
Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT as a Catalyst for Language Learning in Moroccan Higher Education

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Abstract

The emergence of ChatGPT as a unique AI tool revolutionized the educational landscape and gave it a notorious position in Moroccan education. However, scientific studies on the role of ChatGPT in higher education and its perceptions are limited, and more research is needed in the Moroccan context. Hence, the primary purpose of this quantitative study is to investigate the students' perceptions of ChatGPT employment in their learning process and the benefits it offers them on their academic journey. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected through a questionnaire as a research instrument. The study sample, which consisted of 40 English master students from Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco, was non-randomly selected using a convenient sampling method. The data were collected through Google Forms and analyzed statistically using SPSS version 27. The results show that students hold favorable perceptions regarding ChatGPT, viewing it as an engaging and valuable learning tool. They find it useful for improving writing and for understanding complex academic topics. Therefore, it is highly recommended that educators and institutions should encourage the implementation of ChatGPT in the educational field and devise new ways to handle the increasing demands on AI applications.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, higher education, students' perceptions, learning journey

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence was developed to create the same natural human conversation. The AI story dates back to 1964 and 1966 when Joseph Weizenbaum developed ELIZA as the first computer software that simulates human interactions. (Weizenbaum, 1976).

This remarkable invention underpins other developers to construct new groundbreaking applications that contribute to the flourishing of AI. Practitioners seize the opportunity to create applications that serve the development of language-learning interaction. ChatGPT technology has altered the educational landscape. It has supported learners in getting into English conversations, listening tasks, grammar lessons, and other tasks. This valuable potential of ChatGPT has brought significant transitions to education as it has shown an advanced learning model that seems beyond traditional teaching methods.

Despite the notable role that ChatGPT has played in educational settings over the years, there is still a scarcity of research on how students view the learning role of this innovative tool and its key benefits. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to examine how students perceive the use of ChatGPT in their learning process and the advantages it provides for their academic journey.

Research has shown that incorporating ChatGPT into the classroom has contributed to enhancing the learning environment in various ways, as it has enabled students to chat and interact with chatbots. (Rudolph et al. 2023) Additionally, it provides personalized, interactive support that boosts student interest and develops their capacity for self-learning. (Mladenova, Kanev, & Valova, 2024). Also, the role of teachers is no longer the exclusive source of information, yet students can use these chatbots to learn more and they can offer them helpful materials to speed up the learning process.

1.1. Research Questions

Two main research questions frame this investigation:

- **RQ1.** What perceptions do students hold regarding the utilization of ChatGPT for language learning?
- **RQ2.** What benefits are derived from incorporating ChatGPT in educational settings?

1.2. Research Hypotheses

Based on these outcomes, we can hypothesize the following Hypothesis:

- **H1.** Students hold positive perceptions regarding the use of ChatGPT for their language learning.

In the twenty-first century, education should reflect and cope with the swift changes of technology at every stage of our lives. Eventually, it can gear its methods and techniques to fit this speedy shift and speak the native digital language.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Overview of ChatGPT

The speedy and dynamic technological revolution that the world has witnessed and is still witnessing puts new tools in the hands of learners. ChatGPT is a breakthrough that has penetrated the learning fields. It represented a significant transformation in the modern educational era since it provided important possibilities to learners.

In general, this novel technology presented learners with many opportunities and created an almost perfect language acquisition environment. The use of ChatGPT in learning has aimed at reaching the salient goal, which is to assist teachers and not replace them. In other words, modern technologies can help identify key learning and eliminate numerous obstacles. For example, learners could overcome different learning hurdles and enhance the learning process. Overall, the integration of modern technologies, including ChatGPT, can help to establish an enjoyable atmosphere for educational purposes. Fathema et al. (2015) and Tilili et al. (2023) asserted the role of the integration of new technologies in education. As they help establish pleasant learning experiences.

2.2. The Benefits of ChatGPT

Several studies have displayed the salient role of ChatGPT in the educational field and identified its significant impacts on the learners' learning process. Its swift advancement had contributed to changing educators' and learners' views on the classical role of technology in education. ChatGPT 4, for example, can give immediate feedback and support in learning new academic concepts. Also, it can help reach various academic resources. This tool has ignited the learners' motivation and facilitated the task of doing research easily. According to Sengupta and Chakraborty (2020), chatbots can support students to boost their motivation and satisfaction. Furthermore, ChatGPT can have the ability to treat data carefully and provide concrete analysis. This crucial experience pushed students to accept ChatGPT as a catalyst in

their learning journey, as stated by Biswas (2023) and Tlili et al. (2023). According to Mensah Bonsu and Baffour-Koduah (2023), the major role of ChatGPT lies in demystifying complex topics. As a result, ChatGPT will be at the forefront of educational reform in the coming years.

Overall, the important roles of AI-powered chatbots in academic institutions have been emphasized by many studies and have shown their educational potential as a solution to many students' learning problems.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative descriptive research design to investigate students' perceptions of ChatGPT as a tool for language learning. This design is appropriate to collect numerical data so as to analyze and identify the general trends and patterns in students' responses.

3.2. Participants

The study sample consisted of 40 English master students from the English department of Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco. They were selected using convenience sampling based on their availability and willingness to take part in the study. 65% of participants were male students, and 35% were female students.

3.3. Instruments

The instrument used was adapted from a validated scale constructed by Pham Xuan Ho (2024) to measure students' perceptions of ChatGPT's role in aiding English language learning. Slight changes were made to make it fit the study context. Most items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". The study also conducted a pilot study to ensure reliability, which gave a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.967 and a standardized alpha of 0.974, reflecting excellent internal consistency.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this study were collected using an online questionnaire (See Appendix) created through Google Forms. This tool was selected due to its accessibility, ease in disseminating questionnaires, and automated response arrangement. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants via electronic platforms such as emails and WhatsApp. In addition, the researcher was able to monitor responses in real time and export the obtained data for analysis. The data were analyzed using

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 27. Descriptive statistics were employed to interpret the students’ responses, including percentages and frequencies.

4. Results

4.1. Perceptions of ChatGPT for Language Learning

This study investigates the master students’ perceptions of using ChatGPT as a catalyst for language learning improvement. The first part of the questionnaire in this study offered a description of the participants. Figure 1 shows that 65% of the participants (n = 40) were males, and 35% were females, indicating a higher representation of male participants.

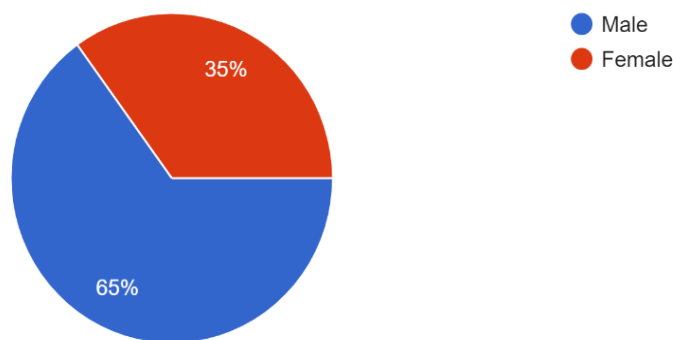


Figure 1. Participants’ gender

Figure 2 shows the frequency of ChatGPT usage for educational content among students. The largest proportion of respondents (42.5%) reported that they use ChatGPT very frequently, followed by 30 percent who use it occasionally. In contrast, 17.5% of the students were rarely using the ChatGPT platform for their educational content, while 10% say they always use it.

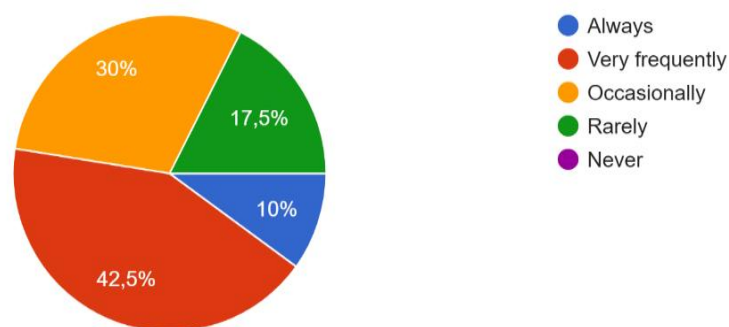


Figure 2. The frequency of using ChatGPT in education

Question (4) in the questionnaire elicited information about whether ChatGPT was a motivational learning experience for the students or not. As Figure 3 displays, the majority of master students (82,5%) found ChatGPT as a motivating learning experience.

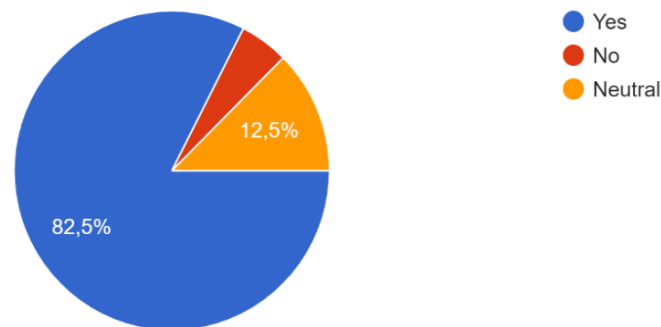


Figure 3. Participants' Perceptions of Using ChatGPT to Enhance Learning Motivation

Regarding the use of ChatGPT as a language learning resource that helps develop the students' English vocabulary, Figure 4 shows that the majority of students (72.5%) emphasized the tool's significant importance in language learning. This high level of agreement suggests that ChatGPT is perceived as an effective tool for enhancing students' English vocabulary. Also, it demonstrates that ChatGPT is a platform that offers students explanations, synonyms, and contextualized definitions that contribute to overall vocabulary acquisition.

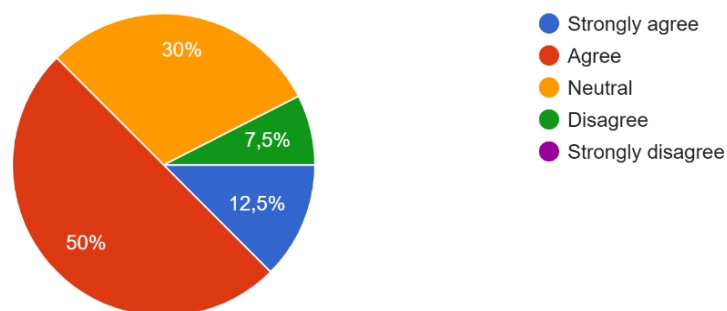


Figure 4. Participants' view of ChatGPT as a tool for improving their English vocabulary

As shown in Figure 5, most students (82.5%) considered ChatGPT to be a crucial aid in language learning, emphasizing its importance as a supportive writing tool. These findings highlight the tool's significant roles in helping students in different aspects of academic writing, such as idea generation, research outlines, and grammar correction. It also indicates the usefulness of ChatGPT in assisting students in the overall writing process by developing independent writing practices in cases of the absence of academic guidance. Interestingly, this can reflect the students' interest in boosting the quality of their academic work in higher education.

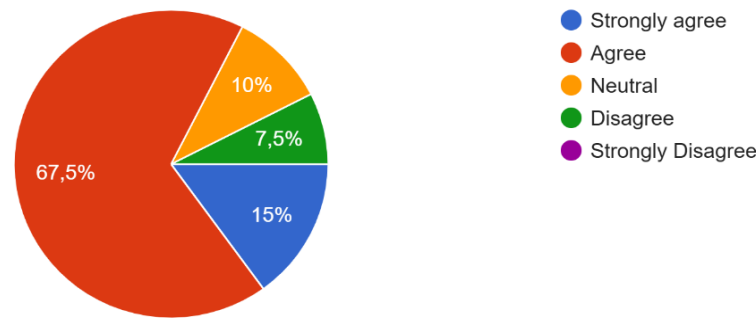


Figure 5. ChatGPT is a tool for enhancing writing skills

Figure 6 illustrates that 40% of students believe ChatGPT supports the development of communication skills, while another 40% remain neutral, and 20% express their disagreement. These findings show weak consensus among students in regard to the tool's capacity to develop the students' communication skills. Additionally, the high percentage of neutral responses may reveal the limited experiences in employing ChatGPT in enhancing the students' communicative purposes.

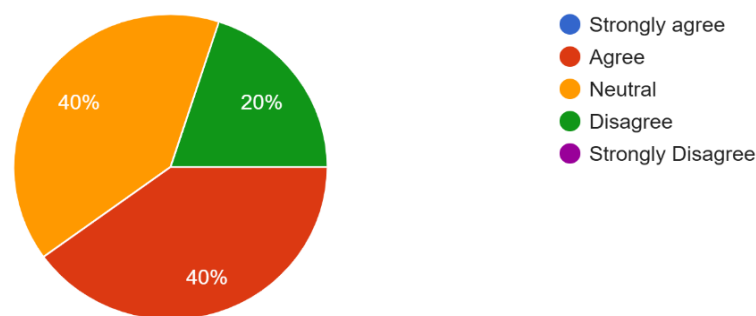


Figure 6. ChatGPT Helps Improve Communication Skills

Figure 7 shows that 62.5% of the respondents agree that ChatGPT is a useful learning tool, and 20% express their strong agreement. This level of positive response (82.5% in total) marks the generally positive response to the use of ChatGPT in learning. The findings suggest a recognition of the potential of ChatGPT for supporting the students' academic tasks and overall learning experience. It also implies that the students currently rely on digital learning resources rather than traditional ones, such as books, textbooks, grammar books, and dictionaries (paper-based), which are accessible and available.

Furthermore, question (5) elicited data about the role of ChatGPT in understanding difficult educational topics. As Figure 8 displays, the majority of students (92.5%) found ChatGPT very useful in understanding tough topics. These findings suggest that this tool is invaluable in

providing easy explanations to students while seeking academic clarifications about certain concepts or topics. Furthermore, it serves to simplify the students' work when dealing with challenging content and handling it swiftly and easily.

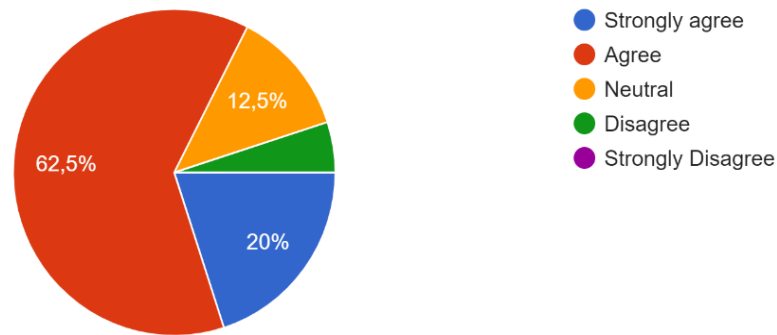


Figure 7. ChatGPT as a useful Learning resource

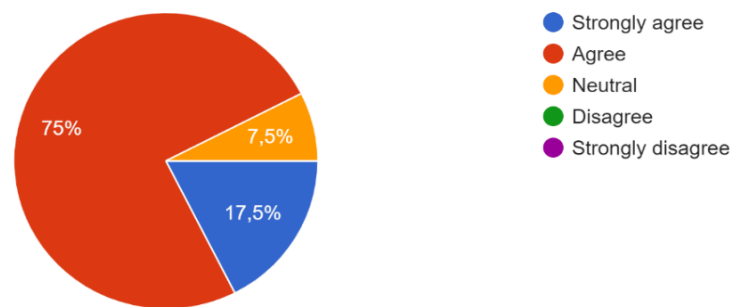


Figure 8. Participants’ views on the ChatGPT support in understanding difficult topics

4.2. Perceived Benefits of ChatGPT

In relation to these findings, question (7) displays the main reason for using ChatGPT. As Figure (9) shows, students gave priority to the main reasons as follows:

- Research assistance (80%)
- Study (75%)
- General information (72%)
- Writing support (67.5%) (see Figure 9)

Based on those findings, ChatGPT is recognized as an academic aid that endorses students in their research skills related to their writing process. It is also a resource for acquiring knowledge and completing academic tasks efficiently. Overall, these results underscore the potential of ChatGPT in the students’ learning journey and value it as a supplementary educational tool that caters to students’ needs.

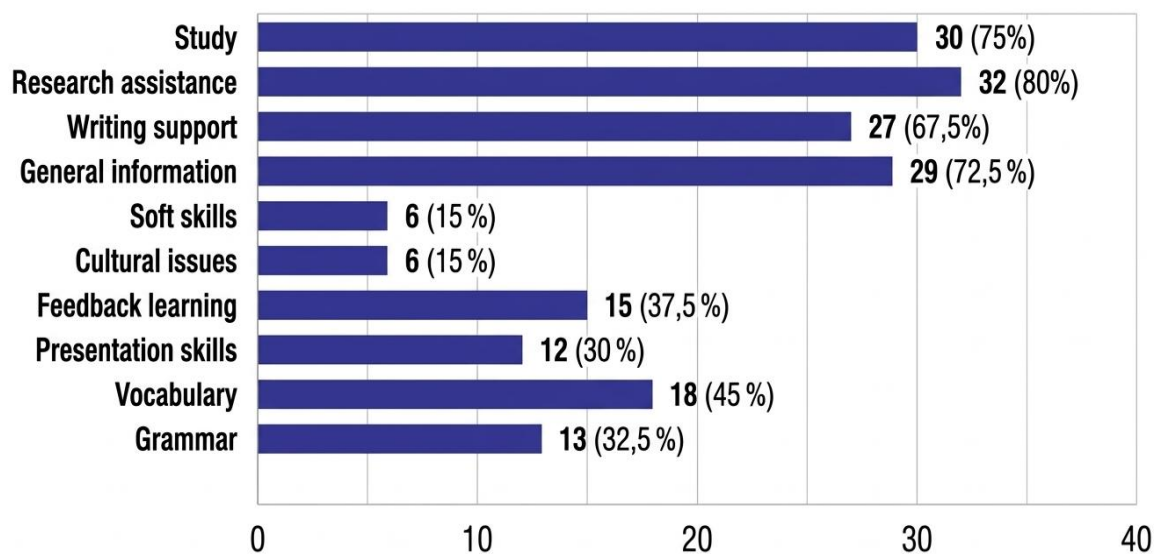


Figure 9. Participants' perceptions of the main reasons for using ChatGPT

5. Discussion

The study investigated students' learning perceptions concerning the implementation of ChatGPT as a catalyst tool for education. It was hypothesized that learners hold positive perceptions regarding the use of ChatGPT in their learning journey. The results confirm this hypothesis since most master students hold a positive view towards ChatGPT, which was underscored as a useful tool that enhances study, research, general information, and feedback writing support. The findings depicted in Figures 2 and 4 substantiate the positive satisfaction of students regarding the integration of ChatGPT within the educational framework. Hence, this provides a clear answer to our first research question (RQ1): What perceptions do students hold regarding the utilization of ChatGPT for language learning?

ChatGPT has revolutionized learning by enabling students to seek knowledge on their own and improve their self-directed learning. These findings supported the major role of ChatGPT in education, as stated by Tlili et al. (2023), Schmidt-Fajlik (2023), Kohnke et al. (2023), and Hariri (2023). A similar trend was observed with the study conducted by Das and J. V. (2024), which found that university students perceive ChatGPT positively. Additionally, these findings are in agreement with Romero-Rodríguez et al study (2023), which found that students have a positive stance on using ChatGPT to enhance their academic performance and perceive it as generally supportive in a learning environment. In this regard, Gen AI tools like ChatGPT are perceived not only as a content-generating tool but also as efficient in polishing paragraph writing, improving writing styles, and overall learning support. (Lieu, 2025).

These positive perceptions can be linked to diverse contextual factors regarding the Moroccan higher education institutions. English is recognized as a foreign language, which puts ChatGPT and similar platforms in the role of supporting learning tools. Thereby, upholding students by reducing linguistic barriers through immediate explanations, paraphrasing, synonyms, and contextualized examples. Additionally, the personalized academic support offered by Moroccan universities is sometimes inadequate and insufficient due to a lack of academic resources, such as novels, dictionaries, books, and theses. Besides, the large number of students in a class can limit access to libraries and prevent them from having more chances of getting seats. Thus, ChatGPT can resolve these problems and give a hand of support that can be accessed at any time and from any place.

Interestingly, these positive views reflect ChatGPT's salient role in Moroccan academic learning, which has fostered its significant function as a form of academic assistance outside and inside the classroom. Valova et al. (2024) also argue that getting the perspectives of different students in higher learning is important in incorporating ChatGPT in education. Furthermore, to answer the second research question (RQ2), what benefits are derived from incorporating ChatGPT in educational settings? The data obtained in Figures 3; 5; 6; and 7 showed that ChatGPT has significantly contributed to making learning more interesting. Since it created a space for interaction and provided opportunities for understanding difficult educational topics. Also, it supported learners to obtain academic assistance and served as a valuable resource for learning. In addition, it has represented a captivating technological tool for research, general knowledge, and feedback.

Despite the possible obstacles like misinformation and the quality of academic feedback, there is a need to refine the utilization of ChatGPT in the educational field. The findings were consistent with several studies. For example, Fauzi et al. (2023) have highlighted the valuable uses of ChatGPT in its significant development of the students' performance since it offers them valuable resources and helps in improving interaction as well as motivation. According to Moqbel and al. Kadi (2023), touchy PT powered by AI personalized tutoring may help pupils learn the structure of languages, vocabulary, and grammar, and support them to improve their language abilities. Rasul et al. (2023) found that ChatGPT and the like are tremendously helpful tools in facilitating independent learning among students. These resources enable students to realize that they have completely immersed themselves and explored many different topics. The

resources and information available through these tools provide access to independent learning and help foster a sense of efficacy that promotes lifelong learning.

Moreover, Rahman et al. (2023) have observed the functional role that ChatGPT plays in academic research, such as the generalization of ideas, the construction of research outlines, and the identification of results from various studies.

Importantly, ChatGPT is seen to be a valuable tool for writing support, idea generation, and research assistance. This high usage of ChatGPT can be due to many reasons. Among them the numerous difficulties faced by students when carrying out academic tasks in higher education. For instance, understanding pedantic topics and synthesizing scholarly sources in English can be arduous. As a result, ChatGPT can help summarize, explain, and generate information, saving time and effort. However, these findings also raise serious concerns regarding academic integrity, such as reliable academic references, plagiarism, and critical analysis, which need to be addressed academically, pedagogically, and institutionally. Additionally, ChatGPT might lead to some misleading research answers. Hence, users should consider the ethical incorporation of this tool so as not to decrease the academic standards of research.

6. Conclusion

Currently, the globe praises the use of technology and its role in disseminating knowledge. In Morocco, many learners have demonstrated a tendency to use these innovative tools in their academic learning. ChatGPT was among those cutting-edge tools that were incrementally adopted. This study has pinpointed the major benefits of ChatGPT on the learners' learning journey. For many students, ChatGPT presents a supporting tool that remedies some educational deficits and provides academic assistance in their learning practices. Moreover, it was recognized as a remarkable breakthrough that boosts their engagement and serves as a guiding and teaching tool inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, this study can provide additive values to recognize the significant impacts of ChatGPT, as a catalyst tool, on master's students at the English Department at Moulay Ismail University in Meknes, Morocco. Furthermore, it attempts to add fresh insight and contributes to broadening the corpus of knowledge in the ChatGPT literature.

Overall, this study offers valuable findings on the use of ChatGPT in the educational field and could pave the way for more research studies to investigate more potential benefits and challenges so as to contribute to the development of this breakthrough technology.

6.1. Limitations

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, it is imperative to recognize the presence of certain limitations. First, this study focuses only on the students' perceptions of the use of ChatGPT in the language area and does not incorporate teachers, parents, administrators, and stakeholders. Second, the study only vetted a few uses of ChatGPT such as research assistance, study, general information, feedback information, presentation skills, soft skills, vocabulary, and Grammar. Third, the research is constrained by a sample size consisting of 40 students and a limited number of closed-ended questions used for data collection. Therefore, incorporating participants from more varied backgrounds and universities can offer a more extensive comprehension of the implications of integrating ChatGPT in university settings.

Future studies could gain fresh insights from the involvement of teachers and students of other academic disciplines so as to have a holistic understanding of the role of ChatGPT in higher education.

6.2. Recommendations

Teachers and other stakeholders should adapt to these changes and carry out more research in the field of education in light of this outstanding pioneering tool. So as to manage AI's unstoppable speed and take profit from its potential benefits. Therefore, encouraging students to acquire knowledge autonomously via ChatGPT, enhances their analytical skills and learning capacity as well as supporting teachers to gear the twenty-first-century changes.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. No financial, personal, or professional relationships have influenced the research, analysis, or conclusions presented in this work.

Notes on Contributors

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Appendix

The Likert Scale was used for gathering information on participants' perspectives regarding the use of ChatGPT in improving English language skills and its benefits, including interaction, soft skills development, vocabulary, writing, grammar, and communication.

Master's students in this study were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statements in Section B using the scale below:

1 – Strongly Disagree 2 – Disagree 3 – Neutral 4 – Agree 5 – Strongly Agree

Section A: Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?

Male Female

2. How often do you engage with educational content on ChatGPT?

Always

Very frequently

Occasionally

Rarely

Never

3. Using ChatGPT motivates you to engage in interactional learning.

Yes No

Section B: Perceptions of Using ChatGPT

No	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	ChatGPT helps you improve your English vocabulary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	ChatGPT contributes to enhancing writing skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	ChatGPT helps me improve my communication skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I believe ChatGPT is a useful learning resource.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	ChatGPT supports me in understanding difficult topics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section C: Reasons for Using ChatGPT

(Please tick ✓ all that apply)

- Study
- Research assistance
- Writing support
- General information
- Soft skills development
- Cultural understanding
- Receiving feedback
- Presentation skills
- Vocabulary
- Grammar