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English Language Education Students' Perceptions On The Use Of AI Technology As An Academic Tool At Tadulako University

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the perceptions of English Language Education students at Tadulako University regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an academic support tool. The study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews involving active students in the 2024/2025 academic year. The findings indicate that most students have positive perceptions of AI in academic learning. Students perceive AI as useful for generating ideas, improving writing accuracy, supporting personalized learning, and providing real-time feedback. These features help students complete academic tasks more efficiently and increase their learning motivation. This finding suggests that AI can support students in overcoming common academic difficulties, particularly in writing and independent learning. The results are consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which emphasizes perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key factors influencing technology acceptance. In this study, students accepted AI mainly because it is easy to use and provides immediate benefits in their academic activities. When students find a technology helpful and simple, they are more likely to integrate it into their learning process. However, the study also reveals several concerns. Some students expressed worries about over-dependence on AI, inaccurate information, and ethical issues such as plagiarism and loss of originality. These concerns indicate that while AI offers many advantages, its use also presents potential risks if not properly guided. Despite these challenges, most students demonstrated a good level of ethical awareness. They emphasized that AI should be used as a supporting tool rather than a replacement for their own thinking and academic effort. This shows that students understand the importance of maintaining academic integrity while using AI.

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Artificial Intelligence (AI), students' perception, English language education, academic integrity, digital literacy.

1. Introduction

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has brought significant changes in many fields, especially in education. In higher education, AI offers various opportunities to support learning processes, such as personalizing learning experiences, automating academic tasks, and providing analytical tools that help both teachers and students improve teaching and learning quality (Maphalala & Ajani, 2025; Junaidi et al., 2020; Weda et al., 2022; Pratiwi et al., 2026). However, the effective use of AI in education depends greatly on how students understand, accept, and use this technology in their academic activities. English Language Education is a field that is closely related to communication skills, critical thinking, and creative expression (Weda et al., 2022; Yaumi et al., 2023; Sujoko et al., 2023; Anggriyani et al., 2025). Therefore, it provides a relevant context for exploring the use of AI in learning, AI technologies can offer personalized feedback, diverse learning materials, and interactive learning experiences that support language development (Köylü, 2025; Said et al., 2021; Andini et al., 2021; Suma et al., 2023).

AI-based platforms are increasingly used to overcome the limitations of traditional teaching methods and to help students develop English skills in a more adaptive way. In the global context, English proficiency has become an essential skill that enables access to international education, global job opportunities, and cross-cultural collaboration (Antenos, 2024). As a result, educators continue to seek innovative strategies to improve English language learning outcomes. AI is considered a promising solution because it provides tools such as ChatGPT, QuillBot, and Jenni AI that support

independent learning, fast feedback, and flexible learning processes. Previous studies have shown that AI use in foreign language learning can increase students' motivation and engagement (Ifenthaler et al., 2024). This technology is also increasingly used in institutions with limited resources, showing its potential to support learning in various educational settings.

Despite its benefits, the use of AI in education also raises important challenges. Issues related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and excessive reliance on technology need careful attention (Idowu, 2024). Historically, AI in language education has evolved from simple rule-based systems to advanced applications based on machine learning and natural language processing (Abril et al., 2023). Therefore, the integration of AI must be accompanied by ethical and pedagogical considerations to ensure its sustainable and responsible use (Vaccino-Salvadore, 2023).

Students' perceptions play a crucial role in determining the success of AI integration in education. English Language Education students at Tadulako University are an important group to study because they are future educators who will directly engage with educational technologies in their professional careers. A preliminary observation conducted by the researcher shows that students commonly use AI to translate texts, check grammar and spelling, paraphrase academic writing, generate vocabulary lists, and assist in writing assignments. Some students also use AI to summarize reading materials, design practice questions, prepare presentations, and assess their English proficiency through AI-generated tests.

In addition, several students have started using AI to design lesson plans, create digital learning media, and practice pronunciation through text-to-speech and automated feedback features. Although AI is used in various ways, many students still feel uncertain about how to apply it effectively and ethically in real classroom contexts. This uncertainty is particularly related to pedagogical strategies, project-based learning, and adapting instruction to diverse learners. These conditions indicate the need for deeper investigation into students' perceptions to support appropriate and sustainable AI implementation in education.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore the perceptions of English Language Education students at Tadulako University toward the use of AI as an academic support tool. By examining students' views on the benefits, challenges, and ethical aspects of AI use. This research is expected to contribute to educational policy development, curriculum design, and the improvement of AI-based learning tools. The findings are also expected to support educators, policymakers, and technology developers in integrating AI wisely and strategically in English language learning in higher education (Tiwari, 2023).

2. Methodology

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore students' perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an academic support tool. The research focused on students of the English Language Education Study Program at Tadulako University. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, interpretations, and views regarding the use of AI in academic learning contexts. To enhance data credibility, the study applied methodological triangulation through the use of multiple data sources.

The participants consisted of six active students from the 2023 cohort, representing six different classes in the English Language Education Study Program at Tadulako University. One student from each class was selected using purposive sampling, as all participants had prior experience using AI tools for academic purposes. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to obtain relevant and meaningful data from participants who were familiar with the phenomenon being studied.

The research was conducted at the English Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Tadulako University, Palu, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires. The interviews provided opportunities for deeper exploration and clarification of students' responses, while the questionnaires, consisting of ten open-ended items, allowed participants to express their perceptions freely in written form.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), including transcription, repeated reading, coding, theme development, and interpretation. In addition, questionnaire responses were summarized descriptively using percentages, calculated based on the formula suggested by Gay et al. (2012):

P = F/N × 100%

Where:

P = Percentage from questionnaire

F = Number of respondents who choose particular options of the question

N = Total number of respondents

100% = Constant value

This combined analysis supported a clear and systematic interpretation of students' perceptions toward the use of AI in academic learning.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Interview Findings

This section presents a narrative inquiry of students' perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an academic support tool in the English Language Education Study Program at Tadulako University. The narratives are constructed from in-depth interviews with six informants and supported by questionnaire data to strengthen the interpretation.

3.1.1 AI Use in Preparing Class Discussions

Data 1 Several informants reported using AI to prepare questions before participating in class discussions. Informant 1 stated, *"I sometimes use AI to help me generate questions, especially in Intercultural Communication when discussing cultural barriers."* Similarly, Informant 3 explained that AI helped in generating guiding questions during discussions on environmental issues in English classes. Informant 5 also shared that AI supported participation in question-and-answer sessions, particularly in Prose courses .

Data 2 In contrast, Informant 4 and Informant 6 did not rely on AI for discussion preparation. Informant 4 mentioned, *"I'm still getting used to looking for questions based on what I don't understand in the material,"* while Informant 6 said that questions were usually prepared directly from the discussion material. These responses show that while AI is commonly used, its adoption depends on individual learning preferences.

3.1.2 AI Use in Group Presentations

Data 3 Most students described using AI to prepare for group presentations, particularly to anticipate possible questions. Informant 1 explained, *"I prepare possible questions with the help of AI, but I don't copy the answers. I read them and adjust the language."* Informant 3 expressed a similar approach, stating that AI was used for suggestions, but answers were rephrased to sound natural.

Data 4 Informant 5 used AI mainly to summarize answers to help understanding before explaining them in their own words. However, Informant 6 admitted, *"Sometimes I just copy and paste the answer and sometimes I use AI as a reference."*

Data 5 Meanwhile, Informant 4 emphasized avoiding AI to strengthen critical thinking. These narratives indicate general awareness of responsible AI use, although some dependency still exists.

3.1.3 AI Use in Academic Assignments

Data 6 Students reported using AI across various subjects. Informant 1 mentioned English Language Teaching Methods, Intercultural Communication, and Academic Writing. Informant 6 reported using AI in Prose, Psycholinguistics, and Translation courses. Informant 5 used AI in Entrepreneurship, particularly in understanding the business model canvas.

Data 7 Only Informant 4 stated that they had not yet used AI for assignments. Overall, these statements show that AI is widely used, especially in courses involving writing, analysis, and creativity.

3.1.4 Lecturer Guidance on AI Use

Data 8 Most informants stated that lecturers did not explicitly instruct them to use AI but allowed it as a supporting tool. Informant 1 recalled that lecturers advised students to *"use AI for exploring ideas, not for copying."*

Data 9 Informant 3 also noted that lecturers emphasized responsible use. Informant 6 stated, *"My lecturer said I can use AI, but don't be dependent on it."* These statements suggest that lecturers acknowledge AI use while emphasizing ethical boundaries.

3.1.5 Perceived Benefits and Challenges of AI

Data 10 Students identified several benefits of AI use. Informant 1 highlighted time efficiency and multiple perspectives, while Informant 3 emphasized quick idea generation and improved understanding. Informant 5 stated that AI helped in understanding assignment context.

Data 11 However, challenges were also noted. Informant 2 mentioned repetitive information and plagiarism issues, while Informant 6 admitted the risk of dependency. Informant 4 warned that AI could encourage instant solutions rather than deep learning. These narratives reflect the dual role of AI as both helpful and potentially problematic.

3.1.6 Impact of AI on Learning Motivation

Data 12 Most informants reported that AI positively influenced their learning motivation. Informant 1 stated that AI increased confidence while still encouraging deep understanding.

Data 13 Informant 3 also mentioned increased motivation but warned about dependency. Informant 5 said AI made assignments easier and learning more engaging. However, Informant 2 felt that AI had only a minor effect, preferring other learning tools. Overall, AI was perceived as motivating when used wisely.

3.1.7 Ethical Awareness and Opinions on AI Use

Data 14 Regarding ethical awareness, most students understood that AI should be used as a support tool. Informant 1 emphasized maintaining originality, while Informant 3 stated that ethical use means learning from AI, not copying it.

Data 15 Informant 2 and Informant 4 admitted limited knowledge of AI ethics. In terms of opinion, students strongly supported ethical AI use.

Data 16 Informant 5 stated that ethical use prevents dependency, and Informant 6 believed it helps teachers control students' reliance on AI. These views indicate growing awareness of academic integrity.

3.1.8 Students' Views on the Future of AI in English Language Learning

Data 17 All informants expressed positive views about the future of AI in English language learning.

Data 18 Informant 1 viewed AI as a virtual tutor and conversation partner but emphasized it cannot replace real interaction. Informant 3 highlighted instant feedback and personalized exercises, while Informant 4 emphasized flexibility in learning anytime and anywhere. Informant 6 noted that AI would continue to be used unless more effective innovations emerge. These statements reflect an optimistic yet balanced perspective on AI's future role.

3.2 Questionnaire Findings

To strengthen the interview findings, a questionnaire was distributed to students of the English Language Education Study Program at Tadulako University. The questionnaire consisted of ten closed-ended (Yes/No) questions accompanied by open-ended responses for clarification. The results are presented in the form of percentages and narrative descriptions to provide a clearer picture of students' perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an academic support tool.

3.2.1 Students' Perceptions of AI as an Academic Support Tool

Data 19 The questionnaire results indicate a very positive perception of AI among students. All respondents (100%) agreed that AI technology is useful as an academic support tool. Students perceived AI as particularly helpful in generating ideas and supporting academic tasks. One respondent stated, *"Yes, it is very helpful, especially in providing ideas"* (R1), while another explained, *"I believe AI is useful because it gives additional ideas that I never thought of before"* (R4). These responses suggest that AI is not only seen as practical but also as a source of inspiration in academic work.

Data 20 Regarding confidence in using AI tools such as ChatGPT, Quillbot, and Jenni AI, the majority of students (95%) reported feeling confident. Students explained that frequent use made them familiar with these tools. One respondent noted, *"I often use ChatGPT to get explanations, and I feel confident using it"* (R7). However, a small number of students (5%) expressed hesitation, mainly due to concerns about over-reliance. As one respondent stated, *"Sometimes I hesitate because depending too much on AI can make us lazy to think independently"* (R12). This indicates that while confidence is generally high, critical awareness remains present.

Data 21 Most students (85%) also believed that AI can complement traditional learning methods. Students explained that AI helps provide additional explanations that lecturers may not have enough time to cover. One respondent stated, *"AI can give several explanations or recommendations that lecturers cannot always explain in class"* (R8). However, some students (15%) emphasized that face-to-face learning remains essential. As expressed by one respondent, *"AI can help, but direct learning with lecturers is still more important"* (R10). These responses show that AI is viewed as a complementary tool rather than a replacement for traditional teaching.

Data 22 Similarly, 85% of respondents believed that AI can improve the quality of their academic work, particularly in writing tasks. Students highlighted grammar checking, paraphrasing, and sentence improvement as major benefits. One respondent stated, *"AI is very helpful because reviewing journals and paraphrasing becomes easier"* (R11). However, some students expressed caution. One respondent noted, *"It can be fifty-fifty, because if we don't understand the basic material, AI can actually mislead us"* (R15). This suggests that AI effectiveness depends on students' foundational knowledge.

3.2.2 Benefits of AI in Academic Settings

Data 23 In terms of personalized learning, almost all respondents (95%) agreed that AI helps adapt learning materials to individual needs. Students felt that AI allowed them to focus on specific weaknesses, such as grammar or vocabulary. One respondent explained, *"AI helps because we can adjust the material based on our needs, for example grammar or certain vocabulary"* (R16). This finding indicates that AI supports flexible and student-centered learning.

Data 24 Most students (85%) also perceived AI as providing real-time feedback that supports learning progress. Instant feedback on grammar and sentence structure was frequently mentioned. One student stated, *"AI gives instant feedback on grammar and structure, so I can improve faster"* (R18). Nevertheless, some students noted limitations, such as overly general responses. As one respondent mentioned, *"Sometimes the answers are too general and cannot always be used directly"* (R20). This shows that students still need to critically evaluate AI feedback.

Data 25 Regarding efficiency, 90% of respondents agreed that AI improves efficiency in completing academic tasks. Students reported that AI helped them save time, organize ideas, and meet deadlines more effectively. One respondent stated, *"AI really helps speed up task completion, especially when facing deadlines"* (R21). However, a small number of students remained cautious due to concerns about accuracy. One respondent commented, *"Not always, sometimes AI can be wrong, so I don't rely on it too much"* (R11). Overall, AI is largely perceived as a time-saving and productivity-enhancing tool.

3.2.3 Ethical Awareness and Challenges in Using AI

Data 26 Most students (75%) believed that AI can be used ethically to support academic activities, as long as originality is maintained. One respondent emphasized, *"It depends on the user. The most important thing is maintaining originality"* (R1). However, 25% of respondents disagreed, expressing concerns about the value of original thinking. One student stated, *"For me, work that comes purely from our own thinking is more valuable"* (R5). These findings indicate differing views on ethical AI use, although ethical considerations are widely acknowledged.

Data 27 In terms of challenges, 70% of respondents admitted facing difficulties when using AI tools, particularly in creating effective prompts and evaluating the accuracy of responses. One respondent noted, *"Sometimes I am confused about how to create the right prompt"* (R30). In contrast, 30% reported no significant difficulties, often describing themselves as technologically familiar. One respondent stated, *"Not at all, I'm Gen Z and already used to technology"* (R27). This suggests a need for additional guidance or training to help students optimize AI use.

Data 28 Finally, all respondents (100%) expressed concerns about ethical issues related to AI use, including plagiarism, originality, and over-reliance. One respondent stated, *"I'm worried about dependency. If everyone uses AI, critical thinking skills can decrease"* (R33). Another added, *"There are concerns, but if we can control its use, AI can still be positive"* (R35). These responses demonstrate a high level of ethical awareness among students.

3.3 Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that English Language Education students at Tadulako University generally hold positive perceptions toward the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as an academic support tool. Both interview and questionnaire data consistently show that students perceive AI as useful, easy to use, and supportive in completing academic tasks. This aligns with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which suggests that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use play a significant role in determining users' acceptance of technology in educational contexts.

One of the most prominent findings is that students view AI as a tool that supports idea generation, writing improvement, and understanding complex material. Many students reported using AI to prepare questions for class discussions, assist with group presentations, and complete assignments in various subjects such as Academic Writing, Intercultural Communication, Prose, and Psycholinguistics. These findings support previous studies which argue that AI can function as a cognitive assistant that helps students structure ideas, refine language, and gain multiple perspectives, particularly in language learning contexts where writing and comprehension are central.

The study also highlights AI's role in enhancing learning efficiency and motivation. Students explained that AI saves time, provides quick feedback, and reduces anxiety when completing academic tasks. The availability of instant feedback, especially in grammar and sentence structure, allows students to revise their work more efficiently and confidently. This finding suggests that AI contributes to a more personalized and flexible learning experience, enabling students to learn at their own pace and according to their individual needs. However, several students emphasized that AI should be used carefully, as overly general or inaccurate responses still require critical evaluation and verification.

Despite the generally positive perceptions, students also expressed concerns related to dependency, accuracy, and ethical issues. Some students admitted that excessive reliance on AI could reduce critical thinking and originality. This concern was evident in both interview and questionnaire responses, where students stressed the importance of understanding AI outputs rather than copying them directly. These findings indicate that students are aware of the risks associated with uncritical AI use, particularly in relation to plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

Interestingly, the role of lecturers emerged as an important factor in shaping students' responsible use of AI. Most students stated that lecturers did not explicitly require AI use but allowed it as a supportive tool, often emphasizing ethical use and originality. This suggests that lecturers play a key role in guiding students toward balanced and ethical technology use. The absence of rigid instructions, combined with ethical reminders, appears to encourage students to view AI as a learning aid rather than a substitute for intellectual effort.

Furthermore, students demonstrated optimism about the future role of AI in English language learning. They envisioned AI as a virtual tutor, grammar checker, and conversation partner that can be accessed anytime and anywhere. However, students consistently emphasized that AI cannot replace real interaction with lecturers and peers. This perspective reflects a balanced view, where technology is seen as an enhancement rather than a replacement of human-centered learning. Such findings reinforce the importance of integrating AI into education in a way that preserves meaningful interaction and pedagogical guidance.

Overall, the discussion indicates that AI has significant potential to support academic learning and engagement when used responsibly. While students recognize its benefits in improving productivity, motivation, and learning efficiency, they also acknowledge the need for ethical awareness and digital literacy. Therefore, higher education institutions should provide clear guidelines, ethical instruction, and training on effective AI use to ensure that students can maximize its benefits while maintaining academic integrity and critical thinking skills.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions presented in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that English Language Education students at Tadulako University generally hold positive perceptions toward the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology as an academic support tool. AI is perceived as useful in assisting students to generate ideas, simplify academic tasks, provide personalized learning experiences, and deliver real-time feedback that improves both learning motivation and efficiency. Alongside these advantages, students also recognized several challenges, including occasional inaccuracies, limited ability to formulate effective prompts, and ethical concerns such as plagiarism and over-reliance on technology. Most students demonstrated ethical awareness, emphasizing that AI should be utilized as a supportive tool while maintaining originality and academic integrity.

Furthermore, students expressed optimism regarding the future role of AI in English language learning, yet they consistently highlighted the importance of balancing technological use with direct interaction between lecturers and peers to preserve meaningful learning.

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