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Investigating the Role of AI Tool Interactions in Enhancing English Language Acquisition Among Saudi College Students

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Abstract
This study examines how Saudi college students learning English as a second language utilize artificial intelligence tools, particularly ChatGPT, to enhance language acquisition. Traditional grammar translation still dominates English instruction in Saudi Arabia, but artificial intelligence chatbots offer personalized, interactive, and engaging second language learning opportunities. While traditional grammar-translation methods dominate English instruction in Saudi Arabia, artificial intelligence chatbots provide new opportunities for personalized, interactive, and engaging second language learning. The study uses Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Communicative Language Teaching principles to develop a qualitative design with purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews of ten college students. Thematic analysis revealed three major findings: (1) students demonstrated limited artigificial intelligence literacy and institutional support for these tools in language learning; (2) students used ChatGPT primarily for writing assistance, brainstorming, and translation, often without critical reflection or feedback revision; and (3) attitudes toward ChatGPT ranged from optimism about its benefits to concerns about over-reliance and lack of trust. While artificial intelligence tools promise to enhance second language acquisition, the study highlights key barriers, including a lack of training, pedagogical integration, and human interaction. The findings call for curriculum reform, teacher training, and the development of culturally responsive strategies to integrate artificial intelligence effectively. This research contributes localized insights into the role of artificial intelligence in non-Western EFL contexts and offers recommendations for future policy and practice.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, English as a foreign language, language learning technologies, second language acquisition, Saudi Arabia
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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically AI chatbots, emerged with a promise to transform Second Language (L2) learning and acquisition. Traditional language learning methods – grammar-translation and audio-lingual – emphasize structured learning, grammar rules, and vocabulary memorization through rote learning and repetitive exercises, but they lack the sustained motivation and active engagement to optimize L2 learning (Anjum et al., 2024). Additionally, most students consider L2 learning uninteresting, compromising their motivation. Fortunately, the pioneer AI chatbot, ChatGPT, is a language model that has demonstrated considerable potential in enhancing L2 acquisition (Alhazmi & Muftah, 2025). AI tools promise to address the limitations of traditional teaching methods by providing a personalized learning environment and authentic opportunities for L2 practice and acquisition.

AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, DeepSeek, and Gemini, promise to enhance students' motivation and learning engagement in L2. These tools execute diverse tasks, including text generation, machine translation, content correction, problem-solving, summarization, grammar correction, and answering questions (Kim, 2023). The chatbots respond to users' prompts with adaptive human-like text, enhancing linguistic literacy and boosting students' motivation and engagement by offering interactive and personalized learning experiences (Asad et al., 2024). However, how learners interact with AI chatbots to complete academic tasks and practice language remains underexplored in developing nations such as Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has gradually introduced AI language learning, but traditional grammar-translation and audio-lingual techniques are still the dominant teaching methods. The conventional methods adopt rote memorization, repetitive drills, and passing engagement with static textbooks (Alqahtani, 2022), which minimizes opportunities for interaction with the spoken language and partially addresses the diverse and evolving needs of SLA learners (Vireak & Bunrosy, 2024). Additionally, most studies on AI tools in L2 learning focus on the Western context, where most students are native English speakers and have practice opportunities (Al-Seghayer, 2024). AI tools can stimulate conversational practice but should be customized to capture diverse learner needs and enhance L2 acquisition.

This study explores how Saudi Arabian college-level second language (L2) learners interact with AI tools to complete academic tasks in English and enhance learning. Specifically, the research analyzes which AI applications they use in L2 learning, their interaction, and the impact on their L2 acquisition and English proficiency. The specific objectives are:

1. To investigate students' awareness of AI tools that can enhance L2 acquisition.
2. To examine how students use AI tools to complete their academic tasks in English
3. To explore student attitudes toward AI-powered tools for language learning.

Various studies have attempted to study the impact of AI in education, particularly in the English Foreign Language (EFL) domain. AI chatbots provide engaging human conversation as a mechanism of language practice. However, empirical studies in the EFL domains are scarce due to unresolved questions about technology's implementation in education (Du & Daniel, 2024). Alqaed (2024) claims that most research on AI adoption in education emerged from 2019 as a response to the pandemic to develop strategies for adopting technology in teaching. Such a focus might limit its specialization as a second-language teaching tool. Saudi Arabia has substantially incorporated AI into its development goals; however, it lacks comprehensive studies on the challenges and opportunities related to implementing AI-based learning outcomes (Alotaibi et al., 2022). The limitation worsens due to the moral and ethical challenges of adopting AI in education

and public service. Alsaawi (2025) posits that many institutions and organizations in Saudi Arabia follow strict ethical and moral guidelines, which might hinder AI adoption as a language learning tool. Ethical concern stems from potential AI biases, especially in language learning, where instructors are concerned about the credibility and validity of the knowledge and information. This disadvantage is worse among countries where English is a second language, such as Saudi Arabia. Most current studies focus on Western L2 learning contexts, which present several opportunities to practice English because of the availability of many native speakers (Asad et al., 2024; Alhazmi & Muftah, 2025; Anjum et al., 2024). Saudi Arabia needs localized studies that account for its domestic weaknesses, such as fewer native English speakers and fewer practice opportunities. Fortunately, Saudi Arabia has made significant efforts under the Vision 2030 to integrate AI in public institutions (Kumar et al., 2025). Saudi Arabia has considerably invested in AI to improve public service and governance, providing opportunities for its inclusion in second language learning. This research aimed to identify the barriers and facilitators of AI chatbot applications in EFL. The outcomes informed educators and policymakers on the technology's practicality, challenges, and necessary interventions to optimize its strengths and minimize weaknesses.

Literature Review

AI in Language Learning

Natural Language Processing

AI is an emerging technology that promises to transform language education through interactive tools that enhance teaching and learning. The critical AI feature is Natural Language Processing (NLP) technology, which combines computational linguistics and Machine Learning (ML) models to understand, interpret, and generate human language (Asad et al., 2024). This capability enables AI to create intelligent tutoring systems, automate writing evaluation tools, and personalize learning environments (Baskara, 2023). NLP and ML are the foundation of applications that adapt to a learner's needs and provide customized feedback and support, a core factor in second language (L2) learning (Alhazmi & Muftah, 2025). AI-driven chatbots go beyond language learning to simulate human-like conversations, enabling learners to practice and develop core language skills – including writing, reading, and comprehension.

NLP-Driven Chatbots

ChatGPT has received extensive scholarly and practitioner attention among AI-driven chatbots. Asad et al. (2023) claim that ChatGPT is the pioneering technology in natural language processing that understands and generates human-like conversations. While ChatGPT embodies the real-life implementation of NLP, alternatives include Deep Seek, a Chinese AI-driven NLP developed by Liang Wenfeng, Gemini by Google, and Copilot by Microsoft. The models accomplish various NLP tasks, such as sentiment analysis, question answering, and language translation (Alhusaiyan, 2025). The chatbots have similar core functionality but differ in pre-training methodology and architecture.

Theories of L2 Acquisition

Krashen's Input Hypothesis

AI chatbots offer adaptive, interactive, and context-rich learning experiences that align with Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories. Krashen's Input hypothesis proposes that language acquisition occurs by exposing learners to a language input higher than their current

comprehension level (i+1) (Luo, 2024). AI chatbots' adaptive inputs match this hypothesis by generating responses tailored to learners' proficiency levels. For instance, a chatbot can infer learners' level through interaction to respond with simple sentences with basic vocabulary for beginners and complex structures for advanced learners. Xia et al. (2023) claim that Krashen's input hypothesis aligns with AI-based language learning systems, such as cross-cultural language learning, which dynamically adjust to the learners' comprehension capability and the language complexity. This principle is relevant to Saudi Arabia because it focuses on individual cultural context and dismisses the generalization perception in AI-based learning. AI chatbots also provide comprehensible feedback, rephrasing sentences to correct learners' mistakes at the i+1 level (Gong, 2023). Krashen's Input hypothesis affirms that AI chatbots support L2 language acquisition through adaptive input and comprehensible feedback features.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) emphasizes that social interactions guide and mediate a child's cognitive development, learning ability, and language acquisition (Alkhudiry, 2022). Vygotsky claims that an individual will perform better when receiving help from others to complete a task than when working alone. SCT is a culturally relevant approach to learning as it accounts for diversity and distinct cultures, such as Saudi Arabia. Vygotsky argued that understanding cognition requires going beyond individual effort to include cultural and social factors that influence behaviors, interactions, and language (Chen, 2025). A person's language development outcome depends on social interaction and relationships, which should be contextualized in a specific culture, such as Saudi Arabia. SCT enables educators to connect a community's historical and cultural profile to AI adoption as a second-language learning tool. Furthermore, it aligns with AI-chatbots integration in language learning through scaffolding interaction, where AI serves as a knowledgeable friend and guides learners through tasks such as breaking a task into smaller activities and, at the same time, offering hints and also supports collaborative learning by co-creating stories or solving problems (Sarmiento-Campos et al., 2022). However, AI lacks sociability due to the absence of cues such as tone and gestures. Despite lacking socioemotional cues, SCT theoretically approves the chatbots' relevance in L2 acquisition through scaffolded interaction and collaborative learning.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a language teaching theory that prioritizes developing communication competence through meaningful interaction and real-life language use. CLT perceives language as a system for expressing meaning. Its primary function is interaction and communication (Qasserras, 2023). Like CLT, using AI chatbots in L2 learning and acquisition provides authentic communication that simulates real-world scenarios and prioritizes fluency and meaningful exchange. The technologies facilitate interactive practices, such as role-play and debates, to develop pragmatic skills and personalize conversations by tailoring content to learners' interests, thereby boosting motivation and providing instant feedback (Qasserras, 2023). Unfortunately, text-based learning often lacks the cultural immersion necessary for effective language acquisition. CLT is a framework for exploring AI chatbots' authenticity, personalization, and interactiveness in L2 acquisition.

Benefits of AI-Chatbot in L2 Acquisition

Personalized Learning

AI chatbots personalize content by dynamically adjusting language complexity and topics based on user interaction. The adaptive feedback is consistent with Krashen's Input Hypothesis and underscores the significance of comprehensible (i+1) level input (Asad et al., 2024). Novice learners receive simple instruction and basic vocabulary, while advanced learners engage with complex structures and expressions. AI chatbots tailor interaction based on user input to allow them to learn at their own pace, which addresses gaps in the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to L2 learning (Anjum, 2024). Learners can also focus on areas of interest to enhance motivation and relevance to learning. Customizing content to learners' proficiency levels and topics improves linguistic competence and increases confidence by minimizing the anxiety associated with inflexible traditional learning approaches (AbuSahyon et al., 2023). AI chatbots create a student-centered environment that supports current pedagogical demands for differentiated instruction.

Interactive Practice

AI chatbot enhances language acquisition and communication competence through interactive language practice that mimics human conversation. It deviates from traditional static exercises by engaging learners in open-ended dialogue, role play, and problem-solving activities that reflect human interaction (Ghafar et al., 2023). For example, learners can practice interview questions and responses, discuss cultural topics, or order food in a restaurant, which assists them in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Such interaction affirms SCT, which emphasizes that effective learning occurs through social collaboration and scaffolding (Asad et al., 2024). AI chatbots serve as conversational agents, providing a supportive environment for learners to experiment with language, make and correct errors, and refine their language skills. AI generates contextually appropriate responses, encouraging critical thinking and adapting language to different contexts or roles. Interactive practice provides continuous engagement to improve fluency and develop pragmatic skills that apply to real-life communication.

Immediate Feedback

AI chatbots provide instant feedback, allowing students to correct errors and refine language use in real-time. Traditional static methods delay feedback. However, AI chatbots instantaneously identify grammatical inaccuracies and lexical or syntactic errors, including explanations for rewritten portions (Ghafar et al., 2023). Immediate feedback reinforces learning, improves knowledge retention, and reduces errors. Moreover, it encourages students to request clarification and direct learning to address their inadequacies or weaknesses (Asad et al., 2024). AI chatbots can speed learning, but they should be used moderately to avoid over-reliance on automated feedback that lacks sociocultural and human interactions.

Accessibility and Convenience

AI-based teaching overcomes geographic and time barriers. The technology is available 24/7 to anyone with internet connectivity. This capability empowers users to practice language at any time and place, eliminating traditional barriers associated with rigid classroom schedules (Kim et al., 2023). A practical example is an employed learner seeking to optimize their time by learning while commuting at home, where they cannot access a native speaker. The AI convenience aligns with global trends in educational technology that emphasize flexibility and inclusivity (Anjum et

al., 2024). AI chatbots have multilingual features that allow them to switch between native and second languages, require translations, or compare linguistic structures to improve cross-linguistic awareness. AI-conversational agents are also scalable, providing similar opportunities to institutional and individual learners (Asad et al., 2024). Nevertheless, concerns about the digital divide, availability of internet connection, or access to internet-enabled devices affect equitable technology adoption and learning.

Limitations of AI-Chatbot in L2 Acquisition

Lack of Human Interaction

AI chatbots adopt a conversational style but lack essential elements of human interactions, such as sarcasm, idioms, and cultural references, which are vital in advanced language proficiency. This limitation implies that the technology generates grammatically correct responses but cannot interpret context-dependent details necessary for pragmatic and sociolinguistic skills (Asad et al., 2024). The lack of cultural and emotional intelligence slows knowledge transfer into the real world. Zaghlool and Khasawneh (2023) argue that language mastery extends beyond syntax and vocabulary to encompass tone, body language, and cultural norms. These features are absent in IA-generated texts. The limitation can lead to superficial L2 acquisition, where learners excel in structured tasks but are weak in real-life scenarios. Human interaction with native speakers remains irreplaceable for modeling non-verbal communication and cultural nuances, which helps learners adapt their language use to diverse social contexts (Zaghlool & Khasawneh, 2023). Moreover, AI can lead to prompt dependency, which manifests as a pattern of obsessive thoughts, impaired control, and craving for AI-generated content more than learning. Although AI dependency is not a disorder, it raises concerns about institutional responsibility, academic integrity, and student autonomy, which are critical factors in learning (Revesai, 2025). Therefore, despite AI chatbots offering valuable real-time practice, the technology partially substitutes for the depth of human-led learning.

Risk of Over-Reliance

The availability and accessibility of AI chatbots lead to over-dependence, reducing the motivation for real-life conversations needed to develop pragmatic and interpersonal skills. Zaghlool and Khasawneh (2023) claim that learners who rely solely on AI chatbots for language practice become accustomed to controlled, error-tolerant interactions, making them ill-prepared to deal with the unpredictability of human dialogue. For instance, interpreting non-verbal cues or adjusting language politeness levels can be learned from face-to-face interaction with native speakers. Additionally, Zaghlool and Khasawneh (2023) claim that successful language acquisition depends on dialogue interaction marked by learners negotiating meaning and receiving spontaneous feedback, processes that AI chatbots cannot genuinely replicate. Furthermore, AI solutions lack inherent responsibility, as they are just tools, raising accuracy, compliance, and authentication concerns. AI hallucination occurs when an AI system generates false or misleading information and presents it as facts due to patterns in its training data, insufficient or biased data, or an inability to fill gaps in its knowledge (Sun et al., 2024). AI chatbot passive learning limits knowledge generalization, forcing instructors to complement AI-based learning with human-to-human interaction opportunities to promote holistic skill development.

Quality of Feedback

AI advancement has failed to address inconsistent, inaccurate, and inappropriate feedback that reinforces errors and confuses learners. The tools generate plausible-sounding but sometimes incorrect explanations, including misapplied grammar rules or outdated cultural information. Asad et al. (2024) claim that AI tools might provide conflicting advice on verb or tense usage to concretize errors. The immediate automated feedback system may focus on surface-level corrections, such as spelling, rather than addressing deeper linguistic and pragmatic issues, like coherence. AI chatbot-generated responses may lack pedagogical intentionality because it does not systematically track learners' progress or tailor feedback to individual developmental needs (Luo et al., 2024). The randomness in the content can frustrate learners and erode their trust in the tool's reliability. Educators emphasize the need for human oversight to validate AI-generated content and address gaps in contextual understanding, ensuring that learners receive accurate and pedagogically sound guidance.

Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative method to explore how Saudi students use AI chatbots to complete English language tasks. It evaluated awareness, usage, and attitudes toward AI-powered tools for language learning. The qualitative design was appropriate because it gathered comprehensive data from a small sample in their natural setting to understand the usage and impact of ChatGPT on language learning in a non-Western academic setting. In contrast, the qualitative method would only provide empirical findings without a deeper analysis of the unique cultural and religious factors shaping language education.

Participants

The study's targeted population was college students in Saudi Arabian colleges taking English as a second language (L2). It adopted purposive sampling because the recruitment depended on specific criteria to ensure sample diversity. The screening questionnaire inquired about age, first language, English proficiency level, and experience using ChatGPT. The selection criteria were: participants should be (1) aged 18-25 years; (2) Arabic as a first language; (3) English as a second language; (4) English proficiency levels intermediate to advanced determined through self-reported proficiency or university placement exams; (5) have prior experience using ChatGPT for academic English tasks, such as writing, editing, brainstorming, summarizing, or translating. The recruitment process began with inviting all L2 students through emails and social media (WhatsApp). Students who accepted the invitation completed the screening questionnaire (Appendix A), which was used to select twenty participants based on the eligibility criteria (twelve females and eight males). The participants completed semi-structured interviews through Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

Data Collection

Data collection employed a semi-structured interview to gather comprehensive contextual data from the five purposively sampled participants. The research questions were developed from literature reviews to address the knowledge gap. Also, a pilot study was performed with two colleagues taking English as a second language to review the questions and ensure they were clear and understandable. The final interview sheet had eight questions, consisting of opening (2), central (4), and closing (2) questions as listed in Appendix B. The interview process began with

all ten participants (six males and four females) receiving an email requesting that they select the best date, time, and channel (Zoom or FaceTime) for the interview. Every interviewee was informed of the research objectives, that the responses would be anonymous, and that any collected data would be secure. The interviewer informed the participants of their rights before asking them to sign an informed consent form. The interview lasted about 15 to 20 minutes, collecting audio and written data for analysis and interpretation.

Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis to explore the usage and impact of ChatGPT in L2 learning and acquisition. The analysis process adopts the Squires (2023) framework, consisting of six phases: data familiarization through reading and re-reading interview scripts, initial code generation, theme development, defining and refining, and report generation. It used NVivo to generate the codes, but it lacked inter-coder reliability due to the research scope and chosen methodology. The thematic analysis allows an in-depth understanding of how Saudi Arabian college-level students engage with ChatGPT in L2 learning.

Findings

Demographic Characteristics

The purposive sample of five college-level L2 students comprised twelve males and eight females from both science and arts disciplines and all years of study, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic characteristics of the sample (N = 20)*

Demographics	Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	12	60
	Female	8	40
University Major	Computer Science &Information Technology	4	20
	Electrical and Mechanical Engineering	4	20
	Business Administration	4	20
	Islamic Studies and Sharia Law	4	20
	Medical Sciences	4	20
Year of Study	Freshman	4	20
	Sophomore	4	20
	Junior	4	20
	Senior	8	40

Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Limited AI Literacy for L2 Learning

Table 2 summarizes the direct quotes from the first objective: to investigate students' awareness of AI tools that can enhance L2 acquisition. It shows the participants' limited awareness and integration of ChatGPT in L2 learning. Most respondents cited a lack of formal guidance in applying ChatGPT and claimed they were uncertain about the technology's future. One of the respondents stated, "*I tried ChatGPT once, but I did not know how to ask the right questions to get useful answers*," and another added, "*I did not know how to start using it for language practice. No one taught us*." Additionally, the curriculum still emphasizes textbooks and grammar drills, providing limited opportunities for the students to practice using AI tools. A respondent cited the

absence of formal adoption by stating, "*Our classes focus on textbooks, so AI feels unnecessary. Teachers do not encourage it.*" Such statements highlight institutional resistance towards AI in L2 learning, which poses further challenges or barriers to students. These findings answer the research question and prove limited awareness, use, and integration of AI tools in L2 language curricula.

Table 2. *Supporting quotes for the theme awareness of AI tools for L2 learning*

Supporting Interview Quotes for Awareness of AI Tools for L2 Learning
• I tried ChatGPT once, but could not ask the right questions to get valuable answers. • I did not know how to start using it for language practice. No one taught us. • Our classes prioritize textbooks, so AI feels unnecessary. • I use AI twice weekly because our classes focus on textbooks and grammar drills. The AI chatbot feels unfamiliar and unnecessary. • The most common task is writing assistance, like translating thoughts from Arabic to English.

Theme 2: AI Tools Usage Patterns for L2 Learning

Table 3 summarizes interview responses about the second research objective: to examine how students use AI tools to complete their academic tasks in English. The interview responses suggest the varied utility of ChatGPT in daily writing tasks. One respondent indicated a sporadic engagement by claiming, "*I use ChatGPT daily to write assignments*," while another showed a lack of familiarity in the statement, "*I tried ChatGPT once but did not know how to ask the right questions*." Most students use ChatGPT for specific tasks, such as brainstorming or translating Arabic to English texts, but their usage lacks reflective engagement. These findings suggest diverse applications of ChatGPT, though most usage is superficial and lacks significant linguistic development.

Table 3. *Supporting quotes for the theme AI tools usage pattern*

Supporting Interview Quotes for AI Tools Usage Patterns
• I use ChatGPT daily to write assignments, but do not revise the output. • I use ChatGPT to brainstorm essay ideas, which helps me structure my thoughts better. • The most common task is writing assistance, like translating thoughts from Arabic to English. • I feel confident using it for brainstorming, but I am unsure if it improves my skills. • I tried ChatGPT once, but I did not know how to ask the right questions to get valuable answers.

Theme 3: Attitudes Toward AI Tools for L2 Learning

Table 4 summarizes direct quotes from the interview about the third research objective: to explore student attitudes toward AI-powered tools for language learning. The interviewees had mixed attitudes toward using ChatGPT for L2 learning. Some students were optimistic about the technology. For instance, one of the participants claimed, "*My writing improved significantly*," while another criticized AI, stating, "*Overusing ChatGPT made me lazy.*" These comments also highlighted a distrust of AI-generated content, with some students preferring human feedback. Despite the recognized benefits of AI, most students questioned the pedagogical value of ChatGPT

in language learning, pointing out a gap between the use of AI chatbots and skill internalization. AI could improve language learning, but its features do not sufficiently provide the necessary support for quality academic work.

Table 4. *Supporting quotes for the theme attitudes toward AI tools for L2 learning*

Supporting Interview Quotes for Attitudes Toward AI Tools for L2 Learning
• My writing improved when I asked ChatGPT to explain and practice grammar rules. • ChatGPT helped me refine my essay vocabulary usage, which boosted my test scores. • It saves time, but I am not internalizing the language. I just copied the output. • Overusing ChatGPT for translations made me lazy. My speaking skills did not improve. • I do not trust ChatGPT's feedback. What if it is wrong? I prefer human corrections.

Discussion

Low Awareness and Institutional Barriers

AI chatbots are novel technologies whose application in education will face mixed reactions. Saudi Arabian students exemplify a group with limited awareness of AI's significance in learning, a situation common among EFL contexts where educational systems are similarly rooted in traditional, teacher-centered methodologies. The slow response probably stems from emphasizing traditional rote and memorization methods in the L2 education system. This challenge in Saudi Arabia reflects Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which claims that a lack of institutional support in adopting a new technology discourages the structural assistance needed to facilitate the process (Alkhudiry, 2022). Furthermore, the problem is evident in the student's struggle to formulate the correct prompts. Low AI literacy is a knowledge gap widened by institutional practices that prefer textbooks to AI integration in learning (Al-Seghayer, 2024). Such challenges are common in EFL content and highlight the need to address learning disparities. Global trends advocate for AI integration in education, but institutional inertia in Saudi Arabia's English language classes slows AI adoption in learning.

Usage Patterns and Pedagogical Impact

Artificial intelligence has several capabilities and functionalities that address diverse needs. The varied usage patterns among Saudi Arabian students reflect AI's potential in language learning. The application of AI among L2 learners aligns with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which states that adaptive input at the i+1 level increases the speed of language acquisition (Luo, 2024). Such applications benefit student learning and development; however, the passive use of AI tools, such as copying output, overlooks cognitive development and undermines deeper learning. This problem is common among countries where English is a second language and is a cautionary issue for classroom management. While AI can enhance learning, it can be a drawback for students who do not see its pedagogical value in L2 learning. Previous studies have also highlighted the need for cautionary application of AI in learning. For instance, Ghafar et al. (2023) claim AI chatbots provide a 24/7 interactive space for language practices, but Qasserras (2023) warns that unstructured use undermines the need for meaningful and context-rich interaction for effective L2 learning, as postulated in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) theory. The research further suggests that learners using ChatGPT for rote translation of text from Arabic to English overlook CLT's emphasis on pragmatic skills such as negotiating meaning, which led to claims that AI does not improve speaking skills. AI applications among L2 learners in Saudi Arabia remain limited

and fail to effectively develop pragmatic language skills. Instructors in the EFL context need to establish a pedagogical framework to avoid using AI as a passive learning strategy and failing to develop essential communication skills. Educators and policymakers should review the technology to ensure that language teaching in Saudi Arabia technologically matches international trends.

Attitudes and Ethical Considerations

Every technological transformation elicits mixed reactions depending on its usability and people's readiness for change. Similarly, Saudi Arabia's college-level L2 learners exhibit mixed attitudes towards AI tools' benefits in personalized feedback and accessibility. The findings are consistent with Luo et al.'s (2024) claim that AI can improve grammatical performance and mastery of a second language, but it might produce inconsistent responses that lack pedagogical value and encourage overreliance on machine-generated texts. These mixed attitudes and concerns are shared across EFL countries. AI usage has also raised trust concerns, as some student prefer human assistance and feedback in their assignments. Students expressed concerns about the trustworthiness of AI-generated content and preferred human feedback. Therefore, AI tools can assist L2 students, but they require regulations to balance the instructor and chatbot's roles to ensure student language acquisition is reflected in theory and practice.

Conclusion

This research confirms that AI is a valuable teaching tool, particularly for students learning a second language. It highlights the potential and challenges of integrating AI into second language classes. The most critical conclusion is the need for a blend of technology, pedagogy, and culture to improve the use of AI tools in L2 learning. Although AI chatbots offer interactive and adaptive feedback for language practices, their effectiveness depends on structured integration into the current curricula. Saudi Arabia's textbook-centric teaching methods stifle the collaborative and interactive environment of AI. Optimizing AI usage in classrooms demands multistakeholder collaboration to address infrastructure barriers, curriculum content, pedagogical design, and AI literacy. AI is a valuable tool, but it should be used alongside traditional learning theory that accounts for culture and socio-emotional learning activities in language acquisition.

At the same time, making ChatGPTs and other AI tools work well in second language education requires bigger changes in how language is taught. It's not enough to introduce ChatGPT to students; it must be carefully connected to teaching methods focusing on communication, culture, and active learning. Schools and universities in Saudi Arabia should focus on improving and updating old curricula, training teachers and students to use ChatGPT effectively and ethically, and making sure lessons stay culturally appropriate. It is also important to note that AI should support, rather than replace, real conversations, critical thinking, and social interaction. Future research should continue to explore how to combine AI's benefits with traditional human-centered learning to help students become stronger and more confident language users. Future studies can also be implemented on a larger number of participants with different learning levels, as this study was limited to only 10 college-level students.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Screening Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographics

1. Age: ____
2. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say ☐
3. Native Language (L1): ____
4. Second Language (L2): ____
5. University Major: ____
6. Current Year of Study: ☐ Freshman ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior

Section 2: English Proficiency Level

- How would you rate your English proficiency? Beginner ☐. Intermediate ☐. Advanced ☐. Near-native ☐.

7. Have you ever taken an English proficiency test (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL, STEP1)? ☐ Yes ☐No. If yes, what was your score? ____

Section 3: ChatGPT Usage

- How often do you use ChatGPT for academic purposes? ☐Daily. ☐Weekly. ☒Occasionally. ☐Never (End of survey – Thank you for your time)

10. What academic tasks do you use ChatGPT for? (Check all that apply)
    - Vocabulary Building ☐
    - Conversation Practice ☐
    - Writing Assistance ☐
    - Grammar Explanations ☐
    - Reading & Comprehension Support ☐
    - Other (please specify): ____
11. How confident are you in using ChatGPT for academic English tasks?
    - Not confident at all ☐
    - Somewhat confident ☐
    - Confident ☐
    - Very confident ☐

[1] STEP is the English Proficiency test (Standardized Test of English Proficiency) used in Saudi Arabia.

Appendix B
Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Opening Questions:

1. Can you describe how you first started using ChatGPT for academic tasks?
2. How often do you use ChatGPT, and for what specific academic purposes?

Main Questions:

1. In what ways do you feel ChatGPT has helped improve your English skills (e.g., writing, vocabulary, grammar)?
2. Have you encountered any challenges or limitations when using ChatGPT? If so, what are they?
3. Do you think using ChatGPT has made you more dependent on AI for language tasks? Why or why not?
4. Have you noticed any changes in writing or academic performance since using ChatGPT?

Closing Questions:

1. Would you recommend ChatGPT to other students for academic writing? Why or why not?
2. Is there anything else you want to share about your experience with ChatGPT in learning English?