

Artificial Intelligence And English Self-Study: A Case Study At Hong Bang Secondary School

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Abstract:

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an increasingly important educational tool that supports students' independent learning, particularly in English language education. This study investigated the role of AI in English self-study among Grade 9 students at Hong Bang Secondary School, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving a questionnaire administered to 43 students from an English Intensive Program and semi-structured interviews with 10 selected participants. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. The findings indicate that most students viewed AI as a valuable learning assistant that enhanced the effectiveness, convenience, and engagement of English self-study. Students reported using AI to improve vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, writing, and reading comprehension, as well as to receive immediate feedback and solve learning problems more efficiently. The results also suggest that AI encouraged greater learner autonomy by enabling students to study independently beyond the classroom. Nevertheless, a small number of students acknowledged that they occasionally relied too heavily on AI or accepted AI-generated responses without sufficient verification. Overall, the study concludes that AI has considerable potential to support English self-study when used responsibly and critically. The findings highlight the importance of promoting responsible AI use, critical thinking, and learner autonomy so that AI serves as a learning support tool rather than a substitute for students' own learning efforts.

Keywords: artificial intelligence; English self-study; learner autonomy; English language learning.

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I. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become one of the most influential technological developments in contemporary education. The emergence of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Microsoft Copilot has significantly transformed the way students access information, complete learning tasks, and develop independent learning habits. Unlike conventional learning resources, AI-powered tools provide instant explanations, personalized feedback, and interactive support, enabling learners to study anytime and anywhere. Consequently, AI has gradually become an important companion for students' self-study, particularly in learning English as a foreign language (EFL).

In English language education, AI has demonstrated considerable potential in supporting students' learning beyond the classroom. AI-powered applications can assist learners in understanding vocabulary and grammar, improving writing, generating practice exercises, and receiving immediate feedback on their language performance. A systematic review by Woo and Choi (2021) concluded that AI-based language learning tools contribute positively to language development by offering personalized learning experiences and timely feedback, while also highlighting their growing pedagogical value in foreign language education.

At the same time, the rapid development of generative AI has created both opportunities and challenges for students' self-study. On the one hand, AI enables learners to study more independently, explore learning resources efficiently, and receive learning support without waiting for teacher assistance. On the other hand, excessive reliance on AI-generated answers may reduce learners' critical thinking, problem-solving ability, and learning responsibility if these tools are not used appropriately. Recent discussions in AI in Education have therefore emphasized that AI should be regarded as a learning support tool rather than a replacement for students' own learning efforts.

Although research on AI in education has expanded rapidly in recent years, many existing studies have focused primarily on higher education, university students, or teachers' perspectives. Comparatively fewer studies have examined how lower secondary school students use AI in their daily English self-study, particularly in the Vietnamese educational context. Furthermore, little attention has been paid to students who already possess relatively strong English proficiency, such as those enrolled in English intensive programs, whose learning behaviors may differ from those of general EFL learners. This context provides an opportunity to explore how AI is currently integrated into English self-study among secondary school students.

Against this background, the present study investigates the use of artificial intelligence in English self-study among Grade 9 students at Hong Bang Secondary School. Specifically, the study explores students' patterns of AI use, the perceived benefits and challenges of AI-assisted self-study, and the role that AI plays in supporting their English learning outside the classroom. By providing empirical evidence from an English intensive class in a Vietnamese lower secondary school, this study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of AI-supported self-study and to offer practical implications for English teachers, students, and schools seeking to integrate AI into language learning in an effective and responsible manner.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. *How do Grade 9 students use artificial intelligence in their English self-study?*
2. *What benefits and challenges do students perceive when using artificial intelligence for English self-study?*

II. Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence in English Language Learning

Artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly emerged as a transformative technology in education, particularly in language learning. The development of generative AI tools has enabled learners to access immediate explanations, personalized feedback, and interactive learning experiences that were previously unavailable through conventional learning resources. As a result, AI is increasingly viewed as a valuable educational assistant that supports learners both inside and outside the classroom.

Recent research has consistently highlighted the educational potential of AI. In a comprehensive review, Chen, Chen, and Lin (2020) argued that AI can improve teaching and learning by facilitating adaptive instruction, intelligent tutoring, and personalized learning environments. Similarly, Yan et al. (2023), after reviewing 118 peer-reviewed studies on large language models (LLMs) in education, found that AI has been widely applied in educational tasks such as feedback provision, content generation, recommendation systems, and learning support. Their review also emphasized that AI should be integrated into educational practice with careful consideration of pedagogical effectiveness and ethical issues rather than being viewed merely as a technological innovation.

In English language education, AI has become particularly attractive because it provides learners with immediate language support. Students can use AI to clarify grammar points, expand vocabulary, generate writing ideas, practice conversations, and receive instant corrective feedback. These features enable learners to continue learning independently beyond classroom instruction, making AI an increasingly important resource for English language learning.

English Self-study

English self-study refers to learners' independent efforts to improve their English proficiency outside formal classroom instruction. Unlike teacher-directed learning, self-study encourages learners to take responsibility for managing their own learning activities, selecting appropriate learning resources, and evaluating their learning progress. Successful self-study has long been regarded as an essential component of foreign language learning because classroom instruction alone is often insufficient for developing communicative competence.

The concept of learner autonomy has provided an important theoretical foundation for English self-study. Henri Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning," highlighting learners' responsibility in making decisions about their learning process. Building on this perspective, Phil Benson (2011) argued that autonomous language learning involves learners actively controlling learning objectives, strategies, and learning resources. These perspectives suggest that effective English self-study requires not only motivation but also appropriate learning strategies and access to suitable learning support.

With the rapid advancement of digital technology, English self-study has evolved considerably. Traditional resources such as textbooks and dictionaries are now complemented by online platforms, mobile applications, and AI-powered learning tools. Consequently, students have greater flexibility in accessing authentic learning materials and practicing English according to their individual learning needs.

Artificial Intelligence and English Self-study

The integration of AI into students' self-study has become an emerging research topic in recent years. Rather than replacing teachers, AI is increasingly viewed as a learning companion that supports learners by providing personalized assistance, immediate explanations, and adaptive feedback throughout the learning process.

A recent scoping review by Roe and Perkins (2024) synthesized evidence from studies published between 2020 and 2024 and concluded that generative AI demonstrates considerable potential in supporting self-directed learning. Their review identified four major themes: personalized learning support, enhanced learner engagement, the continuing importance of teachers as learning facilitators, and the need for responsible AI use.

The authors also emphasized that although AI offers substantial educational benefits, empirical evidence concerning its long-term impact on learners' independent learning behaviors remains limited.

Similarly, Alfredo et al. (2023), in a systematic review of human-centred AI in education, reported that AI systems are most effective when they are designed to support rather than replace learners' decision-making processes. Their review further stressed the importance of balancing technological assistance with human guidance, learner agency, and trustworthiness in educational settings.

Despite the growing body of literature on AI in education, most existing studies have focused on higher education or adult learners. Research investigating the use of AI in English self-study among lower secondary school students, particularly within the Vietnamese context, remains relatively limited. Furthermore, little empirical evidence is available regarding students enrolled in English intensive programs, whose learning habits and technology use may differ from those of students in general education classes. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by exploring the role of artificial intelligence in English self-study among Grade 9 students at Hong Bang Secondary School.

III. Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 43 Grade 9 students from Class 9A6 at Hong Bang Secondary School, Cho Lon Ward, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Class 9A6 is an English Intensive Program in which students generally possess a relatively good foundation in English compared with students in regular classes. The participants were selected through convenience sampling because the researcher was directly responsible for teaching the class, making it possible to observe students' learning behaviors and collect data efficiently throughout the research period.

To obtain a deeper understanding of students' experiences, 10 students were further invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. The interview participants represented different levels of AI usage and learning experiences, allowing the researcher to explore a variety of perspectives regarding the use of artificial intelligence in English self-study.

Research methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' use of artificial intelligence in English self-study.

The quantitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to all 43 participants. The questionnaire was designed to investigate students' patterns of AI use, their perceived benefits, and the challenges they encountered while using AI for English self-study.

To complement the questionnaire findings, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten selected students. The interview data enabled the researcher to obtain more detailed explanations of students' experiences, opinions, and learning behaviors that could not be fully captured through the questionnaire alone.

The combination of these two research methods allowed for data triangulation, thereby providing a more comprehensive interpretation of the research findings.

Research site

The study was conducted at Hong Bang Secondary School, located in Cho Lon Ward, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The school has actively encouraged the integration of digital technologies into teaching and learning, creating a supportive environment for students to explore various online learning resources, including artificial intelligence applications.

The research focused specifically on Class 9A6, an English Intensive Program, where students are encouraged to develop independent learning habits and regularly engage in English learning activities beyond classroom instruction. This context provided an appropriate setting for investigating the role of artificial intelligence in students' English self-study.

The study was carried out over an eight-week period, from March to May 2026, during which students had continuous opportunities to use AI tools in their daily English self-study.

Research instruments

Two research instruments were employed in this study: *a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews*.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section collected participants' demographic information, including gender and their experience using artificial intelligence for English learning. The second section contained Likert-scale items designed to investigate students' use of AI in English self-study, the benefits they perceived, and the challenges they experienced. Participants responded to each statement using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

To gain more detailed insights into students' experiences, semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten participants. The interview questions focused on students' purposes for using AI, their learning experiences, the advantages and limitations of AI-assisted English self-study, and their suggestions for using AI more effectively in the future.

Data collection procedure

The study entitled "Artificial Intelligence and English Self-study: A Case Study at Hong Bang Secondary School" was conducted over an eight-week period, from March to May 2026. The data were collected according to the following procedure:

Table 1. Data collection procedure

Time	Research activities
Weeks 1–2	Introducing the research to the participants, explaining the purpose of the study, administering the pilot questionnaire, and revising the questionnaire where necessary.
Weeks 3–6	Conducting the main questionnaire survey with 43 Grade 9 students while they continued their English self-study using AI tools.
Week 7	Conducting semi-structured interviews with 10 selected students to obtain more detailed information about their experiences of using AI for English self-study.
Week 8	Organizing, coding, and analyzing the data collected from both the questionnaire and the interviews.

Data analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were coded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26) for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean (M), and standard deviation (SD), were calculated to summarize students' responses regarding their use of artificial intelligence in English self-study. These statistical measures provided an overview of students' AI usage patterns, perceived benefits, and perceived challenges.

The qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. The interview transcripts were carefully reviewed several times to identify recurring ideas and meaningful patterns. Similar responses were then grouped into common themes related to students' experiences of using AI for English self-study. The qualitative findings were used to complement and explain the quantitative results, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

By integrating quantitative and qualitative findings, the study aimed to obtain a balanced interpretation of the role of artificial intelligence in supporting English self-study among Grade 9 students at Hong Bang Secondary School.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the quality of the research instruments, both validity and reliability were carefully considered throughout the research process.

Regarding validity, the questionnaire was developed based on previous studies concerning artificial intelligence in education and English self-study. The questionnaire items were adapted to suit the research objectives and the learning context of Grade 9 students at Hong Bang Secondary School. Before the main data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experienced English teachers to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of each item. Based on their feedback, several minor revisions were made to improve the wording and clarity of the questionnaire. In addition, a pilot study involving 10 Grade 9 students who did not participate in the main study was conducted to ensure that all questionnaire items were clear, understandable, and appropriate for the target participants.

Regarding reliability, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's Alpha in IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26). The questionnaire demonstrated an acceptable level of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above the recommended threshold of 0.70. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable for educational research. Therefore, the questionnaire was considered sufficiently reliable for data collection and subsequent statistical analysis.

Overall, the procedures employed to establish the validity and reliability of the research instruments enhanced the trustworthiness of the findings and increased confidence that the collected data accurately reflected students' experiences of using artificial intelligence in English self-study.

IV. Results

Data analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire

• Students' perceptions of the benefits of artificial intelligence in English self-study

The data presented in Table 2 indicate that the participants generally held positive opinions regarding the benefits of artificial intelligence in English self-study. All four statements received relatively high mean scores, ranging from 3.77 to 4.14, indicating that most students agreed that AI played a supportive role in their independent English learning.

Among the four statements, the highest mean score was recorded for Item 3 (AI helps me solve learning problems more quickly during my English self-study) ($M = 4.14$; $SD = 0.64$). This finding suggests that students considered AI an efficient tool for obtaining immediate assistance when encountering learning difficulties. In addition, students also agreed that AI made their English self-study more interesting ($M = 3.95$; $SD = 0.69$) and helped them save time ($M = 3.91$; $SD = 0.75$). The relatively low standard deviation values indicate a high level of agreement among the participants regarding these benefits.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students recognized artificial intelligence as a valuable learning resource that enhanced both the effectiveness and convenience of English self-study.

Table 2. Students' perceptions of the benefits of artificial intelligence in English self-study

No.	Students' perceptions of the benefits of artificial intelligence in English self-study	N = 43	
		M	SD
1	Artificial intelligence helps me study English more effectively by myself.	3.77	0.78
2	AI makes my English self-study more interesting and engaging.	3.95	0.69
3	AI helps me solve learning problems more quickly during my English self-study.	4.14	0.64
4	AI saves me time when I study English on my own.	3.91	0.75
Average		3.94	0.72

(M: mean; SD: Standard deviation)

Figure 1 complements the descriptive statistics reported in Table 2 by providing a visual overview of students' response patterns. It can be observed that positive responses ("Agree" and "Strongly Agree") accounted for the largest proportions across all questionnaire items, whereas very few participants selected negative responses. This visual pattern further supports the finding that students perceived artificial intelligence as a beneficial tool for English self-study.

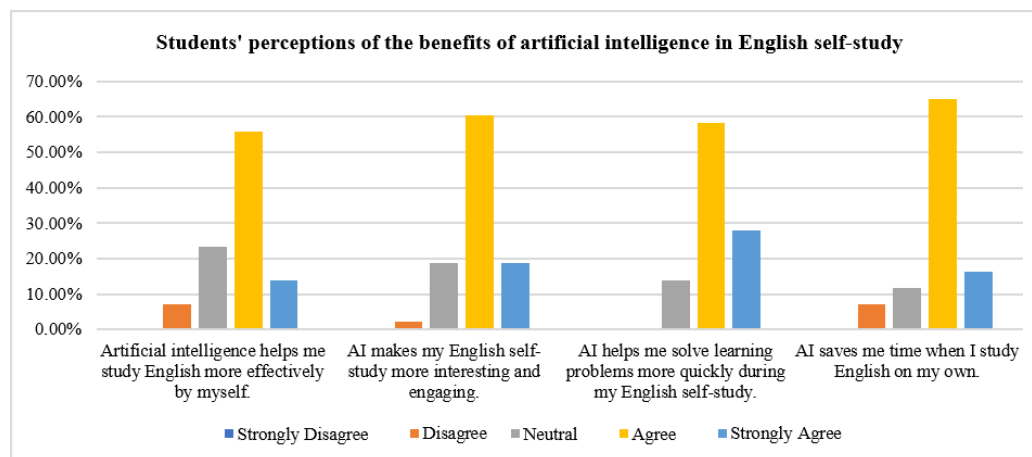


Figure 1. Distribution of students' responses regarding the benefits of artificial intelligence in English self-study

• Students' learning behaviour when using artificial intelligence for English self-study

The data presented in Table 3 show that students generally demonstrated positive learning behaviours when using artificial intelligence in their English self-study. The mean scores for the three statements ranged from 3.58 to 3.77, indicating that most participants agreed that AI encouraged them to become more independent learners and that they were aware of the importance of using AI appropriately.

Among the three statements, Item 6 (I usually check whether AI-generated answers are correct before using them) obtained the highest mean score ($M = 3.77$; $SD = 0.75$). This result suggests that many students did not completely rely on AI-generated responses but instead attempted to verify the information before applying it

to their learning. Similarly, students generally agreed that AI encouraged them to become more independent English learners ($M = 3.74$; $SD = 0.73$). Although Item 7 (I use AI as a learning support tool rather than letting it complete my learning tasks) received the lowest mean score in this category ($M = 3.58$; $SD = 0.85$), the result still indicates that most students recognized the importance of using AI responsibly.

Overall, the findings suggest that students tended to regard artificial intelligence as a learning assistant rather than a substitute for their own learning efforts, although individual differences in learning behaviours were still observed.

Table 3. Students' learning behaviour when using artificial intelligence in English self-study

No.	Students' learning behaviour when using artificial intelligence	N = 43	
		M	SD
5	AI encourages me to become a more independent English learner.	3.74	0.73
6	I usually check whether AI-generated answers are correct before using them.	3.77	0.75
7	I use AI as a learning support tool rather than letting it complete my learning tasks.	3.58	0.85
Average		3.70	0.78

(M: mean; SD: Standard deviation)

The results shown in Table 3 are further illustrated in Figure 2. The chart demonstrates that positive responses ("Agree" and "Strongly Agree") accounted for the largest proportions across all three questionnaire items. This visual pattern supports the conclusion that students generally used artificial intelligence responsibly and viewed it as a learning assistant rather than a substitute for their own learning efforts.

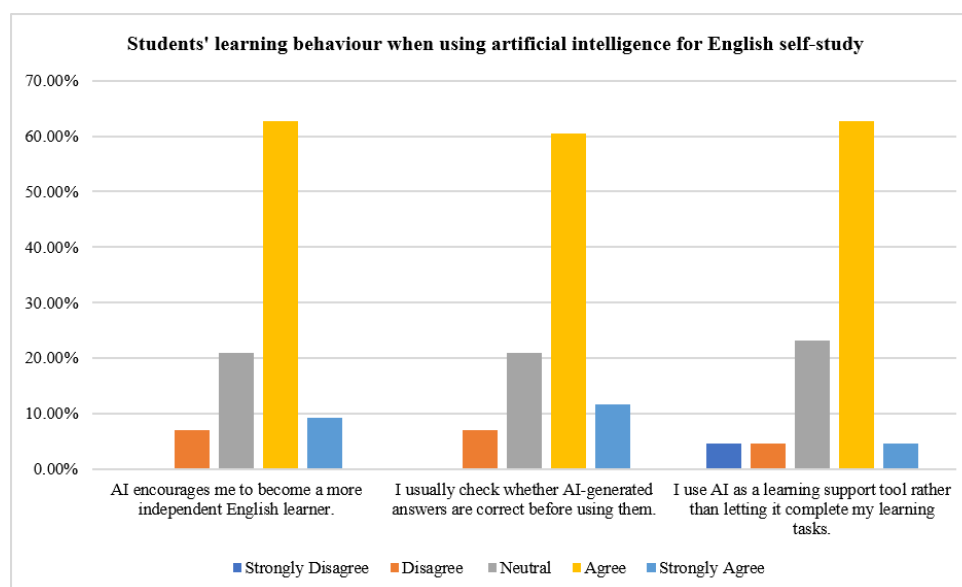


Figure 2. Students' learning behaviour when using artificial intelligence for English self-study

• Students' perceptions of the challenges of using artificial intelligence

The data in Table 4 reveal that students were also aware of several challenges associated with the use of artificial intelligence in English self-study. Although most participants acknowledged the benefits of AI, they also recognized that AI should not always be accepted uncritically.

The statement "AI sometimes gives incorrect or inappropriate answers" received a relatively high mean score ($M = 3.60$; $SD = 0.85$), indicating that many students realized that AI-generated information could occasionally be inaccurate or unsuitable for their learning purposes. Meanwhile, Item 8 (I sometimes depend too much on AI instead of solving learning problems by myself) obtained the lowest mean score in the questionnaire ($M = 2.91$; $SD = 0.75$). This finding suggests that most students did not believe they were overly dependent on AI. Nevertheless, the responses also indicate that a small number of students admitted relying on AI more frequently when facing learning difficulties.

These findings suggest that while students generally viewed AI positively, they also understood the importance of using AI critically and responsibly in the learning process.

Table 4 . Students' perceptions of the challenges of using artificial intelligence

No.	Students' perceptions of the challenges of using artificial intelligence	N = 43	
		M	SD
8	I sometimes depend too much on AI instead of solving learning problems by myself.	2.91	0.75
9	AI sometimes gives incorrect or inappropriate answers.	3.60	0.85
Average		3.26	0.80

(M: mean; SD: Standard deviation)

Figure 3 reveals an interesting contrast in students' perceptions of the challenges associated with artificial intelligence. While most participants acknowledged that AI may occasionally generate incorrect or inappropriate answers, relatively few believed that they depended excessively on AI to solve learning problems. This response pattern suggests that students were generally aware of the limitations of AI while maintaining confidence in their ability to use it as a supportive learning tool rather than relying on it uncritically.

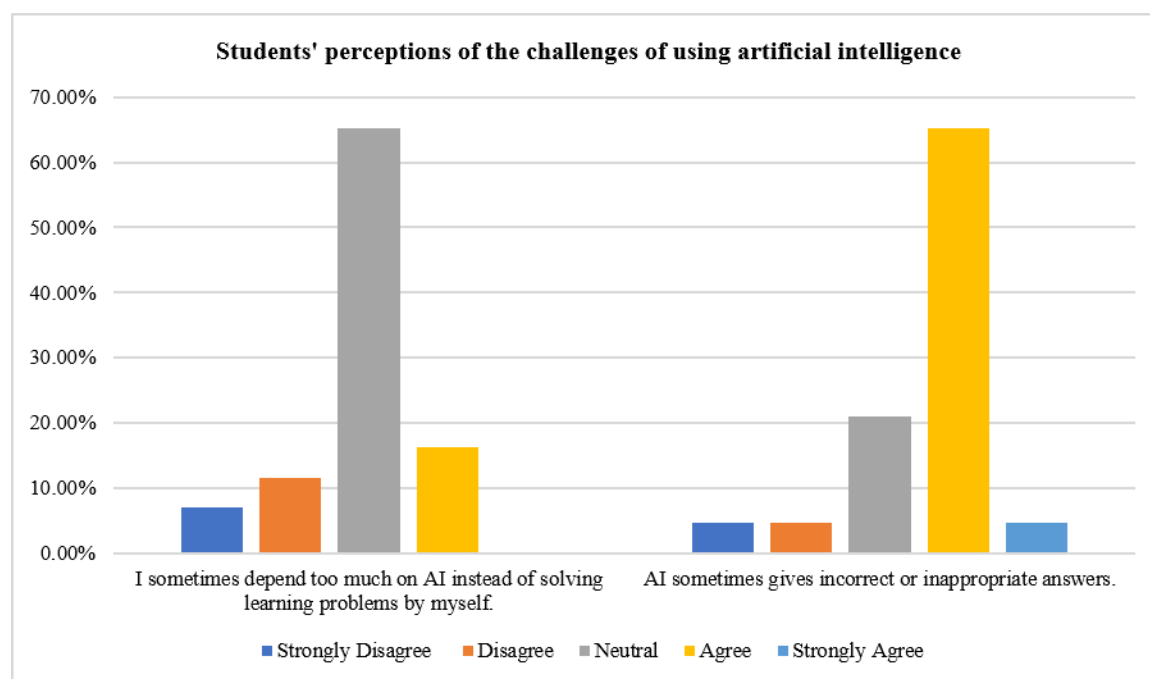


Figure 3. Students' perceptions of the challenges of using artificial intelligence

• Students' overall evaluation of artificial intelligence in English self-study

The final questionnaire item examined students' overall evaluation of the role of artificial intelligence in English self-study. As shown in Table 5, the statement received a mean score of 3.86 (SD = 0.71), indicating that students generally held positive attitudes toward the use of AI in their independent English learning.

The relatively high mean score demonstrates that most participants considered AI to be a valuable learning resource that enhanced their English self-study. At the same time, the relatively low standard deviation suggests that students shared fairly consistent opinions regarding the overall contribution of AI to their learning experience.

Overall, the questionnaire findings indicate that artificial intelligence has become an effective learning support tool for Grade 9 students at Hong Bang Secondary School. Nevertheless, the results also highlight the importance of guiding students to use AI responsibly so that it serves as a learning assistant rather than replacing their own thinking and learning efforts.

Table 5. Students' overall evaluation of artificial intelligence in English self-study

No.	Students' overall evaluation of artificial intelligence	N = 43	
		M	SD
10	Overall, artificial intelligence has had a positive impact on my English self-study.	3.86	0.71

Figure 4 summarizes students' overall evaluation of artificial intelligence in English self-study. The predominance of positive responses indicates that AI was generally perceived as a beneficial learning resource

rather than merely a technological tool. This overall evaluation provides a comprehensive picture of students' attitudes and serves as a useful transition to the qualitative findings presented in the interview section.

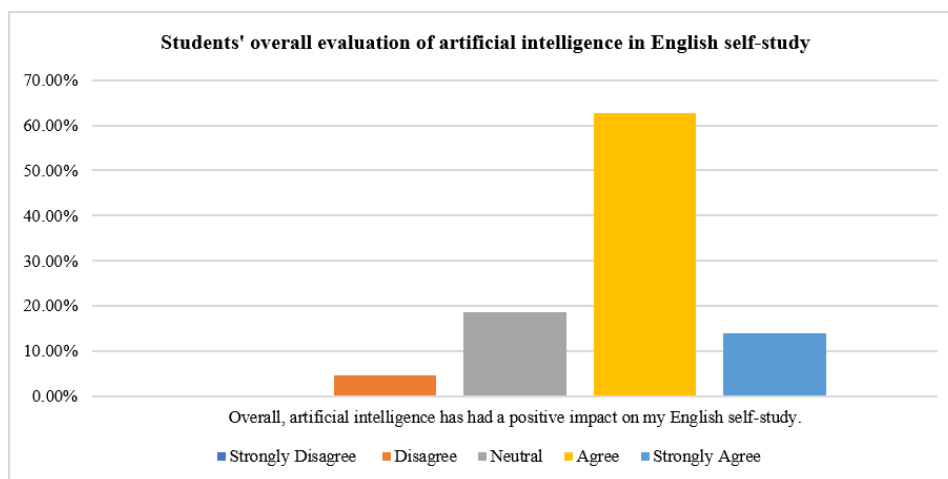


Figure 4. Students' overall evaluation of artificial intelligence in English self-study

Findings from the Semi-structured Interviews

Artificial Intelligence as a Valuable Learning Support Tool

The interview findings revealed that most participants regarded artificial intelligence as an effective learning assistant that supported various aspects of their English self-study. Students reported using different AI-powered applications, including ChatGPT, Elsa Speak, Microsoft Copilot, Claude, Qanda, and Google Translate, depending on their learning needs.

Many students emphasized that AI helped them understand grammar, expand vocabulary, improve pronunciation, generate writing ideas, summarize reading passages, and solve learning problems more efficiently. They appreciated the immediate feedback provided by AI, which enabled them to continue studying without waiting for assistance from teachers or classmates. For example, one student explained that ChatGPT suggested useful vocabulary for an English writing task, allowing the student to continue writing independently. Another student mentioned that AI helped explain difficult grammar structures step by step, making challenging exercises much easier to understand.

These findings support the questionnaire results, which showed that students highly appreciated AI's role in helping them solve learning problems efficiently and improving the effectiveness of English self-study.

AI Encourages Independent English Self-study

Most interviewees believed that AI had increased their confidence and independence when learning English outside the classroom. Several students explained that AI enabled them to solve language problems immediately without waiting until the next lesson or relying on their teachers or parents. This was considered particularly useful when studying at home or preparing for examinations.

Students also highlighted that AI encouraged them to become more active learners by allowing them to explore vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and writing independently. One student noted that AI helped improve pronunciation through instant feedback, while another stated that AI enabled him or her to expand vocabulary and improve writing quality.

Overall, the interview findings suggest that AI has considerable potential to promote independent English self-study by providing students with accessible, personalized, and immediate learning support.

Students Recognize the Limitations of Artificial Intelligence

Although students generally expressed positive attitudes toward AI, almost all interviewees acknowledged that AI-generated responses should not always be accepted without verification. Several participants reported that AI occasionally provided inaccurate translations, inappropriate grammar explanations, inconsistent answers, or unnatural language expressions. Consequently, many students stated that they usually checked AI-generated information using dictionaries, textbooks, or their teachers before applying it to their learning.

These responses indicate that students were aware that AI should be used critically rather than being regarded as a completely reliable source of information. Such findings also explain why the questionnaire results showed relatively high agreement with the statement that AI sometimes provides incorrect or inappropriate answers.

AI Should Support Learning Rather than Replace It

Perhaps the most significant finding from the interviews concerns students' awareness of the appropriate role of AI in English self-study. While most participants viewed AI as a valuable learning assistant, several students admitted that they occasionally relied too heavily on AI, especially when completing difficult homework assignments or lengthy translation tasks. Two students openly acknowledged that they sometimes allowed AI to complete learning tasks instead of attempting to solve the problems independently.

Interestingly, despite recognizing this limitation, almost all interviewees advised that AI should be used as a learning support tool rather than as a replacement for students' own thinking. They suggested that students should first attempt to solve learning problems independently and then use AI to check answers, clarify misunderstandings, or improve their work. Several participants also recommended asking AI to explain why an answer is correct instead of simply requesting the final answer.

Taken together, the interview findings reinforce the questionnaire results by demonstrating that although artificial intelligence provides substantial support for English self-study, students also recognize the importance of maintaining learning autonomy and critical thinking. The findings suggest that AI is most effective when it is used to complement students' learning rather than replace their own learning efforts.

V. Discussions

The findings of this study provide further evidence that artificial intelligence has become an increasingly valuable resource for English self-study among lower secondary school students. Overall, the participants viewed AI as a practical learning assistant that enabled them to study more efficiently, independently, and confidently outside the classroom. Rather than replacing traditional learning methods, AI appeared to complement classroom instruction by offering immediate support whenever students encountered learning difficulties. This finding is consistent with Chen et al. (2020), who argued that AI enhances learning by providing adaptive support and personalized learning experiences. Likewise, Yan et al. (2023) emphasized that generative AI creates new opportunities for individualized learning through instant feedback and interactive assistance.

Another noteworthy finding is that students used AI for a wide variety of learning purposes rather than relying on it for a single task. The interview data demonstrated that students applied AI to improve vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, writing, and reading comprehension according to their individual learning needs. Such flexibility suggests that AI has become an accessible learning companion capable of supporting multiple aspects of English learning. More importantly, students were able to select different AI tools depending on the specific learning task, reflecting a growing awareness of how technology can be integrated into independent learning.

The findings also suggest that AI has the potential to promote learner independence. Many students reported that AI enabled them to solve learning problems immediately without waiting for assistance from teachers or classmates. This indicates that AI may encourage students to become more proactive and self-reliant in managing their own learning process. These findings support Benson's (2011) view that learner autonomy involves learners taking greater control over their own learning through the effective use of available resources. In the context of this study, AI appears to function as one of those resources, providing learners with continuous academic support beyond the classroom.

Nevertheless, the study also highlights several important concerns regarding the use of artificial intelligence. Although most students recognized the educational benefits of AI, some interviewees admitted that they occasionally relied too heavily on AI to complete learning tasks, particularly when dealing with difficult homework or lengthy translation exercises. This finding suggests that while AI can facilitate learning, inappropriate use may reduce students' willingness to think independently or solve problems on their own. Such concerns are consistent with Roe and Perkins (2024), who emphasized that excessive dependence on generative AI may weaken learners' self-directed learning if AI is used as a substitute rather than as a learning aid.

Another significant finding is that most students did not completely trust AI-generated information. Instead, many participants reported checking AI-generated answers by consulting dictionaries, textbooks, or teachers before using them in their learning. This demonstrates that students were aware of the limitations of AI and had begun to develop critical attitudes toward AI-generated content. Such awareness is particularly important in the era of generative AI, where inaccurate or fabricated responses may occasionally occur. Therefore, digital literacy and critical evaluation skills should be developed alongside students' ability to use AI effectively.

Overall, this study suggests that artificial intelligence should not be viewed simply as a technological innovation but as an educational tool whose effectiveness depends largely on how students use it. When used appropriately, AI can encourage independent learning, increase learning efficiency, and provide personalized support for English self-study. However, students also need appropriate guidance from teachers to ensure that AI strengthens rather than weakens their learning autonomy. Developing responsible AI use should therefore become an important objective of English language education, particularly at the lower secondary level.

VI. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is becoming an increasingly valuable educational resource that can support students' independent learning in the digital age. Consistent with the findings of Chen et al. (2020), this study confirms that AI has considerable potential to enhance English self-study by providing immediate feedback, personalized learning support, and flexible access to learning resources. The findings indicate that most Grade 9 students at Hong Bang Secondary School perceived AI as an effective learning assistant that helped them improve various aspects of English learning, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, writing, and reading comprehension. More importantly, AI appeared to encourage students to become more confident and independent in managing their own learning outside the classroom.

The study also highlights that the educational value of AI depends largely on how students use it. Although a small number of participants admitted relying excessively on AI in certain learning situations, most students recognized that AI should be used as a supportive learning tool rather than a replacement for their own thinking and learning efforts. This finding is closely aligned with Benson's (2011) concept of learner autonomy, which emphasizes learners' responsibility for taking control of their own learning process. Therefore, teachers should not only introduce AI-powered learning tools but also guide students to use them critically, responsibly, and ethically so that technology strengthens rather than weakens learner autonomy.

Despite these encouraging findings, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted with 43 Grade 9 students from a single English Intensive class at Hong Bang Secondary School, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, the participants represented students with relatively good English proficiency; therefore, the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of students in regular classes. Third, the research was carried out over an eight-week period, making it difficult to examine the long-term influence of AI on students' English self-study. Finally, the study relied primarily on self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews, which may be subject to response bias.

Future research could involve larger samples from different schools and educational settings to obtain more representative findings. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to investigate how students' use of AI and their learner autonomy develop over time. In addition, future research may explore the impact of AI on specific English language skills or compare AI-supported learning experiences among students with different levels of English proficiency.

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