THE IMPACT OF CHATGPT AS AN AI TOOL ON ESL LEARNERS' OVERALL PERFORMANCE AT TERTIARY LEVEL

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Abstract

This paper presents a study on the impact of CHATGPT on ESL learners' overall performance at the tertiary level. Since artificial intelligence has a positive impact on academic learning, it also has a minimal number of adverse effects on the ESL learners' performance. Still, mostly it helps them perform well in the examination. The current Qualitative study tried to address the gap. The data were collected from tertiary-level ESL students from the 5th semester of the English department of Comsats University, Lahore. The findings indicate the significant positive impact of CHATGPT on the overall performance of ESL learners. This study explained that learners use CHATGPT to summarize and comprehend large and complex text. Future researchers can investigate the impact of CHATGPT on various specific genres.

Key words:
Impact of CHATGPT, overall performance, ESL learners, paraphrasing

Introduction

CHATGPT originated with OpenAI in 2015 and was created by Elon Musk and his colleagues. Then in 2018 they released a developed form of it which is GPT-1 (Generative Pre-Trained Transformer) having a large amount of data set. Then, with the growing world, it has made some developments, like in 2020, they released GPT-3.3, and now they have attracted global attention by releasing its latest version, which is GPT-4.

In the past few years, Artificial intelligence (AI technology) has modernized different fields in education by providing various advanced tools to help with learning styles. CHATGPT plays a crucial role in these AI tools by providing human-like conversation, interactive and personalized learning experiences, especially to ESL learners. Most of the time, ESL learners face difficulties acquiring proficiency, enhancing vocabulary and correcting grammar. Traditionally, ESL learners only depend on textbooks and classroom-based teachings where the teacher is the only means of instruction to learn that language, which may cause difficulties and challenges many times, like availability of material, cost-effectiveness, and sometimes it cannot provide data according to the learner's needs. However, now CHATGPT provides different types of materials to the learners according to their needs and understandings, and it reduces the barriers between learners and that language by providing instant feedback and instructing them like a human teacher.

CHATGPT helps ESL learners and instructors improve their performance and plan lessons and teaching materials (Chung Kwan & Philip Leung, 2024). CHATGPT can enhance the performance of ESL learners (Aladini, 2023). AI is the replication of human intellect with

advanced machines which are programmed to think and learn from experiences and human input (Beni & Wang, 2021). CHATGPT improves fluency and accuracy by providing instant responses (Jiang & Lee, 2020). CHATGPT is an AI model with an extensive data set that can understand commands and generate a response like humans (Radford et al., 2019). CHATGPT, often used by learners in their research articles and assignments, makes their cognitive abilities reliable and dependent (Zhao et al. 2022).

CHATGPT helps ESL learners in many ways to enhance their learning and provide them personalized material by understanding their needs and provide real-time feedback on their works. It provides them opportunities to communicate and improve their pronunciation and all skills like reading, writing, speaking and listening.

In Pakistan, English is used in education, but it is not the native language of most of the population. So, they do not have much fluency in it. They do not even have enough vocabulary in the English language. They are learning this language as second language learners in traditional classroom settings, focusing more on grammatical rules, not on fluency. In traditional methods, ESL learners take help from textbooks and their teachers, but CHATGPT provides them instant responses and materials according to their needs and understanding. It provides solutions and real-time feedback to the ESL learners in Pakistan.

Literature Review

CHATGPT improves the writing skills of tertiary-level ESL learners in Pakistan and focuses on vocabulary enhancement, grammatical corrections and quick feedback in educational learning (Sourath & Ali, 2024). A learner should not over-rely on it and take it as an advantage and a helping tool. Moreover, it should be used with traditional teaching methods to maximize its benefits. (Leila and Teona, 2024). Personalized feedback theory enhanced learners' vocabulary and improved fluency (Jiang & Lee, 2020). However, using CHATGPT in learning has some drawbacks, like over-dependency and plagiarism. Moreover, it blocks the level of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities of ESL learners. Fifty-five undergraduate ESL learners collected the data from a public sector university in Saudi Arabia. The findings of this study are that AI tools like CHATGPT help students in different aspects, such as learning new words, making fewer grammatical mistakes, and using a better sentence structure. Moreover, it provides data according to learners' needs and understanding in a very short time, so it engages students' interest and motivates them. Although it has some challenges, like independence on AI tools, students do not want to solve the problem independently. Some students just input the data using AI tools and copy the required information without knowing it.

By providing immediate responses, CHATGPT helps the ESL learners enhance their writing skills, especially in large classroom settings where a teacher finds it difficult to guide the students individually. The traditional feedback method is more time-consuming, where the teacher is supposed to comment or review the students' tasks individually in many classes. (Santosh, 2024). Research suggests that AI tools like CHATGPT can improve fluency and accuracy by providing instant responses (Jiang & Lee, 2020). However, concerns were raised about the independence of CHATGPT and reduced critical thinking. However, despite this, tools like CHATGPT help students by giving them quick responses, correcting their grammar and content mistakes, and suggesting vocabulary where needed. This method can be used worldwide in crowded classrooms to benefit ESL students. The findings from an Elite private university in India show that Most students encouraged CHATGPT as it helps them in quick learning, self-feedback and peer group learning. Compared with Grammarly, CHATGPT is much better to use because it responds in more detail and explains its grammar mistakes. However, it also has some drawbacks, such as reducing the motivation to think independently
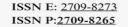
and giving answers in fixed patterns. Besides these minor drawbacks, students considered CHATGPT a helpful tool for improving their writing performance.

CHATGPT helps the ESL learners and instructors improve their performance and plan their lessons and teaching materials (Chung Kwan & Philip Leung, 2024). Most of the previous studies on CHATGPT are about writing skills, so there is a gap in areas like speaking, listening and reading. This study aims to find the challenges of using CHATGPT and the research method that explains the CHATGPT role in ESL learning. Data for this study were taken from seven academic databases, in which there were a total of 202 studies. Moreover, we took only 70 studies as a sample after reviewing them. This research found that most ESL learners use CHATGPT as a learning tool in writing tasks. By leaving gaps in K-12K-12 education, most of the research is conducted. The teachers suggest using CHATGPT as a guide tool like in lesson planning or assessments, but over-reliance on it causes many effects on students' learning. So, there is a need to search some under-explored areas of CHATGPT to use this tool more effectively.

The study focused on CHATGPT, an AI tool considered a helping tool in academic learning that increases their writing proficiency by providing them personalized material according to their cognitive needs and improving their grammatical accuracy (Samah Abdulhadi, 2024). The study aimed to examine the challenges and opportunities they face in using CHATGPT and its impact on their learning. The data was collected from 6 ESL learners selected from a sample of 130 students from the Saudi Arabian University. The study findings are that CHATGPT is helping students enhance vocabulary and writing proficiency by providing instant and personalized feedback. A study explains the risk of plagiarism and lack of contextual understanding (Smith & Taylor, 2022). A part of the overall performance of ESL learners is explored less in their study.

When the students are learning a second language, they must pay attention to four basic skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Writing is difficult to adapt to than all other skills because of a limited vocabulary and grammatical structure. We can practice other skills in the classroom, but writing needs extra practice and feedback outside the classroom. This research helps the ESL students improve their writing abilities by using AI-generated tools to enhance vocabulary and guide sentence structure (Leila & Teona, 2024). Ten students collected data from two random groups from the tourism department who were doing undergraduate studies. This research finds that the students who studied using traditional methods showed better results than CHATGPT users. The CHATGPT users made fewer mistakes in sentence structure. The research finds that learner should not over rely on it and take it as an advantage and helping tool, and to maximize its benefits it should be use with traditional teaching methods (Xu & Wang, 2021).

The role of technology in our studies, especially for language learning, has increased to a great extent. Nowadays, Learners use AI tools like CHATGPT, which help teachers and students in different aspects of second language learning, such as vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar (Ajab & Paras, 2023). The study highlights that CHATGPT can guide the student in a personalized way by understanding their learning need and their way of adopting things, and CHATGPT allows students to practice without being judged. However, challenges like over-reliance and dependency (Smith & Taylor, 2022), although they facilitate the learners. However, it cannot replace a human teacher; it can be used as a supplement. Sindh Madrassatul Islam University, Pakistan's findings show that CHATGPT improves the ESL learners' performance. Sometimes, the information is incorrect, so students must verify the answers. So students still needed humans as teachers.

Learning by technological advanced tools like CHATGPT is often used by learners in their research articles and assignments, making their cognitive abilities reliable and dependent (Zhao et al., 2022). The article is about teachers' perceptions of using CHATGPT in ESL learners, which helps them enhance their vocabulary and make sentences. This research will explore the overall performance of Students after using CHATGPT. The data was collected by 30 ESL teachers of different public sector universities from China This study suggests that majority of teachers believed that the use of CHATGPT has a negative impact in ESL learning it causes reliance and dependency in writing so there should be some boundaries and proper guidance to avoid copy paste content and unethical ways in writing.

Research Gap
Many researchers conducted their research on the impact of CHATGPT on writing skills, but other domains like reading, speaking and listening are less explored. Moreover, there is little study on the impact of CHATGPT on ESL learners at the tertiary level in Lahore, Pakistan. Moreover, most studies are based on quantitative research methods. This study tries to cover this gap using qualitative methods and will explore the impacts of CHATGPT on ESL learners in Lahore, Pakistan.

Research Objectives
1. To examine the impact of CHATGPT on ESL learners of tertiary level
2. To examine the overall performance of ESL learners after using the CHATGPT
3. To examine the effectiveness of CHATGPT on ESL learners

Research Questions
1. How does the use of CHATGPT impact the learning of ESL learners at tertiary level?
2. How does CHATGPT influence the overall performance of ESL learners at tertiary level?
3. How effective is CHATGPT in learning English as a second language?

Methodology:

Research Design:
The researcher uses a qualitative research approach for this research project to get a thorough knowledge of the impact of CHATGPT on the overall performance of ESL learners at the tertiary level. Using this technique, the study investigates learners' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards using CHATGPT in their academic learning.
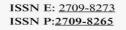
Participants:
This research focused on a group of seven undergraduate ESL learners from the 5th semester of the ENGLISH department at COMSATS University, Lahore. These pupils were selected using the following criteria: they are now pursuing an undergraduate program. English is not their native language and they often use CHATGPT in their learning.

Data Collection Method:
Semi-structured interviews were the primary strategy used to collect data. These interviews were done face-to-face and lasted 5 to 6 minutes. The semi-structured style provided freedom in examining individual experiences. The interview questions were designed to gather detailed information about the impact of CHATGPT on the overall performance of ESL learners. The interviews were conducted in either English or Urdu.

Data Analysis:

After the interviews, the recorded data was transcribed very carefully. The researcher then reread the transcripts multiple times to get the major points. Key statements and phrases were underlined and classified as "themes," including comprehension of text, overall performance, exam preparation, impact of CHATGPT, effectiveness of CHATGPT etc.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The Qualitative data obtained from this study explains that CHATGPT positively impacted the overall performance of ESL Learners at the tertiary level. This study provides evidence that improvements were seen in the performance after using the CHATGPT.

Impact of CHATGPT

This research explained that CHATGPT has positive and negative effects; it depends on how he learner uses it. Positive in that sense, if the learner depends on it, it will stop their critical thinking. He will not complete the tasks by himself, and he takes help from CHATGPT in every assignment and given task. They rely on it. Four students talked about the negative use of CHATGPT. They said they face plagiarism and repeated material that their teachers don't like. Most of the time, CHATGPT helps the students by paraphrasing and summarizing the material provided by their teachers.

However, when students do their work independently and then compare their work with CHATGPT and correct their mistakes, it helps the learners in a positive way.

CHATGPT in exam preparation

CHATGPT helps students in their exam preparation. Learners search for material from CHATGPT for assignments, but then change that text in their wording. They get data from ChatGPT and then paraphrase that. Using CHATGPT in exam preparation increased their overall performance in the exams.

COMPREHENTION OF TEXT

When students struggle to comprehend text, they usually use CHATGPT to paraphrase the text. They try to get more easy and understandable text which CHATGPT provides them according to their understanding level. All students use this in their academic learning. When they have a shortage of time and the need to study bulk of material, they get the summaries of that text by using CHATGPT.

Influence of CHATGPT

CHATGPT has influence on students' overall performance. It can affect the learner's performance in two ways; one it can affect their critical thinking but on the other hand it can improve their learning and can prove to enhance their vocabulary and correct their grammar mistakes which can help them in their final term exams.
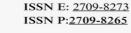
Effectiveness of CHATGPT

CHATGPT is very effective in second-language learning. It enhances the vocabulary and has a positive impact on grammar. Learners mostly use CHATGPT in their learning, and it improves their overall performance.

Teacher's guidance

Mostly, teachers demotivate the use of CHATGPT due to the plagiarism in the learners' work. They said CHATGPT can be a cause of learner's dependency. Some of them guide their learners about the positive and negative use of CHATGPT so they can take in a positive way and improve their performance.

The learner's performance indicated that the students using CHATGPT in their academic learning are getting better results than non-users. Most students used CHATGPT in their exam, quiz and assignment preparation, and believe that it positively impacts their performance if they use it only for help, do not over-rely on it. When students use CHATGPT, they comprehend the data their teachers provided more easily. The students

think that the impact of CHATGPT depends on the users who are using it; they have to decide whether to use it positively or negatively.

If they use it extensively and suitably regarding levels, and if they use it for taking help, it can help them increase the CGPA, but if they only use it to copy down instead of putting their knowledge and what they know, it is not helpful for them.

ESL learners use CHATGPT to paraphrase the text to understand the learning material more easily. They share the whole PDF with CHATGPT when they have a short time to prepare it, especially in examinations. When the students use it for exam preparation, they get questions or quizzes related to their exam material, and they prepare for and perform well in the examination and get a high CGPA.

Usually, they use CHATGPT to understand in case of assignment they use it to understand what the question is and sometimes to get an example of how to attempt that question and using that example they tailored their response and regarding quizzes or exam they ask it may be to summarize the points to give them flash cards or to make a sort of step by step guide on how can they advance learning that material..

In some of their subject, it affects a lot. For example, they are now in the fifth semester. It is somehow better for English, but one of their subjects is French. So once a student gives output to CHATGPT to talk about regular and irregular sentences, but CHATGPT answers him wrong. It's better for the English language, but not for another language. Sometimes it provides wrong information like date of birth, publication dates, but overall, ChatGPT is a helpful tool in the academic learning of ESL learners at the tertiary level.

Recommendations

This study explained that learners use CHATGPT to summarize and comprehend large and complex text. Future researchers can investigate the impact of CHATGPT on various specific genres. And they can research numerous aspects of English like writing, reading, speaking and listening.

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