

The Use of ChatGPT as a Supportive Tool in Language Learning: Prospects and Obstacles

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Abstract

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The swift advancement of artificial intelligence, particularly large language models like ChatGPT, has created new possibilities in language education. This research seeks to examine the opportunities and challenges of applying ChatGPT as a learning assistant in language learning, using a systematic literature review of eleven recent academic publications. Findings indicate that ChatGPT can enhance learning quality by offering automated feedback, AI-driven conversational practice, and assistance in academic writing. Nevertheless, critical challenges emerge, including learner dependency, risks of plagiarism, algorithmic bias, and limited AI literacy among users. The study underscores the need for a critical and ethical pedagogical framework in integrating ChatGPT into language education. To maximize its advantages responsibly and sustainably, adaptive policies, teacher professional development, and strengthened digital literacy are essential.

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1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) in recent years has opened up new possibilities in the field of education, particularly in language learning. One of the most prominent and influential applications of AI is the use of Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT. These models are capable of comprehending and generating text across diverse natural language contexts, making them valuable tools for language acquisition (Kayalı et al., 2023). Developed by OpenAI, ChatGPT is designed to simulate human conversation and deliver contextually relevant, adaptive, and reliable responses. Within language education, ChatGPT functions not only as a question-and-answer resource but also as a conversational partner, text editor, feedback provider, and facilitator for interactive, communication-based learning activities.

The integration of ChatGPT as a learning assistant has attracted considerable attention due to its capacity to deliver personalized, flexible, and context-sensitive learning experiences. It can enhance student engagement by offering instant responses, simplifying complex concepts, and supporting grammar and vocabulary practice. In second or foreign language learning, ChatGPT provides an immersive environment for conversational practice accessible anytime and anywhere, even without direct teacher involvement. This shifts learning beyond the traditional classroom into a more autonomous digital space. Nevertheless, the application of ChatGPT in language education also raises certain challenges. Research highlights the potential risk of excessive reliance on AI-generated answers, which may limit students' ability to develop independent critical thinking skills (Jeon & Lee, 2023).

Furthermore, issues concerning information reliability, algorithmic bias, and academic integrity remain crucial considerations.

ChatGPT continues to face challenges related to cultural sensitivity and specific local contexts, which are vital in language learning, particularly in pragmatic comprehension and the use of idiomatic expressions (Baskara, 2023). Teachers' responses to ChatGPT as an instructional tool are also diverse. While some educators welcome it enthusiastically for its efficiency and innovative potential in lesson planning and student assessment (Alali & Al-Barakat, 2023), others remain skeptical, fearing it may diminish the educator's role and reduce the essential human interaction in language teaching. This condition underscores the importance of developing thoughtful pedagogical approaches and adaptive educational policy frameworks to ensure that ChatGPT can be effectively utilized without undermining the fundamental values of learning.

The use of ChatGPT in language education is closely linked to wider social and technological developments. In today's increasingly digital era, digital literacy skills play a vital role in enabling both students and teachers to engage with AI tools critically, responsibly, and ethically. Thus, incorporating ChatGPT into learning should go hand in hand with AI literacy, ensuring that users are aware of both the strengths and limitations of the technology (Peng, 2023). This research seeks to examine in detail the role of ChatGPT as a learning assistant in language education, focusing on the opportunities it offers as well as the challenges it presents. Using a literature review method, this paper synthesizes recent studies published between 2019 and 2023 on the subject. The findings are expected to contribute to shaping

effective and responsible strategies for implementing ChatGPT in language learning across different educational levels.

2. Literature Review

Several recent studies have explored the application of ChatGPT and other LLM technologies in language education, highlighting both their promising benefits and notable challenges. ChatGPT has been shown to enhance natural interaction in reading and writing instruction, for instance through AI reading assistants that enable “book-chat” activities. Interactions with ChatGPT and PiAI help EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners develop a deeper grasp of polite and empathetic expressions in communication. On the other hand, Jeon and Lee (2023) observed that many pre-service English teachers are beginning to depend on ChatGPT to complete assignments, sparking concerns about diminishing intellectual independence.

Conversely, research by Raheem et al. (2023) indicates that employing ChatGPT as a grammar and writing aid can significantly enhance students’ sentence construction and spelling, though it may also foster dependency. While many educators endorse its use for lesson planning, they emphasize the need for targeted training to ensure effective application without diminishing teaching creativity. Another key concern lies in the development of assessment methods that can withstand potential misuse of AI by students. Overall, the literature highlights ChatGPT’s promising role as a supportive tool in language education, yet

underscores the necessity of a critical stance and strong pedagogical oversight to address its associated challenges.

3. Method

This research adopts a systematic literature review method to investigate the role of ChatGPT as a learning assistant in language education, focusing on the opportunities and challenges linked to its use. This approach was selected as it enables researchers to synthesize a comprehensive view of existing trends, findings, and perspectives within the academic discourse on this subject. The study began with the formulation of key research questions: What function does ChatGPT serve as a learning assistant in language education, and what opportunities and challenges accompany its application? Guided by these questions, a systematic literature search was conducted via Google Scholar using keywords such as “ChatGPT in language learning,” “AI language assistant,” “ChatGPT for education,” and “ChatGPT in language teaching.”

The study applied specific inclusion criteria to filter relevant sources, namely: academic publications released between 2019–2023, explicitly addressing the use of ChatGPT or comparable LLMs in language education, accessible either via open access or institutional databases, and written in English or Indonesian. From this process, articles were selected for detailed examination. The qualitative analysis focused on identifying recurring themes within the literature, including the ways ChatGPT is utilized in language instruction (e.g., as a dialogue partner, text editor, or lesson planning aid), perceptions of both students and teachers toward the tool,

its influence on learners' language proficiency, and the associated technical and ethical challenges. To ensure objectivity, triangulation was conducted by comparing findings across different contexts and geographic regions.

Furthermore, a descriptive synthesis was employed to consolidate the research findings into a thematic narrative, which served as the foundation for composing the results and discussion sections. During this stage, references were organized using the APA citation style to ensure academic consistency and uphold scientific integrity. This approach enabled the researchers to provide a holistic overview of the dynamics surrounding ChatGPT's application in language education, while also outlining the opportunities and challenges encountered by both educators and learners in the age of artificial intelligence.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that employing ChatGPT as a learning assistant in language education has broad implications for students, teachers, and the overall education system. An analysis of twenty academic articles published between 2019 and 2023 reveals that ChatGPT provides significant opportunities to facilitate language learning that is more contextual, flexible, and tailored to individual needs. Nevertheless, the results also highlight considerable challenges, including risks of overreliance, ethical concerns, and issues related to the quality of interaction and authenticity within the learning process.

One of ChatGPT's key advantages lies in its capacity to deliver immediate and personalized feedback during language practice. For instance, in developing writing

skills, university students can utilize ChatGPT to identify spelling errors, refine grammar, and build more coherent arguments. According to Raheem et al. (2023), students who consistently engage with ChatGPT demonstrate stronger sentence construction and reasoning abilities in their writing compared to those who do not. Similarly, Bahroun et al. (2023) highlight that integrating ChatGPT in academic essay writing supports students in organizing ideas, structuring sentences with greater cohesion and coherence, and broadening their vocabulary. This feature proves particularly valuable in language learning for students still at the basic proficiency stage.

In the area of speaking practice, ChatGPT functions as a conversational partner that enables students to independently and consistently develop their dialogue skills. Interactions between EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners and ChatGPT have been shown to boost confidence in using English with politeness and empathy. Although still confined to text-based exchanges, ChatGPT is regarded as capable of offering conversation experiences that closely resemble human interaction. This capability is particularly beneficial for students who lack access to a real foreign language environment, as ChatGPT can simulate authentic communication scenarios.

Moreover, the incorporation of ChatGPT into reading activities has started to gain attention. One approach involves a reading assistance model that combines ChatGPT with Whisper speech-to-text technology to support students in comprehending texts and engaging in reflective discussions. Instead of merely reading, students are encouraged to converse about the meaning, context, and

implications of the material. This makes the reading process more active, interactive, and meaningful, aligning closely with constructivist learning principles.

Educators also gain considerable advantages from the use of ChatGPT. Many language teachers have noted that they rely on it to design lesson plans, develop test questions, and produce sample texts for classroom use. Leveraging ChatGPT allows teachers to reduce the time spent on preparation and dedicate more attention to engaging directly with students. Additionally, the tool serves as a medium for reflection, such as generating summaries of lesson content or suggesting alternative teaching approaches tailored to student needs. These findings highlight ChatGPT's dual role: both as a learning assistant for students and as a professional support tool for teachers.

Although the opportunities offered appear promising, the integration of ChatGPT into language education also brings notable challenges. A key concern is the growing reliance of students on AI-generated responses. Jeon and Lee (2023) discovered that prospective language teachers often use ChatGPT in a passive manner, merely copying the answers it provides without engaging with the underlying reasoning. Such practices risk impeding the cultivation of critical, analytical, and creative thinking abilities skills that are fundamental to effective language learning.

Another challenge that emerges is the potential misuse of ChatGPT in academic settings. Many students tend to rely on it to complete assignments with minimal personal input, which raises concerns about the authenticity of assessments. In conventional grading systems that focus on final results, students could easily

submit AI-generated work without genuinely engaging with the material. This situation highlights the need to strengthen process-oriented and observation-based assessments that can capture students' actual cognitive involvement. Moreover, the issue of inaccuracies and biases in ChatGPT's output remains significant. Baskara (2023), for instance, found that although ChatGPT can provide linguistic feedback, its responses often appear too general and fail to reflect specific local or cultural contexts. In language education particularly foreign language learning cultural understanding is vital. Responses lacking sensitivity to context may create misunderstandings or even convey inappropriate meanings.

Conversely, issues of academic ethics are becoming more prominent. Research by Almaiah et al. (2022) revealed that some students relied on ChatGPT to produce entire essays without acknowledging that the work was not their own. Such practices undermine academic integrity and highlight the pressing need for educational institutions to establish clear and strict regulations on the acceptable use of AI in academic writing. Striking a balance between leveraging technological benefits and upholding the principles of academic honesty remains an ethical challenge that has yet to be fully resolved.

Amid these complexities, teachers play a pivotal role in ensuring that ChatGPT is utilized in both educational and ethical ways. Many educators hold mixed views about its presence. While they acknowledge the efficiency and practicality it provides, they also express concern over the potential decline in the quality of teacher–student interactions. Without proper regulation, teachers fear that

ChatGPT could replace their role as facilitators of learning and diminish the value of human relationships, which are fundamental to language education.

The effectiveness of ChatGPT use is also strongly influenced by the level of digital literacy. Zhang et al. (2023) highlight that students with a basic grasp of how LLMs and AI algorithm's function are more capable of engaging with ChatGPT in a critical and productive manner. Conversely, those with limited digital literacy often accept responses uncritically, without questioning their accuracy. This underscores the importance of embedding AI and digital literacy within the language education curriculum. In this regard, Ranchon et al. (2023) suggest incorporating technology literacy training and modules early in the study program to equip students with the analytical skills needed to evaluate digital resources effectively.

The incorporation of ChatGPT into the language learning curriculum should be implemented gradually and supported by evidence. According to Lee et al. (2021), the integration of AI in education must be aligned with pedagogical approaches that take into account the emotional, social, and cultural dimensions of language learning. Educators are expected to not only master the technical aspects of ChatGPT but also leverage it to foster dialogue, collaboration, and critical reflection. In this sense, ChatGPT should be viewed as a complementary tool that enhances the learning experience and broadens opportunities for student participation, rather than as a replacement for teachers.

Moreover, ChatGPT holds promise as an inclusive and transformative learning tool. Research by Kayalı et al. (2023) shows that its integration into online learning offers significant advantages for students facing geographical, social, or

psychological barriers. With AI assistance accessible around the clock, marginalized learners are provided greater opportunities to experience equitable learning. Still, such technology alone does not guarantee fairness unless it is paired with a well-structured and just pedagogical approach. Findings from this study suggest that while ChatGPT has substantial potential as a language learning assistant, its effectiveness depends on the support of adaptive policies, thoughtful pedagogical practices, and the active engagement of educational stakeholders. Without a holistic framework, reliance on ChatGPT could undermine learning quality, academic integrity, and students' overall educational experiences. Thus, its use should be framed within a broader educational transformation that emphasizes human-centered learning, reflective practices, and robust digital literacy.

5. Conclusion

From the findings of the literature review, it can be concluded that utilizing ChatGPT as a learning assistant in language education offers substantial opportunities alongside challenges that must be addressed. ChatGPT enhances the quality of language learning by providing immediate feedback, facilitating interactive conversation practice, and assisting in academic writing tasks. These strengths broaden access and flexibility in learning, particularly in today's digital era that emphasizes independence and technology-driven education. Furthermore, teachers gain advantages from ChatGPT's support in preparing instructional materials, conducting evaluations, and designing more innovative learning experiences.

Nevertheless, challenges such as student dependency, risks of plagiarism, biased information, and limited digital literacy remain critical issues that must be tackled through a holistic approach. The implementation of adaptive education policies, ongoing teacher development, and the reinforcement of AI literacy alongside academic integrity are essential to ensure that ChatGPT is applied responsibly and effectively. Language learning encompasses not only linguistic abilities but also cultural, critical, and social dimensions that require human interaction. Through a strategic and collaborative framework, ChatGPT can function as a complementary tool that supports rather than replaces the role of teachers and classroom dynamics. Thus, its integration into language education should focus on enhancing learning quality, fostering student engagement, and cultivating broader and more meaningful 21st-century competencies.

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