

Undergraduate English Majors' Views on ChatGPT in Academic Writing: Perceived Vocabulary and Grammar Improvement

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This study investigates undergraduate English majors' perceptions of ChatGPT in enhancing vocabulary and grammar in academic writing. Utilizing a mixed-methods convergent design, data were collected from 31 students via pre- and post-survey questionnaires, 20 participants' reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews with 10 volunteers. Quantitative findings revealed significant improvements in students' perceptions of vocabulary accuracy, relevance, and depth. Thematic analysis of qualitative data identified benefits such as enriched vocabulary, improved grammatical accuracy, and increased confidence in academic writing. Challenges included overdependence, difficulty interpreting feedback, and a lack of originality in AI-generated suggestions. Students employed strategies to optimize ChatGPT use, such as asking specific questions, selectively applying feedback, and balancing AI input with personal judgment. The study highlights ChatGPT's ability to provide tailored feedback, foster confidence, and support vocabulary development while underscoring the importance of responsible use to mitigate overreliance and maintain originality. The findings underscore ChatGPT's potential to enhance academic writing skills when integrated thoughtfully into curricula. However, overuse risks shallow learning (e.g., overdependence on the tool, or difficulty in interpreting feedback), suggesting a need for instructional strategies that can promote rigorous analysis with AI tools. Future research should explore long-term impacts, comparisons with other AI tools, and strategies for ethical and effective integration of ChatGPT in higher education.

Keywords: ChatGPT, vocabulary, grammar, academic writing, English majors, language learning with AI

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into educational practices has gained significant popularity in recent years, revolutionizing traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Tools like ChatGPT, a language model developed by OpenAI, have emerged as transformative resources, particularly in language learning and academic writing. With over 100 million users reported globally within months of its release, ChatGPT has gained widespread popularity for its ability to provide instant feedback, generate personalized learning experiences, and refine written output (e.g., Liu, 2023; Shaikh et al., 2023). As higher education increasingly embraces AI technologies, understanding how tools like ChatGPT influence learning outcomes, especially in areas such as writing skills, vocabulary, and grammar, has become a pressing concern.

Existing research highlights the potential of ChatGPT to enhance students' language learning experiences. For instance, Athanassopoulos et al., (2023) showed that ChatGPT has shown to significantly improve vocabulary and grammar usage among diverse populations, including students with limited language proficiency. Studies also emphasize the tool's ability to provide real-time feedback, offer context-based vocabulary examples, and facilitate personalized exercises tailored to learners' individual proficiency levels (Liu, 2023; Mai et al., 2024; Pellicer-Sánchez, 2015). These capabilities position ChatGPT as a valuable supplementary tool for modern language education. However, alongside these benefits, there are significant challenges. Researchers have raised concerns over the risks of over-reliance on AI tools, which may lead to shallow learning, as students accept suggestions passively without fully understanding the underlying principles (e.g., Bae & Bozkurt, 2024; Zhai et al., 2024). Ethical concerns, such as the potential for plagiarism and the reliability of AI-generated content, further underscore the importance of examining how these tools are integrated into educational contexts (Gerlich, 2025).

This study seeks to address these gaps by exploring undergraduate English majors' perceptions of ChatGPT's role in enhancing vocabulary and grammar in academic writing. While previous research has predominantly highlighted the technical capabilities of AI tools (e.g., Bae & Bozkurt, 2024; Bastani et al., 2024; Nugroho et al., 2023; Zhai et al., 2024), this study emphasizes user perspectives, particularly among learners who are directly impacted by these technologies. By investigating the benefits and challenges identified by undergraduate students, this research aims to provide a balanced understanding of ChatGPT's educational value and offer actionable insights for educators and policymakers. Addressing the dual imperatives of maximizing benefits and mitigating challenges, this study contributes to the ongoing scholarly dialogue on responsibly integrating AI tools in higher education. To obtain the research objectives, two questions were proposed:

Research Questions

- RQ1:** How do undergraduate English majors perceive the effectiveness and usability of ChatGPT in improving vocabulary and grammar in academic writing?
- RQ2:** How do undergraduate English majors perceive the benefits, challenges, and strategies associated with using ChatGPT to enhance vocabulary and grammar in academic writing?

Literature review

ChatGPT as a Tool for Language Learning

An increasing number of studies have explored ChatGPT's potential in enhancing language learning, particularly in writing classes. As an AI language model developed by OpenAI, ChatGPT provides feedback on vocabulary and grammar, assisting learners in improving their writing skills. A study conducted in a Junior High School in Greece demonstrated that ChatGPT significantly enhanced students' vocabulary and grammar, especially for those with migrant or refugee backgrounds. The study reported an increase in the total number of words, unique words, and average word count per sentence, indicating its value as a tool for language learning (Athanasopoulos et al., 2023). Additionally, research on EFL learners showed that ChatGPT helps grasp vocabulary and grammar, enhancing writing abilities (Mai et al., 2024). In a similar vein, Polakova and Ivenz's (2024) study investigated the effectiveness of ChatGPT feedback in enhancing the writing skills of EFL students, finding significant improvements in various aspects of writing, including conciseness and grammar. Another recent study by Biju et al., (2024) also revealed that the participants in the AI-assisted group exhibited improved attitudes toward language learning and heightened motivation. They appreciated the timely feedback and perceived fairness in the AI assessments, which contributed to increased engagement. While both groups showed improvements in writing skills over the study period, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the post-test assessments. However, the difference was not statistically significant. By offering tailored feedback and generating context-based examples, ChatGPT enables learners to refine their language skills dynamically, making it a valuable addition to modern language education.

Personalized Learning and Vocabulary Development

One of ChatGPT's key strengths is its ability to provide personalized, adaptive learning experiences. It tailors vocabulary exercises to students' proficiency levels, ensuring the content aligns with their individual needs (Mai et al., 2024). This individualized approach fosters learner engagement by introducing words that are both challenging and relevant (Li et al., 2024). ChatGPT's ability to generate context-based examples further enhances learning, helping students understand vocabulary usage in various situations (Nugroho et al., 2023; Obeidat et al., 2024). Pellicer-Sánchez (2015) found that contextualizing vocabulary through sentences improves retention compared to rote memorization. Interactive features such as vocabulary quizzes, flashcards, and word challenges increase motivation through gamification while offering real-time feedback on usage, enabling students to refine their vocabulary in real-time (Hung, 2015; Özdemir & Seçkin, 2024; Teymouri, 2024).

Enhancing Writing Skills and Grammar Accuracy

ChatGPT supports writing improvement by providing grammar corrections, synonym suggestions, and writing prompts, which expand vocabulary and enhance sentence fluency. For instance, Nisperos et al., (2024) observed that AI-generated prompts fostered creativity and fluency, encouraging students to think critically about style and vocabulary. ChatGPT's editing and revising capabilities, such as suggesting synonyms and rephrasing sentences, help students produce clearer, more sophisticated texts (Liu, 2023). Additionally, the importance of scaffolding in a knowledge-building environment was emphasized, demonstrating that structured teacher guidance enhances students' interaction patterns, social epistemic networks, and overall academic performance (Li et al., 2024). These findings suggest that when combined with AI-based tools like ChatGPT, teacher scaffolding can further support student engagement and knowledge co-construction, creating an enriched learning environment for developing writing skills. This guidance builds confidence and enables learners to integrate new vocabulary meaningfully into their writing. Additionally, Nasim and Mujeeba (2024) highlighted how EFL students and instructors perceive common errors in writing mechanics, which can help frame how AI tools like ChatGPT may address or miss certain writing issues. Studies

involving Chinese and Greek EFL learners reported improvements in grammar, composition structure, and diverse word usage, further supporting ChatGPT's effectiveness in enhancing writing quality (Xiao & Zhi, 2023). By continuously refining grammar and word choice, ChatGPT empowers students to produce clear, well-structured texts.

Students' Perceptions and Practical Benefits

Students generally perceive ChatGPT as a valuable resource for language learning. They appreciate its ability to provide definitions, synonyms, and contextual alternatives, which improve vocabulary acquisition and language comprehension (Nugroho et al., 2023). Xiao and Zhi (2023) reported that students noticed improvements in textual quality and language nuance understanding when using ChatGPT for language learning tasks. Additionally, ChatGPT fosters critical thinking and collaborative learning, essential for mastering language skills (Avsheniuk et al., 2024). Tran and Tran (2023) noted that it cultivates critical digital literacies, equipping students to engage effectively in digital environments. Beyond cognitive benefits, practical advantages include expanded vocabulary, improved grammatical structures, and enhanced conversational skills (J. Li et al., 2024; Shaikh et al., 2023). ChatGPT's user-friendly design and real-time feedback make it a revolutionary tool that combines social interaction with educational purposes (Liu, 2023).

Challenges and Recommendations for Responsible Use

While ChatGPT offers substantial benefits, it raises concerns about over-reliance and academic integrity. Gerlich (2025) warned that excessive dependence on AI tools may hinder independent cognitive skills and deeper language understanding. Overuse could result in shallow learning, as students might accept AI-generated suggestions without fully comprehending vocabulary nuances or grammatical principles (Zhai et al., 2024). Additionally, ChatGPT's instant feedback, while useful, may encourage superficial engagement with material, as pointed out by Kazemitabaar et al., (2024). There are also risks of inappropriate or overly complex suggestions, which could confuse learners (Bastani et al., 2024). To address these issues, educators must guide students toward responsible use of AI tools. Teachers should integrate ChatGPT into curricula thoughtfully, emphasize the importance of independent skill development, and provide ethical guidance to prevent plagiarism or misuse (Ngo, 2023). Encouraging balanced use and critical evaluation of AI outputs ensures that students optimize the benefits of ChatGPT while alleviating its potential drawbacks.

Another concern pertains to the ethical implications of using AI tools like ChatGPT. Students express apprehensions about the potential misuse of AI in academic settings and the reliability of the information provided. As Liu (2023) noted, while ChatGPT is often accurate, it may occasionally produce misleading or incorrect information, which can pose challenges for students who lack the expertise to critically evaluate its outputs. These concerns highlight the need for students to approach AI tools with caution and a critical mindset. Research also suggests that AI literacy training could help students develop skills to assess the reliability of AI-generated content and use it effectively in academic contexts (Bastani et al., 2024).

Method

Research design

The study employed a mixed method using a convergent design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) to comprehensively examine undergraduate English majors' perceptions of ChatGPT's role in improving vocabulary and grammar in academic writing. The rationale for this design was to integrate quantitative and qualitative data to gain a well-rounded understanding of students' experiences. Quantitative data from pre- and post-survey questionnaires provided measurable changes in students' perceptions, while qualitative data from reflective journals and semi-structured interviews offered in-depth insights into students' experiences, challenges, and strategies when using ChatGPT. The convergent design allowed simultaneous data collection and comparison, ensuring a comprehensive and triangulated analysis of findings. Particularly, survey data was administered to the participants via Google Form, while the data from reflective journals were collected during the time they learned the academic writing subject, and the semi-structured interviews were performed after their end-course exam for the subject. Thirty-one students participated in the questionnaire survey, in which twenty of them wrote five reflective journals each, and ten out of these twenty volunteered to be interviewed.

Participants

The study participants were from a private university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. They were second-year English majors who were voluntarily participated in the study. To ensure their anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used, such as Student 1, or Student 2. Additionally, they were informed of the ability to withdraw at any time during the study.

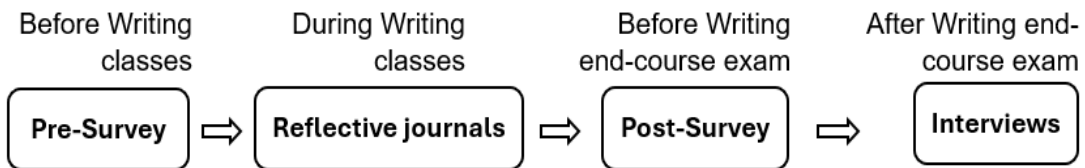
Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection

The study instruments included a 28-item 5-Likert-scale questionnaire, adapted from Paul and Elder (2019) for the purpose of collecting quantitative data. At the beginning of the academic writing course, pre-survey questionnaires were conducted to assess initial perceptions of ChatGPT's impact on vocabulary and grammar. At the end of the course, post-survey questionnaires were administered to them to see how differently they perceived the effects of ChatGPT on their vocabulary and grammar improvement. During the study, the participants were encouraged to write reflective journals to report on how they used ChatGPT to improve their grammar, vocabulary, and the quality of their writing paper in general, and twenty of them completed five journals each. Additionally, after taking the end-course exam, among these twenty participants, ten of them were willingly taking part in semi-structured interviews. The data collection procedure was illustrated in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1

The study data collection procedure



The questionnaire was piloted with students of the same English majors from another class to evaluate its internal consistency. Cronbach's Alpha for all variables during the pilot phase exceeded 0.7 (Table 1), indicating that the research tool was reliable for further data collection. The semi-structured interviews were also piloted with two students from this class, both of whom easily understood all the questions without requiring additional clarification.

Data analysis

The questionnaire data were analyzed using SPSS 27, employing descriptive analysis, while the reflective journals and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It is a flexible and systematic approach that allows themes and codes to emerge inductively (from the data) or deductively (guided by theory). This study employed an inductive approach to ensure that findings were closely tied to participants' experiences and the context of the data. These steps include (1) Familiarization with data: The researcher read and re-read the transcripts many times to gain deep understanding of the content; (2) Generating initial codes: The data was systematically coded to identify meaningful features; (3) Searching for themes: Codes were grouped into broader themes representing significant patterns; (4) Reviewing themes: Themes were refined to ensure coherence and relevance; (5) Defining and naming themes: Themes were clearly defined, capturing the essence of the data; and (6) Writing the report: A narrative was developed, using data extracts to support the themes.

Table 1
Reliability Statistics of piloting phase

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Clarity	.800	4
Accuracy	.703	4
Precision	.834	4
Relevance	.829	4
Depth	.878	4
Breath	.923	4
Logic	.861	4

Results

Questionnaire-survey results

RQ1: How do undergraduate English majors perceive ChatGPT's role in improving vocabulary and grammar in academic writing?

To answer Research Question 1, pre-&post-survey questionnaires were used. A paired t-test was conducted to analyze differences in students' perceptions of ChatGPT's impact on vocabulary and grammar before and after using

ChatGPT. This test was selected because it accounts for the dependent nature of the data, where the same participants provided responses at two time points (Field, 2018). The paired t-test is appropriate for assessing within-subject changes over time while controlling for individual differences (Pallant, 2020). Additionally, paired t-tests remain valid when the sample size is sufficiently large (typically $n > 30-50$), even if the data is not normally distributed (Field, 2018).

The participants' changes in their perceptions of the effects of ChatGPT on their vocabulary and grammar improvement (Table 2) were analyzed using descriptive analysis as follows:

Table 2

Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's effects on vocabulary and grammar improvement

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper			
Pair 1	Clarity (Pre) – Clarity (Post)	.08065	.90459	.16247	-.25116 .41245	.496	31	.623
Pair 2	Accuracy (Pre) – Accuracy (Post)	.42742	.98572	.17704	.06586 .78898	2.414	31	.022
Pair 3	Precision (Pre) – Precision (Post)	.24194	1.09065	.19589	-.15812 .64199	1.235	31	.226
Pair 4	Relevance (Pre) – Relevance (Post)	.49194	1.18758	.21330	.05633 .92754	2.306	31	.028
Pair 5	Depth (Pre) – Depth (Post)	.50806	1.32049	.23717	.02371 .99242	2.142	31	.040
Pair 6	Breadth (Pre) – Breadth (Post)	.43548	1.36010	.24428	-.06340 .93437	1.783	31	.085
Pair 7	Logic (Pre) – Logic (Post)	.23387	1.25820	.22598	-.22764 .69538	1.035	31	.309

Table 2 shows the results of the analysis of students' perceptions before and after the survey, revealing improvements in certain aspects. The analysis revealed significant increases in students' perceptions of Accuracy, Relevance, and Depth, as indicated by their positive mean differences and statistically significant p-values ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, accuracy (mean difference = 0.42742, $p = 0.022$), relevance (mean difference = 0.49194, $p = 0.028$), and depth (mean difference = 0.50806, $p = 0.040$) showed notable improvements. In contrast, perceptions of Clarity, Precision, Breadth, and Logic did not show significant changes, as their p-values were greater than 0.05. For example, clarity (mean difference = 0.08065, $p = 0.623$) and logic (mean difference = 0.23387, $p = 0.309$) exhibited only small and non-significant shifts.

To assess the practical significance of these changes, Cohen's d was used to measure the effect sizes: Small effect: $d \approx 0.2$ (minimal impact), medium effect: $d \approx 0.5$ (moderate impact), large effect: $d \geq 0.8$ (strong impact). The results showed that Accuracy ($d = -0.434$), Relevance ($d = -0.414$), and Depth ($d = -0.385$) demonstrated moderate effect sizes, indicating that while ChatGPT had some impact, the effect was not strong.

Overall, the results suggest that while there were no substantial changes in perceptions of clarity, precision, breadth, or logic, students reported meaningful improvements in their perceptions of accuracy, relevance, and depth after the post-survey. These findings highlight areas of growth and stability in students' evaluations of their learning experiences.

RQ2: What are the benefits, challenges, and strategies undergraduate English majors identifying when using ChatGPT to enhance vocabulary and grammar in academic writing?

To answer this question, the author applied thematic analysis guided by Braun and Clarke (2006). The themes and codes emerged from reflective journals by twenty participants and ten semi-structured interviews were reported as follows:

1. Benefits of Using ChatGPT

Vocabulary Enhancement

ChatGPT significantly enriched students' vocabulary, enabling them to integrate advanced and varied word choices into their writing. Many students reported notable improvements in their ability to use new vocabulary effectively. For instance, one student shared, "I learned new vocabulary, including collocations" (Student 2). Another

highlighted the practical value of ChatGPT's suggestions, stating, *"I found the suggestions helpful, and I often reused vocabulary or sentence structures it provided"* (Student 10). Reflective journals echoed similar sentiments. One student stated, *"ChatGPT gives me plenty of appropriate vocabulary choices and very good sentence structure recommendations"* (Student 7). Another added, *"It helps me expand my vocabulary and explore diverse ways of structuring arguments"* (Student 10).

Grammar Improvement

Another widely recognized benefit of ChatGPT was its ability to enhance grammatical accuracy. Students noted that ChatGPT's feedback helped them refine not only grammar but also aspects such as cohesion and coherence. One student explained, *"ChatGPT helped me improve my writing, such as grammar, word usage, cohesion, and coherence"* (Student 1). Another emphasized its role in addressing structural weaknesses in their writing: *"ChatGPT pointed out structural errors, word usage, and grammar mistakes, making my writing clearer and better"* (Student 6). A reflective journal supported this view: *"It refines grammar and makes my writing clearer and more polished"* (Student 6). Additionally, a student shared that *"ChatGPT helped adjust grammar structure and improve sentence flow"* (Student 12).

Improved Academic Writing Style

Students credited ChatGPT with helping them develop a more refined and academic tone in their writing. Initially, many students struggled with informal language, vague expressions, and a lack of coherence in their academic essays. However, through iterative revisions with ChatGPT, they learned to refine their word choices, sentence structures, and overall organization. ChatGPT's advanced vocabulary and sentence structure suggestions contributed to the quality of their academic prose. One student remarked, *"I learned how to use words to give my writing a more academic tone"* (Student 4). Similarly, another added, *"The vocabulary ChatGPT suggested was often at a higher level, making my writing feel more advanced"* (Student 4). A reflective journal noted that *"It provides suggestions that make my drafts more comprehensive and polished"* (Student 10).

Furthermore, several students emphasized that ChatGPT helped them recognize and eliminate redundancy, improving the conciseness and coherence of their essays. The tool encouraged them to explore new vocabulary, test different syntactic structures, and experiment with more formal academic phrasing, which ultimately led to noticeable improvements in their writing clarity. A student shared, *"It helps me practice various writing styles and explore new vocabulary, which will improve my writing range and depth"* (Student 4). These insights suggest that ChatGPT's role extended beyond surface-level grammar corrections to foster deeper engagement with academic conventions, allowing students to produce texts that were not only technically accurate but also more structured, coherent, and stylistically aligned with academic expectations.

Confidence Building

Finally, ChatGPT played a significant role in boosting students' confidence in their writing abilities. Its constructive feedback provided reassurance and a sense of control over their work. For example, one student shared, *"I felt more confident about my writing after receiving ChatGPT's advice"* (Student 8). Another echoed this sentiment, explaining, *"I felt reassured when ChatGPT suggested ways to improve my writing"* (Student 10). Reflective journals reinforced this perspective. One student stated, *"It reassures me by giving feedback that aligns with my intentions"* (Student 10), while another wrote, *"Using ChatGPT saves time and boosts my confidence by improving grammar and ideas"* (Student 11).

2. Challenges of Using ChatGPT

Overdependence

A major concern among students was the tendency to rely excessively on ChatGPT, potentially hindering their independent writing abilities. One student acknowledged this issue, saying, *"I think it's easy to rely on it for writing, especially when I feel lazy"* (Student 8). Similarly, another admitted, *"There were times when I used ChatGPT for everything without thinking much myself"* (Student 10). Reflective journals highlighted similar concerns. One student wrote, *"Using ChatGPT results in too many restrictions on my critical thinking skills"* (Student 13), while another observed, *"Over-reliance on ChatGPT can hinder independent thinking and creativity"* (Student 9).

Difficulty Understanding Feedback

Some students struggled to interpret the feedback provided by ChatGPT, particularly when the suggestions were unclear or overly complex. As one student shared, *"ChatGPT gave suggestions that were hard to understand; I read them but didn't know what they meant"* (Student 2). Another added that ChatGPT's responses occasionally failed

to address their specific queries: *"Sometimes ChatGPT didn't answer the question I wanted to ask"* (Student 3). Reflective journals supported these challenges, with one student stating, *"The feedback doesn't always fully grasp the nuances of my argument"* (Student 9). Another noted, *"It sometimes provides vague answers that don't help much"* (Student 12).

Lack of Originality

The perceived lack of originality in ChatGPT's suggestions was another concern. Some students felt that the AI offered generic ideas that lacked creativity or personalization. One student explained, *"I felt its suggestions were familiar and lacked originality"* (Student 8). Another noted that while the feedback was polished, it often did not align with their unique ideas: *"ChatGPT writes very polished content, but it doesn't align with my ideas"* (Student 4). A reflective journal added, *"ChatGPT sometimes lacks the depth needed for nuanced and creative writing"* (Student 7).

Overwhelming Suggestions

Students occasionally felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of suggestions provided by ChatGPT, especially when broad or vague queries were posed. One student expressed this frustration, saying, *"ChatGPT gives too many suggestions, and I feel confused about which ones to choose for my writing"* (Student 9). Another highlighted the challenge of processing extensive feedback: *"When I asked about the whole essay, ChatGPT provided so much feedback that it made me feel overwhelmed"* (Student 5). Reflective journals echoed this sentiment: *"Too many suggestions at once can be overwhelming and unclear"* (Student 12). Another student noted, *"The number of suggestions sometimes distracts me from focusing on specific improvements"* (Student 11).

3. Strategies for Effective Use

Asking Specific and Targeted Questions

One of the most effective strategies employed by students was crafting specific and focused questions to improve the relevance of ChatGPT's feedback. By narrowing down their queries, students found that the suggestions were more accurate and actionable. For example, one student shared, *"I learned that the clearer my question, the more accurate ChatGPT's suggestions were"* (Student 10). Another emphasized the importance of dividing their questions into manageable parts, focusing on individual sections of their essays: *"I ask questions for each section, such as whether the introduction has enough of a hook, paraphrasing, and a thesis statement"* (Student 7). Reflective journals further supported this approach, with one student noting, *"I understand how to generate questions to gain more effective feedback from ChatGPT"* (Student 9).

Selective Application of Feedback

Students developed a critical approach to applying ChatGPT's feedback, choosing only the suggestions that aligned with their ideas and goals. This selective strategy ensured that they retained ownership of their work while incorporating helpful recommendations. One student explained, *"I only use suggestions that fit with my ideas"* (Student 3). Similarly, another noted, *"I only edit and apply the suggestions that make sense"* (Student 6). A reflective journal entry echoed this: *"I assess ChatGPT's feedback and only apply relevant points"* (Student 6).

Balancing AI Input with Personal Judgment

Another effective strategy was striking a balance between relying on ChatGPT's feedback and maintaining personal judgment. Students emphasized the importance of retaining their original ideas and critically assessing ChatGPT's suggestions. One student said, *"Even if ChatGPT gives suggestions, I still consider whether they fit my writing"* (Student 9). Another added, *"I keep my original ideas if they make sense and only edit the necessary parts based on ChatGPT's feedback"* (Student 1). Reflective journals reinforced this: *"I rely on ChatGPT but also reflect on its suggestions to ensure they align with my ideas"* (Student 11).

Limiting ChatGPT Usage

To prevent overdependence, students limited their use of ChatGPT, focusing only on key aspects of their writing. This approach encouraged independent thinking and minimized reliance on AI. One student shared, *"I only ask four or five questions to avoid depending on it too much"* (Student 1). Another agreed, stating, *"Five questions are enough, asking too many prevents students from thinking for themselves"* (Student 8). Reflective journals supported this practice, with one student writing, *"Limiting ChatGPT's use helps me develop my critical thinking skills"* (Student 7).

Discussion

This study explored undergraduate English majors' perceptions of ChatGPT as a tool for improving vocabulary and grammar in academic writing. The findings provide a nuanced understanding of the tool's educational value, aligning with and extending prior research, while also highlighting novel insights and contextual nuances.

The study's findings corroborate prior research emphasizing ChatGPT's potential to enhance vocabulary and grammar. Similar to the work of Athanassopoulos et al., (2023), participants in this study reported significant improvements in vocabulary range and usage. These improvements were observed through both quantitative data, which indicated enhanced perceptions of vocabulary depth and accuracy, and qualitative reflections, where participants frequently highlighted how ChatGPT's tailored feedback introduced them to advanced vocabulary and practical sentence structures. As in previous studies (Liu, 2023; Mai et al., 2024), students found ChatGPT's tailored feedback and context-based suggestions instrumental in refining their language skills. For instance, participants noted that ChatGPT's vocabulary recommendations were relevant and effective, enabling them to expand their academic writing capabilities, echoing Pellicer-Sánchez's (2015) findings on contextualized vocabulary learning.

In terms of grammar improvement, this study aligns with Xiao and Zhi (2023) who documented ChatGPT's role in enhancing grammatical accuracy and coherence. Participants frequently highlighted the tool's ability to identify and correct grammatical errors, refine sentence structure, and improve text cohesion, confirming earlier observations about its effectiveness in supporting structured writing tasks. For example, one participant noted, "ChatGPT pointed out specific grammatical errors I often overlooked, helping me improve sentence clarity." Another shared, "The tool's suggestions for sentence structure and word choice made my writing more coherent and polished, especially in academic contexts." These participant insights vividly illustrate the practical impact of ChatGPT on their writing process.

While many findings align with existing literature, this study also reveals nuanced differences. Unlike earlier works, which predominantly examined the technical capabilities of ChatGPT (Bastani et al., 2024; Nugroho et al., 2023), this research focused on the user experience, particularly perceptions of confidence-building and independence. A key insight from this study is the role of ChatGPT in fostering students' confidence in their writing abilities. For instance, participants expressed that receiving immediate, constructive feedback made them feel more assured about their writing. One student noted, "ChatGPT's suggestions gave me confidence because they often aligned with what I was trying to achieve," while another shared, "Using ChatGPT helped me see my mistakes clearly, which boosted my confidence to try new vocabulary and sentence structures." These examples underscore the psychological benefits of integrating AI tools into academic writing. Participants described increased assurance in their work, which aligns with prior research highlighting AI's role in fostering user confidence in language learning (Avsheniuk et al., 2024). However, many studies primarily focus on tangible outcomes like vocabulary range or grammatical accuracy (Liu, 2023; Xiao & Zhi, 2023). This confidence-building aspect is significant because it encourages students to approach academic writing with greater self-reliance and motivation. By feeling assured in their ability to refine and improve their work, students are more likely to engage deeply with the writing process, experiment with advanced vocabulary, and focus on developing their unique voice in academic discourse. Such psychological benefits play a crucial role in fostering a positive and proactive learning environment, which is essential for academic success.

While these psychological benefits are noteworthy, it is equally important to consider areas where ChatGPT's impact on student perceptions was less pronounced. While the results indicated significant improvements in students' perceptions of vocabulary accuracy, relevance, and depth, perceptions of clarity, precision, breadth, and logic did not show notable changes. One potential explanation is that these aspects may require more advanced or nuanced feedback, which current iterations of ChatGPT might not fully provide. Another possibility is that students prioritized vocabulary and grammar over broader aspects like logic or precision, given their immediate relevance to language learning. Further research could investigate how these aspects are addressed by AI tools or develop strategies to enhance their focus in AI-assisted learning.

Additionally, challenges identified in this study differ slightly from those highlighted in earlier research. While overdependence on AI tools has been discussed (Zhai et al., 2024), this study provides a more granular view, such as students feeling overwhelmed by excessive feedback or struggling with the tool's inability to fully align with their unique ideas. This challenge could be more pronounced among students with limited experience in critical evaluation or those from educational backgrounds with less exposure to independent learning practices. For example, students accustomed to teacher-led instruction may find it harder to critically assess AI feedback. Future studies could explore these dynamics across different cultural or educational contexts to provide tailored recommendations. This level of detail offers valuable insights for educators seeking to balance the benefits and drawbacks of integrating AI tools in academic curricula.

This study contributes new perspectives by highlighting strategies students use to optimize ChatGPT's benefits while mitigating challenges. For instance, students emphasized the importance of asking specific, targeted questions to improve the relevance and clarity of ChatGPT's feedback. Peer collaboration activities, where students compare AI-generated suggestions with peer feedback, can further develop evaluative skills and build a community of shared learning. These strategies underscore the need for critical engagement with AI tools, a point less explored in prior studies focused on passive tool usage. Additionally, providing training sessions to help students interpret and apply AI-generated feedback effectively can enhance their ability to critically assess and implement suggestions.

Moreover, the findings suggest that ChatGPT's impact extends beyond technical skill improvement to include the cultivation of critical digital literacies. Participants noted the importance of balancing AI input with personal judgment, a skill essential for navigating the complexities of digital learning environments. This balance can be cultivated through specific instructional strategies, such as integrating reflective practices into assignments, encouraging peer review to complement AI feedback, and providing training on critically evaluating AI-generated suggestions. These approaches can empower students to use AI tools effectively while maintaining their own critical and creative input. This insight aligns with emerging discussions on digital literacy (Tran & Tran, 2023) but adds specificity by linking it to AI-assisted writing tasks.

The current study also has implications for practice. The findings highlight the dual imperatives of maximizing ChatGPT's benefits and mitigating its challenges. Educators are encouraged to guide students in adopting strategies such as selective feedback application, balancing AI inputs with independent thought, and limiting overreliance on the tool. These practices can help students harness ChatGPT's potential while maintaining academic integrity and fostering autonomous learning.

Conclusion

This study explored the perceptions of undergraduate English majors regarding ChatGPT as a tool for enhancing vocabulary and grammar in academic writing. Key findings indicate that students perceive ChatGPT as beneficial for improving vocabulary depth, grammatical accuracy, and overall writing confidence. The tool's ability to provide instant feedback and tailored suggestions significantly contributed to their development of academic language skills. Additionally, the study highlighted the psychological benefits of ChatGPT, such as increased self-assurance and a willingness to experiment with advanced language features.

Despite these benefits, the study also identified notable challenges, including the risk of overdependence on the tool, difficulty in interpreting feedback, and the potential for overwhelming suggestions. Some participants felt that ChatGPT's responses lacked originality or failed to fully align with their unique ideas, indicating a need for balanced usage and critical evaluation of AI-generated content.

Educators play a crucial role in instructing students to exploit the advantages of ChatGPT while upholding academic integrity and fostering independent writing skills. By integrating ChatGPT responsibly into academic curricula, teachers can help students navigate the evolving landscape of AI-assisted learning and prepare them for the demands of academic writing.

Limitations

The study's limitations include a small and context-specific sample size, as participants were drawn exclusively from a private university in Vietnam. This restricts the generalizability of findings to other academic settings or diverse student populations. Furthermore, the reliance on self-reported data through surveys, reflective journals, and interviews may introduce biases related to students' perceptions or social desirability.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future studies should explore the long-term impact of ChatGPT on writing proficiency across broader and more diverse student populations. Comparative research evaluating ChatGPT's effectiveness alongside other AI tools could provide deeper insights into its unique contributions to language learning. Additionally, experimental designs that incorporate control and treatment groups could offer more robust evidence of ChatGPT's impact on academic writing outcomes. Further investigation into strategies for integrating ChatGPT into curricula responsibly, with a focus on minimizing overreliance, would also be valuable for educators and policymakers.

By addressing these gaps, future research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of ChatGPT's potential and limitations, guiding its effective integration into higher education.

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