

University Students' Perceptions on ChatGPT Usage in English Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study explores undergraduate university students' perceptions of generative technologies, such as ChatGPT, in higher education, focusing on their familiarity, willingness to engage, potential benefits and challenges, and effective integration. A survey of 107 undergraduate students from various courses examined their attitudes toward using ChatGPT to learn English. The study focuses on accuracy, privacy, ethical issues, and the impact on personal development. The online questionnaire data were analysed using descriptive statistics in SPSS, reliability testing, mean score analysis, and one-sample t-tests. The results revealed that students generally hold positive perceptions of ChatGPT, acknowledging its effectiveness in improving writing skills, grammar understanding, and vocabulary acquisition. Students viewed ChatGPT as a motivating confidence building tool that complements, rather than replaces, traditional English learning methods. Attitudinal findings showed that students perceive ChatGPT as reliable and useful for academic tasks while maintaining awareness of academic integrity and ethical considerations. They rejected the idea that AI-generated work would pass undetected by lecturers and acknowledged that using ChatGPT for submitted coursework amounts to academic malpractice. Overall, the study concludes that students are optimistic about the future integration of ChatGPT in education, provided it is used responsibly and ethically.

Keywords: ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence (AI), AI-generated content, students' perceptions, academic integrity, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT has significantly transformed higher education, particularly in language learning. ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, is an AI-powered chatbot that generates human-like responses and assists users with writing, translation, comprehension, and critical thinking tasks. Its rapid adoption among university students has brought both opportunities and challenges to academic contexts, especially in English language learning (Dwivedi et al. 2023). Many students have made ChatGPT a valuable academic companion that enhances their vocabulary, writing fluency, and comprehension. However, concerns remain regarding overreliance, academic integrity, and potential misuse in producing plagiarized content (Kasneci et al., 2023). As AI technology is increasingly integrated into education, understanding students' perceptions and attitudes toward its use is vital. In language learning, where creativity, authenticity, and critical thinking are vital, ChatGPT raises important pedagogical questions. This study therefore aims to investigate university students' perceptions and attitudes toward ChatGPT in English

learning, their views on its role as a learning and academic support tool, and their attitudes toward plagiarism related to AI-generated content.

This study aims to:

- Investigate the characteristics of students' perceptions and attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT in their English learning.
- Explore university students' perceptions of ChatGPT as a learning and academic support tool.
- Examine students' attitudes toward plagiarism in the context of using ChatGPT-generated content.

Statement of Problem

While ChatGPT offers significant benefits for language learning, including personalized feedback and instant academic assistance, this also introduces ethical and academic concerns. Many students utilize ChatGPT without a clear understanding of its limitations or implications for academic honesty. Some rely on AI-generated text without proper citation, blurring the line between learning support and plagiarism (Selwyn 2019). Despite the prevalence of AI tools in university settings, empirical research remains limited on how students perceive ChatGPT's role in English language learning and how they navigate academic integrity. Existing studies have focused on the technological aspects or teaching potential of ChatGPT rather than on learners' perceptions and ethical attitudes. In Malaysia, where English is learned as a second language, students' attitudes toward AI-assisted learning and plagiarism may differ from those in Western educational systems. Thus, this study addresses an important gap by examining Malaysian university students' perceptions of ChatGPT as a language learning and academic support tool, while also exploring their understanding of plagiarism in the context of AI use. Therefore, it is essential to understand students' views of ChatGPT as a learning aid, their attitudes toward its use in academic tasks, and their awareness of plagiarism risks. Understanding these perceptions can help educators design effective guidelines and promote responsible AI use in higher education.

Although previous research has explored the pedagogical integration of AI and its perceived usefulness in education (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023), few studies have specifically focused on university students' perceptions and attitudes toward ChatGPT in English learning contexts. Moreover, no evidence on how students reconcile the benefits of AI-assisted learning with issues of academic honesty and plagiarism. Most studies have been conducted in Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding students' perspectives in Asian educational settings, such as Malaysia, where English is a second language and academic integrity norms may differ. This study addresses these gaps by examining Malaysian university students' perceptions of ChatGPT as a learning tool and their attitudes toward plagiarism when using AI-generated content.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ChatGPT and AI in Education

AI technologies are increasingly integrated into educational systems to enhance learning experiences. ChatGPT, in particular, serves as an interactive learning assistant able to generate explanations, answer questions, and provide writing feedback (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Studies indicate that ChatGPT can boost learners' ability in several skills such as language proficiency and other various skills (Baidoo-anu and Owusu (2023). Similarly, Kasneci et al. (2023) said ChatGPT can help students develop several skills including reading, writing, information analysis, critical thinking, problem-solving, generating practice problems, and research. ChatGPT shows many potential benefits to student learning. In learning contexts, ChatGPT offers beneficial opportunities for language practice, vocabulary enrichment, and increased writing quality (Fitria, 2021). Chatbots can also act as a personal tutor or mentor that answers questions, provides easy-to-understand explanations of complex concepts, and engages students in conversations on various educational topics (Baidoo-Anu et al. 2023).

Students' Perceptions and Attitudes Toward ChatGPT

Students generally consider ChatGPT as a supportive academic companion that facilitates self-directed learning, enhances productivity, and reduces anxiety in language tasks. Despite these positive perceptions, some express skepticism about its accuracy and fear of becoming overly dependent on AI-generated content. Some learners regard ChatGPT as a substitute for effort, leading to reduced critical engagement with learning materials. A study by Bitzenbaur (2023) found that 12th-grade students in physics classes favoured ChatGPT in class, indicating that AI enhanced students' lives and made classwork more efficient. Students in the study indicates that AI should be a regular part of everyday life and were overall optimistic about many advantages. Abdaljaleel et al. (2023) found that students preferred ChatGPT because of its functionality. Students in the study said ChatGPT was accessible and could be used as a study assistant. In addition, Abdaljaleel et al. (2023) found that students perceived ChatGPT as useful because it could be a personalized learning tool that helped non-native English speakers connect with educational content in a more meaningful way (Doty & Lipien 2024).

ChatGPT and Academic Integrity

ChatGPT in academic writing raises questions about authorship, originality, and plagiarism. Research shows that many students are uncertain about whether AI-generated content constitutes plagiarism, particularly when they edit or paraphrase it. Elkhodr et al. (2023) found that students view chatbots as valuable and enjoyable; however, they question the information chatbots generate in response to their questions and whether the text is irrelevant or incorrect (Andrew et al. 2025). This reduces the quality and depth of social science research and leads to a lack of human oversight and accountability. Some view it as an untrusted assistant and an unexpected technology (Albayati et al., 2021, 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Mollick & Mollick, 2022). Educators have also expressed concern that students may submit AI-generated work without proper acknowledgment, compromising academic integrity (Yilmaz et al., 2023). These ethical concerns necessitate a deeper understanding of students' attitudes toward plagiarism in the age of AI.

METHODOLOGY

A total of 107 students were conveniently selected as the study sample from various academic programs. The convenience sampling technique was used based on the respondents' eligibility, willingness, and availability at the appropriate time, without any pressure (Yilmaz et al., 2023). Primary data were collected through an online survey, using a Google Form questionnaire. The data obtained were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The analysis was conducted in several stages to ensure a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation of students' perceptions and attitudes toward ChatGPT.

Initially, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, age, faculty, semester of study, level of English proficiency, platform through which ChatGPT was first discovered, and the frequency of ChatGPT usage for academic purposes. Frequencies and percentages were generated to provide a clear overview of the sample profile. This step was essential for contextualizing the findings and understanding how background factors may influence perceptions and attitudes (Takona, 2024).

Subsequently, the reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the constructs measuring perceptions and attitudes. A coefficient value exceeding 0.70 was considered acceptable, in accordance with established guidelines (Taber, 2018). This procedure was crucial to ensure that the measurement scales were stable, dependable, and suitable for subsequent statistical analyses. Following the reliability assessment, mean score analysis shows overall tendencies in students' responses. The mean values indicate the level of agreement or disagreement with each item, while the standard deviations reflected the degree of variability among the responses. This approach helps identify patterns and highlights which aspects of ChatGPT are the most favourable.

Finally, one-sample t-tests show each item against the neutral test value of 3 on the five-point Likert scale. This inferential analysis was appropriate because it allowed the study to determine whether students' perceptions and attitudes were significantly different from neutrality. Positive and significant t-values indicated higher levels of agreement with a given statement, whereas negative values suggested disagreement. The significance threshold was set at $p < 0.05$. The one-sample t-test was particularly suited for Likert-scale data in this context, as it provided statistical evidence on whether students' responses leaned positively or negatively beyond the neutral midpoint (Norman, 2010).

The use of descriptive statistics, reliability testing, mean score analysis, and one-sample t-tests was justified and collectively allowed for both descriptive and inferential insights. Descriptive statistics highlight the demographic profile of the respondents, reliability testing ensured the soundness of the measurement tool, and the combination of mean score analysis with t-tests enabled the study to measure both the strength and the statistical significance of students' perceptions and attitudes toward ChatGPT.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Descriptive Analysis Results on Students' Background Information

Table 1: Students' Background Information

Variable	Level of variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	30	28
	Female	77	72
Age	18 - 21	103	96.3
	22 - 25	4	3.7
Faculty	Applied Sciences	16	15
	Accountancy	68	63.6
	Computer and Mathematical Sciences	23	21.5
Semester	1	9	8.4
	2	80	74.8
	3	18	16.8
Level of English Proficiency	Beginner	22	20.6
	Intermediate	78	72.9
	Advanced	7	6.5
Platform discover ChatGPT	Social Media	45	42.1
	Friends / Peers	51	47.7

	Teachers / Lecturers	2	1.9
	Online Search	9	8.4
ChatGPT use for English language learning	Never	1	0.9
	Rarely	11	10.3
	Sometimes	59	55.1
	Often	27	25.2
	Always	9	8.4

The sample consisted of 107 undergraduate students (Table 1), with a higher proportion of females (72%, 77 students) compared to males (28%, 30 students). Most respondents were between 18 and 21 years old (96.3%, 103 students), representing a typical undergraduate age group. The majority were from the Faculty of Accountancy (63.6%, 68 students), followed by Computer and Mathematical Sciences (21.5%, 23 students) and Applied Sciences (15%, 16 students). Most participants were enrolled in Semester 2 (74.8%, 80 students), suggesting they have some prior university experience.

In terms of language proficiency, most students rated themselves as intermediate (72.9%, 78 students), with fewer identifying as beginners (20.6%, 22 students) or advanced (6.5%, 7 students). Students primarily discovered ChatGPT through friends or peers (47.7%, 51 students) and social media (42.1%, 45 students), with minimal exposure through formal channels such as lecturers (1.9%, 2 students). Regarding usage patterns, more than half reported using ChatGPT “sometimes” for English language learning (55.1%, 59 students), while 25.2% (27 students) used it “often” and 8.4% (9 students) “always,” indicating that ChatGPT is a regularly utilized tool for language practice among respondents.

Reliability Analysis on Students’ Perceptions and Attitudes

Table 2: Results of Reliability Test

Component	Cronbach’s Alpha
Perceptions	0.881
Attitudes	0.802

Table 2 presents the reliability analysis for the two main components: perceptions and attitudes. The Cronbach’s Alpha value for perceptions is 0.881, indicating excellent internal consistency reliability. This suggests that the items measuring students’ perceptions of ChatGPT are highly reliable and produce consistent results. Similarly, the Cronbach’s Alpha value for attitudes is 0.802, which falls within the “good” range of reliability.

This shows that the items measuring attitudes toward ChatGPT are also reliable and internally consistent. Since both values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, the measurement scales used in this study can be considered dependable for further statistical analysis.

Mean Analysis of Students' Perceptions and Attitudes

Table 3: Mean Score of Perceptions Among Students Towards ChatGPT Usage

Item	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Mean (M)	Level
1. ChatGPT helps improve my English vocabulary	0	1	25	51	30	4.03	High
2. ChatGPT helps me understand grammar rules better	0	3	19	51	34	4.08	High
3. Using ChatGPT motivates me to practice English more	0	4	22	45	36	4.06	High
4. ChatGPT helps me with my English writing	0	0	14	49	44	4.28	High
5. I trust the accuracy of the selection of English words in ChatGPT	0	7	45	35	20	3.64	Moderate
6. ChatGPT helps me become more independent in learning English	0	6	38	40	23	3.75	High
7. ChatGPT can replace traditional English learning methods	11	28	37	23	8	2.90	Moderate
8. I feel confident using ChatGPT for language learning	1	8	38	40	20	3.65	High

Table 3 shows mean perceptions of ChatGPT usage. Generally, all students demonstrated positive perceptions of ChatGPT as a learning aid. The highest was found for ChatGPT's role in improving writing skills ($M = 4.28$), followed by enhancing grammar ($M = 4.08$), vocabulary ($M = 4.03$), and motivation to practice English ($M = 4.06$). These results highlight that students view ChatGPT as a valuable supplementary tool that

strengthens core language skills. However, students were more reserved about its reliability in word choice ($M = 3.64$) and its ability to foster independent learning ($M = 3.75$). Importantly, most students rejected the idea that ChatGPT could replace traditional methods ($M = 2.90$), suggesting they see it as a complement rather than a substitute for classroom learning. Students perceive ChatGPT positively for specific skills (especially writing), but they remain critical and balanced about its role in replacing teachers or traditional methods.

Table 4: Mean Score of Attitudes Among Students Towards ChatGPT Usage

Item	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Mean (M)	Level
1. I believe ChatGPT gives reliable and accurate	1	12	55	30	9	3.32	High
2. I feel ChatGPT can produce better results or responses for my assignments	1	12	48	36	10	3.39	High
3. I believe lecturers cannot detect assignments written by ChatGPT	50	34	13	4	6	1.90	Low
4. I believe that ChatGPT retrieves the most recent data for generating responses	1	8	46	38	14	3.52	High
5. I feel the use of ChatGPT by students for academic purposes defeats the purpose of learning	3	24	44	26	10	3.15	High
6. I feel using ChatGPT for completing written assignments or examinations is malpractice and cheating	4	9	45	26	23	3.51	High
7. I feel it is possible to use ChatGPT to support academic activities without violating ethical concerns	2	5	39	41	20	3.67	High

8. I believe ChatGPT will become the new normal in the future	0	5	25	53	24	3.90	High
9. I will recommend ChatGPT to my friends for academic purposes	0	5	25	48	29	3.94	High

Table 4 shows mean attitudes toward ChatGPT usage. Students' attitudes toward ChatGPT in the context of plagiarism and academic integrity are generally positive, with cautious awareness of ethical issues. They believe ChatGPT is reliable ($M = 3.32$), improves assignment results ($M = 3.39$), and retrieves recent information ($M = 3.52$). Importantly, students clearly reject the idea that lecturers cannot detect AI-generated work ($M = 1.90$), showing awareness of accountability.

Ethical considerations showed a balance: while some students worried that ChatGPT might defeat the purpose of learning ($M = 3.15$), many agreed that its misuse constitutes cheating ($M = 3.51$). At the same time, they recognized that ChatGPT could be integrated ethically to support academic activities ($M = 3.67$). Students expressed optimism about the future use of ChatGPT, expecting it to become the "new normal" ($M = 3.90$) and showing strong willingness to recommend it to peers ($M = 3.94$). Students see ChatGPT as a valuable and ethical learning support when used responsibly, but they remain alert to issues of plagiarism and the importance of maintaining academic integrity.

Analysis of t-Test Results

Table 5: t-Test for Perceptions Among Students Towards ChatGPT Usage

Item	SD	t	p
1. ChatGPT helps improve my English vocabulary	0.75	14.26	< 0.001
2. ChatGPT helps me understand grammar rules better	0.78	14.41	< 0.001
3. Using ChatGPT motivates me to practice English more	0.83	13.10	< 0.001
4. ChatGPT helps me with my English writing	0.68	19.36	< 0.001
5. I trust the accuracy of the selection of English words in ChatGPT	0.86	7.63	< 0.001
6. ChatGPT helps me become more independent in learning English	0.86	9.01	< 0.001
7. ChatGPT can replace traditional English learning methods	1.09	-0.98	0.331
8. I feel confident using ChatGPT for language learning	0.90	7.50	< 0.001

Note. Test value = 3 (neutral), SD = standard deviation, p = p-Value

The one-sample t-test results (Table 5) indicate that students generally hold positive perceptions of ChatGPT as a tool for English language learning. Significant findings ($p < .001$) reveal that students believe ChatGPT

effectively improves their vocabulary ($t = 14.26$), helps them understand grammar rules ($t = 14.41$), and motivates them to practice English more ($t = 13.10$). Among the skills assessed, the help from ChatGPT has the strongest agreement in enhancing English writing ($t = 19.36$), suggesting students particularly value ChatGPT's ability to support them in composing written work. Students also reported that ChatGPT contributes to their independence in learning ($t = 9.01$) and increases their confidence in using English for academic purposes ($t = 7.50$). Students generally trust ChatGPT's word choices ($t = 7.63$), this trust is weaker for grammar and writing support. Interestingly, there is no significant difference in students' views about ChatGPT replacing traditional learning methods ($t = -0.98$, $p = .331$), indicating that students see ChatGPT as a complementary tool rather than a substitute for conventional classroom-based approaches. Overall, the results suggest that students see ChatGPT as a beneficial, motivating, and confidence-building resource for language learning, though they recognize the continued importance of traditional teaching methods.

Table 6: t-Test for Attitudes Among Students Towards ChatGPT Usage

Item	SD	t	p
1. I believe ChatGPT gives reliable and accurate	0.82	4.01	< 0.001
2. I feel ChatGPT can produce better results or responses for my assignments	0.84	4.81	< 0.001
3. I believe lecturers cannot detect assignments written by ChatGPT	1.12	-10.23	< 0.001
4. I believe that ChatGPT retrieves the most recent data for generating responses	0.85	6.37	< 0.001
5. I feel the use of ChatGPT by students for academic purposes defeats the purpose of learning	0.97	1.60	0.114
6. I feel using ChatGPT for completing written assignments or examinations is malpractice and cheating	1.04	5.11	< 0.001
7. I feel it is possible to use ChatGPT to support academic activities without violating ethical concerns	0.90	7.75	< 0.001
8. I believe ChatGPT will become the new normal in the future	0.80	11.60	< 0.001
9. I will recommend ChatGPT to my friends for academic purposes	0.83	11.71	< 0.001

Note. Test value = 3 (neutral), SD = standard deviation, p = p-Value

The one-sample t-test results (Table 6) provide valuable insights into students' attitudes toward plagiarism and ethical considerations when using ChatGPT. Several items show differences from the neutral test value of 3, suggesting strong student opinions. Students agreed that ChatGPT is reliable and accurate ($t = 4.01$, $p < .001$) and that it can produce better responses ($t = 4.81$, $p < .001$). They also believed ChatGPT retrieves recent data effectively ($t = 6.37$, $p < .001$) and can support academic activities without necessarily violating ethical concerns ($t = 7.75$, $p < .001$). Importantly, students strongly rejected the notion that lecturers cannot detect AI-generated assignments, as shown by the significant negative result ($t = -10.23$, $p < .001$). This reflects a recognition of institutional safeguards and detection mechanisms. Students also showed that ChatGPT will become the new normal in the future ($t = 11.60$, $p < .001$) and expressed willingness to recommend it to peers

for academic purposes ($t = 11.71, p < .001$). At the same time, they acknowledged the ethical risks of misuse, as evidenced by significant agreement that using ChatGPT for written assignments or examinations constitutes malpractice and cheating ($t = 5.11, p < .001$). However, attitudes were more divided on whether ChatGPT defeats the purpose of learning, with results showing no significant difference from neutrality ($t = 1.60, p = .114$). Overall, these findings suggest that while students see ChatGPT as a valuable and future-oriented academic tool, they remain aware of ethical boundaries and recognize its limitations in maintaining academic integrity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings revealed that university students generally have positive perceptions and attitudes toward ChatGPT in their English language learning. Students acknowledge ChatGPT as a useful, reliable, and motivating learning support tool, particularly effective in improving writing, grammar, and vocabulary skills. The tool is an innovative supplement that encourages independent learning and boosts learners' confidence in using English, though it does not replace traditional classroom instruction.

The t-test results confirmed statistically significant positive perceptions across most items, suggesting that students strongly agree with ChatGPT's role in enhancing language proficiency, especially in writing and grammar improvement. However, neutrality toward ChatGPT replacing conventional learning shows that students value human interaction and guidance from educators as irreplaceable components of learning.

In terms of attitudes, students demonstrated ethical awareness and responsibility in using ChatGPT for academic purposes. They recognized many benefits of ChatGPT in generating accurate information and improving academic work while simultaneously acknowledging the risks of plagiarism and malpractice. The notion that lecturers cannot detect AI-generated work reflects a mature understanding of academic integrity. Furthermore, students anticipate ChatGPT to become a mainstream educational tool and express strong willingness to recommend it to peers, indicating a positive outlook toward the integration of AI in education when used responsibly.

Overall, the study concludes that while students embrace ChatGPT as a valuable learning companion, they remain cautious about ethical boundaries, showing a balanced and reflective approach toward AI use in academic contexts. This demonstrates a growing awareness among learners of the need to use AI tools to enhance knowledge not to replace learning and critical thinking.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study employed a convenience sampling method involving 107 university students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other institutions or contexts. Moreover, the study relied on self-reported survey data, which may be influenced by respondents' social desirability or misunderstanding of questions. The research also focused specifically on English language learning, and thus, perceptions may differ in other academic disciplines. Additionally, as AI technology continues to evolve, students' attitudes toward ChatGPT may change over time, requiring ongoing investigation.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

This manuscript was developed with the assistance of ChatGPT & Grammarly for the purpose of language editing and improving the clarity of writing. The tool supported the authors in reviewing and refining the content, and the authors assume full responsibility for the final version submitted for publication.

Conflict of Interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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Authors' Contributions

Zaidi, A: study conception and design; Zaidi, A: methodology and data collection; Zulkifli, I.Z.: data analysis and interpretation; Zaidi, A: draft manuscript preparation. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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