Research Article

Integrating AI into Learning English: University Students' Perceptions and the Roles of Traditional Methods

Thi Thanh Luy Dau [iD]

Department of English, University of Management and Technology, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to become a more vital component in education, understanding how university students are utilizing AI tools for learning English and how they compare to conventional approaches are essential. This study addresses the lack of a comprehensive overview by exploring university students' experiences and perceptions of using AI tools for learning English, alongside their comparative view with traditional learning methods. A mixed-methods design was employed to collect data from two universities in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. A total of 100 non-English major students participated in answering a questionnaire grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and ten semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain in-depth insights into students' attitudes toward learning English with AI tools and in conventional classrooms. The findings revealed that the most frequently used AI tools were Google Translate, ChatGPT, Duolingo and Grammarly. The primary purposes for AI uses were to support writing assignments, improve vocabulary and assist with translation. Students generally perceived AI tools as beneficial, with vocabulary, reading and writing self-reported as the most improved skills. Students' perceived enjoyment was positively rated though moderate concerns were raised regarding the trust of AI-created content and the need for guided support in optimizing AI-based learning experiences. The majority of students expressed a strong desire for teachers to integrate AI into conventional forms of pedagogy to enhance motivation and engagement in learning English. This requires further research on various methods to effectively apply AI in teaching and language skills.

Keywords

English learning, AI integration, TAM, traditional learning methods, comparative views

Introduction

Recently, educational institutions have witnessed a significant impact of AI when it has capability to transform the conventional teaching and learning approaches (Iqbal et al., 2024). This state-of-the-art technology has introduced advanced tools that are reshaping how students learn languages. As a result, understanding how university students integrate AI into learning English language is crucial. Not only does this integration reflect broader trends of technology but it also uncovers students' perceptions of the effectiveness of AI tools in comparison with traditional learning methods. Moreover, it helps to gain deeper insights into the potential benefits of AI-powered language acquisition and whether it serves as a suitable substitute for or complement to traditional teaching strategies and practices (Dhanapal et al., 2024).

While many studies concentrate on specific tools and language skills, this research provides a comprehensive overview of

how students are utilizing AI tools to learn English in Vietnam. It highlights the most popular tools, and students' perceptions of their impact on language skill development. As Yilmaz et al., (2023) note, gaining insights into students' perceptions of AI tools can shed light on their readiness to embrace its use in education settings. Moreover, learners' acceptance serves as a key indicator of the success of integrating technology to enhance academic performance (Sumakul et al., 2022).

Therefore, this study employs Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) and later expanded by Octavia & Nugraha (2024) as a guiding framework to explore students' acceptance of AI tools in learning English.
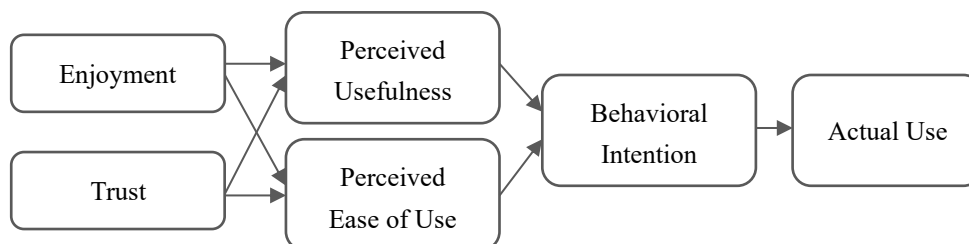

Figure 1. *Adapted TAM framework by Octavia & Nugraha (2024)*

TAM suggests that users' acceptance and adoption of new technology are primarily influenced by two key factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Since TAM focuses more on technical functionality and simplicity than on users' emotions, it is crucial to incorporate perceived enjoyment as an external variable to better understand how students engage with AI tools (Abdalla, 2024). Additionally, students' trust in AI systems is a vital factor because it reflects students' confidence in the technology (Dahri, 2024). Octavia & Nugraha (2024) also confirmed that students' perceptions of AI tools are shaped by enjoyment and trust which enhance the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of these technologies.

Through ten semi-structured interviews, this study also addresses the relatively underexplored area of students' comparative views on learning with AI versus traditional methods. Understanding students' attitudes toward these approaches will help to identify factors influencing students' acceptance and use of them (Dhanapal et al., 2024). Ultimately, the results are expected to inform strategies for integrating AI in English language teaching and learning, and contribute to the ongoing discourse on the future of education in the AI era.

To this end, the study is guided by the following questions:

1. How do university students use AI tools for learning English?
2. What are university students' perceptions of AI tools in their English language learning?
3. How do university students compare learning English with AI tools to traditional learning methods?

Literature Review

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in Education

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), introduced by Davis (1989), has become one of the most influential frameworks for understanding technology adoption across various fields (Dahri et al., 2024). Particularly, this model is widely used in teaching and learning contexts (Koç et al., 2021), including e-learning, distance education, massive open online courses, and mobile library applications, in which it acts as the predominant foundational theory to analyze how people perceive and plan to utilize various forms of technology (AL-Sayid & Kirkil, 2023). The model, based on the social psychology theory, aims to investigate how cognitive and emotional factors influence a user's decision to adopt technology. Technology acceptance occurs in three stages, beginning with external factors that cause cognitive responses (e.g. perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use), then leading to establishing an affective response, which includes the user's intention toward using the technology (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). TAM suggests that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are the primary determinants of users' acceptance and use of technology. Perceived usefulness refers to the level to which a person believes that using a particular technology will enhance their performance, while perceived ease of use pertains to the ease with which the technology can be used (Davis, 1989). If a technology is easy to use and helps individuals carry out their tasks effectively, they are more likely to

embrace it (Abdalla, 2024).

Since Davis (1989) suggested that other external factors also affect perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, TAM has served as a foundational model for later developments. When investigating the acceptance of ChatGPT as a tool for metacognitive self-regulated learning, Dahri et al. (2024) found that personal competency, social influence, usefulness, enjoyment, trust, and metacognitive self-regulation significantly influence high acceptance of this tool. Similarly, Abdalla (2024) confirmed that perceived enjoyment does influence students' intention to use ChatGPT. Octavia and Nugraha (2024) also showed that enjoyment and trust enhance perceived usefulness and ease of use of AI-voice assistants like Google Assistant, Siri, or Cortana. When students perceive AI tools as useful, enjoyable and trustworthy, their satisfaction increases, finally leading to greater support for AI use in education (Almufarreh, 2024).

AI Tools for Learning English

Duolingo is a widely used digital application for learning English both inside and outside the classroom (Yana, 2021). Munday (2016) describes it as a gamified tool where 80% of functions involve translation, transcription, and pronunciation. It supports multiple language skills, and is available on various platforms (Tiara et al., 2021). Duolingo is considered easy to use and understand (Tiara et al., 2021; Purwanto & Syafryadin, 2023). Students believe that Duolingo improves their English skills, particularly vocabulary, listening and grammar, and enhancing motivation due to its intuitive design and gamification elements (Astarilla, 2018; Tiara et al., 2021; Purwanto & Syafryadin, 2023; Nguyen & Thai, 2024). Features such as progress tracking and rewards make learning enjoyable (Yana, 2021; Astarilla, 2018; Nguyen & Thai, 2024). However, Duolingo still has several drawbacks that may affect students' perceived trust such as unnatural sentences, annoying advertisements, repeated questions, lack of grammar guide (Astarilla, 2018), colorful layout, vocabulary repetition (Yana, 2021), and the limitations in speed, tonal variety, and emotional nuances found in real communication situations (Nguyen & Thai, 2024).

Grammarly is popularly perceived as an effective Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) software, which is famous for its ability to detect grammar, punctuation and spelling errors, suggest writing styles, refine written work, and identify plagiarism (Karyuatry et al., 2018; Fitriana & Nurazni, 2022). Students generally respond positively to Grammarly's capacity to correct common issues like sentence structure, missing verbs and prepositions (Putri et al., 2024), and redundant phrasing (El Missi, 2024). Grammarly also makes the process of writing clearer, easier and more engaging (Raihan, 2023). Moreover, this tool is praised for being user-friendly and accessible across devices (Yurika et al., 2023; Raihan et al., 2023; Puri et al., 2024; El Missi, 2024). Despite its popularity, students sometimes question the accuracy of its suggestions, which may alter the intended meaning (Fitriana & Nurazni, 2022; Ummah & Bisriyah, 2022) or fail to offer accurate feedback, leading to confusion (Yurika et al., 2023). Nonetheless, Grammarly remains a favored tool for self-proofreading and improving writing skills (Ummah & Bisriyah, 2022; Puri et al., 2024).

Google Translate is a translation tool, widely used by language learners due to its convenience and usefulness (Lam, 2021; Nguyen, 2022; Pham et al., 2022; Nguyen 2024). Many students used it as a quick dictionary (Margiana & Syafryadin, 2023) and to understand idioms and proverbs (Nguyen, 2022), and to learn grammar through back-and-forth translations (Nguyen, 2023). It also supports paragraph writing by expanding vocabulary and sentence structures, especially for students with limited lexical resources and ideas (Nguyen, 2023). Students expressed their satisfaction with this tool, seeing no reason for not using such a free, fast and accessible application (Nguyen, 2022). Its across-device availability further enhances its convenience (Raza & Nor, 2018). However, Google Translate is perceived less effective for translating long sentences and paragraphs, often producing literal translations (Lam, 2021; Nguyen, 2022). Many errors stem from word-by-word translation, leading to confusing sentences, incorrect word choices and semantic understandings. This is usually caused by negative language transfer of structures from students' first language (Pham et al., 2022; Nguyen, 2023). Additionally, it struggles with culturally specific contexts (Nguyen, 2022). Given the widespread use, language teachers should integrate Google Translate as a pedagogical tool, guiding students on how to critically assess and revise translations to their writing and self-editing skills (Lam, 2021; Nguyen, 2023).

ChatGPT is one of the latest developed chatbots, generally perceived as a useful tool for language learning. Pham and Le (2024) found that students view it effective for providing quick responses, generating ideas, improving reading skills and long-term knowledge retention. Similarly, Ho (2024) reported its usefulness in translation, reading comprehension, and learning specialized vocabulary, though its impact on listening and speaking remains limited. In academic writing, students believe that ChatGPT supports grammar correction, paraphrasing, and idea development, reducing stress and increasing engagement (Kim et al., 2024; Pham & Le, 2024). It also enhances students' ability to analyze and critically assess online content (Tran & Tran, 2023). Its user-friendly interface and accessibility contribute to its popularity (Shaikh et al., 2023). Students generally trust its answers and are satisfied with its usefulness, and enjoyment (Ho, 2024; Shaikh et al., 2023). This holds a promising and practical implication of ChatGPT for language learners (Shaikh et al., 2023; Pham & Le, 2024). However, concerns include

overdependence, reducing critical thinking and creativity (Pham & Le, 2024; Ho, 2024), students' limited ability to provide appropriate prompts and evaluate responses (Shoufan, 2023), and distraction from live lectures (Pham & Le, 2024). Technical limitations such as hallucinations, lack of contextual understanding, and its inability to support deeper learning also raised issues for ChatGPT (Kim et al., 2024; Pham & Le, 2024). Despite these drawbacks, ChatGPT continues to receive broad acceptance in language learning (Vo & Nguyen, 2024). Researchers call for innovative practices to effectively integrate AI into language education (Shaikh et al., 2023; Pham & Le 2024; Ho, 2024; Kim et al., 2024).

AI Application in Learning English in Vietnam

In Vietnam, the widespread availability of the internet and smartphones has provided students with opportunities to access advanced technologies such as AI, to support English language learning (Chu et al., 2024). Several studies have investigated how students use AI for this purpose, with most focusing on university-level English majors. According to Nguyen (2024), these students are aware of the benefits AI tools offer in improving English proficiency and are actively incorporating them into their learning routines. For example, the AI-powered Reading Progress tool in Microsoft Teams has been positively received by university students in northern Vietnam for its usefulness in practicing pronunciation (Pham, 2024). Another commonly used tool is POE, which students have found engaging and effective for vocabulary acquisition, reporting high intentions for continued use and recommending it to peers. ChatGPT has also emerged as one of the most widely used AI tools among Vietnamese students, particularly for enhancing writing skills (Ho, 2024; Vo & Nguyen, 2024; Pham & Le, 2024). While these studies demonstrate a growing integration of AI in English language education, they also reveal that most students explore and adopt these tools independently (Chu et al, 2024). This trend highlights both the promising role of AI in supporting English learning and the need for structured guidance to ensure its effective and sustainable implementation in educational settings.

Previous Studies Comparing AI-based Learning with Traditional Methods

Although the core of education has been formed by traditional study methods such as lectures, textbooks, note-taking, memorization, and one-one-one tutoring, AI platforms now offer personalized, flexible, interactive experiences (Rochelle & Sushith, 2024), adapting to individual learning styles (Rukiati et al., 2023; Dikaprio & Diem, 2024), leading to faster acquisition and retention of language concepts (Dhanapal et al., 2024). However, the application of AI in classrooms remains limited (Balabdaoui et al., 2024).

In a comparative analysis, Shahid et al. (2023) found that ChatGPT significantly improved EFL learners' writing and speaking skills, whereas traditional methods proved more effective for vocabulary acquisition. Grammarly was also found to enhance EFL students' essay writing more significantly, particularly in areas of grammar, tense usage, punctuation and revision when compared with traditional approaches (Marghany, 2023). Additionally, Dikaprio and Diem (2024) reported that AI application Talkpal.ai significantly improved university students' English speaking skills which has traditionally been difficult to develop through conventional teaching methods due to time constraints and high teacher-to-student ratio.

In terms of feedback quality on students' writing, Steiss et al. (2024) noted that teachers are more accurate and more tailored to student-specific characteristics, whereas AI can help with immediate feedback at the early stages of writing. Rukiati et al. (2023) also emphasized that AI tools are often more accessible and cost effective than traditional language courses, making language learning more inclusive and widely available. These comparative views could offer deeper insights into the strengths and weaknesses of each method. However, opinions on whether AI-based instruction is superior to traditional approaches were mixed, as learning effectiveness depends on individual learning preferences (Dhanapal et al., 2024).

Method

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed methods design, aiming to provide a deeper understanding of the research questions compared to using either approach independently (Creswell, 2012). In this approach, quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed independently, and then compared and interpreted together.

Participants

The study was conducted at two universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where the adoption of AI tools in education is

emerging. The sample consisted of 100 non-English major students from various disciplines (42% male, 58% female), 97% of whom were freshmen with a small number of sophomores and juniors. They were all students in the author' English classes. The majority of participants were at the pre-intermediate level (66%), followed by intermediate (22%), elementary (8%), and upper-intermediate (4%).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data was gathered using two instruments: a survey questionnaire and ten semi-structured interviews, both conducted in Vietnamese to ensure clarity and accurate understanding. Participants were clearly informed that their involvement was voluntary via a consent statement presented at the beginning of the survey. Additionally, permission for recording was obtained before conducting the interviews.

The questionnaire comprised multiple-choice items and 5-point Likert scale statements ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". It contained 27 questions divided into three sections. The first section asked for students' demographic information including gender, age, year of study, major and English proficiency level. The second section explored students' experiences of using AI in learning English including types of AI tools, and where they learn about these tools. The third section measured students' perceptions on using AI tools, and was further divided into five subsections to fully answer the research questions: (1) perceived usefulness, (2) perceived ease of use, (3) perceived trust, (4) perceived enjoyment, and (5) future intentions. The survey items used in the third section were adapted from Octavia & Nugraha (2024), which was also rooted from TAM framework with the addition of perceived trust and perceived enjoyment. In the present study, six more items on self-reported improvement in English skills were added to the perceived usefulness dimension to gain deeper insights into the effectiveness of AI tools in supporting English language learning.

To enhance the reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was developed through a careful review of existing literature, validated scales and expert consultation. A pilot test was conducted with five students to check for clarity, relevance, internal consistency with some small revisions were made based on their feedback.

Then, the questionnaire was administered to students both on paper in classrooms and online via Google Forms. The paper-based format allowed for direct guidance and encouraged honest responses. Students who were absent on the distribution days were invited to complete the questionnaire online. After data collection, IBM SPSS Statistics 26 was used to conduct a reliability test for the variables in the questionnaire, including five items for "perceived usefulness", five items for "perceived ease of use", four items for "perceived trust", three items for "perceived enjoyment" and three items for "intentions". To ensure the reliability of the data, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency as it is widely regarded as the most common reliability coefficient (Franzen, 2013). According to Janssens et al. (2008), a Cronbach's alpha value between 0.6 and 0.8 is considered acceptable. The analysis confirmed that all variables satisfied this value range. When the questionnaire was considered well-constructed, descriptive statistics were employed to analyze students' responses to the measurements.

The interview consisted of six open-ended questions exploring students' use of AI in learning English, perceived benefits and challenges, comparisons with traditional learning. Participants were coded from S1 to S10, and the data was organized into a matrix in Microsoft Excel to facilitate analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Students' Experiences with Using AI Tools in Learning English

The Most Popular AI Tools Used by University Students

Given the wide range of AI tools available for learning English - some free and others requiring a subscription - students were asked to specify which tools they used, and the results are presented in Figure 2.
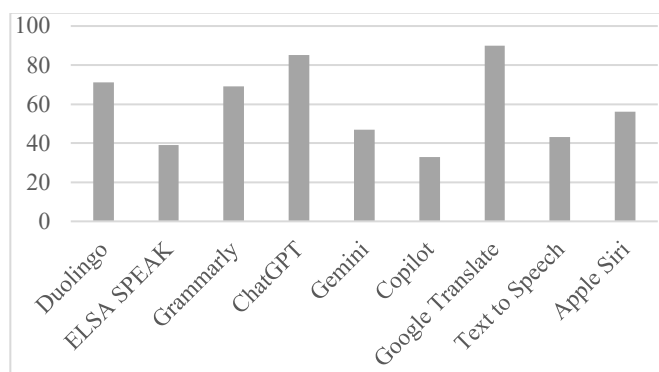
Figure 2. AI tools students have used in learning English

The results highlight students' diverse preferences and needs when choosing AI tools to learn English. As shown in Figure 2, the most widely used tools were Google Translate (90%) and ChatGPT (85%), followed by Duolingo (71%) and Grammarly (69%). Apple Siri (56%) saw moderate usage, while Gemini (47%) and Text-to-Speech tools (43%) were slightly less common. ELSA SPEAK (39%) and Copilot (33%) were the least used.

Balabdaoui et al. (2024) noted that university students commonly used ChatGPT and Grammarly to overcome writer's block, translate, correct texts, and improve writing. Likewise, Sol et al. (2024) reported that Cambodian EFL university students favored Google Translate, ChatGPT and Grammarly due to their effectiveness in translation, grammar improvement, and idea generation.

During the interviews, students further elaborated on their experiences with AI tools. ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Google Translate emerged as the most commonly mentioned. Students (S2, S5, S7) reported using ChatGPT primarily to generate and develop ideas for writing, while S10 used it for refining and correcting writing assignments. As S7 shared:

"*I usually use ChatGPT for grammar exercises, and to clarify difficult questions when I cannot find answers in books. When I get stuck on writing, I simply input a prompt and ChatGPT provides ideas that I can develop further*".

Aligning with Nguyen (2024), who identified Grammarly as a preferred tool among English majors, this study found it was also frequently utilized by non-English major students. Students (S2, S6, S8) found it useful for identifying and correcting grammar errors, and improving grammar knowledge. Consistently, Putri et al. (2024) confirmed that students benefit from Grammarly's advanced features such as checking punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, identifying missing verbs and prepositions.

Additionally, S3 mentioned "*using Google Translate for vocabulary lookup, understanding word usage and parts of speech, and translating entire paragraphs*". These findings are in line with Nguyen (2022), Nguyen (2024) and Margiana and Syafryadin (2023), who also highlighted Google Translate's usefulness in learning idioms and proverbs, and conducting quick word searches.

To improve listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills, some students used ELSA SPEAK, Duolingo, and Memrise (S1, S10). Duolingo, in particular, captured significant student interest, as previous research by Nguyen and Thai (2024) demonstrated its effectiveness in enhancing listening skills, vocabulary and grammar.

These findings underscore the growing integration of AI tools in language learning with students selecting tools based on their specific learning objectives, whether for translation, grammar exercises, writing support or pronunciation practice.

How Students Learn to Use AI Tools

With an aim to investigate whether students receive sufficient guidance on using AI tools effectively, this part of the questionnaire asked students where they learned to use these tools. Figure 3 presents the results.
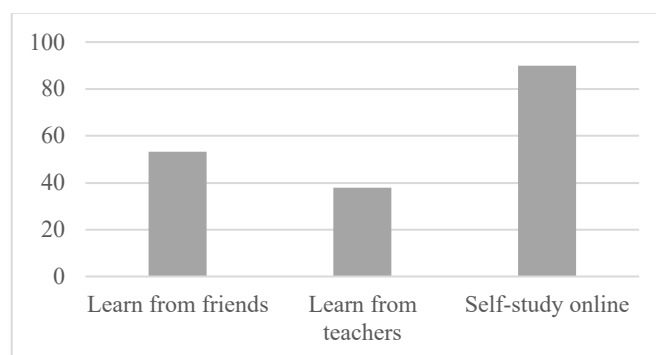
***Figure 3.** How students learn to use AI tools*

Accordingly, most students (90%) reported self-exploring AI tools through online resources. This indicates a strong sense of autonomy among students integrating technology in their study. However, the fact that only 38% received guidance from teachers highlights a gap in formal instruction on AI tools usage. The results aligned with Chu et al. (2024), which suggests that in Vietnam, teachers may not be actively incorporating AI training into their teaching methods, potentially leaving students to navigate these tools without structured support.

In the world context, Balabdaoui et al., (2024) similarly saw very little amount of AI integration in teaching situations and a lack of consistent guidance from educators and institutions. Additionally, 53% of students learned about AI tools from their friends. This shows collaborative nature of learning but raises questions whether informal learning from friends is as effective as structured guidance from trained educators.

Students' Perceptions of Using AI Tools in Learning English

Students' Perceived Usefulness

***Table 1.** Students' perceived usefulness of AI tools in learning English*

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Using AI tools helps improve my English proficiency.	100	3.98	.738
2. Using AI tools helps me learn English faster.	100	3.87	.706
3. AI tools enhance my understanding of English concepts.	100	4.01	.759
4. AI tools improve the efficiency of my English learning.	100	3.93	.742

The results presented in the Table 1 show that students generally perceive AI tools as beneficial for learning English. The highest-rated statement, "AI tools enhance my understanding of English concepts." (Mean = 4.01), suggests that students find AI tools particularly useful in grasping language concepts. Similarly, the statements "Using AI tools helps improve my English proficiency" (Mean = 3.98) and "AI tools improve the efficiency of my English learning." (Mean = 3.93), received high ratings,

indicating that students recognize AI's role in streamlining the learning process.

The interviews corroborate the positive findings from the questionnaire. Many students emphasized the convenience of AI tools, as they enable flexible, self-paced learning. Several students (S2, S3, S9, S10) highlighted the ability to study at anywhere and anytime, while S5 noted that these tools save time and offer private study environments. Additionally, S8 added that AI tools personalize learning, saving both time and financial resources. Some students (S4, S5) further emphasized AI's usefulness of AI tools in self-study.

These positive perceptions are consistent with previous studies emphasizing AI's role in enhancing language proficiency. Studies by Enzelina et al. (2023), Ghafar et al. (2023), Moulieswaran and Kumar (2023) highlight that AI tools provide learners with personalized learning experiences, improve grammar accuracy and create an encouraging environment that helps them achieve their learning goals (Phan, 2023). Especially, AI tools help students remember and retain English concepts for a long term (Dhanapal et al., 2024; Pham & Le, 2024) while also providing interactive language exercises and activities. Sol et al. (2024) further noted that students' positively perceived usefulness of AI tools has been identified as the strongest factor influencing the intention to adopt these technologies.

However, some students expressed concerns about AI's limitations. As S7 stated, "*While these tools are effective for simple exercises, they fall short in addressing tasks requiring critical thinking or adaptability*". Such observation suggests that AI tools perform well in responding to lower-level cognitive tasks but they may require further development to address high-order thinking skills. This aligns with Thanh et al. (2023), who noted that Generative AI tools excel at lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy (e.g., recall and understanding) but struggle with more complex tasks, particularly those requiring creativity and critical analysis.

Students' Self-Reported Skills Improvement

In this study, students were also asked to self-report the language skills they found most improved. Table 2 illustrates the findings.

Table 2. Students' self-reported improvement in English skills

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vocabulary	100	4.03	.731
Grammar	100	3.55	.857
Listening	100	3.81	.929
Speaking	100	3.45	1.019
Reading	100	3.96	.803
Writing	100	3.89	.840

As shown in Table 2, students reported the greatest improvement in vocabulary (Mean = 4.03), reading (Mean = 3.96), and writing (Mean = 3.89), aligning with findings by Nguyen (2024) and Ho (2024). According Ho (2024), students appreciated ChatGPT's effectiveness in addressing English learning challenges, particularly in reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition and essay writing. Similarly, Phan (2023) noted that students frequently use AI tools to enrich their vocabulary and grammar while working on their writing tasks. In this study, students also reported notable improvement in grammar (Mean = 3.55), consistent with the interview responses from S2, S6, S7, S8, who mentioned using AI tools for grammar practice. As S6 stated, "*I installed Grammarly on my laptop so it can help me check grammar errors and revise them. That improves my grammar skills*."

While students reported overall skill improvement, these findings slightly differ from those of Vo and Nguyen (2024), who found that students had more neutral perceptions of skill improvement, despite acknowledging ChatGPT's effectiveness in reading and writing skills. Vo and Nguyen (2024) and Ho (2024) argued that ChatGPT does not significantly improve students' listening and speaking skills. In contrast, these skills received relatively high scores in the current study (Mean = 3.81, and 3.45 respectively). This discrepancy may be attributed to the broader variety of AI tools utilized by students in this study, which may better support the development of a wider range of language skills.

Students' Perceived Ease of Use

Table 3 presents students' opinions on the ease of use of the AI tools. Students generally find AI tools user-friendly, as reflected in the high mean score of 4.04 for "Learning how to use AI tools for studying English is very easy for me". This supports findings from Moulieswaran and Kumar (2023), Phan (2023), and Yilmaz et al. (2023), who reported that students appreciate the simplicity and user-friendly features of AI tools such as Chat GPT, Grammarly and Google Translate.

Table 3. Students' perceived ease of use of AI tools in learning English

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Learning how to use AI tools for studying English is very easy for me.	100	4.04	.751
2. Interacting with AI tools does not require much mental effort.	100	3.19	1.107
3. I am proficient in using AI tools for learning English.	100	3.46	.892
4. I do not encounter any difficulties when using AI tools.	100	3.30	1.059
5. I need guidance on effectively using AI in learning English from teachers, educators, and industry experts.	100	3.46	1.132

However, the lower score (Mean = 3.19) for the statement "Interacting with AI tools does not require much mental effort" suggests that some students find the interaction process moderately demanding. Similarly, statements such as "I do not encounter any difficulties when using AI tools." (Mean = 3.30) and "I need guidance on effectively using AI in learning English from teachers, educators, and industry experts" (Mean =3.46) indicate that while students are generally proficient, some still face challenges and look for support.

These challenges were also revealed during the interviews. S8 expressed, "*My technology knowledge and skills are not good enough to use these AI tools smartly*". S4 added, "*Learning English with AI is only easy and effective for students who have basic English skills and critical thinking abilities. Therefore, teacher's guidance is essential prevent over-reliance or blindly copying*".

This is consistent with Enzelina et al. (2023) who emphasized the need for clear instructions from lecturers. Additionally, Yilmaz et al., (2023) suggested that the gender disparities may influence technology acceptance, with male students reportedly finding AI tools easier to use than their female counterparts. This could partially explain the variation in students' self-reported ease of use in the present study.

Students' Perceived Trust

Table 4. Students' perceived trust of AI tools in learning English

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I trust the knowledge provided by AI tools.	100	3.42	.819
2. When I do not fully understand an aspect of knowledge, I ask AI instead of consulting a teacher.	100	3.28	1.048
3. AI's answers are accurate and reliable.	100	3.06	.862
4. I am concerned about the security and privacy of my personal information when interacting with AI tools.	100	3.46	.989

The results reveal a moderate level of trust. The statement "I trust the knowledge provided by AI tools." received a mean score of 3.42 indicating that students do not fully trust in the information AI provides. Similarly, the statement "When I do not fully understand an aspect of knowledge, I ask AI instead of consulting a teacher." had a slightly slower score (Mean = 3.28), showing that students may use AI tools as a supplementary resource, not a primary source. This is in line with Pham and Le (2024), who observed a lack of consensus on ChatGPT's effectiveness in providing clarification for questions compared to educators.

Notably, the statement "AI's answers are accurate and reliable." received the lowest score (Mean = 3.06), indicating that students may have doubts about the precision of AI-generated responses. These findings align with what students revealed in the interviews, where S1 mentioned encountering inaccurate information from Google Translate; S5 and S9 noted that AI sometimes produces ambiguous translations and struggles with words that have multiple meanings. S4 also pointed out that AI can confuse specialized English translations.

Interestingly, the statement "I am concerned about the security and privacy of my personal information when interacting with AI tools." had the highest score (Mean = 3.46). This indicates that students view data security and privacy as significant concerns when using AI tools, as S2 stated, "*My biggest concern is the security of my personal information when I share my writing for AI to check it.*" Similarly, S1 noted, "*To use any AI tool, users have to provide their personal information, so our data can be easily leaked*." S4 added, "*Many people misuse users' information and images for illegal activities or to create sensitive content*."

Generally, although students perceive AI tools as trustworthy to some extent, concerns about privacy and occasional doubts the accuracy of AI responses influence their level of trust. The findings align with Yilmaz et al. (2023) and Kim et al. (2022), who emphasized that credibility significantly influences student's confidence in AI. Similarly, Ho (2024) noted that despite trusting ChatGPT's capabilities as an automatic translator, grammar checker and paraphraser, it may not create flawlessly polished final creative products. Moreover, Nguyen (2024) and Balabdaoui et al. (2024) identified accuracy, reliability and potential bias as key concerns regarding AI-generated information. Trust has been consistently identified in the literature as a critical factor in technology adoption, as noted by Dahri et al. (2024).

Students' Perceived Enjoyment

Table 5. Students' perceived enjoyment of AI tools in learning English

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I enjoy using AI in learning English.	100	3.92	.849

	N		
2. Using AI tools to learn English is a good idea.	100	4.09	.767
3. Learning English with AI tools is fun.	100	3.74	.928

Table 5 presents students' perception of enjoyment when using AI tools for learning English. Accordingly, students generally show positive attitudes. The statement "Using AI tools to learn English is a good idea." gained the highest score (Mean = 4.09), indicating that students strongly view the usage of AI tools to learn English as beneficial and appealing. The statement "I enjoy using AI in learning English." also received a high score (Mean = 3.92), reflecting students' general satisfaction and positive experiences with AI-assisted learning. Additionally, the statement "Learning English with AI tools is fun." received relatively high score (Maen = 3.74). These numbers suggest that students find their application of AI tools in learning English enjoyable and motivating.

These results support the findings of Abd Rahim et al. (2023) and Dahri et al. (2024), who reported that many participants described their experiences with ChatGPT as both engaging and enjoyable, attributing this to the tool's interactive nature and its ability to stimulate curiosity and interest in learning English. Dahri et al. (2024) further highlighted that students associated their enjoyment with positive emotions, including curiosity, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. Similarly, Phan (2023) discovered that AI learning tools increase students' engagement and interest, especially when students were excited about gaining new experiences through the use of these tools. This increased engagement can be attributed to AI's ability to provide real-time feedback, giving students a sense of immediate and enthusiastic support. Pham and Le (2024) also emphasized ChatGPT's ability to improve students' participation and confidence during classroom activities.

Students' Future Intention of Using AI Tools in Learning English

Table 6 illustrates students' future intention regarding the use of AI tools in their English study.

Table 6. Students' future intention

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I will continue using AI tools in learning English.	100	4.19	.692
2. I will use AI tools more frequently when studying English.	100	3.89	.827
3. I will recommend useful AI tools for learning English to my friends	100	3.86	.817

The findings reveal a strong tendency to continue utilizing AI tools. The statement "I will continue using AI tools in learning English." had the highest score (Maen = 4.19). This indicates a clear commitment among students to incorporate AI tools into their ongoing learning practices. The other two statements "I will use AI tools more frequently when studying English." and "I will recommend useful AI tools for learning English to my friends." also got high scores (Mean = 3.89 and 3.86, respectively). This means that students will increase their usage frequency and be willing to advocate for the benefits of AI tools to their peers, indicating a promising outlook for the adoption and integration of AI in English language education.

The findings align with Vo and Nguyen (2024), who observed a high intention among students to continue using ChatGPT for learning English, reflecting students' strong acceptance and favorable attitudes toward it. Additionally, students expressed a willingness to invest more time and effort in improving their use the tool (Liu, 2023). Similarly, Nguyen (2024) reported that English-major students show high expectations for future use of AI tools in their learning in the future as these tools will be more

developed and integrated into English teaching and learning.

Students' Comparison of Learning English with AI Tools to Conventional Methods

Perceived Benefits and Limitations of AI Tools in Learning English

A key advantage of AI tools, as noted by several students (S5, S8, S10), is personalized learning. They provide quick feedback (S8), and particularly "*suitable for those who like self-studying*" (S10). Many students (S2, S4, S5, S8) noted that this method helps them save time from travelling to physical classrooms, allowing them to study at anywhere and anytime. AI also provides "*rich learning resources*" (S6), varied lessons and methods that enhance engagement (S1, S4). Notably, S2 pointed out that "*AI's pronunciation is very accurate, something not all teachers can achieve*".

However, AI tools have their own limitations. A major drawback is AI's inability to fully understand cultural contexts and translate specialized terminologies, which can lead to confusion (S1, S2, S4, S5, S9). Additionally, the lack of interaction with teachers and peers (S2, S5) can make learning less engaging and even boring (S10). These issues align with Rukiati et al. (2023), who warned that excessive reliance in AI in language learning may lead to the dehumanization of the learning process and hinder student's development of interpersonal and communication skills.

Perceived Benefits and Limitations of Traditional Learning

When discussing traditional methods, several students showed a preference for classroom learning. They appreciated the direct interaction with teachers, who can give immediate support and clear explanations (S2), assess students' proficiency levels (S2, S3), and adapt teaching methods accordingly (S3). This view is supported by Steiss et al. (2024), who emphasized that teachers are better to provide high quality, personalized feedback, particularly in students' writing.

Students also highlighted the motivational role of teachers (S2, S8, S10). As S5 stated, "*In traditional classrooms, students experience a real environment where they can interact and communicate naturally. Since the primary goal of leaning English is to communicate with people, not machines, the direct learning helps to develop socio-communication skills*".

Similarly, S8 noted, "*Traditional methods expose students to cultural contexts, diverse teaching approaches, and soft skills development*". S7 added, "*Learning with teachers creates genuine emotions and human connections, making lesson more engaging.*"

Moreover, some students (S8, S9) mentioned that teachers can provide thorough explanations based on their own experience. This perspective is consistent with Pham and Le (2024), who found that students believe in-person teachers excel at offering detailed, experienced-based answers tailored to individual needs.

Nevertheless, traditional learning has certain shortcomings. S8 pointed out that it lacks personalization and provides slower feedback, a concern echoed by several previous studies (Rukiati et al., 2023; Rochelle & Sushith, 2024; Dikaprio & Diem, 2024; Dhanapal et al., 2024). Additionally, some students (S6, S8) mentioned that traditional learning can be more expensive due to the need for authentic dictionaries or other supplementary materials, for example. Rukiati et al. (2023) similarly argued that AI learning platforms are more affordable than traditional language courses. Finally, S1 commented that students can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the volume of lessons in traditional settings, an opinion also reported by Enzelina et al. (2023). Encouragingly, Pham and Le (2024) suggested that AI tools like ChatGPT can help alleviate the workload associated with classwork, providing a more efficient learning experience.

Integration of AI Tools with Traditional Methods

After evaluating both approaches, all students agreed that AI should be incorporated into traditional teaching methods as a supportive tool, not a replacement for human teachers. This viewpoint is consistent with Shaikh et al., (2023), Balabdaoui et al. (2024) and Pham and Le (2024), who emphasized that while AI tools are valuable, they should complement rather than replace traditional methods. Most students in this study believed that this practice could enhance motivation and engagement (S1, S2, S6, S8, S9). As S8 explained, "*Integrating AI into teaching methods allows both teachers and students to optimize their teaching and learning process, save time, improve interaction and motivation, and access rich learning resources*". S7 added, "*This is also an opportunity move to innovative and creative teaching and learning methods*".

However, Dhanapal et al. (2024) cautioned that learner preferences should be considered when implementing AI-based instruction, as not all students find AI more effective than traditional methods. S4 suggested, "*Once students have foundational English proficiency, teachers can guide them how to study with AI effectively without too much dependence on them, as many students often copy AI's generated answers without fully understanding them*".

This concern is echoed by Pham and Le (2024), who warned that over-reliance on tools like ChatGPT could hinder students' ability to think critically and creatively. Therefore, Ho (2024) emphasized that in this AI-driven era, teachers should not only serve as a language instructor but also act as a trustworthy helper, guiding students in using AI for tasks such as translation, grammar checking, brainstorming. Vo and Nguyen (2024) similarly advocated for providing formal instruction on how to use AI tools effectively in English learning. Furthermore, Ho (2024) stresses the importance of encouraging students to apply critical thinking to refine their ideas and ensure the quality of their works (Ho, 2024).

Conclusion

This study explored how university students in Vietnam use AI tools in their English language learning, their perceptions of these tools and how they compare AI-assisted learning with traditional methods. The findings reveal that university students actively integrate different AI tools for various language skills development. The high frequency of using AI tools indicates that students find them effective and engaging. These patterns can be better understood within Vietnam's broader educational and technological context. Vietnam's recent national policies have made substantial efforts to advance and implement digital transformation and educational innovation (Nguyen, 2024). Additionally, the increasing accessibility of smartphones and internet connectivity has facilitated the integration of AI tools in everyday learning practices (Chu et al., 2024). However, while students are eager adopters, the lack of institutional support and clear instructions for AI use may limit the strategic and critical application of these tools.

Through the lens of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), students perceived AI tools as useful, particularly for better understanding of English concepts, improving proficiency and increasing learning efficiency. Vocabulary, reading and writing were reported as the most enhanced areas through using AI tools, but mixed perceptions on speaking and listening effectiveness suggest tool functionality varies by skill focus. Although many students found AI tools easy to use, others highlighted the need for teachers' guidance to prevent over-reliance and ensure proper use. Trust in AI was moderate mainly due to concerns about accuracy, reliability, privacy and critical thinking capabilities. Nevertheless, students found AI learning enjoyable, reinforcing the role of perceive enjoyment in technology adoption. As students' high satisfaction levels positively influence their intention to continue using AI tools in learning English (Davis, 1989; Abdalla, 2024), many expressed a willingness to use AI more frequently and recommend it to peers. This reflects a promising outlook for the integration of AI in language education.

When comparing AI-based and traditional learning, students appreciated AI's efficiency, personalization, and instant feedback but recognized that traditional learning offers richer interpersonal interaction, motivation and cultural understanding. Instead of replacing teachers, students saw AI as a supplementary tool in their learning process. This view supports a balanced approach to AI integration in language education.

Implications

This study offers practical implications for different stakeholders. For teachers, structured integration of AI tools in English instruction is essential. Although students actively use AI for various learning purposes, they mostly explore the tools independently or through peer collaboration, without formal guidance. To maximize the benefits of AI-based learning, teachers should provide explicit instruction on effective AI use, including evaluating AI-generated content, avoiding over-reliance, and leveraging AI for skill development. Additionally, teachers should incorporate AI tools into classroom activities to enrich traditional teaching methods ensuring that students receive both personalized support from AI and human interaction which is essential for language learning. For instance, teachers could use guided prompts for AI-assisted writing tasks followed by peer and teacher feedback to build metacognitive skills. Given that students find AI tools enjoyable and motivating, teachers can further enhance engagement by incorporating gamified AI-based learning activities such as AI-driven vocabulary challenges (e.g. adaptive quizzes and AI-generated word puzzles) and interactive role-playing tasks to make learning more dynamic and interactive.

For administrators, curriculum designers and policy makers, institutional support is crucial for integrating AI in English education. Universities should develop AI literacy curricula through workshops, training sessions or digital resources to promote responsible AI use. For example, workshops could include training sections on how to use AI for academic writing support, which covers ethical use, prompt engineering, and revision strategies, or training sections on evaluating AI output, which covers identifying factual errors or biases. Digital resources may include tutorial videos on effectively using different types of AI tools or interactive self-paced modules on responsible AI use.

For AI tool developers, addressing concerns about data privacy, accuracy and critical thinking capabilities is a key. In

addition, improving AI tools to provide more contextualized responses and interactive feedback can bridge the gap between AI-based and traditional learning experiences, making AI tools more engaging and pedagogically valuable.

Limitations and Recommendations

The present study provides valuable insights, however, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, it mainly relied on self-reported data, which may not accurately reflect learning outcomes. Future research should incorporate objective measures or experimental designs to better assess AI's impact on language proficiency. Secondly, the small sample size, with predominantly of first-year students (97%), from two universities in Vietnam may limit generalizability, as experiences with AI may differ among institutions and contexts. Future studies should include participants from different academic years and institutions ensure greater representativeness. Thirdly, the study only focuses on students' experiences and perceptions without extensively investigating teachers' roles in applying AI-based teaching. Future research should explore teachers' use of AI and its effects on learning. Additionally, while the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provided a useful framework for understanding student perceptions of AI tools, it primarily emphasizes individual attitudes and behavioral intentions. This focus may overlook broader systemic, pedagogical, or institutional factors such as curriculum design, technological infrastructure, or professional development that also significantly influence AI integration. Future research could combine TAM with complementary frameworks (e.g., TPACK) to capture a more holistic view of AI adoption in educational settings. Finally, as AI technology evolves rapidly, ongoing research is needed to track the developments in AI-based learning and to assess their long-term implication for English education.

Abbreviations

AI: Artificial Intelligence
TAM: Technology Acceptance Model
TPACK: Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study can be found at:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CZM2Z-G0ycSN0J9yRqVjObJEJ63TMkh0?usp=drive_link

Conflicts of Interest

"The authors declare no conflicts of interest."

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Biography

    Dau Thi Thanh Luy is a lecturer at the University of Management of Technology, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She has more than 12 years of experience in teaching English to all ages, designing general English training curricula and assessment. She also works as a Speaking Examiner for Cambridge Assessment English, Cambridge University Press and Assessment. She has participated in various international conferences on TESOL both as a presenter and an attendee. Her research interests include technology in language education, remote teaching and assessment.

Research Field

Technology in language education, AI in language education, remote teaching