Artificial Intelligence in English Learning: Voices from EFL Students at UIN Palopo

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Duolingo have increasingly been used to support language acquisition. However, students' experiences and attitudes toward these tools remain underexplored in the local academic context. This research aimed to identify both the perceived advantages and disadvantages of AI in English learning. A qualitative narrative method was employed, involving 16 sixth-semester English students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using open-ended questionnaires distributed via Google Forms. The findings reveal that students generally perceive AI positively, noting its role in enhancing accessibility, personalized learning, and improvement in key language skills—speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Nevertheless, concerns were raised about over-reliance on technology, reduced classroom interaction, and limited accuracy in context-sensitive tasks. Internet connectivity issues and access restrictions on premium features were also highlighted. The study concludes that while AI offers valuable support in EFL learning, it should be integrated thoughtfully alongside human interaction and traditional pedagogies. These insights can inform educators, institutions, and future researchers in designing balanced, student-centered approaches to AI-assisted language education.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English Learning

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st era, English serves as a global language. In the context of globalization, English has assumed a central role as the primary language of instruction in governmental institutions and serves as a dominant medium of communication in international conferences, professional forums, commercial sectors, and other formal domains (Ismayanti, D., Said, Y. R., Usman, N., & Nur, M. I., 2024). In Indonesia, English is taught not as a native or second language, but as a foreign language.

The process of learning and teaching a non-native language presents considerable challenges, as it involves more than just instructional delivery and entails a wide range of complex factors. Technological advancements in the modern era have demanded more refined approaches to teaching and learning, including the use of media as a means to enhance instructional delivery. Recent technological advancements, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), have transformed English language teaching (ELT) by offering tools for personalized learning, immediate feedback, and enhanced engagement (Agrawal, 2024). Tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Duolingo are widely used to support students' writing, speaking, and reading skills.

While many studies highlight AI's benefits in education (Fadli & Iskarim, 2024; Sumakul et al., 2022), fewer focus on its influence on students' learning autonomy and critical thinking in the Indonesian EFL context. Nevertheless, students also encounter several notable obstacles in utilizing AI tools for learning. The primary constraint in online learning is a poor internet connection, which students and teachers try to solve by finding better network access (Kelana, R. I., et al., 2018). Unstable network conditions present a significant obstacle to the effective use of technology that relies on internet connections, including AI tools.

Conducting an in-depth analysis of the potential of AI technologies within educational contexts is of critical importance. This research is anchored in an extensive review of relevant literature and includes a critical evaluation of prior studies to identify existing gaps in scholarly understanding. Moreover, it incorporates perspectives from students who have experience using AI-based tools in the classroom, offering valuable insights into both the advantages and disadvantages of such technologies. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by exploring students' perceptions of AI in language learning at UIN Palopo, emphasizing both opportunities and challenges.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative narrative design to investigate students' experiences and opinions regarding AI-assisted English learning.

Research Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative narrative design to capture students' experiences in depth. Sixteen sixth-semester students (3 males, 13 females; aged 21–23) from the English

Language Education Study Program at UIN Palopo were purposively selected, as they had experience using AI tools for language learning.

Instruments and Data Collection

An open-ended questionnaire consisting of 10 items was distributed via Google Forms. The questions focused on students' preferred AI tools, perceived benefits, limitations, and their influence on classroom interaction.

Data Analysis

Responses were analyzed using narrative analysis (Bruner, 1990), involving data reduction, thematic coding, and interpretation. Themes were identified based on recurring perceptions regarding AI's effectiveness and challenges.

FINDINGS

The key findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' perceptions of AI in language learning

No	Category	Students Insight
1	Effective AI Tools	ChatGPT, Grammarly, Duolingo, DeepL, Google Translate were most used for accessibility.
2	Skill Improvement	AI helped improve writing, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension with real-time feedback.
3	Advantages	Accessibility, cost-effectiveness, flexibility, and tailored learning materials.
4	Disadvantages	Over-reliance on AI, technical issues, contextual inaccuracies, and premium feature limitations.
5	Interaction	Students noted decreased interaction with peers and teachers due to AI dependence.

Students also reported frequent use of AI applications such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Duolingo to support various English skills.
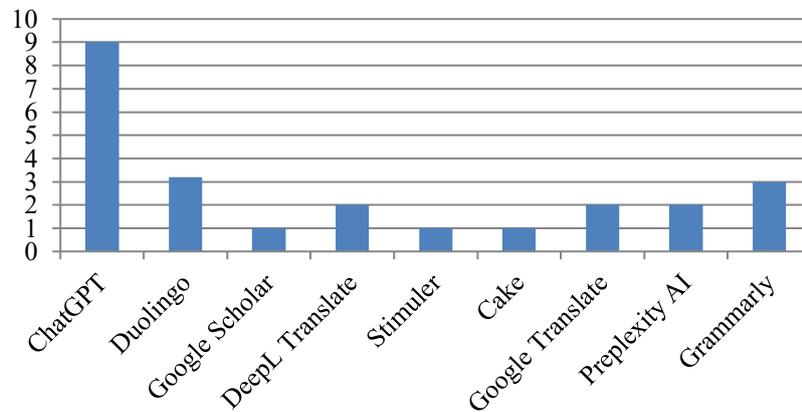
AI Application and Website

Figure 1. Most Effective AI According to Students

DISCUSSION

This research, which uses a narrative qualitative method to examine the perceptions of English students regarding the use of AI in learning English, shows that students have both positive and negative views on the utilization of AI in learning. This section presents the findings of the research, including the web or AI applications that are effective for learning, the effectiveness of AI in enhancing their skills, common problem faced when using AI, and the less effective AI features.

Based on the students' responses about effective web or AI applications for learning, most of the students have used ChatGPT, Duolingo, Grammarly, and Preplexity AI to learn English because it can answer questions quite accurately and relevantly. Students perceive AI as a beneficial resource for improving essay quality, brainstorming, and providing immediate feedback in a low-anxiety environment (Arifatin & Setyaningrum., 2024).

Respondents have a favorable opinion regarding the effectiveness of AI in enhancing their skills in writing, reading, speaking, and listening. This is because AI provides direct feedback features in the form of answers and corrections to students' writing and speaking errors, making it easier for students to correct their mistakes. For writing, AI can provide instant and detailed feedback on grammar, vocabulary usage, stylistic choices, and overall coherence, thereby guiding learners toward more effective and accurate written expression. In reading, AI tutors can adapt texts to individual proficiency levels and offer contextual

definitions, fostering deeper comprehension. For speaking and listening, AI-driven platforms can simulate conversations with realistic pronunciation, analyze speech patterns for errors, and provide immersive listening practice, making language acquisition more interactive and accessible than ever before (Zou, et al., 2023).

However, students also found some concerns of AI in their English learning process. A common problem faced when using AI, especially in learning, is internet connectivity. Students and teachers will have difficulty completing learning activities that have already started using AI if there is a connection error. In the other hand, the accuracy of AI is still lacking, such as in translation, where it sometimes does not match the context or grammar, and when providing answers, it does not explain in detail, only giving a general overview (Marito & Ashari, 2017). Additionally, some students also argue that AI limits critical thinking because its features are readily accessible, making users dependent on tools and instant media.

Several students' statements that AI has some features that are less effective in learning English, such as the premium feature, which limits the learning process for free, the text translation feature, which is contextually inappropriate and often contains grammatical errors, and the voice translation feature, which is unclear due to the pronunciation being too fast.

The findings of this research reveal that students generally perceive the use of AI in English language learning positively. A majority of participants acknowledged that AI-driven tools like ChatGPT, Duolingo, and other interactive platforms have contributed to the improvement of their English skills, including speaking, writing, reading, listening, grammar, and pronunciation. These results are consistent with earlier research entitled Students' Perception on the Use of AI in English (Arifatin & Setyaningrum., 2024) that emphasized the ability of AI to deliver personalized and continuous practice, especially in areas such as grammar and pronunciation.

The results of this study indicates that one of the most appreciated aspects of AI noted by students is the ability to provide instant feedback and its accessibility at any time and from any location. This ease of access supports the development of learner autonomy, allowing students to take greater control over their learning process. By enabling independent access to resources and real-time feedback, AI tools encourage self directed learning and continuous improvement outside the traditional classroom setting. This findings is in line with research conducted by Rusmiyanto et al. in their study entitled The Exploitation of Artificial

Intelligence in Developing English Language Learner's Communication Skills (Rusmiyanto, et al., 2023). However, the implementation of AI should be carefully managed and maximizes the benefits while remaining vigilant of its limitations is crucial for effectively fostering critical thinking skills among EFL learners (Darwin, et al., 2024).

All things considered, in conducting research on English students' perceptions of using AI for learning English, the researcher faced some challenges. These included time constraints that limited the depth and scope of data collection, low levels of student motivation in completing the questionnaire, and a number of responses that were not entirely aligned with the research objectives. These obstacles impacted the comprehensiveness of the findings and suggest the need for improved engagement strategies and clearer communication of research goals in future studies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that EFL students at UIN Palopo generally have a positive perception of Artificial Intelligence in learning English. They recognize AI as a supportive tool that enhances accessibility to learning materials, provides real-time feedback, and helps develop English skills, including speaking, writing, reading, and listening. Students appreciate the flexibility, personalization, and efficiency that AI brings to their learning experiences.

However, this research also reveals several concerns. Some students express worry about the potential for over-dependence on AI, a reduction in social and classroom interaction, and the occasional inaccuracy or contextual limitations of AI-generated content. In addition, technical issues such as poor internet connection and limited access to premium features also pose challenges.

Furthermore, educators and curriculum developers are encouraged to use AI thoughtfully, ensuring it complements rather than replaces the essential elements of language learning. For students, they should not rely solely on AI-generated content, but instead use it as a reference to support critical thinking, creativity, and independent problem solving. Future researchers are encouraged to investigated the long-term effects of AI in language learning and comparing studies involving different educational levels and backgrounds could provide a broader and more comprehensive understanding of AI's role and effectiveness in language education.

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