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Communicative Prompt Functions and Interactional Engagement in ChatGPT-4-Assisted EFL Role-Play

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Abstract

This qualitative descriptive study examined the communicative functions of student-generated prompts in written ChatGPT-4-assisted role-play among third-semester EFL students. Fifteen third-semester students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program at Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia, were selected through purposive sampling. The primary dataset consisted of transcripts of written role-play conversations; an open-ended reflective questionnaire was planned as a supplementary source. An analysis of selected conversational turns identified seven prompt functions: relational, self-disclosure, topic development, exploratory, affective support, reflective, and closing. The excerpts indicate that students used prompts to participate in simulated dialogue and influenced subsequent AI-generated turns. Requests for reasons and clarification illustrated inquiry-oriented actions, whereas contextually linked follow-up questions illustrated interactional continuity. These findings illustrate how student-generated prompts organize the initiation, continuation, and closure of AI-mediated written interactions.

Keywords: *AI-mediated Interaction, ChatGPT-4, Communicative Prompt Functions, EFL Written Role-play, Interactional Continuity, Inquiry-oriented Prompts.*

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INTRODUCTION

EFL learners may have limited opportunities to use English meaningfully, particularly in contexts where sustained interaction is uncommon. Limited classroom interaction, fear of making errors, and speaking anxiety may reduce learners' willingness to communicate (Ajiza et al., 2024; Horwitz et al., 1986; Quvanch et al., 2024). The issue of anxiety has also been discussed in the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia (Marshalina, 2024). Therefore, the availability of opportunities to practice communication and the conditions surrounding this practice need attention in language learning. The affective filter hypothesis put forward by Krashen provides a theoretical perspective to understand the emotional barriers faced by learners in using language (Krashen, 1982). However, this study did not measure these affective factors.

Conversational AI provides additional opportunities for language practice through simulated interactions. Systems such as ChatGPT can respond directly to learners' input, facilitate simulated dialogues, and allow learners to experiment with alternative expressions beyond scheduled classroom activities (Kasneci et al., 2023; Kohnke & Zou, 2025; Qiao & Zhao, 2023). Research on the use of AI in education has also highlighted its potential benefits and limitations (Crompton et al., 2024; Crompton & Burke, 2023). Unlike some conventional language-practice activities, conversational AI is characterized not only by the speed of its responses but also by its ability to generate subsequent turns in response to learners' contributions. Each AI-generated response can be shaped by the learner's preceding input, allowing the conversation to develop in ways that reflect the learner's choices. Consequently, the direction and development of the interaction depend, in part, on the learner's own contributions.

However, the availability of a responsive system does not necessarily mean that learning has taken place. Learners may accept AI-generated responses without examining them critically, or they may use these responses as a starting point for further questions and the reconsideration of their ideas. Research on technology-assisted language learning has highlighted both its potential benefits and its limitations, emphasizing the importance of critical engagement and pedagogical guidance (Godwin-Jones, 2021; Kohnke & Zou, 2025). Similarly, studies of willingness to communicate in EFL contexts distinguish between the availability of opportunities for interaction and learners' actual engagement in communication (Cheng & Xu, 2022; Lee & Liu, 2024). This distinction directs attention away from the mere availability of AI tools and toward the language-learning practices that learners develop through their interactions with them.

In Indonesia, recent studies have examined students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for writing instruction (Chairiah et al., 2025), feedback on AI-assisted writing (Fathimatuzahro & Rizkiyah, 2025), experience using Character AI to practice speaking (Napitupulu & Dalimunte, 2025), and the benefits and challenges of using Gemini (Purnama et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies reflect growing academic interest in the use of AI in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. However, they have not directly investigated how sequences of student-generated prompts shape interpersonal relationships and guide topic development in AI-mediated role-play. Examining prompts as interconnected conversational turns may therefore extend existing research beyond tool evaluation, perceived benefits, and written language products to the communicative processes through which learners engage with AI.

In technical discussions, prompts are generally understood as instructions designed to elicit appropriate responses from a model (White et al., 2023). In language-learning role-play, however, this definition captures only part of their function. Students may use prompts to establish relationships between characters, disclose personal information, ask follow-up questions, express uncertainty, or bring a conversation to a close. Each student-generated written turn thus serves two purposes: it performs a communicative action within a simulated dialogue and provides input that shapes subsequent AI responses. This dual function provides a basis for examining prompt construction as a communicative practice rather than merely a technical skill (Kohnke et al., 2022;



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Mollick & Mollick, 2023).

The activities examined in this study are based on campus-life scenarios in which ChatGPT-4 assumes the role of a friend or fellow first-year student. Participants engage in written conversations about introductions, daily routines, university experiences, social relationships, personal interests, learning difficulties, and future plans. The initial instructions establish the framework for each interaction, while students' subsequent turns can maintain the existing direction, redirect the discussion, develop a topic further, or bring the dialogue to an end. Unlike human–human role-play, this activity involves a simulated interlocutor whose responses are generated in relation to the evolving context of the written conversation. The study does not compare ChatGPT-4-mediated interactions with human–human role-play or interactions involving other AI systems.

Several constructs must be distinguished when interpreting the conversational data. Inquiry-oriented actions can be identified through requests for explanations, reasons, examples, or clarification, whereas interactional continuity can be observed in connected turns and sustained topic development. Neither form of observable behavior, however, should be treated as direct evidence of intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic psychological needs relevant to motivation (Guay, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2020); Nevertheless, the opportunity to choose topics during AI-mediated role-play does not, in itself, demonstrate that these needs have been satisfied. Similarly, expressions of learning difficulties or the use of follow-up questions cannot independently establish changes in learners' motivation or anxiety (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021).

This distinction also defines the contribution of the present study. Rather than assuming that AI-assisted conversations inherently enhance intrinsic motivation, the study identifies and examines the communicative functions of student-generated prompts across a selected set of conversations. The analysis focuses on how students initiate interactions, connect conversational topics with personal experiences, develop ideas, seek further information, express difficulties, reflect on learning, and signal conversational closure. These functions illuminate one aspect of prompt use in AI-mediated language learning: how students employ written language to organize and sustain exchanges with simulated AI interlocutors. As a descriptive study, the research draws conclusions only from evidence available in the recorded interactions. Accordingly, it addresses the following research questions: first, what types of prompts do third-semester EFL students generate during ChatGPT-4-assisted role-play, and what communicative functions do these prompts serve? Second, how do student-generated prompts manifest inquiry-oriented actions and interactional engagement in written conversations?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine the patterns of student-generated prompts and their communicative functions in written role-play activities with ChatGPT-4. The study aimed to describe students' interactional practices rather than estimate the effects of an intervention or attribute learning outcomes causally to the use of the platform (Üstünbaş, 2024; Yan & Zhang, 2024). The unit of analysis was each student-generated turn in the conversation. Adjacent turns were also considered when interpreting communicative functions, while AI-generated responses served as interactional context and were excluded from the analysis of student-generated prompts. The study identified two potential data sources: written records of role-play conversations and a post-activity reflective questionnaire containing open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences. The distinction between these two data sources is important for interpreting the findings. Questioning practices can be examined directly through conversation transcripts, whereas claims about perceived confidence or motivation require relevant self-reported data that

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can be traced to individual participants. Because participant-linked questionnaire responses were unavailable, the study did not report findings about participants' self-reported experiences based on this instrument.

Participants and Data Selection

The participants were third-semester students enrolled in the English Language Education Study Program at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Of the 30 students enrolled in the course, 15 were purposively selected for in-depth qualitative analysis of their written role-play interactions with ChatGPT-4. Participant selection was based on the relevance of the available interaction records to the research questions and their alignment with the study's inclusion criteria. Seven communicative categories were established as the analytical framework, although participants were not required to demonstrate all seven functions. The total number of students who met the inclusion criteria was not documented in the available research materials. Although the analysis sample was reported to comprise 15 purposively selected students, the coding summary provisionally recorded 12 conversations and 170 codes.

Activities, Instruments, and Data Collection

During the activity, students engaged in written role-play conversations with ChatGPT-4, which assumed the role of a friend or fellow first-year student. Students communicated in English about campus life, daily routines, academic and social experiences, personal interests, friendships, learning difficulties, and future plans. Students contributed successive turns, while ChatGPT-4 generated responses consistent with the assigned role. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the role assignment at the beginning of the activity and a conversation exchange near its conclusion, respectively. The study also included a reflective questionnaire with open-ended questions intended to explore students' curiosity, perceived comfort, confidence, willingness to continue the activities, and views on AI-assisted learning. The questionnaire design drew on self-determination theory by Ryan & Deci (2020) and methodological guidance on the development of research instruments by Dörnyei (2007). However, the available documentation did not contain the complete questionnaire, individual participant responses, the number of valid responses, or records linking respondents to their role-play transcripts. Accordingly, questionnaire-derived percentages and participant quotations were not presented as empirical findings.

Data Analysis

The reported analytical procedure followed the general stages of thematic analysis: familiarization with the conversation transcripts, initial coding of meaningful student-generated turns, comparison and grouping of codes, review of codes against transcript excerpts, development of categories, and interpretation of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The initial codes included greetings and conversational openings, self-disclosure, topic-related follow-up questions, requests for reasons or clarification, expressions of difficulty, reflections on learning, and conversational closings. The initial codes were subsequently organized into seven descriptive categories: relational, self-disclosure, topic development, exploratory, affective support, reflective, and closing. Because a single conversational turn may perform multiple communicative functions, primary and secondary codes need to be distinguished according to the surrounding conversational context. A verifiable coding register should document the unique identifier of each student-generated turn, speaker identity, turn sequence, assigned categories, and rules for counting overlapping functions. The available documentation did not establish whether all coding checks had been completed. Therefore, the numerical results reported in the following sections should be interpreted as provisional rather than as independently verified frequencies.

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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The first research question focused on the communicative function of prompts written by students. The selected excerpts showed seven functions, ranging from establishing social contact to ending interactions. The second research question related to observable inquiry-oriented actions and the continuity of interaction between speech turns. These categories describe communicative functions in role-playing activities in writing. These categories are not intended to measure students' motivation, language proficiency, or psychological engagement. Nor do they indicate the stages of development that must be passed sequentially. The images in Figure 1 and 2 depict the role assignment and closing turns in the available written role-play records.

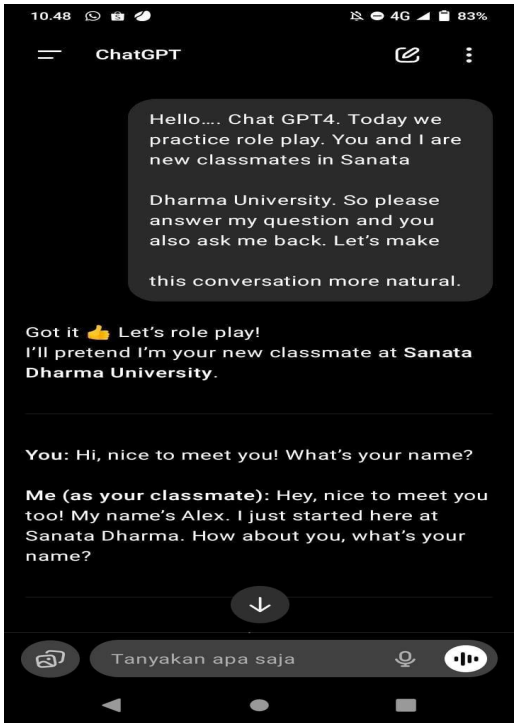


Figure 1. Role determination and the beginning of conversation by students

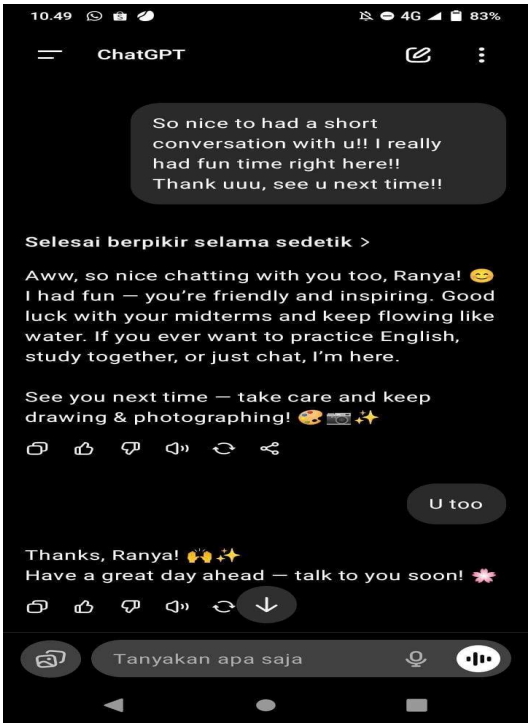


Figure 2. Closing actions of students in playing written roles

Types of Prompts and Their Communicative Functions

Table 1 presents seven categories along with their identifying characteristics and interactional functions. The numerical summary is presented provisionally because the underlying participant-to-transcript mapping and coding register have not yet been verified. The figures refer to 12 conversations and cannot yet be interpreted as verified frequencies for the analytical sample of 15 students.

Table 1. Communicative Prompt Categories and Provisional Descriptive Frequencies

Prompt category	Observable characteristics	Communicative function	Provisional prompt counts, n (%) / conversations, n (%)
Relational	Greetings and introductory questions	Establishing contact and a simulated social relationship	14 (8.2%) / 11 of 12 (91.7%)

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Prompt category	Observable characteristics	Communicative function	Provisional prompt counts, n (%) / conversations, n (%)
Self-disclosure	Information about the learner's background, interests, routines, or experiences	Personalizing conversations	93 (54.7%) / 12 of 12 (100%)
Topic development	Follow-up questions and contextually connected topic switches	Expand or redirect a topic under discussion	23 (13.5%) / 9 of 12 (75.0%)
Exploratory	Why/how questions; requests for reasons, examples, or clarifications	Requesting additional information	8 (4.7%) / 6 of 12 (50.0%)
Affective support	Statements of concern, pressure, uncertainty, or difficulty	Expressing emotional concerns or learning-related difficulties	4 (2.4%) / 4 of 12 (33.3%)
Reflective	Comments on learning experiences and self-evaluation	Expressing reflections on learning experiences	18 (10.6%) / 10 of 12 (83.3%)
Closing	A farewell, thank you, or a sign of the end of the conversation	Managing conversational closings	10 (5.9%) / 9 of 12 (75.0%)

Relational Prompts and Self-Disclosure

Relational prompts can be used to initiate social interaction in simulated situations. One of the students asked the question:

> *"Hello... Nice to meet you! So, we're new classmates at Sanata Dharma University, right?"*

Greetings and mention of classmate status form the social framework that forms the basis for the next turn of speech generated by AI. The quote shows how students build roles and open conversations but provides no evidence of a decrease in anxiety or an increase in perception of social security. Students also conveyed autobiographical information to relate the simulated conversations to their personal experiences. One example is the following statement:

> *"My major is English Education. I'm from Bangka Belitung... My hobbies are dancing, singing, reading some fantasy or action novels, and I like to watch K-dramas."*

The written speech turns contain information about the student's academic identity, region of origin, and hobbies that are used as material in the conversation. This example does not prove the benefits of self-disclosure. Instead, the personal information provides material that the simulated interlocutor can use in composing the next response. The self-disclosure category has the highest number of temporary codes in Table 1, although the distribution still needs to be confirmed based on the overall coding register.

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Topic Development and Exploratory Prompts

The topic development prompt connects the new turn of speech generated by students to the topic of the ongoing conversation. The question *"What about your academic and social life?"* is a brief example that illustrates this function. Through this question, students invite the interlocutor to describe aspects of life that are relevant to the campus life scenario. The question shows how students can develop dialogue beyond the initial greeting without leaving the established context of campus life. This quote supports the interpretation of the continuity of conversation but does not prove an improvement in students' ability to manage discourse.

Exploratory prompts aim to obtain additional explanations or perspectives. For example, the question *"Which one do you think will be the most challenging for you?"* encourages classmates in the simulation to identify and consider possible challenges to be faced. Similar requests for clarification and clarification also indicate information-seeking behavior. The prompt is in line with an inquiry-oriented interaction pattern. However, its use can also reflect adherence to task instructions or an attempt to maintain the continuity of the conversation. Therefore, the prompt is more appropriately interpreted as an observable inquiry-oriented communicative action, rather than as evidence of increased curiosity as an individual characteristic (trait curiosity) or intrinsic motivation.

Affective Expressions, Reflective Prompts, and Closings

Prompts categorized as affective support in the source table primarily contain expressions of difficulty, emotional distress, or uncertainty in simulated conversations. This category includes statements about workload, concerns about speaking ability, and difficulties in making friends. These expressions can be observed in conversation transcripts. However, a decrease in emotional distress or anxiety cannot be inferred based on these expressions alone. This distinction is important because the study did not report anxiety scores or use comparative conditions. Reflective prompts show how students assess their learning experiences and, in some cases, express the difficulties they feel. In one of the conversation excerpts, one participant wrote:

> *"For me, I'm just afraid of facing midterm exams and end-of-semester exams... I always motivate myself to keep trying and not give up..."*

The quotes are presented according to the original text to maintain the authenticity of the data generated by students.

This statement shows how students express anxiety about facing the exam as well as their determination to keep trying in the conversation. However, these expressions do not in themselves prove the development of self-regulation skills or increased motivation. Therefore, this quote is more appropriately interpreted as evidence of communicative function than as a standardized measure for assessing psychological change. The closing prompt marks the end of the role-playing activity. One participant wrote:

> *"Every day, I miss when I'm in the dorm. btw Alex, thank you for sharing. I want to go now, baby."*

Although it uses informal language with a number of forms that do not conform to standard English rules, the message contains expressions of gratitude and an explicit statement that the student wants to end the conversation. The pragmatic function as a conclusion needs to be distinguished from evidence of improving students' pragmatic competence. Overall, the examples show how students

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start, maintain, and end a simulative conversation through a series of interconnected speech turns, rather than simply through a stand-alone request for information.

Illustration of Action Sequences in Role-Playing Conversations

Table 2 presents six illustrative types of conversational actions. These examples are illustrative rather than evidence of a fixed sequence followed by all participants. Accordingly, Table 2 pairs verbatim learner excerpts with interpretations limited to observable communicative actions.

Table 2. Illustrative Communicative Actions in Role-Play and Transcript-Based Interpretations

Illustrative action	Participants' speech as in the source	Text-supported interpretation
Opening/ relational	"Hello im ines nice Yo meet u"; "Hi… You can call me Ranya."	Initiating social contact and establishing simulated roles
Self-disclosure	"I'm majoring in English language education."; "I like English for real. But i know that my English is not good enough."	Relating the exchange to learners' identities and self-descriptions
Topic development	"What about your daily routine here?"; "How's your social life here?"	Requesting elaboration while maintaining the campus-life topic
Exploration	"Why did you choose this major, Ines?"; "Do you usually practice your pronunciation outside class too?"	Requesting reasons or additional details
Affective expression/ reflection	"Not really, there's so much work to do. And it's stressing me out."; " I have trouble w/ my friend, we're not close enough."	Expressing stress or interpersonal difficulties; not evidence of reduced anxiety
Closing	"Alrighty, Alex! I should get going too. See you!"; " Oh ya the times is up, I hope we can talk more. Thank you for your sharing Jun."	Closing the interaction and expressing appreciation

Inquiry and Interactional Engagement

Evidence relevant to the second research question can be seen from the relationship between each turn of student speech and the context of the conversation that precedes it. The question *"Why did you choose this major, Ines?"* asks for reasons in a simulated university life scenario. Meanwhile, the question *"Which one do you think will be the most challenging for you?"* encourages the interlocutor to further consider the things that have been discussed earlier. The questions go beyond the exchange of information in the form of names and show the practice of inquiry that can be observed through discourse. Its interactional significance lies in the way students determine the information they want to obtain through their next turn of speech.

Continuity of participation was seen when the next prompt referred to a previous response, maintained the same topic, or asked a question related to a previous discussion. The sequence provided evidence of continuity of interaction during the execution of the written task. However, the available transcripts did not prove participants' perceptions of their level of attention, improved language proficiency, or the likelihood of similar patterns in human interaction. The available data support only descriptions of written activities that are interrelated and take place in multiple turns of speech, not a general assessment of student involvement in learning. The claim that some stu-

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dents feel more comfortable practicing using AI than interacting face-to-face requires the support of traceable reflection data for individual participants.

DISCUSSION

Prompts as Communicative Turns and System Instructions

This research shows that prompts composed by students in role-playing activities mediated by AI function as communicative speech turns, not solely as technical instructions. In documented conversations, student-generated text serves both as a communicative action addressed to the simulated interlocutor and as input that influences subsequent AI responses. For example, a self-introduction prompt adds new information to the dialogue, while a follow-up question utilizes that information to direct the next stage of the conversation. These two functions serve as the basis for examining prompts through the perspective of discourse analysis, while still considering technical approaches in understanding the prompt drafting process (Mollick & Mollick, 2023).

The seven categories are more appropriately understood as descriptive labels to identify communicative functions than as stages in a developmental hierarchy. Some turns are more oriented towards relationship formation, while others focus on self-disclosure or the search for information. Other turns are used to express difficulties or end conversations. A communicative function still has meaning even though it appears relatively rarely. In contrast, a high frequency of occurrence does not necessarily indicate greater pedagogical value.

Based on the summary of provisional encoding, the self-disclosure category includes the largest proportion of code-setting, while the exploratory and affective support categories emerge with lower frequencies. Before the dataset and coding decisions are verified, they need to be treated as a temporary descriptive count, not as an estimate that can be generalized to a wider population.

Social Framing and Affective Interpretive Boundaries

Role-playing activities in conversation begin in the social context. Greetings, introductions, and mention of roles as classmates form a social framework that can be maintained in the next turns of written conversation. The sociocultural approach emphasizes the role of interaction in language development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978), while self-determination theory identifies relatedness as one of the three basic psychological needs relevant to motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Both perspectives provide a basis for examining the formation of social frameworks in interaction. However, greeting behavior cannot necessarily be used as a measure of psychological security or the fulfillment of the need for social connectedness.

Care in interpreting data is also necessary when reviewing prompts that reveal affective problems or personal reflections. When students express uncertainty about their exams or English language skills, the question becomes part of the conversation. This kind of statement can be interpreted by referring to affective perspectives in language learning (Krashen, 1982). However, role-playing transcripts do not prove a decrease in anxiety or a change in students' confidence levels. A number of previous studies have examined the benefits of using AI in language learning activities based on participants' perceptions (Chairiah et al., 2025; Napitupulu & Dalimunte, 2025). Meanwhile, the data in this study show how students express their concerns through written interactions in role-playing activities.

Inquiry and the Organization of Written Dialogue

Topic-development and exploratory prompts can be distinguished analytically, even when both take the form of questions. Topic-development questions primarily maintain topical continuity, whereas exploratory turns request additional reasons, examples, clarifications, or descriptions. This distinction clarifies how conversational continuity and understanding-oriented communica-

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tive actions can emerge in a series of interactions without necessarily being treated as the same function. This interpretation is generally in line with research on conversational interaction and meaning formation (Canals, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023).

Further requests for explanation can be examined in relation to curiosity theories that address information gaps and knowledge structures (Patankar et al., 2023). However, observed prompts do not in themselves explain the motives underlying their use. The question may reflect genuine interest, adherence to task instructions, or an attempt to maintain a reasonable continuity of dialogue. Therefore, such prompts can be used to analyze the use of inquiry-oriented language, but they are not sufficient to draw conclusions about curiosity as an individual characteristic (trait curiosity) or a measurable increase in cognitive ability.

Reflections, Pragmatic Closures, and Interpretive Boundaries

Reflective speech turns show that some students evaluate aspects of their learning experience during role-playing activities. Expressions of concern about exams, dissatisfaction with language skills, and determination to keep trying can be used as study material to understand how students represent themselves in interactions mediated by AI. This practice can be discussed in relation to research on self-regulated learning and educational chatbots (Guan et al., 2025). However, the appearance of reflective expressions does not necessarily prove an increase in self-regulation skills. The same interpretation limitations also apply to the closing expressions of the conversation. The conversation section shows how students manage interactions pragmatically but does not directly measure the development of their pragmatic competence.

The distinction between observable conversational practices and psychological outcomes is essential to maintain the validity of the study's interpretation. Role-playing transcripts allow researchers to examine the questions students ask, the information they express, the topics they develop, as well as the way they end the conversation. However, the transcripts do not establish changes in intrinsic motivation, speaking fluency, anxiety, or confidence. Where participant-linked reflections are available, they may add contextual information about reported experiences. However, retrospective self-reports cannot be used as the sole basis for establishing cause-and-effect relationships. These limitations do not diminish the descriptive value of interactional analysis but limit the extent to which research claims can be supported by available evidence.

Implications for EFL Pedagogy

The identified functional categories offer a provisional framework for designing guided AI-assisted written role-play activities. Teachers may guide students to establish interactional roles, introduce relevant personal information, formulate context-sensitive follow-up questions, request reasons or clarification, and close dialogues appropriately. Teachers may also prompt students to distinguish purposeful follow-up questioning from uncritical acceptance of AI-generated responses and to evaluate the relevance of those responses. These suggestions are a possible pedagogical application of the descriptive framework developed in this study, rather than a form of intervention whose effectiveness has been proven.

Teaching the use of prompts as a communicative practice also opens up opportunities to discuss the limitations of simulated interlocutors. Responses generated by AI can appear socially appropriate without reflecting an understanding equivalent to human understanding. Therefore, students need to evaluate the accuracy, contextual appropriateness, and relevance of AI responses to the task at hand (Crompton & Burke, 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023). Further research can test whether the teaching of these practices explicitly improves the quality of interaction or supports the achievement of measurable language skills. In the evaluation process, student behavior while doing an assignment needs to be distinguished from independently measured learning outcomes.

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Limitations and Further Research Directions

This study involved 15 third-semester students selected from one study program with a batch size of 30. This sample characteristic limits the generalizability of findings to learner groups and other educational contexts. Another limitation is related to the documentation of research data. The provisional coding summary records 12 conversations and 170 code assignments, but the available materials do not map those records onto the 15 participants. The unavailability of traceable and auditable coding records limits the interpretation of the distribution of each category.

Meanwhile, the absence of questionnaire answers that can be linked to each participant causes the reported experience to be unverifiable. This documentation gap is related to the traceability of research evidence, so it needs to be reviewed based on the original research record. Moreover, all analyzed excerpts came from written role-play rather than independent measures of speaking performance. The study did not employ a pretest–posttest or comparative design to assess changes in speaking proficiency, anxiety, confidence, or intrinsic motivation. Future studies could use verified transcript archives, transparent coding records, participant-linked reflections, and independent measures of language performance or motivation. Future comparative and longitudinal research may examine whether prompt use teaching is directly related to broader learning outcomes, not limited to student performance in observed written assignments.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Conclusion

This study examines how students who learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL) use prompts to manage written interactions in role-playing activities assisted by ChatGPT-4. The results of the analysis identified seven communicative functions of prompts, namely relational, self-disclosure, topic development, exploratory, affective expression, reflective, and closing. These findings show that prompts do not only function as instructions to generate responses from AI systems. In the analyzed conversations, students use prompts to build simulated social relationships, share personal experiences, develop topics, ask for explanations, express difficulties, reflect on learning experiences, and end conversations. Thus, prompt preparation can be understood as a communicative practice that allows students to play an active role in determining the direction and development of dialogue mediated by AI.

The findings of the study also show how students maintain the continuity of the conversation through context-relevant follow-up questions and requests for clarification on the information that has been conveyed. The interaction pattern provides observable evidence of inquiry-oriented communication practices and continuity between turns in written conversations. However, the existence of these patterns cannot be used as a basis for concluding that students experience increased intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, decreased anxiety, or the development of English language proficiency. The main contribution of this study lies in the explanation of how prompts compiled by students perform communicative functions in written interactions, rather than in proving the effectiveness of AI in improving learning outcomes. Further research can develop these findings by examining the development of prompt preparation practices over time and their relationship to broader language learning outcomes through the use of additional data sources and appropriate assessment instruments.

Implications

The findings of this study provide a number of implications for the use of AI-assisted role-playing activities in learning English as a foreign language. The seven communicative functions identified can serve as an initial framework to help students understand how a conversation begins, is maintained, developed, and ends. Lecturers can integrate these functions into learning activities that



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encourage students to ask meaningful follow-up questions, explore ideas, ask for clarification, express difficulties faced, and reflect on their learning experiences. Learning attention does not need to be limited to the quality of each prompt separately, but is also directed at how a contribution relates to previous responses and influences the development of subsequent conversations. This approach has the potential to help students be more sensitive to the interconnectedness between turns and continuity of meaning in written interactions. However, the application of these seven functions needs to be tailored to the learning objectives and communication context, rather than being treated as a standard sequence that must always be followed in each conversation.

Another important implication relates to the need to develop students' ability to critically evaluate responses generated by AI. Although ChatGPT-4 is capable of maintaining simulated conversations and providing responses in person, the responses generated are not always accurate, contextual, or linguistically appropriate for specific learning purposes. Therefore, students need to have the opportunity to question, assess, and, if necessary, correct the information and use of language that arises during the interaction. In this process, lecturers continue to play an important role as learning companions who guide students in careful evaluation, direct them to trusted learning resources, and connect AI-assisted activities with meaningful communication practices with lecturers and fellow students. Thus, AI can be used to expand language practice opportunities without replacing the social and communicative experiences gained through human interaction. Whether explicit prompt instruction can strengthen students' ability to manage written conversations, develop prompt literacy, or contribute to measurable improvement in English proficiency is still an empirical question that requires further research.

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