# HOW TO PREVENT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM OVERUSE OF AI IN LEARNING ENGLISH?

**Đinh Thị Bắc Bình**
**Học viện Ngân Hàng**

***Abstract:*** *The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot, has transformed English language learning in higher education. These technologies provide immediate feedback, personalized learning experiences, and unlimited access to language resources. However, excessive reliance on AI may hinder students' development of critical thinking, creativity, language production, and learner autonomy. Instead of becoming active language users, some students risk becoming passive consumers of AI-generated content. This paper looks into the benefits and the risks of AI overuse among university students learning English and proposes practical strategies for educators to promote responsible AI use. Drawing on recent research in educational technology, second language acquisition, and digital literacy, the paper argues that universities should not prohibit AI but rather integrate it into teaching through AI literacy, assessment redesign, process-oriented learning, and ethical guidelines. By positioning AI as a learning assistant rather than a substitute for human thinking, educators can maximize its educational benefits while minimizing its potential risks.*

***Keywords:*** *artificial intelligence, English language learning, higher education, AI literacy, learner autonomy, ChatGPT*

*Nhận bài: 08/08/2026 Phản biện: 08/09/2026 Duyệt đăng: 11/09/2026*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become one of the most influential technological innovations in education during the past few years. Unlike traditional educational technologies, generative AI can produce coherent essays, answer complex questions, provide grammatical corrections, generate lesson materials, and simulate conversations almost instantly. Consequently, AI has become an increasingly common learning companion for university students worldwide (Kasneci et al., 2023).

Recent studies suggest that AI-supported learning can improve learners' motivation, writing quality, and language confidence when used appropriately (Crompton & Burke, 2023). AI also enables differentiated instruction by adapting learning materials to students' proficiency levels and learning needs, making language learning more accessible and individualized.

Despite these educational benefits, some learners rely on it as a replacement for independent thinking. Research in educational psychology consistently demonstrates that deep learning occurs when students actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information (Bransford et al., 2000). Similarly, theories of second language acquisition emphasize the importance of meaningful language output, interaction, and learner autonomy in developing communicative competence (Swain, 1985; Little, 1991). Consequently, excessive trust in AI may weaken students' information evaluation skills and increase the risk of academic misconduct.

The challenge facing English language teachers, therefore, is not whether AI should be used but how it should be used. Completely banning AI is neither practical nor desirable because AI technologies are becoming integrated into professional communication and lifelong learning. Instead, educators need effective pedagogical strategies that encourage students to view AI as a learning assistant rather than an intellectual substitute.

## II. BENEFITS AND RISKS OF AI IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

### 2.1. The Benefits

Artificial intelligence has transformed English language learning by providing learners with immediate, personalized, and interactive support. Unlike traditional computer-assisted language learning (CALL), generative AI can understand natural language prompts, generate human-like responses, explain grammar, translate texts, summarize information, and simulate authentic conversations. These capabilities allow learners to practice English anytime and anywhere, making language learning more flexible and learner-centered.

Research consistently demonstrates that AI can improve various aspects of language learning when used appropriately. According to Crompton

and Burke (2023), AI applications in higher education support personalized learning, adaptive instruction, and instant feedback, enabling students to learn at their own pace. Similarly, Kasneci et al. (2023) argue that large language models such as ChatGPT can function as intelligent tutors by explaining complex concepts, generating examples, and facilitating collaborative learning. Such functions reduce learning barriers and increase students' confidence, particularly for learners with limited language proficiency.

Recent systematic reviews also indicate that AI positively influences students' motivation and language performance. For example, studies summarized by Zhai et al. (2024) show that AI-assisted learning contributes to improvements in writing quality, vocabulary acquisition, grammar accuracy, and speaking fluency. Chatbots provide learners with unlimited opportunities for interaction without the anxiety often associated with communicating with native speakers, thereby increasing learners' willingness to communicate.

Furthermore, AI has expanded teachers' instructional possibilities. Teachers can use AI to generate teaching materials, design quizzes, provide formative feedback, and personalize learning activities more efficiently. UNESCO (2023) acknowledges that generative AI can reduce teachers' administrative workload, allowing them to devote more time to higher-order instructional activities such as mentoring, discussion, and critical thinking development.

Despite these advantages, researchers generally emphasize that AI should complement rather than replace human learning. Technology itself does not guarantee meaningful learning; educational outcomes largely depend on how students and teachers use AI within pedagogical contexts (Kasneci et al., 2023).

**2.2. The Risks of AI Overuse**

While AI offers numerous educational benefits, excessive dependence on AI has become an emerging concern in higher education. AI overuse refers to situations in which learners rely on AI to perform cognitive tasks that they would otherwise complete independently, such as generating ideas, composing essays, solving problems, or evaluating information. Rather than supporting learning, AI becomes a substitute for thinking.

One major concern involves the decline of critical thinking. Critical thinking requires learners to analyze information, evaluate evidence, compare alternatives, and formulate independent judgments. When students accept AI-generated responses without questioning their accuracy or appropriateness, these essential cognitive processes may be reduced. UNESCO (2023) warns that generative AI may encourage passive learning if students merely consume AI-generated content instead of actively constructing knowledge.

Another concern relates to learner autonomy. Little (1991) defines learner autonomy as the capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning through planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning strategies. As AI becomes more capable of completing academic tasks, students may gradually lose confidence in their own language competence.

The literature also highlights risks to writing development. According to Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis, language production itself contributes to language acquisition because learners notice linguistic gaps while expressing their ideas. If AI produces complete essays for students, learners may miss valuable opportunities to practice these cognitive and linguistic processes.

Academic integrity represents another significant challenge. Since generative AI can produce sophisticated academic texts within seconds, distinguishing between students' original work and AI-generated content has become increasingly difficult. Rather than relying solely on AI detection software—which has been shown to produce unreliable results—many scholars recommend redesigning assessment methods to emphasize authentic performance, process-based writing, and oral interaction (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024).

Moreover, generative AI is not free from limitations. Large language models occasionally generate fabricated references, inaccurate facts, or logically inconsistent explanations, a phenomenon known as "hallucination" (OpenAI,

2023). Students who lack sufficient digital literacy may accept these outputs uncritically, leading to misinformation and superficial learning.

**2.3. AI Literacy as a Sustainable Solution**

Instead of banning AI, recent literature increasingly advocates developing students' AI literacy. AI literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and ethical awareness required to use AI effectively, critically, and responsibly (Long & Magerko, 2020).

UNESCO (2023) identifies AI literacy as one of the core competencies that education systems should cultivate in the digital era. Similarly, the OECD (2024) argues that future graduates must be able not only to use AI tools but also to collaborate with AI while maintaining human judgment, creativity, and ethical responsibility. These recommendations suggest that preventing AI overuse does not require restricting access to technology; rather, it requires helping students develop the capacity to use AI thoughtfully and independently.

## III. HOW TO BENEFIT FROM AI IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

One of the most important strategies is to develop students' AI literacy. Although today's university students are often described as "digital natives," familiarity with technology does not necessarily imply the ability to evaluate AI-generated information critically. Students should receive explicit instruction on how generative AI works, its strengths and limitations, and the ethical issues associated with its use. Therefore, English courses should include activities that require students to verify AI-generated information using reliable academic sources and reflect on the quality of AI outputs. Such practices encourage learners to become critical users rather than passive consumers of AI-generated content (UNESCO, 2023).

A second strategy involves redesigning assessment methods. Traditional take-home essays are particularly vulnerable to AI misuse because students can easily submit AI-generated texts as their own work. Rather than relying on AI-detection software—which has been criticized for inconsistent accuracy and false positive results (Perkins, 2023)—educators should redesign assessments to emphasize learning processes instead of final products.

Another effective approach is to integrate AI into classroom instruction transparently instead of discouraging its use. Rather than asking students to avoid AI completely, teachers can demonstrate how AI supports learning responsibly.

Furthermore, promoting learner autonomy remains essential in AI-supported language learning. According to Little (1991), autonomous learners actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning processes. AI should strengthen rather than diminish these abilities.

Finally, universities should establish clear institutional policies on ethical AI use. Many students remain uncertain about when AI use constitutes appropriate academic assistance and when it becomes academic misconduct. Transparent guidelines should specify acceptable AI practices, including brainstorming ideas, checking grammar, and receiving language feedback, while requiring students to acknowledge substantial AI assistance in academic assignments. Such policies can reduce confusion, promote academic integrity, and foster a culture of responsible AI use (UNESCO, 2023).

## IV. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

One practical implication is the integration of AI literacy into English language curricula. AI literacy should become an essential component of digital literacy, enabling students to understand how AI systems generate responses, recognize their limitations, evaluate the reliability of AI-generated information, and use AI in accordance with academic integrity principles (Long & Magerko, 2020; UNESCO, 2023).

Assessment practices also require substantial revision. Since AI can generate grammatically accurate essays within seconds, assessment should increasingly emphasize learning processes rather than final written products. Teachers may require students to submit brainstorming notes, outlines, multiple drafts, revision records, and reflective journals documenting how AI was used throughout the writing process. Oral defenses, classroom presentations, peer-review sessions, and collaborative projects can further provide authentic evidence of students' language

proficiency while reducing inappropriate reliance on AI (Perkins, 2023).

Furthermore, teachers should encourage students to adopt AI as a learning partner rather than an answer generator. For example, AI can be used to generate discussion questions, explain grammatical structures, provide vocabulary suggestions, or simulate conversational practice. However, students should be required to critically evaluate AI outputs, revise generated texts, and justify their final decisions. Such activities promote higher-order thinking and maintain learners' active engagement in the learning process.

## V. CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence is reshaping English language education at an unprecedented pace. Generative AI technologies offer significant opportunities to enhance language learning by providing personalized feedback, increasing learner motivation, and expanding access to educational resources. Nevertheless, excessive dependence on AI may undermine critical thinking, learner autonomy, authentic language production, and academic integrity if students use AI as a substitute for their own cognitive effort.

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