
A STUDY ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TO SUPPORT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TRANSPORT TECHNOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

In the context of rapid digital transformation, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly being integrated into the field of education, particularly in English language learning. This study aims to investigate how university students at the University of Transport Technology (UTT) utilize AI, thereby analyzing their perceptions, purposes of use, as well as the benefits and limitations of these tools. The research primarily adopts a qualitative approach through the analysis of relevant secondary data. The findings indicate that students frequently use applications such as ChatGPT, ELSA Speak, and Google Translate to support pronunciation practice, writing skills, and vocabulary expansion. The application of AI offers several advantages, including convenience, the ability to personalize the learning process, and the enhancement of language proficiency. However, the results also reveal that students' use of AI remains largely spontaneous and lacks clear guidance, which may lead to overreliance on technology and consequently affect critical thinking and autonomous learning abilities. Based on these findings, the study suggests that lecturers and educational institutions should provide appropriate guidance and orientation to help students utilize AI effectively and responsibly, thereby maximizing the role of technology in learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of increasingly profound globalization, the requirement for foreign language proficiency, especially English, is constantly increasing. Thanks to their ability to provide instant feedback and personalize learning content, artificial intelligence (AI) applications are increasingly chosen by students as an effective support tool in the English learning process – an essential skill in the era of international integration. Reality shows that English has become a mandatory requirement in higher education, clearly demonstrated through guidelines and policies such as the National Foreign Language Project 2020 and the Education Development Strategy for the 2021–2030 period [1]. However, current studies still present differing views on the application of AI in learning: some opinions argue that tools like ChatGPT contribute to enhancing motivation and effectiveness in learning English, while others express concerns about the risk of a decline in learners' critical thinking [2].

Despite being widely used, students' application of AI is currently largely spontaneous, lacking specific orientation from lecturers and the university. Aspects related to AI usage behavior, including purposes, frequency, and methods of use, have not yet been systematically and comprehensively studied.

Stemming from this reality, the research “A Study on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support English language learning among students at the University of Transport Technology” was conducted to analyze the characteristics of students' learning behaviors when applying AI, thereby proposing solutions to contribute to improving the quality of English teaching and learning, while supporting students to effectively adapt to the higher education environment in the modern context.

2. RESEARCH CONTENT

While many previous studies primarily focused on analyzing the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI) in the field of education, this study aims to explore AI usage behavior, especially the limitations in the English learning process of students at the University of Transport Technology. The research was deployed using a combined approach of qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure the comprehensiveness and reliability of the research results.

Regarding the quantitative method, the author used a survey questionnaire to collect data on the perceptions, purposes, frequency, and methods by which first-year students at the University of Transport Technology use AI tools in learning English. Besides, the qualitative method was carried out through interviews with English teaching lecturers to further clarify their perspectives on the effectiveness, difficulties, and challenges when students apply AI to their learning process.

Through combining the two research methods, the article aims to comprehensively reflect the current state of AI usage in English learning among students at the University of Transport Technology, thereby serving as a basis to propose appropriate pedagogical solutions to enhance the effectiveness of English teaching and learning in the current educational digital transformation context.

The research was carried out through the following steps:

- **Step 1:** The researcher designed and distributed a survey questionnaire to first-year students at the University of Transport Technology to collect initial data on the level of awareness, purposes, frequency, and methods of using artificial intelligence (AI) tools in learning English. At the same time, the questionnaire also surveyed the advantages, difficulties, and desires of students when applying AI in the learning process. The implementation time was 1–2 weeks.

- **Step 2:** Based on the initial survey results, the researcher conducted interviews with several English teaching lecturers at the University of Transport Technology. The interview content focused on the lecturers' views on students' use of AI in learning English, the observed benefits and limitations, as well as the orienting role of lecturers and the university. The implementation time was 1 week.

- **Step 3:** After completing data collection from the questionnaires and interviews, the researcher synthesized, compared, and analyzed the data. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were processed to identify general trends in students' AI usage behavior, while qualitative data from

teacher interviews were analyzed by topic to clarify and supplement the student survey results. The implementation time was 2–3 weeks.

• **Step 4:** Based on the data analysis results, the researcher drew conclusions regarding the current situation, advantages, and limitations in the use of AI to support English learning by first-year students. From there, the study proposed a number of solutions and recommendations to orient students to use AI effectively and responsibly, while improving the quality of English teaching and learning at the University of Transport Technology. The implementation time was about 1–2 months.

3. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Current state of AI usage in English learning among first-year students

Survey results conducted with 120 students at the University of Transport Technology show that the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in English learning is quite popular..

Regarding the AI tools used, the data shows:

- 82% of students use ChatGPT to support writing skills, explain grammar, and expand ideas.
- 76% of students frequently use Google Translate to look up vocabulary and support translation.
- 58% of students choose ELSA Speak to practice pronunciation and improve speaking skills.
- 41% of students use Grammarly to check grammar and spelling errors.
- Only 19% of students use other AI tools.

Survey results show that the level of access and usage of AI tools by first-year students at the University of Transport Technology is relatively high. The fact that ChatGPT and Google Translate are used at an overwhelmingly high rate reflects students' tendency to prioritize tools capable of providing fast support, easy accessibility, and satisfying immediate learning needs. This aligns with the characteristics of first-year students – a group currently in the transition phase from general education to the university environment, still lacking self-study experience and time management skills. Besides, the usage rate of ELSA Speak indicates that students have a need to improve pronunciation and communication skills, although this level is not as high as tools supporting writing and translation. This shows that students still tend to focus more on skills serving testing and evaluation rather than developing comprehensive communication skills.

3.2. Purposes of using AI in learning English

Results from the questionnaire show that students use AI for various purposes:

- 78% of students believe AI helps save learning time.
- 71% of students use AI to improve writing skills.
- 65% of students use AI to expand vocabulary.
- 52% of students say AI supports pronunciation practice and speaking skills.

However, only 34% of students use AI to self-assess and adjust their learning strategies.

Data analysis shows that the main purpose of students when using AI is to save time and enhance learning efficiency. AI is viewed as a fast support tool in completing assignments, looking up knowledge, and improving writing skills. This reflects pragmatism in the learning behavior of first-year students, as academic pressure and differences in learning methods at the university level lead them to turn to technological solutions to adapt. However, the percentage of students using AI for self-assessment and learning strategy adjustment is still quite low. This shows that AI has not been exploited as a long-term orienting learning support tool, but is mainly used to solve immediate needs. This is a notable limitation in developing students' self-study capacity and critical thinking.

3.3. Students' perceptions of the benefits and limitations of AI

The perception survey results show:

- 83% of students evaluate that AI brings convenience and flexibility in learning English.
- 69% of students believe that AI helps personalize the learning process.
- However, 46% of students admit to having a tendency to depend on AI when doing assignments.
- 39% of students worry that using AI frequently could reduce independent thinking abilities.

The research results indicate that students clearly recognize the benefits AI brings, especially its convenience, personalization ability, and timely support in the English learning process. AI helps students be more proactive in accessing knowledge, especially for those whose English foundation is not yet solid. However, the percentage of students admitting to the risk of relying on AI and declining independent thinking reveals a contradiction in perception: students both highly value AI and worry about the negative impacts of uncontrolled use. The teacher interview results also reinforce this observation as many lecturers believe students tend to copy or rely on suggestions from AI, instead of analyzing and building answers on their own.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is gradually affirming its increasingly important role in the global higher education context. Applying AI not only creates positive changes in the learning process but also brings long-term impacts on the academic outcomes and capacity development of university students. Among those, some typical positive impacts of AI on students' learning activities can be noted as follows:

- Artificial intelligence effectively supports students' self-study and self-research activities. In the university environment, where learners are encouraged to maximize proactiveness and self-study as the main approach, AI becomes a powerful support tool in accessing and expanding knowledge. Through its ability to provide rapid feedback, and flexibly answer academic questions and exercises, AI contributes to creating learning interest and enhancing self-study efficiency for students.

- AI also promotes interaction and collaboration in group learning. Thanks to the support of tools like ChatGPT, students can easily form ideas, propose questions, or build discussion content for group activities. In this context, AI acts as an academic reference source supporting the collaborative learning process, while also posing a requirement for students to evaluate, filter, and use information with critical thinking - an indispensable capacity in the digital age.

3.4. Proposed solutions for effective AI use

In the current context of strong digital transformation, artificial intelligence (AI) is expected to continue opening up many innovative opportunities for the education sector. Practical research has shown that AI possesses great potential in supporting the personalization of learning content, providing instant feedback, and increasing learner interaction. However, to effectively exploit these benefits while minimizing potential risks, deploying synchronized and directed solutions is absolutely necessary.

First of all, students need to be fully equipped with the awareness and skills to use AI through training programs, thematic seminars, or modules related to digital technology. This is an opportunity for learners to access new tools, exchange experiences in applying AI to practice pronunciation, expand vocabulary, and develop speaking skills; while also raising awareness of risks such as inaccurate information or excessive dependence on AI. When clearly understanding the operating principles, limits, and downsides of AI, students will be capable of selecting suitable tools and using them proactively and in a controlled manner. Especially in learning English, directly experiencing and evaluating AI tools will help students clearly identify their strengths and weaknesses, thereby exploiting them more effectively in the foreign language learning process.

Besides, the university needs to establish and issue specific regulations related to the use of AI in learning. These regulations aim to help students clearly distinguish the boundaries between applying AI reasonably (such as looking up documents, practicing skills, receiving pronunciation feedback) and violating academic integrity (such as copying content or using AI to completely replace the process of doing assignments). Establishing a clear regulatory framework will contribute to creating a fair, transparent, and responsible learning environment.

In addition, the orienting role of lecturers is an indispensable factor in the process of integrating AI into teaching and learning. Lecturers need to guide students to use AI as a learning support tool, instead of completely relying on technology. Requiring students to be transparent about the level of AI support in their assignments, while encouraging the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and practical communication abilities will contribute to enhancing proactiveness and honesty in learning.

Parallel to that, educational institutions need to focus on investing in technological infrastructure, providing learning accounts, and access to reputable AI software such as ELSA Speak, Grammarly, Duolingo, or ChatGPT versions serving academic purposes. This will create conditions for students to access technology safely, legally, and effectively.

Finally, the university and lecturers need to focus on fostering core competencies for students that AI can hardly replace, including critical thinking, content creation, teamwork, and cross-cultural communication. The harmonious combination of technology application and personal skill development will help first-year students enhance English learning efficiency, develop comprehensively, and adapt better to the learning environment in the context of globalization.

4. CONCLUSION

Research results indicate that artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly affirming its role as an effective support tool in the English learning process of first-year students, especially in the early

stages when learners are still adapting to the university environment and new learning methods. The AI tools commonly used by students include ELSA Speak, ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Grammarly, mainly to support pronunciation practice, vocabulary expansion, grammar consolidation, and writing skill enhancement. Applying AI contributes to increasing flexibility in learning, promoting students' proactiveness, and partially reducing academic pressure.

However, alongside obvious benefits, using AI also poses many challenges. Some recorded limitations include risks related to information security, the unassured accuracy of content, and the lack of direct human interaction - an important factor in developing practical communication skills and cultural understanding. Moreover, a segment of students believes that AI tools sometimes translate the wrong context or provide inappropriate suggestions, easily leading to a state of dependence if learners lack the ability to evaluate and filter information.

Given this reality, equipping students with the knowledge and skills to use AI reasonably is a necessary requirement to ensure a harmonious combination of modern technology and traditional learning methods. In this process, the orienting role of the university and lecturers is considered a key factor, especially in establishing clear regulations and specific guidelines on applying AI in learning.

In short, AI brings many positive values to first-year students' English learning. However, to achieve long-term and sustainable efficiency, students need to be properly oriented, while developing independent thinking and autonomous learning capacities in the process of accessing and using AI tools.

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