

THE EFFICIENCY–INTEGRITY PARADOX: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF AI USE IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH AND STUDY SKILLS COURSES AT TASHKENT INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

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Abstract. This paper analyzes the attitudes of the students towards the use of artificial intelligence in Academic English and Study Skills lessons at Tashkent International University of Education (TIUE). The data were collected by means of a mixed-methods survey of 20 undergraduate students in the International Foundation Program for the academic year of 2025-2026. Based on the results, it can be concluded that there is a wide but conservative application of AI by undergraduates. Even though most respondents admitted their usage of generative AI chatbots in academia, students also raised issues related to plagiarism, dependence on AI tools, lack of originality, and potential negative impact on developing critical thinking skills. Based on the obtained results, the notion of "Efficiency–Integrity Paradox" can be introduced. In addition, the results show that undergraduates do not view AI as a means to replace human efforts with automation but rather use AI as a tool to support learning activities. Finally, the majority of the sample mentioned the necessity for universities to provide students with AI literacy training and develop academic guidelines. It is argued that universities should abandon prohibitive strategies for AI usage and implement AI literacy models.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, AI Literacy, Academic Integrity, Higher Education, Academic English, Student Perceptions, Uzbekistan*

1. Introduction

The ease of using AI generators has resulted in rapid changes in the way university students perform their academic work (Hockly, 2023). Today, many students use AI to come up with ideas, summarize texts, paraphrase, translate, and complete homework assignments (Tolstykh & Oshchepkova, 2024). AI generators can serve as language aids for students in English programs as well.

The field of Academic English and study skills faces numerous problems associated with the growing popularity of AI. The vulnerability to misusing AI technology is connected with the features of tasks in Academic English classes that imply writing practice, paraphrasing, building arguments, and independent work. From one perspective, use of AI technology may help learners deal with large amounts of homework effectively, increase precision, and build confidence (Tapalova & Zhiyenbayeva, 2022; Kristiawan et al., 2024). On the other hand, the routine use of AI tools might result in lack of ability to think independently and write effectively (Sharadgah & Sa'di, 2022).

Simultaneously, students engage in the process of AI learning, understanding the benefits and potential issues related to the activity. With the growing popularity of using AI in various aspects of life, a new controversy emerged between increased effectiveness and its negative consequences associated with the use of external help and the problem of dishonesty, among others.

The problem of using AI becomes particularly pressing in International Foundation Program courses because they require developing academic writing skills, critical thinking skills, and autonomous learning in English.

A wide range of research is available on integrating AI into education around the world (Madrakhimova, 2024; Vikhrov & Abdullaev, 2024). Nevertheless, research focused specifically on studying AI usage by students in Uzbekistan is scarce, usually concentrating on

policy-making and technical sides of the issue, while paying little attention to the attitudes of students themselves.

This paper aims at investigating the perception of AI use among students in the Tashkent International University of Education Academic English and Study Skills classes. It adds to the existing discussion about AI in higher education by introducing two novel concepts, namely the Trust-Verification Gap and the Efficiency-Integrity Paradox, into discussion in the context of English-medium foundation programs in Uzbekistan.

In accordance with these concepts, the following research questions are formulated:

1. How often do students use AI tools in Academic English and Study Skills courses?
2. What issues does the use of AI bring to students' academic work?
3. Is AI viewed by students as an auxiliary tool or as a replacement for learning?
4. What institutional support do students need in order to use AI responsibly?

2. Related Literature

2.1 Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching

The application of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in ELT involves various sophisticated technological tools, such as chatbots, writing evaluation programs, machine translation, and intelligent tutoring systems. According to Hockly (2023), technology has the ability to change the way people learn languages because technology can provide adaptation and feedback features to motivate learners. Moreover, ethics is important, especially concerning issues regarding learner privacy and well-being and digital literacy skills. In a similar fashion, Tolstykh and Oshchepkova (2024) noted that AI technologies are tools that help with text translation and concept clarification.

2.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Using AI in ELT

Many scholars have shown evidence regarding the positive effect that technologies can produce on engagement and personalization of learning. For example, in their systematic review of studies, Sharadgah and Sa'di (2022) stated that technologies help improve learners' language skills and assess their competencies and increase satisfaction among learners. However, several ethical and methodological aspects of AI tools can pose some challenges. Furthermore, Kristiawan et al. (2024) argued that technologies help to motivate learners and increase the level of individualization but may lead to some problems like lack of readiness of teachers to adopt technologies, restricted resource availability, and lack of ethical standards.

2.3 The Use of AI in Higher Education in Uzbekistan

Although there has been increasing interest in AI solutions for learning recently, not much research has been done specifically for Uzbekistan. The available evidence suggests that even though AI-assisted learning gains popularity among university learners, numerous obstacles exist, such as poor readiness of institutions and insufficient digital literacy of learners. Thus, for example, according to Madrakhimova (2024), some of these include learners' insufficient digital literacy and institutional insufficiency to conduct innovative learning programs. Moreover, Vikhrov and Abdullaev (2024) mentioned both opportunities and challenges of implementing AI in Uzbekistan. Still, not much is known about how Uzbek students learn English.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

For this investigation, a mixed-methods survey approach was applied for examining student attitudes towards AI-assisted learning among Academic English and Study Skills modules.

3.2 Participants

The present study addressed all students taking International Foundation Program Academic English modules in the 2025-2026 academic year at Tashkent International University of Education (TIUE). Of the 27 eligible participants, only twenty took part in the survey, accounting for about 74% of the target group. Involvement in academic English writing exercises, including significant assignments of up to 1,000 words long, was assumed for the students involved. Convenience sampling was used here.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Information was gathered through an anonymous questionnaire distributed via google form that featured both multiple choice and Likert-scaled questions and an opportunity to give qualitative responses. It focused on issues such as frequency of application of AI tools, preference for particular models, contribution of artificial intelligence to assignment completion, ethical considerations in AI use, confidence in assessing the quality of AI-generated material, and expectations about institutional policy in this context. Quantitative data was processed through descriptive statistics, while qualitative information was coded into recurrent themes linked to ethics, dependence, verification, and expectations. Participation was entirely voluntary.

3.4 Limitations

Despite the reasonably high number of respondents and representative selection process conducted in the research, limitations remain, particularly those due to the small sample and limited geographical focus. Thus, results should not be interpreted in terms of broader applicability outside the immediate scope of the work. Nonetheless, some findings can be viewed as indicative of problems faced by English-language universities as they adopt AI tools.

4. Results

4.1 Usage Frequency and Tool Preferences

Based on the findings, it can be said that while the use of AI by TIUE learners is common, its widespread use daily has yet to be realized. Most of the survey participants (45%) indicated the occasional use of the AI technology (between 1–3 times in a month), which suggests that there is ongoing exploration of integrating AI in learning tasks. On the other hand, 20% indicated to be regular users of the tool using it on a weekly basis, while 15% indicated being daily users. This shows there is a small but significant group of students highly engaged with AI.

How frequently do you use AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly AI, Quillbot, Bard/Gemini, etc.) for your Academic English assignments or study tasks?

20 responses

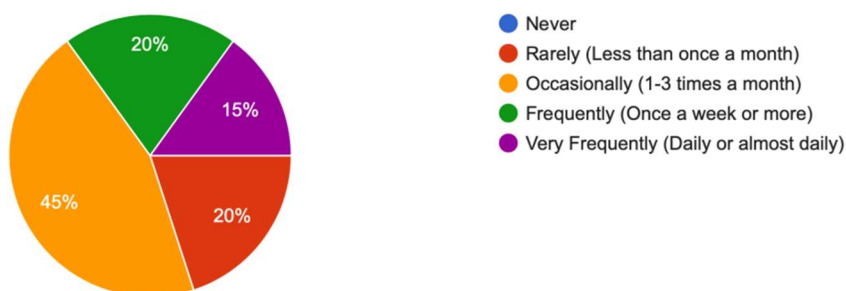


Figure 1. Frequency of AI Tool Usage Among TIUE Students

Source: Author survey data (2026).

As for the AI technologies most frequently used by the TIUE students, the Generative AI Chatbot tops the list with 70% of respondents choosing this one. As for other technologies, 25% stated to use AI-powered translation tools as they help to overcome linguistic challenges in an English-language setting. Paraphrasing tools also have their share with 20% of respondents preferring this AI technology.

Which AI tools have you used specifically for Academic English or Study Skills purposes? (Select all that apply)

20 responses

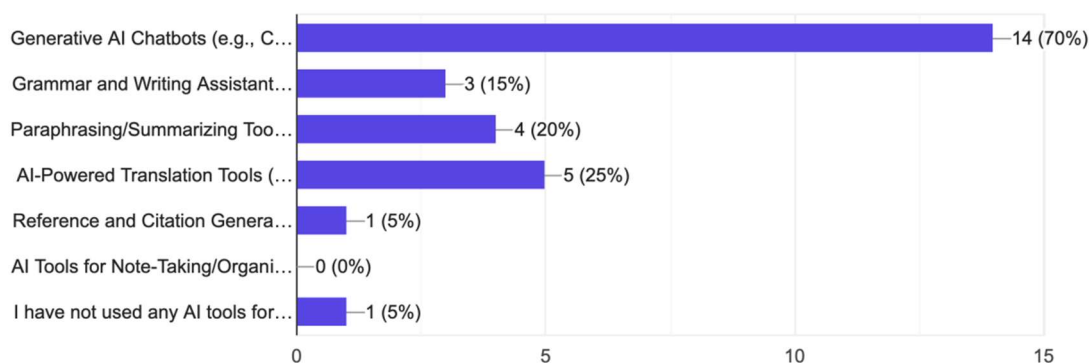


Figure 2. Preferred AI Tools Among TIUE Students

Source: Author survey data (2026).

4.2 Content Generation and Ethics

The results suggest that students have differing levels of dependence on AI technology when undertaking academic writing assignments. On an average assignment comprising 1,000 words, most participants said that AI helped write between 10% and 30% of the assignment. This implies that students mostly use AI as a secondary tool for academic assignments instead of allowing AI to do the entire job by itself. However, there were also some outliers, where one participant used 0% AI technology while another admitted to using up to 70% AI technology for assignments.

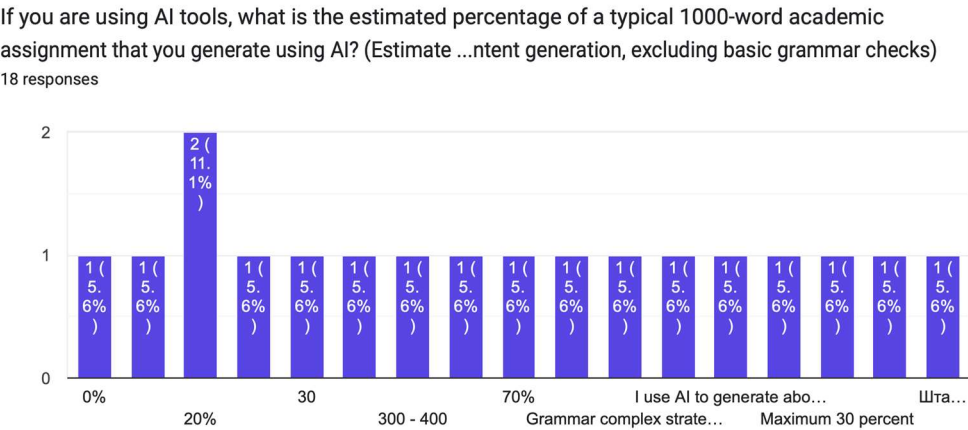


Figure 3. Estimated AI Contribution Levels

Source: Author survey data (2026).

The issue of ethics became one of the most discussed aspects in the survey. The major threat raised by the use of the technology was the possibility of unintentional plagiarism, mentioned by 55% of participants. The fears of being dependent on the use of AI software and its impact on critical thinking were expressed by 45%, whereas the lack of originality was pointed out by 40%.

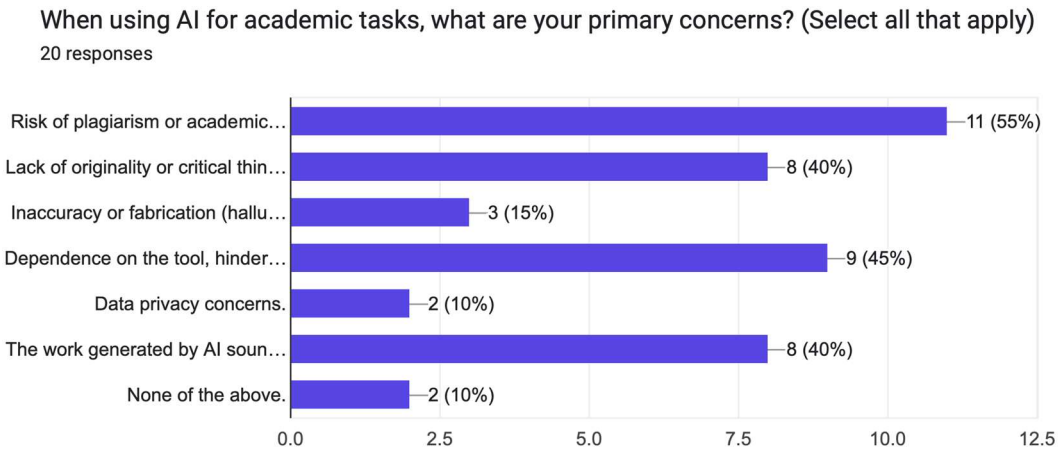


Figure 4. Student Concerns Regarding AI Use

Source: Author survey data (2026).

4.3 Perception of AI’s Role

A variety of viewpoints was observed with regards to whether or not AI could be used as replacement or support to the human learner. The majority group (36.8%) held that AI can only serve as an aid that would improve the learning abilities of the students without replacing their efforts. Another 31.6% held the opinion that a combination of both humans and technology could serve effectively together.

In your opinion, AI tools primarily serve as a replacement for human effort or a supplementary aid in Academic English and Study Skills?

19 responses

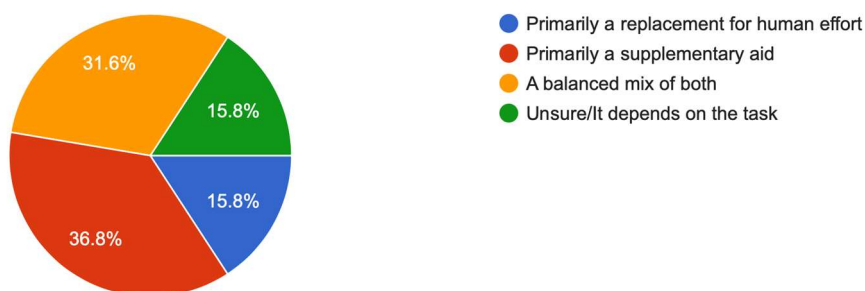


Figure 5. Student Perceptions of AI's Academic Role

Source: Author survey data (2026).

5. Discussion

5.1 The “Supplement vs. Replacement” Dichotomy

The findings suggest that TIUE students generally perceive AI as a tool for augmentation rather than replacement. A combined 68.4% of respondents either viewed AI as a supplementary aid or supported a balanced human–AI partnership. This supports the “Human-AI Hybrid” model, in which students remain the primary decision-makers while AI functions as a supporting assistant. Rather than fully outsourcing academic work, most students appear to use AI for brainstorming, clarification, language support, and idea generation.

This pattern reflects broader international trends in higher education, where students increasingly rely on AI to improve efficiency while still recognizing the importance of human judgment and creativity. The relatively small percentage (15.8%) who viewed AI as a replacement for human effort suggests that complete dependence on AI has not yet become the dominant mindset among TIUE students.

5.2 The Trust–Verification Gap

The average confidence rating of 3.30 out of 5.0 in evaluating AI-generated content demonstrates a moderate but cautious level of trust. Students generally believe AI can provide useful information, but they remain aware of its limitations. Qualitative responses such as “Users should always check the information provided by AI” indicate that many students understand the risks of misinformation and hallucination in generative AI systems.

This finding highlights the existence of a “trust-verification gap.” While students are confident enough to use AI regularly, many still lack advanced verification skills necessary for evaluating factual accuracy, academic reliability, and bias. As a result, students may rely on AI-generated content without fully understanding how to validate sources or identify inaccurate outputs.

The gap suggests that AI literacy education is urgently needed. Beyond simply teaching students how to use AI tools, institutions must also train students to critically evaluate AI-generated information and apply fact-checking strategies.

5.3 Ethical Paradox: Efficiency vs. Integrity

The findings reveal a “cautious-optimist” attitude among students regarding AI use in education. On one hand, students recognize the practical advantages of AI tools, particularly in saving time, simplifying research, and supporting English-language writing tasks. Several respondents described AI as helpful for organizing ideas and reducing workload pressures in an English-medium academic environment.

On the other hand, many students expressed concerns about the ethical consequences of overreliance on AI. One respondent stated that “If students use it every day... they may lose their own thinking skills.” This statement reflects a broader fear that excessive AI use may weaken critical thinking, creativity, and independent learning abilities.

Importantly, the findings do not suggest that most students are intentionally using AI to avoid learning. Instead, students appear to use AI as a coping mechanism for heavy workloads, language barriers, and time constraints. This creates an ethical paradox: AI increases academic efficiency while simultaneously raising concerns about academic integrity and intellectual development.

5.4 The Mandate for Training

A significant 84.2% of respondents agreed that TIUE should provide formal AI training and guidelines for students. This strong majority indicates that students do not want unrestricted or unregulated AI use. Instead, they are seeking institutional support, ethical guidance, and clear expectations.

Currently, many students rely on a “trial-and-error” approach when using AI tools, leading to uncertainty and anxiety regarding acceptable academic practices. Students expressed interest in having a formal “code of conduct” that clarifies how AI can be responsibly integrated into assignments and learning activities.

The findings therefore suggest that universities must move beyond simply allowing or prohibiting AI tools. Instead, institutions should focus on developing AI literacy programs that teach students responsible usage, ethical awareness, and critical evaluation skills (British Council, 2024).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study demonstrates that AI has become an increasingly important academic assistant among TIUE students. While students value AI for its efficiency and convenience, they also remain aware of its ethical and educational risks. Most students prefer a balanced “human-AI partnership” rather than complete dependence on technology.

The findings suggest that the future of AI in higher education depends not only on access to technology but also on the development of AI literacy skills. Students require institutional guidance to ensure that AI enhances learning rather than replacing critical thinking and originality.

Recommendations for TIUE

Based on the findings of the study, several institutional actions are recommended to ensure the responsible and effective integration of AI in higher education at TIUE.

1. Implement an AI Disclosure Policy

Students should be required to include an “AI Statement” in assignments indicating how AI tools were used. This policy would promote transparency and help address concerns related to plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

2. Adopt Process-Based Assessment Methods

Teachers should place greater emphasis on outlines, drafts, reflections, presentations, and revision stages instead of evaluating only final outputs. This would reduce excessive dependence on AI-generated content and encourage authentic learning.

3. Conduct Critical Evaluation Workshops

The university should organize training sessions focused on fact-checking AI-generated information, identifying hallucinations, and evaluating source reliability. These workshops would improve students' AI literacy and critical thinking skills.

4. Provide Responsible Prompting Instruction

Students should be trained to use AI as a learning support tool rather than a replacement for independent work. Instruction on effective prompting can encourage students to use AI for explanations, brainstorming, and feedback.

5. Develop Faculty Training Programs

Faculty members should receive professional development training on ethical AI integration, classroom policies, and assessment strategies involving AI-assisted learning. Training programs can help instructors better understand the benefits and limitations of AI tools, allowing them to guide students more effectively and maintain academic integrity within their courses.

6. Establish an Institutional AI Code of Conduct

TIUE should create clear university-wide guidelines defining acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI in academic work. A formal code of conduct would reduce confusion among students and faculty while providing a structured framework for responsible AI usage in assignments, research, and classroom activities.

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