

“AI in My English Class”: Perceptions of Indonesian Junior High School Students on Artificial Intelligence for Language Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English Language Teaching (ELT) has significantly transformed learning practices, particularly in developing countries such as Indonesia. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of Indonesian Junior High School students toward the use of AI in language acquisition. Employing a descriptive quantitative design, data were collected from 35 students of SMP Tahfidz Mutiara Al-Akbar Makassar using total sampling, consisting of Grade 7 (10 students), Grade 8 (12 students), and Grade 9 (13 students). A structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were utilized to explore students' attitudes, perceived benefits, and challenges of AI integration in English learning. The finding reveals that students generally hold positive perceptions toward AI tools, particularly in improving vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and writing skills. However, concerns regarding over-reliance and reduced critical thinking were also identified. It is concluded that while AI enhances language acquisition, its pedagogical implementation should be carefully guided to ensure balanced and effective learning outcomes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly evolved into a transformative force in contemporary education, reshaping not only how knowledge is delivered but also how learners interact with content and construct understanding (Kaharuddin et al., 2024; Strielkowski et al., 2024). In the domain of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), AI technologies, such as chatbots, intelligent tutoring systems, automated writing evaluators, and machine translation tools, have introduced new possibilities for personalized, adaptive, and student-centered learning (Ginting et al., 2022; Albasry et al., 2025). These tools enable learners to access linguistic input, receive instant corrective feedback, and engage in interactive practice beyond the constraints of the traditional classroom (AbuSahyon et al., 2023).

In the Indonesian context, where English is learned as a foreign language and exposure outside the classroom is often limited, AI offers a promising solution to bridge gaps in input, interaction, and feedback (Kaharuddin, 2025). Students increasingly rely on AI tools for translation, grammar correction, pronunciation modeling, and idea generation in writing, reflecting broader trends in digital learning where technology functions as a cognitive partner in the learning process (Kristiawan et al., 2024). From a language acquisition perspective, AI aligns with key principles such as meaningful input, interaction, and output. AI-mediated

environments allow learners to engage in repeated practice, negotiate meaning, and refine their linguistic output with minimal anxiety (Chen et al., 2026). Moreover, AI supports autonomous learning, which is particularly important in EFL settings where classroom time is limited (Nguyen, 2025).

However, the integration of AI in language learning is not without challenges. While AI can enhance efficiency and accessibility, it also raises concerns regarding cognitive dependency, superficial learning, and reduced critical engagement (Girma, 2025). Students may prioritize speed and convenience over deep comprehension, relying on AI-generated responses without fully processing linguistic structures (Creely, 2024). Such practices may shift learning from active engagement toward assisted performance. Furthermore, ethical and pedagogical concerns have been raised regarding authorship, academic integrity, and the changing role of teachers in AI-mediated classrooms (Küçükuncular & Ertugan, 2025). Previous research in Indonesia has begun to examine the use of AI in educational contexts, particularly among university students and learners in vocational settings (Sukini et al., 2025; Rombepajung et al., 2026). These studies have provided important insights into the potential benefits, challenges, and perceptions associated with AI-assisted learning. However, the existing literature has predominantly focused on older learners and higher or vocational education contexts, leaving the experiences of junior high school students comparatively underexplored.

This gap is particularly important because junior high school students are at a formative stage of language development, in which patterns of technology use, learning autonomy, and dependence on AI may develop differently from those of university or vocational students. Moreover, limited attention has been given to how Indonesian junior high school students themselves perceive the role of AI in supporting their English language learning. Therefore, the novelty of the present study lies in its focus on Indonesian junior high school students as a distinct learner population and in its exploration of their perceptions of AI use specifically within English language learning. By addressing this underexplored educational level and learner context, the study extends previous Indonesian research on AI in education and provides context-specific evidence on how AI is perceived and experienced by adolescent English language learners.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Artificial Intelligence in Language Learning

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education refers to computational systems designed to emulate human cognitive processes, including learning, reasoning, pattern recognition, and problem-solving (Chen et al., 2020). Beyond simple automation, contemporary AI systems, particularly those powered by machine learning and natural language processing, are capable of analyzing large volumes of learner data, adapting instructional content, and generating context-sensitive feedback. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), AI has been increasingly embedded in a wide range of tools such as intelligent tutoring systems, automated writing evaluation platforms, speech recognition applications, and conversational chatbots. These technologies facilitate language acquisition by creating adaptive learning pathways, delivering personalized feedback, and enabling interactive communication that approximates authentic language use (AbuZahyon et al., 2023).

One of the most significant pedagogical advantages of AI lies in its capacity to provide immediate, individualized, and scalable feedback, which is often difficult to achieve in conventional classroom settings characterized by limited instructional time and large student populations (Arafah & Bahar, 2015; Kamalov et al., 2023). AI-powered systems can process learner input in real time, identify grammatical, lexical, and syntactic errors, and offer targeted corrective feedback. This supports form-focused instruction, allowing learners to notice gaps in their interlanguage and refine their linguistic accuracy more effectively (Arafah et al., 2021). Furthermore, the immediacy of feedback reduces the delay between performance and correction, which is crucial for reinforcing learning and preventing fossilization of errors.

In addition, AI significantly enhances multimodal learning environments, where learners engage with linguistic input through multiple channels, including text, audio, and visual representations. Such multimodal exposure is particularly beneficial in EFL contexts, as it enriches comprehension and supports diverse learning styles. AI also promotes learner autonomy by enabling students to regulate their own learning processes, choosing when, how, and what to learn, thereby fostering self-directed learning habits (Navas Bonilla et al., 2025). This shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered environments aligns with contemporary educational paradigms emphasizing personalization and lifelong learning. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that AI integration contributes to measurable improvements across various language skills, including vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, writing proficiency, and speaking fluency (Bahar, 2014; Butarbutar et al., 2021). These improvements can be attributed to increased opportunities for practice, continuous feedback, and adaptive learning experiences tailored to individual proficiency levels. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of AI is not solely determined by technological sophistication but also by pedagogical design and user engagement. Without appropriate instructional guidance, AI tools may be used merely for task completion rather than meaningful learning, potentially limiting their educational impact. Therefore, while AI holds substantial potential to transform language learning, its integration must be

accompanied by thoughtful pedagogical strategies that ensure learners actively engage with the language, reflect on feedback, and develop deeper linguistic competence.

2.2 Students' Perceptions of AI in Education

Students' perceptions play a central role in determining both the adoption and effective use of educational technologies, as emphasized in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Ismail et al., 2020; Granić & Marangunić, 2019). Within this framework, learners' attitudes toward a technology are shaped primarily by perceived usefulness (PU) the extent to which the technology enhances learning performance and perceived ease of use (PEOU) the degree to which it is considered effortless to use. These perceptions influence not only students' willingness to adopt AI tools but also the depth and frequency of their engagement. When learners perceive AI as beneficial and user-friendly, they are more likely to integrate it into their learning routines, leading to increased motivation, sustained engagement, and more frequent interaction with the target language.

In EFL contexts, where opportunities for authentic language exposure are often limited, students tend to perceive AI as a practical and empowering learning resource. Empirical studies indicate that learners commonly view AI tools as efficient, accessible, and supportive in improving various language skills, particularly writing, grammar, and vocabulary (Kaharuddin, 2013; Zhao, 2025). The ability of AI to provide instant feedback, generate language models, and offer explanations contributes significantly to its perceived usefulness. At the same time, intuitive interfaces and ease of access—often via mobile devices—enhance perceived ease of use, making AI tools appealing even to younger learners with varying levels of digital literacy.

However, emerging research reveals a paradoxical dimension in students' perceptions of AI. While learners appreciate the convenience, speed, and assistance provided by AI, they are simultaneously aware of its potential drawbacks (Katsenou et al., 2025; Wang & Zhang, 2026). These include concerns about over-reliance, reduced effort in problem-solving, and diminished opportunities for critical thinking. In some cases, students may prioritize efficiency over understanding, using AI to complete tasks quickly rather than engaging in deeper cognitive processing. This duality reflects a tension between AI as a facilitator of learning and as a potential constraint on cognitive development.

Consequently, students' perceptions of AI are often ambivalent rather than uniformly positive, characterized by both enthusiasm and caution. This ambivalence suggests that positive attitudes toward AI do not automatically translate into meaningful learning outcomes. Instead, the impact of AI depends on how students interpret and use the technology within specific learning contexts. Therefore, understanding these nuanced perceptions is essential for educators, as it highlights the need for pedagogically guided AI integration that maximizes engagement while mitigating risks associated with superficial learning and dependency.

2.3 AI in the Indonesian Educational Context

AI adoption in Indonesia has shown a steady increase in recent years, largely driven by rapid digitalization, expanding internet access, and the widespread use of mobile technologies among students (Haetami, 2025). This technological growth has created new opportunities for integrating AI into educational practices, particularly in English language learning. However, the implementation of AI across Indonesian schools remains uneven and fragmented. Disparities in infrastructure, such as inconsistent internet connectivity, limited access to devices, and varying levels of technological support, continue to hinder the equitable adoption of AI-based learning tools. In addition, differences in digital literacy among both students and teachers further complicate effective integration, as not all users possess the skills required to critically and productively engage with AI technologies.

In many educational settings, particularly at the secondary level, AI is often utilized informally by students rather than being systematically embedded within the curriculum (Gouseti et al., 2025). Students frequently access AI tools independently for tasks such as translation, grammar checking, and content generation, without explicit pedagogical guidance. This creates a disconnect between actual technology use and instructional design, where AI functions more as a convenient shortcut than as a structured learning tool. While teachers generally acknowledge the potential of AI to enhance teaching and learning, many report challenges in integrating it effectively due to limited professional training, lack of institutional support, and uncertainty about appropriate pedagogical strategies (Alwaqdani, 2025). As a result, AI integration often remains superficial, focusing on tool usage rather than meaningful learning outcomes.

At the junior high school level, empirical research on AI use is still relatively scarce, particularly studies that foreground students' perspectives and lived experiences (Kaharuddin et al., 2023). This gap is significant, given that learners at this stage are in a critical phase of cognitive, linguistic, and digital development. Their early interactions with AI technologies are likely to shape not only their language learning strategies but also their attitudes toward technology-mediated learning in the long term. Without sufficient research, it is difficult to understand how younger learners interpret AI, how they balance its benefits and

limitations, and how it influences their learning behaviors. Hence, there is a pressing need for context-specific studies that examine AI use in Indonesian junior high schools from the students' viewpoint. Such research can provide valuable insights into how AI is actually experienced in real classroom contexts, identify potential risks such as over-reliance or misuse, and inform the development of pedagogically sound strategies for integrating AI in ways that are both effective and equitable.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which explains users' adoption of technology based primarily on two key constructs: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which learners believe that using a particular technology will enhance their learning performance, while perceived ease of use relates to the degree to which the technology is perceived as effortless to operate. In the context of AI-assisted English learning, these constructs are highly relevant, as students' willingness to engage with AI tools depends on whether they find them beneficial for improving language skills and easy to access and use. When students perceive AI as both useful and user-friendly, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward its use, which in turn influences their behavioral intention and actual usage. Thus, TAM provides a robust framework for understanding how learners accept and integrate AI technologies into their language learning practices.

However, while TAM explains why learners adopt AI, it does not fully capture how AI supports the process of language acquisition itself. Therefore, this study also draws on key theories from Second Language Acquisition (SLA) to provide a pedagogical and cognitive perspective on AI use. First, Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1992) emphasizes the importance of comprehensible input ($i+1$) in language acquisition. AI technologies contribute to this process by providing accessible, level-appropriate language input through translations, explanations, and contextualized examples. Learners can repeatedly engage with input that is slightly above their current proficiency level, facilitating gradual linguistic development. Second, Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996) highlights the role of interaction and negotiation of meaning in promoting language learning. AI-powered tools, particularly conversational agents and chatbots, enable learners to simulate interactive communication, ask questions, receive clarification, and modify their language output based on feedback. Although AI interaction may not fully replicate human communication, it still provides valuable opportunities for practice and meaning negotiation, especially in EFL contexts with limited exposure to native speakers. Third, Swain's Output Hypothesis (2005) underscores the importance of language production in developing linguistic competence. AI tools encourage learners to produce language through writing prompts, dialogue simulations, and speaking exercises. More importantly, AI-generated feedback pushes learners to notice gaps in their knowledge, reflect on their errors, and revise their output, thereby strengthening their language accuracy and fluency.

By integrating TAM and SLA theories, this study establishes a comprehensive framework that captures both the technological acceptance dimension and the language learning process. TAM explains students' perceptions, attitudes, and usage of AI tools, while SLA theories elucidate how these tools facilitate input, interaction, and output, the core mechanisms of language acquisition. This dual framework allows for a more holistic understanding of AI in EFL learning, bridging the gap between technology adoption and pedagogical effectiveness.

3. METHOD

This study was conducted at SMP Tahfidz Mutiara Al Akbar Makassar and employed a descriptive quantitative design complemented by qualitative inquiry, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of students' perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2009). The use of a mixed-methods approach enables the researcher to generate statistical representations of students' responses while also capturing deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives regarding AI in English learning. The study employed saturated sampling, in which all members of the population were included as participants. Specifically, the sample consisted of 35 Junior High School students across three grade levels (Grade 7, Grade 8, and Grade 9), ensuring full representation of the target population within the research setting. This approach enhances the internal validity of the study, as it eliminates sampling bias and provides a more accurate reflection of students' perceptions in the specific context (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990).

Three instruments were employed to collect and validate the data: (1) a structured questionnaire, (2) a semi-structured interview, and (3) data triangulation. Each instrument served a specific purpose in addressing the research questions and developing a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of AI use in English language learning.

a. Structured Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was used as the primary quantitative instrument to address the research question concerning students' perceptions of the usefulness and ease of using AI in English language learning. The questionnaire was developed based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), particularly the constructs

of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, and was adapted from established instruments and previous empirical studies (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008).

The questionnaire consisted of items designed to measure two core dimensions. The first dimension, perceived usefulness, focused on students' perceptions of whether AI helped them improve their English learning, understand learning materials, complete English learning tasks, develop language skills, and learn more effectively. The second dimension, perceived ease of use, examined whether AI tools were perceived as easy to access, operate, understand, and use independently for English learning activities.

Thus, the questionnaire blueprint was organized around the following indicators:

Construct	Main indicators	Focus of questionnaire items
Perceived Usefulness	Learning improvement	Whether AI helps improve English learning
	Learning effectiveness	Whether AI makes English learning more effective
	Task completion	Whether AI helps complete English learning tasks
	Comprehension	Whether AI helps students understand English materials
	Language development	Whether AI supports the development of English skills
Perceived Ease of Use	Ease of operation	Whether AI tools are easy to operate
	Ease of access	Whether AI tools are easy to access when needed
	Ease of understanding	Whether AI-generated explanations are easy to understand
	Ease of learning	Whether students can learn to use AI without difficulty
	Independent use	Whether students can use AI independently for English learning

The questionnaire therefore provided quantitative evidence regarding the extent to which AI was perceived as useful and easy to use by the participating students.

b. Semi-Structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to address the research question concerning students' experiences, attitudes, perceived benefits, challenges, and concerns regarding the use of AI in English language learning. The interviews complemented the questionnaire data by allowing participants to explain their perceptions in greater depth and to provide examples of their actual experiences.

The interview questions were organized into several key areas. First, participants were asked about their experience and frequency of AI use, including which AI tools they used and for what English learning activities. Second, questions explored the perceived benefits of AI, such as assistance with understanding materials, vocabulary, grammar, writing, or other English learning tasks. Third, participants were asked about the ease and difficulties of using AI, including problems encountered when interacting with AI tools. Fourth, questions examined students' attitudes and concerns, particularly regarding dependence on AI, accuracy of AI-generated information, independent learning, and the possibility of using AI without sufficiently understanding the learning material. Finally, participants were invited to explain whether and how AI influenced their motivation, confidence, and engagement in learning English.

The core interview questions included the following areas:

1. How do you usually use AI when learning English?
2. Which English learning activities do you use AI for, and why?
3. How does AI help you understand or complete English learning tasks?
4. What difficulties do you experience when using AI for English learning?
5. How easy or difficult is it for you to use AI independently?
6. Do you think using AI makes you more motivated or confident in learning English? Why?
7. Do you ever rely too much on AI when completing English tasks? Please explain.
8. How do you check whether the information or answers provided by AI are correct?
9. What are your main concerns about using AI for learning English?
10. Overall, how do you think AI should be used to support English learning?

These questions were intentionally designed to generate explanations and examples that could not be fully captured through closed-ended questionnaire items.

c. Data Triangulation

Triangulation was employed not as a separate data collection instrument but as a data validation strategy. Questionnaire findings were compared with interview responses to identify areas of convergence, complementarity, or discrepancy between the quantitative and qualitative data. For example, students who

reported that AI was useful and easy to use in the questionnaire were further examined through interviews to determine how and why they perceived AI in this way. Conversely, interview responses concerning difficulties, dependence, or concerns about AI were compared with the questionnaire results to determine whether similar patterns were reflected quantitatively. The integration of these two sources strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings by allowing the quantitative results to be cross-checked against participants' qualitative explanations (Creswell & Creswell, 2009). Consequently, the three components served complementary functions: the questionnaire measured the extent and dimensions of students' perceptions, the interviews explored the reasons, experiences, and challenges underlying those perceptions, and triangulation was used to cross-validate the findings.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Positive Perceptions and Language Development

The findings indicate that students have strong positive perceptions of AI, particularly in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation improvement. Quantitative results show that 85% of students agreed or strongly agreed that AI helps improve their vocabulary ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 0.52$), while 80% reported improved grammar understanding ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.55$). Additionally, 78% of students indicated that AI supports their pronunciation practice ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.57$). These results suggest that AI tools were widely perceived as effective in supporting specific aspects of English language development among junior high school learners. The strongest perceived improvement was found in vocabulary development, particularly in students' ability to acquire new words, understand their meanings and usage, and apply a wider range of vocabulary in context. The finding therefore indicates perceived growth in students' lexical repertoire rather than merely increased access to translation.

However, the extent to which the newly acquired vocabulary corresponded to higher proficiency levels, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels, cannot be established from perception data alone and would require vocabulary-level testing or pre- and post-assessment. For grammar, the perceived benefit was associated with students' ability to identify grammatical errors, understand grammatical explanations, and revise their written sentences. These activities could be supported by AI-based writing and grammar tools such as Grammarly, QuillBot, or ChatGPT, when such tools were actually used by the participants. For pronunciation, AI-supported applications such as ELSA Speak can provide pronunciation models and immediate feedback on students' oral production. Therefore, pronunciation improvement should be interpreted in relation to specific pronunciation targets practiced during instruction, rather than as a general improvement in pronunciation.

Overall, the findings suggest that AI was perceived as particularly useful when its functions were directly aligned with specific language-learning objectives. Vocabulary development was primarily supported through lexical input and contextualized practice, grammar through error identification and revision, and pronunciation through repeated oral practice and immediate feedback. Nevertheless, these perceptions should not be interpreted as direct evidence of measurable gains in overall English proficiency without corresponding performance-based assessments. This supports previous research showing that AI enhances multiple language competencies, including lexical development, grammatical accuracy, and speaking ability (Zhang, 2025; Cardenas et al., 2025).

Before the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were administered, the students participated in a series of English learning activities in which AI was integrated as a supplementary learning tool. The instructional activities were aligned with the learning objectives and English language competencies targeted at the junior high school level. The learning sequence covered both micro-linguistic competencies, including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, and macro-language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Vocabulary development was integrated into activities involving the introduction and use of new lexical items related to the lesson topics. Students used ChatGPT to obtain meanings, examples of use, contextualized sentences, and clarification of unfamiliar words. Grammar development was addressed through structured language activities and writing tasks. For example, when students learned to write a procedure text, ChatGPT was used to provide explanations and examples of grammatical features relevant to the target text, while students were required to produce their own texts and revise them based on feedback.

Pronunciation was addressed through activities involving common English expressions and oral practice. For example, students practiced expressions for giving instructions, asking for clarification, expressing opinions, and responding in classroom interactions. AI was used to provide examples, explanations, and opportunities for students to check unfamiliar words or expressions before practicing them orally. Reading and listening activities were conducted through texts and audio-based learning materials, while productive skills were developed through speaking activities and written assignments. In this way, AI was positioned as a supporting medium rather than as a replacement for classroom instruction.

The learning activities were followed by assessments designed to determine whether the intended learning objectives had been achieved. Vocabulary and grammar were assessed through exercises and

language-use tasks, while writing was assessed through students' production of genre-based texts, such as procedure texts. Speaking activities were assessed through students' ability to use the target expressions and language forms appropriately in oral interaction. Reading and listening were assessed through comprehension tasks. Consequently, the assessment results provided an indication of whether students were able to apply the language knowledge and skills developed during the learning activities rather than merely complete tasks with the assistance of AI.

Data collection was conducted after the students had completed the relevant English learning activities and assessments involving AI-supported learning. The structured questionnaire was distributed after the instructional sequence to capture students' perceptions of the usefulness and ease of using AI in relation to the learning activities they had experienced. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected students to obtain deeper explanations of their experiences, perceived benefits, difficulties, and challenges in using AI for English learning. This sequence ensured that students responded to the questionnaire and interview questions based on actual classroom experiences rather than hypothetical perceptions.

As presented in Table 1, students reported high mean scores across the language-skill indicators, with vocabulary improvement receiving the highest rating. This finding suggests that AI was perceived as particularly useful for supporting lexical development. The result can be explained by the frequent opportunities students had to use ChatGPT to obtain word meanings, synonyms, contextual examples, sentence models, and explanations of unfamiliar expressions during English learning activities. The findings also indicate that the perceived contribution of AI extended beyond vocabulary to other micro- and macro-language competencies. At the micro-language level, students perceived AI as useful for understanding and applying grammatical structures and improving pronunciation through access to explanations and language models. At the macro-language level, AI was perceived as supporting receptive and productive language skills by facilitating comprehension, idea generation, oral preparation, and written production.

The distinction between receptive and productive skills is important in interpreting the findings. Reading and listening represent receptive skills, whereas speaking and writing represent productive skills. AI-supported learning may provide different forms of assistance for each group. For receptive skills, students can use AI to clarify vocabulary, explain difficult passages, summarize information, and provide additional explanations. For productive skills, AI can assist students in generating ideas, checking language accuracy, rehearsing expressions, and revising written output. Therefore, the higher rating for vocabulary should not be interpreted as evidence that AI independently improved students' overall language proficiency. Rather, it indicates that vocabulary was the language component for which students perceived the most immediate and visible benefit from AI-supported learning. Overall, the findings suggest that the contribution of AI to EFL learning was most meaningful when its use was directly connected to specific learning objectives, instructional materials, classroom activities, and assessment tasks. Such alignment allowed AI-supported activities to function as a means of reinforcing targeted language competencies and provided students with opportunities to apply linguistic knowledge in both receptive and productive learning activities.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceptions of AI in Language Skills (N = 35)

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Vocabulary Improvement	4.30	0.52	Very High
Grammar Improvement	4.22	0.55	High
Pronunciation Practice	4.15	0.57	High

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Furthermore, the overall mean score for the perceived usefulness construct was high ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.52$), indicating a strong positive evaluation of AI as a learning tool. A substantial proportion of students (82%) agreed that AI makes English learning easier and more effective. However, the perceived effectiveness of AI should be understood in relation to the specific learning objectives, learning materials, instructional activities, and assessment tasks implemented in the English classroom. In this context, AI was perceived as effective when its use helped students achieve the intended learning outcomes, such as understanding vocabulary and grammatical structures, comprehending English texts, developing ideas, and producing more accurate written or spoken English. For example, ChatGPT could be integrated with lesson materials by providing explanations, examples, guided practice, and feedback related to the target language features, while assessment tasks could be used to determine whether students were able to demonstrate the targeted competencies independently. Thus, the effectiveness of AI was not determined merely by students' ability to complete learning tasks more easily, but by the extent to which AI-supported activities contributed to the achievement of the intended learning objectives and learning outcomes.

The high level of agreement also reflects strong perceived usefulness, a key component of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which suggests that students are more likely to adopt and continue using a technology when they perceive that it provides meaningful benefits for their learning (Davis, 1989). Accordingly, AI can support effective EFL learning when its use is pedagogically aligned with the learning objectives, instructional content, assessment methods, and expected learning outcomes, rather than being used simply as an additional technological tool. This pattern is further illustrated in Table 2, which presents the distribution of students' responses across key items related to AI usefulness.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Students' Responses on AI Usefulness (N = 35)

Item Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total Agree (%)
AI improves vocabulary	18	12	3	2	0	85%
AI improves grammar	16	12	4	3	0	80%
AI helps pronunciation	15	12	5	3	0	78%
AI makes learning easier	17	12	4	2	0	82%

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Overall, the combination of high mean scores and strong agreement percentages confirms that students perceive AI as a useful and effective tool in supporting their English language learning.

4.2 AI as a Tool for Autonomous Learning

Students reported using ChatGPT as an AI-powered tool to support their English learning, particularly for translation, grammar checking, and writing support. This reflects a growing shift toward learner autonomy, where individuals take greater responsibility for managing their own learning processes (Luckin, 2024). Quantitative findings show that 83% of students reported using AI for translation ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.58$), 79% for grammar checking ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.60$), and 76% for writing support ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.62$). These results indicate that AI is widely utilized as a self-directed learning tool. Through AI-powered platforms, students are able to independently access linguistic resources, generate ideas, revise their work, and receive immediate feedback without constant teacher intervention. This self-directed engagement allows learners to control the pace, timing, and focus of their learning, thereby extending language practice beyond the physical and temporal boundaries of the classroom. In EFL contexts, where exposure to English input is often limited, such autonomy is particularly valuable as it enables continuous interaction with the target language. As illustrated in Table 3, students demonstrate consistently high levels of agreement across various dimensions of autonomous AI use, particularly in language support and iterative learning practices.

Table 3

Students' Autonomous Use of AI in English Learning (N = 35)

Dimension	Indicator	Mean (M)	SD	Agreement (%)	Interpretation
AI Usage for Learning	Use AI for translation	4.25	0.58	83%	High
	Use AI for grammar checking	4.18	0.60	79%	High
	Use AI for writing support	4.10	0.62	76%	High
Iterative Learning	AI helps revise writing multiple times	4.05	0.64	74%	High
	AI helps identify and correct mistakes	4.00	0.66	71%	High
Engagement & Practice	AI increases frequency of English practice	4.12	0.61	77%	High
Cognitive Risk (Negative)	Rely on AI without trying independently	3.60	0.80	60%	Moderate
	AI reduces effort in thinking	3.45	0.85	55%	Moderate

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Moreover, AI facilitates exploratory and iterative learning, where students can experiment with language forms, test hypotheses, and refine their understanding through repeated practice. The data indicate that 74% of students agreed that AI helps them revise their writing multiple times, and 71% reported that AI assists in identifying and correcting errors, reinforcing the idea of recursive learning. For example, when using AI for writing, learners can draft texts, receive corrections, and revise multiple times, engaging in a process

that strengthens both accuracy and fluency. This type of engagement reflects a shift from passive reception to more active participation in the learning process.

From a theoretical perspective, this phenomenon aligns closely with Second Language Acquisition (SLA) frameworks that emphasize the importance of active engagement, meaningful practice, and learner involvement in language development (Hiver et al., 2024). Supporting this, 77% of students agreed that AI increases their frequency of English practice, indicating enhanced engagement with the target language. Autonomous use of AI supports key SLA processes by encouraging learners to notice linguistic features, produce output, and reflect on feedback. However, it is important to note that autonomy in AI-mediated environments is not entirely independent; rather, it is technology-mediated autonomy, where learning is shaped by the affordances and limitations of AI tools. While this form of autonomy can enhance motivation and learning opportunities, it also raises important pedagogical considerations. The findings reveal that 60% of students admitted relying on AI without attempting tasks independently, and 55% agreed that AI reduces their effort in thinking. These results suggest a potential risk of over-reliance and superficial learning. Without appropriate guidance, students may use AI primarily for efficiency rather than deep cognitive engagement. Therefore, fostering guided autonomy, where learners are encouraged to use AI critically and reflectively, becomes essential to ensure that independence leads to meaningful learning rather than superficial task completion.

4.3 Emerging Challenges: Dependency and Cognitive Impact

Despite its benefits, students reported dependency on AI and reduced thinking effort, indicating potential drawbacks in its use for language learning. Quantitative findings reveal that 60% of students admitted relying on AI without attempting to answer tasks independently ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.80$), while 55% agreed that AI reduces their effort in thinking ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.85$). These results suggest that although AI supports learning efficiency, it may also encourage a tendency toward passive learning behaviors. This aligns with concerns about surface learning and reduced cognitive engagement, where learners focus on obtaining correct answers quickly rather than developing deeper understanding (Hmelo-Silver, 2004; Wiggins & McTighe 2008). As shown in Table 4, students' responses indicate moderate levels of agreement on dependency-related items, highlighting a balance between the benefits and risks of AI use in language learning.

Table 4

Students' Perceptions of AI Dependency and Cognitive Impact (N = 35)

Dimension	Indicator	Mean (M)	SD	Agreement (%)	Interpretation
Dependency on AI	Rely on AI without trying independently	3.60	0.80	60%	Moderate
Cognitive Engagement	AI reduces effort in thinking	3.45	0.85	55%	Moderate
Learning Approach	Prefer using AI for quick answers	3.70	0.78	63%	Moderate
Critical Thinking Impact	AI limits deep understanding	3.50	0.82	57%	Moderate

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

AI may shift learning from deep cognitive processing to quick task completion, potentially limiting students' ability to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving (Gerlich, 2025). This indicates that while AI enhances accessibility and efficiency, its unregulated use may reduce opportunities for reflective and analytical learning. Therefore, it is essential for educators to design learning activities that encourage students to critically evaluate AI-generated responses and actively engage in the learning process.

4.4 Pedagogical Implications

The findings emphasize the need for guided AI integration in English language learning. Teachers play a crucial role in ensuring that AI functions as a complementary learning tool rather than a substitute for cognitive engagement (Yadav, 2025). Quantitative results show that 84% of students agreed that teacher guidance is important when using AI ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.50$), and 81% indicated that they learn better when teachers explain AI-generated answers ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.54$). These findings highlight that, despite the autonomy offered by AI, students still rely on teacher mediation to achieve meaningful understanding. As shown in Table 5, students strongly support structured and guided use of AI, particularly in relation to teacher involvement and critical thinking development.

Table 5

Students' Perceptions of Guided AI Integration (N = 35)

Dimension	Indicator	Mean (M)	SD	Agreement (%)	Interpretation
Teacher Guidance	Teacher guidance is important when using AI	4.28	0.50	84%	Very High
	Teacher explanation improves understanding	4.20	0.54	81%	Very High
Structured Learning	AI should be used with clear learning instructions	4.18	0.56	80%	High
Critical Thinking Support	AI tasks should encourage thinking and analysis	4.15	0.58	78%	High
Balanced Use	AI should support, not replace learning	4.25	0.52	83%	Very High

Note: scale 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Structured tasks and critical thinking-oriented activities are essential to maximize the benefits of AI while minimizing its risks (Berrarbi & Amrane, 2025). The data indicate that 78% of students agreed that AI-based activities should encourage thinking and analysis, suggesting awareness of the importance of cognitive engagement. Therefore, effective AI integration requires pedagogical strategies that combine technological tools with guided instruction, ensuring that students not only use AI efficiently but also engage in deeper learning processes.

5. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that Indonesian Junior High School students perceive Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a valuable tool for English language learning, supporting improvements in language skills, motivation, and learner autonomy. The findings align with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, indicating that AI enhances learning through increased exposure, interaction, and feedback. However, challenges such as over-dependence and reduced cognitive engagement suggest a risk of superficial learning. Therefore, AI should be integrated as a supportive learning partner rather than a replacement for teachers. Its effectiveness depends on guided implementation, where teachers facilitate critical engagement and ensure that AI use leads to meaningful and sustainable learning outcomes.

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