

# An Exploration of Student Perceptions of the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English Language Learning in Higher Education

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe students' preferences regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies such as ChatGPT and Grammarly in enhancing the effectiveness of English language learning. The background of this research is based on the rampant utilization of AI technology among students, particularly in assisting the academic writing process, vocabulary development, and grammar. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews with eight active students from the English Education Study Program. The results indicate that most students have a positive perception of AI usage due to accessibility, rapid feedback, and improved writing quality. However, there are concerns regarding excessive dependence, a decline in critical thinking skills, and the potential for academic ethical violations. This study concludes that although AI technology provides significant benefits in the process of learning English, its use must still be accompanied by ethical understanding and learning independence. The implication of this research is the need to develop learning policies that balance the utilization of technology with the strengthening of students' academic character.

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## I. Introduction

In the era of rapid digital transformation, the utilization of artificial intelligence (AI) technology in education, especially in English language learning, has become increasingly prominent [1]. This technology not only acts as a learning aid but also shapes the way students access, process, and produce information. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory, developed by Davis in 1986, explains that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use will influence technology acceptance in learning practices. Meanwhile, the self-regulated learning (SRL) approach emphasizes the importance of student independence in managing the learning process with the help of digital technology, including AI [2].

Several studies show that students tend to have a positive attitude towards the use of AI technology in English language learning. Research conducted by Abimanto & Mahendro showed that 89% of English Education students stated that AI helped their learning efficiency, especially in academic writing skills [3]. However, some students also expressed concerns about potential dependence on the technology and a lack of critical understanding of the features used. This indicates ambiguity in students' perceptions of AI's role in supporting learning [4].

AI writing tools such as Grammarly and QuillBot are considered useful in structuring sentences and improving grammar. However, some students also pointed out that AI intervention in writing sometimes made them lose the originality of their ideas and personal language style. This finding indicates the challenge of maintaining a balance between technical accuracy and creative expression in the use of AI-based technologies. Students utilize AI-based self-assessment features to improve academic writing skills. These tools provide quick and detailed feedback, thus improving learning efficiency. However, barriers such as limited access (paid features) and information overload are important notes in evaluating the use of AI in the context of higher education [5]

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that students' perceptions towards the use of AI in English language learning are on a broad spectrum, ranging from enthusiasm to apprehension. Although many studies reveal the benefits of AI in improving learning efficiency and quality, there is still a gap in the in-depth exploration of how these perceptions are formed in the context of local culture, academic ethics, and students' self-regulatory capacity in utilizing the technology wisely. Previous studies generally emphasize quantitative results or surface descriptions of technology use, and not many have used the integration of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) frameworks to analyse student perceptions holistically. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in using a qualitative descriptive approach to explore students' perceptions in depth by combining the TAM and SRL frameworks in one analysis model, and focusing on the context of Indonesian students who have unique cultural backgrounds and academic values. With this approach, the research is expected to provide richer theoretical and practical contributions in understanding how students accept, interpret, and regulate the use of AI in English language learning. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which Indonesian students accept, interpret and regulate the use of AI in English language learning.

## II. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to explore in depth the perceptions of students towards the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology in English language learning. This approach is considered appropriate because it can provide a systematic, factual, and accurate description of the phenomenon under study in a natural context. According to Arikunto, the descriptive qualitative approach is widely used in education and social fields because it allows researchers to understand the information contained in the experiences and views of informants as a whole [6].

This research was conducted in the English Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Muhammadiyah University of Mataram. The research took place in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. The research subjects were active students of the English Education Study Program who had used AI technologies, such as ChatGPT and Grammarly, in academic activities, especially in English language learning.

The technique of determining informants in this study was a purposive sampling method, namely the selection of informants intentionally based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives [7]. The criteria set include active students in semester IV and VI, who have used AI technology in academic activities for at least the last two semesters, and are willing to provide information openly and reflectively. Based on these criteria, the researcher determined eight students as the main informants who were considered capable of providing in-depth and relevant data.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were semi-structured interviews to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and views on the use of AI technology in the learning process. Observations were conducted to understand the real context of students' use of AI in academic activities. Meanwhile, documentation consists of screenshots, notes on the use of AI applications, as well as the results of student assignments or academic work that show the application of technology such as ChatGPT and Grammarly.

The data obtained were analyzed using the interactive analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) as cited in Anggraeni, which includes three main stages: Data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification. Data verification was conducted to filter out important information from the results of interviews and documentation; data presentation was arranged in the form of thematic narratives; and conclusions were drawn based on patterns or trends that emerged from the data that had been analyzed [8]. To ensure data validity, researchers used source triangulation and technique triangulation, namely by comparing data obtained from various collection techniques and comparing opinions between informants to ensure consistency and validity of findings.

## III. Results and Discussion

### Students' Preferences in Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with eight students from the English Education Study Program who actively use AI-based apps like ChatGPT and Grammarly in their learning activities. The interviews showed that most of the participants had a positive preference for

using AI because it was seen as helpful in understanding the material and completing various academic tasks more effectively. These benefits were especially felt in grammar and sentence construction when writing English essays.

(B) “if there's material that I don't understand, I just ask ChatGPT. The explanation is simpler compared to books, so it's easier to understand. The informant also added grammar and vocabulary. I also often ask for example sentences so I can better understand how to use them.”

The statement shows that students choose AI because it can provide explanations that are easy to understand, fast, and interactive, making it an alternative learning resource that supports the learning process. Students' preference for AI is also influenced by their perception of ease of use. Almost all respondents said that ChatGPT and Grammarly have simple interfaces, so they're easy to use, even for first-time users.

(D) “Not really. In my opinion, the interface is simple. You just type a question or upload a text, and the results come out immediately. The informant also added that it's easy to use and the results are quick. So, if I have a last-minute assignment, I can be more efficient.”

These findings show that ease of use is one of the main reasons students choose AI as a learning tool. This research aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which explains that perceptions of ease of use are an important factor in determining technology acceptance [9]. Besides ease of use, students also consider the benefits (perceived usefulness) they get from AI. Most of the informants stated that AI is very effective for editing writing, fixing grammar, expanding vocabulary, and providing examples of language use in certain contexts.

(B) “Usually it's grammar and vocabulary. I also often ask for example sentences so I can better understand how to use them.”

However, some students feel that AI doesn't yet give optimal results when used to practice listening and speaking skills. This shows that the effectiveness of AI is still influenced by the characteristics of the language skills being learned. In line with the research results of Sri Sugiarto et al., this finding indicates that students' preferences for AI are influenced by how well the application's functions match their learning needs. Therefore, the use of AI is contextual, depending on the characteristics of the language skills being learned [10]. This research also found that AI encourages the growth of students' learning independence.

(D) “I don't directly ask the lecturer if I don't understand something. I first look it up on ChatGPT, then I compare it with the book or lecture materials. When asked why they verify, the informant explained, Because I realize AI can also be wrong. So I still have to make sure the answer is correct.”

This statement shows that students use AI as an initial learning resource but still go through a verification process using other references. This situation aligns with the findings of Febriyanti, that students' preference for AI is not entirely passive, but is accompanied by academic awareness to verify the information they get [11].

Besides these various benefits, students also realize that AI has its limitations.

(E) “Not always. Sometimes the example sentences are too formal. When I used it for an assignment on campus, the lecturer said the language was too stiff. So, I added, I edited it again to better match the context of the assignment and my writing style.”

This shows that AI isn't fully adaptive to local needs, as also found by Nendissa, adapting content to local cultural and academic contexts becomes its own challenge for the effectiveness of AI in education. Besides that, academic ethics is also a concern for students [12].

(H) “In my opinion, it's fine to use it, but don't just copy-paste. You still need to understand it first and then modify it according to your own thinking.”

This statement shows that students prefer to use AI responsibly, as a learning aid rather than as a replacement for thinking or as the main source when doing academic assignments. This aligns with the study by Inayati on the importance of digital ethics literacy among students. This literacy is important for fostering academic responsibility in using technology in a healthy way [13].

### **The Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Students' English Skills**

Research results show that using AI has a positive impact on improving students' English skills, especially in writing. Most informants admitted that AI helps correct grammar mistakes, enrich vocabulary, and improve sentence structuring.

(A) " What I feel the most is saving time. Usually, I need about two hours to write an essay, but now I can finish it faster because Grammarly immediately points out the mistakes. So, I also feel more confident when submitting assignments.”

These findings show that AI not only improves learning efficiency but also boosts students' confidence in producing better academic writing. This aligns with the findings of Salsabila, that one implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education offers various features that can help students in the learning process, such as providing information quickly, academic guidance, problem-solving, and support in completing academic assignments [14]. Besides improving writing skills, AI also contributes to enhancing students' understanding of grammar and vocabulary.

(B) “ChatGPT provides simpler explanations compared to books, making difficult concepts easier to understand.”

This aligns with Jimmy's research, which found that students also get various sentence examples that help them understand how vocabulary is used in the right context [15]. In this way, AI serves as an adaptive learning tool that can gradually strengthen students' language skills. This study also shows that AI increases students' motivation to learn.

(G) “I feel more excited to learn English because if something is difficult, I can just ask right away. So, I don't give up quickly. The informant also added, 'I often practice conversations with ChatGPT, even though it's still simple.’”

This statement shows that AI creates a more flexible and interactive learning experience, encouraging students to be more active in practicing English. This situation contributes to increasing students' engagement in the learning process. These findings are in line with Mongan, who stated that AI can boost learning motivation through personal and adaptive interaction [16]. Nevertheless, this study also found some negative impacts on students' English abilities if AI usage is not properly controlled. Informant C admitted that they started relying on Grammarly, making them feel less confident when having to write independently.

(C) “Honestly, yeah. Now, if I write without Grammarly, I feel less confident. In addition, Informant F revealed, 'Because the answers from ChatGPT are already complete, I often just use them without thinking.' They also added, 'I feel like I get a bit lazy analyzing things on my own.’”

These findings show that excessive use of AI can reduce critical thinking, intellectual independence, and students' confidence if not balanced with independent practice. Overall, the research results show that AI has a significant impact on students' English skills, especially in the area of grammar. However, this benefit needs to be balanced with the wise use of AI so that it doesn't lead to dependence, lower critical thinking skills, or neglect of academic ethics. Therefore, AI should

be seen as a learning support tool that strengthens the students' learning process, rather than as a replacement for language skills that need to be built through practice and direct learning experiences.

### Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the use of artificial intelligence technologies such as ChatGPT and Grammarly has a positive impact on English language learning among university students. These technologies contribute to increasing time efficiency, improving writing quality, and increasing confidence in writing. Students showed enthusiasm for AI due to its ease of use and immediate benefits in their daily academic activities. However, the study also revealed concerns related to technology dependency, decreased critical thinking skills, and potential violations of academic ethics. AI plays a dual role as a tool and a learning partner, but its use needs to be balanced with ethical awareness and self-learning skills. Therefore, the successful integration of AI in learning depends not only on the sophistication of the technology, but also on the readiness of users to utilize it reflectively and responsibly.

In line with these findings, it is recommended that students use AI technology wisely and not fully rely on the automatic features available. Higher education institutions are expected to provide digital literacy assistance and strengthen the understanding of the ethics of technology use in the academic context. AI developers also need to increase content sensitivity to local needs to make it more relevant and responsible.

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