

# CHATGPT AND INDEPENDENT ENGLISH LEARNING AMONG STUDENTS IN THE HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAM AT NATIONAL ECONOMICS UNIVERSITY

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## Abstract:

*As demand for knowledge and language proficiency grows, learners are increasingly using artificial intelligence (AI) tools to support independent foreign language study. This study examines how students in the High-Quality Program at National Economics University use ChatGPT to develop their English self-learning competence. It assesses the current state of that competence, analyzes the benefits and limitations of ChatGPT as a tool for self-directed learning, and proposes ways to strengthen students' ability to learn English independently.*

**Keywords:** *self-learning competence, English language learning, artificial intelligence, ChatGPT*

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## Tác động của việc sử dụng ChatGPT trong việc tự học tiếng Anh của sinh viên Chương trình Chất lượng cao tại Đại học Kinh tế Quốc dân

### Tóm tắt:

*Trong bối cảnh nhu cầu về tri thức và năng lực ngoại ngữ ngày càng tăng, người học đang sử dụng các công cụ trí tuệ nhân tạo (AI) để hỗ trợ quá trình tự học ngoại ngữ. Bài viết xem xét cách sinh viên thuộc Chương trình Chất lượng cao tại Đại học Kinh tế Quốc dân sử dụng ChatGPT để phát triển năng lực tự học tiếng Anh. Trên cơ sở đánh giá thực trạng năng lực này, bài viết phân tích những lợi ích và hạn chế của ChatGPT trong việc hỗ trợ học tập tự chủ, đồng thời đề xuất các giải pháp nhằm nâng cao khả năng tự học tiếng Anh của sinh viên.*

**Từ khóa:** *năng lực tự học, học tiếng Anh, trí tuệ nhân tạo, ChatGPT*

## 1. Introduction

In the context of contemporary higher education, self-learning competence plays a crucial role in helping students develop independent thinking, adaptability, and lifelong learning skills. This is particularly important in English language learning, which requires regular and long-term practice. Self-directed learning is therefore a key factor determining learners' progress and overall learning effectiveness. ChatGPT is a language model developed by OpenAI based on the GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) architecture. It can support learners in various aspects of language learning, including grammar explanation, writing practice, conversation simulation, translation, and the provision of immediate feedback. However, students' access to and ability to effectively utilize this tool vary considerably, resulting in different levels of learning effectiveness.

Students enrolled in the High-Quality Program at the National Economics University receive a total of 45 English lessons, with each lesson lasting 75 minutes, in preparation for the university's required exit English proficiency examination. In addition to classroom instruction with teachers, students need to devote considerable time to self-study and practice at home to achieve their expected scores. Through using ChatGPT, students can receive substantial support throughout their English self-learning process. This paper aims to investigate the current state of English self-learning competence among students in the High-Quality Program, analyze the benefits of ChatGPT in enhancing their self-learning competence, and identify the challenges associated with its use. Based on these findings, the paper proposes appropriate solutions to improve students' English self-learning competence through the effective application of ChatGPT.

## 2. Research content

### 2.1. *The concept of self-learning competence*

Self-learning competence has been addressed by researchers increasingly in recent years. One of the first scholars to formally introduce the concept of learner autonomy was Henri Holec. In his book *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981), Holec defined learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." He further explained that taking charge of one's learning involves the ability to determine one's own learning objectives, content, and pace; select appropriate learning methods; monitor and adjust the learning process; and evaluate one's own learning outcomes. Sharing Holec's emphasis on the competency aspect, Huttunen (1986) defined self-learning competence as the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning. Esch (1996) further emphasized that self-learning is not merely the ability to exercise control over the learning process but also involves consciously, purposefully, and systematically taking responsibility for one's learning. In the context of contemporary higher education, self-learning has become an essential requirement for developing independent thinking, adaptability, and lifelong learning skills.

### 2.2. *Factors affecting students' self-learning competence*

#### *a) Motivation for Self-Learning*

Self-learning motivation directly affects the effectiveness of the self-learning process. It is formed initially from learners' needs and their desire to fulfill learning requirements and complete academic tasks that they are expected to accomplish within a specified period.

#### *b) Self-Learning Skills*

Everyone has their own working methods and habits of intellectual activity, which may differ from those of others. In the teaching and learning process, teachers should pay attention to developing students' existing habits as well as strengthening those that remain weak or underdeveloped. This, in turn, contributes to the formation and development of students' self-learning skills.

*c) Teaching Methods of Lecturers*

Lecturers' teaching methods have a particularly important influence on the formation and development of students' self-learning competence. In the teaching process, lecturers should not merely clarify learning objectives but, more importantly, stimulate students' motivation to learn. This helps students become aware of the objectives they are expected to achieve and fosters intrinsic motivation, enabling them to engage in learning in a self-directed, active, proactive, and creative manner.

*d) Learning Resources and Material Conditions*

Learning resources and material conditions are essential factors supporting the self-learning process. Devices such as computers, smartphones, and tablets, together with a stable Internet connection, enable students to access learning materials, participate in online learning, and utilize modern educational tools such as ChatGPT, Google Scholar, Moodle, and Coursera. These resources can contribute significantly to improving the effectiveness of students' self-learning.

**2.3. ChatGPT**

ChatGPT is a chatbot powered by a Large Language Model (LLM) developed by OpenAI and based on the GPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer) architecture. It is an artificial intelligence system initially built on GPT-3.5, a series of large language models developed by OpenAI, and further fine-tuned using both reinforcement learning and supervised learning techniques. ChatGPT was launched as a prototype in November 2022 and quickly attracted considerable attention due to its ability to provide detailed responses and communicate fluently across a wide range of fields and areas of knowledge. ChatGPT can perform a variety of language-related tasks, including answering questions, translation, text summarization, creative writing, grammar correction, and conversation simulation. With its ability to understand context and linguistic nuances, ChatGPT can communicate naturally and flexibly, enabling human-like interaction and making it applicable to various fields, including education, business, and entertainment.

**2.4. ChatGPT and English self-learning**

ChatGPT is a powerful tool that can support learners throughout the English self-learning process. According to Deng (2025), the use of ChatGPT significantly improves learners' writing skills. Learners can receive immediate feedback on word choice, sentence structures, and styles of expression. In addition, ChatGPT can help identify and correct grammatical, spelling, and vocabulary errors (Hidayati, Andriyanti, & Adiyani, 2025), thereby contributing to greater accuracy and confidence in written language use. In addition to supporting language skills, ChatGPT is also a useful tool for translation, vocabulary explanation, and the creation of learning materials. Learners can use it to gain a better understanding of how words are used in different contexts. However, it is important to critically evaluate the information generated by ChatGPT and avoid excessive dependence on the tool in order to ensure accuracy and foster independent language-thinking skills.

**3. Research methodology and findings****3.1. Research methodology**

The author employed a quantitative research method. An online questionnaire in the form of a Google Forms was distributed via a Zalo group to 105 students from three different classes in the High-Quality Program at the National Economics University. A total of 75 students submitted responses through the Google Form survey. The data collected from these 75 respondents were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods with Microsoft Excel and presented in the form of charts.

**3.2. Research findings**

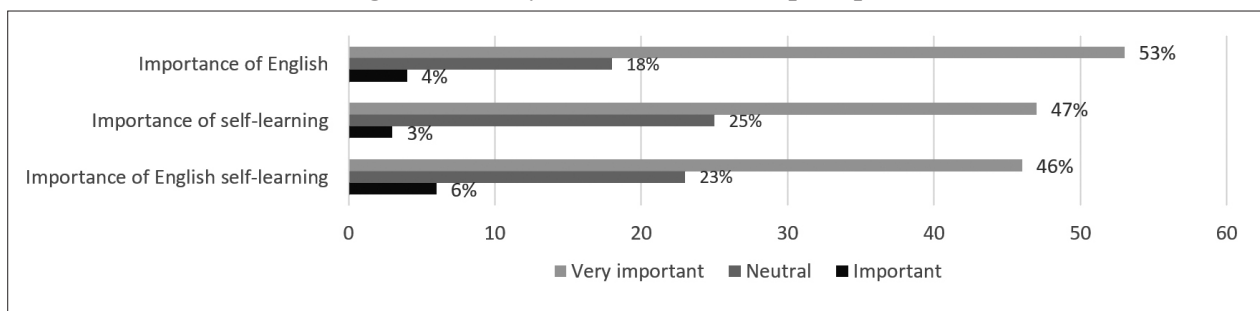
### 3.2.1. The current state of English self-learning competence among High-Quality Program students through the use of ChatGPT

#### a) Perceptions of the Importance of English, self-learning, and English self-learning

The survey results indicate that the 75 participating students have a good awareness of the importance of English, the importance of learning autonomy at the university level for their future personal development, and the importance of English self-learning activities.

The items were evaluated on a five-point scale, where 1 = very unimportant, 2 = unimportant, 3 = neutral, 4 = important, and 5 = very important. The survey results regarding students' perceptions of these aspects, expressed as percentages, are presented in the chart below.

**Figure 1. Survey results on students' perceptions**



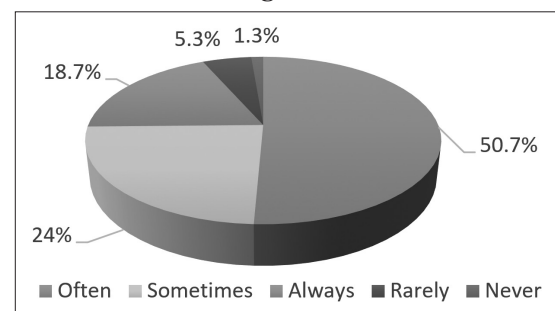
Source: Author's calculation

Although these figures only reflect students' perceptions, the author considers the results encouraging, particularly regarding learning autonomy, because, according to cognitive theory, accurate perceptions are likely to lead to positive behaviors.

#### b) Frequency of ChatGPT Use for English self-learning among High-Quality Program students

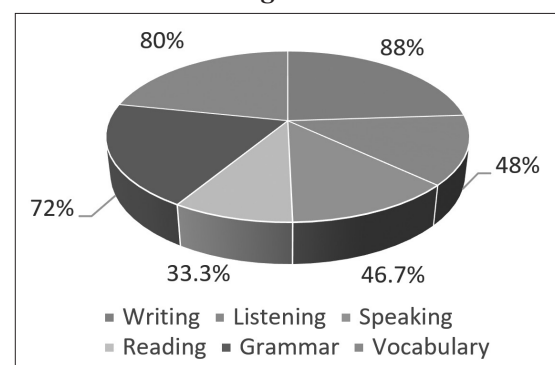
The survey results on the frequency with which students use ChatGPT in their English self-learning process, as presented in Figure 2, show that 98.7% of the students surveyed have used or are currently using ChatGPT for English self-learning at varying frequencies. Among them, 50.7% reported using ChatGPT frequently, while 18.7% reported always using it for English learning. Nearly one-quarter of the students (24%) reported that they sometimes use ChatGPT, while 5.3% rarely use the application. Notably, only 1.3% of the students reported never using ChatGPT for English learning. This proportion is considerably lower than the combined percentage of students who reported using ChatGPT frequently or always.

**Figure 2. Frequency of ChatGPT Use among students**



Source: Author's calculation

**Figure 3. Purposes of ChatGPT Use among students**



Source: Author's calculation

#### c) Purposes of using ChatGPT for English self-learning among High-Quality Program students

When surveyed about their purposes for using

ChatGPT during the English self-learning process, the results were as follows: 88% of the participating students reported using ChatGPT to support their writing skills, which was the most selected purpose. This was followed by vocabulary, selected by 80% of the students, grammar, selected by 72%. Meanwhile, listening and speaking were selected by 48% and 46.7% of the respondents, respectively. Reading was the least frequently selected skill, with only 33.3% of students reporting its use.

### 3.2.2. Benefits of ChatGPT for English self-learning competence among High-Quality Program students

Regarding students' perceptions of the benefits of ChatGPT for English self-learning competence, the survey results show that the highest-rated benefit was "providing immediate feedback," with a mean score of 4.20. This was followed by "improving English language skills" (mean score = 4.06), "increasing learning initiative" (mean score = 3.85), and "supporting learning planning" (mean score = 3.66). The lowest mean score was recorded for "maintaining a regular self-learning habit," with a mean score of 3.34.

**Table 1. Benefits of ChatGPT for students' English self-learning competence**

| Benefits of ChatGPT                    | Mean |
|----------------------------------------|------|
| Support learning planning              | 3,66 |
| Provide immediate feedback             | 4,20 |
| Increase learning initiative           | 3,85 |
| Improve English language skills        | 4,06 |
| Maintain a regular self-learning habit | 3,34 |

*Source: Author's calculation*

### 3.2.3. Difficulties of using ChatGPT for english self-learning among students

Although ChatGPT is an intelligent and powerful support tool, its use in English self-learning also presents certain difficulties. When asked about the challenges they encountered, students provided a range of responses. The survey results are presented in the table below.

**Table 2. Difficulties in using ChatGPT for English self-learning among students**

| Difficulties in Using ChatGPT                                   | Mean |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| Dependence on ChatGPT                                           | 4,14 |
| Lack of guidance on how to use ChatGPT effectively              | 3,97 |
| Lack of guidance on how to use ChatGPT effectively              | 4,03 |
| Failure to regularly verify the information provided by ChatGPT | 3,63 |

*Source: Author's calculation*

According to the collected data, "dependence on ChatGPT" received the highest mean score (4.14). This score indicates that many students tend to rely excessively on ChatGPT to obtain answers rather than conducting their own investigation and research. In addition, the possibility that ChatGPT may provide inaccurate or misleading information is also a significant concern, with a mean score of 4.03. Another difficulty commonly encountered by students is their lack of knowledge about how to use ChatGPT effectively (mean score = 3.97). The final issue is that most students do not regularly verify the information provided by ChatGPT (mean score = 3.63). This may result in students acquiring inaccurate knowledge, particularly regarding grammar, vocabulary, and language use.

## 4. Measures to enhance English Self-learning competence using ChatGPT among High-Quality Program students at the National Economics University

### 4.1. Organizing training sessions on the effective use of ChatGPT for students

One of the reasons why the use of ChatGPT has not been fully effective is that students have not received specific guidance on how to make effective use of this tool. At the National Economics University, although students receive training on the use of AI in learning at the beginning of their program, many students still struggle to apply these tools effectively to English language learning.

Therefore, the university should collaborate with the Faculty of Foreign Languages to organize training sessions introducing systematic and appropriate ways of using AI in foreign language teaching and learning, particularly in English language learning.

#### **4.2. Combining ChatGPT with other active learning methods**

The survey results indicate that one of students' major concerns is the risk of becoming dependent on ChatGPT and experiencing a decline in independent thinking. This issue deserves careful consideration because passive use of ChatGPT may encourage learners to copy generated content without developing a deep understanding of the material or processing information independently. To address this issue, ChatGPT should be integrated with active learning methods such as group discussions, self-reflection and critical evaluation, and project-based learning. ChatGPT should serve as a tool to support the thinking process rather than replace learners' own initiative and creativity.

#### **4.3. Developing an AI Tool Utilization Skills Framework for English Language Learning**

In practice, many students have difficulty formulating effective prompts, often fail to verify the information provided by ChatGPT, and may sometimes accept inaccurate or misleading content. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive skills framework that enables students to use ChatGPT proactively and critically. This skills framework should include the ability to formulate clear and effective prompts, verify information, use ChatGPT appropriately for different English language skills, as well as manage learning time and evaluate learning performance.

### **5. Conclusion**

This study has examined the theoretical foundations, investigated the current state of English self-learning competence, and proposed several specific measures to enhance the English self-learning competence of High-Quality Program students at the National Economics University through the use of ChatGPT. The integration of ChatGPT into the English self-learning process has provided a number of benefits for learners. A clear understanding of the advantages of ChatGPT can help students make the most effective use of this technology to improve their English self-learning competence. At the same time, recognizing the difficulties and limitations associated with ChatGPT can help learners avoid becoming completely dependent on technology and instead combine traditional learning methods with technological tools to achieve better outcomes in the English self-learning process ■

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