

# **Student Perspectives on Using ChatGPT as a Tool for English Language Learning and its Perceived Impact on Learner Autonomy**

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## **Abstract**

ChatGPT, a generative chatbot developed by OpenAI, has taken the world by storm due to its enormous capabilities in generating human-like text responses, and students at the tertiary level widely use it to complete their language-related tasks. This research examines EFL students' perceptions of using ChatGPT as a tool for English language learning and its impact on learner autonomy. A mixed methods approach was used for the current study by administering a survey questionnaire among EFL students (N=190) and conducting semi-structured interviews with selected students (N=18) at the Preparatory Studies Centre of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences- Al Mussanah in the Spring Semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The findings of this study reveal that Student perceptions of using ChatGPT to enhance learner autonomy are generally positive. They perceive ChatGPT as a highly accessible and flexible resource that supports various aspects of language acquisition, such as vocabulary expansion, grammar improvement, and conversational practice. Although some students faced difficulty comprehending the responses generated by ChatGPT due to their low proficiency in English, most participants appreciated the flexibility and convenience of accessing language learning support. Furthermore, students found that ChatGPT enhanced a low-pressure environment for practising language skills, enabling them to build confidence, motivation, and independence in their language learning journey. Overall, students perceive ChatGPT as a valuable tool for fostering learner autonomy and enhancing their language proficiency in a self-directed and engaging manner. The findings of this study can help educators and researchers gain valuable insights into students' changes in learning preferences and strategies to make informed decisions about revisiting instructional approaches and curriculum design by integrating modern technology.

**Keywords:** ChatGPT, EFL learners, learner autonomy, student perspectives