TFL Master's students' experiences and perceptions of using AI in learning

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TFL Master's students' experiences and perceptions of using AI in learning

Abstract

This study explores the experiences and perceptions of TFL Master's students in the Two Foreign Languages program regarding the use of artificial intelligence in learning. As AI tools are increasingly integrated into higher education, it is important to understand how Master's students' use these technologies for academic and language-learning purposes. This study is guided by two research questions: first, what are TFL Master's students' experiences of using AI in learning? Second, what are TFL Master's students'perceptions of using AI in learning?

The study employed a qualitative research design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 Master's students enrolled in the Two Foreign Languages program. The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, in order to identify key themes related to students' experiences, perceived benefits, challenges, and ethical concerns. The findings show that Master's students generally use AI as a supportive tool in their academic work. Participants reported that AI helps them save time, improve the quality of written assignments, generate ideas, organize their thoughts and develop academic language. At the same time, the participants expressed several concerns, particularly regarding plagiarism, inaccurate information, and uncertainty about appropriate use. The study concludes that AI tools can support Master's students academic and language learning when they are used responsibly. However, clear institutional guidelines, practical training and academic support are needed to help students use AI tools effectively, ethically, and independently in their learning process.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, master's students, two foreign languages, learning, students experiences, students perceptions

Екі шет тілі магистранттарының оқуда жасанды интеллектіні қолдану тәжірибесі мен көзқарасы

Аңдатпа

Бұл зерттеу екі шет тілі магистранттарының оқу үдерісінде жасанды интеллектіні қолдану тәжірибесі мен көзқарастарын зерттейді. Жасанды интеллект құралдары білім беру саласында кеңінен қолданылатындықтан, магистранттардың бұл құралды академиялық мақсатта қалай пайдаланатындарын түсіну маңызды. Бұл зерттеу екі зерттеу сұрағына негізделген. Екі шет тілі магистранттарының оқу үдерісінде жасанды интеллектіні қолдану тәжірибелері қандай? Екі шет тілі магистранттарының оқу үдерісінде жасанды интеллектіні қолдануға қатысты көзқарастыры қандай? Зерттеуде сапалық зерттеу әдісі қолданылды. Деректер 12 екі шет тілі магистранттарымен жүргізілген жартылай құрымдалған сұхбат арқылы жиналды. Сұхбат деректері студенттердің тәжірибелеріне, қабылданған артықшылықтарына, қиындықтарына және этикалық алаңдаушылықтарына қатысты негізігі тақырыптарды анықтау үшін тақырыптық талдау әдісімен өңделді. Зерттеу нәтижелері магистранттардың жасанды интеллектіні негізінен уақытты үнемдеуге, жазба жұмыстарының сапасын жақсартуға және идеялар қалыптастыруға көмектесетін қосымша құрал ретінде пайдаланатындарын көрсетті. Алайда қатысушылар плагиат, шамадан тыс тәуелділік, жалған ақпарат сияқты мәселелерге алаңдаушылық білдірді. Зерттеу қорытындысы жасанды интеллектіні дұрыс қолданған жағдайда магистранттардың академиялық және тіл үйренуде көмекші құрал бола алатынын көрсетеді. Дегенмен, магистранттарға бұл құралды тиімді, этикалық және дербес пайдалану үшін, нақты нұсқаулықтар мен тренингтер қажет.

Түйін сөздер: жасанды интеллект, магистранттар, екі шет тілі, студенттердің тәжірибесі, студенттердің қабылдауы

Опыт и восприятие магистрантов специальности Два иностранных языка по использованию искусственного интеллекта в обучении

Аннотоция

Данное исследование изучает опыт и восприятие студентов магистратуры по направлению Два иностранных языка в использовании искусственного интеллекта в обучении. Поскольку инструменты искусственного интеллекта все активнее применяются в высшем образовании, важно понять как магистранты используют их в академических целях. Исследовано было сосредоточено на двух исследовательских вопросах. Во-первых, каков опыт магистрантов два иностранных языка в использовании ИИ в обучении? Во-вторых, как магистранты воспринимают использование ИИ в обучении? В исследовании использовался качественный дизайн. Данные были собраны посредством полуструктурированных интервью с 12 студентами магистрантами специальности два иностранных языка. Интервью были проанализированы с помощью тематического анализа для выявление ключевых тем, связанных с опытом студентов воспринимаемыми преимуществами, трудностями и этическими вопросами. Результаты показывают, что магистранты в целом используют ИИ как вспомогательный инструмент, который помогает экономить время, улучшать качество письменных работ и генерировать идеи. Однако, участники выразили обеспокоенность по поводу плагиата, чрезмерный зависимости от ИИ и недостоверной информации. В заключение отмечаются, что ИИ могут поддерживать академическое и языковое обучение магистрантов при условии их ответственного использования. Вместе с тем, необходимы четкие рекомендации и обучение, чтобы студентам эффективно, этично и самостоятельно применять инструменты ИИ.

Ключевые слова: искусственный интеллект, магистранты, два иностранных языка, опыт студентов, восприятие студентов

Chapter 1

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has developed rapidly and brought significant changes to many areas, including education. In recent years, the integration of AI technologies into educational settings has become not just an opinion, but necessity for modern language learning (Liunokas, 2025). According to Oxford Dictionaries (2026), Artificial Intelligent (AI) refers to the use of computer systems capable of performing tasks or producing outputs that are typically linked to human cognitive functions. AI- driven tools such as automated writing assistance, machine translation systems and chatbots are available to individuals learning foreign languages. According to Muñoz-Basols et al. (2025), the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 marked a significant step in making generative artificial intelligence more accessible. The public availability of ChatGPT-3, combined with its ease of use, contributed to its rapid adaptation across various sectors, reaching 100 million users within two months (Yankouskaya et al., 2025). However, ChatGPT is banned or unavailable in approximately 20 countries due to security concerns (Lu, 2025). Despite these concerns, leading high education institutions acknowledge that AI plays an important role in shaping the present and future of education (Kuleto et al., 2021). The Higher Education Policy Institute and Kortex report indicates a substantial rise in students' use of AI tools,

increasing from from 53% to 88%. This increase suggests that AI has become a regular part of students' academic activities. In relation to language learning,this trend is particularly significant. AI-based language learning tools refer to digital programmes that apply AI algorithms to facilitate the acquisition and improvement of foreign language skills (De la Vall Araya,2023). AI-driven learning tools attract people because they offer personalized content and support conversation through chatbots. In addition, these tools use AI, gamification to improve language learning (Peña-Acuña et al.,2024). In the study by Qiao and Zhao (2023), the results indicated that learners using AI demonstrated greater improvement in both speaking skills and self-regulation compared to non-AI-learners. Another study by Yan et al. (2025) found that AI personalized learning tools demonstrated positive effects on enhancing learners' pleasure, reducing anxiety level, and strengthening self-efficacy.

1.1 Background information

In the last few years, the widespread use of artificial intelligence has changed how university students approach learning tasks (Schmidt et al., 2025). In the master's degree Two Foreign Languages (TFL) program, students are expected to demonstrate high levels of critical thinking and high English proficiency. In this case, AI tools should act as "active collaborators" in the learning process. The availability of these tools enable learners to generate ideas, reformulate sentences, simulate conversations and receive feedback. However, the accessibility of such tools may cause other issues. For example, the findings from Gerlich's study underscore a critical tension between AI-driven efficiency and human cognitive autonomy. Frequently relying on others or tools to do analytical tasks may weaken long-term critical thinking skills (Gerlich, 2025).

Historically, technology integration in language education has begun with Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). Lavy (1997) defined this term as the exploration and study of computer applications in language teaching and learning. Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) enables teachers to enhance students' vocabulary and grammar by incorporating multimedia materials (Thenmozhi et al.,2023). Over time, CALL evolved into more interactive multimedia platforms and later into Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) refers to using mobile devices such as cell phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), and smartphones, tablets to facilitate language learning(Yaman et al.,2016). Despite these benefits, MALL applications still primarily delivered fixed content. The current phase of AI development includes AI systems that can understand language, talk with learners and give feedback. Unlike early technologies, AI tools can analyze input, generate customized responses, and simulate human-like interactions.

Nevertheless,a significant gap exists between the technological capabilities of AI and our understanding of its impact on the cognitive process of advanced language acquisition. While Masters' students use AI for translation, grammar correction, and stylistic polishing, it is still uncertain whether these tools support long-term learning or "linguistic dependency".

1.2 Problem statement

Although artificial intelligence tools are increasingly used by students, existing research primarily focused on undergraduate students. Limited research has been given to Masters' students of Two Foreign Languages programme. Moreover, most studies examine the effectiveness of AI and impact on students' learning outcomes, student's and teacher's

views on its use (Almasri, 2024; Msambwa, 2025). As future English language teachers, MA TFL students' attitudes may influence their professional practices. The lack of empirical evidence in this area creates a gap in understanding how AI shapes postgraduate students. Therefore, there is a need to investigate MA TFL students' experience and perceptions of using AI in learning.

1.3 Purpose

This study has two main aims: first, to explore TFL Master's students' experience of using artificial intelligence (AI) tools in learning. Second, to examine students' perceptions of AI integration in their academic and linguistic development. To achieve this aim, the study addresses following objectives:

- To review and analyze the theoretical and empirical literature concerning AI-assisted learning;
- To explore the ways in which TFL Master's students use AI tools in academic context;
- To investigate students' perceptions of the advantages, limitations, and potential risks of AI use;

1.4 Significance

The study is significant because it adds to existing research by focusing on the TFL Master's students' experiences and perceptions. Although AI tools are becoming common in education, little research has focused on how Master's students' use these technologies or how they perceive their role in academic learning. By examining master's students' perspectives, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of AI tools on language learning, learner autonomy, and digital engagement. In the context of Kazakhstan,

relatively few studies have examined AI use in higher education (Sharshova et al. 2025; Kemelbekova, 2024). Therefore, the current study aims to fill this gap by exploring AI use in higher education in Kazakhstan.

1.5 Research questions

Research question 1: What are TFL masters' students' experiences of using AI in learning?

Research question 2: What are TFL master's students' perceptions of using AI in learning?

1.6 The thesis structure

This thesis consists of six chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the research and includes such aspects as the background of the study, the research problem, its purpose and importance, and research questions. In Chapter Two, the author analyzes relevant literature on such aspects as AI in education, academic writing, language learning, and students' experience and perception of AI technologies. Besides, this chapter outlines the theoretical framework underlying the current study based on the TAM and Expectation-Confirmation Model. In Chapter Three, the author outlines research design, participant selection, sampling technique, data collection techniques, and procedures for data analysis. In Chapter Four, the findings obtained after data analysis are provided. These results are discussed in Chapter Five in regard to research questions and related literature. Finally, Chapter Six is devoted to summarizing findings, acknowledging limitations of the current study, and suggesting further research directions.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction to theoretical frameworks

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has intensified the need to understand how students use, perceive, and adopt it in learning contexts. AI tools offer substantial pedagogical potential, however their effectiveness depends on students' acceptance, perceived value and sustained engagement. As a result, theoretical models explaining technology adaptation provide an essential foundation for examining students' experience and perceptions of the use of AI. Among the most influential frameworks, this study is grounded on the two models: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Expectation-Confirmation model (ECM). The rationale for selecting these theories was based on their relevance to the research objectives and their ability to explain both the

adaptation and and continued use of AI. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) primarily explains initial acceptance of technology based on users' beliefs. On the other hand, Expectation-Confirmation Model (ECM) focuses on post-adoptation behavior and continuance initiation. Together these two models provide a comprehensive theoretical framework to explore both the acceptance and sustained use of AI tools among TFL Masters' students.

2.2 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

As information and communication technologies continue to develop and become widely used, the question of the acceptance or rejection of these technologies become an important issue. As a result, many theories have been developed to explain the factors influencing technology acceptance. Among them, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most influential theoretical frameworks devoted to explaining users' acceptance and adoption of information technologies. This theory was introduced by Fred Davis in 1989. Among several theoretical models, this theory is widely applied and tested (Ma et al., 2004). TAM was designed to predict and explain determinants of computer technology acceptance in organizational contexts. The model is grounded on Theory Reasoned Action (TRA), developed by Feishbein and Azjen in 1975. Theory Reasoned Action suggests that beliefs influence attitudes, which then form intentions that lead to actual behavior.

The TAM framework suggests that users' acceptance of technology is mainly influenced by two beliefs: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU).

Perceived usefulness

Perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which an individual believes that a particular system can enhance their task performance. In the context of AI in TFL program, perceived usefulness may manifest as students' beliefs that AI tool:

- Improve academic writing quality;
- Enhance grammar and vocabulary accuracy;
- Support research and literature review process;
- Facilitate idea generation;
- Save time during assignments;

Perceived usefulness (PU) is often viewed as one of the most influential factors predicting behavioral intention in TAM based studies.

Perceived ease of use

Perceived ease of use describes the extent to which a person believes that using a particular system is simple, clear, and requires little effort. This includes clarity interface, simplicity of interaction, and cognitive load required to operate the technology.

In this case, PEOU may include:

- Simplicity of prompt design;
- Accessibility;
- Minimal technical training requirements;
- Intuitive Interaction;

Behavioral intention (BI) and Actual Use

Behavioral intention refers to a user's deliberate willingness or plan to use a particular technology. In the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), behavioral intention is

a direct predictor of actual system usage. In this study, behavioral intention may reflect students' willingness to:

- Continue using AI tools in coursework;
- Integrate AI into research writing;
- Recommend AI to peers;
- Rely on AI for language-related tasks;

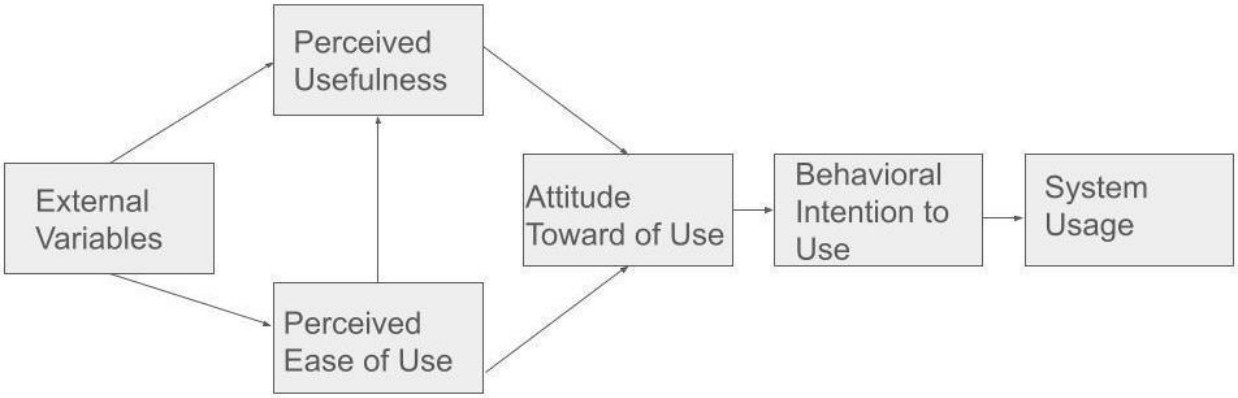


Figure 1. Technology Acceptance Model framework

The structural logic of TAM can be explained as follows: Perceived ease of use-Perceived usefulness; Perceived Usefulness-Behavioral intention to use: Perceived ease of use- Behavioral intention; Behavioral Intention-Actual use.

The theoretical basis for the formation of the suggested structure is provided by the cognitive evaluation theory. People evaluate a particular system in terms of its instrumental value and effort expectancy, both of which determine intention and, consequently, behavior.

In regards to AI tools employed by students, there are several reasons why TAM is appropriate as a theoretical framework that may be applied for examining how they perceive and adopt new technologies systematically. Researchers have used the theory to

explore student acceptance of learning management systems, mobile learning applications, and online learning platforms (Alassafi, 2022; Fathema et al. 2015; Syafika et al. 2024). It is empirically proven that perceived usefulness was a decisive factor in forming intention among college learners who perceived technologies as something that helps improve academic results (Abdullah et al. 2016; Al-Rahmi et al. 2021).

Though widely accepted, the theory has been criticized because of its focus on cognitive evaluations and lack of consideration of post-adoption factors like satisfaction and expectations confirmations. Thus, the model is concerned about initial adoption rather than sustained usage. Furthermore, TAM lacks information on emotions, ethics, and exceptional dimensions.

Table 1

Technology Acceptance model and its application to this study

TAM component	Explanation	Meaning in this study
Perceived usefulness (PU)	An individual's level of confidence in the belief that he/she will gain increased effectiveness or productivity using the technology	Refers to Master's students' beliefs that AI tools help improve learning processes, academic performance, writing quality, idea generation, language accuracy, study efficiency

Perceived ease of use (PEOU)	The ease or convenience an individual perceives in utilizing a certain technology without putting in much effort.	Refers to how easily TFL master's students' can use AI tools for learning activities such as writing, studying, brainstorming, and understanding academic materials
Attitude toward use	Users' attitudes toward using a particular technology, whether positive or negative	Refers to TFL Master's students' overall opinions and feelings toward AI use in learning, including, enthusiasm, trust, concern, or skepticism
Behavioral intention to use	Behavioral intention refers to user's willingness and intention to continue using a specific technology	Refers to Master's students' willingness or plans to continue using AI tools in their academic and language learning activities

Actual use	The real use of a technology in practical situations	Refers to how TFL Master's students actually use AI tools in learning tasks such as academic writing, summarizing, grammar checking, idea generation, and research activities

2.3 Expectation- Confirmation Model

The Expectation- Confirmation Model (ECM), created by Bhattacherjee in 2001. This model is one of the most renowned models in the field of determining the continuation intentions of users in regard to information systems. In contrast to previous models such as the TAM model, which focuses on initial acceptance and adaptation, the ECM model emphasizes post-adaptation behaviors and analyzes their determinants. This distinction is very important, as sustained usage is often more critical to the long-term success of a system than initial adoption.

ECM is grounded in Expectation-Confirmation Theory (ECT) originally developed in the field of customer behavior. According to this theory, individuals form expectations about a product or service before using it. After experiencing the product, they compare their expectations met or exceeded, when expectations are not fulfilled. Positive confirmation leads to greater satisfaction, whereas negative disconfirmation may result in dissatisfaction and discontinuance.

Table 2

Expectation- Confirmation Model and its application to this study

ECM component	Explanation	Meaning in this study
Expectation	Before using a system, users have expectations about it	MA students have expectations that AI tools will help with writing, understanding, saving time, and idea generation
Confirmation	After using the system, users compare their real experience with their expectations	Students compare their actual experience of using AI with what they expected before using it
Perceived Usefulness	If users think the system is helpful and improves performance, they see it as useful	Students decide whether AI tools useful for academic tasks such as writing,translation, grammar checking, and brainstorming
Satisfaction	When expectations are met or exceeded, users feel satisfied	If AI tools help students as expected, they feel satisfied with using them

Continuance Intention	Satisfaction and usefulness influence whether users continue using the system	If students find AI useful and are satisfied, they are more likely to continue using it in learning

2.4 Artificial Intelligence in educational contexts

The application of artificial intelligence (AI) technology in education transforms traditional ways of teaching and learning. The term artificial intelligence was first introduced by John McCartyhy, at the Dartmouth workshop. However, research focusing on the use of Artificial Intelligence has attracted scholarly attention for more than 30 years (Luckin et al., 2016). Nowadays, AI has transformed modern education by introducing a shift towards personalized, learner-centered approaches to learning and instruction.The evolution of AI technology in education might be regarded as the next step towards innovative applications of computer technology in education. More specifically, AI can be seen as an advanced stage in the evolution of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Previously, computers were primarily used to deliver educational content to learners. However, with the rapid advancement of AI today, these tools have incorporated a range of new features. Adaptive learning, immediate feedback, content recommendation, personalized learning can be considered as key functions of AI in education.

As a result of these features increased enhanced student engagement, flexible personalized learning, and improved academic outcomes can be observed (Vieriu & Petrea,

2025). All these functions become especially important in the process of language education.

Currently, most students use some AI technology as a part of their academic practices. In particular, at the Master's program level, TFL students are needed to write research papers, make logical and well-argued claims, and develop a thesis paper. For these purposes, different online AI assistants such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, or QuillBot can be used to generate ideas, paraphrase text, detect errors, and adjust academic style. From the standpoint of students, AI is not a technical innovation alone. Rather, it becomes a learning companion providing assistance to students throughout their academic writing experience. Most commonly, students use AI technology to facilitate the writing process in foreign languages. AI might help students express complicated ideas clearly, find suitable vocabulary, and make coherent and cohesive texts. As a result, AI supports the enhancement of language abilities and academic proficiency of students. Song and Song (2023) found that ChatGPT assisted language learning significantly improved EFL students' academic writing skills and writing motivation. Their study showed improvement in several areas of writing, including organization, coherence, grammar, vocabulary and language use. However, students' experience with AI is not fully positive. Although all participants of the study admit the usefulness of the technology, many of them are concerned about possible negative consequences. First of all, some people are afraid that AI will increase the dependence of students from this technology and hamper the development of autonomous writing skills.

Another issue related to students' experience of using AI is associated with ethics (Holmes, 2023; Vieriu & Petrea, 2025). Holmes (2023) highlights three main problems.

The first is lack of accuracy, the second is reproduction of opinions that are the most common. The third problem is AI relies on data collected on the internet, which often contains biases and harmful content. Specifically, there is a great deal of ambiguity around questions concerning the use of AI content as a part of students' academic papers.

Beyond ethical issues, the most continuous issue regarding AI usage remains the protection of personal data. The findings of the “2024 Personal Information Protection and Utilization Survey” indicate that nine out ten respondents recognized the importance of protecting personal data. While educational institutions push for AI adoption, researchers emphasize the importance of data privacy. Holmes (2023) claims that privacy and data protection are fundamental considerations. It is crucial to educational institutions and technology developers to the responsible handling of data.

Finally, students' perceptions of AI technology are affected by a number of conflicting factors. AI technology can be seen by students as an additional learning resource contributing to the development of their skills. On the other hand, students regard AI as a potential threat to their academic achievements and ethical integrity (Qu et al., 2025). For this reason, examining students’ perceptions of AI technology from different perspectives is necessary.

In summary, AI technology in education has gained a considerable popularity among students. Careful integration of AI tools can support academic writing practices and contribute to more effective learning. However, the efficient implementation of AI technology requires from students a thoughtful approach and a high degree of critical awareness.

Table 3

Popular AI tools among students

Tool name	AI technology used	Access cost	Description
Google translate	Neutral machine translation	Free	Text translation. Translate between 108 languages
ChatGPT	Transformer-based NLP	Basic access is free, advanced features are paid	Generative artificial intelligence chatbot
Grammarly	Machine learning+NLP	Free version available +paid Premium/Business plan	English language writing assistant tool
DeepL	Neutral Machine Translation (NMT)	Free version available+paid DeepL plans	Online translator
QuillBot	Transformer based NLP	Freemium	AI tool for paraphrasing
GeminiAI	Multimodal Transfer	Freemium	A large language model chatbot

Cloud AI	Machine learning	Pay as you go	AI services delivered via the cloud for data analysis and automation

2.5 AI in academic writing

After introducing ChatGPT in 2022 by OpenAI, researchers from the United States conducted research, involving 226 university teachers and students (Barrett & Pack, 2023). The main focus was on undergraduate students and teachers' perspectives on using GenAI in the writing process. The findings of the study indicate that both students and teachers perceived GenAI used to be more acceptable in the early stage of writing. Moreover, both teachers and students reported concerns about how AI might be used (Barrett & Pack, 2023). Another research conducted among TFL students from 2 private universities by Kazakhstani researchers (Bekturova et al.,2025) indicates a positive attitude towards using ChatGPT in academic writing. Academic writing is a fundamental requirement for Master's degree students, who are expected to produce research articles and master's thesis. Consequently, the development of strong writing skills is essential for their academic success. However,many students face challenges in developing academic writing. For example difficulties in organizing ideas, using appropriate academic language, and maintaining coherence (Almarwani, 2020). Nowadays, a wide range of AI tools such as Grammarly, QuillBot, ProWritingAid, ChatGPT, GeminiAI are available both free and paid. Moreover, AI applications support students in maintaining coherence, ensuring grammatical accuracy and enhancing academic voice.

The growth of AI generated content increasing concerns regarding the responsible use of these tools. Researchers even raise a question: is it appropriate to mention ChatGPT as an author? (Dergaa et al.,2023; Goto & Katanoda, 2023; Kotsis, 2025). The role of AI in authorship is currently a widely debated topic. Current research and publishing policies generally agree that AI tools should not be included in the list of authors. As they lack accountability, responsibility, and the ability to make independent intellectual contributions. Instead, AI is viewed as a supportive tool that assists human authors in the writing process (Watson et al., 2025) .

A study conducted by Lund & Naheem (2023) sought to investigate the AI authorship policies of leading academic journals. The findings show that 58.7% had policies on AI use. Majority of these journals allow tools like ChatGPT to improve the clarity, language, and overall manuscript quality, while only a small number are prohibited to use. At the same time, almost all journals stated that AI tools should not be mentioned as authors.

In order to enhance academic integrity among students, institutions should provide clear guidelines on the ethical use of AI tools. The findings of the research by Qadhi et al., (2025) indicate that targeted training and development of ethical guidelines can support institutions in improving AI integration and academic integrity.

Students' experience of using AI tools for academic writing is a complex interplay of benefits and challenges. While AI improves writing quality and efficiency,concerns related overdependence, academic integrity and independent thinking persists. A balanced incorporation of AI as a supportive tool is essential in the field of education.

2.6 AI supported language learning

The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in language learning contexts can be considered the result of an evolutionary process that goes from a rigid way of instructing to a more personalized approach to learning. In fact, the application of AI allows for the analysis of the learner's progress and the provision of feedback (Chen et al., 2020). The application of AI in language education has progressed across several stages of development. In this regard, the first usage of AI in language instruction took place in the 1960s thanks to the implementation of rule-based approaches and the implementation of AI into computer-assisted language learning (CALL) in the 1980s and 1990s. Following improvements in natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning in the 2000s and 2010s, it was possible to make AI more adaptive and interactive. Indeed, the implementation of mobile AI assistants such as Siri (2007) can be seen as the move towards more personalized applications. Finally, the arrival of generative AI in the last decade has greatly improved language learning processes. As shown in Table 1 below, the evolution of artificial intelligence can be traced through several stages.

Table 4

The evolution of Artificial Intelligence

Period	Stage	Key features	Examples	Limitations
1960s-1980s	Early AI (rule-based systems)	Simple text-based interaction, grammar drills, pattern based responses	ELIZA	Limited understanding, no real language processing

1980s-1990s	AI and CALL integration	Intelligent tutoring systems, error detection, increased interactivity	PLATO	Limited adaptability
2000s	NLP and speech technologies	Speech recognition, pronunciation feedback,automated writing evaluation	DuoLingo	Dependence on large dataset, potential bias in algorithms, limited depth of conversational ability
2020s-Present	Generative AI	Real-time interaction, content generation, personalized feedback	ChatGPT, google translate, etc.	Risk of inaccurate or misleading outputs, ethical consideration

Artificial intelligence performs multiple pedagogical and cognitive functions in language learning, transforming how learners interact with content, teachers and technology. Its functions can be categorized into instructional, feedback, adaptive, and analytical roles. Users can choose from a range of options according to their preferences. Macinska & Vinkler (2024) states language learners can choose from a variety of AI tools that support their learning process, such as:

- Vocabulary apps;
- Spelling and grammar checking;
- Chatbots for conversational practice;
- Intelligent tutoring systems that offer personalized instruction;

The first category is vocabulary apps. These apps help learners acquire and retain new words and repetition. Northrop & Andrei (2019) grouped vocabulary learning apps into five main sections: games (47%), language instruction (26%), word-focused apps (13%), practice applications (9%), and e-texts (4%). Each category serves a different purpose in supporting vocabulary.

Many vocabulary apps use techniques such as spaced repetition , which shows words at optimal intervals to improve memory. (Yan & Zhou, 2023) In addition, they often provide definitions, examples, images,and pronunciation practices. These features help learners better understand meaning and usage of words. Some applications also adapt to the learners level, preference. This personalized approach helps learners focus on vocabulary that is most relevant to their needs. As a result, vocabulary apps can be helpful to improve receptive skills (reading and listening) and productive skills (writing and speaking). However, the research conducted by Pikhart (2020) shows that the majority of these vocabulary apps do not use AI. These systems relied on predefined algorithms rather than deep learning or machine learning techniques.

The next category is spelling and grammar checking tools. Spelling and grammar checkers are designed to automatically identify and correct language errors in text. Although word processing programs have included spelling and grammar checkers since the mid-1980s, online grammar checkers have advanced and more effective in the past

decade (Long, 2022).This development is largely due to advances in artificial intelligence, which allow these tools to analyze not only individual words but also the context of an entire sentence. As a result, modern grammar checkers can provide more accurate and meaningful suggestions. Park (2019) compared Grammarly Premium to human rates using essay samples from 40 Korean EFL learners. The findings showed that AI-based grammar checkers successfully correct surface-level mechanics. However, they fail to detect the majority of context-dependent errors. It means that AI-based grammar checkers should be used as a drafting aid to reduce teacher workload.

Conversational chatbots, also called dialogue systems, are software programs that simulate human conversations, particularly through the Internet (Lin et al., 2023). Over the past 25 years, chatbots have developed from single scripted systems to advanced conversational tools (Macinska &Vinkler, 2024). Chatbots in language learning have three main features:

- They are available 24/7, allowing to practice any time;
- They provide a wide range of input beyond what peers can offer;
- They function as a tireless assistant, supporting repetitive tasks (Huang et al., 2021; cited in Macinska & Vinkler, 2024)

In their study Labadze et al., (2023) revealed that students mainly benefit from AI chatbots in three areas: guidance in completing homework tasks, adaptive learning and skill development. Educators benefit from AI through increased efficiency and enhanced pedagogy. However, despite wide acceptance of conversational tools such as ChatGPT, Replika, DuoLingo among students, limitations are also exciting. Conversational chatbots

may sometimes produce inaccurate and limited responses. As a result, the use of AI chatbots has generated considerable debate among scholars (Labadze et al., 2023).

AI assisted tools have been more commonly used to support academic English reading in higher education among students. Chea & Xiao (2024) explain that AI tools can assist students with the text comprehension, vocabulary building, and summarization. The study focused on reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking. It used a mixed-method design with 24 students, divided into an experimental group using AI-assisted tools and a control group using only conventional methods. The findings show that AI-assisted tools improved students' academic English reading skills. Particularly reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and critical thinking.

2.7 Students' Experiences

The experience of MA learners in TFL has significantly evolved since the emergence of AI technologies, with the latter introducing changes from static, non-interactable digital platforms into dynamic, engaging processes. Based on available empirical evidence, three key aspects can be identified: linguistic interaction, increased academic effectiveness, and cognitive complexity alongside excessive reliance.

From the perspective of the graduate language learners, the fundamental element in the application of AI and especially generative AI is linguistic interaction. Aljohani (2026) identifies in his systematic review that graduate students tend to consider digital technologies such as ChatGPT as human-like agents capable of providing immediate personalized responses to complicated linguistic tasks. The key difference of such technologies from other sources is that they allow for an interactive process of learning to write through constant communication and correction (Kasnesi et al., 2023). In addition to

the practical use of languages, AI provides an opportunity for boosting scholarly work. According to Kwak (2025), students utilizing adaptive learning systems and intelligent tutoring systems (ITS) generally receive performance improvements by 15%–30%. In the case of MA students, it would allow them to do their research more efficiently in such fields as synthesizing vast amounts of literary works and working with large datasets. As a result, such tools can significantly improve the efficiency of students because of cognitive offloading and help students concentrate on their analysis instead of dealing with routine tasks. However, there are also issues faced by the students using this technology. The concept of the “heuristic trap” has been widely discussed in literature recently. According to Zhai et al. (2024), one of the common problems that many students face is the issue of "over-reliance" when students take information provided by the tool for granted without proper analysis. In this case, the conflict might manifest itself between the efficiency provided by the tool and the necessity for a thorough analysis done by the student.

2.8 Students’ Perceptions

Whereas “experience” relates to the application of AI, “perception” encompasses the mind-set, professional fears, and moral judgments made by the MA TFL students. The findings of the present study show that some students perceive AI as a potential threat to independent thinking. When students use AI to generate ready made answers, they usually avoid the process of planning, analyzing and questioning. The study by Hasanein & Sobaih (2023) notes that over-reliance on ChatGPT may reduce students' critical thinking and problem solving abilities. Similarly, Aldawsari (2024) argues that when students depend on AI generated answers, their analytical thinking may decrease. Chan (2023) also draws

attention to the possible misuse of generative AI in academic settings, especially regarding plagiarism and academic integrity.

Although some students perceived AI tools as a threatening technology, Yavich et al.(2025) study shows a more positive perspective. Yavich et al. (2025) examined the relationship between AI tool use and academic self-efficacy among Israeli students. Their study found a weak but statistically significant correlation between AI use and academic self-efficacy. It means students who use AI tools more frequently may feel more confident in managing academic tasks. This suggests that AI may be perceived both as a risk and as a supportive tool, depending how much guidance they receive.

2.8.1 Ethical perceptions

The attitude of many language learners and pre-service teachers is defined by what Cennetkusu (2026), identifies as “principled caution”. Students report key ethical risks of AI, including privacy issues, bias in algorithms and inaccurate outputs. The growth of automated writing tools has led to concerns about the relevance of traditional assessment methods (Sharples, 2022). As a result, many students feel a lack of institutional guidance and must address ethical issues related to AI use on their own. Hadinejad et al. (2025) found that students did not always treat AI-generated content as ready to use. They critically evaluate the output , refine it and verify information. Chan (2023), based on data from university students and staff, argues that higher educational institutions need clear AI education policies. Because students face ethical issues related to academic integrity, fairness, and responsibility use of generative AI. However, nowadays many universities have already developed AI policies to address potential risks and ensure the ethical use of AI in education. For example, a study on GenAI policies in higher education Luo (2024)

used purposive sampling to analyse documents from the top 20 universities in the QS World Universities Rankings. The findings indicate that leading universities are actively shaping norms and responsible use of AI. Moreover, Luo (2024) found that most higher education institution policies fall into one of the three categories:

- AI as a threat to Academic Integrity;
- AI as a tool for productivity;
- AI as a catalyst for assessment reform;

Policies which fall into the first category represent AI primarily as a tool for plagiarism or “contract cheating” The main focus on AI detection, banning and also academic misconduct. This framing often leads to students anxiety and lack of trust between learners and institution.

In the second category these policies frame AI as a functional aid, similar to a calculator or a speller checker. Although this perspective is relatively progressive, Luo (2024) argues that it is limited. Because it overlooks the deeper cognitive and creative changes that AI brings to the learning process.

Policies on the third category suggest that the “problem” is the assessment itself. Nowadays take-home essays might not be effective. Consequently, institutions are shifting toward alternative forms of assessment such as oral defense, supervised examinations.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore experiences and perceptions of MA TFL students regarding the use of AI in their learning process. A qualitative approach was most appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the "lived experience" of students(Creswell, 2014). A descriptive study was appropriate, because the aim was to obtain a clear and detailed understanding of TFL MA students' experiences and perceptions of using AI in learning. Since research questions ask what TFL MA students experience and how they perceive AI in learning , a descriptive qualitative approach was suitable for capturing rich accounts of their actual use, beliefs, and challenges.

3.2 Participants

The number of participants was 12. The sample consisted of six first year and six second year students from one private university. The purposive sampling was used to focus on MA TFL students enrolled in the TFL programme who have prior experience with

AI tools. The age participants went from 22- 40. Participants were allowed to choose the language of the interview to ensure clarity. Before the interview, participants were provided with information about the study's purpose and were informed of their right to withdraw without any negative consequences. All participants received an informed consent form before participating in the study.

Table 5

Background information of the participants

Participants	Age	Year of study	Gender
Participant 1	23	2 year	Female
Participant 2	27	2 year	Female
Participant 3	21	1 year	Female
Participant 4	22	1 year	Female
Participant 5	22	2 year	Female
Participant 6	42	2 year	Female
Participant 7	23	2 year	Female
Participant 8	22	1 year	Male
Participant 9	21	1 year	Male
Participant 10	22	1year	Female

Participant 11	21	1 year	Female
Participant 12	23	2 year	Male

3.3 Procedures

Before data collection, participants were provided with a consent form, and relevant information about the study, including its aim and purpose. Interviews were scheduled based on participants availability and preference. Interviews were conducted both face to face and online formats. A total of 15 interview questions were prepared in advance. However, additional questions were asked to clarify participants' responses. Participants had the freedom to choose the language of the interview. Each interview lasted 35-40 minutes. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. Later all information was transcribed and subsequently analyzed.

3.4 Data collection tools

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection tool, enabling respondents to express their experiences and perceptions of using AI in learning in depth. Semi-structured interviews are generally guided by open-ended questions, which enable participants to elaborate on their views, experiences, and ideas in-depth (Kallio et al.,2016). The semi-structured interview consisted of 15 open-ended questions. The interviews were collected individually face to face and via Zoom format. It depended on participants' preference and availability. The interview lasted approximately 35-40 minutes. Interview questions were developed based on research questions, focusing on students experiences and perceptions of using AI in learning. All interviews were audio

recorded with participants consent and transcribed for analysis. Ethical considerations were strictly followed. A self-assessment form was conducted in accordance with SDU guidelines. The result indicated that the study did not require official approval from the Research Ethics Committee, as it was classified as low-risk research.

3.5 Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed thematically, following Braun and Clarke (2006) approach. In this study, thematic analysis was used to systematically identify, organize, and interpret recurring patterns of meaning across data. Thematic analysis was considered suitable for this study because it supports identification, analysis, and interpretation of recurring patterns within qualitative data. This makes it appropriate for examining TFL Master's students' experiences and perceptions of using AI. The analysis followed six phases. First, familiarization with data by carefully reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. Second, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments related to research questions. Thirdly, the initial codes were organized into broader categories based on identifiable patterns. Fourthly, the validity of the themes was determined in light of both the codes and the entire data pool. Fifthly, an iterative process was adopted in order to fine-tune the details of the themes. Lastly, appropriate codes were chosen, and a discussion of the analysis took place. The above-mentioned steps made it possible to systematically gather data, resulting in greater insight into the perceptions of participants towards the use of AI in learning.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

This chapter presents the study findings derived from the analysis of twelve semi-structured interviews with TFL MA students at one private university. The data analyzed thematically, through this analysis key themes were identified concerning MA students' experiences and perception of using AI in learning. The study findings were organized into eight themes aligned with the research questions.

Themes addressing research question 1 (students' experiences):

- AI as a supportive tool for academic learning;
- Selective AI use:
- AI and academic pressure;
- AI related challenges;

Themes addressing research question 2 (students' perceptions):

- Students views on the advantages of AI;
- Ethical concerns;

- Need for clear guidance;

Table 6

Thematic framework table

Research Questions	Theme
What are TFL Master's students' experiences of using AI?	AI as a supportive tool for academic learning
What are TFL Master's students' experiences of using AI?	Selective AI use
What are TFL Master's students' experiences of using AI?	AI and academic pressure
What are TFL Master's students' experiences of using AI?	AI related challenges
What are TFL Master's students' perceptions of using AI?	Students views on the advantages of AI
What are TFL Master's students' perceptions of using AI?	Ethical concerns
What are TFL Master's students' perceptions of using AI?	Need for clear guidance

4.1 AI as a supportive tool for academic learning

The data shows that a majority of participants use AI as an academic support tool. Most participants reported using AI frequently for writing tasks, generating ideas, improving grammar, and refining academic language. One interesting finding is that almost all participants use only ChatGPT. Other AI tools had not gained widespread recognition.

"I use it for writing tasks… I ask ChatGPT to formulate the outline of the research papers, essays." - ***Participant 1***

"I mainly use AI writing tools to enhance my academic language."- ***Participant 2***

"Secondly, I use it in my tasks for generating ideas, translating, and finding the best word to express my thoughts clearly."- ***Participant 5***

"If I want to write a research paper or essay I use it."- ***Participant 6***

"First, I write my own writing, then I ask AI to improve."- ***Participant 4***

In summary, AI was not entirely substituting students' efforts but working as a tool that helped them get started, organize, and improve on their work. Translating and vocabulary were among other aspects that students applied AI in their studies. According to students, they utilized AI to translate information to more academic English language. Furthermore, they sought to find better-suited vocabulary words and phrases.

4.2 Selective AI use

Even so, participants used AI frequently, they didn't just let AI do work, they used it strategically. The data shows they treated AI as a supportive tool for brainstorming and structuring. Carefully meaning control over the final version to ensure the original voice was not lost. Several participants described a process when they first drafted text

themselves and asked AI to refine it. Others used to structure an essay, generate an idea, and begin a task.

*"AI tools are most effective when you use them to learn and improve, not to replace your own thinking. I would draft a paragraph, then use an AI writing tool if my academic tone and structure were appropriate. I treat AI as a tool not as an authority"- **Participant 2***

*"If you are using it not to cheat, not to get something ready made, but if you use it to analyze to help you, then yeah, it is useful. I would not rely on this to write… my papers , articles and works" **- Participant 9***

*"I try to avoid plagiarism by rewriting everything in my words."- **Participant 1***

*"If given a task, write your opinion … I doubt AI, just take ideas and develop your writing."- **Participant 7***

*"(After) reading the version generated by AI it became clear how to organize my thoughts and ideas. Follow it as an example."- **Participant 5***

*"I don't fully rely on any AI tool."- **Participant 8***

According to responses students took ideas, structures, examples, and language suggestions, but tried to maintain their own contribution in the final work. In this sense, AI functioned as a guide, an organizer, rather than a full author.

4.3 AI and academic pressure

The data showed that students used AI as a way to manage heavy academic workload and high expectations of a Masters degree. AI was helpful under conditions of time pressure, complex academic reading, and high expectations for writing. Participants described Master's level as more demanding than previous stages of study. For some students AI helped address the gap between their current level of knowledge and the level

expected in postgraduate education. It supported them in understanding texts, producing more formal writing.

"(AI) especially beneficial for the masters (students) who have families, work and other duties. Without AI I couldn't have the knowledge I have today, I could not understand the materials."- ***Participant 5***

"Because MA students are required to write academic papers often. Sometimes we lack time. AI helps me to complete fast. AI helps me save time"- ***Participant 7***

"At the Master's level, the academic demands are high, and AI tools help narrow the gap between what we know and what is expected of us."- ***Participant 2***

"To save time even though I know, it is better not to use it, anyway I use it."- ***Participant 6***

4.4 AI related challenges

Despite the usefulness of AI, participants also described some challenges. Students reported that AI produces unnatural and incorrect information. In some cases, it does not fully understand the task, and provides broad answers. Another challenge was the need for constant checking and editing. Many participants highlighted that they could not use AI output directly.

"AI gives incorrect or too general answers."- ***Participant 3, Participant 7***

"It gives sources that don't exist , and writes with mistakes"- ***Participant 5***

"AI sometimes produces overly generic or unnatural academic language."- ***Participant2***

"AI is not always trustworthy. I always try to check information from other sources."- ***Participant 3***

"AI may provide inaccurate answers. But sometimes the paid version may give more accurate answers"- ***Participant 6***

*"I always double check information or check if from the original sources mostly. I mostly rely on reliable, original sources."- **Participant 1***

4.5 Perceived benefits of AI

Participants generally expressed positive perceptions of AI in learning. During the interview, participants described AI as beneficial, useful, helpful. Students perceived AI as improving efficiency, saving time, and supporting academic work. Respondents saw AI as valuable for TFL Masters students, whose studies involve demanding reading, academic writing. In addition, they described AI as more than just a tool. It was compared to a teacher, assistant, instructor, native speaker or cognitive partner.

*"It makes learning easier, faster, and more interesting."- **Participant 3***

*"It works like a cognitive partner."- **Participant 9***

*"Yes, I genuinely believe it is beneficial."- **Participant 2***

*"If I do not use ChatGPT, I need to open more tabs."- **Participant 7***

*"AI helps ask questions and answers."- **Participant 6***

*"It can serve as another instructor and assistant." **Participant 8***

4.6 Ethical concerns

Another important topic discussed in relation to this data revolves around ethics. In particular, the topics of plagiarism and dependence on outside aid were mentioned by several participants. Most importantly, many participants were not sure how to draw the line between legitimate aid and unethical practices. On the other hand, the second most prominent topic was the worry about one's competence being lost. Many participants worried that frequent use of AI might reduce critical thinking, weaken academic ability, and

encourage laziness. Turnitin was the next hot topic among students. Some students feared that even so, they did not use AI for writing, but results might be flagged as AI generated.

*"We have students that violate the academic integrity policies. I try to avoid plagiarism by rewriting everything in my own words. Even if you do not use AI, Turnitin generates as you use AI… It shows a higher rate of AI."- **Participant 1***

*"I was not sure where the line was between using AI as a learning tool and using it in a way that could be considered academic dishonesty. If use AI too much, I might not develop my own academic writing skills fully."- **Participant 2***

*"Students… become lazier and it affects their learning."- **Participant 4***

*"If we use ChatGPT often, we could become lazy and not study at all."- **Participant 7***

*"I know tools that are like Turnitin, where they can identify AI usage."- **Participant 9***

*"I am concerned about plagiarism, over-reliance, and incorrect information."- **Participant 3***

4.7 Need for clear guidance

It is apparent from the findings that another issue was the absence of clear guidance on responsible AI use. Though some students had been informed about AI policy by universities or their teachers, this policy was always said to be vague and general. Sometimes percentages of use of AI had been indicated by teachers, but the participants always wished to have better training with offline workshop sessions and prompt guidance.

*"Teachers provide us with the syllabus. They usually write about the percentage of acceptance of AI, like 20%, 10%." - **Participant 1***

*"I do not exactly, but some teachers explain how to use it before completing the task."- **Participant 5***

*"There is a lack of digital literacy."- **Participant 6***

*"I think I wanna train more about how to use AI."- **Participant 10***

*"I want workshops or seminars specifically about how to apply AI tools ethically in academic writing."- **Participant 2***

*"Maybe we need to have more training and support."- **Participant 4***

*"My university gives some guidelines, but they are not very clear or detailed. Students need more support to use AI correctly and ethically. "- **Participant 3***

4.8 Connection to the TAM and ECM

The findings of the study can be understood through the interaction between Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Expectation Confirmation Model (ECM). TAM helps to explain the initial acceptance of AI tools among TFL Master's students. Several participants described AI as useful for academic writing, idea generation, grammar improvement, translation and saving time. These findings reflect perceived usefulness, which is a key concept in TAM. In addition, frequent use of AI tools may also suggest perceived ease of use, as Master's students' appeared comfortable using an accessible and user-friendly tool.

At the same time, ECM helps to explain students' continued ease of use of AI after initial adoption. Participants' experiences showed that AI often met their expectations by supporting them in academic tasks.This confirmation contributed to positive perceptions and continued use of AI. However, the findings also indicated limitations such as inaccurate answers, ethical concerns, and uncertainty about proper use. These challenges suggest that confirmation is not always complete, and students' satisfaction with AI remains conditional. As a result, students did not use AI uncritically, but selectively and critically.

Therefore, TAM explains why students adopt AI tools. While ECM explains how their actual experiences shape satisfaction and continuance intention. Together these models provide a useful framework for understanding both acceptance and sustained use of AI in learning.

4.9 Summary of findings

Based on the results, TFL MA students apply AI for multiple purposes. A large number of participants emphasized the use of AI for writing, reading, brainstorming, and translating. From the standpoint of the research participants, AI is an essential part of education that serves as an assistant in saving time and improving academic writing.

As for the views on AI, participants are mostly positive, efficient, and recognize its growing importance. However, there are ethical concerns, integrity issues, dependence problems, and confusion related to expectations from educational institutions.

One of the most notable findings is the mismatch between students' increasing use of AIand the lack of clear guidance on how to use these tools ethically and effectively.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

5.1 Summary of findings

The present study explores TFL MA students' experiences and perceptions of using AI in learning. Overall findings suggest that AI is an important tool in participants' academic life. Masters students reported using AI in writing, reading and summarizing texts, translation, idea generation. However, AI was not a marginal or occasional tool. AI was described as a practical resource integrated into everyday study routines. At the same time, participants revealed that AI use is not straightforward. Although participants

recognized clear benefits such as time-saving, improved comprehension, academic writing support, they also shared concerns about inaccurate information, fabricated sources, plagiarism, ethical concerns and over-reliance. These findings correspond to Chan (2023) findings, which also emphasized the need for clear AI education policies to guide students with clear guidance on academic integrity and ethical use.

5.2 Discussion of RQ1: students' experiences of using AI

5.2.1 Everyday academic support

The findings show that MA students' increasingly use AI as a part of their everyday academic support.Participants reported using AI across a wide range of tasks, writing, reading, translation, and vocabulary support. This shows that AI is perceived by the participants as a versatile tool to learn from as opposed to a specific technology. TFL MA students who read a lot of academic articles, books, and write academic essays, use AI to help them generate ideas, organize essays, develop text structure and improve their grammar making their language more academic. It shows that students use AI not only to compensate for their lack of knowledge about some subjects, but also to understand how they should write academic language.

Reading emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned issues in the participants' responses. Students admitted having problems with comprehending academic articles, book chapters, as well as with understanding special terms and vocabulary. AI helped them in making academic texts simpler and explaining terms.Participants mentioned that AI helps them overcome challenges related to understanding advanced academic language. These findings are similar to the results of Chea and Xiao (2024) who also reported that AI-assisted tools considerably improved university students' academic

English reading skills. In their study, students who integrated AI tools with traditional learning approaches demonstrated greater improvement in reading comprehension than those who relied only on conventional methods.

In summary, AI supports students not only during the academic writing process, but also in reading academic papers.

Translation and vocabulary support were also strongly present in the data. AI helped participants translate ideas into academic language and also to choose better words for their papers. Thus, language learners use AI as a language mediation tool helping them with language issues.

5.2.2 AI and academic pressure

Another important point that emerged from the analysis was the association between students' use of AI and academic pressure. Participants spoke about large volumes of readings, difficult writing assignments, and a lack of time. The use of AI was not attributed simply to its being interesting or novel, but rather due to its ability to help them manage their time. Many participants noted that AI had enabled them to complete tasks faster, condense long texts, and meet deadlines better. For some participants, the pressure was not just limited to the academic sphere, as work, family, and time constraints imply that AI has been used by students outside of their academic pursuits. One particularly important observation was that for one participant, the necessity to use AI was due to the fact that others were using it. This suggests that AI use was not always motivated only by individual academic need, but also by social influence. This finding is consistent with Korchak et al., (2025) who examined the influence of social factors on GenAI adaptation

among undergraduate and postgraduate students. The researchers found that the popularity of GenAI among peers can shape students' intention to use it.

5.2.3 AI related challenges

However, there are some limitations mentioned. Some participants have reported several issues in applying the technology in practice, which include inaccurate information, false references, and outcomes which do not meet expectations according to the assigned task. One limitation mentioned by the participants several times was connected with the necessity to edit and verify the information. It has been stated that they always had to check their outcomes and compare them to the original texts. This indicates that the effectiveness of AI is shaped by the user's ability to apply technology critically, responsibly, and effectively. This finding aligns with Hadinejad et al. (2025) study, which revealed that students recognized the need to critically assess, verify, and refine AI generated outputs.

5.3 Discussion of RQ 2: students' perceptions of using AI

5.3.1 Perceived benefits of AI

Perceptions about the use of AI are positive. During the interview, artificial intelligence was defined as useful, helpful, crucial, important, and valuable. The students felt that AI could help them learn languages, write papers academically, and understand difficult text materials. Therefore, these perceptions confirm that students consider AI technology as an effective tool for students. A number of students considered AI as a teacher, an assistant, an instructor, a native speaker, or a cognitive partner. This means that students view AI as an educational source rather than just an instrument. If there are certain cases when learners are afraid of asking for help from other people, then AI can be used as an alternative.

The participants' perceptions about the increasing indispensability of AI were also identified. In some cases, students pointed out that AI has become increasingly embedded in the educational process and even everyday life.

5.3.2 Limited trust in AI and ethical issue

Thus, the results demonstrate that AI was generally viewed by students as helpful but non-trustworthy. The majority of the participants did not consider it an authority when it comes to providing any kind of information, facts, sources, or references. On the contrary, the respondents saw it as an auxiliary tool for studying. The theme of caution can be marked as one of the conclusions from this research. Students were ready to use AI to improve language skills, generate ideas, and make texts more understandable. However, they were hesitant about using the tool to create academic papers, which might not have correct references or answers and could be based on wrong sources. These reactions prove that students understand that AI is helpful but does not have all the capabilities needed to provide completely correct content.

Another problem is connected with the topic of ethics. Issues of plagiarism, cheating, over-reliance, and loss of individual skills often arose among the participants. Students could not define the limit between acceptable and unethical behavior regarding AI usage. Many participants were ready to use the technology for generating ideas, helping with grammar, and improving overall structure while being uncertain whether it would be considered acceptable at educational institutions. This concern was supported by Aldawsari (2024), which suggested that overdependence on AI may weaken students' independent thinking.

The next issue raised by the participants was over-reliance on AI. Students were afraid that too much dependence could influence their critical thinking abilities and writing skills, and they might become dependent.

An additional ethical issue related to AI in the modern university context is connected with Turnitin and other AI detection technologies. The respondents were afraid that they might be detected for AI usage even without actually doing it, which creates a negative environment in educational institutions.

5.3.3 Need for clear guidance

The final problem relates to the absence of clear guidelines on how to utilize AI. Even though a number of students claimed that there have been references made by either universities or teachers about using AI technology, there still remains an absence of any clarification about using it in an ethical manner. Indeed, there have been references to the rules and AI percentage, but it was not fully understood by some students. While doubting whether AI can help in improving grades or how trustworthy this application is, students doubt whether their usage of the technology will be allowed. Chan (2023) also raised this question, and highlighted the importance of clear institutional policies. The absence of clear guidelines seems to lead to confusion among students. As a result, there was a request for seminars, workshoppers, as well as more examples. Students do not demand unlimited use, they require guidance.

5.4 Concluding discussion

In conclusion, the results show that AI contributes significantly to TFL Masters students' academic learning experiences. Participants experience AI as a practical academic support tool that helps them cope with linguistic and academic demands of postgraduate

study. They also perceive it as beneficial, efficient and necessary in modern education. However , these perceptions were accompanied by ethical concerns, limited trust, and uncertainty about institutional expectations.

The discussion therefore suggests that AI should not be understood in simple and positive or negative terms. It is a useful tool, but imperfect educational resource whose value depends on critical engagement, ethical awareness and clear institutional support. For TFL Master's students' AI is neither a replacement for learning nor a neutral tool. It is a powerful aid that can enhance learning, but only when students are able to use it carefully, selectively and responsibly.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This study explored TFL Master's students experiences and perceptions of using AI in learning. Through qualitative methods and semi-structured interviews, the study analyzed how students use AI in their academic practices. In addition, how they understand its role, value, and challenges. The findings show that AI has become an essential component of TFL Master's students' academic lives. Regarding the questions of writing, reading, translating, and vocabulary learning, the first research question was addressed and revealed that the use of AI in the academic context was applied as an aid. AI was mostly used to generate ideas, structure written content, improve grammar and scholarly language, and make complicated academic text simpler. It is worth noting that participants' use of AI was selective and purposeful, suggesting that they did not depend solely on AI tools. As many of the participants expressed, the application of AI was seen as guidance, assistance, and aid, but never complete dependency.

Furthermore, the employment of AI by the students was driven by the pressure coming from their postgraduate studies including high workload, lack of time, and high academic requirements. In some cases, participants also mentioned family and workplace-related tasks. At the same time, difficulties in applying AI included incorrect information, generic wording, fake sources, and regular checks and revisions.

In discussing the second research question, one should note that the participants perceive AI as an instrument that can contribute positively to their work. AI is considered as something helpful, powerful, and even necessary when studying a foreign language and

working on academic assignments. However, certain limitations of students' attitudes towards AI should be identified. Students claim that they do not totally trust any outputs created by AI because they have no confidence in their reliability and authenticity. Furthermore, the respondents mentioned that AI might be used unethically and dishonestly. Therefore, it could affect students' grades negatively. They also indicated the issue of plagiarism and the risk associated with overusing AI. Another major limitation is related to students' uncertainty regarding the criteria for accepting the use of AI. For example, Turnitin, indicating that although they did not use AI at all, their assignments would probably be flagged. Many of the participants stated that they lack information concerning the acceptable forms of using AI because there were no guidelines from the university administration on this matter.

Generally speaking, it becomes clear that the majority of TFL Master's students' regard AI as a useful but limited resource for learning and improving their academic skills. This resource could be helpful if used responsibly and appropriately.

There are some practical recommendations to take into account after analyzing results. First of all, students are recommended to focus on developing AI literacy to understand how to use and evaluate outputs generated by AI. Teachers should talk to their students and share information about the appropriate use of AI.

At the institutional level, the findings point to the need for clear AI-related policies, student training, and ongoing support for ethical and effective AI use.

In conclusion, AI is already part of students' everyday and academic life. Its role in higher education is likely to grow further in future. Therefore, the key use is not whether students will use AI or not. The main issue is how educational institutions can help them to

use it in ways that support learning, uphold academic integrity and strengthen thor academic and linguistic development.

6.1 Limitation

First, the study draws on a small sample of participants. Although this is acceptable in qualitative research and enables a detailed examination of the participants' experiences and perceptions, the findings can not be generalized.

Second, the study uses self-reported interview data. It means the findings reflect what participants said about their AI use. Participants may present their behavior in a more socially acceptable way. Especially while discussing sensitive issues such as plagiarism, over-reliance and academic integrity.

Third, this study focused specifically on TFL MA students' experiences and perceptions. This study did not involve teachers, supervisors, or university administrators. Because of this, this study does not provide a full picture of how AI use is understood across all stakeholders in higher education.

Fourth, the study explored AI use in learning in a broad sense.Including, writing, translation, reading, vocabulary, speaking. Although the study provided a wider understanding of students' AI practices, it also means that the analysis did not examine one single skill area in very fine detail.

6.2 Recommendations for future research

Future studies could extend the scope of this study by involving a larger number of students from different universities. Since this study is focused on only TFL Master's students, further studies could include students from other language related programmes. Another option would be to compare Master's students' with undergraduate and PhD

students. This would help to understand whether students' experiences and perceptions of using AI vary depending on students' academic level, field of study, or learning needs.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled "TFL MA students experience and perception of using AI in learning".

Research Purpose and Procedures:

This *[survey/**interview**]* should take approximately 35-40 minutes to complete.

Possible risks and discomfort related to participation in this research:
There are no significant risks associated with participation in this study. However, participants may experience minor discomfort when reflecting on their learning experiences or expressing personal opinions.

Possible advantages of participation:
While there are no direct benefits to participants, the study may contribute to a better understanding of how AI tools are used in learning and may help improve teaching practices and academic support for students.

Confidentiality & Privacy.
Within reasonable limits, all personal information obtained during the study will be kept confidential. Participants' identities will not be disclosed, and pseudonyms (e.g., Participant1, Participant 2) will be used in reporting the findings. All collected data will be securely stored in the researcher's Google Drive and permanently deleted upon completion of the research.

Contacts for additional information: mob: 87789571545 **e-mail:** 241302005@sdu.edu.kz

Voluntary Nature of the Study: It is strictly voluntary as to whether to participate in this study or not. You have a right to withdraw your agreement to participate at any time.

Estimated duration of the research: Approximately 35-40 minutes.

Statement of Consent

I, _____, agree to participate in this study voluntarily. I have been made aware of the research purpose and objectives and clearly understand what is expected from me.

I know that it is voluntary to participate in this study and I have complete freedom to withdraw my consent at any time without providing any reasons and in this case there will be no negative consequences to me.

I understand that any personal information obtained in this study will be kept confidential.

Participant (sign): _____ Researcher (sign):_____

Appendix B

Interview questions

Background information

- What is your age?
- What is your year of study?

- What is your gender?

Interview questions

1. When did you start using AI tools for academic purposes?
2. In which areas do you use AI the most?
3. Can you give me an example of how you used AI for an assignment?
4. Can you describe how you use AI tools in your learning?
5. What do you think about the role of AI in language learning?
6. Do you believe AI is beneficial for Masters students?
7. How trustworthy do you find AI-generated content?
8. What challenges have you experienced when using AI tools?
9. Are you concerned about issues related to plagiarism, over-reliance, incorrect information?
10. Have you ever felt unsure about whether your use of AI was acceptable?
11. Does your university provide any guidance on using AI tools?
12. Do you feel that you have enough training or support to use AI effectively and ethically?
13. What kind of guidance would you like to receive?
14. How do you see the role of AI in your future learning?
15. Would you recommend AI tools to other students? Why or why not?

Appendix C

The self-assessment form results

Hi Zhuldyzay,

We've received your submission. Based on the information you provided, you don't need to apply for Ethics Review and you can continue with your research project.

Thank you
Research Ethics Committee