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Exploring University Students' Perceptions of Lucida AI as an AI-Powered Speaking Partner for English Speaking Practice

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ABSTRACT

Integrasi Kecerdasan Buatan (AI) ke dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris telah menciptakan peluang baru untuk mendukung praktik berbicara siswa. Studi ini mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa terhadap Lucida AI sebagai mitra berbicara berbasis AI untuk praktik berbicara bahasa Inggris. Dengan menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, studi ini melibatkan sepuluh mahasiswa S1 dari Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di sebuah universitas swasta di Depok, Indonesia. Partisipan menggunakan Lucida AI selama kurang lebih dua minggu sebelum berpartisipasi dalam wawancara semi-terstruktur, sementara kuesioner skala Likert diberikan sebagai triangulasi metodologis. Temuan mengungkapkan tiga tema utama. Pertama, mahasiswa merasa bahwa Lucida AI mendukung praktik berbicara mereka dengan meningkatkan pengucapan, tata bahasa, kosakata, kelancaran, dan pemahaman. Kedua, aplikasi tersebut menumbuhkan lingkungan belajar yang mendukung dan membangun kepercayaan diri yang mengurangi kecemasan berbicara. Ketiga, partisipan mengidentifikasi beberapa keterbatasan teknis, termasuk ketidakakuratan pengenalan suara sesekali dan respons yang berulang. Secara keseluruhan, mahasiswa memandang Lucida AI sebagai alat tambahan yang berharga untuk praktik berbicara mandiri daripada sebagai pengganti pengajaran di kelas.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into English language learning has created new opportunities for supporting students' speaking practice. This study explored university students' perceptions of Lucida AI as an AI-powered speaking partner for English speaking practice. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the study involved ten undergraduate students from the English Education Department at a private university in Depok, Indonesia. Participants used Lucida AI for approximately two weeks before participating in semi-structured interviews, while a Likert-scale questionnaire was administered as methodological triangulation. The findings revealed three major themes. First, students perceived that Lucida AI supported their speaking practice by enhancing pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Second, the application fostered a supportive and confidence-building learning environment that reduced speaking anxiety. Third, participants identified several technical limitations, including occasional speech recognition inaccuracies and repetitive responses. Overall, students viewed Lucida AI as a valuable supplementary tool for autonomous speaking practice rather than a replacement for classroom instruction.

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INTRODUCTION

English has become the dominant language for international communication, higher education, scientific publication, and global employment. Consequently, university students are expected not only to understand English but also to communicate effectively in spoken interactions. Among the four macro language skills, speaking is widely recognized as the most challenging productive skill because it requires learners to simultaneously manage pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and interactional competence during real-time communication (Brown, 2004; Richards, 2008; Nation & Newton, 2020). Unlike reading and listening, speaking demands immediate language production, leaving learners with little opportunity to revise or monitor their utterances before expressing ideas. Therefore, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners continue to experience difficulties in oral communication despite receiving formal English instruction for several years.

One of the major challenges faced by EFL learners is the limited opportunity to practice speaking in authentic communicative situations. Classroom instruction often emphasizes grammar, reading, and examination-oriented activities, while opportunities for meaningful oral interaction remain relatively limited. As a result, many students experience speaking anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and low confidence when communicating in English. These affective barriers reduce learners' willingness to communicate and ultimately hinder the development of speaking proficiency. Brown (2004) argues that successful speaking instruction should provide learners with sufficient opportunities to interact, negotiate meaning, and receive constructive feedback throughout the learning process. Likewise, Richards (2008) emphasizes that effective speaking development requires meaningful communication rather than isolated linguistic exercises.

Recent advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have introduced new possibilities for addressing these long-standing challenges in English language teaching. AI technologies have evolved beyond simple grammar correction systems into intelligent conversational agents capable of simulating authentic dialogue while providing immediate feedback on learners' spoken performance. Through developments in natural language processing (NLP), automatic speech recognition (ASR), and large language models (LLMs), AI-powered applications can now function as virtual speaking partners that facilitate continuous speaking practice without requiring learners to interact with teachers or native speakers. This flexibility allows students to practice English anytime and anywhere, making AI an increasingly attractive supplement to conventional classroom instruction. Recent systematic reviews have shown that AI-assisted language learning increases learners' opportunities for oral practice while simultaneously reducing psychological barriers associated with face-to-face communication (Bhar, 2026; Mahazan & Ismail, 2025).

A growing body of research has demonstrated the positive pedagogical potential of AI-assisted speaking practice. AI-mediated interaction has been reported to improve learners' pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, and speaking confidence. Furthermore, AI-generated feedback enables learners to identify pronunciation errors, refine sentence structures, and practice repeatedly without fear of negative evaluation. Importantly, affective outcomes such as reduced speaking anxiety, increased willingness to communicate, and greater learner motivation have consistently emerged across recent empirical studies (Mahazan & Ismail, 2025; Bhar, 2026). Nevertheless, previous research also indicates that the effectiveness of AI depends on how it is integrated into language instruction. Therefore, AI should be regarded as a complementary learning resource rather than a replacement for teachers or authentic human interaction.

More recently, attention has shifted toward AI-powered speaking partners, which enable learners to engage in interactive conversations resembling authentic human communication. Compared with earlier computer-assisted language learning applications that mainly focused on grammar drills or pronunciation exercises, AI-powered speaking partners provide dynamic conversations, contextual responses, personalized feedback, and adaptive learning experiences. Such conversational AI environments encourage learners to practice speaking more frequently while simultaneously fostering learner autonomy and self-regulated learning. Recent systematic reviews conclude that AI speaking partners are particularly effective in creating low-anxiety learning environments that encourage learners to take risks in oral communication and increase their confidence in speaking English (Bhar, 2026; Wang et al., 2025)..

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Among the emerging AI-powered language learning applications, Lucida AI has recently gained attention as an AI-based speaking partner that offers real-time conversational practice supported by pronunciation correction, grammar feedback, vocabulary development, and scenario-based communication (Lucida, 2025). The application is designed to provide learners with a judgment-free environment in which they can repeatedly practice speaking while receiving immediate feedback on their performance. According to the official application description, Lucida AI supports interactive conversations, personalized language coaching, vocabulary learning, pronunciation feedback, and simulated speaking tasks for everyday communication as well as standardized English proficiency tests.

Despite the increasing popularity of AI-powered speaking applications, existing research has primarily focused on widely used platforms such as ChatGPT, Google Assistant, ELSA Speak, Speechling, and other AI chatbots (Mahazan & Ismail, 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Recent systematic reviews indicate that empirical studies on AI-assisted speaking instruction are still concentrated on these well-established technologies, whereas studies specifically examining Lucida AI remain scarce **(**Bhar, 2026). This represents an important research gap because different AI platforms employ different interaction designs, feedback mechanisms, and pedagogical features, which may influence learners' experiences and perceptions in different ways. Therefore, findings obtained from one AI application cannot necessarily be generalized to another.

Another limitation of previous studies concerns their methodological orientation. Most existing research has adopted experimental, quasi-experimental, or quantitative approaches to examine learning outcomes, technology acceptance, or instructional effectiveness (Mahazan & Ismail, 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Although these studies provide valuable evidence regarding the effectiveness of AI-assisted speaking practice, they offer limited insight into how learners actually experience interacting with AI-powered speaking partners during their learning process. Understanding students' perceptions is particularly important because positive learning experiences may encourage sustained use of educational technology, whereas negative experiences may reduce learners' willingness to integrate AI into their language learning. Therefore, a qualitative approach is needed to capture learners' experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges more comprehensively.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to explore university students' perceptions of Lucida AI as an AI-powered speaking partner for English speaking practice. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how students perceive the contribution of Lucida AI to the development of the five speaking components proposed by Brown (2004): pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In addition, the study investigates how students perceive the learning environment created by Lucida AI in supporting their confidence to practice speaking English, as well as the technical challenges they experience while interacting with the application.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore university students' perceptions of Lucida AI as an AI-powered speaking partner for English speaking practice. A qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to obtain comprehensive descriptions of participants' experiences, opinions, and perceptions without extensive theoretical interpretation (Sandelowski, 2000). To enhance the credibility of the findings, this study also employed methodological triangulation by administering a Likert-scale questionnaire as supporting data. The questionnaire was not intended for statistical hypothesis testing but rather to corroborate the findings obtained from the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The participants consisted of ten undergraduate students from the English Education Department at a private university in Depok, West Java, Indonesia. They were selected through purposive sampling because they had experience using Lucida AI for English speaking practice. Prior to the interviews, all participants were required to use Lucida AI for approximately two weeks with a minimum of three speaking practice sessions per week to ensure that their perceptions were based on sufficient learning experiences. Before participating in the study, all participants were informed about the research objectives and procedures and voluntarily agreed to participate by providing informed consent. The number of participants was considered appropriate for this qualitative study because the primary objective was to obtain rich and in-depth information rather than statistical generalization (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Two instruments were employed to collect the data. The primary instrument was a semi-structured interview designed to explore students' experiences and perceptions of using Lucida AI in English speaking practice. The interview protocol was developed based on the five components of speaking proposed by Brown (2004), including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These components served as the conceptual framework for exploring how students perceived the contribution of Lucida AI to their speaking practice. A supporting instrument in the form of a twelve-item questionnaire was also developed based on the same five speaking components. The questionnaire employed Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree and was used solely to support the qualitative findings through methodological triangulation. Prior to data collection, both instruments were reviewed by two experts in English Language Teaching to ensure their content validity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The interview data revealed three major themes regarding university students' perceptions of Lucida AI as an AI-powered speaking partner for English speaking practice. Overall, the participants perceived Lucida AI as a useful learning companion that supported various aspects of speaking development, particularly pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. In addition to improving speaking performance, the application also increased students' confidence in speaking English by providing a supportive learning environment. Nevertheless, several participants identified technical limitations that occasionally reduced the effectiveness of the application.

Lucida AI Enhanced Students' Speaking Performance

The first theme demonstrates that the participants perceived Lucida AI as an effective tool for improving various components of English speaking performance. Based on the interview data, students consistently reported improvements in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension after practicing with the application. These findings correspond to the speaking components proposed by Brown (2004), which served as the conceptual framework for this study.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned benefits of Lucida AI. Most participants explained that the application enabled them to recognize and correct pronunciation errors immediately through instant feedback. They believed that repeated practice helped them pronounce difficult English words more accurately.

One participant explained:

> *"Before using Lucida AI, I often hesitated to pronounce words such as* ***schedule*** *or* ***comfortable*** *because I was afraid of making mistakes. The application immediately corrected my pronunciation, so I gradually became more confident and my speech became more fluent."* (P1)

Similarly, another participant stated:

> *"The pronunciation model provided by Lucida AI was very clear, especially when practicing academic vocabulary. I simply listened and repeated the words until I could pronounce them correctly."* (P9)

These responses suggest that immediate pronunciation feedback encouraged students to practice repeatedly and improve the accuracy of their spoken English.

Grammar

Another aspect frequently highlighted by the participants was grammar improvement. Several students explained that Lucida AI automatically identified grammatical errors during conversations and immediately suggested more appropriate sentence structures.

For example, one participant commented:

> *"I am usually very concerned about grammar when speaking English, so I often become nervous. Lucida AI immediately pointed out my mistakes and suggested the correct verb forms, which helped me understand my errors without making me feel embarrassed."* (P2)

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Another participant also appreciated the corrective feedback:

> *"After I finished speaking, the application immediately rewrote my sentence using the correct grammar without interrupting the conversation." (P9)*

These findings indicate that students perceived the immediate corrective feedback as beneficial for improving grammatical accuracy during speaking practice.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary development was another important benefit perceived by the participants. Several students reported that Lucida AI introduced alternative words and expressions during conversations, allowing them to expand their vocabulary and avoid repetitive language use.
One participant stated:

> *"The best part was the vocabulary suggestions. When discussing different topics, Lucida AI recommended more appropriate and varied words, making my conversations sound more natural." (P3)*

Likewise, another participant explained that although the application occasionally experienced technical problems, it still helped increase vocabulary knowledge during daily speaking practice.

These responses suggest that students viewed Lucida AI not only as a conversation partner but also as a practical source of vocabulary enrichment.

Fluency

Most participants also believed that regular interaction with Lucida AI contributed to greater speaking fluency. They explained that continuous conversations required them to respond immediately, encouraging them to think and speak more spontaneously in English.
One participant explained:

> *"Lucida AI really helped my fluency. I became accustomed to responding immediately instead of spending too much time arranging sentences in my head. Gradually, speaking English became more natural."* (P5)

Similarly, another participant reported that regular speaking practice reduced hesitation and enabled smoother communication.

Overall, the participants perceived repeated interaction with Lucida AI as an effective means of developing speaking fluency.

Comprehension

Although comprehension was mentioned less frequently than the other speaking components, several participants explained that Lucida AI helped them better understand conversational contexts and respond appropriately. They indicated that interacting with the application trained them to comprehend spoken English more quickly before producing responses.

In addition, participants reported that receiving immediate explanations and corrections enabled them to understand the intended meaning of conversations more effectively, thereby improving their overall speaking performance.

The questionnaire responses also showed generally positive ratings across the five speaking components, supporting the interview findings that students perceived Lucida AI as beneficial for English speaking practice.

Lucida AI Created a Supportive and Confidence-Building Learning Environment

Beyond improving linguistic aspects of speaking, participants consistently described Lucida AI as providing a comfortable and non-judgmental environment for practicing English. Many students explained that they felt less anxious when interacting with the application than when speaking with classmates or lecturers.
One participant stated:

> *"The most important thing was that I didn't feel judged. Even when I made many mistakes, I could continue speaking comfortably because I was talking to an AI, not another person."* (P2)

Similarly, another participant explained:

> *"I am actually an introverted person and often feel afraid of speaking in class. Using Lucida AI felt like having a very patient private tutor. My confidence increased significantly."* (P7)

These responses indicate that Lucida AI reduced speaking anxiety by providing a psychologically safe learning environment. Such an environment encouraged students to practice more frequently without fear of negative evaluation. The questionnaire responses also reflected high levels of agreement regarding students' confidence and comfort while using the application, reinforcing the interview findings.

Technical Limitations of Lucida AI

Despite the generally positive perceptions, several participants identified limitations that affected their learning experience. The most common concern involved speech recognition accuracy, particularly in noisy environments.

One participant explained:

> *"Sometimes the voice detection did not recognize what I said correctly, even though I believed my pronunciation was already accurate. As a result, the application incorrectly identified my pronunciation as wrong."* (P8)

Another participant noted that AI responses occasionally felt repetitive and less natural than conversations with real people.

> *"The responses were sometimes rather repetitive and less natural compared to talking with friends, although the application was still useful for checking grammar." (P4)*

In addition, one participant reported that Lucida AI occasionally struggled to understand highly complex sentence structures, which reduced the effectiveness of the interaction.

Although these technical issues were acknowledged, most participants agreed that they did not substantially diminish the overall usefulness of Lucida AI as a speaking practice tool. Instead, they viewed the application as an accessible supplementary resource that complemented classroom learning.

Discussion

This study explored university students' perceptions of Lucida AI as an AI-powered speaking partner for English speaking practice. The findings revealed three major themes: (1) Lucida AI was perceived to enhance students' speaking performance, particularly in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension; (2) Lucida AI created a supportive learning environment that increased students' confidence to speak English; and (3) despite its benefits, students recognized several technical limitations that affected their learning experience. These findings demonstrate that students generally viewed Lucida AI as a valuable supplementary tool for independent speaking practice rather than as a replacement for classroom instruction.

The first theme indicates that participants perceived Lucida AI as supporting various aspects of English speaking performance. Based on the interview data, students believed that the application helped them improve their pronunciation through immediate corrective feedback, develop grammatical accuracy by identifying language errors, enrich their vocabulary through contextual conversations, improve fluency through repeated speaking practice, and strengthen comprehension by encouraging them to understand and respond appropriately during conversations. Although this study did not objectively measure speaking achievement, the participants consistently perceived positive changes in these five components after regularly using Lucida AI. These findings correspond to the components of speaking proposed by Brown (2004), who emphasizes that effective speaking requires the integration of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Therefore, students' perceptions suggest that Lucida AI provides opportunities to practice these interconnected speaking components within meaningful communicative activities.

Among the five speaking components, pronunciation and fluency emerged as the aspects most frequently discussed by the participants. Many students explained that the immediate feedback enabled them to recognize pronunciation errors and repeat difficult words until they felt more confident in producing them correctly. Others reported that continuous interaction with Lucida AI gradually reduced hesitation because they became accustomed to responding spontaneously during conversations. Brown (2004) argues that speaking proficiency develops through continuous communicative practice in which

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learners actively produce language rather than merely study linguistic rules. The participants' experiences therefore indicate that Lucida AI may facilitate repeated speaking practice that encourages learners to become more fluent and confident speakers. Similar findings have been reported in recent studies demonstrating that AI-powered conversational applications support pronunciation development and speaking fluency by providing individualized feedback and unlimited speaking opportunities (Wang et al., 2025; Bhar, 2026).

The participants also perceived Lucida AI as beneficial for improving grammar and vocabulary during speaking practice. Several interviewees explained that the application immediately identified grammatical mistakes and suggested more appropriate sentence structures without interrupting the conversation. Others appreciated the contextual vocabulary suggestions that enabled them to express ideas using more varied and appropriate lexical choices. Brown (2004) explains that grammatical competence and vocabulary knowledge are fundamental components of communicative competence because they enable speakers to construct meaningful and accurate utterances. The participants' perceptions therefore suggest that Lucida AI functioned not merely as a conversational partner but also as an interactive learning resource that promoted language awareness through immediate feedback. This finding supports previous research indicating that AI-assisted language learning enhances learners' linguistic development by providing personalized corrective feedback that encourages self-monitoring and autonomous learning (Mahazan & Ismail, 2025).

Another important finding concerns the affective benefits of using Lucida AI. Most participants reported that they felt more comfortable practicing English with the application because they did not fear making mistakes or being negatively evaluated by others. As reflected in the interview findings, students perceived Lucida AI as a patient speaking partner that allowed them to practice repeatedly without embarrassment. This supportive learning environment encouraged them to participate more actively in speaking practice and gradually increased their confidence. These findings support Brown's (2004) view that affective factors, including self-confidence and anxiety, substantially influence learners' speaking performance. Learners who experience lower anxiety are generally more willing to communicate and participate in oral interaction. Likewise, recent studies have shown that conversational AI can reduce foreign language anxiety because learners perceive AI as a non-judgmental interlocutor that provides opportunities for repeated practice without social pressure (Goh & Aryadoust, 2025; Bhar, 2026). Therefore, the confidence-building effect identified in this study represents an important contribution of Lucida AI beyond linguistic improvement alone.

Despite these positive perceptions, participants also identified several technical limitations that influenced their learning experiences. The most frequently reported problems involved inaccurate speech recognition, repetitive responses, and conversations that occasionally felt less natural than communication with human interlocutors. These findings indicate that although Lucida AI provides valuable opportunities for independent speaking practice, current AI technology has not yet fully replicated the complexity of authentic human interaction. Similar limitations have been reported by previous researchers, who argue that AI-powered conversational systems may experience difficulties interpreting accents, recognizing complex utterances, and maintaining contextually appropriate conversations (Bhar, 2026; Goh & Aryadoust, 2025). Nevertheless, most participants emphasized that these technical issues did not reduce the overall usefulness of Lucida AI, as the application remained beneficial for regular speaking practice outside the classroom.

An important implication of this study is that Lucida AI should be viewed as a complementary learning resource rather than a substitute for teachers or classroom interaction. The interview findings demonstrate that students appreciated the flexibility, accessibility, and immediate feedback provided by the application, yet they also recognized that communication with teachers and classmates remains essential for developing authentic communicative competence. Human interaction enables learners to negotiate meaning, interpret pragmatic and sociocultural cues, and receive contextualized feedback that AI systems cannot yet consistently provide. Therefore, integrating AI-powered speaking partners such as Lucida AI into English language instruction may extend students' opportunities for independent speaking practice while maintaining the indispensable role of teachers in facilitating meaningful communication.

Finally, this study contributes to the growing literature on AI-assisted language learning by providing qualitative evidence regarding students' perceptions of Lucida AI in an Indonesian EFL context. While previous studies have predominantly examined the effectiveness of AI applications using

quantitative or experimental designs, the present study offers deeper insights into how students experience AI-supported speaking practice through semi-structured interviews. By highlighting learners' perceptions of both the benefits and limitations of Lucida AI, this study expands current understanding of AI-powered speaking partners and provides practical implications for English language educators seeking to integrate emerging AI technologies into speaking instruction.

CONCLUSION

This study explored university students' perceptions of Lucida AI as an AI-powered speaking partner for English speaking practice. The findings indicate that students generally perceived Lucida AI as a valuable supplementary learning tool that supported their speaking practice across the five speaking components proposed by Brown (2004), namely pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Participants also perceived that the application provided immediate feedback and opportunities for repeated speaking practice, which contributed to greater confidence and reduced anxiety when communicating in English. These findings suggest that, from the students' perspective, Lucida AI offers a supportive learning environment that encourages autonomous speaking practice beyond the classroom.

Despite these positive perceptions, participants also identified several technical limitations, including occasional inaccuracies in speech recognition and repetitive conversational responses. These findings indicate that, although AI-powered speaking partners have considerable potential to support English language learning, they cannot yet fully replace authentic interaction with teachers and peers. Therefore, Lucida AI should be viewed as a complementary learning resource that extends opportunities for independent speaking practice rather than as a substitute for classroom instruction.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on AI-assisted language learning by providing qualitative evidence regarding students' experiences with Lucida AI in an Indonesian EFL context. Unlike previous studies that have predominantly employed quantitative or experimental approaches, this study offers a deeper understanding of how learners perceive the benefits and challenges of interacting with an AI-powered speaking partner during their speaking practice.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. It involved only ten participants from a single private university, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. In addition, the study focused on students' perceptions rather than objectively measuring improvements in speaking performance. Future research is therefore recommended to involve more diverse participants from different educational institutions, compare Lucida AI with other AI-powered speaking applications, and employ mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to examine both learners' perceptions and actual speaking development over an extended period.

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