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Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Artificial Intelligence in an English as a Foreign Language Learning Context

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Abstract. This study seeks to explore the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding the integration of generative artificial intelligence tools, specifically ChatGPT, into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. The main objective was to determine the perceived benefits and limitations of artificial intelligence tools to foster language learning. A total of 120 EFL university students who were enrolled in two distance courses participated in this mixed-method research. Learners ranged from B1 to B2 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference and were located in various regions of Ecuador and abroad. Data collection involved a diagnostic survey, reflective narratives, an exit questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The quantitative information was analyzed descriptively, while qualitative responses were interpreted thematically. Findings revealed that students perceived AI tools as helpful in organizing ideas, managing time, and improving linguistic and pedagogical skills. Most participants affirmed that ChatGPT enhanced their writing abilities and contributed to their future professional instruction. However, concerns about AI overdependence, lack of personalization, and occasional inaccuracies were noted. It is concluded that although AI is a valuable resource in EFL education, its implementation must be guided by thoughtful instructional design and critical engagement.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence; English as a Foreign Language; pre-service teachers' perceptions; higher education

1. Introduction

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, is being increasingly recognized as vital in enhancing teaching and learning experiences around the world (Özkan et al., 2024; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). In addition, Artificial Intelligence technologies can facilitate personalized learning, which helps educators to adapt to students'

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individual needs and preferences and thus improves students' engagement, motivation, and academic performance (Iman et al., 2024). Certainly, the way language is acquired, practiced, and evaluated is changing as a result of the incorporation of AI resources into educational procedures (Trivedi, 2023; Xia et al., 2024). Moreover, as EFL educators face the new challenges of contemporary classroom environments, AI tools can improve their teaching practices since they are helpful in delivering feedback, simplifying assessment procedures, and offering analytical insights into students' progress (Hassan Seif Eldin, 2024).

Among current AI tools, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot, Monica, and ChatGPT have been widely recognized for their application in education. Google Gemini, with its various linguistic capabilities, supports the personalized learning experiences that help in designing EFL content (Wade, 2025). Microsoft Copilot, integrated into Microsoft 365, provides intelligent writing and editing aids that can assist teachers in the design of lessons and materials (Microsoft, 2025). Likewise, Monica offers translation, summarization, and writing assistance that can be used in EFL settings (Monica, 2025).

In this context, ChatGPT has emerged as a key technology in language learning (Bin-Hady et al., 2023). This tool can simulate conversational interactions that allow learners to practice speaking and comprehension skills in a safe, judgment-free environment, which is crucial in developing fluency and confidence (Klimova et al., 2024). Moreover, the capacity of ChatGPT to provide immediate feedback and engage students in interactive dialogues has been shown to improve the competency, confidence, and motivation of EFL learners (Lo et al., 2024). According to Kalenda et al. (2025), ChatGPT is a useful tool to create lesson plans, encourage creativity, and help with grammar explanations. Another view is given by Wang and Fan (2025) who manifest that ChatGPT improves students' learning outcomes and higher-order thinking abilities; however, its effects differ depending on the educational situation.

Recent research has addressed the integration of AI tools in EFL contexts and highlighted the educational potential and the challenges associated with these technologies. The studies by Darwin et al. (2024) and Al-Othman (2024) emphasize AI's possibilities to enhance critical thinking and personalize language instruction. Similarly, Vo and Nguyen (2024) and Khairuddin et al. (2024) report favorable learners' perceptions toward generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT, especially for writing and engagement, but also highlight concerns regarding accuracy, creativity, and long-term effectiveness. Other studies, including those of Le Phan (2023) and Abed et al. (2025), illustrate the need for guided implementation and professional training to optimize AI's educational use.

While prior studies have explored the integration of AI into language education, mainly focusing on in-service teachers or general student populations in diverse international contexts, there is limited attention to the attitudes, concerns, and expectations of future educators. Derived from this, the present study addresses this gap by examining the perceptions of pre-service teachers and offering

context-specific insights that are essential in shaping effective teacher training programs. The study centers on pre-service teachers whose perspectives are crucial in understanding how they interpret the role of AI in EFL learning in Ecuador. By exploring their perceptions, this research provides specific insights that can inform teacher education programs and guide the responsible integration of AI in language instruction. Accordingly, this work addresses the following questions:

- How do pre-service teachers perceive the contribution of AI to their English language learning?
- What limitations are perceived by pre-service teachers in the use of AI-based systems in EFL learning?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Generative AI in Education

Generative artificial intelligence constitutes a powerful aid that has the capacity to foster fundamental changes in education (Cooper, 2023). Furthermore, GenAI has been defined as a branch of AI designed to produce original content across multiple formats such as text, video, and images (Cao et al., 2023). As Luo (2024) asserts, GenAI technologies are rapidly evolving, and higher education institutions continue to implement frequent revisions and adaptations for their use.

Certainly, the use of GenAI in higher education remains a debated and evolving issue with no universally accepted guidelines currently in place and as a result, the effective implementation of AI generators in teaching and learning practices continues to lack clarity (Ogunleye et al., 2024). Nevertheless, as Yang (2022) highlights, the expanding capabilities of AI to perform automated tasks, analyze vast amounts of data, and generate predictive insights continue to transform multiple dimensions of everyday life, including the field of education. Therefore, understanding how GenAI can be integrated into educational contexts is essential in evaluating its impact on the teaching and learning process.

Recent research highlights a wide range of instructional applications of GenAI in higher education. Daun and Brings (2023) affirm that tools such as ChatGPT can effectively assist with literature searches, student queries, code development, and the creation of exercises. Kurtz et al. (2024) emphasize that GenAI has the potential to personalize learning environments based on individual student needs and acknowledge that the use of AI tools can support early interventions and reduce dropout rates. Atlas (2023) identified several current uses of GenAI in higher education, including automated essay scoring, personalized tutoring, research support, language translation, and assistance in syllabus and assessment design.

According to Pesovski et al. (2024), GenAI enables affordable and accessible personalized learning. Moreover, AI tools can be helpful in enhancing creative writing and brainstorming (Zhao et al., 2022). Akgun and Greenhow (2022) affirm that AI technology offers a wide range of educational applications that include personalized learning platforms, automated assessment tools, and behavior-monitoring technologies such as facial recognition. Thus, AI plays a key

role in enhancing student engagement, promoting critical thinking, and strengthening learners' ability to evaluate information and pose meaningful questions (Akgun & Greenhow, 2022).

2.2 English as a Foreign Language Learning Through AI

In recent years, the integration of AI into EFL education has gained much attention, especially because of its features that enable individualized learning experiences (Wei, 2023; Zhang, 2025). Research in this area points out that AI tools such as chatbots, intelligent tutoring systems, and speech recognition apps can improve EFL students' motivation, engagement, and language proficiency (Al-Othman, 2024; Peña-Acuña & Fernandes Durão Corga, 2024).

In this context, AI platforms allow learners to receive adaptive feedback and participate in real-time evaluations, which helps students to learn at their own pace and according to their needs (Zhu & Wang, 2025). In addition, Guan et al. (2024) and Wu and Yu (2024) explain that the use of AI in informal English digital contexts has been proved to generate positive attitudes and to reduce anxiety in students, thus leading to a more favorable learning environment.

Moreover, the integration of AI into the EFL setting can help learners in different regions of the world to obtain high-quality language instruction, thus contributing towards addressing accessibility and inclusivity (Wang et al., 2024; Zhang & Umeanowai, 2025). Furthermore, Alharbi (2025) manifests that the implementation of AI in EFL contexts has been easy because of its alignment with students' technological preferences and proficiency levels. In contemporary language instruction, AI has become essential for natural language processing, adaptive learning, and individualized feedback.

Additionally, the use of AI includes the creation of chatbots that show personalized and efficient language training to provide interactive learning experiences on web-based platforms and virtual reality systems (Alenizi et al., 2023). Although benefits have been demonstrated when including AI in the EFL classroom, further research to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of AI in language acquisition and to ensure access across diverse learning settings especially is needed (Jiang, 2022).

2.3 Artificial Intelligence Tools in EFL Learning

The integration of AI in the EFL learning process has gained relevance due to its advantages in the language acquisition process (AbuSahyon et al., 2023). Certainly, AI tools allow the implementation of personalized learning environments that promote engagement and proficiency among learners. These tools can play the role of personal tutors that provide immediate feedback, address questions, and recommend resources that are aligned with the learner's progress (Wang et al., 2023; Winkler & Söllner, 2018). Such AI tools are especially important in remote learning environments where the absence of face-to-face interactions may leave students feeling isolated. Considering the importance of AI tools, their integration in EFL teaching requires addressing pedagogical and ethical considerations, including the changing roles of teachers, data privacy

concerns, and the need for ongoing professional development (Kundu & Bej, 2024).

Moreover, AI technology has introduced a variety of tools that can effectively enhance the students' learning experiences and their linguistic skills (AbuSahyon et al., 2023). In this regard, chatbots such as ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Copilot, and Monica can be used for educational purposes. For instance, ChatGPT provides students with the opportunity to practice language skills in ways that simulate real-world communication. This chatbot offers instant feedback and encourages learners to apply their language abilities in practical, everyday scenarios (Amin, 2023).

Similarly, Google Gemini offers multilingual features (Baskara, 2025) since it is capable of linking words and ideas, interpreting contextual cues, and engaging in conversations that closely resemble human interactions (Wang & Zhao, 2023). With respect to Copilot, this tool facilitates user interaction by addressing questions related to different aspects of writing, providing suggestions when prompted, and functioning as an on-demand assistance tool (Esfandiari & Allaf-Akbary, 2024).

2.4 Previous Studies

Darwin et al. (2024) conducted a qualitative study to determine the perceptions of EFL students regarding the role of AI in developing their critical thinking skills. The research aimed to investigate the benefits of AI in enhancing critical thinking and the limitations associated with its use as perceived by students. The study involved seven master's students who were from two Indonesian universities and who had advanced English proficiency and prior experience with AI tools. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically.

The findings revealed that the participants viewed critical thinking as a multifaceted skill that involves scepticism, analytical reasoning, and contextual evaluation. They acknowledged that AI is valuable in improving multiple dimensions of critical thinking, which include conducting academic research and examining theoretical frameworks. However, several limitations were also identified. Students noted that AI-generated content may lack personalization, promote cognitive offloading, and produce algorithmic biases that narrow critical perspectives. The study concluded that although AI has considerable potential to support critical thinking, its use must be balanced with pedagogical strategies that encourage independent analysis. Moreover, the authors highlighted concerns about excessive reliance on AI, especially when it addresses complex linguistic or emotional content.

Vo and Nguyen (2024) conducted a quantitative study to investigate the perceptions of EFL university students regarding ChatGPT as a language learning tool in Vietnam. Based on a Technology Acceptance Model framework, this research involved 369 participants who had prior experience using ChatGPT in language learning. A validated questionnaire was administered online and included dimensions such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, positive attitudes, negative attitudes, and behavioral intention. Findings revealed that learners

generally had positive attitudes toward ChatGPT, reporting its ease of use and supportive nature in reading and writing tasks. However, perceptions of its general usefulness were neutral, especially concerning listening and speaking development. Furthermore, gender did not significantly influence perceptions, but class level did, with upper-year students exhibiting greater familiarity and acceptance. Although most learners expressed motivation to continue using ChatGPT, qualitative responses highlighted concerns about accuracy, reduced creativity, and potential overdependence. The researchers emphasized the importance of pedagogical guidance, suggesting that effective integration of ChatGPT in language learning requires teacher support, careful monitoring, and strategies to prevent overreliance. Finally, the study underlined the need for balanced implementation of AI tools in EFL education.

Khairuddin et al. (2024) investigated the perceptions of 284 Malaysian university students regarding the use of AI tools as academic support. The study employed a quantitative research design through a questionnaire that consisted of 20 items across six sections. The research explored student engagement, interaction, behavioral intentions, satisfaction, and academic performance. The results, analyzed through SPSS v29 revealed that students perceived AI tools as beneficial, especially in prompting classroom engagement, improving knowledge acquisition, and supporting collaborative learning. Participants liked the flexibility, comfort, and autonomy that AI provided in their learning activities and indicated a willingness to interact with and recommend these tools.

However, the study also highlighted moderate concerns such as lower satisfaction with AI in research applications and reduced interest in frequent use. The findings suggest that although AI supports learning through commitment, personalization, and performance improvement, it is essential to ensure responsible and balanced integration. The scholars recommended that educators adapt to evolving technological trends and supply themselves with relevant digital skills to optimize the role of AI in academic settings.

A study by Le Phan (2023) examined the perceptions of 100 Vietnamese university students in the use of AI technology in English writing classes. The research employed a mixed-method approach. Quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews were combined to explore students' views on the advantages and challenges of three specific AI tools: Grammarly, Google Translate, and a paraphrasing tool. The findings revealed that students held a positive attitude toward AI, especially in terms of accessibility, usability, and ability to improve vocabulary, grammar, and writing quality.

In addition, students reported enhanced motivation, engagement, and confidence when using AI support in writing tasks. Nonetheless, they also pointed out several challenges such as overdependence on AI, limited features, and inaccuracies in translation or paraphrasing. Notably, concerns were raised about reduced critical thinking and language retention due to excessive reliance on automated suggestions. The results showed that AI technologies can enhance

writing performance and learner autonomy; however, their use should be moderated and accompanied by proper pedagogical guidance.

Abed et al. (2025) analyzed the perceptions of English language teachers regarding the use of AI in public schools in Iraq. The research examines teachers' views, the challenges they encounter, and their perceptions of the benefits of AI for student participation and language proficiency. This qualitative case study employed interviews, observations, and surveys. The results showed that 75% of teachers perceive AI as a valuable tool that enhances engagement, and 70% claim that it improves language skills.

However, 63% of instructors report that they have limited access to technology, and 58% assert that they have not received adequate training. Additionally, the statistical analysis revealed an increase in student performance and improvement in engagement after using AI tools. Although AI can improve language learning in schools with limited resources, it will only be successful if basic problems such as a lack of teachers' training and access to technology are solved first (Abed et al., 2025).

A study conducted by Al-Othman (2024) explored the views of 24 EFL university instructors on the use of AI tools in English language teaching. The research analyzes the benefits, limitations, ethical concerns, and future expectations of AI in the classroom. A qualitative case study design was used, which included semi-structured interviews analyzed through the NVivo software. The participants reported that AI offers advantages such as personalized learning; enhanced student engagement; improved speaking, listening, and writing skills; and real-time feedback.

However, they also expressed some concerns related to overdependence on technology, reduced critical thinking, lack of human interaction, and plagiarism. The findings emphasize the need for professional development to align AI integration with pedagogical goals since many participants showed a strong interest in training programs to implement AI tools effectively. The study concludes that although AI can transform EFL education, it is necessary to address ethical issues and ensure that teachers are properly prepared to use it responsibly.

As previously stated, recent research highlights the benefits and challenges of using AI tools in language education, which shows improvements in aspects such as writing, engagement, and critical thinking, while also raising concerns about overreliance, creativity loss, and ethical use. However, most studies leave a gap in understanding how pre-service teachers perceive and plan to use AI. Exploring their views is essential, as they will shape future classroom practices. Hence, this study addresses that gap, offering insights into preparing teacher education programs better for the integration of AI in language teaching.

3. Method

3.1 Setting and Participants

The participants in this study comprised 120 EFL university students (86 female and 34 male) who were registered in two distance courses of the final academic year in a Teaching English as a Foreign Language program at a private institution. The age groups of the participants are presented in Figure 1. The courses pertained to the field of linguistics, with a particular emphasis on Semantics, Pragmatics, and Discourse Analysis. Convenience sampling was selected not only because of its accessibility but also because of its relevance to the objectives of the study. Since the pre-service teachers were enrolled in the last stage of their program, they had sufficient prior academic and language-learning experience to engage meaningfully with the tasks required in the study.

They also provided their informed consent, which was a critical ethical consideration in this research. The students' proficiency level was B1 and B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The participants comprised both national and international students and belonged to various associated centers of the university, which are located in Ecuador's coastal, highland, Amazonian, and insular regions.

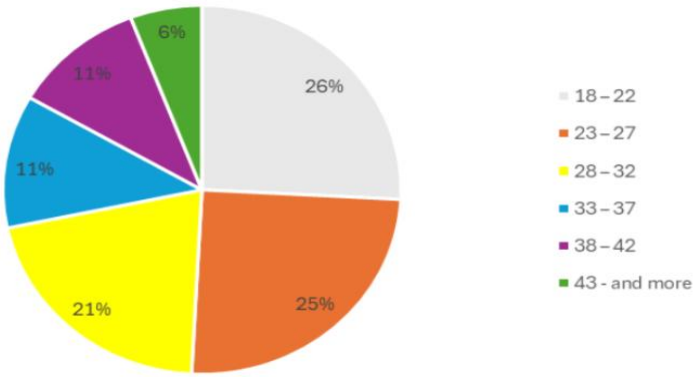

Figure 1 : Participants' ages

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

A diagnostic survey was administered to identify the learners' views on the use of AI in EFL learning before being enrolled in each course. This instrument included a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) with open- and closed-ended questions.

Reflective narratives were used to register the students' perceptions of AI integration into their coursework. These narratives were structured around four guiding questions developed by the researchers to focus learners' reflections on specific aspects of the experience:

- How has the use of ChatGPT supported your learning and academic work?

- How has integrating ChatGPT into your assignments influenced your performance and learning process?
- How have teacher feedback and ChatGPT supported your learning and development as a future EFL teacher?
- How has ChatGPT influenced the learning strategies you use to improve your skills?

An exit survey was administered at the end of the intervention to gather participants' reflections on their experiences and perceived learning outcomes. This instrument was intentionally designed with characteristics similar to those of the diagnostic questionnaire in order to ensure comparability between pre- and post-intervention data. A semi-structured interview was also applied to gather insights into the students' opinions of their experience after using AI tools in their learning process.

3.3 Validity and Reliability of the Tools

Before implementation, all the data collection instruments underwent a rigorous piloting and validation process to guarantee their appropriateness for the study. The piloting stage allowed for the identification and refinement of ambiguous or unclear items, ensuring that the tools were comprehensible and aligned with the research questions. Following this, a validation procedure was conducted to assess the internal consistency and overall reliability of the instruments. The reliability analysis resulted in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.74, which indicated that the items in the instruments were sufficiently correlated to measure the intended constructs with confidence.

3.4 Research Design

This study followed a quasi-experimental single-time series research design including qualitative and quantitative data. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), this approach allows for a better understanding of the research problem. For this reason, the method has gained prominence in the context of language teaching and learning (Riazi, 2017).

3.5 Procedure

During the first stage, the students in the two courses completed an online diagnostic survey. The results indicated that learners had prior understanding of AI and perceived it as a facilitator of learning to enhance their academic experience. Most participants also reported that they used AI tools on a weekly basis and expressed willingness to incorporate them into their academic tasks.

Based on the results, a five-month intervention was carried out using ChatGPT to examine its impact on students' learning. The implementation involved completing assignments such as infographics and essays, which were submitted through the Canvas institutional platform. These tasks required students to review the provided guidelines and rubric first, and thereafter, to use ChatGPT to brainstorm ideas, organize their drafts, and edit them before the final submission. Once the teacher had received the students' assignments, they were graded according to the corresponding rubric. The students received personalized

feedback from the instructors to help them improve their linguistic and pedagogical skills. Additionally, the participants wrote reflective narratives to explain the benefits and limitations that they had encountered while using AI in their tasks. These narratives provided opinions about the advantages, tensions, or resistance to the use of AI and were thematically analyzed. It is worth noting that a thematic analysis was carried out to uncover consistent patterns and themes related to each item (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The exit survey was administered to understand students' experiences after using GenAI. Finally, a sample of 12 interviewees was intentionally selected to gather insights that might not have been addressed in the written narratives. This decision prioritized the depth and richness of the data over statistical representativeness through a more dynamic dialogue (Patton, 2002). The qualitative data from the student interviews were systematized and graphically illustrated using the Mentimeter tool.

4. Results

Regarding the first research question (Tables 1, 2, and Figure 2): How do pre-service teachers perceive the contribution of AI to their English language learning? Table 1 displays the data from the exit survey, which correspond to their views on the use of the ChatGPT tool.

Table 1: Students' perceptions

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I think that the use of ChatGPT in my assignments was helpful for my learning progress.	35.83%	45.84%	13.33%	2.50%	2.50%
The course activities aligned with my expectations for integrating AI into my learning experience.	36.67%	45.00%	15.83%	0.83%	1.67%
I believe that the use of ChatGPT supported the improvement of my language and teaching skills.	37.49%	45.84%	13.33%	1.67%	1.67%
ChatGPT supported my learning during the course activities.	33.33%	43.34%	18.33%	3.33%	1.67%
I could easily integrate ChatGPT into my academic tasks.	30.83%	41.67%	21.67%	3.33%	2.50%
Using ChatGPT helped me to improve my time	43.33%	29.17	20.83%	4.17%	2.50%

management and task organization.					
The support from ChatGPT was clear, practical, and easy to understand.	42.50%	39.17%	12.5%	2.50%	3.33%
The teacher's feedback contributed to enhancing my performance in the activities.	45%	35.83%	14.17%	1.67%	3.33%
I feel better trained to incorporate ChatGPT into my future teaching.	35%	43.33%	14.17%	4.17%	3.33%
I suggest including similar activities based on the use of AI tools in other courses.	39.17%	40%	13.33%	3.33%	4.17%

Table 2 below illustrates how students interacted with ChatGPT and how it influenced their academic practices. It also shows some recurring themes. The table presents the excerpts that exemplify students' positive experiences and perspectives regarding the use of AI in EFL coursework.

Table 2: Excerpts from students' reflective narratives

Themes	Reflective narratives
Use of ChatGPT	"I believe that AI was a valuable tool for enhancing my learning. I definitely recognize its importance as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, independent learning." "Using ChatGPT to generate ideas and organize my course assignments really helped me save time. This process made me feel more comfortable with my learning." "ChatGPT offered multiple ideas quickly, saving time on research significantly." "ChatGPT was simple to use, the instructions and suggestions were clear and easy to follow." "It is good to have an AI tool that allows me to investigate in-depth topics and strategies that can be applied in different learning and teaching settings."
Integration of AI in assignments	"The main advantage of using AI in my assignments was how easily I could find information and how much time it saved." "I consider that AI has been useful because it was easier for me to perform the activities that were suggested for this assignment efficiently and in real time."
Improvement of language and teaching skills	"I consider Artificial Intelligence to be a valuable resource for learning English, but its true value arises when we combine it

	with a critical approach, which is fundamental as future EFL teachers."
Teacher's feedback	"Teacher's feedback and ChatGPT helped me by breaking down difficult content into manageable, usable components." "Teachers' feedback and AI increased my comprehension by providing real-world examples." "Teacher's instructions provided specific information and simple words, making learning much easier for me."
Learning strategies with ChatGPT	"AI allowed me to learn additional strategies that helped me practice and improve my skills, moving towards the professional field." "AI enriched my understanding by introducing strategies I might not have considered before." "AI influenced my learning by broadening my perspective on applying learning strategies effectively in assignments."

The figures below present a summary of the students' perceptions that were indicated during the interviews. Figure 2 highlights the perceived benefits of using ChatGPT.

Figure 2: Perceived benefits
Source: Own elaboration

Concerning the second research question, what limitations do pre-service teachers perceive in the use of AI-based systems in EFL learning? Figure 3 summarizes the constraints identified by the participants. These are elaborated in the discussion section in view of their reflections.

Figure 3: Perceived limitations
Source: Own elaboration

5. Discussion

This study examined the perceptions of pre-service teachers in regard to integrating ChatGPT into EFL learning, focusing on identifying its benefits and limitations for fostering language development. The results show that most students perceived ChatGPT as a helpful tool that supported their learning progress and improved their language and teaching skills. Reflective narratives highlighted benefits such as idea generation, efficiency in completing assignments, and the development of new learning strategies, especially when combined with teacher feedback. Students also expressed readiness to integrate AI into their future teaching. However, they acknowledged certain limitations, including overreliance on the tool and the need for critical use in academic contexts.

5.1 Benefits of AI in EFL Learning

The results highlight a positive perception among participants regarding the integration of ChatGPT into their academic assignments. Most of the students (81.67%) strongly agreed and agreed that this tool was helpful in their learning process. However, 13.33% expressed a neutral position regarding this aspect. Additionally, 2.50% of participants disagreed, and another 2.50% strongly disagreed. This aligns with the reflective narratives in which most students expressed favorable opinions in this respect.

As one of the learners asserted, "I believe that AI was a valuable tool for enhancing my learning. I definitely recognize its importance as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, independent learning." These findings are similar to those of Das and Madhusudan (2024) who also observed positive student perceptions toward the integration of ChatGPT in academic activities; learners notably expressed that AI tools enhanced their creativity and confidence during the learning process.

Concerning students' perceptions of the alignment of the course activities with their expectations for AI integration, 36.67% strongly agreed and 45% agreed in this respect, with a low percentage expressing disagreement. These positive views reveal that the instructional design used in the courses effectively integrated AI

tools in a way that met or exceeded learners' expectations. Similarly, one participant reflected on this aspect, stating, "The main advantage of using AI in my assignments was how easily I could find information and how much time it saved."

These findings align with the study by Moulieswaran and Prasantha Kumar (2023), which reported that learners tend to hold positive perceptions of AI-assisted language learning, viewing such a tool as a valuable resource to enhance their English learning experience. Concerning this aspect, Almufarreh (2024) asserts that students' satisfaction with the use of AI is influenced by content quality, which means that AI must be effectively integrated and aligned with the corresponding learning goals.

Regarding learners' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT to improve their language and teaching skills, 37.49% strongly agreed, 45.84% agreed, and 13.33% had a neutral view about this aspect. Only a small percentage (3.34%) of participants disagreed and strongly disagreed. These results suggest that the students perceived ChatGPT as a useful tool to foster language development and pedagogical understanding, which is likely due to its ability to provide model responses, enrich vocabulary, and enhance their reflection.

One of the participants asserted, "I consider Artificial Intelligence to be a valuable resource for learning English, but its true value arises when we combine it with a critical approach, which is fundamental as future EFL teachers." These findings are similar to those of Phosa (2024) who reported that ChatGPT is an effective tool for EFL learners since it contributes to the improvement of their linguistic abilities. Similarly, Kusuma et al. (2024) found that ChatGPT enhances pre-service teachers' techniques, and this contributes to their professional growth.

As for the contribution of ChatGPT to support students' learning during the course activities, 76.67% of the participants demonstrated positive agreement, with only 5% expressing disagreement. It is important to mention that 18.33% of the participants remained neutral, which may suggest variability in how effectively the tool was applied across different tasks. In this respect, one of the students in the reflective narratives asserted, "Using ChatGPT to generate ideas and organize my course assignments really helped me save time. This process made me feel more comfortable with my learning." These findings are consistent with Kayali et al. (2023) who assert that ChatGPT facilitates student learning during course activities through a user-friendly interface, fast and relevant responses, and personalized experiences.

Regarding the integration of ChatGPT into academic tasks, most participants reported a positive perception, with 72.5% either strongly agreeing or agreeing that they could effectively incorporate this GenAI tool into their learning activities. A smaller proportion remained neutral (21.67%), while 3.33% disagreed and 2.50% strongly disagreed. These findings suggest that most students perceived ChatGPT as a valuable and easily adaptable resource to improve their academic engagement. This is consistent with the ideas expressed in the reflective

narratives, which included favorable comments about this aspect. For instance, one of the students affirmed, "I consider that AI has been useful because it was easier for me to perform the activities that were suggested for this assignment efficiently, and in real time." Concerning this aspect, a study by Salam (2024) found that students perceived ChatGPT as a friendly tool that has an intuitive design and multilingual capabilities, which facilitate its effective integration into academic tasks.

Furthermore, 43.33% of the participants strongly agreed and 29.17% agreed that the use of ChatGPT helped them to improve their time management and task organization. Meanwhile, 20.83% held a neutral position, 4.17% disagreed, and only 2.50% strongly disagreed with this statement. This indicates that most students recognize ChatGPT as a supportive tool to improve their performance and facilitate more efficient completion of tasks. These results were corroborated by those obtained from the reflective narratives in which a student mentioned, "ChatGPT offered multiple ideas quickly, saving time on research significantly." In this respect, García Castro et al. (2024) affirm that ChatGPT supports students in time management and task organization because it offers rapid access to information and assists them in achieving academic responsibilities, thereby improving efficiency in planning learning activities and assessment preparation.

As for the participants' perceptions of the support provided by AI, the majority expressed a favorable opinion, with 42.50% strongly agreeing and 39.17% agreeing that ChatGPT was clear, practical, and easy to understand. In contrast, 12.5% remained neutral, while 2.50% disagreed and 3.33% strongly disagreed. These results indicate that most students perceived that ChatGPT was accessible and user-friendly, and this might have fostered their confidence to use AI for learning.

The insights obtained in the reflective narratives also confirm that learners perceived that the key benefits of ChatGPT were its simplicity and practicality, emphasizing its clarity and ease of use. In this respect, one of the participants asserted, "ChatGPT was simple to use, the instructions and suggestions were clear and easy to follow." This aligns with the study by Slamet (2024), which found that both EFL teachers and students recognize the potential of ChatGPT as a digital learning assistant, emphasizing its clarity and practicality in facilitating language acquisition.

Students' perceptions indicate a strong agreement regarding feedback in their learning process, since 45% of them strongly agreed and 35.83% agreed that teachers' feedback enhanced their performance in doing activities. Only 14.17% showed a neutral position. These findings suggest that although students benefit from ChatGPT feedback, they value timely, contextualized, and human responses from instructors. Feedback plays an important role as it guides learners to improve their language production and task completion.

This is reinforced by one student's opinion: "Teacher's instructions provided specific information and simple words, making learning much easier for me."

These results align with recent outcomes by Zou et al. (2025) who highlighted that AI-generated feedback tends to be more detailed, but it can lack the contextual feeling that is essential in teacher feedback. Indeed, teacher-feedback processes can create a more personalized learning experience in EFL contexts. In relation to learners' beliefs on incorporating ChatGPT into their future teaching, the study revealed that 35% of the participants strongly agreed and 43.33% agreed that AI tools such as ChatGPT enhanced their pedagogical preparedness for teaching. A smaller portion of learners, 14.17%, remained neutral. These facts indicate that AI aids in broadening instructional strategies and perspectives in prospective EFL teachers. In this regard, one student manifested, "AI enriched my understanding by introducing strategies I might not have considered before."

This is in line with a study by Zainuddin (2024) who found that AI tools are effective in enhancing student engagement and providing personalized learning experiences. Furthermore, according to Slamet (2024), ChatGPT is viewed as an invaluable tool in EFL teacher education programs to increase instructional practices and prepare future instructors for language teaching.

Another point of view that participants noted was that they strongly agreed (39.17%) and agreed (40%) with the inclusion of activities based on the use of AI tools in other instructional courses. A smaller segment of students (13.33%) maintained a neutral perspective. These findings imply that assignments in which AI tools are integrated across different disciplines can aid students in conducting in-depth research and acquiring diverse perspectives applicable to various learning and teaching settings.

In this context, one learner indicated, "It is good to have an AI tool that allows me to investigate in-depth topics and strategies that can be applied in different learning and teaching settings." These results are consistent with studies by Lo et al. (2024), which concluded that the use of ChatGPT has been effective in various areas, including writing, reading, and speaking. This contributes to better language proficiency and learner commitment. Similarly, research by Feng Teng (2024) and Han et al. (2023) found that AI tools such as ChatGPT can enhance EFL students' skills, which leads to improved learning outcomes.

5.2 Limitations of AI in EFL Learning

A primary concern among the participants was the risk of becoming overly dependent on AI, which could impede the development of independent thinking and self-regulation skills. One student reflected, "AI might reduce the development of independent problem-solving skills." Another emphasized the cognitive consequences, stating, "This tool could make us lazy and can cause a lack of creativity in us." Similarly, the idea that "[i]t might reduce the effort needed to carry out a task" reflects how dependence on AI may interfere with genuine involvement in the learning process. These results align with Zhang et al. (2024) who found that excessive reliance on AI may diminish students' creativity and critical thinking, foster passivity, and in the long term, obstruct the growth of autonomous thinking and self-management abilities.

Several participants also noted that AI responses often lacked the adaptability that is needed for personalized learning. In this respect, one student observed, "It lacked depth and personal insight, as AI can't adapt to specific needs or learning styles." Others highlighted the limitations in communicative competence, pointing out that "AI lacks the ability to understand emotions or social cues, which are important in real-life communication." In this context, Fernandes et al. (2023) found that many personalized AI educational tools fail to support diverse learners' needs effectively, emphasizing the necessity to adapt teaching strategies. These findings reveal a significant limitation of current AI in EFL contexts, especially in situations in which cultural and emotional awareness are essential for effective language learning.

Regarding the reliability of AI responses, the limitation that participants identified was that the content generated by ChatGPT was not accurate. Some students affirmed that they received incorrect or repetitive information, particularly when prompts were confusing or too general. One student commented, "The information sources are not always correct. If you do not have a clear question, it can give redundant and unreliable information." Another participant confirmed this concern by stating, "Sometimes the information isn't right."

This suggests that learners must develop strong prompt-writing and critical evaluation skills when using AI to avoid misinformation or superficial results. Previous studies have identified several difficulties regarding AI-generated content. For instance, Xu and Jumaat (2024) reported that responses produced by ChatGPT were often perceived as unreliable and raised issues related to potential plagiarism and improper citation practices. In addition, EFL learners found occasional mistakes in the information provided by ChatGPT and questioned its effectiveness and reliability (Wu & Flanagan, 2023; Yang, 2024).

For some participants, it was also complicated to understand some of the terms that were included in the responses generated by ChatGPT, and they considered them a barrier rather than a support. One student mentioned, "There were many academic and unknown words, which made the development of the task difficult." This led to additional cognitive load, as students had to spend extra time checking some terms to comprehend the content. This challenge shows that EFL learners need support to grasp vocabulary. In this respect, studies by Ngo (2023) and Jamshed et al. (2024) found that EFL learners encountered obstacles when using ChatGPT, particularly in interpreting specific terms produced by the tool. Therefore, rather than aiding their language development, these aspects were viewed as limitations in their learning.

Although AI helped in organizing ideas, some students felt that it did not support more advanced writing skills such as paraphrasing or integrating sources appropriately. For example, one student noted, "Another aspect … is related to finding the right words to paraphrase the author's ideas … to avoid plagiarism." Others expressed that "[t]he help I get from AI doesn't match the specifications I want" and "AI gave some confusing ideas about the topic and did not help to complement the main idea."

These reflections suggest that while AI can scaffold initial writing tasks, it may fall short in helping learners meet academic integrity standards. These opinions align with research in the field; Alammar and Amin (2023) found that although EFL students perceive AI-driven paraphrasing tools as useful in improving writing performance, there is a risk of plagiarism if these resources are not employed appropriately. Likewise, the study by Malon et al. (2024) indicated that AI-powered writing technologies can enhance students' writing skills and idea generation; nonetheless, they may not adequately support the development of more complex writing abilities such as the integration of sources and ethical issues.

Lastly, the idea that AI might hinder original thought is a recurring topic. As one participant expressed, "Relying too much on AI could limit creativity when planning tasks." Another student reinforced this idea, stating, "Today, we depend exclusively on AI to do homework or solve everyday problems, which leads to a lack of creativity and critical thinking." These perceptions indicate a growing concern that overreliance on AI tools could impede the development of essential cognitive skills. In this regard, some studies align with these points of view. A study by Akyıldız (2024) found that AI tools limit students' creative capacities.

Furthermore, research by Woo et al. (2025) indicated that AI tools can aid in idea generation, but they may also lead to homogenized outputs, thus reducing the diversity of students' creative expressions. Furthermore, an investigation by Guendouz and Benettayeb (2025) highlighted that excessive dependence on AI tools might interfere with the development of critical thinking skills among EFL students, which suggests the need for balanced integration of AI in educational settings.

6. Conclusion

Pre-service teachers had favorable perceptions toward the integration of GenAI tools into their EFL courses. Most participants viewed this technology as a valuable support to enhance their academic performance, improve language proficiency, structure ideas, and apply more refined strategies in the completion of their written assignments. Furthermore, students consistently reported that GenAI contributed to the development of their pedagogical practice. Many recognized the role of AI in preparing them for their future roles as educators by offering strategies for effective language teaching and fostering critical reflection on instructional design.

The participants highlighted that one of the most important advantages of using AI was managing time and organizing academic tasks. ChatGPT helped the learners to generate ideas in addition to providing instant feedback and clarifying instructions to simplify the writing process and enable them to use their time effectively. These benefits were especially valued in an online learning context in which self-regulation and planning are essential for successful academic performance. Nevertheless, the limitations raised concerns about overreliance on AI. Students manifested that continuous dependence might impede the

development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Moreover, several learners reported that AI responses sometimes included vocabulary or expressions that were difficult to understand or contextually inappropriate.

The students supported the integration of AI-based activities into their courses, emphasizing their value in promoting research and skill development. However, successful implementation requires clear instructional alignment, teacher guidance, and ethical considerations. The results of this study provide valuable contributions with clear implications for both educational policy and classroom practice. On a policy level, the findings highlight the need to incorporate training on the pedagogical use of AI tools within teacher education programs.

In practice, the study offers tangible applications by demonstrating how ChatGPT can enhance language learning, support time management, and foster innovative teaching strategies. This research explored participants' immediate perceptions of AI integration, specifically in relation to its potential impact on sustained language development and teaching performance. Future research should examine the long-term impact of AI integration on learning outcomes, compare the effectiveness of various tools, and explore instructional models that combine traditional and AI-supported approaches.

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We declare that AI ChatGPT Plus was used to refine the language of this manuscript.

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