

“Exploring Polish ELT Students’ Perceptions and Attitudes towards Using ChatGPT for Grammar and Syntax Support in Writing: A Qualitative Research” *

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Abstract

The present paper is a qualitative study that aims to explore the perceptions of Polish ELT students regarding the use of ChatGPT for improving their grammar and syntax proficiency in their academic writing. The study involved semi-structured interviews with first-year Polish ELT students to examine their experience and evaluation of AI-generated feedback on grammatical and syntactic aspects of their writings. Findings indicate that students have developed positive perceptions towards ChatGPT: they perceive it as not only a corrective instrument but also as a reliable and formative learning resource that raises grammatical awareness, syntactic well-formedness, and clarity in writing. Participants reported that interacting with ChatGPT helped them notice recurring grammatical weaknesses, experiment with more complex structures, and develop greater autonomy during revision. The study suggests that students see AI-powered feedback as beneficial for both linguistic development and affective support. However, they emphasised that there is a need for effective instructional and pedagogical guidance to avoid overreliance on various AI tools.

Keywords: ChatGPT; grammar feedback; syntactic development; academic writing; learner perceptions

Introduction

Grammar and syntax are fundamental in writing, serving as the basis for effective communication. Mastery of grammar offers the writer instruments for a sentence construction that is grammatically correct and appropriately conveys the intended meaning. Conversely, poor grammar results in obscurity for readers and diminishes the message of the writer, which eventually limits the effect of the whole text (Crystal, 2006). Syntax contributes immensely to clarity, natural tone, and flow of writing (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002). Thus, syntactic knowledge enables writers to present their ideas coherently; hence, readers get to track arguments or a line of narration more smoothly. The literature on the development of academic writing indicates that a good command of syntax and grammar enriches writing proficiency and general language development, especially for learners of foreign languages (Ellis, 2006). In this respect, paying particular attention to these elements is considered crucial, especially in relation to Polish ELT learners; the obvious reason is that non-native speakers often struggle with the subtleties and complexities of the syntax and grammar of the English language, which is quite different from their native linguistic structures (Nunan, 2015). Relevant research underlines that persistence in the practice of grammar and syntax not only improves writing but

also guarantees academic success (Andrews et al., 2006). That is why teaching and fostering such an understanding is essential for developing writing skills.

Currently, AI tools are becoming exponentially important in the development and improvement of students' writing skills, particularly regarding grammar and syntax enhancement. The tools are featured with the provision of personalized feedback that allows learners to identify errors and mistakes and correct them in real time (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). AI systems like ChatGPT make use of natural language processing in sentence structure analysis, grammar corrections, and the suggestion of alternative structures (Phuong et al., 2022). It is such feedback that improves writing over time by encouraging students to internalise grammatical rules and linguistic patterns of message conveyance. Furthermore, AI tools also allow for non-native students to engage in repeated writing, which is helpful for English learners due to time constraints (Pérez-Paredes, 2020). It has been revealed in studies that the application of AI in writing leads to better accuracy and fluency with regard to grammar and syntax (Zhai et al., 2021). This finding supports long-term language development, especially for non-native learners. In Polish ELT context, gaps within traditional instruction can be bridged by AI tools through the provision of individual support and assistance to track learner progress (Alkhatib et al., 2022). Therefore, AI tools represent a valuable contribution to the traditional mode of teaching and improve the process and outcomes of writing education.

Despite the rapidly growing interest in research on the role of AI in the development of writing skills, scant attention has been paid to the question of how the editing feedback provided by AI feeds into the improvement of students' grammatical knowledge and syntactic proficiency in academic writing. Most studies in literature have primarily focused on the broader improvements in writing fluency and coherence. Nuanced effects of AI-driven feedback regarding grammar and syntax have been swept under the carpet. On the other hand, opportunities for focused learning enabled by AI tools such as ChatGPT—that provide immediate corrections and suggestions for grammar and sentence structure—can significantly improve students' mastery of these core aspects of writing. However, because of the inability to ascertain whether AI interventions result in long-term retention of grammatical rules and syntactic structures, or if students become overdependent on the technology, there remains a gap in the research.

This, therefore, means that this paper seeks to explore how ELT students and learners in Poland evaluate the AI-generated grammatical and syntactic feedback on their writing development. Besides, it aims to examine whether such feedback can bring about long-term improvement in students' grammatical knowledge and writing skills. Despite the widely recognized addition that AI tools like ChatGPT provide, such as real-time corrections and alternative sentence structure, there has been only limited research into whether these things, using AI, can result in long-term learning. This study aims to fill that gap by analyzing the perceptions of Polish ELT students about how AI's feedback on grammar and syntax influences their overall writing skills. Understanding learners' experiences and attitudes towards AI feedback on their writing is helpful to determine the effectiveness and impact of such tools. Thus said, the present paper is guided by the following research questions:

1. In general, how do students perceive the effectiveness of AI-powered grammar feedback on their writing?
2. What changes do students notice in their writing practices and skills after using AI grammar feedback tools?
3. How do AI feedback mechanisms impact students' confidence and attitudes towards writing?

Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence is already changing the approach to learning new languages for students, especially in terms of writing in English. Among them, ChatGPT is an AI tool that has gained popularity due to its ability to provide support for ESL and EFL learners through instant feedback, suggestions, and interactive dialogue. Such interaction gives the student the ability to engage in back-and-forth dialogues, much like how a student would during real-life tutoring, encouraging them to reflect upon grammar and sentence structure.

Recent literature on the interface of AI and education has also focused on the use of ChatGPT for feedback and language development. Song & Song (2023) mention that the adaptive responses provided by ChatGPT systematically reflect the core language-learning principles, which allow students to internalize the use of proper grammar through repetition. Similarly, Werdiningsih & Marzuki (2024) refer to ChatGPT as a tool of mental support, which, according to the Distributed Cognition theory, is helpful for learners in organizing and refining their writing.

Research supports the efficiency of ChatGPT for improving grammar and writing quality. For instance, Song and Song (2023) show that practicing with ChatGPT significantly enhanced the grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and motivational levels of Chinese students. Such findings were attributed to the tool's capability to offer customized and

contextual feedback. Another work, that of Polakova and Ivenz (2024), conducted on more than a hundred university students, also established similar improvements. The students liked the speedy, non-judgmental responses from ChatGPT, eventually making them more willing to revise their writings and take creative risks without fear of criticism. Similarly, Alwasidi and Al-Khalifah also reported significant improvements in their study. In their study, the students who used ChatGPT throughout a semester-long course became more confident in forming topic sentences, maintaining cohesion, and editing grammatical errors. Frequent exposure to AI-driven feedback made students more confident in editing and understanding syntax.

Other research has pointed out the tool's potential to support more advanced facets of writing. Werdiningsih and Marzuki (2024) found Indonesian postgraduate students using ChatGPT to generate complex sentences and improve fluency. According to students, the AI is a sort of thinking partner that is particularly useful in reflecting on how ideas may be brought into better focus. Xu and Jumaat (2024) found that students wrote more strategically in using better techniques for planning and revision, and paying more attention to grammar and sentence flow. Nguyen Minh (2024) noted that Vietnamese students gained in vocabulary and sentence diversity by benefiting from the rephrasing features of ChatGPT in a way that allowed them to compare different ways of framing similar ideas.

Of course, not all findings are completely positive. Some researchers observed that greater focus on content and fluency at times led to some slight omissions in grammatical accuracy. Song & Song (2023) established that for active learning, students need to actively engage themselves with this feedback; mere reception of suggestions without comprehension of the accompanying rules constrains learning. Other researchers, such as Xu & Jumaat (2024) and Seelro & Khan (2024), sounded an alarm regarding overdependence on AI. When students rely too much on these AI-generated phrases, they cannot internalize the concept of grammar behind such phrases. These concerns necessitate structured guidance whereby teachers guide students to critically assess and apply AI feedback instead of using it passively.

There are also some studies that report on the learner feedback across different regions. Seelro and Khan (2024) reported that students valued ChatGPT for providing contextual examples and helping learners to improve grammar, vocabulary, and style. They valued that the tool helped understand grammar as a part of meaningful communication. In Malaysia, Yasmi and Bahador (2025) have noted an increase in writing confidence among students, while others have been concerned with depending too much on this tool or getting suggestions that are not necessarily accurate. Similarly, Selim (2024) noticed an increase in comfort when trying out grammar and tone after the use of ChatGPT. For many learners, this conversational format was less intimidating than teacher feedback; thus, anxiety was reduced, and they remained motivated. Others explored the potential of ChatGPT in concert with other tools, such as Grammarly. Jasim (2025) studied Iraqi students who benefited from both tools and found that their grammar, cohesion, and style improved. The students reported that ChatGPT was great at developing ideas and sentence structure, but Grammarly helped to correct minor mistakes. As Deep and Martirosyan (2025) explain, the key aspect in which ChatGPT does better than these grammar checkers is by explaining and contextualizing changes it has suggested, so students understand the reasoning behind those changes.

Despite the many advantages, scholars continue to urge caution. Some AI feedback contains subtle mistakes, and others are phrased inconsistently, which may mislead learners. Yasmi and Bahador (2025) and Xu and Jumaat (2024) warn that such mistakes may interfere with learning if students fail to critically evaluate the feedback provided. This is why most researchers call for embedding ChatGPT into guided learning processes wherein the instructors provide reflections for students on how to make use of the corrections in thinking. Seelro and Khan (2024) emphasized the importance of building AI literacy so that learners would be able to make the most out of these tools while maintaining independence. With thoughtful integration into the classroom, ChatGPT has the potential to support both the development of better writing and greater learner autonomy. But for long-term success, this would need to be within a broader pedagogy that also fosters critical thinking and active approaches to learning.

Methodology

Research Design

The qualitative design allows an investigation into first-year ELT students' perceptions of the utilisation of ChatGPT to support grammar and syntax in their academic writing. Semi-structured interviewing will be the method of information gathering, as it has the potential to promote articulation of experiences, interpretations, and affective responses from participants, within a format that provides opportunities for follow-up questions and elaboration.

Context and Participants

This research was conducted during the summer term 2025 at a private university in Poland, offering an undergraduate degree in English Language Teaching. The research involved 15 first-year ELT students who attended the second semester of study. All participants completed a writing assignment on which they should revise their drafts using AI tools; hence, they already used a variant of AI - ChatGPT. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all students before any data collection.

Instructional Procedure

In the context of this writing module, students were given an assignment related to academic essays, and grammatical and syntactical feedback during the text revision phase was given through ChatGPT. The use of AI is meant for support and must not control or take over the guidance of the instructors themselves. Students were asked to go over their original drafts versus those edited by AI and reflect on the feedback received while checking grammatical accuracy, syntactic structure, clarity, and coherence.

Data Collection

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the semester. The interview protocol included questions targeting students' perceptions of the usefulness of ChatGPT, experiences with AI-generated feedback, perceived changes in grammar and syntax awareness, and affective responses such as confidence, comfort, or anxiety. Interviews lasted approximately 20–30 minutes and were audio-recorded with permission.

Data Analysis

All interviews were transcribed and followed Braun and Clarke's 2006 six-phase thematic analysis procedure: familiarisation, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. Coding focused on the recurrent patterns related to linguistic development, metalinguistic awareness, autonomy in revision, emotional responses, and perceived limitations or risks of AI feedback. To ensure credibility, the emerging themes were constantly compared across transcripts, and interpretive decisions were recorded by writing analytic memos. 3.6 Ethical Considerations Ethical approval was provided by the hosting institution. Participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntariness of participation, and about their right to withdraw at any time. Data were anonymised in order to guarantee protection of participants' identity.

Findings

I figured out a set of experiences pertaining to using ChatGPT in students' response to interview questions. The results revealed how ChatGPT has functioned not only as a tool providing corrective feedback but also as a formative resource that enhances the degree of students' self-awareness. Throughout the study, students identified having a clearer view of their personal weaknesses, and deeper involvement with writing as a learning process. These themes emphasize the dynamic nature of the impact of AI-generated feedback on Polish ELT students' writing development.

Perceived Improvement

Many students have reported that their writing was improved with regard to specific grammatical and syntactic structures through the feedback they have received from ChatGPT. They point to concrete examples of growth and highlight the progress they have made. One student, for example, said she now had no problem using relative clauses and adverbial clauses and was confident that she could use them without error in her writing. These had previously presented difficulties before the continuous corrections and explanations which ChatGPT provided helped her master them.

Student 1: I had a lot of problems with grammatical things like relative clauses, but now I am so good at them that I use them without even thinking. The feedbacks that ChatGPT's gave me in fact helped me understand how they work, and I feel very confident using complex grammar in my writing.

Student 2: It was difficult for me to deal with punctuation, especially commas and semicolons. After I got a lot of feedback and comments from ChatGPT, I think I'm now better at finding my mistakes and correcting them myself. I also think my writing has been better and sounds more academic.

Another student said that he struggled with complicated grammatical structures such as punctuation for a very long period. Before using the AI tool, such structures led to much confusion and mistakes in his writings, but after repeated feedback on how to use those forms correctly, he has much more clarity now and is able to use the participles aptly to turn a weakness into a strength. The improvements for other students go beyond specific grammatical structures. Many of them reported that a general sense of independence, specifically about punctuation, has grown. They are less dependent on outside feedback that dictates the basic use of punctuation, from commas all the way to semicolons. This independence, according to them, has given them more self-assurance in writing error-free sentences.

Heightened confidence

Students persistently identify the grammar and syntax feedback that they have received from ChatGPT as significantly improving their confidence in academic writing. Most of the students express empowerment and focus on how AI support has changed the way they write in English. One such student (student 3) explained how receiving feedback from the AI has enabled her to feel less anxious and write confidently. She has always been unsure about whether she was communicating clearly or whether the writing was grammatically correct. The AI's exact corrections have given her the confidence that her grammar and syntax match normal language expressions, so she no longer focuses on possible mistakes but more on communicating her ideas.

Student 3: Before I started using ChatGPT, I was always very much concerned about my writing and the possibility that my message wouldn't make sense for a reader. However, now, thanks to GPT's feedback, I feel more confident that my grammar is correct and my ideas are conveyed clearly.

Student 4: GPT helped me a lot to understand what grammar really is, so by using it, I have learnt not to avoid mistakes but what is more important is that I actually know why and how things work. I've started trying new sentence styles and vocabulary, and I feel surer of myself when I write

This increase in confidence stems not only from an improvement in grammatical accuracy but also from a sense of mastery over the rules of language. Students reported a growing proficiency in grammatical structures, which helped them feel more secure in their writing choices. The sense of mastery entails more than just the avoidance of errors, extending into a fuller understanding of how grammar affects the flow and clarity of their writing as a whole. For some, this sense of mastery also spills over into stylistic elements in that they feel more comfortable experimenting with varied sentence structures and sophisticated vocabulary. The AI feedback has made them more confident toward refining their writing style to make it grammatically correct and more engaging at the same time (student 4). As a result, students approach writing assignments with increased confidence. The apprehension that once burdened them when confronted with writing is replaced by optimism and eagerness to write.

Discussion

Students' perceptions of the effectiveness of AI-powered grammar feedback

The results of this study have indeed shown that students perceived AI-powered grammar feedback—specifically through ChatGPT—to be highly effective in improving their writing, particularly in terms of grammatical rule understanding, and syntactic clarity. These perceptions comply with the existing literature highlighting the pedagogical value of AI-driven feedback in second language writing. Consistent with the observation of Song and Song (2023) that ChatGPT offers individualised and context-sensitive corrections, participants in this study also highlighted the aspect that the feedback they got was not generic but customised according to their recurring grammatical and syntactic patterns. This supports the view that such adaptive feedback from ChatGPT has the potential to foster the kind of focused attention and metalinguistic reflection supportive of long-term linguistic development.

The students' emphasis on heightened awareness of their grammar weaknesses further corroborates arguments by Werdiningsih and Marzuki (2024), who note that such AI tools can serve as cognitive scaffolds that externalize and clarify complex linguistic structures. Many participants in this study reported that ChatGPT made them aware of advanced structures—such as relative clauses, adverbial clauses, and participle constructions—that they had previously misinterpreted or overlooked. This increased self-awareness reflects findings from Alwasidi and Al-Khalifah (2025), who demonstrated that persistent AI-assisted writing practice enables learners to perceive patterns in their own errors and gradually internalise grammatical principles. However, the emotional and psychological dimensions of students' perceptions also revealed several important nuances.

Changes in students' writing practices and skills after using AI grammar feedback tools

After sustained interaction with the grammar and syntactic feedback provided by ChatGPT, students reported significant and multidimensional changes within their writing practices and skills. Changes span syntactic complexity, stylistic refinement, and independence in writing, patterns from recent studies in AI-assisted language learning. Participant-noted improvements corroborate empirical results from Polakova and Ivenz (2024) and Alwasidi and Al-Khalifah (2025), where it was found that AI-generated feedback clarifies grammatical precision, supports clearer organization of ideas, and strengthens overall quality in writing.

One of the most salient changes noted was improved accuracy and confidence in using complex grammatical structures, such as relative clauses, adverbial clauses, and punctuation. This corresponds to the finding by Nguyen Minh (2024) that ChatGPT has allowed learners to diversify sentence structures and to engage more actively with syntactic variation. Participants in this study commented several times that the repeated exposure to AI feedback enabled them to internalise rules which had hitherto been difficult to master. This mirrors the argument of Werdiningsih and Marzuki (2024), who see ChatGPT as a kind of cognitive scaffold offering learners' models of well-formed and structurally complex sentences which they can adapt and imitate.

Impact of AI feedback mechanisms on students' confidence and attitudes towards writing

The findings show the importance of AI feedback mechanisms, and especially those provided by ChatGPT are to students' confidence in and attitude towards writing. This influence is multidimensional, which points on the one hand to positive motivational shifts, and on the other hand to initial emotional challenges that gradually evolve in the course of time. The emerging patterns tally closely with the arguments raised in the literature and echo the dual role played by AI in shaping both the affective and cognitive dimensions of writing development.

One of the most striking results was the significant gain in writing confidence among students as they became more familiar with the feedback pattern. Many students indeed expressed the belief that immediate, non-judgmental feedback lowered the level of anxiety, which corroborates earlier research by Seelro and Khan (2024) that students find AI tools less intimidating compared to teacher evaluation. In the same vein, Yasmi and Bahador (2025) argue that AI creates a psychologically safe environment in which learners are more willing to experiment with new structures and take risks in their writing. The students also described how a growing sense of self-efficacy was developed when they reached deeper insights into grammatical rules and were able to apply those rules independently. Such a finding is in line with those of Alwasidi and Al-Khalifah (2025), who report that repeated exposure to AI feedback emboldens internal monitoring skills in learners and increases their confidence in producing error-free text. That students can predict certain errors long before receiving external feedback might suggest that AI support contributed to what Xu and Jumaat (2024) call autonomous writing strategies, further stabilising the students' belief in their capability to produce high-quality writing.

Conclusion

This study has explored the experiences of Polish ELT students in using an AI-enhanced tool to support grammatical and syntactic improvement in academic writing. The findings have highlighted the different ways that ChatGPT can

impact learners' development in academic writing. Given the effectiveness that students considered the AI-driven feedback, the participants consistently drew on the value afforded by the individualised and context-sensitive corrections provided by ChatGPT. It allowed them to recognise their weaknesses with regard to advanced grammatical structures and clearly explained the critical aspects. Again, it points to the development theories fostered previously on the role of AI as a scaffold for cognitive and linguistic development (Song & Song, 2023; Werdiningsih & Marzuki, 2024). Generally, the students felt this feedback was accurate and pedagogically relevant, pointing to the possibility of AI as ancillary means for achieving focused grammatical learning in EFL.

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