



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AS A TOOL TO PRACTICE AND IMPROVE SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS IN ENGLISH¹

Onezimo Vitor Matos Reis²

ABSTRACT: The main purpose of this study is to analyze the ways in which it is feasible to develop oral production and comprehension skills in English by using the *Praktika* artificial intelligence application. The methodology consists of reviewing the literature on artificial intelligence and oral production and comprehension skills. The research approach is qualitative, exploratory in nature, describing ways of improving English oral production and comprehension skills by using the artificial intelligence application. Three specific objectives were outlined: (1) to investigate the impact of artificial intelligence in the world; (2) to describe the skills of oral production and comprehension in English, based on the communicative approach; and (3) to analyze the *Praktika* application designed to improve oral communication skills. In order to achieve these goals, the article is based on theoretical contributions from authors such as Testa (2021); Edmett et al. (2023); Melo (2019); Richards (2006, 2008); Ludermir (2021); Almeida Filho (1998, 2009); Brown (2006); Harmer (1998); Rost (2015) and other researchers who have dedicated themselves intensively to studying this area. After the exploratory literature search, potential ways of improving learners' English oral production and comprehension skills were identified, such as conversation simulations, a variety of topics, pronunciation, and linguistic variation, feedback on oral communication skills, and other approaches.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence. Application. Oral skills.

RESUMO: O principal propósito deste estudo consiste em analisar de que maneiras é viável desenvolver as habilidades de produção e compreensão oral em língua inglesa por meio do

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² Discente do curso de Letras Língua Inglesa. Faculdade de Línguas Estrangeiras (FALEST). Universidade Federal do Pará, campus Bragança. Email: vitorreis2007@gmail.com

aplicativo *Praktika* de inteligência artificial. A metodologia consistirá em realizar revisões de literatura acerca da inteligência artificial e das habilidades de produção e compreensão oral. A abordagem da pesquisa é qualitativa, de natureza exploratória, salientando as maneiras de aprimorar as habilidades de produção e compreensão oral em inglês usando o aplicativo de inteligência artificial. Três objetivos específicos foram delineados: (1) investigar o impacto da inteligência artificial no mundo; (2) descrever as habilidades de produção e compreensão oral em língua inglesa, tomando como base a abordagem comunicativa; e (3) analisar o aplicativo *Praktika* destinado ao aprimoramento das habilidades de comunicação oral. Com o intuito de alcançar tais metas, o artigo fundamenta-se em aportes teóricos de autores como Testa (2021); Edmett et al. (2023); Melo (2019); Richards (2006, 2008); Ludermir (2021); Almeida Filho (1998); Brown (2006); Harmer (1998); Rost (2015), e dentre outros pesquisadores que se dedicaram intensamente a estudar essa área. Após a pesquisa bibliográfica exploratória, foram identificados potenciais caminhos para aprimorar as habilidades de produção e compreensão oral da língua inglesa dos aprendentes, como simulações de conversações, variedade de temas, pronúncia e variação linguística, feedback sobre as habilidades de comunicação oral e outras abordagens.

Palavras-chave: Inteligência Artificial. Aplicativo. Habilidades orais.

1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the term technology has encompassed everything from simple stones used as tools and weapons to the most sophisticated artifacts of today's society. Technology is developed to make human life and tasks easier as society progresses and human needs arise (Santos, 2019). Thus, over the years, technology has been renewed in line with people's needs. With the advancement of applications that use artificial intelligence and some individuals use them easlily, it is extremely important to consider the benefits of these applications in the English language learning process for speakers whose mother tongue is another. Generally speaking, what is App³? According to Coutinho (2014, p. 58, free translation⁴), the concept of an application is “software designed to be installed on a mobile device. Its shortened version is App”. Apps have specific characteristics, such as sending and

³ App is the short term used to refer to Application.

⁴ Software desenvolvido para ser instalado em um dispositivo móvel. Sua versão encurtada é app [texto original].

receiving messages, social networks, games, education, and thus expanding the capabilities of using a smartphone⁵(Santos, 2019).

After having a general understanding of the concept of an application or App, another important point is to understand the concept of artificial intelligence (AI). According to Testa (2021, p. 18, free translation⁶), the idea that “this concept supposes a theoretical principle that constitutes a computational machine, capable of processing data, modifying it based on logically formulated instructions”. This way, we can understand that artificial intelligence is a system capable of carrying out tasks autonomously using machines. Artificial intelligence applications are available to those who have a cell phone with internet access.

English language learners can use artificial intelligence Apps to practice oral production and comprehension skills. For this reason, we outlined the research problem for this paper: how can English language learners develop their oral production and comprehension skills by using artificial intelligence Apps? In this sense, resources such as artificial intelligence applications are widely used by people on their electronic devices, as the case of the *Praktika* application, to practice the communicative skills of oral production and comprehension in the English language. However, knowing how to use the *Praktika* AI App properly is essential to improve English oral communication skills. For this reason, the article has carried out exploratory research, investigating ways of improving oral communication skills in English as a second language using the *Praktika* artificial intelligence application.

Artificial intelligence, which is a software that works in robots, is currently available in cell phones, tablets, cars, and other electronic devices. According to Gunkel (2017, p. 13, free translation⁷), [...] “the fact is that our world is already populated by semi-intelligent artifacts, social robots, algorithms capable of learning and autonomous decision-making systems that exponentially take the place of the other in social relations and communicative interaction”. The main aim of this article is to analyze possibilities to develop learners' English oral production and comprehension skills by using the *Praktika* artificial intelligence App. In addition, we carried out research on artificial intelligence and its influence on the world, as well as conceptualized oral production and comprehension skills considering the communicative approach to language teaching; and finally, we analyzed the *Praktika* App

⁵ According to Coutinho (2014), the concept of smartphone is commonly used to refer to the latest generation of mobile devices, characterized by their advanced processing capacity.

⁶ Esse conceito supõe um princípio teórico que constitui uma máquina computacional, capaz de efetuar um processamento de dados, modificando-os a partir de instruções logicamente formuladas [texto original].

⁷ O fato é que nosso mundo já é povoado por artefatos semi-inteligentes, robôs sociais, algoritmos capazes de aprender e sistemas de tomada de decisão autônomos que exponencialmente ocupam o lugar do Outro nas relações sociais e na interação comunicativa [texto original].

which can help develop oral production and comprehension skills for learners of the English language.

The previous paragraphs have highlighted the relevance of research into artificial intelligence as a tool for improving English oral production and comprehension skills. This article will be structured as follows: in section 2, we will consider the origins of artificial intelligence; section 2.1 artificial intelligence and language learning; section 3 communicative teaching of English as a foreign language; section 3.1 oral production and comprehension skills; section 4 describes the methodology used in the research; section 5 results and discussion: the AI App *Praktika* and functions to practice and improve speaking and listening skills in English; section 6 final considerations; and section 7 the acknowledgments. This information will be useful for guiding the reader through the text on the possible applications of artificial intelligence as a tool for improving oral communication skills in English.

2 THE ORIGIN OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The year 1950 was a milestone for computer science and artificial intelligence. A highly prestigious researcher, Alan Turing, known as the 'father of computing', was one of the pioneers to share the idea that machines could function autonomously. This idea was published in his scientific article entitled *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*. In the article, Turing (1950, p. 433) asks, “I propose to reflect on the question: Can machines think? To this end, we should begin by defining the meaning of the terms machine and think”.

This question arouses various studies into machines' behavior and capacity for autonomy. Scientists such as Newell, Shaw, and Simon contributed to the development of artificial intelligence through their research and projects. The scholars developed a “reasoning” program called Logic Theorist (LT).

In the article entitled *The processes of creative thinking*, was defined the concept of the program Logic Theorist (LT), according to Newell et al., “It is a computer program capable of discovering proofs of theorems of elementary symbolic logic, using heuristic techniques similar to those used by human beings” (Newell et al., 1958, p. 5-6). The researchers have continued to improve their research, with the aim of developing machines capable of helping humans with everyday tasks. At the moment, the conditions for artificial intelligence are much more favorable. According to Testa (2021, p. 36, free translation⁸), [...] “the conditions have changed, and much has also been developed in the direction of

⁸ [...] as condições mudaram, e muito se desenvolveu também em direção a um procedimento inteligente no procedimento das máquinas [texto original].

intelligent machine procedure”. In addition, the aim of AI research was to create machines that, using artificial intelligence software, could function autonomously as if they had their own thoughts.

With advances in research to improve artificial intelligence so that it could be more efficient, and with more effective processors⁹ and systems enhancing the performance of equipment, machine learning emerged, making it possible for the machine to learn new algorithms autonomously. According to Melo:

In 1980, machine learning emerged, considered to be the ability to learn without being programmed. It is a subfield of artificial intelligence that aims to develop algorithms and techniques focused on inductive reasoning that allow computers to learn certain tasks by extracting patterns and rules from large data sets (Melo, 2019, p. 55, free translation¹⁰).

As mentioned in the introduction, the concept of artificial intelligence encompasses the idea of machines capable of imitating human intelligence autonomously. On the other hand, the concept of machine learning differs from artificial intelligence. According to Ludemir (2021), machine learning technology enables robots to acquire new skills from data or information, such as Google and Tesla vehicles, for instance. An additional example that illustrates how machine learning takes place was cited by Testa (2021, p. 46, free translation¹¹), “when an algorithm [...] wants to keep a website user on the site for as long as possible, it is interesting that, in order to achieve a certain goal, it finds a way to keep the subject's attention on the page”. The capabilities of artificial intelligence and machine learning include performing tasks that were previously exclusive to humans, such as solving simple and complex problems, understanding natural language and recognizing patterns, among other skills.

According to the authors Suryana, Asrianto, and Murwantono (2020), AI systems and applications are currently capable of significantly reducing human effort in various areas, performing tasks in a matter of seconds. Many entrepreneurs are using artificial intelligence to replace manual labor with machines, seeking to carry out completely different operations within their businesses. AI tools make work easier, resulting in greater efficiency and

⁹ According to Alecrim; Marques (2023), processors are chips responsible for processing data in a computer, cell phone and other electronic devices, functioning as the “brain” of this equipment.

¹⁰ Em 1980 surge a aprendizagem de máquina, considerada como a capacidade de aprender sem ser programado, é um subcampo da inteligência artificial que objetiva desenvolver algoritmos e técnicas com foco no raciocínio indutivo que permitem ao computador aprender determinadas tarefas extraindo padrões e regras de grandes conjuntos de dados [texto original].

¹¹ Quando um algoritmo [...] tem a pretensão de manter um usuário de um site o máximo de tempo possível no site, é interessante que, para atingir determinado fim, ele descubra um meio para prender a atenção do sujeito na página [texto original].

precision. The popularization of the use of artificial intelligence has intensified with the advent of ChatGPT. According to Rodrigues; Rodrigues (2023, p. 6, free translation¹²), “ChatGPT is characterized as a generative AI, being the pioneering platform that has become popular since 2015, free of charge, arriving today with its improved version, with the possibility of free or paid use”. In this section, we can understand the origin of artificial intelligence in 1950, when researcher Alan Turing asked whether machines could be autonomous. Over the years, more research has been carried out in this area, resulting in significant advances, such as the emergence of ChatGPT. It is clear that this technology brings benefits to people's lives, including those who want to learn a new language. In the next section, we will look at how artificial intelligence is being applied to the process of learning foreign languages.

2.1 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

English learners seek to acquire fluency in the language due to its international nature, which highlights the urgency of developing more effective teaching methods (Richards, 2006). It is therefore essential to re-evaluate current strategies and approaches to teaching and learning essential language skills (Richards, 2008). Artificial intelligence is currently widely used by a large proportion of English language learners to practice and improve communicative skills (Edmett et al., 2023). Thus, we understand that technology tools are of great importance for learning foreign languages.

As a result of this training, many English learners are able to become autonomous in their foreign language learning journey by making use of artificial intelligence resources. According to Leffa (2016, p. 296, free translation¹³), “in autonomous learning, the responsibility lies with the student. If he has learned, the credit goes to him”. In this way, the English language learner is in control of learning the foreign language, choosing the day and time to practice and learn the communicative skills of the foreign language, using the tools of artificial intelligence to help them prepare for the target language.

The use of artificial intelligence to improve oral communication skills in English is advantageous for preparing learners for real-life situations. “Communication is vital in interpersonal relationships” (Suéli et al., 2018, p. 17, free translation¹⁴). The use of technology

¹²O ChatGPT caracteriza-se como uma IA do tipo generativa, sendo a plataforma pioneira que se popularizou desde o ano de 2015, de maneira gratuita, chegando à atualidade com sua versão melhorada, tendo possibilidade de uso gratuito ou pago [texto original].

¹³ Na aprendizagem autônoma, a responsabilidade está no aluno. Se ele aprendeu, o mérito é dele [texto original].

¹⁴ A comunicação é vital nas relações interpessoais [texto original].

to practice communication is notorious in the current scenario, as in Melo's words (2019, p. 50, free translation¹⁵), mentioned that:

Contemporary life has changed as a result of new technologies, and this has had an impact on language practices and the way we act on a daily basis. Nowadays, communication has often taken place through social networks and apps, and routine actions have been based on computer programs. Through websites and virtual applications, we can, for example, make purchases, bank transactions, and share images, videos, and information. The way we (inter)act and produce meaning can therefore often involve or depend on machines and networked information and communication technologies.

From this perspective, we can see that the emergence of new technologies represents a new industrial revolution. These technologies make everyday tasks easier and are used for a variety of purposes, including communication. It is therefore crucial to use technology to our advantage. In this way, machines not only perform manual labor but also intellectual activities, those that require the use of what is considered intelligence (Ludermir, 2021).

3 COMMUNICATIVE LEARNING OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Communication plays a vital role in various contexts, whether in a relaxed way during a conversation with a colleague, or in a more serious way in formal settings. Thus, communication can take many forms and is only effective when the message is interpreted with the same importance as it was conveyed (Suéli et al., 2018). In addition, communication is based on a form of social interaction, personal presentation, and exchange of information (Almeida Filho, 1998). Communicative approach language focuses on learning the foreign language through the use of the target language, in situations that prepare students to use the foreign language in a real situation, but how can students practice and improve their oral production and comprehension skills? This question is essential for this section on communicative learning of English as a foreign language.

There are different ways of practicing and/or learning a foreign language, and the language learner can follow certain methodologies and approaches, and with these diverse ways it is essential to find a way that can be really useful for the English language learner. Researchers such as Richards (2006) and Almeida Filho (1998) have mentioned

¹⁵ A vida contemporânea tem apresentado mudanças decorrentes das novas tecnologias e isso tem impactado as práticas linguageiras e as maneiras de agirmos no dia-a-dia. Na atualidade, a comunicação tem se dado, em muitos casos, através das redes sociais, de aplicativos, bem como as ações rotineiras têm se pautado em programas de computador. Através de sites na internet e aplicativos virtuais, podemos, por exemplo, fazer compras, transações bancárias, compartilhar imagens, vídeos e informações. A forma como (inter) agimos e produzimos sentidos pode, muitas vezes, portanto, envolver ou depender de máquinas e tecnologias de informação e comunicação em rede [texto original].

communicative approach as an effective way to learning a foreign language. According to Almeida Filho, the concept of communicative learning is:

The communicative teaching is that which organizes learning experiences in terms of relevant activities/tasks of real interest and/or need to the student so that they are able to use the target language to carry out real actions in interaction with other speakers-users of that language (Almeida Filho, 1998, p. 36, free translation¹⁶).

Learning English as a foreign language can be conducted through a communicative process, with the aim of the language learner using the language to interact with other speakers with the language in question. One researcher who addresses communicative teaching is Richards, in his article *Communicative Language Teaching Today*, in which he mentions that over the last 30 years, there has been a significant transformation in the process of learning a second language. Previously, language learning was mainly focused on achieving grammatical competence, when language learners memorized dialogues and performed exercises to minimize the occurrence of errors (Richards, 2006).

With the existence of various methods for learning a foreign language, such as the grammar and translation method, the audio-lingual method, the direct method, and others, methodologies must be developed so that learners can get to know, practice, and use the target language. With the need for efficient learning, the communicative approach was developed. Richards states that:

Communicative language teaching created a great deal of enthusiasm and excitement when it first appeared as a new approach to language teaching in the 1970s and 1980s, and language teachers and teaching institutions all around the world soon began to rethink their teaching, syllabuses, and classroom materials. In planning language courses within a communicative approach, grammar was no longer the starting point. New approaches to language teaching were needed. (Richards, 2006, p. 9).

In this way, we see a communicative foreign language learning approach as something innovative because it does not prioritize grammar as the main point for learning the language. When we start learning a new language, we need to practice in order to improve our understanding of the language. The aim of learning a foreign language communicatively is to learn to communicate using the target language. The main focus is on interacting with other speakers on real topics, with grammar as a secondary feature. The learner is allowed to make grammar mistakes and has a certain freedom to talk without the fear of grammatical faults (Richards, 2006).

¹⁶ O ensino comunicativo é aquele que organiza as experiências de aprender em termos de atividades relevantes/tarefas de real interesse e/ou necessidade do aluno para que ele se capacite a usar a língua-alvo para realizar ações de verdade na interação com outros falantes-usuários dessa língua [texto original].

According to Alencar (2009), foreign language teaching and learning in Brazil began informally in 1500 and then formally by the Jesuits and the Portuguese royal family. A few years later, according to Almeida Filho (2009), the grammatical approach and the audiolingual method were taught in Brazil. As a result, learners of the foreign language needed an effective methodology for practicing and learning the foreign language.

Thus, in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a great deal of movement towards foreign language teaching in Brazil, looking for the most appropriate methods and techniques for teaching and learning the English language (Almeida Filho, 1998). However, although efforts have been made to find an effective way of teaching and learning foreign languages, it is clear that Brazilian educational institutions find it difficult to implement the communicative approach since the grammar method is still widely used.

Regardless of the method or approach used to learn a foreign language, when students feel confident in using the target language, the learning process can become more fluid and therefore effective in developing fluency in the foreign language. The aim of a foreign language student is to learn the language in order to be able to communicate through it, but in order to do so, they need to practice and develop the four language skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading (Araújo; Dias, 2017). These four skills are essential for the student to be able to develop fluency in the foreign language. The main focuses of this work, however, are speaking and listening.

3.1 ORAL PRODUCTION AND COMPREHENSION SKILLS

Grammatical knowledge and vocabulary are not indispensable for the learner to master the use of a language, but it is necessary to go beyond that, and it is crucial to practice and develop language skills (Araújo; Dias, 2017). In this research, we will focus on oral production and comprehension skills. In accordance with Suéli et al., (2018, p. 17, free translation¹⁷), “verbal language is a language that uses words to communicate”. The skill of oral production is a quality of great importance for those seeking to develop their proficiency in a language.

According to Celce-Murcia (2001, p. 103), “for most people, the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the most basic means of human communication”. Thus, in order to be proficient, it is necessary to practice, and there

¹⁷ A linguagem verbal é aquela que utiliza palavras para efetivar o ato comunicativo [texto original].

are some tools for language learners to use. As learners practice this skill frequently, they become much more familiar with the target language, and according to Richards:

As students carry out communicative tasks, the assumption is that they engage in the process of negotiation of meaning, employing strategies such as comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and clarification requests. These are believed to lead to a gradual modification of their language output, which over time takes on more and more target-like forms (Richards, 2008, p. 27).

It is possible to infer that by using oral communication skills, it is common for learners to become increasingly familiar with the new language. In addition, according to Harmer, another way of practicing oral production skills is to discuss everyday issues that occur in the student's life, such as the last movie they watched, commenting on its characteristics (Harmer, 1998). The ability to speak is extremely important for those learning a new language. With this in mind, there are various ways to practice and improve communicative skills, such as discussions, speeches, role-plays, conversations, audio-recorded oral dialogue diaries, and other activities focused on accuracy (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Currently, one way of practicing this skill is through artificial intelligence applications. Artificial Intelligence has come to be used as a companion to the language learner (Edmett et al., 2023). In this way, we understand that the skill of oral production is important to practice and develop. Along with it, a skill of great importance is the skill of oral comprehension.

Listening comprehension is a fundamental skill for English language learners, but practicing and developing this skill requires time and dedication on the part of the student. Furthermore, learning a new language to understand aurally when listening to a native speaker of this foreign language, for instance, is not an easy task (Brown, 2006). Although this skill requires dedication to develop, it is essential to understand what its functions are:

Listening as comprehension is the traditional way of thinking about the nature of listening. Indeed, in most methodology manuals *listening*, and *listening comprehension* are synonymous. This view of listening is based on the assumption that the main function of listening in second language learning is to facilitate understanding of spoken discourse (Richards, 2008, p. 3).

Listening and listening comprehension are synonymous terms that can be classified as an oral language skill and that the language learner aims to understand speech in order to understand the oral message. Foreign language learners strive to achieve this goal and there are various strategies for improving this listening skill. One strategy for achieving this goal is to understand the main idea of what has been said, which improves listening comprehension,

and a second way is to activate prior knowledge of the subject matter of the conversation (Brown, 2006).

According to Rost, who defends the idea that activating the cognitive schema helps to understand the spoken message, “the listener also needs to activate appropriate schemata in order to fill in missing information, as no utterance in speech contains all of the information needed to understand it” (Rost, 2011, p. 75-76). For listening comprehension, it is advisable for learners to familiarize themselves with different accents of the foreign language (Harmer, 1998). Therefore, it is likely that by using the strategies correctly and having more contact with the language, the language learner will be able to achieve their listening comprehension goal. The characteristics of the oral production and comprehension skills of the foreign language were mentioned in this part. Therefore, the next section will deal with the research methodology and how it was conducted.

4 METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for the research consisted of conducting a qualitative and exploratory investigation through bibliographic sources to investigate the impact of artificial intelligence in the world, and how to describe the skills of oral production and comprehension in the English language, taking as a basis the communicative approach.

It is also important to highlight the importance of communicative learning of a foreign language. The research is based on authors who mention English language teaching and learning, such as Almeida Filho (1998) and Richards (2006, 2008), who argue in favor of the effectiveness of the communicative approach for practicing, developing, and improving the fluency of language learners.

Moreover, it is imperative to have a good understanding of communicative approaches, as pointed out by researchers such as Brown (2006) and Harmer (1998), who discuss ways of improving English listening and speaking skills.

Following the literature review, we carried out an analysis of the *Praktika* application, which was designed to improve the oral communication skills of English language learners.

The form of exploratory research, according to (Lösch; Rambo; Ferreira, 2023, p. 3, free translation¹⁸), [...] “the researcher can use different types of data collection instruments to capture the phenomenon to be investigated, and can make use of various qualitative data

¹⁸ O pesquisador pode utilizar diferentes tipos de instrumentos de coleta de dados para captar o fenômeno a ser investigado, e pode fazer uso de várias técnicas de análise de dados qualitativos que podem contribuir no rigor e na qualidade da investigação [texto original].

analysis techniques that can contribute to the rigor and quality of the investigation”. Thus, it is essential to carry out exploratory research on techniques to improve the oral communicative skills of the English language, especially in two fundamental aspects of communication: oral production and comprehension.

When researching the artificial intelligence application *Praktika* as a resource for practicing and improving oral skills, it is necessary to adopt specific strategies to achieve this goal. The results of the research, based on scientific evidence, mention ways of developing oral comprehension and production skills using the artificial intelligence application.

According to Gerhardt and Silveira (2009), qualitative research aims to describe, understand, and explain the conclusions of scientific research in a non-statistical way. In this way, the results of the qualitative research were organized into topics with images that explain the functionalities of the *Praktika* application, which uses artificial intelligence and is associated with the communicative approach. The next section will cover the results of the research, suggesting ways of using the *Praktika* App to practice and improve oral English language skills.

5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: THE AI APP PRAKTIKA

The results of the research derive from ways of improving oral production and comprehension skills using the *Praktika* App, which employs artificial intelligence. Nowadays, more studies are being carried out on artificial intelligence in English language learning than five or ten years ago, reflecting the recent increase in the number of artificial intelligence Apps, which many language learners seek out in order to practice oral skills in the target language (Edmett et al., 2023). Currently, there are a variety of artificial intelligence tools available to help you learn foreign languages. However, it is essential to master the use of these tools, as the research will offer guidance on how to make the most of the potential of these artificial intelligence applications.

Thus, we selected a free artificial intelligence application that allows language learners to practice and improve oral production and comprehension skills in English. In the next section, we will describe the functionalities of the specific application, as well as discuss learning with communicative purpose and ways of improving oral comprehension and production skills.

5.1 PRAKTIKA APPLICATION¹⁹



Figure 1 - Application Praktika

(Source: Image taken from <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ai.praktika.android&hl=pt&pli=1>)

The information on the *Praktika* application was taken from the software's official blog. In this section, we will delve into the origin and functionalities of the App, relating them to communicative learning of English as a foreign language, with a theoretical basis. The App was founded on May 26, 2022, by Adam Turaev. The App is designed to help students learn by simulating possible artificial intelligence scenarios (Praktika, 2022). As mentioned by Edmett et al. (2023), many language learners see artificial intelligence as a relevant tool for improving communication skills, as it is an easily accessible technology. By using artificial intelligence applications as a means of practicing oral skills, English language learners can develop their communicative skills.

According to Almeida Filho (1998, p. 23, free translation²⁰), “by developing communicative competence, students automatically develop linguistic competence, but the reverse is not necessarily true. A student can demonstrate linguistic competence without being able to use it to communicate”. Furthermore, using learner speech recognition is a way of practicing conversational skills. According to Kazu and Kuvvetli (2023), speech recognition is essential for interacting with devices. This requires the application to be accurate and quick in recognizing the learner's voice, making it possible to practice the language by using it.

Thus, we understand the benefits and importance of this research in finding ways to use the *Praktika* artificial intelligence application to practice and consequently improve English oral production and comprehension skills. The following topics will cover the functionalities of the *Praktika* application, relating them to the theory-based communicative

¹⁹ Until March 2024, information about the Praktika app was collected, including its description and corresponding exercises on the website <https://praktika.ai/>.

²⁰ Ao desenvolver competência comunicativa o aluno desenvolve automaticamente competência linguística sem que o reverso seja necessariamente verdadeiro [texto original].

approach, with the aim of identifying ways of practicing and improving the oral production and comprehension skills of language learners.

5.2 SCENARIOS IN THE VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

The *Praktika* artificial intelligence application shows us ways of using these skills orally. Through various scenarios in the App's virtual environment, as shown in the Figure 2, in part (1) *lessons*, those learning and developing the English language can improve their communicative skills by exploring the topics of target language grammar and more. The learner chooses a lesson and can improve their oral communication skills with the chosen topic through an interaction with an avatar controlled by artificial intelligence. In addition, it is possible to create a personalized environment for informal discussions, as shown in the Figure 2, in part (2) *practice zone* and (3) *what do you want to talk about?* In the practice zone, it is possible to talk freely with the avatar about the topic of interest to the student or select a predefined option (fears, job and career, technology, and others), as illustrated in Figure (2). Finally, in the *What do you want to talk about?* section, the student can choose a specific topic for a specific purpose, such as a job interview simulation, in which the avatar itself will ask the English language learner the questions. In this way, the learner practices their oral expression and comprehension skills.

According to Harmer (1998), it is essential that learners of the foreign language prepare themselves to practice communicative skills. With this in mind, students must be engaged with the topic being addressed and have prior knowledge of the subject. According to Brown (2006), prior knowledge is important and can help learners practice listening comprehension skills. Therefore, the learner must have pre-existing knowledge about the subject they are going to practice, which is a way of improving oral communication skills. These are some of the ways in which artificial intelligence can be used through the *Praktika* application.

According to Leffa (2016), autonomy refers to freedom and independence. It is also important to note that by using this tool, learners can choose the most suitable time to improve their foreign language skills, which results in an improvement in communication. In this way, the learner becomes autonomous in their learning process. As mentioned by Richards (2006), defends the idea of students' autonomy in their process of learning a foreign language, highlighting the benefits of this approach for the development of their language skills.

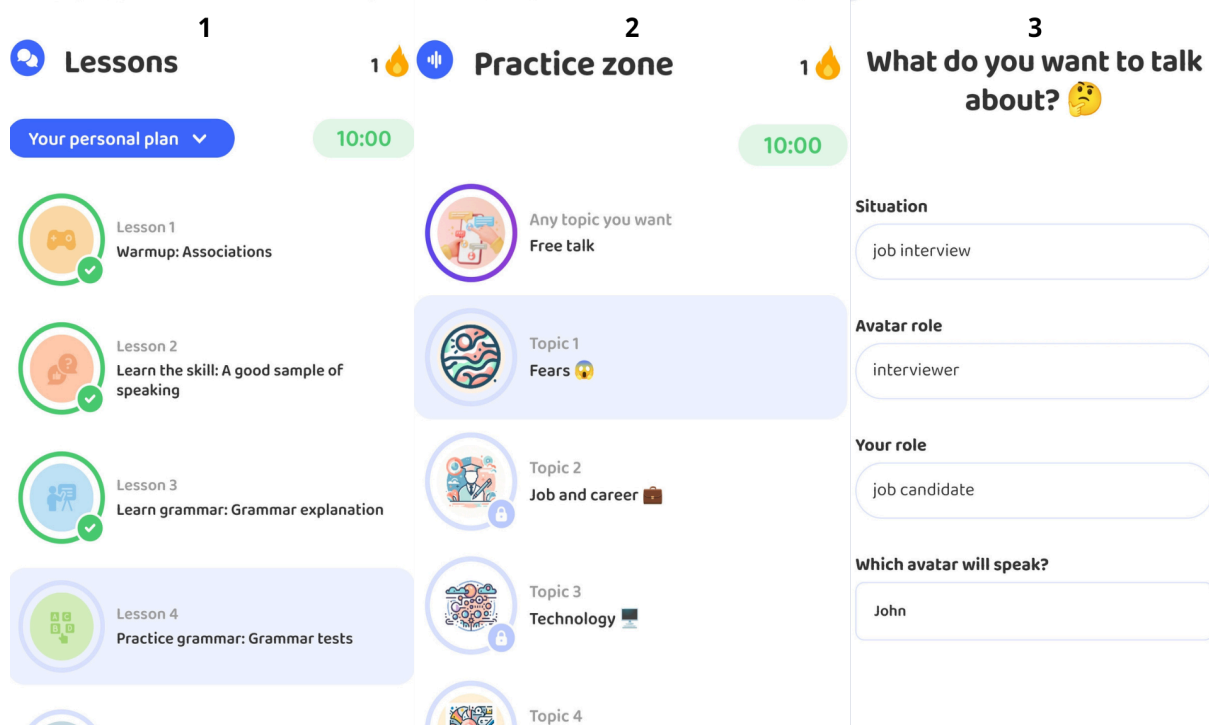


Figure 2 - Praktika app with its functions
(Source: Image taken from the App Praktika software)

According to Almeida Filho (1998), language learners have the opportunity to practice their oral communication skills by using different topics, so that they can use these skills in real situations in the future. Thus, we understand that through communication using artificial intelligence application, English language learners can practice and consequently improve their listening and speaking skills. By using the *Praktika* application, it is possible to have an interaction between the student and the avatar:

To ensure that you have a realistic English practice experience, you can use *Praktika*, the best English language practice app, to interact with a realistic AI. AI is included in this best app to practice the behavior, appearance, and speech of the English speaker, just like real humans do. This way, you will feel like you are interacting with a real human being, and this can be useful for building confidence (Praktika, 2022).

Students learning the language can use these ways to practice and improve their oral communication skills. For Edmett et al. (2023, p. 15), “AI was used as a conversational partner, a language coach and in a multimodal capacity”. By dialoguing with an avatar in the *Praktika* App, you will have the opportunity to experience situations inspired by real or possible real-world events. Taking advantage of this, the *Praktika* conversation App aims to prepare you more effectively for using the English language orally (Praktika, 2022). This way, in a real-life scenario, it is very different from practicing communicative skills. According to

Almeida Filho (1998), practicing the English language requires some specific factors, such as enthusiasm, risk-taking, anxiety, and pressure in the dialogue. Thus, through the *Praktika* artificial intelligence application, these aforementioned pressures do not influence the learner's learning of the English language.

5.3 LINGUISTIC VARIATION AND REPETITION OF PRONUNCIATION

Another way of using this tool is for listening comprehension, a skill that language learners have to practice and improve in order to achieve fluency. As mentioned by Edmett et al, (2023, p. 15) “pronunciation was the main sub-skill revealed in studies related to the use of AI in speech, with a variety of AI-powered systems and programs available to learners”. In this way, oral skills are highly sought after by foreign language learners, considering the skills of oral production and comprehension, so using the application, a particular way of using this tool is in the part of linguistic variation, allowing to improve the part of oral comprehension.

Through the *Praktika* AI App, it is possible to use linguistic variations to practice and improve language skills (Praktika, 2022). One can listen to different language variations from various nationalities, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Africa, and other countries from Asia. However, in the *Praktika* App, only English language variations such as British and American are freely available for use, as illustrated in the Figure 3, in parts (4 and 5).

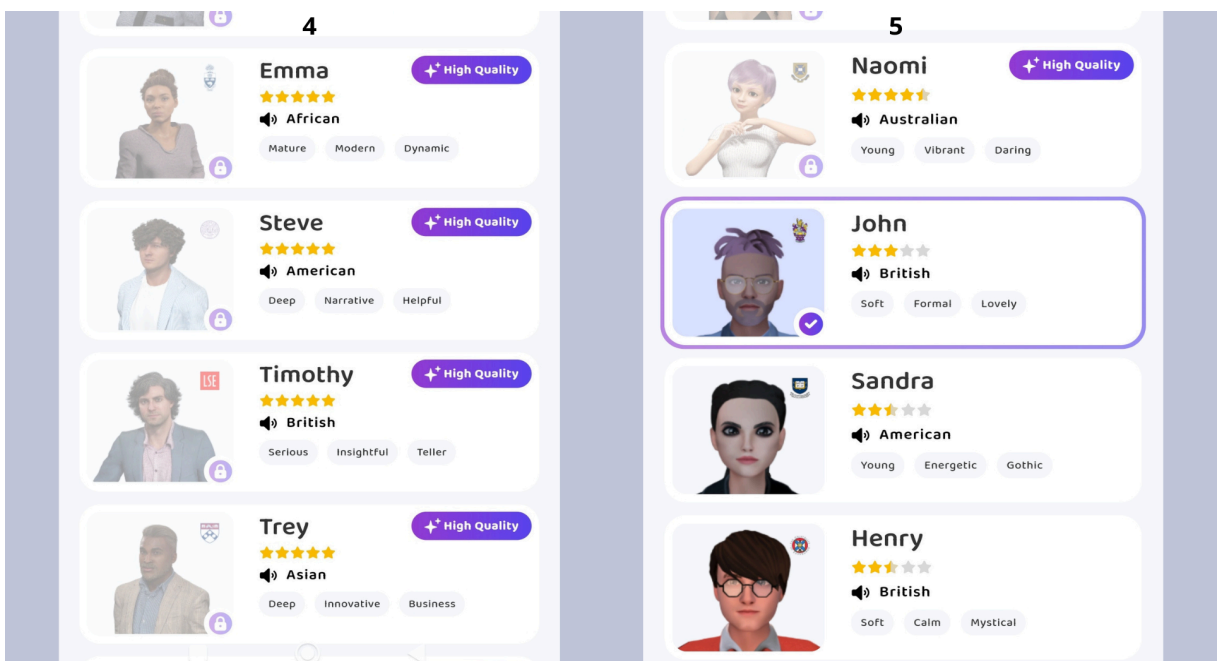


Figure 3 - Praktika app with its functions
(Source: Image taken from the App Praktika software)

According to Harmer (1998), it is advisable for language learners not to familiarize themselves with just one form of pronunciation, but it is important for them to listen to other linguistic variations of the target language in order to practice and, consequently, improve their listening comprehension.

With the *Praktika* App, it is important to listen to the different language variations available on the tool. Furthermore, it is possible to improve comprehension skills by listening to the dialogues several times when the language student can not clearly understand the message. As mentioned by Richards (2008), when a speaker transmits information, there is no possibility of repeating the message several times. In this way, we understand that it is beneficial to use artificial intelligence to develop listening comprehension, making it possible to repeat the content until the message is fully understood.

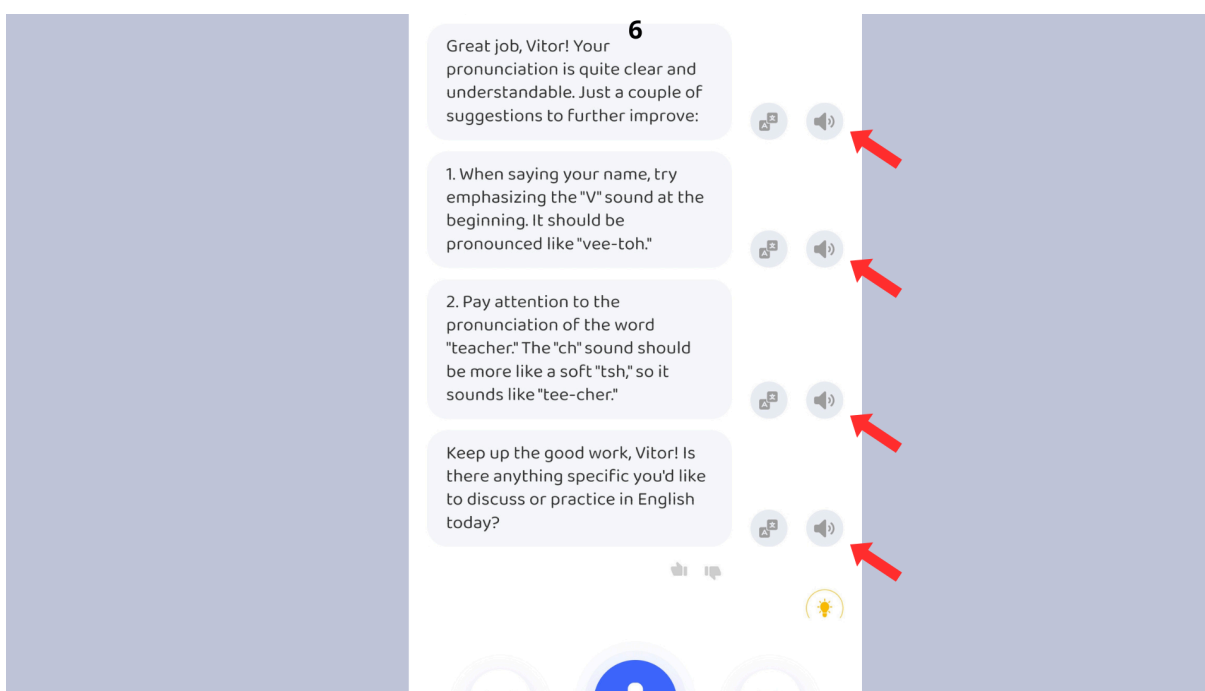


Figure 4 - Praktika app with its functions
(Source: Image taken from the App Praktika software)

According to Rost (2011, p. 173), “repeating the text by replaying the audio or video extract or repeating the text orally”. We understand that repeating words helps language learners improve their oral comprehension of the foreign language. Thus, when an English language learner wants to practice and consequently improve their listening skills using the *Praktika* artificial intelligence application, it is possible, through a conversation with the avatar, to repeat the avatar's message several times until the message can be understood or comprehended, just by clicking on the icon as shown in the figure 4.

5.4 FEEDBACK ON SPEAKING SKILLS

To conclude this section, another way of improving oral production is through feedback that the language learner receives instantaneously in order to improve oral communication skills. By using the *Praktika* App, artificial intelligence can provide feedback in real-time. As mentioned by Souza (2023), feedback plays an important role for foreign language learners, helping them to improve their communicative skills in English.

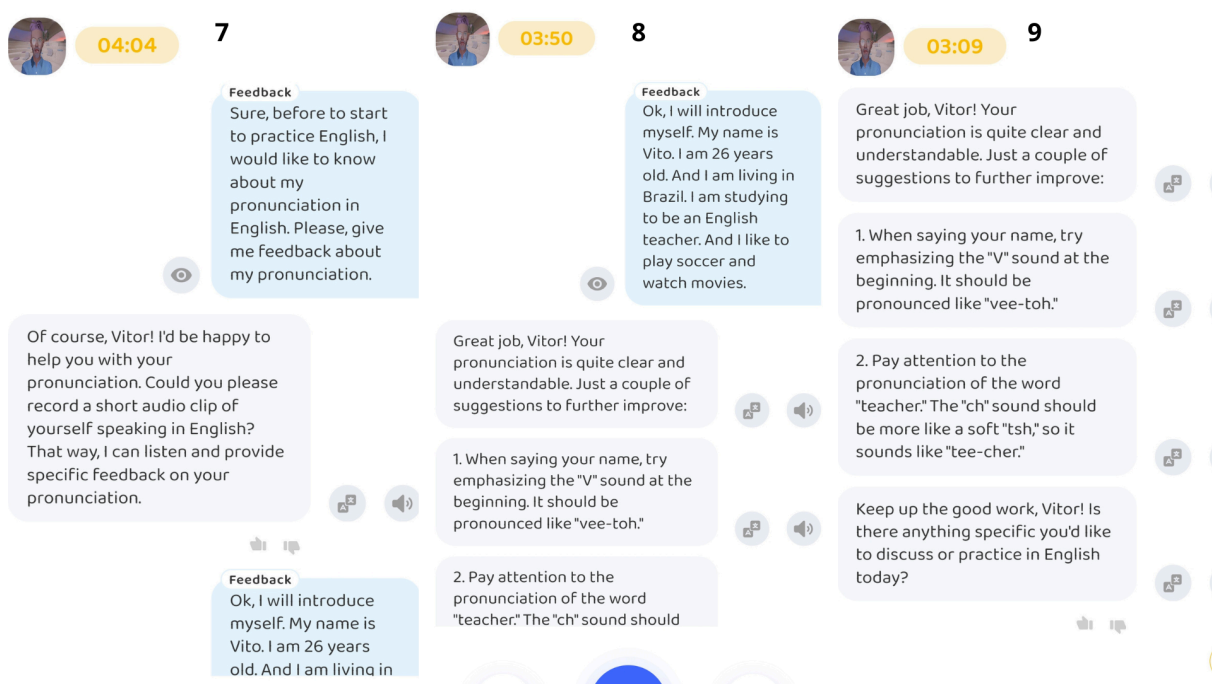


Figure 5 - Praktika app with its functions
(Source: Image taken from the App Praktika software)

In figure 5, in parts (7, 8 and 9), there is a dialog between an English language learner using the artificial intelligence application *Praktika*. In the dialog, the language learner asks the avatar for feedback on his English pronunciation and immediately the artificial intelligence provides the feedback with suggestions for improving pronunciation, as shown in figure 5.

According to Brown (1998), positive feedback can serve as motivation for learning the target language. In the *Praktika* App, one can get detailed feedback based on pronunciation and grammar. These scores are updated in real time so that you know if you are heading in the right direction in the learning process (Praktika, 2022).

In this way, when making mistakes, the student asks for immediate correction, making it possible to practice without worrying exclusively about precision when formulating sentences, but rather about maintaining coherence in communication, which results in improved language and communication skills (Edmett et al., 2023). Receiving feedback then becomes a way for learners to direct their English language studies, as pointed out by Rost (2015), who emphasizes the importance of feedback to guide learning and achieve communicative goals in language learning.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research was based on artificial intelligence as a tool to practice and improve listening and speaking skills in English. It aimed to explore ways of using the *Praktika* artificial intelligence application to practice and improve English language oral skills. Given the growing accessibility of AI tools, the research sought to understand the importance of knowing how to use them properly. Thus, objectives and questions were established to guide the study. The main goal was to highlight the potential of artificial intelligence in improving English oral production and comprehension skills. The specific objectives included explaining concepts about artificial intelligence, exploring oral comprehension and production skills, and how it is feasible to practice and develop these communicative competencies. The research investigated ways of using the App for English language skills and selected the *Praktika* app.

Thus, the central question of this article was: “In what ways is it possible to improve English oral production and comprehension skills by using an artificial intelligence App?” The assumption behind this question was that, through dialogues mediated by artificial intelligence applications, it is possible to practice and develop these skills, resulting in improvements. Through the research, we found ways to practice and consequently improve communicative skills such as conversation simulations, variety of topics, pronunciation, and linguistic variation, feedback on oral communication skills, and other approaches.

Restrictions found include the limitation of applications that employ artificial intelligence to develop conversational skills and their use for the free version, as well as the scarcity of literature related to this study.

Given the recent nature of the research, it would be useful to carry out further investigations and explore opportunities to use artificial intelligence to practice and, consequently, improve communication once this area of research is highly relevant because English language learners seek to practice and improve their communication skills autonomously.

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