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AI Technology in The ESP Context: Uses and Concerns among Architectural Engineering Students at Hadhramout University

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Abstract: With the rapid advancement of information technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI), numerous cutting-edge techniques and technologies have been developed to improve English learning generally and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) specifically. This study's combination of the use AI technology by ESL students bring a niche in the field. It also examines ESP students in a developing country overwelmed by war. Therefore, this article presents a quantitative study on Yemeni architectural engineering students to identify their perceptions of their proficiency in utilizing AI tools in their ESP studies. In addition, the study attempted to determine what concerns these students may have when using AI applications. To collect data, a close-ended questionnaire was administered to 43 fourth year students at the Department of Architectural Engineering at Hadhramout University, Yemen in the academic year 2024-2025. The findings indicated that the majority of the students are below the average efficiency (M=2.65) level in using most of the AI applications. The students, however, rated themselves as efficient in handling few AI-based applications such as ChatGPT (M= 4.44), Microsoft Bing Copilot (M= 3.88) and Google Gemeni

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(M=3.74). The study also showed that Yemeni EFL students have high concern regarding the use of AI technology (M=3.57). For instance, the current analysis emphasized several challenges and concerns involving ethical issues related to data privacy, plagiarism, overreliance, cheating and laziness among learners, and the tendency to provide misleading or inaccurate information. This study could contribute to raise architectural engineering students' awareness and knowledge about their lacks in using AI technologies. Knowing their strengths and weaknesses in using various AI tools would be beneficial so that future learning may be enriched if learners maintain their strengths and try to improve and stretch their weaknesses. Moreover, based on the findings, the study presented recommendations for the professors, curricula designers and engineering students at Hadhramout University.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Engineering Students

1. Introduction

As far as EFL learning is concerned, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has begun to be integrated into EFL learning with applications and tools which mainly involve natural language processing, expert systems, speech recognition, robotics, intelligent agents, and others (An et al., 2023; Bin-Hadi et al, 2024; Enzelina et al., 2023; Jia-Cing et al., 2021). AI-powered language learning tools are recent technologies that emerged from automation that can imitate human intelligence through language processing and can complete tasks using the information gained (Enzelina et al., 2023). AI language learning technologies are developed and used to help improve EFL learners' motivation and efficiency and enable them to learn new languages efficiently and engagingly (Dugošija, 2024; Rebolledo & González, 2023).

Prior research in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) showed that AI is currently seen as of paramount importance in the academic and professional lives of engineering students (Sinkus & Ozola, 2024). AI, as a branch of computer science, utilizes computer systems to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence (Khoiriah et al., 2024). Implementing AI tools into the ESP curriculum presents a wide range of benefits by personalising and adapting content and tasks to the specific needs and individual proficiency levels of engineering students (Sinkus & Ozola, 2024).

Despite the increasing adoption of AI tools globally and their potential to enhance ESL/EFL learning, there is a scarcity of research that investigated the uses and challenges, particularly among Yemeni university EFL students (Hezam et al, 2024). Consequently, few recent studies have been conducted among Yemeni EFL learners on utilizing AI technology to enhance their learning and improve academic achievement (e.g. Alkamel & Alwagieh, 2024; Hezam et al, 2024). To the



researchers' knowledge; however, Yemeni engineering ESP students have been neglected. Therefore, further investigation is required to explore the perceptions of a group of architectural engineering students at a public university in Yemen to identify the students' ability and potential challenges and concerns of using AI-based learning tools. This would help provide insights for effective integration and support of AI in their academic and occupational domains. Given this, the current study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- How do Yemeni engineering students perceive their proficiency in utilizing AI tools in their ESP studies?
- What are the perceptions of Yemeni engineering students regarding their concerns when utilizing AI tools in their academic ESP study?

2. Literature Review

2.1. AI and EFL Learning

There is no clear-cut definition of the concept AI as it is defined differently by many scholars. For Healey (2020) as cited in Schimidt and Strasser (2022), AI is a broad term that describes a collection of technologies that can solve problems and perform tasks to achieve defined objectives without explicit human guidance. AI key concepts in terms of AI-powered language learning, according to Schimidt and Strasser (2022), have been classified as Natural Language Processing (NLP), Machine Learning (ML) and Deep Learning (DL). Smith and Johnson (2020) aver that AI technologies, such as natural language processing and machine learning, have significantly improved language learning efficiency by providing learners with immediate feedback and personalized content. In the same vein, Luckin et al. (2016) argued that AI-powered technologies and tools help offer the possibility of EFL learning that is more personalized, flexible, inclusive, and engaging.

Therefore, integrating AI-based applications into the classroom is essential for familiarizing EFL students with this technology, as it has become a key policy agenda in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Enzelina et al., 2023; Tuomi, 2018). Chat GPT, Google Gemeni, Perplexity, DeepL, Grammarly, Canva.ai, ChatPdf, Grooper, and other AI tools have been invented in ELT. The role of AI in ELT extends beyond the classroom. Prior research in EFL context confirmed the importance of AI tools implementation in the EFL classroom. For instance, a recent study in the Saudi EFL context by Alhalangy and AbdAlgane (2023) among 45 university teachers confirmed the importance of AI and its positive impact on facilitating EFL pedagogical and learning procedures.



In the Yemeni Arabic EFL context, Hezam et al. (2024) explored Yemeni EFL undergraduates' perceptions of using AI tools. The findings showed that most of the students regularly employ AI-powered tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Duolingo to enhance their EFL learning. On the other hand, the study revealed a number of barriers such as limited internet access and high AI tool costs. Moreover, Alkamel and Alwagieh (2024) conducted a recent investigation in Yemen aiming to identify university leaners' potential opinions, benefits, and challenges regarding using ChatGPT as an AI-based writing tool in academic writing. Generally, the findings highlighted the possible benefits of ChatGPT to improve Yemeni EFL undergraduates' academic writing as well as the challenges associated with using AI-based writing tools, such as concerns about academic integrity.

In keeping in line with globalization, AI teaching and language learning has evolved tremendously that leads many researchers, educators, course designers and language practitioners to improve their teaching methodology and approaches. In the case of English for specific purposes (ESP), and due to the increase demand from the industrialization, the globalization and the hospitality and travel industry, the teaching of ESP has also flourished and evolved. As far as engineering learners are concerned, ESP is distinguished as a type of ELT that focuses on the specific needs of a particular group of learners. A relevant needs analysis study conducted by Sinkus and Ozola (2024) among 137 engineering students at Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies. They surveyed twenty five of the potential AI software tools which used to enhance engineering students in their ESP studies. These include: Chat GPT, Microsoft Bing Copilot, Google AI, iask.ai, Google Bard, Perplexity, DeepL, Bing Translator, Alexa Translation, Reverso Translation, Grammarly, Language Tool, Canva.ai, Midjourney, Lensgo.ai, DALL E, Adobe Firefly, ChatPdf, Grooper, Sharly, Quillbot, Otter.ai, Mendeley, Decktopus, and SmallTalk2me. The results indicated that the students frequently used a wide range of AI tools in their ESP studies. They also highlighted areas of concern when utilizing AI technology.

Given this, the current study tries to explore the uses and concerns of AI technology by engineering ESP learners in tertiary education in Yemen. This could help give educators new directions for making changes in their classrooms to meet their learners' interests and needs as AI, according to Bin-Hadi et al. (2024) may have wide-ranging implications in the areas of curriculum design, materials development, student orientation, and teacher training.



2.2. Theoretical Foundations

The theoretical frameworks supporting the integration of AI in ESP education include constructivist and andragogy theories. This study is also inspired by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989) and the penta-dimensional Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Language Learning (AIALL) model for language learning by Bin-Hady et al. (2023)..

The constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky,1978), is used by the researchers in the present study because the integration of AI in ESP education aligns seamlessly with constructivist learning theory, emphasising the importance of active engagement, knowledge construction by learners, personalised and student-centered approaches and scaffolded learning experiences (Anderson et al., 1995; Blikstein & Worsley, 2016; Jackson, 2024; Luckin et al., 2016; Russel & Norvig, 2010).

Knowles' (1973, 1984, 2005) andragogical theory has been used as a framework in closely related studies by Lowell (1995), Bale and Dudney (2000), and Misch (2002) among engineering students, undergraduate business school students, and medical students, respectively. Accordingly, relevant concepts from andragogical theory are adopted in the present study on engineering students at Hadhramout University. Moreover, it might be worth mentioning that human-centered andragogy is a form of educating adults that is learner-centered (Adarkwah, 2024; Forrest & Peterson, 2006). UNESCO's (2023) recommendation for incorporating AI into education is to adopt a human-centered approach which focuses on the development of human capabilities and agency for effective human-machine collaboration in learning, life, and work. In a human-centered andragogy, more emphasis is laid on the adult learner than the AI technology (Adarkwah, 2024).

Concerning the TAM model which was proposed by Davis (1989) has been elaborated by Davis and Venkatesh (1996). According to TAM, users are more likely to accept a technology if they believe it will help them perform their tasks more effectively (Haruna & Amos, 2024). The TAM framework has been widely referred to in research dealing with AI and technology utilization as it can potentially provide empirical data becoming fundamental determinants of technology use (Davis, 1989; Davis & Venkatesh, 1996; Wulyani et al, 2024), covering the constructs of *Perceived Ease of Use* (PEoU), *Perceived Usefulness* (PU), and *Technology Acceptance* (TA). Consequently, in this study, the researchers followed the TAM model by attempting to determine the ability of architectural engineering students so as to get data regarding the construct PEoU. In addition, the



study looked at the students' potential concerns when using AI technology which would be somehow related to the construct PU.

Finally, the researchers in the current research benefited from the pentadimensional AIALL model for language learning proposed by Bin-Hady et al. (2023). The model stresses the significance of a flexible teacher's role in promoting learner autonomy, creating an enjoyable learning experience, encouraging future innovation and recognizing diverse applications.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative survey design to find out engineering students' perceptions regarding AI. The study oriented fourth year students at the Department of Architectural Engineering at Hadhramout University, Yemen in the academic year 2024-2025.

3.1.1. Population

The target population in this research was all the students who studied in the academic year 2024-2025 in the Department of Architectural Engineering at Hadhramout University, Yemen. The total number of the students was 352 (231 males and 121 females). Using a non-probability purposive sampling technique, the study surveyed a total of 43 fourth year architectural engineering students, aged from 22 to 25 years old. Choosing the subjects using the judgment (purposive) sampling is based on the researchers' own judgment (Milroy, 1987). Therefore, all fourth year students were selected because they are accessible and would represent the output of the architectural program at Hadhramout University. Moreover, preliminary informal interviews with some of these students revealed that they are familiar enough of many AI tools and applications.

3.1.2. Instrument

Based on the TAM framework and Sinkus and Ozola's (2024) study, a questionnaire was developed as the main instrument for data collection (Appendix 1). It comprised three sections A, B and C. The first section gathered information regarding the participants' background. The second and third sections were developed to identify the students' perceptions regarding their ability (25 items) and concerns (17 items) when using AI tools respectively. The questionnaire items were built according to efficiency scale (See data analysis). It might be expedient at this juncture to indicate that a draft of the questionnaire was submitted to two experts in ELT at Hadhramout University so as to check its content validity. Few amendments



were done based on the feedback the jury provided. Moreover, to ease understanding, an Arabic version of the questionnaire was administered. The study showed a high reliability level for both diminsions. Cronbach's Alpha was use to measure the reliability level. Table 1 shows that both variales achived a high consisitancy level of .99.

Table 1. The consistency of the instrument

Variables	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Ability	25	.99
Concern	17	.99

3.2.3. Data analysis

Data in this study were quantatively processed; descriptive analysis including mean scores and standard deviations was calculated. The means are simply arithmetic average of the responses for the first research question were ranked with 1 point assigned for "not efficient at all", 2 for "Not efficient", 3 for "somewhat efficient", 4 for 'Efficient" and 5 for "very efficient". It is worth mentioning that the mean ratings obtained for the second research question were between 1 and 5, where 1 implies "strongly disagree" and 5 implies "strongly agree".

4. Results and Discussions

The results of this study were two folds: 1) determining the students' ability in utilizing AI tools, and 2) identifying the potential concerns when utilizing AI technology. For ease of reference, the findings are presented and discussed according to the order of the survey questions.

4.1. Students' Ability in Using AI Tools

This sub-section deals with the descriptive statistics of the results to answer the first research question i.e. *How do Yemeni engineering students perceive their proficiency in utilizing AI tools in their ESP studies?* The participants were asked to rate their ability in using 25 AI tools. Table 1 depicts values representing the subjects' responses to the former question.



AI Tools	Mean (N=43)	Standard Deviation
1) Chat GPT	4.44	.700
2) Microsoft Bing Copilot	3.88	1.159
3) Google AI	3.09	1.108
4) iask.ai	2.551	.983
5) Google Gemeni	3.74	1.236
6) Perplexity	2.39	.791
7) DeepL	2.48	.935
8) Bing Translator	2.69	.988
9) Alexa Translation	2.53	.934
10) Reverso Translation	2.48	.935
11) Grammarly	2.39	.791
12) Language Tool	2.41	1.005
13) Canva.ai	3.11	1.095
14) Midjourney	2.39	.979
15) Lensgo.ai	2.30	.860
16) DALL E	2.37	.873
17) Adobe Firefly	2.44	.853
18) ChatPdf	2.48	.882
19) Grooper	2.20	.887
20) Sharly	2.27	.854
21) Quillbot	2.32	.808
22) Otter.ai	2.30	.831
23) Mendeley	2.41	.905
24) Decktopus	2.37	.845
25) SmallTalk2me	2.32	.808
Average	2.65	0.921

Table 2. Yemeni ESP students' ability in using AI tools

The architectural students' self-assessment of their ability in the using AI tools, as shown in Table 2, reveal that they are generally at below average efficiency level in using most of the AI applications. They scored an average mean of 2.65 and standard deviation of 0.921. They rated themselves lower than 2.5 in using 17 out of 25 AI tools. This indicates that the students appear to have problems in using *ChatPdf* (mean=2.48), *Reverso Translation* (mean=2.48), *DeepL* (mean=2.48), *Adobe Firefly* (mean=2.44), *Language Tool* (mean=2.4186), *Mendeley* (mean=2.41), *Perplexity* (mean=2.39), *Grammarly* (mean=2.39), *Midjourney*



(mean=2.3953), DALL E (mean= 2.37), Quillbot (mean= 2.32), Lensgo.ai (mean=2.30), Otter.ai (mean=2.30), Decktopus (mean=2.37), SmallTalk2me (mean=2.32), Sharly (mean=2.27), and Grooper (mean= 2.20).

However, they felt that their ability in using *ChatGPT* is efficient enough as it received the highest mean score i.e. 4.44 of the students' results. This seems to be in line with prior research findings such as Bin-Hady et al. (2024), Deng and Lin, (2022), Huang (2023), Jeon et al. (2023), Komatina et al. (2024), Koraishi, (2023), Liu and Ma, (2023), and Sinkus and Ozola, (2024). All these studies presented empirical evidence that highlights the effectiveness of EFL/ESP learners on using ChatGPT as a language-learning tool. As far as engineering students are concerned, using AI-powered academic research tools such as Chat GPT can assist in meeting the academic needs of engineering students in the ESP course as they can be used for finding resources and reading academic literature (Sinkus & Ozola, 2024). Moreover, ChatGPT can help architectural engineering students in particular in suggestions, offering design tips or concepts (Deng & Lin, 2022; Komatina et al, 2024).

Interestingly enough, *Microsoft Bing Copilot* (mean= 3.88) and *Google Gemeni* (mean= 3.74) were also highly rated by architectural engineering students in this study. *Microsoft Bing Copilot* (also known as Bing AI, Bing Chat or Copilot) and *Google Gemeni* are AI chatbot and translation tools respectively.

4.2. Students' Concerns on Using AI Tools

This sub-section presents and discusses data to help answer the second research question i.e. *what are the perceptions of architectural engineering students at Hadhramout University regarding their concerns when utilizing AI tools in their academic ESP study?* The informants were required to rank 17 items regarding their concerns on using AI tools. Relative rankings of the students are shown in Table 3below.

Fable 3. Yemeni ESP students	concerns regarding	using AI tools
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AI Tools		Standard
	(N=43)	Deviation
1- I have concerns related to plagiarism and cheating	3.51	1.16
2- I have concerns of not representing the real skills and knowledge of the students	3.90	1.04
3- I have concerns about failure to properly cite and write references and sources	3.88	.956



66

4- I have concerns about the lack of effort in the original work	3.44	1.09
5- I have concerns about violation of academic honesty and integrity	2.95	1.19
6- I have concerns about full reliance on technology will lead to student laziness	3.86	1.16
7- I have concerns about over-reliance on AI in learning will contribute to the destruction of students' creativity, critical thinking skills, and independence	3.83	1.25
8- I have concerns that the work generated by AI lacks transparency as no information regarding the data sources are given	3.51	1.12
9- I have concerns about unethical use of AI tools can lead to a decrease in the quality of learning	3.81	1.11
10- I have concerns about not actually learning from the information provided by AI and just copying it without thinking and understanding	3.62	1.09
11- I have concerns about over-reliance on AI and the lack of a human advice may negatively affect students' communication and interpersonal skills.	3.74	1.04
12. I have concerns about the use of AI can raise trust issues due to content errors, missing references or misleading information	3.60	1.02
13. I have privacy concerns about data misuse, unauthorized access to personal information, and intellectual property infringement	3.55	1.00
14. I have concerns about the potential to devalue human input and expertise, prioritizing AI-generated content over human knowledge	3.53	1.00
15- I have concerns that translating some technical terms using AI is inaccurate	3.60	1.09
16- I have concerns that translating some phrases and texts in our field of specialization using AI is inaccurate	3.46	1.09
17- I have no concerns about the use of AI	3.00	1.34
Average	3.57	1.10

Almost all the items in Table 3 received mean scores higher than 3.5. This means that the Yemen ESP students appear to have high concerns regarding using AI technology with an average (mean =3.57 and standard deviation =1.10). Their concern of *not representing the real skills and knowledge of the students* (mean= 3.90) comes first as it was ranked with the highest mean score. This is followed by their concern of *failure to properly cite and write references and sources* (mean=



3.88), full reliance on technology will lead to student laziness (mean= 3.86), overreliance on AI in learning will contribute to the destruction of students' creativity, critical thinking skills, and independence (mean= 3.83), and unethical use of AI tools can lead to a decrease in the quality of learning (mean= 3.81).

On the other hand, the least ranked item in Table 2 was item 16 with a mean score 3.00 emphasizing that the majority of the architectural engineering students in this research *have no concerns about the use of AI*.

Similar to the present findings, concerns regarding the use of AI in ESL/EFL contexts have been well documented by many researchers (e.g. Fuchs, 2023; Huang, 2023; Sinkus & Ozola, 2024). For example, a relevant study by Sinkus and Ozola (2024) among engineering students at Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies, found that the majority of the students (48.9%) express concerns regarding plagiarism and cheating and failure to cite and write references and sources properly. In addition, around third of the subjects i.e. 27.7% believe that unethical use of AI can lead to dependence on technology and laziness and by over-relying on AI for learning, students are not able to develop creativity, critical thinking skills, and independent thought. Another related study was that of Huang (2023) who stated that AI limitations, such as its potential to miss nuances and promote over-reliance, may hinder engineering students' creativity, critical thinking, and raise plagiarism concerns.

5. Conclusion and Implications

To reiterate, based on the selected participants' perspectives, the students appear to have problems in using most of the AI tools. This would help raise the students' awareness of their ability so as they would be able to improve themselves and attend training courses to overcome such obstacles when using AI technology. Many concerns on using AI tools are highlighted in this study. On this regard, the researchers concur with Sinkus and Ozola (2024) advice in that in ESP contexts, AI technology should be used responsibly to avoid issues like plagiarism and cheating, overreliance and laziness, lack of authenticity, originality, transparency, decreased quality of learning, negative impact on communication and interpersonal skills.

The implications for ESP teachers and curriculum designers at the Department of Architectural Engineering at Hadhramout University are not farreaching as they need to regard their students' ability and issues not as a simple activity but a complex multi-facetted process, and when developing an ESP course they should not neglect the potential concerns of a number of factors mentioned above.



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APPENDIX 1 The Students' Questionnaire

Dear Participants,

The following questionnaire constitutes part of a research project that investigates AI technology utilization among Architectural engineering students at Hadhramout University.

The questionnaire is anonymous and all the data will be handled confidentially. Your accurate responses and the time spent in filling in the questionnaire are highly respected and appreciated.

Instructions: For the following items, please indicate your answer with a tick ($\sqrt{}$) in the boxes or spaces provided. Where a line is provided, please write your answer, if applicable.

A) Background Information

Please tick ($\sqrt{}$) in the appropriate box.

1. What is your age?

21 years	[]		
22 years	[]		
23 years	[]		
24 years	[]		
25 years	[]		
Others (pl	ease	specify)	

2. What is your sex?

Male [] Female []



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B) Ability in Using AI Tools

How efficient would you be in using the following *AI Tools* to enhance your ESP learning? Please tick ($\sqrt{}$) in the appropriate space.

AI Tools	Very efficient	Efficient	Somewhat efficient	Not efficient	Not efficient at all
1) Chat GPT					
2) Microsoft Bing Copilot					
3) Google AI					
4) iask.ai					
5) Google Gemini					
6) Perplexity					
7) DeepL					
8) Bing Translator					
9) Alexa Translation					
10) Reverso					
Translation					
11) Grammarly					
12) Language Tool					
13) Canva.ai					
14) Midjourney					
15) Lensgo.ai					
16) DALL E					
17) Adobe Firefly					
18) ChatPdf					
19) Grooper					
20) Sharly					
21) Quillbot					
22) Otter.ai					
23) Mendeley					
24) Decktopus					
25) SmallTalk2me					
26) Others (please specify)					



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C) Concerns Regarding Using AI Tools

What concerns do you associate with the unethical use of AI in your academic ESP study? Please tick ($\sqrt{}$) in the appropriate space.

AI Tools	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1- I have concerns related to plagiarism and cheating					
2- I have concerns about not representing the real skills and knowledge of the students					
3- I have concerns about failure to properly cite and write references and sources					
4- I have concerns about the lack of effort in the original work					
5- I have concerns about violation of academic honesty and integrity					
6- I have concerns about full reliance on technology will lead to student laziness					
7- I have concerns about over-reliance on AI in learning will contribute to the destruction of students' creativity, critical thinking skills, and independence					
8- I have concerns that the work generated by AI lacks transparency as no information regarding the data sources is given					
9- I have concerns about unethical use of AI tools can lead to a decrease in the quality of learning					



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This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. Available online at https://revue.univ-oran2.dz/Revue/IJMLSP/index.php/IJMLSP 18. Other concerns (please specify)

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Authors' contributions

Dr. Atef has prepared the first draft of the paper while Dr. Wagdi has understakens the methodological part and revised the whole manuscript.

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Ethical approval

This research did not require any ethical approval.

Informed consent

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

