



Castledown

 OPEN ACCESS

Technology in Language Teaching & Learning

ISSN 2652-1687

<https://www.castledown.com/journals/tltl/>

Technology in Language Teaching & Learning, 6(3), 1–19 (2024)

<https://doi.org/10.29140/tltl.v6n3.1714>

EFL Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Ethical Uses of Artificial Intelligence Tools



JOEL NEFF^a 

KASUMI ARCIAGA^b 

MICHAEL BURRI^c 

^a*Utsunomiya University*
joeldavidneff@gmail.com

^b*Utsunomiya University*
kasumi.arciaga@gmail.com

^c*University of Wollongong*
mburri@uow.edu.au

Abstract

The use of artificial (AI) tools in language education has sparked substantial debate in recent years. Amidst these discussions are ethical considerations for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners to determine when and how to integrate AI into their language learning experiences responsibly. Addressing this query holds considerable implications, potentially impacting teaching approaches, development of materials, and assessment methods. Therefore, capturing the ethical perspectives of learners and teachers is imperative to establish robust pedagogical practices. This study aimed to initiate a dialogue on the ethical utilisation of AI tools in an EFL learning environment, heeding De Costa's call for caution against having a "one-size-fits-all approach to ethics executed from a top-down stance". The present study evaluated three hypothetical scenarios depicting fictional students using generative AI tools in their EFL coursework. These scenarios explicitly mention whether the students acknowledged their usage of tools. The scenarios were presented via an online survey to 543 first-year students and 16 teachers at a national university in Japan. The participants assessed each scenario using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely unethical) to 4 (completely ethical). An analysis of the ratings revealed that students and teachers have differing perspectives from each other on what

Copyright: © 2024 Joel Neff, Kasumi Arciaga and Michael Burri. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. **Data Availability Statement:** All relevant data are within this paper.

constitutes ethical and appropriate utilization of AI tools in academic work. The paper culminates with a discussion that elucidates EFL learners' viewpoints on the ethical integration of AI tools within an educational context.

Keywords: AI, ethics, higher education, EFL

Introduction

The rapid advancement and proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) tools have impacted every aspect of modern society. As David Brooks (2023), an opinion columnist for *The New York Times*, observed, “the most important thing about AI may be that it shows us what it can’t do, and so reveals who we are and what we have to offer”. The consensus of the public seems to be that AI is here to stay. It will become an indispensable tool that is deeply integrated into our lives. The integration of AI tools is also becoming deeply embedded in modern digital workplace tools. Microsoft Office 365 now integrates AI in the form of Copilot to assist, for example, with email creation and the extraction of data from Excel spreadsheets. Google Workspace also utilizes AI and synchronizes various apps to schedule meetings, email replies, and different Google documents and forms. These are just some instances that show that AI is not a mere enhancement but a core component in changing the ways work is done and how work is delivered in the most efficient and effective manner. Essentially, the embedded AI will be indistinguishable from the product itself. These recent developments are making the presence of AI inescapable across numerous domains, including education. Thus, academic institutions and the policymakers who create their bylaws must now keep pace with the integration of AI in English as a foreign language (EFL) education and beyond. The potential applications of AI in educational settings are vast, ranging from personalised learning experiences and adaptive assessments to automated grading and content generation. However, as these innovative technologies become increasingly pervasive in everyday society, the ethical considerations of their implementation and usage must be thoroughly addressed.

Lawmakers are now attempting to legislate the rapid deployment of AI tools to increase ethical considerations. However, attempts so far to ban, for example, the use of AI from schools and law offices have failed. Despite these legislative challenges, recognising the critical need for ethical guidance, De Costa (2024) called for the necessity of conducting grassroots research to develop an appropriate and inclusive approach that will address the ethical implications of using AI in various English language teaching contexts. However, ethical understandings and perceptions of AI are not universal (Luo, 2024) and thus empirical research examining the diverse perspectives of key stakeholders, such as students and teachers, is crucial. Exploring viewpoints at the grassroots level can reveal insights from those directly impacted by the integration of AI within educational environments. In turn, these insights can inform the development and implementation of more ethical practices surrounding the use of AI technologies in educational settings.

The present study therefore aimed to provide initial insights into how students and teachers viewed ethical considerations regarding the utilization of AI tools in an EFL context. Specifically, the study investigated Japanese university students' and teachers' perceptions through hypothetical yet realistic scenarios involving the use of AI tools in EFL classrooms. By directly exploring the viewpoints of these students and teachers, this study offered novel insights into the perceived ethical considerations surrounding the employment of AI tools in the setting of EFL in higher education.

Literature Review

AI Tools in Higher Education

The advancement of AI has disrupted society and sparked widespread debates, especially among educators. As AI is becoming increasingly sophisticated and capable of performing complex tasks such as producing lengthy texts, concerns have arisen regarding the ethical implications and potential consequences of their proliferation in schools. Generative AI models such as ChatGPT have been at the forefront of these discussions, presenting new challenges that warrant careful examination (Hockly, 2023). The introduction of ChatGPT in November 2022 triggered substantial dialogue, forcing educational institutions to grapple with the implications of AI for academic integrity and policies. Renowned institutions such as Harvard and Oxford University responded to the surge of AI capabilities by attempting to maintain ethical standards and uphold the principles of academic integrity (Plata et al., 2023). Overall, the arrival of ChatGPT prompted a re-evaluation of the existing guidelines and led to a broader conversation about the need to adapt academic policies to account for the disruptive potential of AI tools in educational settings (De Costa, 2024).

It is crucial to note that the discourse prompted by these institutions included a suggestion that the integration of AI tools in education should be allowed and advocated for the formulation of academic policies allowing teachers the autonomy “to set their standards as long as these standards were explicit in their syllabi” (Plata et al., 2023, p. 753). Contributing to the discourse on academic policies, Luo (2024) conducted a comprehensive review of AI use in higher education. Her analysis critically examined policies from 19 top universities, revealing that they focused on ensuring the originality of students’ work. The use of AI tools presented challenges in defining plagiarism because these tools could be considered external sources functioning as third-party resources, similar to ghostwriters. Recognising the issue of originality, Luo (2024) called for the need to contextualise the originality of students’ work, recognizing that students are already utilising AI tools in their writing. Therefore, labelling the use of AI tools as an external resource, as often highlighted in various academic university policies, is questionable.

Meanwhile, numerous studies have – or are being – conducted on the integration and use of AI tools, often with the aim of advancing foreign language learning. Research has, for instance, examined both the advantages and disadvantages of AI in educational settings (Barrot, 2023; Baskara & Mukarto, 2023; Cotton et al., 2023; Hockly, 2023), as well as its pedagogical implications for teachers and academic policymakers (Crawford et al., 2023; Kostka & Toncelli, 2023; Perkins, 2023). These studies have provided valuable insights, such as the advantages and drawbacks of AI use; however, relatively little is still known about EFL students’ and teachers’ perceptions of the ethical use of AI tools. Examining these perceptions is paramount. As AI tools become increasingly sophisticated and accessible, their potential for misuse in academic settings grows. Understanding how students and teachers view the ethical boundaries around AI can inform policies and guidelines to uphold academic integrity. Moreover, the perspectives of those directly involved in EFL teaching and learning are vital, as they navigate the practical realities of using AI tools in their daily work and studies. Their voices offer insights that can shape the responsible development and deployment of AI in education. Additionally, understanding ethical perceptions is necessary to bridge the gap between the rapid technological advancements of AI and the moral frameworks needed to govern its use.

Student’s Perceptions and Use of AI Tools

The number of studies exploring EFL students’ attitudes and perceptions toward AI tools in foreign language learning and writing contexts is steadily increasing. The findings reveal students’ positive

sentiments and a general acceptance of AI. For instance, a large-scale study involving 867 Chinese EFL learners found a correlation between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, intention to use, and actual use of AI tools while learning English (Liu et al., 2024). The study highlighted learners' diverse strategies when using AI tools across different language learning contexts.

Similarly, Kurniati and Fithriani's (2022) research investigated the perceptions of 20 postgraduate students concerning the utilization of Quillbot to rephrase and rewrite texts included in documents. Employing a combination of interviews and questionnaires, the study demonstrated that the students regarded this specific AI tool as a valuable asset in enhancing their writing skills and confidence. Echoing these findings, in another study, 150 university students from Pakistan viewed AI tools as convenient and accessible writing aids (Bibi & Atta, 2024).

Resembling Kurniati and Fithriani's (2022) and Bibi and Atta's (2024) work, the perceptions of Vietnamese EFL students regarding AI tools such as ChatGPT in their writing classes have been investigated (Phan, 2023). The results showed the students' ($n = 100$) positive attitudes towards the use of AI, and they valued its accessibility and simplicity. The students also reported that the assistance of AI instilled a sense of excitement, and they felt that it enhanced their writing skills.

It must be noted that EFL students' perceptions are not uniformly positive. While recognising the convenience and accessibility of AI tools, several studies (e.g., Bibi & Atta, 2024; Phan, 2023) highlighted students' perceived drawbacks that could dampen their enthusiasm for using AI, including inaccuracies and repetitiveness. Interestingly, a word association study which looked at 130 university students in Türkiye revealed that participants tended to express more negative words in connection with AI (Keleş & Aydın, 2021). This suggests that while students become more exposed to the advancements and news surrounding AI, they might not necessarily favour its use.

Beyond perceptions and attitudes, researchers have examined the impact of AI-based assistance on students' learning agency and writing skills. For instance, research explored the impact of AI use on students' learning agency during peer feedback activities (Darvishi et al., 2024). The researchers found that students tended to depend on AI tools rather than utilising them as learning resources. Furthermore, the study revealed no significant difference between the integration of human feedback and AI assistance and the sole use of AI assistance. Yan (2023) also explored the implications of integrating AI tools into EFL writing curricula during a teaching practicum. Post-practicum results showed the participants' more diverse lexical choices and a reduction in grammatical errors. However, the participants also expressed reservations about the use of AI tools, indicating that AI was not universally suitable for all writing tasks. Notably, the participants exhibited negative attitudes and expressed concerns about AI's potential to compromise ethical considerations in writing, suggesting the need for research to examine ethical issues in the use of AI tools.

EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Use of AI Tools

Multiple studies have investigated viewpoints of students, but research on teachers' perceptions remains underexplored. The viewpoints of 17 EFL teachers in Thailand were examined through interviews (Ulla et al., 2023). The findings showed that the teachers actively utilised AI tools to create lessons, viewing them as powerful teaching resources. However, concerns were raised about potential over-reliance on AI tools, implying that teachers may need to incorporate external, non-AI resources that are already physically available.

Other relevant research has compared teachers' and students' perceptions and use of AI tools. Mandal and Mete (2023), for example, investigated the incorporation of AI into EFL curricula. Both teachers

and students acknowledged the potential usefulness of AI as an educational resource. Interestingly, while students generally believed that AI tools would not replace teachers, the educators held mixed views regarding this matter.

What has been missing in the current research on EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of AI use is a thorough examination of the ethical issues. Recent comprehensive publications, such as *Creative Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Education* (Urmeneta & Romero, 2024), have begun to address this by looking at the deeper implications of what educators mean by the term "ethical" when applied to the use of AI tools. In addition, the European Union emphasises that ethical considerations for AI tools must include "human agency", "fairness", "humanity", and "justified choice" (European Commission, 2022, p. 18). As discussed in the introduction, this seems particularly important, given the scarcity of research on the ethical dimensions of AI's integration, as well as the limited research on the ethical use and perceptions of AI in EFL teaching and learning contexts.

Subsequently, the present study aimed to make an important contribution to the ever-growing discourse surrounding the influence of AI in EFL learning and teaching in the context of Japan. This line of inquiry is essential to uncover potential divergences or convergences between students and teachers regarding the integration of AI in EFL settings, and eventually to clearly establish and then refine strategies for the integration of AI tools into language learning, teaching practices, curricula, and policies. Many studies investigating the use and perceptions of AI tools have drawn on questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. Although we also used a survey, we have chosen to use hypothetical scenarios to attain in-depth and rich perspectives of both students and teachers in a Japanese EFL university programme. The following research questions guided the present study:

1. How familiar are Japanese university students and their instructors with AI tools and what tools do they currently use?
2. What are the perceptions of Japanese university students and their instructors toward the ethical use of AI tools in assisting with the completion of learning tasks?

Methodology

Research Context

The research was conducted at a national university in Japan during November 2023. The university maintains a first-year student population of approximately 1000 individuals, with all first-year students being required to participate in 2 years of English classes. During their first year, they are instructed by two teachers, one being a native Japanese speaker, the other being a native-English speaker, in separate lessons. Over the course of a week, the students meet with the Japanese teacher for two 90-minute lessons and the non-Japanese teacher for one 90-minute lesson, totalling three weekly classes. The first-year classes focus on core skills such as reading and writing courses taught by native Japanese-speaking teachers, and listening and speaking courses taught by native English-speaking teachers. On the instructor side, the program consists of 8–10 full-time native Japanese teachers and an additional 8–10 part-time native English-speaking lecturers.

Participants

In total, 543 first-year students out of approximately 1000 participated in the study. All first-year students were encouraged to participate and given the opportunity during class. The students were recent high school graduates aged 18 to 19 years old. Their English ability was basic to upper intermediate, as

determined by several metrics, including high school test results and standardised tests such as the Test of English for International Communication, which follows those under A1 to B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference. The students were divided equally across male ($n = 284$), female ($n = 252$), and unknown ($n = 7$), and came from across Japan, but mainly from the Kanto region. The students were enrolled in five major undergraduate degrees: Agriculture (農学部), Education (共同教育学部), International Studies (国際学部), Engineering (工学部), and Regional Design (地域デザイン学部). Additionally, 16 teachers, ranging from those in their first year of employment at the university to those who had worked there for more than 10 years, participated in the study.

Research Design

Surveys are a proven method for gathering data from a large group of participants (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Online survey tools such as those freely available from Google or Qualtrics enable surveys to be carried out quickly and easily, while built-in analytical tools are capable of creating near instantaneous graphs, charts, and statistics.

For this study, a survey was designed and implemented via the Google Forms application. The survey was primarily quantitative, consisting of the participants' background information, their experience with AI tools, and six hypothetical scenarios that explored ethical applications. The participants were asked to rate the scenarios on a modified Likert scale. An additional minor qualitative component (Riazi, 2017) consisted of an open-ended item which asked the participants to write down their personal experiences related to the hypothetical scenarios in the student survey. To ensure the clarity and ease of access of the items, the second author translated all of them into Japanese and then had a research assistant verify the accuracy of the translation.

Once done, the study and its survey were submitted to and approved by the first and second authors' university ethics committee. The survey contained a short disclaimer informing the participants about what data would be collected, how the data would be used, and how they would be shared. Participants were voluntarily asked to explain that they had read and understood the disclaimer before they could begin the survey.

Data Collection

After piloting the survey (created in Google Forms) with a small group ($n = 22$) of second-year students at the same university, the student version of the survey was distributed to all first-year students via a hyperlink in the university's online teaching platform, as well as through a QR code that teachers could print and distribute manually. Each question was presented in English and Japanese for ease of comprehension and to improve the response times. The students were given approximately 10 minutes to complete the survey in class.

The teacher survey had a further 12 open-ended questions (for a total of 14), primarily giving the option to add comments expanding and explaining the choices made in the multiple-choice answer section, as there were fewer respondents for this section of the research. The teachers were given a link to the online survey and asked to complete it within 2 weeks.

Two surveys were administered to elicit comparative (i.e., student and teacher) data about the ethical use and perspectives of AI tools. It was suspected that a gap may exist regarding the ethical boundaries in question. To that end, the resulting data could be used to show where such a gap might exist and possibly, through the use of the qualitative data, illustrate fundamental differences between those

designing courses (i.e., the teachers) and those who will be assessed during the courses. If such gaps exist between students' and teachers' perceptions, identifying them is critical to building courses and curricula that are equitable and fair to students.

Survey Instrument

The survey consisted of three different sections to elicit the participants' (1) background and their awareness or use of AI tools, (2) experience with AI tools, and (3) their evaluation of six scenarios. The open-ended questions were considered to be part of Item 3.

Background and Awareness of AI Tools

In the first section, participants were asked about their backgrounds, as well as their awareness of, familiarity with, and actual use of AI tools. The background information requested consisted of demographic and biographical information. It was again suspected that by including gender, teaching experience, and other factors in the teacher survey, gaps and specific differences might appear in the data that could then be analysed.

The survey tool included a list of generative AI tools, such as Chat GPT, Google Gemini, and Canva Magic Design. This list was compiled by scanning the headlines for news about AI tools and by looking at contemporary research papers and presentations. This section allowed the researchers to assess the participants' awareness of the current field of AI tools and then compare it to their familiarity with specific tools that had been part of the zeitgeist over the preceding few months.

Experience with AI Tools

In this section, participants were asked about their experiences using the AI tools included in the previous section of the survey. Nine queries were framed as statements to which the participants could respond with one of three choices:

- Yes, with the teacher's permission.
- Yes, on my own initiative and volition.
- No, I have not.

The queries ranged from general experience with AI tools (e.g., "I have used AI tools at school") to be more specific, such as "I have used AI tools to answer questions during class." However, all the questions avoided mentioning any specific tool in favour of the generic term *AI tool* to avoid biases. The queries were arranged into three categories:

1. Using AI to do homework or in-class assignments;
2. Using AI to translate instructions or lesson materials;
3. Using AI to create materials for classwork (e.g., graphics or video).

As with the first section, all questions and answer choices were provided in both English and Japanese. These items probing the same underlying issues explored through the ethical scenarios (see the next section) provided crucial insights into participants' experiences with AI tools and their attitudes regarding what constitutes ethical use of those same tools. This triangulation of multiple items examining the focal concept of students' and teachers' ethical perceptions of the use of AI tools was a vital component of the survey's design.

Ethical Scenarios

The third and last section of the survey consisted of six scenarios designed to assess students' and teachers' perceptions of ethical AI use. The scenarios provided a way of asking participants to imagine themselves in a situation and to provide a response that could be quantified without revealing their identities (Bielak & Mystowska-Wiertelak, 2020). When used effectively, scenarios "highlight selected parts of the real world that can help unpackage individuals' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes to a wide range of social issues" (Hughes, 2001, p. 384). The six scenarios were devised by the first two authors. The authors drew on their extensive teaching experience to ensure that the scenarios were tasks commonly encountered by teachers and students in EFL classes. However, only three of the six scenarios (see below for a brief description of the three scenarios), plus the teachers' open-ended responses are examined in this paper. The authors selected the three scenarios that focused on students' completion of learning tasks. Choosing only half the scenarios allowed for an in-depth analysis of one particular aspect of the survey data (i.e., completing learning tasks) and, subsequently, a detailed discussion of the results within the word count stipulated by the journal's author guidelines.

The participants were asked to read the scenarios and then rate them on a 4-point Likert scale. While Likert scales often have five choices, according to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), the actual number, whether odd or even, has little bearing on the results generated by a survey. According to Hughes and Huby (2002), however, the researchers felt that an odd-numbered scale (e.g., five points) would provide students with too many opportunities and would subsequently lead them to choose the safe middle ground. A 4-point scale, therefore, pushed students towards either end of the spectrum, providing the researchers with a clear dividing line between unethical (1 and 2) and ethical (3 and 4) behaviour being described in each scenario. As shown in Figure 1, the rating scale was as follows: 1 = absolutely unethical and 4 = completely ethical, with 2 and 3 being left unlabelled.

Each scenario was provided in both English and Japanese. The scenarios were composed through an extensive process of discussion between the researchers, drawing on their diverse professional experiences across multiple domains, and careful observations made over many years of teaching EFL in several different contexts. The discussions allowed the researchers to collectively identify and expand upon common patterns and situations they had encountered, synthesising their insights to construct a comprehensive set of hypothetical yet realistic scenarios that effectively captured the complexities surrounding the ethical use of AI tools in an EFL context. After the discussion and design of the scenarios, Author 2 translated them from English into Japanese. The following are the six scenarios that were included in the survey:

Scenario 1. Risa asked ChatGPT for her essay ideas. She then wrote her draft in English on her own. She then copied and pasted the text into ChatGPT and proofread it. She submitted her essay as her own work.

1 2 3 4

Absolutely unethical 完全に非倫理的 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Completely ethical 完全に倫理的

Figure 1 A Screenshot of the Scale as Shown in the Survey Tool.

This scenario was chosen due to its relevancy, as it reflects a common occurrence frequently observed and reported by the researchers in their experience teaching EFL writing courses. Given the researchers' firsthand exposure to such situations in their teaching contexts, this scenario was deemed to be an appropriate representation of real-life experiences faced by EFL students and instructors.

Scenario 2. Ami has forgotten to do her homework assignment. It is due tomorrow. Ami types the homework assignment into ChatGPT and asks the software to write her assignment for her. When the software is finished, Ami copies the AI's answer into her work and tells her teacher that the AI wrote it.

This scenario was included to examine participants' perspectives on the ethical implications of using AI tools such as ChatGPT to generate complete assignments or written work that would then be submitted as one's own. It raises questions about academic integrity, plagiarism, and the appropriate use of AI assistance in educational contexts.

Scenario 3. Haruto will do a presentation for his class assignment in a few weeks. He has done a lot of research, but he cannot find the right image to support his work. He uses MidJourney to create an image that he can use in his presentation. He cites AI as part of his credits.

This scenario arose from the authors asking themselves how they would use AI; for example, what would they consider an ethical use of AI tools? While many situations were discussed, the use of image-generating AI seemed something that both students and teachers would be likely to do.

The three scenarios not included in the present study are as follows. One scenario involved a student using a translation application to understand the textbook's content. Another scenario focused on a student using a translation app to translate their Japanese essay into English. The third scenario was similar to Scenario 1 (Risa) in the present study, but in this case, the student wrote an essay based on the ideas derived from ChatGPT.

Results

The results derived from the survey data demonstrated that the participating students and teachers possessed high awareness but relatively limited experience with the use of AI tools. Furthermore, the data showed an alignment between the students' and the teachers' perceptions of two of three scenarios. The open-ended responses at the end of the survey also indicated considerable variety among the students' views of the ethical use of AI tools, whereas the teachers' responses were mostly context-specific.

Familiarity with and Use of AI Tools Among Japanese Undergraduate Students and Their EFL Teachers

The survey responses showed that general awareness of AI tools was high. Approximately 69% of the students ($n = 374$) surveyed and 100% ($n = 16$) of the teachers said they were familiar with the term AI. However, actual experience with and use of AI was much more limited. About one-third of the students (32.6%; $n = 177$) had used AI tools with their teachers' permission, and just under half of the learners (42.2%; $n = 229$) reported having used AI tools on their own initiative (i.e., without being prompted by their teacher). Almost one-third (25.2%; $n = 137$) had never used them.

As for the teachers, about two-thirds of them (62.5%; $n = 10$) indicated that they had made use of AI tools in their teaching, whereas 37.5% ($n = 6$) said they had not. In the open-ended section, various reasons were stated for utilizing AI tools:

- translating ($n = 3$), e.g., “Translate emails that I receive”;
- gathering/looking for information ($n = 2$), e.g., “I use AI tools to quickly gather information, insights, and explanations for academic topics and writing support”;
- checking writing, including students' work ($n = 2$), e.g., “I have used ChatGPT to check my students' writing assignments”;
- creating class activities ($n = 1$), e.g., “Creating rubrics and worksheet ideas”;
- adjusting to work demands ($n = 1$), e.g., “I utilized the previously mentioned artificial intelligence tools for translating documents and aiding in adapting to work demands.”¹

One key difference between the teachers and students was the scope of the tools used. While almost all teachers (100%) and students (99%) had heard of ChatGPT, the other tools were not as well-known on the student side. One particular example stands out, in that all of the teachers indicated familiarity with Grammarly (a grammar, spelling, and punctuation checker), while only 12.5% of the students knew about it. The teachers' responses also indicated a greater depth of familiarity with AI tools, naming several that were absent from the students' responses, including Quillbot and Genni.

Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of the Ethical Use of AI Tools

The analysis of the students' ($n = 543$) and the teachers' ($n = 16$) survey responses to the three scenarios on the ethical use of AI tools in assisting with the completion of learning tasks showed that the students' perceptions aligned with the teachers' perceptions in two of the three presented scenarios.

In the first scenario, the students were asked to rate Risa's practice of asking ChatGPT for essay ideas before writing a draft in English on her own and then having ChatGPT proofread it. Risa submits the essay as her own work. As shown in Figure 2, 15.3% of the students ($n = 83$) rated Risa's scenario to be completely ethical and more than one-third (37.6%; $n = 204$) thought it was probably ethical, while almost one-third (30.2%; $n = 164$) considered this to be probably unethical and 16.9% ($n = 92$) viewed it as completely unethical.

The teachers' perceptions of Risa's scenario matched the students' perceptions (see Figure 3). Three (18.8%) of the 16 teachers thought that brainstorming ideas with ChatGPT and then having it proofread one's work was completely ethical, but almost half of the teachers (43.8%, $n = 7$) perceived this to be somewhat ethical. Risa's practice was deemed to be somewhat unethical by one-third of the teachers (31.3%, $n = 5$) and one teacher considered this to be completely unethical, supporting the student data in that a notable number of students and teachers thought that an EFL learner asking AI tools for ideas and proofreading their work was more or less acceptable.

The second scenario presented the students and teachers with a case of a student (Ami) having forgotten to complete her homework assignment and consequently asking ChatGPT to write it for her. She submits the assignments and informs her teacher that ChatGPT had produced her piece of writing. As Figure 4 depicts, more than half of the surveyed students believed this to be completely unethical (25%; $n = 136$) or probably unethical (36.3%; $n = 197$). Almost one-third of the cohort (27.1%; $n = 147$) thought this was perhaps ethical, and 11.6% ($n = 63$) considered Ami's case to be completely ethical.

¹ Not all teachers provided additional context for their answers.

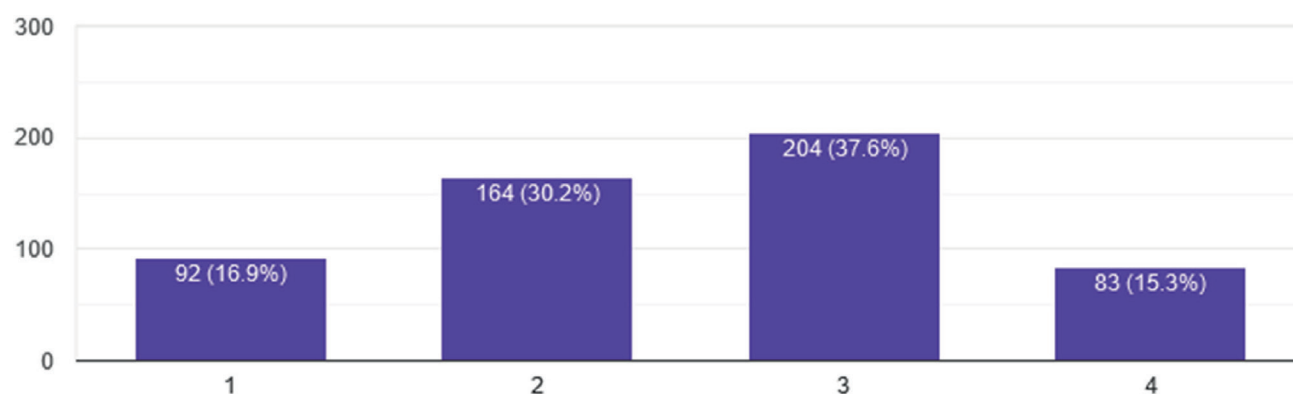


Figure 2 *Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT Proofreading a Student's Work.*

Note: 1 = Completely Unethical; 2 = Probably Unethical; 3 = Probably Ethical; 4 = Completely Ethical.

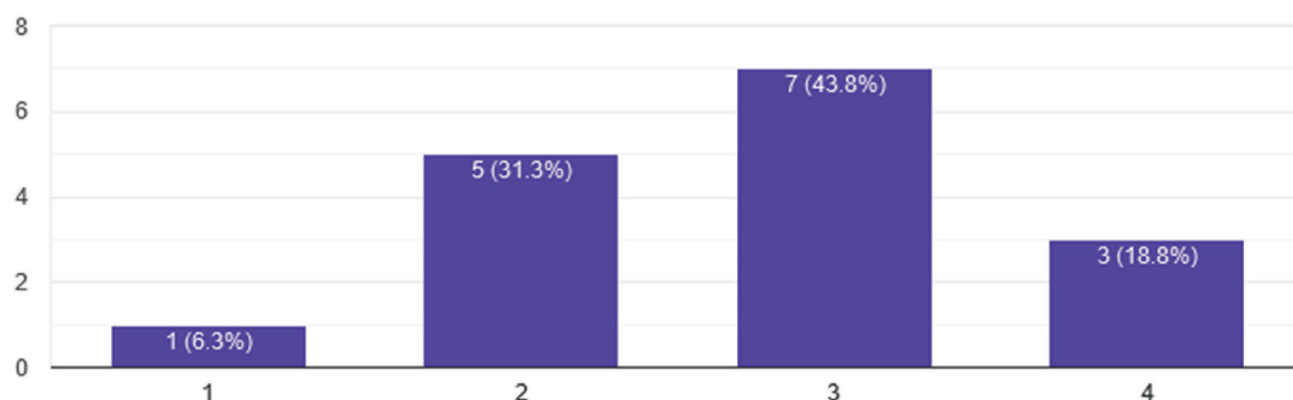


Figure 3 *Teachers' Perceptions of ChatGPT Proofreading Student Work.*

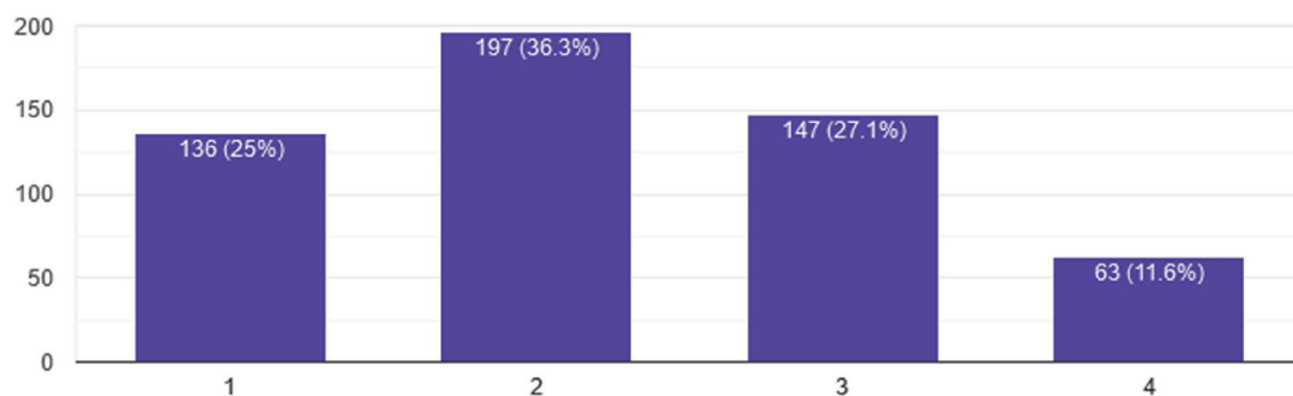


Figure 4 *Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT Producing an Assignment.*

It is worth noting here is that while more than one-third of all the students (38.7%) considered Ami's scenario to be probably or completely ethical, the majority of the 543 students (78.8%; $n = 428$) that were surveyed indicated that they had never used AI tools to produce entire homework assignments (see Figure 5). This corresponds with previous research showing that students tend not to utilise AI to finish their assignments because of their lack of technical knowledge, as reported by Phan (2023).

However, students in Bibi and Atta's (2024) research acknowledged the significant role AI tools can play in assisting them to fulfil certain aspects of assignments, such as writing tasks.

As Figure 6 illustrates, the majority of the students in the current study indicated that they had no experience with using AI tools to complete assignments. The students' responses aligned with the teachers' answers, in that two-thirds of the teachers (68.8%; $n = 11$) reported that they did not allow their students to use AI tools to complete classwork. This perspective resonates with the study conducted by Ulla et al. (2023), in which teachers expressed apprehension about their students' excessive reliance on AI tools such as ChatGPT. They were concerned that this reliance would "hinder the development of writing and language skills and contribute to a lack of critical thinking" (p. 11). The teachers in the present study shared a similar concern where assessments and grading heavily hinge on students' independent production (see also Luo, 2024).

Comparing the students' with the teachers' perceptions towards AI-generated homework assignments, it was evident that teachers were more critical of Ami's scenario of using ChatGPT to complete her

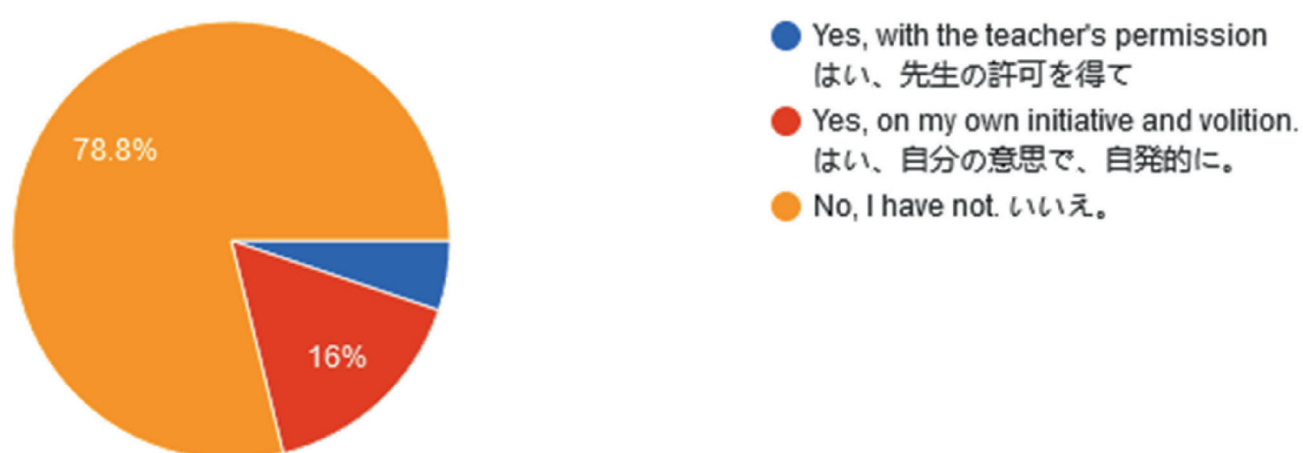


Figure 5 Number of Students Having Used AI Tools to Complete Homework Assignments (e.g., an essay or speech).

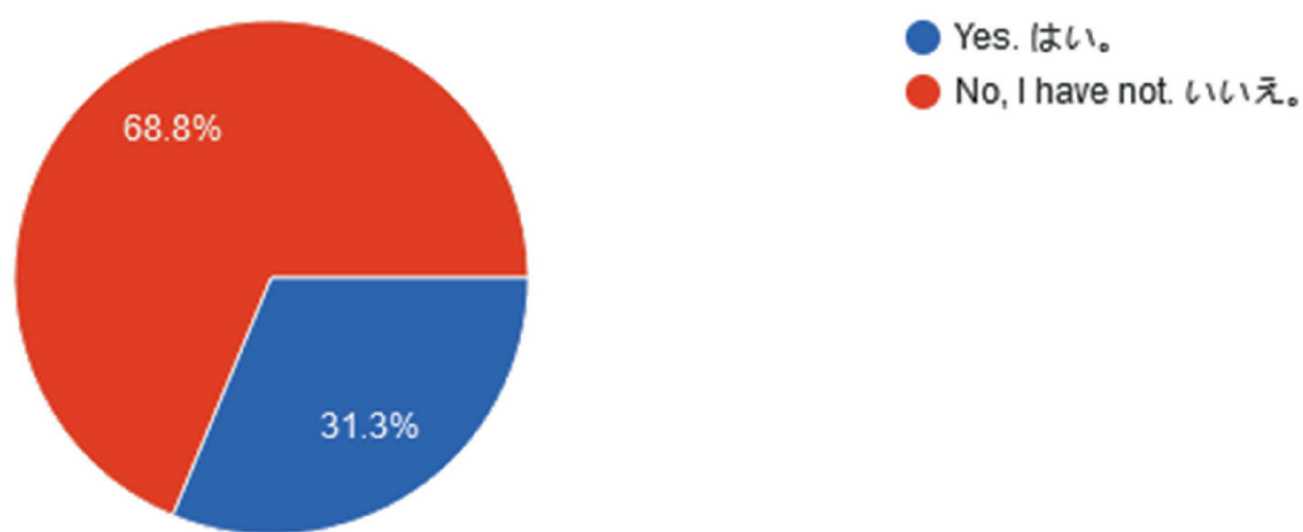


Figure 6 Teachers Allowing Students to Use AI Tools to Complete Classwork.

writing assignment than the students, and thus the perceptions of the two groups did not quite align. Quarter of the students ($n = 136$) thought Ami's practices were completely unethical but, as shown in Figure 7, almost two-thirds of the 16 participating teachers (62.5%; $n = 10$) believed this particular case was completely unethical, two teachers thought it was probably unethical (12.5%), three considered it to be probably ethical (18.8%), and only one teacher (6.3%) viewed as completely ethical.

In the third scenario, Haruto is unable to locate an appropriate image that supports an in-class presentation he has been working on, so he uses an AI tool to create an image. Once done, Haruto includes the AI-generated image and references the tool in his presentation. As depicted in Figure 8, three-quarters of the participating students (74.8%; $n = 406$) were in favour of Haruto's actions, with 38.5% ($n = 209$) indicating it was probably ethical and 36.6% ($n = 197$) believing it to be completely ethical. Relatively few students (19%; $n = 109$) suggested that Haruto's use of an AI tool to generate and use an image in classwork was somewhat unethical, and only 6.3% ($n = 34$) thought it was completely unethical.

Resembling the students' perceptions, few teachers had any issues with this scenario. Figure 9 illustrates that 12 of them (75%) thought Haruto's actions were completely ethical, three (18.8%) viewed it as somewhat ethical, and only one (6.3%) believed this to be somewhat unethical.

It is worth noting that while most students and teachers seemed to have few issues with including AI-generated images in classwork, relatively few students (75.1%; $n = 408$) and teachers (87.5%; $n = 14$) that participated in this study indicated having any experience with using AI tools to

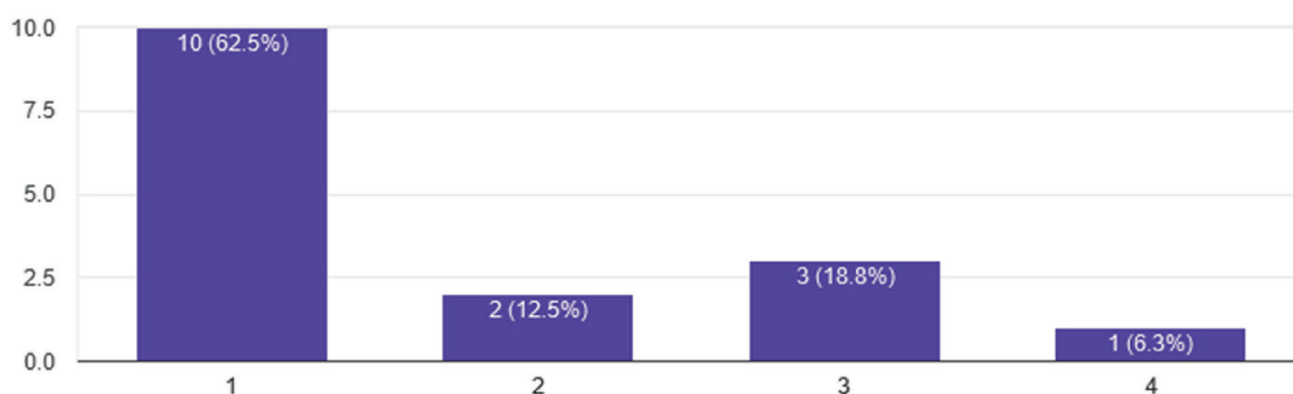


Figure 7 Teachers' Perceptions of ChatGPT Producing an Assignment.

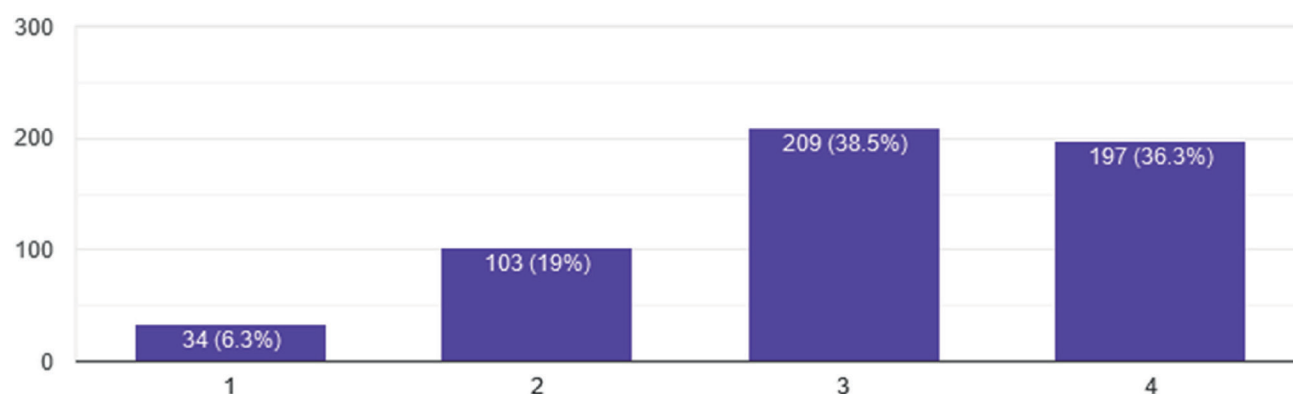


Figure 8 Students' Perceptions of Use of AI-Generated Images.

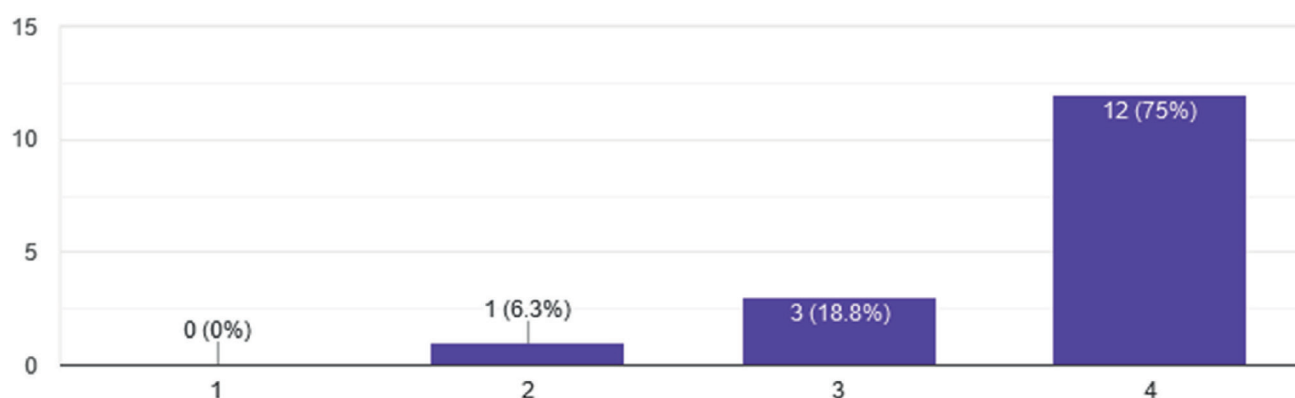


Figure 9 Teachers' Perceptions of Students' Use of AI-Generated Images.

create images for use in schoolwork and lessons. To the best of our knowledge, to date, no studies have explored students' and/or teachers' use of images created by AI, and thus this is an area that warrants further inquiry. However, it should also be pointed out that in the time since this survey was conducted, a significant controversy regarding AI art generators has arisen. Critics allege that the AI tools have been trained on copyrighted images (Quang, 2021) and that, therefore, the use of these generators is a serious copyright issue that will need to be discussed and researched, while its proponents maintain that this is a misunderstanding of the technology underlying these tools (Murray, 2023).

Following the three scenarios, the responses to the open-ended item at the end of the survey ("Is there anything you would like to tell us related to your experience with AI or regarding the scenarios shown above?") provided additional insights into the students' and teachers' perceptions of the ethical use of AI tools. There was considerable variety among the student responses. For example, two students said that they were using AI such as Google Translate to translate their textbooks to improve comprehension: "If I don't understand the content of a textbook, I use Google Translate" (教科書の内容が分からないときはグーグル翻訳使います). Other students, however, wondered about the applicability of AI. As the next quote illustrates, one student questioned the reliability and accuracy of Google Translate and that, therefore, it was only used as a reference when the student was uncertain about expressing something in English:

I often use Google Translate to chat with friends overseas, but after being told that there are sometimes strange expressions, I no longer trust the AI completely. Even if I use it for assignments, I only use it as a reference when I am not sure how to express this expression in English (Google翻訳で海外の友達とチャットをよくしていますが、たまにおかしい表現があるとされてから、完全にAIを信じることはなくなりました。課題に使うにしても、英語でこの表現はどう表すのか分からない時に参考にする程度です).

The survey responses also suggested that some students questioned whether it was "good" for them to use AI to complete class assignments:

"I wondered if it was okay to use AI to do my assignments because it does not do good for me, and it is essentially my own responsibility" (AIを使って課題をすることは自分のためにならないため、自分の責任であるため、別にいいのかなと思ってしまった).

However, contrary to recently arisen concerns about AI image generators, other students seemed to be more adamant about the utilisation of AI tools. As one student mentioned, they believed that AI use did not violate any copyright issues in Japan and that therefore their use was legitimate:

“Generated AI may be based on existing works, but if it is used in schools, it does not violate copyrights in Japan so far, so I may use it for now” (生成AIは既存作品を基にしている場合があるが、学校での利用ならば日本の著作権には引っかからないので今のところ利用する事がある).

One student also proposed the need to establish clear guidelines as to what was acceptable regarding the use of AI tools to work on assignments:

I think it would be wrong in this age to prohibit doing assignments using AI. I would like to see a standard for what is acceptable and what is not. I think it would leave both parties in a state of confusion if they are later told that they are in violation (AIを使って仮題をすることを全て禁止にするのは今の時代的に違うかなと思う。どこまでよくてどこからは違反なのか、その基準を示してほしい。あとから、それは違反ですと言われるのはお互いモヤモヤが残ると思う).

As for the teachers' responses to the open-ended question, they were less varied than the students' responses and were mostly context-specific. Three responses mentioned the contextualised nature of the ethical use of AI tools. As the following two quotes illustrate, the teachers thought that their ratings of the three scenarios may differ, depending on the type and goals of the course in which the scenarios were situated, the guidelines provided in the syllabus, and the instructions given to the three fictional students, Risa, Ami, and Haruto.

“All of my answers would be different depending on what instruction the teachers gave.”

“My answers would change depending on the type of class, goals of the course, and, most importantly, how the use of such tools was prescribed/prohibited in the syllabus.”

Similar to the students proposing a standardisation of the use of AI tools (see above), one of the teachers also mentioned the need to clearly identify the role that AI plays in tertiary education in order to support students' EFL learning processes:

A challenge for me as a teacher is identifying points at which AI can support the learning process. There is also a need to focus on skills that students will require outside the context of the classroom. Given that AI will likely become, and arguably is, a key part of many peoples [sic] workday, identifying the role of AI within the University classroom is critical.

While these results show a gap between students' and teachers' perceptions of the ethical use of AI tools, they also offer glimpses into the questions and issues that remain as yet unresearched. If one gap can be shown through the analysis of the three scenarios, then a close analysis of the other three scenarios that were not included in the present paper could provide additional insights. As noted, the use of scenarios prompts a response from the reader. It is this response that shows where further research could and should be done if institutions are to devise guidelines for the ethical use of AI tools that are intuitive, equitable, and accessible.

Discussion

Overall, although AI tools present a challenge to the status quo, the results showed that both students and teachers were already forming ideas and practices regarding how to use these tools in an ethical and transparent manner.

An intriguing difference was the scope of the AI tools known to the students versus the teachers. Whereas both groups were highly aware of AI tools such as ChatGPT, which was probably because of its significant media coverage, teachers demonstrated greater familiarity with a broader range of AI resources, like Grammarly and Quillbot. This finding aligns with the study by Keleş & Aydın (2021), which demonstrated that pre-service teachers possess a more comprehensive knowledge and understanding of AI tools compared with students from other fields. This discrepancy could stem from teachers' professional needs to explore and evaluate different tools for their classroom applications. Overall, this suggests that although AI is gaining traction in Japanese higher education contexts, its adoption and usage patterns are still evolving. Further research could shed light on the specific ways teachers and students are leveraging AI, the challenges and benefits they perceive, and potential gaps in knowledge or training that could be addressed to facilitate more effective integration of AI into language learning and instruction.

Regarding the responses to the hypothetical scenarios, the majority of respondents considered Scenarios 1 and 3 as “mostly ethical,” choosing Option 3 on the scale. However, for the second scenario, the majority of students viewed the described action as “mostly unethical,” selecting Option 2. This contrast suggests that students do not perceive merely disclosing the use of AI tools as sufficient to make an otherwise unethical act, such as passing off AI-generated work as one's own, ethical.

As for the teachers' response to the scenarios, the same pattern can be discerned, albeit more adamantly. Teachers rated Scenario 1 as mostly ethical, whereas Scenario 3 was viewed as completely ethical. The biggest difference between the students' and teachers' responses, however, can be seen in the response to Scenario 2, which 62% ($n = 10$) of the teachers rated as completely unethical.

The discrepancies between students' and teachers' perceptions of AI tools, as well as the variety of responses and some uncertainty about the scenarios, suggest the need for establishing clear and concise guidelines on the ethical use of AI tools in English language education programmes. Importantly, guidelines need to be contextualised to meet the needs of stakeholders involved in educational programmes, and to provide guidance as to what is acceptable and not acceptable (Luo, 2024). As an example, the university involved in the present study revised its academic integrity policy to include a separate section on AI usage. This change was based on the results and insights gained from the present study, as well as Author 1 and Author 2's resulting suggestions, which were presented during an internal workshop in March 2024. The authors recommended that instructors should provide clear guidelines for each assignment, specifying whether students can utilize AI tools in class and outside class. Another recommendation was that these newly established guidelines needed to be communicated consistently across the faculty.

What remains is the need for continued refinement and broader interdisciplinary discourse involving EFL learners, teachers, educational technologists, AI developers, and policy makers. The present study has shown that this avenue of research is necessary and immediate. The results have proved intriguing enough that a new study is being planned, wherein new first-year students in the same programme at the same university will participate in the survey presented here. Their results will then be contrasted with this initial set of data to examine whether any changes in students' perceptions and use of AI tools have emerged over the course of the year.

As with AI tools themselves, research into their ethical usage is an ongoing process. The research presented in this paper is an initial examination of what promises to be a much more encompassing discussion. As such, the authors intend to expand this line of research by including students and teachers from more diverse backgrounds and studying and teaching in different contexts in Japan and beyond. Updated and revised methodologies for continuing the research include adding interview components and student-derived scenarios based on their experience and understanding.

Lastly, in light of the results generated by the current study, the authors believe that to facilitate awareness, understanding, and standardisation of the ethical use of AI tools in education, English language programs should implement a comprehensive professional development programme. This could encompass faculty and student discussions, workshops, and seminars led by experts in AI ethics, covering topics such as the capabilities and limitations of AI tools, potential ethical concerns, and best practices for their responsible use. By implementing such a multifaceted approach, institutions can foster a shared understanding of the ethical implications of AI in education and equip educators as well as students with the necessary knowledge and skills to navigate this evolving landscape responsibly and effectively.

Conclusion

The present study revealed both a consensus and divergent views between teachers and students regarding the ethical use of AI tools in EFL education. Although students generally considered acknowledging the use of AI tools as ethical, teachers did not necessarily share this perspective. The findings underscored the need for ongoing dialogue and open discussions between students and teachers to bridge the gap in their perceptions and establish a shared understanding of the ethical considerations surrounding the integration of AI tools in EFL learning environments. The present study also highlighted a lack of awareness, particularly among students, regarding the capabilities of AI tools and their potential implications and actual usage in EFL learning.

Scenarios such as those used here are a useful tool but one that is flawed at best. Other researchers in other contexts would have different experiences from which to derive scenarios, as well as different students and teachers to read and respond to them. As such, no scenario can be said to be a universally understood one. Thus, the scenarios used in this survey are merely a starting point for an extensive and nuanced discourse. As such, it is hoped that these scenarios will lead to more research and that they will, in due course, be revised with additional context being added, in concert with the feedback and discussion that comes from their presentation. It is also worth noting that the sample size of the teachers ($n = 16$) was relatively small in comparison with the number of students ($n = 543$) participating in the study, potentially limiting the generalisability of the results.

AI will be seen as one of the defining technologies of our time, a point from which there is no turning back, much like previous inventions such as the telephone, the television, and the internet. Thus, although surveys and scenarios are not without their limitations, their application in this case has shown that there is both an understanding of the evolving role of how AI can and should be used in a particular EFL programme, and where gaps between students' and teachers' understanding can be found. The changes in the field of AI are fast and dynamic, and the ethical considerations are constantly evolving; therefore, the guidelines must be updated frequently. The final conclusion to be drawn, then, is that institutions must take note of AI and, through discussion, create timely guidelines for its use based on consensus-derived ethical standards.

References

- Barrot, J. S. (2023). Using ChatGPT for second language writing: pitfalls and potentials. *Assessing Writing*, 57 (2023), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2023.100745>
- Baskara, R., & Mukarto, M. (2023). Exploring the implications of ChatGPT for language learning in higher education. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 7 (2), 342–358. <http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i2.1387>
- Bibi, Z., & Atta, A. (2024). The role of ChatGPT as an AI English writing assistant: a study of students' perceptions, experiences, and satisfaction level. *Annals of Human and Social Sciences*, 5(1), 433–443. [https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2024\(5-1\)39](https://doi.org/10.35484/ahss.2024(5-1)39)
- Bielak, J., & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A. (2020). Investigating language learners' emotion-regulation strategies with the help of the vignette methodology, *System*, 90, 102208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102208>
- Brooks, D. (2023, February 2). In the age of A.I., major in being human. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/02/opinion/ai-human-education.html>
- Cotton, D. R., Cotton, P. A., & Shipway, J. R. (2023). Chatting and cheating: ensuring academic integrity in the era of ChatGPT. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 61, 1–12. <http://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2190148>
- Crawford, J., Cowling, M., & Allen, K. (2023). Leadership is needed for ethical ChatGPT: character, assessment, and learning using artificial intelligence (AI). *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 20(3). <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.3.02>
- Darvishi, A., Khosravi, H., Sadiq, S., Gasevic, D., & Siemens, G. (2024). *Computers & Education*, 210 (2024). 1–18. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2023.104967>
- De Costa, P. I. (2024). What's ethics got to do with applied linguistics? Revisiting the past, considering the present, and being optimistic about the future of our field. *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, 3(1). 100103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rmal.2024.100103>
- Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: construction, administration and processing* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003331926>
- European Commission (2022). *Ethical guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and data in teaching and learning for educators*. <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/153756>, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2024.2310288>
- Hockly, N. (2023). Artificial intelligence in English language teaching: the good, the bad and the ugly. *RELC Journal*, 54(2), 445–451. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00336882231168504>
- Hughes, R. (2001). Considering the vignette technique and its application to a study of drug injecting and HIV risk and safer behaviour. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 20(3), 381–400. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.00107>
- Hughes, R., & Huby, M. (2002). The application of vignettes in social and nursing research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 37(4), 382–386. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2002.02100.x>
- Liu, G. L., D G. L., Darvin, R., & Ma, C. (2024). Exploring AI-mediated informal digital learning of English (AI-IDLE): A mixed-method investigation of Chinese EFL learners' AI adoption and experiences. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2024.2310288>
- Luo, J. (2024). A critical review of GenAI policies in higher education assessment: a call to reconsider the “originality” of students' work. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 49, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2024.2309963>
- Keleş, P. U., & Aydın, S. (2021). University students' perceptions about artificial intelligence. *Shanlax International Journal Education*, 9 (S1), 212–220. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v9iS1-May.4014>

- Kostka, I., & Toncelli, R. (2023). Exploring applications of ChatGPT to English language teaching: opportunities, challenges, and recommendations. *TESL-EJ*, 27(3), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27107int>
- Kurniati, E. Y., & Fithriani, R. (2022). Post-graduate students' perceptions of Quillbot utilization in English academic writing class. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, 7(3), 437–451. <https://dx.doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v7i3.852>
- Mandal, R., & Mete, J. (2023). Teachers' and students' perception towards integration of artificial intelligence in school curriculum: a survey. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, 12(7/5), 95–103. Available at <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4544750>
- Murray, M. (2023). Generative AI art: copyright infringement and fair use. *SMU Science & Technology Law Review*, 26(2), 1–48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4483539>
- Perkins, M. (2023). Academic integrity considerations of AI large language models in the post-pandemic era: ChatGPT and beyond. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 20(2). <https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.02.07>
- Phan, T. N. L. (2023). Students' perceptions of the AI technology application in English writing classes. *Proceedings of the AsiaCALL International Conference*, 4, 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.54855/paic.2344>
- Plata, S., Guzman, M. A. D., & Quesada, A. (2023). Emerging research and policy themes on academic integrity in the age of ChatGPT and generative AI. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 19(4), 743–758. <http://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v19i4.24697>
- Quang, J. (2021). Does training AI violate copyright law? *Berkeley Technology Law Journal*, 36, 1407. <https://doi.org/10.15779/Z38XW47X3K>
- Riazi, M. (2017). *Mixed methods research in language teaching and learning*. Equinox Publishing.
- Urmeneta, A., & Romero, M. (2024). *Creative applications of artificial intelligence in education*. Palgrave Macmillan Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-55272-4>
- Ulla, M. B., Perales, W. F., & Busbus, S. O. (2023). 'To generate or stop generating response': Exploring EFL teachers' perspectives on ChatGPT in English language teaching in Thailand. *Learning: Research and Practice*, 9(2), 168–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23735082.2023.2257252>
- Yan, D. (2023). Impact of ChatGPT on learners in a L2 writing practicum: an exploratory investigation. *Education and Information Technologies*, 28, 13943–13967. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11742-4>