

Review Article

Combining AI and Traditional Methods to Support Students' Foreign Language Learning

Dang Hong Nhung(M.A.)^{1*}, Nguyen Ngoc Nam Son(B.A.)¹

¹Hung Vuong University - Phu Tho province

***Corresponding Author:** Dang Hong Nhung
Hung Vuong University - Phu Tho province

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Abstract: UNESCO experts have compared the invention of generative artificial intelligence (AI) to a scientific and technological breakthrough on par with the invention of electricity or the internet. Students cannot be banned from using it; instead, they need to be guided to use it safely, responsibly, and in a balanced way.

Keywords: AI, teaching, traditional methods, combination.

1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly asserting its important role in many areas of life around the world. Tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepSeek, Grammarly, as well as AI applications that support translation and generate images and videos, are being widely accessed and used by students. This rapid spread is not only changing the way knowledge is accessed but is also raising new challenges related to academic ethics, critical thinking, and self-study capacity.

In Vietnam, AI has also gradually been integrated into education, becoming an effective supporting tool for teaching and learning activities. However, the application of AI in the university environment has not yet been studied comprehensively. In particular, AI poses significant challenges to maintaining academic ethical standards, especially in ensuring honesty, originality, and fairness in learning and research. The use of AI in education needs to go hand in hand with equipping students with knowledge of digital ethics, self-study skills, and a sense of responsibility for their own academic conduct.

2. Students' overuse of AI in the learning process

Informal use of generative AI by students can lead to many negative consequences. Students are not guided on how to re-evaluate the accuracy and bias present in AI-generated results. It is also difficult for students to recognize potential copyright infringements that may appear in AI answers, given the public training data sources used by developers. More seriously, students may use AI's "creations" without citing the source in assignments, tests, and class projects. Students may also become "addicted" to using AI and other technology tools, leading to an imbalance between physical and mental development.

In Phu Tho province, Hung Vuong University is a multidisciplinary, multi-level university that trains high-quality human resources and serves as a center for scientific research and technology transfer, contributing to the socio-economic development of Phu Tho province and the surrounding region. To maintain and promote this role in the current context, applying new technologies—especially AI—in education is necessary. However, reality also shows that a lack of understanding or overuse of AI can lead to backlash effects on students' learning behavior, ranging from excessive dependence on technology to a decline in critical thinking and creative skills.

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Some students at Hung Vuong University shared that AI can help students solve exercises, write paragraphs, and translate texts. A second-year student shared: "At first, I only used AI to check my answers. But after a few times, I realized many assignments could just be done by AI. It only takes about 15 minutes of editing before I can submit it. This has made me use AI more and study reference materials less." This is not limited to second-year students; many third-year students, when facing difficult exercises in the Interpretation and Translation course, also turn to AI. AI acts like an assistant that helps students solve problems quickly and for free.

AI has become a powerful supporting tool for students' learning process. However, overusing AI also negatively affects learning quality in ways such as: excessive dependence on technology, reduced creative thinking, inaccurate or even incorrect information in answers, passive learning, academic dishonesty, and reduced personal responsibility. For this reason, students need to be guided to use AI correctly and avoid becoming dependent on it.

3. Students need to be guided on how to use AI properly

When ChatGPT was launched, many experts expressed concern that students would use AI tools to cheat academically. As advanced AI systems have become increasingly widespread in practice, universities around the world have had to make decisions on how to effectively apply these technologies while maintaining academic integrity. Instead of avoidance or prohibition, universities need to find solutions to adapt to technological development.

The results of a survey of 430 students at Hung Vuong University show that artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly becoming a familiar tool that plays a significant role in students' learning process. Among the AI applications used, ChatGPT is the most popular, chosen by about 67.4% of students, followed by Gemini at about 25.6%. In addition, translation support applications such as Google Translate and Baidu Translate are also used by students, though at a lower rate of about 7%. These figures show that students have begun to form a habit of exploiting AI tools to serve various needs in learning and research. According to the survey, AI is mainly used by students for document translation, chosen by about 46.5% of students. This is one of the highly rated functions, as AI can quickly process documents in multiple languages, helping students save time and making it more convenient to access learning materials. Besides document translation, about 27.9% of students use AI to support presentation preparation and reference searches. AI can help learners search for, systematize, and suggest necessary content, thereby supporting the preparation of lessons and presentations as well as expanding knowledge. In addition, about 20.9% of students use AI to solve exercises, and 4.7% use AI to support paragraph writing. These results reflect the diversity of students' purposes in using AI and also show that AI is gradually becoming involved in many different stages of the learning process, from information search and document processing to supporting the completion of learning products. Regarding frequency of use, the survey results show that students today tend to use AI quite regularly. As many as 230 students said they regularly use AI, accounting for 53.5% of total survey participants; 160 students said they occasionally use AI, accounting for 37.2%; while 40 students said they use AI very frequently, accounting for 9.3%. Thus, the majority of surveyed students have used AI to varying degrees, with the "regular use" group accounting for the highest proportion. This shows that AI is no longer an unfamiliar technology but has become part of the learning habits of many students. Regarding the reasons for using AI, students gave various explanations, the most prominent being AI's ability to actively support self-study. About 46.5% of students chose this reason, showing that AI is being viewed as an effective supporting tool in the process of proactively exploring and absorbing knowledge. Next, 39.5% of students said that a major advantage of AI is its ability to process information quickly, thereby helping to save time in learning and performing other tasks. About 11.6% of students chose the reason that some AI software is currently available for free, making this technology more accessible to students. In addition, 10 students, equivalent to 2.3%, said they frequently use AI because they trust the accuracy of the information the tool provides. These results show that convenience, self-study support capability, information processing speed, and accessibility are important factors driving students to use AI. However, alongside the benefits AI brings, the issue of the degree of dependence on technology is also a matter of concern. The survey results show that 65.1% of students choose to use AI only when necessary, reflecting a relatively positive awareness of viewing AI as a supporting tool rather than a complete substitute for personal capability. However, 27.9% of students admitted to being quite dependent on AI software, while 7% of students said they use AI flexibly and in combination with the self-study process. This raises the need to enhance students' awareness of how to use AI appropriately, effectively, and responsibly. In fact, AI is not an absolute tool, and the information it provides is not always 100% accurate.

AI models can provide inaccurate, incomplete, or contextually inappropriate information, so students should not assume that every answer from AI is correct. Instead, learners need to form the habit of checking, cross-referencing, and verifying information from multiple sources before use, especially for content used in learning, research, and tasks requiring high accuracy. Verifying information not only helps improve the reliability of results but also contributes to building students' capacity to search for, evaluate, and process information. In addition, to make effective use of AI, students also need to know how to ask questions and present requests clearly. Instead of asking spontaneous or overly general questions, users should take time to define their goals, think through the issue they need to solve in a general way, and then build short, specific questions that go straight to the point. A clear way of framing the problem will help AI understand the request correctly, thereby producing appropriate answers, limiting rambling information, and reducing the likelihood of

errors. After receiving an answer, students need to use their own thinking to analyze, evaluate, and select appropriate information rather than passively accepting it. This is also an important process that helps learners develop critical thinking, analytical ability, and the capacity to make decisions based on their own reasoning. From these results, it can be seen that instead of viewing AI as a tool that "does the work for them," students should regard AI as a tool that "works alongside them," that is, an assistant supporting the process of learning, research, and work. AI can take on many useful tasks such as suggesting ideas, expanding content, helping search for reference information, adjusting expression, checking grammatical errors, supporting translation, or offering different approaches to a problem. However, AI cannot and should not completely replace the human process of thinking, research, creativity, and self-study. Learners still need to play an active role in identifying problems, evaluating information, choosing options, and drawing final conclusions. It can be said that the results of the survey of 430 students at Hung Vuong University clearly reflect the growing role of AI in students' learning lives today. AI brings many practical benefits, especially in supporting self-study, saving time, processing documents, and completing learning tasks. However, the effectiveness of AI depends heavily on how people use this tool. If used passively and with excessive dependence, AI can reduce learners' ability to self-study, think independently, and think critically; conversely, if used correctly—combining the power of technology with one's own thinking ability and capacity for verification—AI will become a powerful assistant in the process of learning and working. Therefore, what matters is not whether students use AI or not, but how they use AI in a way that both takes advantage of the benefits technology brings and maintains and develops their own capacity, creativity, independence, and responsibility. AI can be a powerful ally on the journey of learning and human development, but it cannot replace human intelligence, thinking, and creativity itself.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AI has become a familiar and popular tool in the learning lives of Vietnamese students in general, and students at Hung Vuong University in particular. The proportion of students using AI tools is very high, with the main purposes being to support learning, search for information, improve writing skills, and save time. Most students view AI as a powerful assistant that helps them access knowledge faster and learn more effectively, and most are also aware of and concerned about the risk of becoming dependent on or overly reliant on AI.

However, there remain notable limitations and challenges. Students' awareness of academic ethics in using AI is still unclear, even showing signs of laxity and inconsistency in judging right from wrong when letting AI replace personal thinking. On the other hand, students' current use of AI is almost entirely spontaneous and self-taught, without specific guidance.

Therefore, measures are needed to improve effectiveness, control risks, and maximize the potential of AI in the higher education environment, such as: developing official guidelines on the use of AI in learning to ensure compliance with academic ethical standards; integrating content related to AI usage skills, digital ethics, and critical thinking into the curriculum or extracurricular activities such as seminars, discussions, and creative competitions; and, on the part of teachers, guiding students to use AI as a learning support tool rather than a replacement for personal thinking, while developing methods to check and assess the level of academic honesty of students in their work. Students need to raise their awareness of personal responsibility in using AI, especially in complying with academic ethical standards and maintaining honesty and creativity in learning, and should learn to check, critically evaluate, and verify information provided by AI rather than using it passively.

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