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The Perceptions of Native-Arabic Speaking Students towards Using ChatGPT for Learning English as a Second Language

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Abstract:

The abilities of the Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based service, ChatGPT, have been attracting a continuously expanding interest since its release. Researchers and educators are keen to understand ChatGPT's implications in language education and identify its benefits and drawbacks. Despite its strengths and advanced multilingual capabilities, ChatGPT has several limitations such as its poor performance in non-Roman script languages, particularly Arabic. In addition, a gap in the literature has been identified concerning the voice and position of native-Arabic speaking students regarding the use of ChatGPT in English learning. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the perceptions of this cohort of students towards ChatGPT as a learning assistant and analyse their beliefs regarding the advantages and disadvantages of ChatGPT. A 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire was utilised to collect primary quantitative and qualitative data from 30 English students whose first language is Arabic and have diverse levels of English proficiency. The research was conducted in three different academic institutions in the UK. The findings reveal that most of this student group perceive ChatGPT positively in terms of its use as an effective tool to scaffold and enhance their English learning. However, there are some concerns among these students regarding ethical use, performance in Arabic language and information accuracy. These issues should be addressed by the technology developers, policymakers, teachers and researchers, who could cooperate to determine how ChatGPT can be utilised in the safest and most effective way.

Key words: ChatGPT, Generative AI, English Learning, Language Education, Native-Arabic Speaking Learners

Introduction:

ChatGPT, short for Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer, has set the record for the fastest-growing consumer application and attracted considerable attention since its release (Hu, 2023; Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023). A growing number of studies focusing on the use of ChatGPT in language learning have concluded that the Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool is able to enhance the learning process in multiple ways (Liu and Ma, 2023). For instance, it can be utilised to obtain tailored input, receive personalised feedback, practise receptive and productive skills, and gain deeper insights into the society of the target language (TL). However, research has also indicated some potential drawbacks of the chatbot, including but not limited to, academic unethical behaviour, security concerns, learner dissatisfaction and academic inequity (Ahmed, 2023; Yeo, 2023; Chan, 2023).

In terms of English students' views about the new AI software, the literature shows that learners generally believe that ChatGPT is able to help them improve the quality of their learning by providing access to useful information and materials that they can use for further practice in the TL (Chan and Hu, 2023; Liu, 2023; Ali et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Liu and Ma, 2023). Although there is an expanding body of literature concerning the impact of the AI chatbot on language education, as stated above, there is still less attention paid to the learners and their perspectives about this innovative technology (Shoufan, 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2023). ESL (English as a Second Language) learners whose first language (L1) is Arabic, in particular, may be at a disadvantage as ChatGPT performs poorly with non-Roman script languages. Hence, the developer company (OpenAI) advises the non-English-speaking users against using ChatGPT for text-transcription tasks (OpenAI, 2023). Using ChatGPT without being aware of this limitation could negatively impact these students' English learning experiences, particularly, when they use it to assess their second language use, transcribe texts or translate sentences (Liu, 2023; OpenAI, 2023; Jiao et al., 2023; Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023). Therefore, more empirical research that provides a better understanding of learners' perceptions of the chatbot is needed as it could potentially help educators, technology developers and policymakers to present clear guidance and enhance ChatGPT's performance as a learning assistant to mitigate the highlighted academic concerns (Liu, 2023; Chan and Hu, 2023). In addition, the existing literature on Arabic-L1 English learners' experiences with ChatGPT is notably limited, with two studies identified at the time of this study (Mohammed, Al-Ghazali and Alqohfa, 2023; Ahmed, 2023) in the context of academic writing. As a result, this study focuses on providing empirical evidence regarding the experiences of these students by exploring ChatGPT's practical use, benefits, drawbacks as well as pedagogical implications for English classrooms and beyond, with recommendations for future research to maximise its benefits while minimising its drawbacks.

Research Questions:

RQ1. How do native-Arabic speaking students perceive ChatGPT in the context of learning English as a second language?

RQ2. What are ChatGPT's benefits and drawbacks from the perspectives of English as a second language students whose first language is Arabic?

Literature review:

ChatGPT and English Language Learning

The Generative AI tool, ChatGPT, has significantly revolutionised language education globally (Moorhouse, Wong and Li, 2023; Liu and Ma, 2023). It has been the centre of attention in language education and research, as it is widely used by millions of students and academics all around the world (Rudolph, Tan and Tan, 2023). Since OpenAI introduced it to the public in November 2022, ChatGPT has gained both admiration and apprehension from students, teachers and researchers (Kostka and Toncelli, 2023; Mizumoto and Eguchi, 2023). The popularity of ChatGPT in language learning could be attributed to its uniqueness, as it differs from other existing AI technologies in several ways (Bin-Hady et al., 2023). First,

ChatGPT is more interactive and engaging than other AI-based tools that only offer predetermined answers (Ali et al., 2023; Fyfe, 2022; Jeon and Lee, 2023; Bin-Hady et al., 2023). As a result, it could create personalised learning opportunities for students depending on their interests, pace of learning, and academic performance (Ali et al., 2023; Mohamed, 2023; Fyfe, 2022; Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023; Tlili et al., 2023). In addition, ChatGPT has been trained using an enormous body of texts to perform numerous natural language processing tasks, allowing it to generate coherent texts, conduct translation and answer any questions in a natural human-like way (Mizumoto and Eguchi, 2023). However, despite ChatGPT's outstanding performance in transcribing English texts, it is worth acknowledging that it performs poorly with some other languages, particularly those with non-Roman script. Hence, OpenAI advises its users who speak these languages against using ChatGPT for text transcription in those languages (OpenAI, 2023a). This is arguably because most of the text in the database is derived from an English corpus and then translated into other languages (Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023). Nevertheless, it is still widely believed that ChatGPT holds a great value and potential in English learning as it provides learners from all linguistic backgrounds with many learning opportunities (Liu and Ma, 2023). Since AI-technological advancements like ChatGPT are, as Hong (2023) states, “inevitable”, academic institutions and educators need to view this as a chance to modernise the traditional approaches of instruction and assessment.

ChatGPT's Benefits in English Language Learning

There is no doubt that ChatGPT offers language learners many functionalities that can benefit their learning experiences in several aspects (Barrot, 2023). It is considered, as Barrot (2023) suggests, “a rich source of information for language input and language practice anytime and anywhere.” Researchers like Bin-Hady et al. (2023) and Barrot (2023), specifically, found that ChatGPT can scaffold the language learning process by providing learners with immediate feedback on their language production. This feedback, according to these researchers, might be in the form of a detailed written assessment with recommendations for enhancements (Bin-Hady et al. and Barrot, 2023). In addition, ChatGPT has the ability to act as a language practice partner and suggest activities for further practice (Bin-Hady et al., 2023; Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023). As a result, learners could overcome the reoccurring hurdle of the lack of a proficient-speaking partner (Bin-Hady et al., 2023).

Additionally, previous research supports that ChatGPT can cultivate students' motivation to read and write in English and that most learners perceive the AI-technology positively as a motivational tool for second language learning (Ali et al., 2023). In the same vein, a study by Ibrahim et al. (2023) revealed that ChatGPT could potentially foster the competitiveness of English learners. Furthermore, when ESL learners use ChatGPT to obtain a better understanding of the culture and history of TL speakers and society, they can become more interested and willing to achieve proficiency and fluency in that language (Liu and Ma, 2023; Liu, 2023; Karlik, 2023).

In addition, the literature suggests ways in which ChatGPT could support the language learning process. To illustrate, it can enhance learners' reading abilities by generating comprehension and expansion questions about any reading texts (Kohnke, Moorhouse and

Zou, 2023; Liu, 2023). Teachers can also use the AI tool to create lesson plans, learning materials and task-based activities that are engaging, interesting and tailored to their students' needs (Ahmed, 2023; Hong, 2023). Moreover, ChatGPT allows differentiation in selection of materials depending on the learner's level of proficiency (Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023). This is particularly important because it allows learners, outside the classroom, to easily distinguish and access learning resources at desired levels, which is critical to language acquisition as suggested by Steven Krashen (1982, cited in Patrick, 2019). In his theory of second language acquisition, Steven Krashen (1982, cited in Patrick, 2019) explains that, successful language acquisition effectively occurs when learners receive comprehensible input that is slightly above their proficiency levels. Since ChatGPT is able to provide this type of input anytime and anywhere, it can be argued that it can significantly boost language learning. Therefore, it is widely believed that ChatGPT can enhance the quality of language learning and offer students numerous opportunities to effectively practise and use the language, as suggested by the results of Liu (2023).

ChatGPT's Drawbacks in English Language Learning

Although ChatGPT's positive potential in supporting English language education is generally recognised by many researchers in the field of TESOL (e.g., Barrot, 2023; Javier and Moorhouse, 2023; Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023; Liu and Ma, 2023), there are still several challenges and drawbacks that the chatbot exhibits (Yeo, 2023; Liu, 2023). As an example of these limitations, there are many concerns about ChatGPT threatening the ethics of academia (Yeo, 2023; Moqbel and Al-kadi, 2023). It is argued that ChatGPT lacks the ability to provide accurate citations and references, which results in plagiarism (Mohamed, 2023; Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023). This has been acknowledged by the developer, which stated that, "Users might depend on ChatGPT for specialized topics, for example in fields like research. We are transparent about the model's limitations and discourage higher risk use cases without proper verification" (OpenAI, 2023a, para, 15). In other cases, when students use ChatGPT to write entire essays, references are often provided by the tool, however in nearly all of these cases the students would not be willing to declare that the work is auto-generated by the chatbot as it would not be accepted by the teachers (Yeo, 2023). This raises questions of and concerns about originality in academic writing and assessment (Yeo, 2023). Furthermore, learners might become too reliant on ChatGPT completing tasks like generating texts, which, ultimately, deprives them from many learning opportunities that accompany the writing process, eventually denying these students the ability to create original, accurate and fluent sentences (Yeo, 2023).

Moreover, there are other limitations of ChatGPT regarding learning that the literature indicates (Liu, 2023). Notably, ChatGPT generates security concerns like personal information leakage, which previously happened in 2023, when some users were able to see the chat history and personal billing information of other users (Liu, 2023). Additionally, while ChatGPT can offer instant feedback, the lack of human interaction can negatively affect learners' development, when ChatGPT is used exclusively as the only source of linguistic input or when teachers become too dependent on the technology in instruction (Mohamed, 2023). For this specific reason, there is a strong belief among educators that AI cannot ever

replace them in the valuable social communication aspect of their work as instructors, but it might make their jobs more interesting, engaging, and innovative (Kostka and Toncelli, 2023).

Furthermore, the free version of the tool (GPT-3.5) cannot provide pronunciation or intonation feedback, as it does not accept or produce audio materials (Mohamed, 2023). However, the new paid model (ChatGPT 4o) can, as OpenAI (2023a, para, 1) states, “see, hear and speak”. This allows students to have voice conversations with ChatGPT as well as show the tool pictures of what they are talking about to facilitate immediate answers and feedback (OpenAI, 2023a; 2024a). The difference in capabilities between the free and paid versions of ChatGPT may lead to academic inequity as many students may not be able to afford accessing the new model (Yeo, 2023). Other disadvantages related to ChatGPT in language learning might originate from the fact that many students do not have the competence or ability to effectively use it in supporting their language acquisition, as supported by the intervention study carried by Javier and Moorhouse (2023). The study involved the teacher implementing the use of ChatGPT in the classroom in a four-lesson sequence to scaffold experiential activities (Javier and Moorhouse, 2023). Interestingly, the teacher reported that the students struggled to use the chatbot. However, after providing them with ideas to interact with the tool, they were able to use it more efficiently (Javier and Moorhouse, 2023).

English Learners' views towards ChatGPT

While studies exploring English learners' perceptions of ChatGPT have generally revealed positive views, a few concerns have been raised. Several survey research papers (e.g., Chan and Hu, 2023; Liu, 2023; Ali et al., 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Liu and Ma, 2023) concluded that language learners perceive ChatGPT positively as a motivational tool in supporting and enhancing their learning. For instance, Liu and Ma (2023) illustrated that students mostly use ChatGPT to engage in various English learning activities beyond the classroom. Likewise, Liu (2023) revealed that most Chinese participants who were English learners identify many benefits of ChatGPT's use in English learning. Conversely, Ahmed (2023) showed a dissatisfaction among Saudi students in using ChatGPT for learning. Unlike Liu, (2023) and Liu and MA (2023), Ahmed (2023) utilised a qualitative design. The students' interviews revealed that they were more satisfied with teacher-mediated writing learning compared to ChatGPT-facilitated learning (Ahmed, 2023). The literature also highlights that different cohorts of learners have mixed perceptions of the AI tool. For example, Indian and American students believe that ChatGPT's use in writing assignments is unethical, whereas Brazilian learners perceive it to be acceptable, despite this, both of these groups of learners showed eagerness to use ChatGPT for future learning (Ibrahim et al., 2023).

The literature also emphasises a need for more research that measures learners' views towards the chatbot to understand their needs and allow them to capitalise on the benefits of this tool (Liu, 2023; Shoufan, 2023). In terms of focus, most studies aimed at measuring students' views of ChatGPT have been broad in terms of scope, either investigating learners' perceptions in the general context of education (e.g., Chan and Hu, 2023; Mohammed, Al-Ghazali and Alqohfa, 2023) or across various courses (e.g., Shoufan, 2023; Ibrahim et al., 2023). On the other hand, some survey studies have focused on specific cohorts of students such as Chinese English

learners (e.g., Liu, 2023; Liu and Ma, 2023) and Filipino ESL students (e.g., Javier and Moorhouse, 2023). However, the existing literature on Arabic-speaking ESL learners' experiences with ChatGPT seems to be limited with two studies identified in the context of academic writing (Mohammed, Al-Ghazali and Alqohfa, 2023; Ahmed, 2023). Considering the fact mentioned earlier that, most of ChatGPT's database is derived from an English corpus, this presents a limitation regarding Arabic-text transcription (OpenAI, 2023; Liu, 2023; Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023). Consequently, these learners will face additional challenges and drawbacks in using ChatGPT, for example, to obtain accurate feedback on their TL use, define words or when they try to use it to translate Arabic texts to English and vice versa (OpenAI, 2023; Liu, 2023; Kohnke, Moorhouse and Zou, 2023). Additionally, exploring these students' beliefs is important since students' perceptions of their learning situations have been linked to their academic outcomes. Positive views result in a deeper learning strategy while negative views lead to a more superficial learning strategy (Biggs and Tang, 2011; Shoufan, 2023; Baber, 2020; Chan and Hu, 2023).

Therefore, exploring the views of this cohort of English learners is critical if we intend to obtain a comprehensive understanding of ChatGPT's impact on language education (Shoufan, 2023).

Research Methods:

Participants

The study involved Arabic-speaking ESL learners with English proficiency levels of A1 or above according to CEFR (the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). From 53 initial responses, 20 were excluded for not meeting the selection criteria, and three declined participation, resulting in a final sample size of (n=30) which, according to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991), allows for a normal distribution in the sample. Institutional approvals and informed consent were gained from the institutions and participants who were given a four-week window to complete the questionnaire. These measures ensured transparency, confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation and adherence to ethical standards. Ethical approval from the researcher's home institution was also obtained before conducting the research.

Sampling

A combination of purposive, snowball and convenience sampling methods was employed to recruit participants from three UK-based institutions (A, B, C), where many Arabic-speaking students are enrolled in pre-sessional courses. Institutions A and B, located in Preston - England, were accessible. Institution C is located in Swansea – Wales and was selected due to prior affiliations. To enhance diversity and response rate, snowball sampling was facilitated through contacting university tutors at institution A to disseminate the questionnaire across various departments.

Data Collection Instrument

This research employs a mixed method approach with an emphasis on quantitative data (QUAN-qual design) (Dornyei, 2007) for objectivity and replicability. The questionnaire

consists of 18 closed-ended 5-point Likert scale items with two open-ended questions and it was adapted from Liu (2023) and Hasan (2019) (Appendix A). The questionnaire was available in both English and Arabic to include participants with diverse proficiency levels, which offered a comprehensive view of ChatGPT across various stages of learning and helped increase the representativeness and generalisability of the data (Creswell, 2014; Dornyei, 2007). The translation process was conducted and reviewed by bilingual speakers to enhance accessibility, cultural appropriateness and inclusivity. The questionnaire was administered through Microsoft Forms that enabled anonymous responses, potentially enhancing the level of honesty and reducing social-desirability bias (Dornyei, 2007, p. 121).

The first questionnaire item is about the students' L1, followed by an item regarding their ChatGPT's frequency of use. Then, the remaining close-ended items were divided into four categories, students' understanding of ChatGPT (4 items), their perceptions of the actual practice in using ChatGPT (4 items), their views about ChatGPT's benefits (4 items), and their perspectives regarding the AI tool's drawbacks (4 items). Note that, although the items were separated into general categories, some items might fall into more than one category. For example, items 7 and 9 may belong to both the second and third categories stated above. Additionally, in order for the researcher to include all the content of the participants' informed consent form at the beginning of the questionnaire, a section numbered as 1 had to be created before the actual questionnaire items. As a result, the item numbering starts at 2. Moreover, the final section of the questionnaire includes one open-ended item related to participants' perceptions regarding ChatGPT's advantages and another open-ended item regarding the chatbot's disadvantages.

Analysis:

The quantitative data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics through IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0 programme (IBM, 2023). The Descriptive Statistics and Case Summary functions in SPSS were used to calculate key statistical measures which were interpreted based on the rating intervals proposed by Pallant (2005), who linked the average of each item with the degree of agreement. According to these intervals, 1.00-1.80 signifies strong disagreement; 1.81-2.60 indicates disagreement; 2.61-3.40 reflects moderate agreement; 3.41-4.20 represents high agreement, and 4.21-5.00 implies strong agreement (Liu, 2023).

Before coding and thematically analysing the responses to the open-ended questionnaire items, the Arabic responses were translated and then reviewed for accuracy. Once the translations were revised, Braun and Clarke (2006) methodological phases of thematic analysis were followed and the NVivo software was used to input the codes, arrange relevant themes, identify relevant extracted quotes and create thematic maps.

Results:

This study seeks to measure how native Arabic-speaking students perceive ChatGPT in the context of learning ESL (RQ1) and identify the tool's benefits and drawbacks from these learners' perspectives (RQ2). The results will be organised and presented according to five

main thematic areas: overall insights, skill-based use, perceived advantages and perceived disadvantages, based on both quantitative and qualitative data.

General Perceptions and Understanding of ChatGPT

The descriptive analysis in Table 1 suggests a strong acceptance of ChatGPT in relation to ease of use, comprehensibility and enjoyment. The data show that just over three quarters of students find ChatGPT easy to use ($M=3.83$), which was reinforced by qualitative data where, for instance, one student remarked that ChatGPT “*Saves time when you look for info.*” Similarly, about 60% of participants expressed that it makes their ESL learning enjoyable ($M=3.73$). In addition, the data reflects a clear level of satisfaction ($M=4.00$) regarding the chatbot’s comprehensibility and 77% of students reported that they intend to use the tool frequently in the future ($M=3.97$).

Table 1. Participants’ Perceptions and Understanding of ChatGPT (n= 30)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD
4. I find ChatGPT to be easy to use.	3.3%	3.3%	20%	50%	23.3%	3.83	1.020
5. Learning English with ChatGPT is enjoyable.	0%	3.3%	40%	36.7%	20%	3.73	.828
6. I feel that I can easily understand the information provided by ChatGPT.	0%	3.3%	20%	50%	26.7%	4.00	.788
8. I will often use ChatGPT frequently for English learning in the future.	0%	6.7%	16.7%	50%	26.7%	3.97	.850

Note. n: Sample Size, M: Mean and SD: Standard Deviation

Frequency of Use and Its Impact on Perceptions

This study also looks at students' views of ChatGPT as a tool for learning English in relation to their frequency of use. Notably, Table 2 demonstrates that participants' frequency of use had an influence on their attitudes towards the utilisation of ChatGPT for English learning. Those who reported regular or constant use rated its influence on their learning more positively ($M=4.67$ for "always" users) compared to those who rarely or never use it. These students also viewed ChatGPT as more helpful in improving the quality of their language learning.

This suggests that familiarity with the chatbot may increase users' perceived value of it. As one student described, "*Better than Google.*" Suggesting growing preference for using the tool in comparison to conventional search engines.

Table 2. Participants' Perceptions regarding ChatGPT in Relation to their Frequency of Use (n=30)

			14. I think ChatGPT can help me improve the quality of my English learning.		
3. Have you used ChatGPT for English learning before?	never	total	n	9	9
			M	3.44	2.78
			SD	.882	1.302
	rarely	total	n	2	2
			M	3.50	3.50
			SD	.707	.707
	sometimes	total	n	7	7
			M	4.57	3.43
			SD	.535	1.272
	often	total	n	9	9
			Mean	4.33	3.22
			SD	.500	1.302
	always	total	n	3	3
			M	4.67	4.00
			SD	.577	1.732

Note. n: Sample Size, M: Mean and SD: Standard Deviation

Perceived Benefits of ChatGPT

The quantitative data in Table 3 show that students strongly agree with several benefits of ChatGPT's use in English learning. These benefits include improving the quality of English learning ($M=4.10$), providing more practice opportunities ($M=4.03$), increasing motivation ($M=3.80$) and enhancing cultural understanding ($M=3.73$).

Students also reported using the AI-tool to scaffold various English skills with different degrees of frequency. Noticeably, writing emerged as the skill of highest engagement ($M=4.20$), followed by reading ($M=3.87$), speaking (3.63) and listening ($M=3.50$). Qualitative data supported these trends as the theme of Language skills enhancement (Figure 1) appeared frequently in students' responses. In particular, students expressed satisfaction with ChatGPT's ability to improve the quality of their writing by performing tasks like paraphrasing and editing. One student emphasised using the tool for, "*Suggesting synonyms, antonyms and metaphors,*" while another shared that they, "*Use ChatGPT for proofreading*", suggesting the chatbot's value as a personal writing assistant.

In addition to writing, three students reported that ChatGPT was beneficial in improving their reading and speaking skills. They appreciated the opportunity to hear how the tool pronounced words, which helped improve their spoken English, with one student commenting, "*It's maybe will help us to improve our speaking skills,*" and another highlighting, "*Possibly by listening to the AI speak and learn how to pronounce words correctly.*"

In addition to skill enhancement, the thematic analysis revealed three main benefit areas. Accessibility and efficiency of use was the most prevalent theme identified. It corresponds with the theme of source of information as several participants described ChatGPT as quick and easy to use in obtaining accurate information. For example, one participant remarked, "*It just provides accurate info,*" whereas another noted the tool's ability to provide, "*Quick information about anything,*" suggesting that the immediacy of the tool's responses contributed to its appeal as a learning device.

Finally, some students indicated ChatGPT's usefulness in preparing for standardised exams in academic contexts, specifically the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam.

Table 3. Participants' Perceptions regarding ChatGPT's Advantages (n= 30)

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD
14. I think ChatGPT can help me improve the quality of my English learning.	0%	6.7%	13.3%	46.7%	33.3%	4.10	.803

15. I think ChatGPT can give me more English learning opportunities.	3.3%	0%	13.3%	56.7%	26.7%	4.03	.850
7. I use ChatGPT to help me get a better understanding of the English-language culture.	0%	13.3%	20%	46.7%	20%	3.73	.944
9. I use ChatGPT to increase my motivation in learning English.	0%	6.7%	23.3%	53.3%	16.7%	3.80	.805

Note. n: Sample Size, M: Mean and SD: Standard Deviation

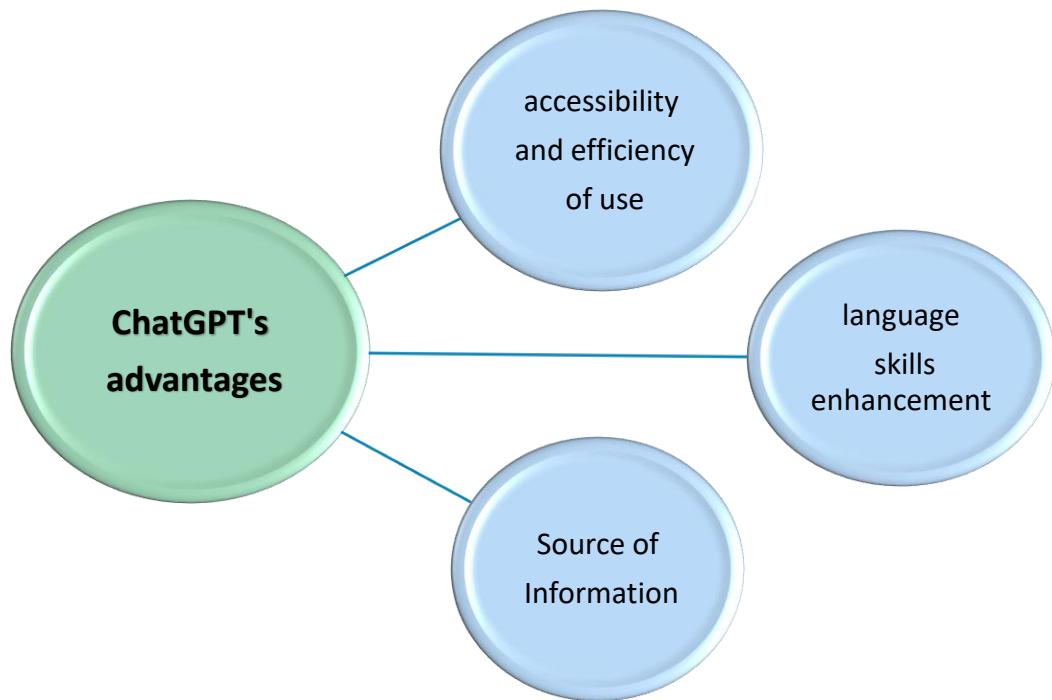


Figure 1. Thematic Map of ChatGPT's Advantages as Perceived by Students

Perceived Drawbacks of ChatGPT

Although views were generally positive, several students identified some disadvantages. As indicated in Table 4, perceptions noticeably varied regarding ChatGPT's problem with information leakage and its effectiveness in aiding English learning, as reflected by respondents' wide-ranging levels of agreement and considerable standard deviations observed

(SD=1.163 and SD=1.278 respectively). Furthermore, the data show that most respondents recognise the possibility of ChatGPT providing inaccurate information. Some learners highlighted that they occasionally received insufficient, outdated or wrong answers, as reflected in the mean score of 3.90. This trend was supported by the qualitative data where ChatGPT's linguistic and non-linguistic comprehension limitations appeared as a common area of concern (figure 2). One learner noted, "*Limited information*" and another shared, "*Some expressions might not be updated.*"

Additionally, plagiarism was notably mentioned as a potential concern. The mean score of M=3.93 suggests that many participants believe that the tool could encourage copying answers without appropriate referencing, indicating ethical issues related to its use.

Although not as frequent as non-linguistic limitations, issues specifically concerning ChatGPT's understanding of Arabic language appeared in the data. Comments like "*It does not understand Arabic well enough to be used for complicated sentences*" and "*Not good at giving answers in Arabic*" demonstrate the generative tool's inability to competently comprehend or respond to the students' Arabic requests. In addition, some respondents reported that ChatGPT struggled at times to understand their English questions, "*Sometimes it doesn't understand our exact needs*" and "*Doesn't understand some of the questions I ask*".

lastly, the qualitative data also indicated the theme of usability and engagement challenges, as a few students found the chatbot difficult to use while one student found it "*boring*".

Table 4. Participants' Perceptions regarding ChatGPT's Disadvantages (n=30)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	M	SD
16. I think ChatGPT may encourage students to plagiarise (plagiarise is when someone uses another person's ideas or work and pretends that it is their own).	0%	13.3 %	13.3%	40%	33.3%	3.93	1.015
17. I think ChatGPT may have problems with information leakage (for example when ChatGPT shares your information with someone else).	6.7%	13.3 %	33.3%	26.7%	20%	3.40	1.163
18. I think ChatGPT's responses may include	3.3%	6.7%	16.7%	43.3%	30%	3.90	1.029

some wrong information.							
19. I think ChatGPT is not helpful for my English learning.	10%	20%	26.7%	23.3%	20%	3.23	1.278

Note. n: Sample Size, M: Mean and SD: Standard Deviation

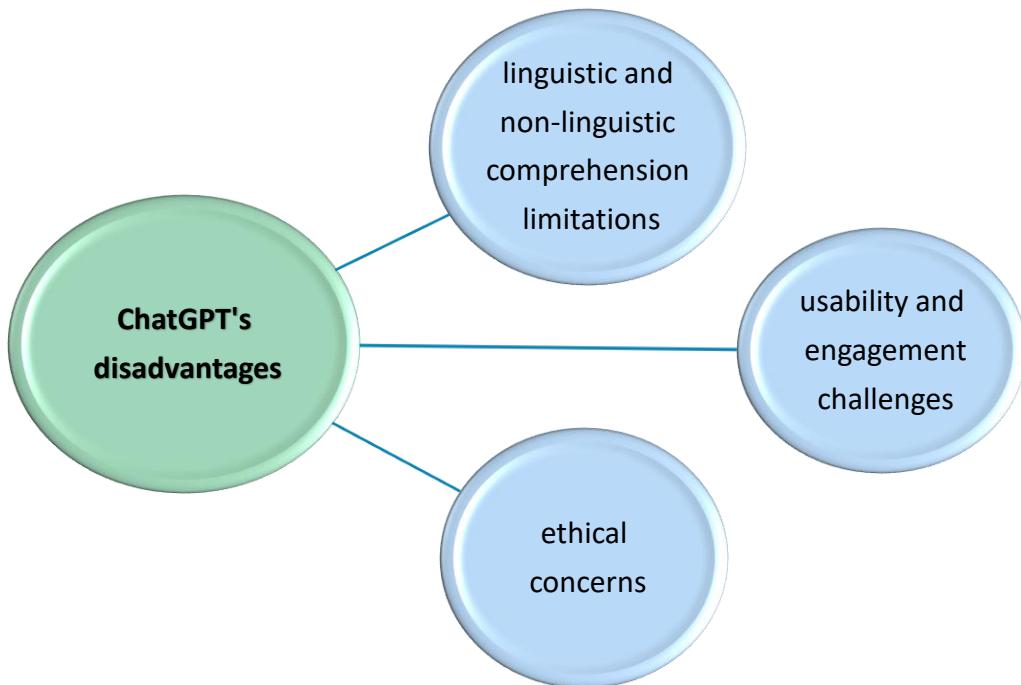


Figure 2. Thematic Map of ChatGPT's Disadvantages as Perceived by Students

Discussion:

There is a general acceptance among Arabic-L1 ESL students towards ChatGPT in learning English. This aligns with the findings of several other studies which either focused on exploring the views of English learners from specific linguistic backgrounds (e.g., Liu, 2023; Liu and Ma, 2023; Young and Shishido, 2023) or investigated Arabic-L1 learners' perceptions about ChatGPT's use for improving specific aspects of English language learning such as academic writing (e.g., Mohammed, Al-Ghazali and Alqohfa, 2023).

There is a growing agreement among Arabic L1 speakers in frequency of using ChatGPT to learn English in their daily educational activities. High frequency of ChatGPT use is associated with more positive attitude towards the AI tool and its potential to improve the quality of their language learning. Arabic L1 speakers acknowledge that ChatGPT might not always be helpful in their English learning, despite this they expressed intention to frequently use it for future learning.

Furthermore, the results identify many positives to using ChatGPT in language learning. For example, just over two thirds of students found ChatGPT motivating. In a similar vein, the results of Ali et al. (2023) demonstrated that ChatGPT generally increased Saudi EFL students' motivation regarding the skill development of reading and writing but exhibited a less significant impact on their listening and speaking abilities. This outcome corresponds with this study's finding that most participants use ChatGPT to enhance their writing and reading but they are less willing to use it to improve their listening or speaking abilities.

The highlighted preference of using the AI tool in writing poses serious risks to academic integrity and online-assessment fairness which is why many academic institutions prohibit the AI tool use in written assessments (Liu, 2023; Yeo, 2023; Moqbel and Al-kadi, 2023). Since educators might find it challenging to distinguish students' writing from the AI tool's (Abd-Elaal, Gamage and Mills, 2022), focusing on the process of writing might be a better alternative. Thus, alternative assessments like portfolio assessments could help prioritise learning from the process rather than only evaluating the final product (Curtis, 2017; Lam, 2018; Yeo, 2021). However, students will still need to be informed about the dangers and ethicality of utilising ChatGPT, including how to determine the originality and accuracy of the responses produced by the chatbot (Yeo, 2023; Peres et al., 2023). Thus, developing students' knowledge of the generative tool's limitations and risks is essential.

Interestingly, some students reported having difficulty with ChatGPT comprehending their requests especially in Arabic. This might highlight the lack of knowledge among those students of the limited linguistic ability of ChatGPT in dealing with non-Roman script language like Arabic. This can present a significant hurdle for them as most of them use the chatbot to improve their English. Although OpenAI (2024) has made substantial improvements on text in non-English languages in the new model (GPT-4o), it is important for more learners to be aware of such limitations since this model is fully accessed through a paid subscription only and most of these learners expressed intention to continuously use the generative tool in the future for English learning. In addition, raising the students' awareness of this issue, among other measures, could possibly enhance their language learning experiences by making them question and assess the chatbot's responses (Liu, 2023).

Conclusion:

The study reveals that the participating English students who are native-Arabic speakers generally see ChatGPT as an effective English learning tool, which can enhance the quality of their learning by increasing their motivation and providing them with more personalised skill practice. Furthermore, the study identifies more benefits than drawbacks in terms of ChatGPT's use for English learning. Among others, the identified benefits include enhancing speaking, reading and writing abilities and obtaining instant access to information, however this information, according to some students, might not be accurate or up to date.

These findings could assist educators, researchers and technology developers to understand the extent to which ChatGPT is helping English learners, potentially resulting in detailed guidelines of use which may ensure the safe and responsible integration of the AI tool into language learning. Additionally, the results may help raise students' awareness of ChatGPT's

limitations, including but not limited to, Arabic language incompetence. Knowing these drawbacks could immensely help these learners have a better learning experience through the cautious and critical use of ChatGPT.

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