

# The impact of artificial intelligence on the English self-study process at Nguyen Tat Thanh University

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## Abstract

Using artificial intelligence (AI) for English education is both beneficial and detrimental in several ways. A vast majority of previous related studies demonstrated that using AI could help English as a foreign language (EFL) learners nurture their English knowledge and skills, hence becoming more autonomous and possessing good learning traits. The present study employed an online questionnaire to investigate the impact of AI on English self-study process among 270 first-year undergraduates at Nguyen Tat Thanh University during the second semester of 2024-2025 academic year. SPSS (Version 27.0) was used to analyze the data. The results indicated that AI implementation can facilitate the students' English self-and allow many implications for local EFL teaching and learning.

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## Keywords

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## 1 Introduction

In this 4.0 era, English language education in Viet Nam has witnessed many breakthroughs. Since the National Language Project 2020, many universities, colleges, and other schools have aimed to foster their students' English skills, particularly communicative competence [1]. Using technology to help students improve English skills is among top priorities of the current national education system. This implementation could also facilitate the students' autonomy [2] and many 21<sup>st</sup> century skills [3], along with certain challenges [4]. In Viet Nam, English is still considered as a foreign language, and there can be an imbalance in information technology (IT) skills between EFL teachers and students [1].

Utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) in English education has gained much more academic attention [5]. Many past studies have demonstrated the effects of AI on EFL learners' English learning. However, the effects of using AI on the level of English self-study process among non-English major students in Viet

Nam have remained limitedly known. Meanwhile, at Nguyen Tat Thanh University (NTTU), students are allowed to use many technological tools to support their English self-study. Among these technologies, ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Grammarly are common to support the students' English self-study. Nevertheless, the lecturers may not have the opportunities to instruct students to use these tools effectively due to curriculum constraints. Therefore, it is necessary to gather the students' perspectives on how they use AI tools to support their English self-study. This helps the lecturers gain more insights into the potential of these tools for their educational settings. Hence, the current study aims to bridge such a possible gap by addressing the following main research question:

“What is the impact of AI on the English self-study process for the self-study English process at NTTU?”

To answer this question profoundly, two sub-questions were addressed:



- (1) Which English language skill do AI tools support much better than the others?
- (2) What are main difficulties in using these tools to support English self-study?

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 AI in Higher Education

#### 2.1.1 Definition

AI refers to “the ability of machines to carry out functions that are normally associated with human intelligence, such as reasoning, correcting, making self-improvements and learning through experience. Computer programmers try to create programs which have this capacity” [6]. In higher education, AI has been used widely to automate many tasks, such as “managing students’ learning”, “predicting learning outcomes”, “generating tests”, and so on [7].

#### 2.1.2 Categories

Crompton and Burke classified AI in education into five groups, according to the purposes in higher education, namely (1) “assessment or evaluation”, (2) “predicting”, (3) “AI assistant”, (4) “intelligent tutoring system”, and (5) “managing student learning” [7].

### 2.2 The impacts of AI for English Learning in Higher Education

#### 2.2.1 Positive impacts

Applying AI into English learning in higher education is beneficial in several ways. First, it assists the students to develop their language skills [4]. Second, it helps the students to develop vocabulary knowledge [8]. For example, ChatGPT can generate useful texts for learning, so the students can broaden their vocabulary knowledge. They can also see vocabulary in many contexts. Third, it facilitates the students’ general English self-study [4, 9-11]. The students can benefit from various apps for their English self-study, namely “virtual teachers” and “ChatGPT” [[9; 11].

#### 2.2.2 Negative impacts

However, this implementation remains many obstacles. First, AI tools still have technical constraints, so they cannot totally replace humans [4]. Second, the “over-reliance on technology” can hinder students’ critical thinking and creativity in many ways [3]. Third, the teachers and students need to upgrade their IT skills and other relevant knowledge [4]. Finally, there are some ethical and societal concerns on the use of AI in certain education contexts [3]. Incurring costs of using AI,

finding suitable sociocultural contents, and aligning AI content with the existing curriculum can be additional challenges to schools and educators.

### 2.3 Previous Studies

#### 2.3.1 Foreign studies

Deng et al. demonstrated the effects of using virtual teachers as a kind of AI on Chinese EFL learners’ learning [9]. The participants were 56 high school students, randomly assigned into two groups: one control group without a virtual teacher and one experimental group without a virtual teacher. One pretest and one posttest were used to test the effectiveness of the AI on EFL learners’ learning results. The findings demonstrated that using virtual teachers can greatly facilitate the students’ English learning. They expressed more positive attitudes towards this manipulation.

A qualitative study by Namjoo et al. explored effects of students’ self-study experience with AI [10]. A total of 20 students joined a semi-structured interview to confide their perception of the benefits and challenges of learning English independently with AI. The thematic analysis highlighted many conveniences of using AI, yet there are three prominent challenges, such as technical issues, content constraints, and data insecurity. This study provides useful insights into the research phenomenon.

#### 2.3.2 Vietnamese studies

A study by Chu et al. was aimed to generalize the pros and cons of using AI tools to support the students’ development in English language skills and the current status of using these innovations [4]. The survey was conducted at a local high school in Hanoi. The population included 297 high school students in all three grades. The results showed that the students realized many advantages and disadvantages of this application. This manipulation was often spontaneous and unfavored by most teachers and schools. This study recommends a few useful ideas for other studies, in terms of research ideas and results.

In another context, En et al. conducted a survey study to investigate non-English majors’ perception of using ChatGPT to support English learning [11]. The sole questionnaire was delivered to 244 students at a local university. The results indicated more preferences for using ChatGPT to facilitate English learning. The students hold a strong belief in the improvement of

English skills thanks to ChatGPT. Thus, this study focused on a specific AI platform to aid English learning.

Another study by Tran investigated the usefulness of using AI to support EFL learners' vocabulary learning [8]. The participants were 12 post-graduate students at a local private university in Ho Chi Minh City. The questionnaire results showed that most students confirmed the benefits of using AI to facilitate EFL learners' vocabulary learning. The study highlights the importance of using AI to support the students' vocabulary self-study. It can provide certain grounds for the use of AI in vocabulary self-study.

#### 2.4 Research Gap

In short, several previous studies have researched the positive influences of using AI on EFL learners' English learning process and results. However, not many studies pay close attention to the benefits of this innovation for Vietnamese EFL learners' self-study process.

### 3 Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study aims to investigate the impact of using AI to support English self-study process. A questionnaire is the main instrument to gather the results. There are two reasons for selecting this research design. First, it can help collect the data in a large population [12]. Second, the researcher intends to see the students' overall

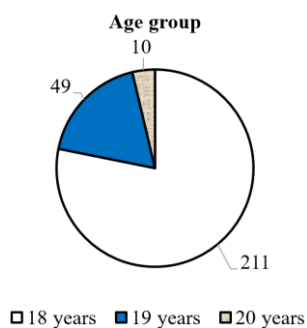
perception of the positive impacts of using AI for self-study processes, rather than the other insights. Thus, understanding the students' perspectives can help local lecturers adapt suitable teaching approaches to support the students' English self-study process.

#### 3.2 Research Context

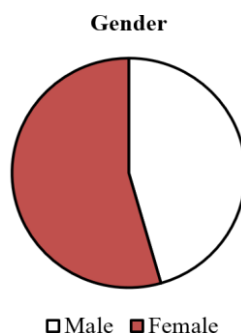
In the second term of 2024-2025 academic year, this survey was conducted. At NTTU, English is a mandatory course for all non-English majors. There are sufficient facilities to support the students' English self-study at the school, such as Wifi connection, multimedia rooms, and so forth.

#### 3.3 Sampling and Participants

The researcher chose to use convenience sampling method because it is convenient, without any stratification or randomization [12]. The survey respondents were comprised of 270 first-year undergraduates whose majors are not English. Furthermore, five voluntary students were invited to the follow-up interview. These students always use AI tools to support their English self-study. Most of the questionnaire respondents were at the age of 18 at the time of the survey ( $N = 211$ , 78.1 %). Most were female students ( $N = 147$ ; 54.4 %). Most of them were learning English in their fourth to sixth year ( $N = 95$ ; 35.2 %) and often use AI tools for their English self-study ( $N = 155$ ; 57.4 %). The following table describes the information about the participants in detail. The following figures report on the students' demographics.

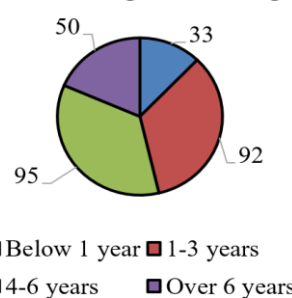


**Figure 1** The students' age group



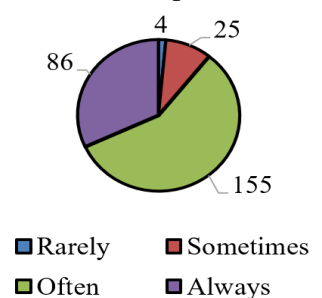
**Figure 2** The students' gender

**Years of English Learning**



**Figure 3** The students' years of English learning

**AI Tool Experience**



**Figure 4** The students' AI tool experience

#### 3.4 Research Instrument

An online questionnaire, created on Google Forms, was administered in Week 10 of the semester. It aims to collect the students' perspectives on only the positive impact of using AI for English self-study at NTTU.

The questionnaire, adapted from [4], includes three parts, one for personal information (4 multiple choice question items, concerning age, gender, English learning experience, and AI tool experience), another for the perceived benefits (ten 5-point Likert scale items, ranging from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 –

Strongly Agree) and the other for the perceived challenges (8 question items, similar to Section 2).

One semi-structured interview was conducted to analyze the students' perception of the impact of AI on the self-study process. The ideas for the interview questions were adapted from [4]. There are two primary questions, including (1) "What do you think are key benefits of using AI tools to support your English self-study process?" and (2) "Do you have any other opinions on the use of AI to support your English self-study process?".

### 3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

The original questionnaire was carefully proofread to ensure that there were very few errors. Then, it was translated into Vietnamese to facilitate the participants' reading comprehension. The students were invited to complete the original questionnaire to help check its reliability and validity in Week 3 of the semester. They were instructed carefully before fulfilling this questionnaire. After final considerations, the finalized version was delivered to them in Week 10. The semi-structured interview was conducted in Week 11 in person, with interview notes. No voice or video recordings were used to secure the personal privacy of the student interviewees.

All question-and-answer items were coded onto SPSS. Then, the software was used to analyze the descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) of the students' questionnaire responses. Based on the statistical results, the findings was interpreted to answer each research question. Content analysis was applied to analyze the interview responses. Similar main points were grouped and presented by themes.

### 3.6 Reliability and Validity

The original questionnaire was carefully proofread before actual implementation. The items were translated into Vietnamese to support the respondents to complete the questionnaire. Then it was sent to 278 students, 8 of which included missing data, and the results were tested in terms of reliability and validity. Cronbach Alpha's value of this scale is high enough ( $\alpha = 0.886 > 0.6$ ), so the scale has a satisfactory level of internal consistency reliability.

**Table 3** Perceived Impact of AI on the English Self-study Process

Statements	M	SD
1. "AI tools help me feel more interested in studying English"	3.95	0.935
2. "AI tools help me study English conveniently"	3.79	0.917

**Table 2** Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.886	10

Moreover, to interpret the Likert scale finding, the framework by Pimentel and Pimentel was employed [13]. In detail, when mean ranges "from 1.00 to 1.79", the interpretation should be "Strongly Disagree". When it ranges "from 1.80 to 2.59", the interpretation should be "Disagree". When it ranges "from 2.60 to 3.39", the interpretation should be "Neutral". When it ranges "from 3.40 to 4.19", the interpretation should be "Agree". When it ranges from "4.20 to 5.00", the interpretation should be "Strongly Agree".

## 4 Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

#### 4.1.1 The Functions of AI for Language Skills

The quantitative analysis of the questionnaire revealed that most students agreed with the impact of AI on their self-study process. All means are greater than 3.40, indicating a high level of agreement among the respondents.

First, most respondents strongly support the use of AI tools for English listening and speaking skills (Item 6:  $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.952$ ). Second, they are in favor of the use of AI tools for English pronunciation (Item 4:  $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.872$ ). Third, they agree with the positive effect on their vocabulary knowledge (Item 3:  $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 0.975$ ). Fourth, they support the convenience of English study self-evaluation (Item 10:  $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 0.952$ ). Fifth, they confirm with the improvement English grammatical knowledge (Item 5:  $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.842$ ). Sixth, they affirm that AI tools motivate them to study English (Item 1:  $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.935$ ). Seventh, they agree with the use of AI tools to personalize English learning (Item 8:  $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.965$ ). Eighth, they agree with the positive influence on literacy skills (Item 7:  $M = 3.94$ ,  $SD = 0.937$ ). Ninth, they confirm that AI tools help them study English conveniently (Item 2:  $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 0.917$ ). Finally, they agree that AI tools aid them to select useful learning resources (Item 9:  $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.009$ ).



3. "AI tools help me improve English vocabulary knowledge"	4.04	0.975
4. "AI tools help me improve English pronunciation"	4.09	0.872
5. "AI tools help me improve English grammar"	3.96	0.842
6. "AI tools help me improve English listening and speaking skills"	4.29	0.952
7. "AI tools help me improve English reading and writing skills"	3.94	0.937
8. "AI tools help me personalize English learning by my interests"	3.95	0.965
9. "AI tools help me choose suitable learning resources"	3.62	1.009
10. "AI tools help me evaluate my English learning progress effectively"	4.00	0.952
Valid N (listwise)	270	

Therefore, the questionnaire results showed ten perceived positive impacts of using AI tools on the self-study process in order. They are (1) "improved listening and speaking skills", (2) "enhanced pronunciation ability", (3) "vocabulary knowledge", (4) "study progress self-evaluation", (5) "grammatical knowledge", (6) "higher learning motivation", (7) "personalized English learning", (8) "improved literacy skills", (9) "convenient English learning", and (10) "useful learning resources".

The qualitative data analysis confirms the advantages found in the questionnaire responses. However, most students strongly agreed with three most noticeable benefits, such as "improved grammatical knowledge", "convenient English learning", and "improved vocabulary knowledge" (Student 1, 2, 4 and 5). In terms of the most impactful aspects of AI tools for English language skills, the interviewees added that writing can be the most common. They agreed that they often use ChatGPT, Google Translate, and Grammarly to support their written idea development and revision. Especially, Student 2 and 5 shared more in-depth information about the reasons for this. Firstly, they can improve their vocabulary and grammatical knowledge if they use these tools effectively. Student 2 stated that "If I know how to use ChatGPT, Grammarly and Google Translate well, I can update my vocabulary for particular contexts." Student 5 agreed that "Those common tools help me improvise my grammatical structures in writing, which is very useful for my exam preparation".

#### 4.1.2 Difficulties in Using AI Tools for English Self-study

The further interview responses shed light on four key obstacles to the use of AI tools to support the self-study process. These hindrances are (1) "the over-reliance on technology", (2) "technical issues", (3) "unreliable contents", and (4) "costly subscriptions".

As regards the other perspectives, there are four disadvantages of using AI tools to support the self-study process. Firstly, it causes the "over-reliance on technology" (stated by Student 2 & 5). Student 2 agreed that "the overuse of AI tools can make the students lack creativity and higher-order thinking skills, leading to their lazy thinking". Student 5 confirmed that "If I am lazy to think ideas by myself, I am easily addicted to use AI tools. This can degrade my creativity and thinking." Secondly, technical barriers can frustrate the students (stated by Student 1, 3 & 5). The students with low IT skills can encounter many difficulties in using complicated AI tools to support their self-study (Student 3 & 5). Student 1 added that sometimes AI tools have cracks which affect the self-study process. Thirdly, the students can face "unreliable contents" on AI platforms if they are unprepared well to a learning task (stated by Student 4). This student agreed that "Some learning models on AI may not always give correct answers to the given questions, so the students need to consider carefully the content." Finally, "costly subscriptions" are a concern (stated by Student 1 & 4). Both agreed that the students may need to pay for expensive platforms to utilize advanced features to support their self-study.

#### 4.2 Discussion

The research results demonstrated that using AI tools is beneficial for English self-study. One of the possible reasons for this is the fact that the students frequently use these tools, as stated in the survey. This high frequency of use can contribute to their positive perception of using AI tools for English self-study [10]. Thus, it agrees with most previous studies [4, 8-11].

Firstly, because AI tools give conducive, convenient learning environments for English self-study, passionate learners can gradually improve their language skills. As supported by many scholars [4, 9-

11], AI applications are beneficial for the students' English learning results. Special technical features greatly support distant learning and make it become a learning habit [2].

Secondly, AI platforms can be conducive to the improvement in language areas like "pronunciation", "vocabulary", and "grammar". The present study acknowledges [8] who concluded that AI applications support vocabulary learning. The students can learn English vocabulary autonomously thanks to several visual aids and exercises.

Thirdly, AI tools can encourage more students to study English because of interesting contents and features, convenience of self-study progress self-evaluation, and the high possibility of personalization in learning. These claims are in agreement with [4, 9-10]. Useful functions and engaging platforms can make EFL learners become more interested in learning. They can self-evaluate their learning progress by taking part in many interactive quizzes. They can also personalize their English learning by their own interests.

Fourthly, the present study contributes another benefit to most past related studies as using AI tools can be useful for the students who want to seek numerous learning resources. For university students, they may want to find effective reference for their learning tasks, so AI tools are great aids in this case. In favor of [11], using a common platform like "ChatGPT" can facilitate the students' idea generation and reference recommendations. These merits can help EFL learners become more autonomous learners in their learning process.

This study also contributes to past studies in terms of the perceived disadvantages of using AI tools. These drawbacks are "the over-reliance on technology", "technical issues", "unreliable contents", and "costly subscriptions".

First, the present study agrees with [3]. The "over-reliance on technology" leads to the dearth of creativity and critical thinking skills. If the students cannot control their addiction to the AI use, their cognitive abilities can be gradually deteriorated. The present interview with frequent AI users can also help explain this finding. Because all the interviewees are passionate AI users, they may suffer from this problem. Their addiction to AI may result in their perceived disadvantages, such as lacking creativity and higher-order thinking skills.

Second, the present study supports [4]. While using AI tools, EFL learners may encounter technical constraints. AI platforms may have some cracks, leading to the overloading system. EFL learners also need to improve their IT capabilities to become better users. They need to know how to use AI effectively step-by-step to take advantage of the learning resources.

Third, as approved by [4, 10], EFL learners may be confronted with unreliable contents on AI platforms. Certain responses from AI may be inaccurate or unreliable, so EFL learners need to carefully check the contents before use. Moreover, AI tools cannot always replace humans with complicated learning tasks like writing a research project or grading an academic essay. The present study agrees with this drawback.

Fourth, the present study is also in line with [3]. EFL learners may need to pay for expensive platforms to conduct complicated procedures. For these advanced features, they need to register premium accounts, which are often costly. However, the present study does not reach more conclusions like [3]. There are no findings about the unsuitable sociocultural contents and the unalignment with the existing curriculum.

Besides, the results contribute to all previous Vietnamese studies by highlighting language skill aspects receiving many benefits from AI tools. First, because the students opt for three most common AI tools (e.g., Google Translate, Grammarly, and ChatGPT), they may find it useful to use them for writing skill development. To illustrate, ChatGPT can generate useful ideas and help them improvise patterns of organization. Google Translate can help them translate key terms from Vietnamese into English effectively. Grammarly can help them edit grammatical mistakes. Second, the results highlight that at NTTU writing can be a burden for many Vietnamese students. They are required to conduct many kinds of writing tasks. This leads to the use of AI tools to support self-study. These insights can contribute to more ideas about using AI tools to support English self-study at Vietnamese universities.

## 5 Conclusion

The study aims to investigate EFL learners' perception of the impact of using AI tools on the self-study process. It took place at NTTU in the second semester

of 2024-2025 academic year. One online questionnaire was delivered to 278 first-year undergraduates (270 validated samples), followed by a semi-structured interview to 5 voluntary students.

The quantitative data analysis revealed ten perceived benefits of using AI applications. They are (1) “improved listening and speaking skills”, (2) “enhanced pronunciation ability”, (3) “vocabulary knowledge”, (4) “study progress self-evaluation”, (5) “grammatical knowledge”, (6) “higher learning motivation”, (7) “personalized English learning”, (8) “improved literacy skills”, (9) “convenient English learning”, and (10) “useful learning resources”.

While the qualitative data agrees with all aforementioned benefits, it adds four common drawbacks of using AI tools on the English self-study process. They are (1) “the over-reliance on technology”, (2) “technical issues”, (3) “unreliable contents”, and (4) “costly subscriptions”.

Based on the findings, there are several implications for local EFL teaching and learning. For EFL teachers, they can consider the existing curriculum carefully and find effective ways to introduce useful AI tools for the students. EFL teachers can find budget-priced, common, convenient apps for English learning and share to their students. They can also make demonstrations of using these tools in English self-study so that many students can learn some learning models. Understanding their students’ learning interests, abilities, and perception of AI tool use can make local EFL teachers determine possible English learning apps to match their educational context. There are also many implications for the lecturers at this school to apply AI tools to help students self-study. They can introduce useful platforms like ChatGPT for the students to practice writing by themselves or in groups. The students can be instructed to use this platform to improve writing ideas and text organization. They can be instructed how to select good answers from this platforms and how to learn useful vocabulary and grammatical structures. For other language skills, the lecturers can seek and introduce useful AI tools to help the students learn. For instance,

ELSA Speak can be used for improving speaking skills; Grammarly can be useful for grammar. The lecturers may need to adapt these tools to their real educational contexts for the sake of more motivating, meaningful learning moments.

Despite great attempts to complete the study, the researcher acknowledges its shortcomings. First, only student participants were included; no triangulation was used. This can limit the contributions of the findings because no teachers’ insights into the use of AI were discovered. Second, no experimentation was conducted to demonstrate the real impact of using AI tools on the students’ English self-study process. The results were mainly based on the students’ self-reported data. Third, the study focuses on no specific AI tools but discusses these applications in general. The findings cannot be used to apply into any specific learning tool. For those limitations, they can somehow influence the reliability and validity of the study. The inclusion of a few participants (only students) may exclude the teachers’ viewpoints in using AI tools to support learning. Only surveys (via the online questionnaire and interview) may not discover all possible ideas about using AI tools for English self-study, particularly specific apps for language skills and how to use these apps effectively. The lack of meticulous description of teaching practices at the school with AI tools may lead to the subjectivity of the findings. It is because only the students’ perspectives are recorded.

Therefore, future studies can bridge those gaps by taking these recommendations. First, teacher participation should exist in these works to help include more insightful results. Second, empirical data can be used to illustrate the relative impact of using AI tools on the self-study process. Third, further academic works can pay attention to one or two AI tools and discuss the potential influences on English self-study process.

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**Tóm tắt** Sử dụng trí tuệ nhân tạo (AI) cho giáo dục tiếng Anh vừa có lợi vừa bất lợi. Phần lớn các nghiên cứu liên quan trước đây đã chứng minh rằng việc sử dụng AI có thể giúp người học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ bồi dưỡng kiến thức và kỹ năng tiếng Anh của mình. Họ có thể trở thành những người học tự chủ và sở hữu những đặc điểm học tập tốt hơn. Nghiên cứu này sử dụng bảng câu hỏi trực tuyến để điều tra tác động của AI đến quá trình tự học tiếng Anh của 270 sinh viên năm nhất tại Trường Đại học Nguyễn Tất Thành, vào học kỳ thứ hai của năm học 2024-2025. SPSS (Phiên bản 27.0) đã được sử dụng để phân tích dữ liệu. Kết quả chỉ ra rằng việc triển khai AI có thể tạo điều kiện thuận lợi cho việc tự học tiếng Anh của sinh viên. Từ đó, kết quả khảo sát có thể được ứng dụng rộng rãi trong việc dạy và học Tiếng Anh tại trường này.

**Từ khóa** trí tuệ nhân tạo, tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ, người học tự chủ

