



**An-Najah National University
Faculty of Graduate Studies**

**EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF
THE ROLE OF CHATGPT-AIDED PERSONALIZED
LEARNING IN ENHANCING AUTONOMOUS
LEARNING IN PALESTINIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**This Thesis is submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master's Degree of Methods of Teaching English Language, Faculty of Graduate
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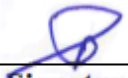
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Dedication

Palestinian martyrs are not just numbers; they are stories to be documented and told from one generation to another. Here, I dedicate my thesis to these unforgettable stories that continue to teach us the genuine meaning of humanity, *sumud*, sacrifice, and national commitment.

This dedication is incomplete without a proper acknowledgment of the unyielding support and love of my family. I, therefore, express my deepest gratitude to my father, Nidal Al-Atrash, my mother, Wisam Ahmad, my sisters, Zeina and Nawwar Al-Atrash, and my brothers, Mu'men and Mahdi Al-Atrash. Your constant encouragement and love have always been the driving force behind my academic pursuits and scholarly success. I sincerely thank you!

To my little family; my husband, Dr. Mohammed Hamdan, and my little princess and the star of our home, Salma Hamdan, I extend my warmest dedication and gratitude. Special thanks go to my husband who has never hesitated to support me in times of exhaustion, distress, and frustration. He is the man who fed my inquisitive spirit and pushed my scientific endeavors forward, a man who is simply priceless.

This thesis is also dedicated to my second family; my father-in-law, Ismael Hamdan, and mother-in-law, Khitam Alawneh, and all other family members. This project would not have been possible without your unwavering help, blessing, and wishes.

To my all-and-for-ever hero, my late grandfather, teacher Ahmad Jaber, I dedicate this work. Whatever expressions I provide here, I can never describe the beauty, courage, and wisdom I have learned from him. He will always remain a beautiful soul who taught me to take a leap of faith in myself and make my ideas come true. This dedication is, moreover, extended to my grandmothers, Halima and Fatima, all of my uncles, and their families for believing in me.

Finally, whoever reads this labor of love, may you find hope, knowledge, and truth in youth as I continue to do. Thank you for reading this!

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First and Foremost, I deeply thank God The Almighty for His innumerable blessings. I am eternally indebted to Him for the light and insight that have guided me through this long journey.

This thesis is not the outcome of the efforts of entirely one individual. Many people have contributed to its development, progress, and final production. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to acknowledge those who have made an authentic impact on my master's journey and accomplishment. I sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr. Khaled Dweikat, for his generous instruction, unrelenting guidance, and nuanced feedback not only during the course of this thesis but throughout my graduate experience at An-Najah National University.

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that I submitted the thesis entitled:

EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE ROLE OF CHATGPT-AIDED PERSONALIZED LEARNING IN ENHANCING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING IN PALESTINIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

**By
Aya Nidal Faleh Al-Atrash**

I declare that the work provided in this thesis, unless otherwise referenced, is the researcher's own work, and has not been submitted elsewhere for any other degree or qualification.

Student's Name

Aya Nidal Faleh Al-Atrash

Signature:



Date:

16/12/2024

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-assisted autonomous learning in enhancing self-directed learning at two Palestinian universities which are An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University. To achieve this aim, the researcher employed a mixed-approach research design to analyze and explain the collected data. The data were collected through the study tools which are interviews and a questionnaire from a sample of EFL students according to demographic variables such as gender, academic level, and university. An analytical descriptive approach was used by using the questionnaire as a tool for the study and was analyzed using SPSS V.23. The sample of the study consisted of (348) students chosen by stratified random method. The quantitative analysis revealed generally positive perspectives of ChatGPT's effectiveness in fostering self-directed learning. The findings of the questionnaire showed a high response to the total degree of the main question. Moreover, there were no statistically significant differences attributed to the variables of academic level and university while there were statistically significant differences due to gender in favor of males. The qualitative data further emphasized the potential of ChatGPT to function as a supplementary tool, providing learners with ways to steer academic learning more efficiently. The study also emphasized the need for teacher guidance to ensure balanced use. Overall, ChatGPT is seen as a valuable benefit in the educational process even though its success depends on thoughtful integration with conventional teaching methods. The study ultimately recommended the necessity of raising the awareness level of perspective on the impact of ChatGPT-assisted autonomous learning in enhancing self-directed learning and profound studies about this domain.

Keywords: AI in education; ChatGPT; autonomous learning; self-directed learning; EFL students

Chapter One

Introduction and Theoretical Background

1.1 Introduction

The way technology has revolutionized teaching methods is fascinating, particularly in language teaching. The transfer toward web-based learning not only increases accessibility but also fosters student engagement and autonomy (Di et al., 2018). By breaking down the boundaries of the physical environment of classrooms and fixed schedules, web-based learning opens up new possibilities for interactive and individual learning experiences. This shift has challenged conventional approaches focused on textbooks and classroom teaching by offering a more flexible and dynamic technique for students to learn the English language. If learning a new or foreign language in today's universities by the use of traditional or modern ways of learning does not get positive impacts as commonly expected in learning processes, then the issue of building a new model for learning the English language and improving the learner's performance remains a fundamental concern. This concern can be approached in many different ways. One essential way of improving the student's ability to autonomous learning is to use a mixed approach that allows students to integrate ChatGPT as a necessary part of the face-to-face learning process.

Several works of literature in education provide various definitions of "autonomous learning". Some extreme explanations confuse it with "independent learning," where students are supposed to avoid all external effects while learning, which can be misleading. While "autonomous learning" involves self-management and self-monitoring (similar to the "self-regulated learning" concept) (Entwistle & McCune, 2004), it can also be good for interactions with peers or teachers' perspectives. Students in this approach use others' ideas to improve their own, not just passively accept them. Knowledge building becomes an individual journey with distinctive awareness, not simply "receiving" information. Autonomous learners take control and responsibility for their own education, finding resources, setting goals, and improving their understanding within a chosen field. This aligns with a self-directed approach and with personalized learning, where the focus is on individual interests and needs. However, it is different from the student-centered approach which may involve some teacher guidance despite the emphasis on student participation. It must take into account that learner autonomy is a

skill brought up through an individual journey of development. This journey toward cultural knowledge encompasses different layers of emotional uncertainty because learners find it hard to bridge gaps between what is expected and what is real. Yet, these gaps can be approached, solved, and harnessed if learners gain self-trust in terms of finding new information, solving problems by experience, and autonomously *re*-shifting to authentic modes of knowledge acquisition without following the steps of their instructors' philosophy of teaching. This ultimately brings ease to students' experimental learning despite the level of uncertainty this might entail (Magolda, 2023).

Knowles (1975) believes that self-directed learning (SDL) must be centralized in the process of adult education. Here, SDL refers to a way of learning by which students are in full control of the entire learning process. This implies that they can find their own interests in the search for knowledge, locate different sources of information they need, create their self-assessment, build their objectives, keep track of their development, and choose any appropriate approach to employ in the learning process, regardless of their teachers' influence. In so doing, learners reveal that they are highly competent as they embody a desire for knowledge retention. To Knowles, these learners become increasingly motivated to set their own goals, which means that they are more equipped than passive learners who turn into mere recipients of knowledge. In relation to this, Knowles shows that SDL reflects itself in the learners' normal psychological behavior throughout their development, which eventually decreases their feelings of self-devaluation, fear, and doubt, especially in the act of gaining new knowledge in the learning process (Knowles, 1975).

Five important elements manifest SDL from a conceptual perspective, as put by (R. Kim et al., 2014). To begin with, structuring goals on the part of learners is a significant element that demonstrates their ability to choose what is relevant and necessary in terms of the final product of learning, be it their academic success or establishing a career that is tied to the knowledge they seek to build. Secondly, learners must determine and access fitting resources, utilizing diverse materials like textbooks and online sources to support their objectives. The third key element demands adopting and implementing learning activities, where learners create executable plans, be in charge of studying time effectively, and require feedback to align with their goals and accessible resources. The fourth dimension is monitoring and evaluating performance requiring learners to evaluate

their progress with equivalent set goals, which enables them to modify to enhance performance. The final key element is reshaping learning strategies which involves thoughtful completed activities to identify areas for improvement, leading to modification in learning approaches and consistent engagement in learning environments.

Online education, especially asynchronous learning, has gained popularity due to its widespread availability, advancement of technology, and cost-effectiveness, which offers university students increased accessibility, convenience, and flexibility (Buelow et al., 2019). McDonald et al. (2020) demonstrate that a significant part of university students enrolled in complete asynchronous online courses. In fact, asynchronous learning gives learners the opportunity to locate and use the materials they need in their courses and other relevant sources at their will.

It is mandatory that students who are involved in synchronous courses via online platforms equip themselves with deep knowledge of self-directed learning and other autonomous modes of learning. Contrary to students who are part of classical settings in the educational process, students who take synchronous courses must bring along their SDL skills, which are a genuine learning value that is much needed to replace the lack of assistance from teachers and interchange of information with peers (Frimming & Bordelon, 2016). This need is an intrinsic part of asynchronous online education, meaning that students are responsible for their time and are significantly in charge of their learning strategies which they may adapt to comply with their final educational objectives (Zhu et al., 2020). Since obtaining knowledge by having access to the Internet in asynchronous online courses is vital, Y. Lai et al. (2022) argue that the Internet becomes important to provide different sets of data to empower students' knowledge, self-learning, and SDL skills. This allows students to improve their experiences of self-learning, offer new insights into the learning self, develop their ability to criticize and evaluate newly acquired knowledge, and reflect on their own points of strength and weakness for the sake of increased development (R. Kim et al., 2014).

The gradual value of SDL and autonomy in asynchronous online learning stems from the fact that learners can separately take charge of their time and take note of their progress, which fosters their flexible adaptation to the learning process. Consequently, individuals who improve in these environments are often characterized as self-directed learners,

showing high levels of motivation and active engagement in their educational tracking (Knowles, 1975).

It must be noted, nonetheless, that having the skills needed for autonomous learning is not part and parcel of all university students, which implies that they may fall behind in developing their abilities in self-directed learning. For example, their inability to employ different resources in the learning process, particularly multimedia data, due to their unprofessional ways of directing learning materials can increase their sense of frustration. The lack of professionalism in dealing with new technologies and having access to necessary information, as noted by (Kara et al., 2019), can propel the students' anxiety as they lag behind due to their technical inexperience. In addition to the students' lack of technical skills that qualify them to engage deeply in a self-directed learning process, the non-existence of an authentic learning environment that fully supports its learners can lead to dire challenges in the context of asynchronous learning. (Kara et al., 2019) consider that interactions among students themselves and with their teachers, likewise, are pivotal to the ultimate fruition and improvement of the process of online learning. These challenges can contribute to the failure of the learning process by bringing about damage to the students' healthy spaces and environments in asynchronous online learning.

In their discussion of artificial intelligence in education, Carter Jr et al. (2020) suggest that it can be used to further improve the amount of support given to students in the process of learning. Students in today's educational contexts can gain further support from technology-enhanced environments, especially if we take into account the fast growth of artificial intelligence in different educational settings. Students who are particularly engaged in asynchronous online courses, which can be challenging because of the students' constant need to acquire self-directed learning skills, can use artificial intelligence to simplify materials and make the process of learning easier. Students' use of chatbots, which are newly designed and popular AI programs that generate human-like conversations, can facilitate the process of self-learning. The particular employment of ChatGPT, which is a specialized type of chatbot, fulfills the functional role of self-directed learning as it provides intricate discussions, interactive responses, and a supportive environment in terms of assistance, assessment, and critique. This becomes possible through the utilization of ChatGPT which renders natural language processing

(NLP) or, at least, a quasi-human language to fashion productive conversations between learners themselves within their technologized environments.

The integration of AI in the learning process proves to be beneficial to students whose utilization of ChatGPT can facilitate different aspects of this process such as interactive correspondence, *re*-production of knowledge, and peer engagement. In the words of (Li & Xing, 2021), the employment of ChatGPT grants students the ability to take part in class discussions in a way that releases them from the constraints of conventional methods of teaching. This endeavor on the part of students to take part in group discussions is an essential quality that adds to the benefits of ChatGPT. Dwivedi et al. (2023a, 2023b) suggest that in-class collaborative activities such as working on mutual projects, engagement in teamwork, and reciprocal involvement in problem-solving practices are now easy to create through ChatGPT.

At the individual level, ChatGPT can also foster personal initiatives as it caters to every student's personalized way of learning by providing student-oriented exams or quizzes based on his/her academic level, potential, and needs (Perez et al., 2017). Through direct interactions with each student's queries in the form of detailed evaluation and commentary, not only does ChatGPT operate as a means of creativity, self-criticism, knowledge production and renewal, but it also functions as a tool of communication by which students' conversational skills are further improved (Perez et al., 2017). In this regard, Dwivedi et al. (2023) also propose that ChatGPT serves teachers since it can create substantive reflection on students' assignments and, accordingly, offer thorough feedback that contributes to the establishment of a culture of students' personalized learning. The birth of this culture in different educational settings, thanks to the increasing use of ChatGPT in contemporary learning spaces, reveals that this tool of artificial intelligence can be multi-dimensional in terms of its basic function. While ChatGPT envelops abilities that can be steered to emphasize learners' autonomy of learning methodologies, it also gives sufficient free space to accumulate educational materials, sources, and notes by generating them promptly (Perez et al., 2017).

The current study explores students' autonomous learning in different educational settings by focusing on the value of learning environments and how they may influence and support this autonomy-led philosophy of education. One of the most important

aspects of the supportive learning environment is the use of AI, with a particular focus on ChatGPT, which turns into a rich site of autonomous learning as it gives easy access to many resources relevant to the course material and students' fundamental needs, helps to draw a plan for certain achievable objectives, and manages students' academic progress, especially in certain contexts where learning environments fail to support students.

However, there are certain constraints, demands, and challenges that one must take into consideration when it comes to the employment of AI in the learning process. Among these challenges is the students' recognition of keeping away from an over-dependence on AI while seeking support and assistance from teachers. Other challenges include the continuous development of AI's authentic responses and their relevancy to the students' needs. To make its use feasible or implementable both theoretically and physically, it must also be taken into account that the human touch in education must be left unharmed if we consider the value of human interaction when dealing with new technologies such as ChatGPT. Finding a balance between human capacities to reflect and produce within learning environments and the use of AI in education is necessary. In other words, the use of AI in education cannot replace or take over human perception and guidance in any possible way. In this regard, while this study investigates the blending of AI technologies, particularly, ChatGPT, in education, it reflects on the best feasible ways to employ such tools to enhance learners' performance of knowledge effectively and creatively.

1.2 Theoretical Background

This study investigates the notion of autonomous learning, which forms the bulk of this research, by using John Dewey's (1938) theoretical framework. Dewey's philosophy is pivotal in the learning process as it gives students the opportunity to reflect deeply on their own learning experiences. In this philosophy, it thus appears that students' engagement in deep critical thinking of the decisive actions they take as they become involved in the learning process embodies the view that knowledge is constructed rather than acquired. This takes place via the repetitive process of questioning and adaptation. If students are endowed with these reflective capabilities, they can easily transform into independent learners who can be both responsible for their learning and powerful participants in the cultivation of knowledge through encouraging sustainable learning habits. In one of his postulations, Dewey contends that individuals "do not learn from experience... [they] learn from reflecting on experience" (Dewey, 1938), a theory that

embodies the soul of the learning process in which emphasis is not necessarily laid on the knowing and accumulating new information, but is centered on the active involvement of students in the meanings they produce from their reflective perspectives on their learning experiences. Dewey's philosophy on experiential learning gives shape to the core objective of this thesis, which is the examination of autonomous learning within higher education environments in Palestine.

Employing AI tools, here ChatGPT, to the advantage of this study in terms of assisting learners to form their goals, locate resources for learning, and observe the quality and progress of their learning capitalizes on Dewey's philosophical perceptions of education as a process that entails dynamic participation and self-directed learning.

In his defense of the significance of learning by experiencing, Dewey recommends that teachers "give the students something to do, not something to learn" (Dewey, 1938). This recommendation also corresponds to his view of learning as doing: "The doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking" (Dewey, 1938). These important theoretical articulations pose a critical question about the nature of the learning process, which Dewey sees in active roles. To put this simply, Dewey considers that learning by experience exposes the learners to the most beneficial outcomes of education where they can draw meaningful conclusions by reflecting on certain tasks to find solutions to problems and think critically about these tasks. Dewey's view of learning as an experience of reflection or doing rather than only knowing contributes to the main focus of this thesis, which aims to develop a culture of participation in which learners are rendered active producers of knowledge, or participants who are not merely positioned as passive recipients of data.

One of the most important aspects of autonomy in education, as put by Dewey, is that "the only freedom this of remaining importance is the freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and judgment". Dewey's notion, here, highlights the merit of learners' freedom of intellect, which this thesis capitalizes on by investigating the impact of experiential ChatGPT-assisted learning on students' ability to think, criticize, synthesize, interrogate, and assess forms of knowledge to generate and build a solid sense of authority and freedom on the part of learners. Moreover, Dewey's structural significance to the body of this thesis appears in his suggestion that "education aims to enable individuals to continue their education", which reveals the essence of education

promoted in this thesis, that is durability. By offering a long-standing view of education, Dewey argues that learning builds the learner's character and establishes his/her desire for continual growth, which ultimately grants students the much-needed tools, skills, and mentality to make progress in a world that is constantly developing (Dewey, 1938). By making use of Dewey's theories in this thesis, the researcher not only reflects on the practical dimensions of applying AI tools to educational settings but also underscores the profound benefits of giving learners the chance to take full control of their education.

1.3 Problem Statement

Many undergraduate students go through challenges when they study the English language as a foreign language in different Palestinian higher education institutions. These challenges may culminate in the students' failure to cultivate an autonomous identity, which is a quality they need to embrace in a self-directed learning culture. Including concerns relevant to the question of autonomous learning, these challenges also point to the search for resources and using them as well as finding appropriate pedagogical help and encouragement. The rise of ChatGPT and its integration into students' learning experiences have offered genuine ways to reflect on students' autonomous identities in relation to AI-empowered platforms. Yet, the effective employment of ChatGPT in the context of autonomous learning in Palestinian higher education remains unresolved, a question that begs an immediate answer despite the abundance of research on this topic. This study, therefore, poses a challenging question on the potential of using and integrating AI tools, and for the sake of this thesis ChatGPT technology, into various educational settings of Palestinian higher education. It specifically explores the perspectives of students in the field of English language as a foreign language on the incorporation of ChatGPT to improve their experiences of learning, with a particular focus on the notion of autonomous learning. By finding, analyzing, and understanding these perspectives, the study not only shows the significance of examining vital interactions or correspondences between ChatGPT and autonomous learning but also consciously reflects on the best means through which ChatGPT-in-autonomous-learning can be best exploited to refine the prospect and characteristics of teaching the English language in Palestinian higher education institutions.

The crux of the research problem emanates from the increasing need to integrate AI technologies into contemporary educational contexts to produce an autonomous learning culture among EFL students. The rising demand for incorporating technology in education implies that ChatGPT among other tools reflects a wide range of possibilities that can shape the learning methodologies and encourage students' self-direct mode of learning. As noted, there are many ChatGPT-related benefits that one can bring into discussion here, yet one of the most common gaps that can be flagged up in this regard is how such tools can impact the potential of learners to outline goals, get access to resources, and autonomously keep track of their progress. Speaking of certain EFL contexts, it is relevant that ChatGPT is frequently used to enhance students' autonomy which can vitally empower their critical flare and improve their linguistic abilities and levels of acquisition. The emphasis on autonomy and self-determination in students' acquisition of language, which is foregrounded in Dewey's experiential philosophy of learning, this student sheds light on this gap by demonstrating how AI technology can leave a remarkable impact on students' independence. The final outputs of the study seek to highlight how the effective integration of AI in enhancing students' autonomy can be taken as a significant pedagogical insight and philosophy for current educators and policymakers at academic institutions.

1.4 Aims of the Study

The current study seeks to:

1. Investigate if ChatGPT technology gives students the authority to lead their own learning experience, practices, and overall process, and set their final goals.
2. Determine whether gender affects how students adopt educational autonomy through ChatGPT.
3. Determine whether study levels play a significant role in the utilization of Gen AI technology for educational objectives.
4. Investigate the perspective of EFL students in the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning.

1.5 Questions of the Study

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning?
2. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to gender?
3. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to university?
4. Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to student's level?

1.6 Hypotheses of the Study

The present study aims to test the following hypotheses:

1. There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to gender.
2. There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to university.
3. There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to student's level.

1.7 Importance of the Study

Reinforcing educational autonomy is essential in contemporary education by empowering learners to control their learning process. In Palestinian higher education, where conventional teaching methods prevail, this study searches through the potential of ChatGPT to enhance autonomy among undergraduate students, offering a way for them to have greater control over their educational endeavors. Upgrade English Language Teaching is considered a cornerstone of the globalized world, especially for Palestinian higher education institutions that work to develop proficient English language instructors.

Through pioneering approaches to EFL, this study aims to enlighten readers on how ChatGPT technology can enhance language teaching, and potentially elevate the quality of English language education in Palestinian institutions. To conclude, this study is not only academically significant but also reveals practical implications for improving educational practices, fostering self-directed learning among undergraduate students, and moving forward to English language education in Palestinian higher education institutions. By investigating students' perspectives on ChatGPT-aided autonomous learning, the thesis aims to contribute to the continuing discussion on innovative teaching and learning techniques in the Palestinian context and beyond.

1.8 Limits of the Study

This study is limited to the following:

- 1. Locative limits:** Two different Palestinian universities: (An-Najah National University) and (Al-Quds Open University).
- 2. Temporal limits:** this study was conducted in the academic year (2024).
- 3. Human limits:** The study involved the EFL students who study at An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University.
- 4. Topical limits:** Exploring EFL students' perspectives on the role of ChatGPT-assisted autonomous learning to enhance self-directed learning in Palestinian higher Education.

1.9 Definition of Terms

The researcher provides theoretical operational definitions to clarify key terms and their meanings in this research. The following terms are intrinsic to the body of research and are important to understand its essential main dimensions:

- **Autonomous Learning:** Holec (1981) defines it as the ability to take control of one's own learning, which involves making decisions about different aspects of learning such as pace of learning, materials, selection, and setting goals.
- **Operational Definition:** In the context of this present study, autonomous learning refers to the ability of students in higher educational environments to individually steer their learning journey, make decisions according to their learning goals and

strategies, and reflect on their learning experiences without constant supervision from teachers.

- **Self-directed learning:** It refers to a process in which individuals take initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in determining their learner needs, drawing up learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975).
- **Operational Definition:** This study poses that self-directed learning entails the individuals' ability to take part in the learning process in a dynamic way, inform their ultimate learning goals decisively, and make use of resources to make concrete these goals in the specific context of higher education.
- **Asynchronous learning:** This term implies that learners in certain educational contexts can be involved in the learning process by having the opportunity to know and review data, and finish their tasks at different times, which (Sagin Simsek, 2008) emphasizes as opposite to real or fixed timeframe.
- **Operational Definition:** This study employs this term to reflect students' involvement in different learning practices in online educational environments, which makes their correspondence with teachers and peers unnecessary. This ultimately gives students a good chance to experience a sense of flexibility in terms of time schedules and pacing.
- **ChatGPT:** This is an OpenAI-developed tool that is used to generate human-like conversations based on certain prompts inserted by users (Open AI, 2023).
- **Operational Definition:** This term is employed in this study to refer to the use of this AI-powered tool to enhance students' autonomous and self-directed learning in the context of higher education in Palestine. The term operates as a tool to assist students in designing their learning objectives, locating data online, and keeping track of their progress by interacting with the tool's language, albeit naturally.

1.10 Literature Review

Learning can be viewed as a spontaneous performance of knowledge that is motivated by personal desires for growth and development. Loyens et al. (2008a) highlighted that learning is an active process that demands learners to take initiative. They structure knowledge regarding the information available to them. Since the mid-20th century, research on autonomous learning has been progressing, particularly in fostering foreign language education. Henri (Holec, 1981) work, “Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning”, significantly looks into the integration of autonomous learning into language teaching. Foreign language autonomous learning aims to internalize and obtain knowledge (McMillan & Rivers, 2011). Subsequently, research and implementation of autonomous learning in language teaching have expanded. Researchers explore varied aspects, including the conceptualization of autonomous learning (Benson, 2007); (Peeters, 2018), teaching practice (Macaskill & Denovan, 2013); (Oxford, 2015), and the role of teachers ((Hamed et al., 2021); (C. Lai et al., 2016); (Rosell-Aguilar, 2018)). Moreover, different studies explore the learning strategies relevant to autonomous language learning (Cockrum, 2013); (Oxford, 2015). Some argue that autonomous learning is built in Western theories, enhancing exploration of its cultural adaptability in a different context (Schmid, 2018). In (Zhong et al., 2019) introduced Curriculum 2.0 to tackle gaps in autonomous learning. Modern information technology has revolutionized teaching methods, notably influencing students’ autonomous language learning abilities. This has garnered attention from researchers and educators, including (Benson, 2007; C. Lai & Gu, 2011; Lewis, 2013; Rienties et al., 2018, & Shadiev & Yang, 2020). They investigate how technology can enhance students’ autonomy, improve learning outcomes, and foster motivation from various perspectives.

As stated by Deci & Ryan (1985), the autonomy of learning refers to the psychological need for individuals to practice self-direction in initiating and managing their behavior. In the current orientation of English as a foreign language pedagogy, there is a significant emphasis on a student-centered approach and valuing learner autonomy (AKBARI, 2008; Bell, 2003). This means EFL learners are now actively engaged in making pedagogical decisions and treated as autonomous and involved participants (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Consequently, the curriculum design is increasingly focused on language learners

(Macalister & Nation, 2019), with researchers recognizing the vital role of learner autonomy in teaching (Bell, 2003).

While a lot of terms exist in past research, highlighting different sides of learner autonomy (Benson, 2007), a simpler understanding focuses on learners' ability to take control of key elements in their language acquisition (Benson, 2013; Holec, 1981). A significant shift has occurred over time, moving from learning situations to learner autonomy itself as a central feature (Benson, 2007). Concepts like "independent learning" and "self-direction" are often studied alongside learning autonomy (Najeeb, 2013). Benson & Huang (2008) assume that these terms, "self-directed" and "independent," typically reflect situations where learning autonomy is practiced. It's substantial to clarify that references to individual or independent learning do not implicitly isolate learning lacking teachers and mentors (Littlewood, 1999). On the contrary, learning autonomy can enhance collaboration and learning with teachers and peers (Garrison et al., 2014). According to the idea of learner autonomy as self-directed learning (SDL), (Little, 2007) emphasizes the psychological aspects included. This involves critical reflection, where learners analyze their learning experiences, independent decision-making about their learning objectives and strategies, and take the initiative to apply them to their decisions. In essence, learning autonomy empowers learners to become the central figure in their learning process, rather than passively receiving direction from a teacher (Fang & Pace, 2013).

The concept of self-directed learning, with its origin in adult education, can be considered both a personal quality and a characteristic of the learning environment itself. (Knowles, 1975) emphasizes the process feature, where learners take the initiative and responsibility for their learning aims, whether individually or with some external support. This expands to providing learners some control over the content they interact with, including selecting the material, evaluating it critically, and choosing appropriate learning strategies. (Benson, 2013) confirms that the terms "self-directed learning" and "learning autonomy" are often used interchangeably in the literature, which may contribute to the misunderstanding that they are synonymous. However, recent tendency shows a uniqueness emerging with "learning autonomy" which refers to the capacity to control one's learning. In contrast, "self-directed learning" is increasingly related to situations where this capacity is actively used (Benson & Huang, 2008). Although self-direction

provides opportunities for learners to evolve into autonomous thinkers, it does not guarantee autonomy for every learner. Moreover, self-directed learning (SDL) is seen as a crucial step in bringing up learner autonomy (Yang, 2024a) and significantly influences academic performance in both the short and long terms (Loyens et al., 2008b). Similarly, (Little, 2007) propounds that learning autonomy is educated through an interactive process where instructors gradually empower learners with more control over their learning processes and materials. Little (2007) emphasizes that language instructors should create an interactive dynamic that encourages both communicative proficiency and learner autonomy at the same time.

Scholarly research in the field of English language and autonomous learning has been abundant in the years from 1990 to 2023. This increasing interest in research in this field has generated different insights and orientations from researchers who proposed approaches and learning methodologies in which learners are centralized in the process of education. The crux of these scholarly propositions is the idea of individualism, meaning that learners become responsible for their own education by improving their learning experiences. Due to its significance in today's educational research, scholars have indulged in several studies that explore the importance of autonomous learning and its impact on teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Within the English language teaching context, learning autonomy is frequently discussed in the context of learners' communication (Benson, 2007) with (Nupus et al., 2022) suggesting that it works as a means to enhance efficiency in language acquisition. The support for learning autonomy in language classrooms as well as its comprehensive conceptualization has been the focus of much research. These studies propose that learners must be motivated and prepared to cuddle autonomy, and implicit active involvement in decision-making related to their learning process (Chan, 2001; Cotterall, 1995). This suggests that (EFL) students should acquire the tools of learning autonomy and engage in autonomous learning as an integral element of their university education.

In the 21st century, education is moving forward to meet the requirements of the digital age, emphasizing autonomous learning experiences that are suitable for individual students. This necessitates that teachers and students alike reconsider their conventional positioning within the educational process. In today's education, there is a high expectation on the part of educators to cultivate what may be termed "lifelong learners",

a term that refers to the significance of learners' sustainability by developing their potential as competent thinkers and knowledgeable participants who are led by self-directed learning skills. Considering the fast and abrupt changes in the domain of learning, the view of teachers as the sole designers and absolute feeders of knowledge in the learning process seems unrealistic. Teachers are currently reimagined as guides who only facilitate the passage of information to students, hence enhancing their students' autonomous learning. The use of ChatGPT can further perpetuate and affirm this new positioning of teachers as facilitators of the learning process. This may happen through the integration of ChatGPT as a medium through which prompt feedback is provided while also creating interactive moments for in-class discussions. ChatGPT, in addition, fosters a sense of personalized support to students who can use it to improve traditional ways of education. By building on conventional methods of teaching, ChatGPT becomes a complementary means of personalized learning that fosters different skills such as problem-solving and individualized thinking.

The effective endorsement of students' autonomy in the learning and improvement of English language skills has been explored in different research projects. Speaking from a Swedish experience of teaching students at high schools, Almusharraf (2020) revealed that the use of traditional modes of teaching has shown less effective impact than the employment of autonomous learning strategies in the classroom. The study found that those students who had appropriate chances to work on their autonomous learning were more capable of learning the English language than their counterparts who were deeply immersed in traditional ways of learning. In order to increase teachers' and students' appetite for autonomous learning of language and its subsequent development, Benson & Voller (2014) suggested a practical framework by which learners can concentrate their energy on acquiring new forms of linguistic knowledge. The major defining aspects of this framework include pedagogy, learner agency, assessments, and curriculum. By following the main tenets of this theoretical proposition, it was found that learners could easily benefit from an interactive learning environment in which they are fully supported to become leaders of their learning initiatives, reappropriate productive and genuine tasks in the learning process, and increase the number of opportunities when it comes to solidifying the qualities and skills needed for a self-directed learning experience. In Liu et al. (2023) reflected on this experience by demonstrating that the manifestation of these

capabilities in the classroom in the form of task-based activities, self-managed acquisition of new language knowledge, and learner-centered approaches can generate new levels of metacognition. This ultimately increases the students' sense of self-awareness as they turn into responsible participants who can gain proficiency on the condition that they take control of their academic progress. The resultant effects based on the findings of these studies demonstrate that there is a high chance for students' development and proficiency if the experience of autonomous learning is equally and justly adopted in different contemporary classroom settings.

Speaking of the educational context at Palestinian universities, there is still a considerable lack of research that directly investigates concerns related to the possible integration of ChatGPT-assisted autonomous learning experience in improving language proficiency. Therefore, it is vital to take into account current studies on the employment of today's technologies – here chatbots and similar AI-powered technological tools – in enhancing the value of autonomous learning in the context of learning and developing language proficiency. In the context of teaching the English language to Chinese learners, it was found by Chen & Yang (2019) that the incorporation of chatbots in the process of learning can be truly efficient and productive in many possible ways. One of the great benefits of using chatbots in this learning experience is the consolidation of a self-directed learning perspective, which is made possible via the chatbot-assisted provision of organized rich content and informative feedback. This chatbot-generated perspective allows students to foster a proficient orientation toward language acquisition.

In another experience that is far too removed from the previous one, Annamalai et al. (2023) argued that the evolution of aspects related to autonomy in learning is indebted to the use of chatbots as a basic learning tool among university students in Taiwan. Their study concluded that technology could enhance the invaluable quality of autonomy in learning a language. Bringing chatbots and other artificial tools of technological intelligence into conversation with contemporary educational spaces, according to (Hwang & Chang, 2023a), is fruitful. This study confirmed that such technological tools decreased the intensity or complexity of the integration of self-directed learning among students, which fostered a powerful movement to learn the English language independently and professionally. Based on the outcomes of these studies, it can be noted that employing technology, particularly chatbots, in the English language classroom can

create positive changes concerning autonomous learning and the students' ability to self-direct their own learning experience. Approaching this topic from the perspective of learning language at Palestinian universities, nonetheless, remains a pivotal issue in today's research which must examine the impact of ChatGPT-assisted technology on the enhancement of students' acquisition and knowledge of language and the development of their autonomous and self-directed experience of learning.

The use of chatbots, which Adamopoulou & Moussiades (2020) define as intelligent bots, digital means of support, technologically structured designs for conversation, and artificial means of human-machine interaction, in the field of education has become a subject that overheats with a scholarly passion for further exploration. This popular type of current AI system makes use of natural language processing (NLP) to create a human-like form of communication by reading users' prompts and responding to them interactively and conversationally (Khanna et al., 2015). In different fields in the humanities and social sciences, mostly education, the employment of chatbots has become widespread in the last few years. In relevant research, Colace et al. (2018) fashioned a chatbot prototype that is incorporated into courses taught to computer science university students to examine its potential to identify questions proposed by these students and provide possible answers. This experiment showed that using chatbots in higher education was beneficial in terms of its coherent and comprehensible application to classroom settings, which eventually improved the students' experiences of gaining new knowledge.

Other studies concerning the application of chatbots as supportive elements of language learning were also conducted by (Hwang & Chang, 2023b), who produced a methodical discussion of 25 empirical research concerning this topic. The conclusions they arrived at can be summarized in two ways. The use of chatbots reflects the ability and determination of students to converse in a certain language by keeping a log of their communications in progress (Grudin & Jacques, 2019). Moreover, chatbots are equipped with certain features such as promptness of response, modification and adaptation, and smoothness of usage; all of these features enhance students' ability to communicate collaboratively. These features, accordingly, contribute to the production of a personalized learning experience as they help students to obtain rich and interactive materials, which are either drawn from chatbots-stored information or taken from online

learning resources. According to Hwang & Chang (2023b), the enhancement of language learning by the integration of chatbots has proven significant and intelligible since these technological tools function as active agents that are always ready to offer a personalized learning experience by providing field-specific conversational dialogues with participants who can easily access them by using their own electronic devices.

Chatbots can cover all three types of interactions as outlined by (Moore, 1989). The ability of chatbots to benefit the learning process can be seen in three ways. While chatbots operate as powerful online educators, disseminators of knowledge, and rich sites of autonomous learning through the content they offer, they simplify and expedite channels of interactive correspondence among different agents in the learning process, namely teachers, students, and the content *per se*. This multidimensional approach has the potential to provide numerous benefits for student learning, such as fostering self-directed learning experiences, assisting with common inquiries and concerns, and providing timely feedback. Hwang & Chang (2023c) point out the potential benefits of integrating chatbots into educational settings, reflecting how technology continues to progress to enhance the learning experience.

In consequence, the capabilities of chatbots show their potential usefulness as effective tools for enhancing self-directed learning (SDL) among university students. The use of AI systems in education is remarkably double-fold. Firstly, these systems propound sufficient and precise instructions on former experiences and performances of students' learning. Secondly, they give counseling on additional online materials by allowing further accessibility to auxiliary and supportive materials such as videos and online lessons. One of these commonly used chatbots is ChatGPT, which is designed by Open AI to carry out lengthy human-like conversations by employing the tremendous GPT-4 language model that reaches up to 175 billion parameters to reply to naturally inserted human language. With its word-paid conversation system, ChatGPT aids in solving problems and generating content to address user inquiries. Since its launch, ChatGPT has rapidly gathered over one million users within a week, sparking discussions between educators about its implications for teaching practices and student learning outcomes.

Some researchers as Karataş et al. (2024; Hınız (2024) see ChatGPT as a potential facilitator of independent learning, capable of designing customized learning plans, while

others express concerns about its potential to make traditional online exams out of date and automate teaching roles. Moreover, its availability 24/7 makes it an accessible resource, particularly for university students who engage in asynchronous online learning environments, thus enhancing SDL. Adult learners through ChatGPT can obtain relevant learning resources such as videos, lessons, and articles based on learners' requirements, track their progress, and suggest more learning opportunities.

Jeon (2024a) conducted a study investigating the advantages of chatbots in the primary English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom and their influence on the psychological features of language learners, particularly their motivation to learn English. The research included the use of customized chatbots created with Google's Dialogflow, engaging 36 Korean primary school students. Through qualitative analysis of interview and interaction records, the study identified technological, social, and pedagogical advantages related to the use of chatbots.

Essel et al. (2022) investigated the influence of a chatbot that automatically responds to student requests. The study employed a pretest-posttest design with 68 undergraduate students randomly assigned to either a control or experimental group. Results revealed that students who interacted with the chatbot performed better academically compared to those who interacted with the course teachers. Additionally, the experimental group expressed confidence in the chatbot's combination into the course.

W. Kim et al. (2023) introduced a chatbot called Ellie, which offers three distinct modes: Skill Chat, Task Chat, and General Talk. Skill Chat focuses on practicing language forms while in Task Chat mode, learners engage in various second language problems to enhance their learning outcomes. General Chat is recommended for informal discussions on individual topics. Around 137 Korean students from high schools were involved in a study that tested their responses to the use of Ellie in the span of seven weeks. The use of Ellie, either in individual or collaborative ways, was meant to evaluate the value of its incorporation in terms of multiple levels of language learning, task implementation and accomplishment, and the natural flux of language exchange. The implementation of Ellie in this experiment showed that it functioned as an appropriate tool for L2 learners who could easily use it to immerse in task-based activities as well as generate and develop conversations.

The effective learning of English by means of AI mediation and its impact on learners' progress, second language development, and their movement toward a self-directed approach to learning have been explored in (Wei, 2023) study that used a mixed-method way of assessment. Wei remarked that there is a high investment in AI technologies that learners would purchase to enhance their academic achievement and progress. In Wei's study, the number of participants was 60 university students who were divided into two groups. While the first group (experimental) employed AI-generated technologies in language learning, the members of the second group (control) were exposed to traditional ways of language learning. In this study, different types of assessment tools were used to understand the impact of contemporary AI-driven technology on students' performance. While students' competence and knowledge of vocabulary, writing, overall understanding of grammar, and reading comprehension were assessed by employing pre-test and post-test, self-reflection questionnaires were employed to analyze and investigate their incentive for second-language learning as reinforced by self-directed learning. The analysis of data collected from questionnaires showed positive and high results in different domains, including students' incentive to learn a second language and their deployment of strategies that reflect a high sense of self-regulation. Based on qualitative results collected from interviews made with 14 students from the first group (experimental), it was found that their dependence on AI tools in their learning increased their involvement in the learning process, motivated them to take initiative, and enhanced their self-regulated principles, leading eventually to the creation of a personalized experience of learning. The total conclusions of this study affirmed that learners' motivation, academic progress, and autonomous learning are possible with the incorporation of AI technologies in language learning, a possibility that scholars and educators must take into full consideration.

The impact of language produced by AI technologies on the active participation of EFL learners in the process of language learning is further explored by (Ebadi & Amini, 2024) who suggested that the development of learners' performance, inspiration, and impulse for new knowledge can be made real through the systematic approach of AI tools. Their findings were fundamentally based on accumulated data on learners' stimulation, active social status in their learning communities, and questionnaires assessing human-like social behavior, which is also accompanied by recordings of AI-learning tool instructors.

In their analysis of the effectiveness of AI platforms, mostly ChatGPT, on learners' motives and instructors' rationale in English language acquisition, (Ali et al., 2023) contended that despite the considerably neutral impact ChatGPT left on all participants in the domains of speaking and listening, it greatly affected their performance in reading and writing by improving them significantly. Likewise, Schmidt-Fajlik (2023) compared the effectiveness of ChatGPT, Grammarly, and ProWriting in evaluating and developing EFL learners' English grammar, concluding that ChatGPT was outstanding in improving and decorating grammatical mistakes.

Hsu et al. (2023) inquire into the impact of AI-assisted image recognition technologies on EFL learners' vocabulary knowledge, self-regulation, and anxiety. Using an experimental research design, the experimental group used AI-assisted image recognition technologies to associate images with identical vocabulary to enhance vocabulary knowledge. The result reveals that while the experimental group indicated here improved self-regulation, reduced anxiety, and vocabulary knowledge, they only significantly outperformed the control group in vocabulary understanding, with notable differences in anxiety and self-regulation. Similarly, W. Kim et al. (2023) examined the effect of teaching AI-supported language learning on EFL university students' grammar skills. Here, the researchers applied AI to the teaching of grammar in one group whereas the other group (control) was taught traditionally. In this case, it was found that the control group fell behind the experimental group in the ability to learn new grammatical formulations and structures due to the free use of AI-generated language tools.

Studies were also conducted on learners' writing skills and their close association with AI technology. Among these studies is Yan (2023) research which proposed that EFL learners' success in writing was intrinsically tied to their reliance on AI-aided language which facilitated their learning new skills in English writing. Speaking of timeliness in this context, Yan's research also demonstrated the positive aspect of AI on the speed of performance, meaning that learners finished their writing tasks rapidly, logically, and systematically. By using a case study design for their research, Utami et al. (2023) also focused on the faculty of AI-generated language in assisting students' knowledge and development of writing skills. With a particular focus on their ability to write academic research skillfully, Utami et al. (2023) paid special attention to three EFL students from Indonesia where interview questions and questionnaires were distributed. The use of AI-

generated tools, as shown in the final results of the research, made the learning of writing skills more accessible and enjoyable. The analysis of data revealed that AI tools created multiple options or alterations at the sentence level for students to use. Moreover, such tools supplied students with generous feedback, and rich commentary, and presented further assistance with students' engagement with writing. The impact of AI tools on language skills goes beyond writing *per se*, which W. Kim et al. (2023) reflect in their research project on the use of AI-generated language to improve EFL students' reading skills and enhance their enjoyment of reading texts. The study was carried out in two groups; the first produced certain themes following their engrossment, and the second (or control) group was involved in reading practices in a traditional setting. The use of AI, as noted in the study findings, enhanced students' desire for joyful reading.

ChatGPT, which is an application powered by AI, has hugely impacted the learning of foreign languages (Karataş et al., 2024). By touching upon a critical gap in contemporary education, Karataş et al. (2024) explored the employment of ChatGPT in real-life contexts of education and what this might entail. In their research, Karatas et al. revealed that blending ChatGPT into different educational scenarios unfolded incessant gaps, which this thesis acknowledges and seeks to challenge at the same time, regarding the gains and losses or disadvantages of integrating ChatGPT in teaching language. The study was conducted at a university in Turkey where 13 students from preliminary classes of foreign language were made familiar with and allowed to use ChatGPT for almost one month. The main facilitator of this experience was the head researcher, a language teacher, who used his expertise to find out that students' improving use of new vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills was all dependent on the integration of ChatGPT in the learning process. Such findings, which were mainly drawn from a theme-based analysis of interview results, also showed that ChatGPT's adaptability and easy accessibility were vital markers that boosted students' involvement and dedication. Realizing its huge potential and possible drawbacks, the study illustrated that ChatGPT transforms into a counseling agency that offers prompt and practical guidance to scholars, teachers, and researchers whose major interests lie in the study of teaching strategies, learning practices, and curriculum studies.

Many research projects have investigated the possibility of integrating ChatGPT into the process of education; some of these include (Jeon, 2024a; Loncar et al., 2023; Tlili et al.,

2023; Kohnke et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2023). Conducted in South Korea, (Jeon, 2024a) research particularly explored the vital role played by ChatGPT as a complementary tool of instruction in the classroom. For two weeks, ChatGPT was incorporated into the teaching design and strategies of 11 South Korean teachers. These teachers were interviewed after they were supplied with ChatGPT-generated logs. Based on the examination of the qualitative data gathered from these interviews, (Jeon, 2024b) the research found that there were four important contributions that ChatGPT could make. While ChatGPT functioned as a source of evaluation and assistance in teaching practices, it also became a significant content resource that teachers also employed as a form of interlocution. The study reported that teachers fulfilled three objectives: building a moral vision of using AI and understanding it in the context of teaching, employing various resources whilst deciding on the best pedagogy to use, and motivating agile students to examine this further. Not only did the study propose a consistent collaboration between teachers and ChatGPT but it also invited readers to reconsider how the value of embodying full pedagogical expertise concerning the employment of AI technology in the classroom.

Different from the study by Jeon (2024a), which engaged instructors directly as participants, (Kohnke et al., 2023; Loncar et al., 2023; & Lim et al., 2023) focused on reviewing the technology of ChatGPT and its possible educational implementation. Kohnke et al. (2023) specifically investigated ChatGPT's proficiency within the context of language learning. Their inclusive technology review provided a primary comprehension of how ChatGPT could foster language teaching and learning by providing examples of learning activities that teachers might apply using the tool. They discovered that ChatGPT can assist language learning through the simulation of authentic communicative teaching. Moreover, it can “distinguish the meaning of a word context, generate texts in various categories (e.g., emails, stories, recipes), offer dictionary definitions, example sentences, and translations, correct and explain language mistakes, develop quizzes, comment texts” (Kohnke et al., 2023). Operating as an AI writing assistant, ChatGPT can provide word alternatives, immediate feedback on grammar, and overall text coherence. Initially, it may provide particular recommendations for development, acting as a supportive tool for improving language skills. As students become more confident, the quality of ChatGPT's input can shift from being highly

directive to more suggestive, allowing students to take greater charge of their writing while still using the tool as a resource for inquiry.

In their 2023 study, Ulla et al. (2023) examined the perspective of English as Forging Language (EFL) instructors at a Thai university on the use of ChatGPT as a tool for language teaching. The research included a web interview survey accomplished by seventeen EFL instructors, three of whom shared in follow-up individual interviews in person. By analyzing data qualitatively, the study concluded that the employment of ChatGPT was usefully and constructively received by teachers who recognized the potential of AI tools to produce in-class task-based language activities as well as course management in terms of design and planning. Despite the positive effects of ChatGPT applications in the classroom, teachers expressed deep concerns about possible disadvantages relating to its credibility, believability, and students' dependability on its provided content. The study not only suggested powerful avenues for the eventual use of ChatGPT in learning spaces but also added to the body of ChatGPT knowledge by highlighting its potential misuse, failures, and ethical considerations.

The investigation of the concerns about the implementation of self-directed skills and self-evaluation in the learning process has been paramount in recent research, culminating in Ali et al. (2023) discussion of the impact of these skills on learners' ultimate achievements and accountability for their demands, objectives, ways of learning, and final results. The application of this philosophy, which is generally referred to as a student-centered approach to learning, can be too demanding and challenging in traditional contexts where teachers stand as the iconic sources of knowledge distribution at the expense of recipient students. The researchers created and prototyped a generative artificial intelligence chatbot application called "Teacher GAIA" to address this issue. This tool is purposed to asynchronously aid students in their self-directed learning and self-assessment outside the classroom. The study distinguishes varied constructivist learning approaches that encourage student-led learning, such as knowledge construction, inquiry-based learning, self-assessment, and peer teaching. The researchers then applied the in-context learning potential of Open AI's large language model (LLM) through prompt engineering to facilitate interactions that support these learning approaches. These interactions were designed to differentiate from the traditional, transmissionist learning mode of ChatGPT, which tends to reflect teacher-led teaching. The researcher proposed

that “TeacherGAIA” will be a valuable tool for teachers in promoting self-directed learning and self-assessment among K-12 students.

Pan et al. (2024) presented an innovative AI-supported Self-Regulated Reading (SSR) approach, highlighting an AI chatbot system designed to promote students’ SRR by directing their article chosen and providing personalized support. The system incorporates a customized chatbot named “Reade”, powered by large language models (LLMs), which offers suitable reading strategies and challenges specifically for EFL students. While students replied positively to the chatbot’s power to address their reading challenges, they also flagged up particular limitations. The study proposed that future developments should focus on broadening personalization, such as customizing reading materials based on personal needs, combining performance-based evaluation, and allowing users to input specific challenges for more suitable support. Regardless of some limitations, “Reade” offered promise in fostering students’ use of self-regulated strategies and developing their reading achievement, encouraging the adoption of AI chatbots in English language learning and self-regulated learning (SRL).

In examining the experience of EFL students in Japan concerning the use of ChatGPT-3.5 in improving their writing skills, Allen & Mizumoto (2024) focused on learning practices through group work, with a particular focus on certain writing techniques such as proofreading and checking their assignments in different writing sessions. Considering the practical application of artificial intelligence in the Japanese classroom, the study assessed whether this experience can be used in a healthy learning environment that encourages this interaction. After comparing students’ experiences of writing in traditional classroom settings and their integration of artificial intelligence in learning the practices of proofreading, editing, and checking via the distribution of questionnaires, (Allen & Mizumoto, 2024) believed the AI tools were mostly favorable as they introduced students to important techniques they had to be aware of, such as cohesive and clear writing, and supplied them with necessary feedback to check on their progress.

In exploring the power of generative AI in education, Hınız (2024) generally tested the level of advancement in teaching and learning a foreign language based on current technological development. Hınız’s study included 13 students and 14 teachers who

integrated ChatGPT into their experiences of language learning and showed the extent to which ChatGPT can be used to enhance the teaching of the English language.

After their positive reception of ChatGPT, both teachers and students of English as a foreign language took into account the effective application of AI technologies to the learning experiences of language as they considered these technological tools to be rich obtainable means of production that provided different resources on language learning materials, hence customizing these teachers' and students' experiences alike. What was particularly useful and appealing in this experience was the attention ChatGPT paid to every learner's needs, which ranged from providing multi-structured exercises, and immediate feedback, to learning materials. Speaking of the individual needs of learners, it was acknowledged that Generative AI caters to the different styles, requirements, and particular demands of learners as it brought along materials that could benefit learners who faced learning problems such as dyslexia, language processing failures, hearing issues, or other types of learning disabilities. The pedagogical politics of inclusion in this case is necessary to incorporate all subjects within the learning process, meaning that learning becomes inclusive and fair as it speaks to all participants in the classroom. Learners' inclusivity encourages participation and engagement among all participants who gain a deep sense of belonging and affiliation, which ultimately leads to the creation of a safe, healthy, and collaborative environment in which marginalization is substituted with inclusivity.

Even though this builds a culture of learning personalization that is mostly different from traditional educational settings, relying too much on AI tools for the acquisition of language can pose serious challenges, which can be summarized as superficiality and insufficiency of the learning experience. Therefore, HıMIZ (2024) works as an invitation to strike a balance between the approaches that can be used in a parallel manner to teach and learn language; namely AI technology and human interaction mode of teaching that is rooted in educators' experience. Instead of treating generative AI as a core source of teaching, the study suggested that it must not be viewed as a substitution for the vital presence of teachers in the classroom. Teachers function as important assets in the construction of knowledge without their assistance in the domains of digital competence as well as critical and creative methods of teaching, the empowerment of higher-order skills among students would be problematic, or at least inadequate. While AI

technological tools operate as additional instruments that can expand on the teachers' role in education, teachers must be positioned as the primary planners of designs, facilitators of the communication of knowledge, and the essential reflective social and emotional sources of learning language. Their pedagogical work, in other words, cannot be replaced.

Yang (2024b) pointed out that personalized learning is enhanced by the inclusion of AI tools in the learning process, which allows students to grasp fundamental knowledge as they gain support, feedback, and counseling in accordance with their demands, development, and capability. If using a standard or universal approach that speaks to students' presumably common demands and needs poses concerns about the authenticity of the learning experience due to its traditionalism, then applying AI to students' learning experiences can be productive in different ways. For instance, it encourages them to build an individualized vision by which they form pedagogical schemes that acknowledge their specific academic styles, modes of research and study, and learning behavior. This is all facilitated through the benefits of AI's natural language processing and accessible machine learning, which grant students the opportunity to figure out the difficulties they experience during the process of learning, obtain a prompt response or commentary on their performance, and receive more advantages relating to customized content. Whilst this profits students in terms of responding to their progress and needs, AI more importantly creates interactive environments that can constantly be *re*-adapted to continue to provide students with the most up-to-date content material and extra resources. In this case, AI tools positively overshadow the entire learning process by making it more strategic, efficient, and liable for modification for better use.

One of the studies that explored the transformative power of AI in teaching and learning the English language was carried out by (Tamil Selvam & Khairani Zakaria, 2024a). This study, which entailed a productive analysis of 25 research projects, brought with it a bundle of changes to the classroom environment, which can be summarized as follows: enhancement of students' critical abilities, improvement of writing skills, being linguistically competent, fashioning a culture of autonomous learning, and learning via adaptive experience. Based on these findings, it was noted that the incorporation of AI technology in the classroom also implied a movement toward a proficient and masterful development of teachers' opportunities for powerful and professional instruction. Despite the positive impact of these reviews, it should not be forgotten that AI challenges its users

at different levels, which are technologically, ethically, and equitably. These concerns mean that the use of AI must come along with a good knowledge of how to train educators and constantly refine curriculum plans, which is also necessary to avoid other issues relating to students' disappointment and the too familiar overuse of AI technology, despite the students' straightforward, apparent, and positive view of this technology.

The multidimensional faculties of ChatGPT-4o, which are dynamic vocal production, multimedia upload capacities, and different vision and video functions, can make the process of learning and teaching the English language more interactive and engaging (Pang et al., 2024). These faculties reflect the transformative power of ChatGPT-4o in the field of education as it builds reciprocal methods of learning, adopts new ways of language communication, and fulfills a highly personalized commentary. If teachers know how to take advantage of these features of characteristics, they can definitely bring into being a solid learning community in which challenges of teaching English are silenced. Teachers, for example, can tailor their students' unique personalized ways of learning by customizing their learning trajectories, regenerating new materials to be more entertaining, and offering immediate responses, amendments, and suggestions to students' performance. The new accomplishments of ChatGPT-4o have a huge impact on the students' inclination to learn the four skills of language (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) more effectively. Even though these skills can be administered in a typical ChatGPT-4o setting, this AI tool must not be treated as an absolute replacement for the actual presence and human representation of instructors in the classroom. Instead, ChatGPT complements the instructors' presence, which is necessary to foster students' cultural competence, intelligent emotional affiliation, and thoughtful criticism. According to (Tafazoli, 2024; Tiwari, 2024), using AI tools in education as entire potential replacements for human instructors is utterly erroneous, meaning that combining both methods in teaching and learning language remains more necessary and logical.

In their study of the impact of AI technological uses on the current process of education, (الكعبي & جعواني, 2024) employed the descriptive analytical approach to show that AI-powered applications made remarkable changes to teaching and learning practices and the process of education, generally speaking. The findings of their study revealed that artificial intelligence was supportive in the sense that it responded to every student's special requirements, which helped to bring into play a learning experience that was

highly customized. Jaaouani and Alkaabi demonstrated that AI's interpretative abilities in terms of analyzing and synthesizing a large amount of data contributed to the construction of a personalized experience of learning in which learners entertained a specific style of comprehension and worked within their various levels of understanding. This also implied that teachers could reflect on the taught materials and choose what best fits their students' needs. This contribution on the part of AI technology fashioned a coherent and approachable learning environment where students could practice learning autonomously by selecting their sources of different materials, seeking assistance that is promptly at their disposal, and thus harnessing time in the best possible way. Additionally, both researchers also pointed out that allowing students to have free access to AI tools to use for learning could reap other benefits such as keeping a log of individual and separate notes for themselves as well as finding and accumulating their self-designed content. This becomes necessary to propagate a tendency to further interaction in online learning settings, decrease gaps commonly found in education, and eventually give birth to a culture that propels a diversified inclination in contemporary education. If we consider the effect of artificial intelligence on contemporary education, we find that it operates as a multilingual platform that handles students' questions and responses to regular tasks, assignments, and inquiries in an efficient and timely fashion.

The effects of generative artificial intelligence on students' performance have been unprecedented and wide, extending to students from different cultures, backgrounds, and genders, which (البراهيم، 2024) reflected in their examination of these effects, particularly with the assessment of the use of ChatGPT among female educators in the College of Education at King Saud University. To achieve this objective, the researcher applied a descriptive method of surveying female educators' perspectives on the use of ChatGPT by designing a questionnaire to be equally distributed for the sake of gathering and analyzing data. The questionnaire consisted of 22 items and was distributed electronically, eventually reaching up to 48 responses. Based on the findings of his study, the researcher concluded that ChatGPT can help the teacher change her/his learning strategies and particularly develop her/his style of assessment by making it more creative. In addition, ChatGPT can especially provide an effective and specific educational contribution, reinforce the learning experience, and increase students' engagement in online workshops. The fact that ChatGPT is capable of corresponding directly to the

personal preferences and styles of learners in a mutual, interactive, or collaborative manner shows that it is used to adopt a study design that can be defined as utterly autonomous, reflective, and experiential. This can decrease the administrative demands or responsibilities of the teaching staff and help them to produce innovative course plans. Using ChatGPT, moreover, can add to the process of education in different ways, which are highlighted in (Shabbir et al., 2024). Some of these contributions include teaching and assistance, where ChatGPT offers direct help to students, facilitates their preparation of school homework, and answers any questions they may have. Additionally, ChatGPT can increase students' participation in virtual classes by providing exercises and interactive questions that align with the workshop materials. Not only does ChatGPT function as a teacher or guide as it offers notes and assistance throughout the entire learning process, but it can also help self-directed learners create their own goals and strategies and use them as a tool for reflection and self-assessment.

In his investigation of English language acquisition, Geng (2024) contended that the use of AI can be highly effective as it produces interactive modes of online learning. The fact that English is a rich semantic field where one meaning has various ways of expression implies that authentic methods are needed to account for sentence similarity. If we bring word vectors together with semantic similarity, there is a high possibility that natural language processing will become more accurate and efficient. Students' levels of vocabulary acquisition, their understanding of word nuances, and their subsequent proficient communication improve by bringing multiple and different sentences into full comparison. Using technology-enhanced approaches has recently highlighted the value of E-learning in contemporary educational environments. These approaches provide learners with more flexible and customized experiences in the learning process utilizing technological enhancement, particularly AI-assisted interactions and virtual experiences. While traditional approaches to education often encompass passivity of knowledge formation as well as learners' reluctant participation and full in-class engagement, interactive E-learning offers the potential for independent search for information and group-mediated exploration of texts. Learners become more fully attentive and enthusiastic when they are involved in interactive practices through which they build their knowledge and continue to improve it. In addition, the materials of courses and teaching

strategies can be *re*-adapted to suit each student's personal needs and differences to develop the final desired results through the employment of interactive E-learning.

AlTwijri & Alghizzi (2024) conducted a systematic review to examine the implementation of Artificial Intelligence in higher education, especially in boosting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' influential factor. The review generally suggested that AI has a promising future in EFL teaching. It has positively affected students' English language skills, engagement, attitudes, and motivation. Furthermore, there is a requirement for more comprehensive guidance on the suitable pedagogical approaches for applying AI technologies in EFL classrooms. Additionally, further studies are demanded to highlight the educational and ethical implications of AI incorporation. Given the positive perspectives, EFL students have shifted toward AI-incorporated EFL classrooms, it is logical to suppose that they will easily adopt the utilization of AI implementation in their language learning process. Currently, obtainable AI technology provides pedagogical opportunities to lay out intelligent learning structures that scaffold learning, offering adaptive learning experiences, and empowering interactive and customized learning opportunities. These opportunities encourage motivation, engagement, and positive position. Their study also leads to the researcher's comprehension of the literature's progress and assists in identifying the current field of AI research. Teachers can design valuable perceptions from the outcomes to evolve their instructional strategies and assessment procedures and draw AI-based learning activities. Language program designers can use the outcomes to evaluate the efficacy of AI applications and combine them into the development of an EFL syllabus.

Dai & Liu (2024) investigated the opportunities and challenges of implementing AI in English as a foreign language class from the perspectives of Chinese EFL students. To accomplish this, a total of 45 EFL students from different academic institutions in China were selected using the criterion sampling technique. Participants were requested to complete an open-ended questionnaire to collect data for qualitative research. A direct and scientific assessment of the positive outcomes and disadvantages of the employment of AI in the classroom formed the crux of this research. Following a deep analysis of the resultant interaction with AI affirmed an inclination to move toward a personalized learning culture where materials provide rich development, learning happens promptly, and feedback is given individually. All of these reflect the rising interest in the

employment of ChatGPT in the classroom, which can be summarized in a single theoretical concept; that is autonomous learning. In other words, ChatGPT grants EFL students the chance to practice their self-examination by selecting their materials, arranging these materials, engaging in multiple intellectual and practical activities, and evaluating their performance individually. Within this highly personalized experience, EFL students who participated in this study acknowledged the significance of AI tools to enhance both their English language skills and the ability to employ these skills to generate fruitful or productive communication instantly. Moreover, many participants see AI technology as a learning facilitator, potentially speeding up the language acquisition process. This could be attributed to the effective and up-to-date learning resources provided by AI-driven programs and software. However, the study also focuses on various challenges related to utilizing AI in English classrooms. The most frequently mentioned challenges involved decreasing students' critical thinking skills and limiting student's creativity.

Yuan & Liu (2025) investigated in their quasi-experimental study the effect of using an AI tool, especially Duolingo, on the engagement and motivation of Chinese EFL students. This study included 383 students in Chinese students. The results presented statistically significant improvements in EFL learners' motivation, enjoyment, and engagement among the experimental group. These tools can raise both internal and external motivation, enhance learners' self-confidence, enthusiasm, and confidence in their language skills, and stimulate active involvement. The study highlighted the possibility of AI to modify EFL classrooms by interacting with AI platforms supplying real-time feedback and comments. This can happen by suggesting substitute sentences, supporting ongoing progress and promoting self-confidence in language competence. The creation of a productive environment that fulfills the learners' expectations of a relaxing and transformative experience happens through constant support that perpetuates a sense of immediacy. Here, the newly adopted learning experience is necessary to increase students' interest in language learning, which also improves the pedagogy that teachers commonly use in the classroom.

These pedagogical endeavors to improve the quality of language education are now possible for teachers, researchers, and policy-makers who can make full use of the unending developments in the field of AI technologies in education. Not only do teacher

shift their styles pertaining to pedagogical designs, but they also transform their taught courses to suit the personalized needs of students, reflect on their feedback, and involve them in comprehensive learning experiences. From the perspectives of students, these new changes in AI-assisted pedagogical designs transform their deep and interactive learning if we take into consideration how AI technologies introduce new shifts to traditional classroom settings by changing them and the material being taught in courses into collaborative, dynamic, and reformed content. Bendig et al. (2024) argued that the culminating value of these shifts was embodied in the transformation of the learning experience into a memorable and delightful one. This experience, which is thus described as pleasant and fun, can change students' perspectives on the integration of technology in the classroom. The acceptance of using technology in learning as part of the overall pedagogical styles and designs leaves some room for fun activities at a time when students mostly feel under pressure.

1.11 Summary

Focusing on higher educational contexts in Palestine, the current study reflects on the development of self-directed learning of English as a foreign language through the employment of ChatGPT. This self-directed approach to learning English, as noted in this study, equally produces an empowering proclivity to adopt autonomous learning as EFL learners dominate the process of self-education. The introductory part of this thesis functions as a detailed commentary on the advantages of incorporating AI technology in education, yet with particular attention to its uses and benefits to autonomous learning when learning sources become difficult to find. This shows that this thesis falls into the category of research projects on AI technology in education as it invites researchers and educators to locate and incorporate various modes of technologized education to cultivate as many positive outcomes as possible. In higher education, this becomes a necessity considering the consistent and rising developments of technology in education, which is thoroughly discussed in the literature review section. In this particular section, the researcher sheds light on the impact of AI on education by looking into previous comprehensive research and detailed studies which also discuss autonomy in education and what problems and learning issues EFL learners normally face in this regard.

By bringing all of these scholarly voices into this conversation, the study points to an existing gap that the researcher aims to address; that is, ChatGPT's assistance in

supporting a self-directed technologically-oriented learning of the English language which is the first study to address this issue in the context of higher education in Palestine. The study, therefore, examines how EFL students' perspectives on the integration of ChatGPT into contemporary learning environments reveal a desire for the adoption of self-directed learning which unfolds many potential advantages, albeit the probable challenges its use may also incur. The study also aims to contribute to the rising structure of knowledge on AI in education and offer insights that could affirm the integration of similar tools in other educational contexts. Moreover, the study aims to provide a practical perception for teachers and policymakers in Palestinian higher education on how AI tools can reinforce autonomous learning, particularly for EFL students, with the comprehensive goal of developing educational outcomes in challenging contexts.

Chapter Two

Methodology and procedure of the study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the nature of the research methodology within which the research process was conducted. Therefore, the chapter outlines the procedures and methodology used in the present study titled “Exploring the EFL Students’ Perspective of the Role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in Enhancing Self-directed Learning in Palestinian Higher Education”. To achieve this aim of the study and answer its questions and hypotheses, this chapter adopts the most appropriate one for this study. There is a definite number of sections that compose the body of this chapter. These sections encompass the study design, variables of the study, study population, sample of the study, and finally the instruments employed by the researcher for the sake of collecting data. Moreover, this chapter addresses two key aspects of the current thesis, which are the validity and reliability of the instruments used for data collection, the procedures the researcher followed to complete this research, the approaches employed to analyze collected data, and eventually the final body of statistical procedures. These procedures are exquisitely explored in every section to ensure the final results are accurate and reliable, which is necessary to reflect, ascertain, and solidify the overarching validity and relevance of the study.

2.2 Study Design

To complete the main objectives successfully, the research uses a mixed-approach methodological structure to investigate the perspectives of EFL students on how autonomous learning, which is facilitated by ChatGPT, can eventually lead to the enhancement of self-directed learning in Palestinian higher education. These two approaches are quantitative and qualitative designs that operate as descriptive and analytical methodologies to assess and understand the collected data. The quantitative approach, on the one hand, supplied measurable sets of data concerning the learners’ active experiences and actual performances. On the other hand, the qualitative approach offered a useful interpretation of their viewpoints, general reception, and attitudes. Employing both approaches certified a proper, well-documented, and comprehensive knowledge of the efficient and central role played by ChatGPT in empowering EFL students’ autonomy of learning.

2.3 Variables of the Study

The variables below are included in this study, which are classified into independent and dependent:

2.3.1 Independent Variables

Students:

1. **Gender** which involves two categories (males and females).
2. **Students' level** which involves four categories (First-year, Second-year, Third-year and Fourth-year)
3. **University** which involves two categories (An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University)

2.3.2 Dependent variables

The response of undergraduate students (their perspectives) on the items of the study tool concerns the Exploring EFL Students' Perspective of the Role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in Enhancing Self-directed Learning in Palestinian Higher Education.

2.4 Study Population and Sample

The sample consisted of 348 An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University students. The study population is An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University students who study English as a foreign language. The sample is a stratified random sample. The background of the student's study sample is varied in terms of gender, year of study, and university Table (1) shows the demographic characteristics of the study sample.

Table (1)*Distribution of Students Sample According to Study Independent Variables*

Variable	Class	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	78	22.4
	Female	270	77.6
Age	First-year	79	22.7
	Second-year	65	18.7
	Third-year	87	25.0
	Fourth-year	117	33.6
University	An-Najah National University	173	49.7
	Al-Quds Open University	175	50.3
Total		348	100.0

2.5 Instruments of the Study

To achieve the objectives of this study the researcher employed a mixed-approach methodology of analysis alternately, integrating both quantitative and qualitative study designs. The researcher began with a thorough discussion of results by utilizing the quantitative approach of analysis and then moved to use the qualitative approach to analyze the results collected from interviews conducted with 20 students from both academic institutions, i.e. An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University. The researcher's use of the second approach, i.e. the qualitative approach, was necessary to certify, consolidate, and confirm the results gathered and analyzed in the questionnaire distributed among students from both universities. The first quantitative instrument was a 40-item questionnaire developed according to previous literature and the researcher's own experience in the field of studying EFL. This questionnaire was designed to gather perspectives from undergraduate students and was distributed electronically through different channels, including emails, social media accounts, and official university accounts.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section focused on demographic information about the respondents, such as gender, academic level, and university. The second section focused on three main domains: (general information, the role of ChatGPT

in self-directed learning, and the integration of ChatGPT with traditional learning methods).

For the qualitative approach of the study, the researcher conducted interviews with 20 undergraduate students. These interviews contain five open-ended questions to obtain more in-depth responses and provide wealthy qualitative data. The interviews were conducted using numerous digital communication tools, including WhatsApp, Messenger, email, and voice recordings. This mixed approach allowed for an inclusive analysis of students' perspectives on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing autonomous learning within Palestinian higher education.

2.5.1 First Instrument: Questionnaire

The prime study tool, which is the questionnaire, was distributed to undergraduate students via an electronic link. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher designed a 40-item questionnaire for student samples based on previous literature and the researcher's own experience in the field of studying EFL. The questionnaire was composed of two sections; the first focused on the demographic data of the respondents such as gender, age, academic year, and university. The second consisted of three domains (General information, ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning, and Integration with Traditional Learning). The scores of responses to each item were calculated according to a five-point Likert scale for the first three domains of responses in which strongly agree =5 points, agree =4 points, neutral = 3, disagree = 2 points and strongly disagree = 1 point.

2.5.2 Second Instrument: Interviews

The interview involved five questions connected to the study's focus and involved 20 undergraduate students from different Palestinian universities, including An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University. The aim was to collect personal comprehension and experiences concerning the main subject of the thesis, which is Exploring the EFL Students' Perspective of the Role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in Enhancing Self-directed Learning in Palestinian Higher Education. Interviews with students were conducted via their social platforms, such as WhatsApp, Messenger, and official university sites. The researcher recorded the discussions with students, took notes, and arranged them based on research questions.

The protocol of this interview was developed and designed in a certain way to achieve clarity and a sense of consistency while collecting qualitative data from targeted students. The collection of these data from EFL students is meant to address their experiences during the employment of ChatGPT and its impact on autonomous learning. In devising the format of the interview, a semi-structured style was used to convey in a flexible way the main research items or themes in the study. These themes are setting the research objectives, identifying resources, and keeping track of students' learning progress. To assess the impact of students' integration of ChatGPT as an intrinsic part of their autonomous experience of learning, 30-40-minute interviews were made on an individual basis with students who were directly and actively involved in using ChatGPT in their self-directed learning. While these interviews were conducted, ethical measures were also taken into account as students were equally asked for informed consent to participate and publish the final results of the research, which would remain confidential at their discretion. While the questions of the interview were mostly oriented toward exploring the positive effects of AI and its indispensable role in offering a goal-planning scheme, resource search and assessment, and autonomous learning, they also addressed the possible challenges posed by its use. Finally, it was necessary to ensure that the dimensions of validity and reliability were preserved and authenticated in the research. To preserve these dimensions, the researcher adopted trustworthiness with members of the study by constantly reminding them of their confidential participation in the study, by giving vital and rich portrayals, and audit trails. The preservation of this triangulation of procedures in building researcher-participant trustworthiness meant that dependability, credibility, exchangeability, and confirmability are enhanced to enrich the final output of the study.

2.6 Validity of the Questionnaire

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire, it was rated by a jury of experts in the field of teaching EFL, information technology, and artificial intelligence in the faculty of engineering at An-Najah National University. The respondents' comments and the jury's suggestions were taken into consideration to modify and improve the questionnaire's content and wordings by omitting, adding, or rephrasing items bringing the number of items remaining 40 items.

2.7 Reliability of the Questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated through the Cronbach Alpha formula and the following tables illustrate the results:

Table (2)

Cronbach Alpha test for the students' study tool

Domains	Items	Cronbach Alpha
General information	14	0.820
ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning	15	0.833
Integration with Traditional Learning	11	0.863
Total	40	0.935

Results in Table (2) illustrate that the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the instructors' tool ranged from (0.820) to (0.863) for the domains of (General information) and (Integration with Traditional Learning). Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the total degree was (0.935). These values are excellent and acceptable for the purpose of the study.

2.8 The Study Procedure

- Before the start of the study, the researcher consulted with the research supervisor to shape the instruction and procedures for its implementation.
- Approval to begin the study was acquired from the Deanship of the Faculty of Graduate Studies at An-Najah National University.
- The researcher determined the study sample and study population.
- Official permission was obtained from An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University to distribute the questionnaire and conduct interviews with undergraduate students from two different universities.
- An online link to the questionnaire was distributed to the chosen sample and separate interviews through emails and social media platforms.
- The final draft of the questionnaire was given to the study sample. It took about five weeks for the instrument to be distributed, collected, and returned to the researcher. The total number of the returned questionnaires was 348.

- The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the collected data.

2.9 Statistical Procedures

The data collected were analyzed using (SPSS) in order to provide answers to the hypotheses and questions of the study, the researcher used the following:

1. Means, frequencies, standard deviations, and percentages in order to estimate the relative percentage of every item.
2. T-tests for Independent Samples to test the assumptions related to the variable of Gender and university.
3. One Way ANOVA Test the variable of the year of study.
4. Cronbach's Alpha is used to test the consistency of the items in the questionnaire.

2.10 Data Analysis

Accordingly, the researcher used the following scale to represent the estimation level of sample responses. In order to limit the length of the cells of the five-point Likert scale (minimum and maximum limits, the range has been calculated $(5-1=4)$, divided by the correct length of the cell $(4/5=0.80)$ and added to the lowest value of the scale (1) in order to reach the highest limit of this cell. Cell limits are clarified and shown in Table (3):

Table (3)

Scale for representing the estimation level of sample responses

Mean	Percentage %	Estimation Level
4.20 and more	84.0 % and more	Very High
3.40-4.19	68.0 – 83.8 %	High
2.60-3.39	52.0 – 67.8 %	Moderate
1.80- 2.59	36.0 – 51.8 %	Low
Less than 1.8	35.9% and less	Very Low

Chapter Three

Rustles

3.1 Introduction

This study aimed to identify EFL students' perspectives on the impact of ChatGPT-assisted autonomous learning in enhancing self-directed learning at two chosen Palestinian universities which are An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University. It also aimed to identify the effect of several variables on the responses. To accomplish the aims of the study, the researcher analyzed the data of the questionnaire in accordance with the study questions and hypotheses. The results were as follows:

3.2 Results related to the main study Question

What are the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning?

To answer this question, the researcher used means, standard deviations, and estimation levels as shown in the following tables.

Table (4)

Means, Standard Deviations, and estimated level of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning in descending order

No.	No. In the Questionnaire	Domains	Means	standard deviations	%	Estimated level
1	1	General information	3.86	0.47	77.2	High
2	3	Integration with Traditional Learning	3.75	0.56	75.0	High
3	2	ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning	3.66	0.51	72.2	High
Total			3.76	0.46	75.2	High

Table (4) shows that the total degree for the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning was (3.76) which suggests a high level of estimation. The highest mean was given to the domain (General information). The lowest was for the domain (ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning).

The following tables illustrate the results of the items:

Table (5)

Means, Standard Deviations, and estimated level of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning (General information) in descending order

No.	No. In the Questionnaire	Item	Means	standard deviations	%	Estimated level
1	13	The effectiveness of ChatGPT for learning depends on how the student uses it.	4.18	0.84	83.6	High
2	6	ChatGPT offers information on various domains	4.16	0.74	83.2	High
3	5	Students can save time by using ChatGPT.	4.09	0.88	81.8	High
4	4	ChatGPT makes me too lazy to think.	3.98	0.78	79.6	High
5	7	ChatGPT can be a valuable tool for expanding my English Vocabulary	3.97	0.92	79.4	High
6	2	ChatGPT provides prompt responses	3.92	0.89	78.4	High
7	12	Excessive use of ChatGPT could decrease my ability to learn effectively through traditional methods	3.91	0.95	78.2	High
8	1	Using ChatGPT is user-friendly	3.87	0.83	77.4	High
9	14	ChatGPT is a new technology, and its long-term impact on EFL learning requires further investigation	3.84	0.79	76.8	High
10	8	ChatGPT offers a secure environment for practicing English within my field.	3.76	0.85	75.2	High
11	11	the effectiveness of ChatGPT for learning depends on how the student uses it.	3.72	0.90	74.4	High
12	9	ChatGPT can help me develop my critical thinking skills in the context of the English language	3.66	0.97	73.2	High
13	10	ChatGPT contributes to developing my creative thinking abilities within the English language context	3.59	1.00	71.8	High
14	3	ChatGPT makes me too lazy to think	3.35	1.22	67.0	Moderate
Total			3.86	0.47	77.2	High

Table (5) shows that the total degree of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning (General information) was (3.86) which suggests a high level of estimation. The highest mean was given to the item (the effectiveness of ChatGPT for learning depends on how the student uses it.).The lowest was for the item (ChatGPT makes me too lazy to think).

Table (6)

Means, Standard Deviations, and estimated level of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning (ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning) in descending order

No.	No. In the Questionnaire	Item	Means	standard deviations	%	Estimated level
1	10	I am concerned about the accuracy of the information provided by ChatGPT	3.88	0.92	77.6	High
2	1	ChatGPT can provide me with personalized learning materials based on my needs.	3.87	0.84	77.4	High
3	13	Using ChatGPT for academic work worries me as it can lead to plagiarism.	3.84	1.03	76.8	High
4	3	ChatGPT can offer immediate feedback on my writing and speaking practice.	3.83	0.88	76.6	High
5	6	ChatGPT can suggest relevant learning resources (e.g., websites, and articles) to supplement studies	3.79	0.95	75.8	High
6	7	ChatGPT can help me practice different English language skills (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation).	3.77	0.90	75.4	High
7	8	ChatGPT can create engaging exercises for self-directed learning	3.69	0.91	73.8	High
8	2	ChatGPT can help me identify my weaknesses in English language skills.	3.64	1.01	72.8	High
9	4	Using ChatGPT can motivate me to learn English more independently	3.62	0.99	72.4	High
10	9	I feel confident using ChatGPT to navigate and find information related to English language learning.	3.59	0.97	71.8	High
11	11	I am worried that relying on ChatGPT might hinder my development of critical thinking skills in English	3.59	1.20	71.8	High
12	15	I would be comfortable using ChatGPT to practice conversation skills with a simulated English speaker	3.59	0.99	71.8	High
13	5	. ChatGPT can help me set and track my own learning goals	3.56	0.96	71.2	High
14	14	ChatGPT can help me connect with other EFL learners for collaborative learning activities	3.46	0.90	69.2	High
15	12	Using ChaGPT for self-directed learning might lead to social isolation in my language-learning journey	3.26	1.13	65.2	Moderate
Total			3.66	0.51	72.2	High

Table (6) shows that the total degree of *the* perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning (ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning) was (3.66) which suggests a high level of estimation. The highest mean was given to the item (I am concerned about the accuracy of the information provided by ChatGPT.). The lowest was for the item (Using ChatGPT for self-directed learning might lead to social isolation in my language-learning journey).

Table (7)

Means, Standard Deviations, and estimated level of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning (Integration with Traditional Learning) in descending order

No.	No. In the Questionnaire	Item	Means	standard deviations	%	Estimated level
1	10	EFL instructors need to be aware of the limitations of ChatGPT and teach students how to critically evaluate the information it provides	3.96	0.83	79.2	High
2	7	ChatGPT should not be used as a substitute for qualified EFL teachers	3.86	0.97	77.2	High
3	3	I would like my instructors to provide a guide on how to integrate ChatGPT into my studies	3.85	0.88	77.0	High
4	4	Collaboration between ChatGPT and EFL teachers can create a more effective learning environment	3.84	0.90	76.8	High
5	11	I believe ChatGPT can complement and enhance my learning experience in EFL courses	3.82	0.85	76.4	High
6	8	The ideal learning environment would combine the strengths of both ChatGPT and traditional EFL instruction	3.74	0.91	74.8	High
7	9	ChatGPT could be used in class to facilitate discussions and debates on various English language topics	3.73	0.90	74.6	High
8	1	ChatGPT can be a useful supplement to my current EFL classes at university	3.70	0.89	74.0	High
9	2	ChatGPT can help me prepare for upcoming exams and assessments in my EFL courses	3.69	0.89	73.8	High
10	5	ChatGPT can free up classes for more interactive learning activities with my EFL instructor	3.68	0.85	73.6	High
11	6	I am concerned that using ChatGPT might give me an unfair advantage over classmates who do not use it	3.36	1.16	67.2	Moderate
Total			3.75	0.56	75.0	High

Table (7) shows that the total degree of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning (Integration with Traditional Learning) was (3.75) which suggests a high level of estimation. The highest mean was given to the item (EFL instructors need to be aware of the limitations of ChatGPT and teach students how to critically evaluate the information it provides). The lowest was for the item (I am concerned that using ChatGPT might give me an unfair advantage over classmates who do not use it).

3.2.1 Results related to the first sub-question

Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to gender?

And its related Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to gender.

To answer this question and its related hypothesis, Independent sample t-tests were used and the Table (8) shows the results:

Table (8)

Independent two-sample t-test result of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to gender

Domain	Category	N	Mean	S. D	t	Sig.*
General information	Male	78	4.04	0.45	3.931	0.000*
	Female	270	3.80	0.46		
ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning	Male	78	3.83	0.52	3.287	0.001*
	Female	270	3.62	0.50		
Integration with Traditional Learning	Male	78	4.00	0.53	4.629	0.000*
	Female	270	3.67	0.55		
Total degree	Male	78	3.96	0.46	4.391	0.000*
	Female	270	3.70	0.45		

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table (8) shows that there are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to gender. The significant value was (0.000) which is less than (0.05) and these

differences are in favor of males due to the mean of (3.96) while females' mean is (3.70). Also, statistically significant differences in the domains of (General information, ChatGPT, and Self-directed Learning and Integration with Traditional Learning) are in favor of males.

3.2.3 Results related to the second sub-question

Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to the Year of study?

And its related Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to the year of study.

To answer this question and its related hypothesis.

To analyze the second hypothesis, One Way ANOVA test was used and the Tables (8) and (9) show the results:

Table (9)

Frequencies, Means, and Standards Deviations of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to year of study for the total degree

(Total Degree)	Year of Study	N	Mean	S. D
The perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning	First-year	79	3.74	0.45
	Second-year	65	3.84	0.50
	Third-year	87	3.73	0.52
	Fourth-year	117	3.74	0.41
	Total	348	3.76	0.46

Table (9) shows that there are differences in means of the levels of the year of study. In order to show these differences, the One-Way ANOVA test was used and Table (9) shows the results.

Table (10)

Results of One-Way ANOVA of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to year of study

Domains	Year of Study	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
General information	Between Groups	0.435	3	0.145	0.647	0.585
	Within Groups	77.173	344	0.224		
	Total	77.608	347			
ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning	Between Groups	0.300	3	0.100	0.378	0.769
	Within Groups	91.132	344	0.265		
	Total	91.432	347			
Integration with Traditional Learning	Between Groups	1.744	3	0.581	1.825	0.142
	Within Groups	109.582	344	0.319		
	Total	111.326	347			
Total	Between Groups	0.605	3	0.202	0.912	0.435
	Within Groups	76.034	344	0.221		
	Total	76.639	347			

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table (9) shows that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to year of study due variable of year of study. The significant value was (0.435) which is more than (0.05). Also, there are no statistically significant differences in the domains of (General information, ChatGPT, and Self-directed Learning and Integration with Traditional Learning).

3.2.4 Results related to the third sub-question

Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to university?

And its related Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to university

To answer this question and its related hypothesis, Independent sample t-tests were used and the Table (11) in appendix (E) shows the results.

Table (11) shows that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to the year of study due to the variable of the university. The significant value was

(0.800) which is more than (0.05). Also, no statistically significant differences in the domains of (General information, ChatGPT, and Self-directed Learning and Integration with Traditional Learning).

3.3 Results of interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with 20 undergraduate students from two various Palestinian universities which are An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University to investigate the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning. These interviews were accomplished through online platforms such as WhatsApp, Messenger, and email, to make data collection possible for the study. To meet the main objectives of this research, which are centered on the effective reception of the participants' views on the role of ChatGPT in transforming learning into an autonomous practice that empowers a self-directed perspective on learning and knowledge acquisition, the researcher has designed the interview questions to respond directly to these objectives. Based on the studies that the researcher discussed in detail, the questions were designed to address and shed light on the autonomous perspectives of learners, the integration of technology in education, and students' involvement. There are different criteria that the researcher followed to authenticate the final results and make sure they meet the core objectives of the study. These criteria include clarity of questions, relevance to the central aims of the study, and their potential to produce detailed, intellectual answers on the part of students. These questions were open-ended to help students get engaged in a culture of sharing in which they display their experiences and reflections freely, and this makes it possible to comprehend their perspectives and the wider contexts of education. The collected data thematic analysis and the findings are demonstrated below:

Theme 1: Students' Attitudes towards ChatGPT Assistance in Autonomously Learning English as a Foreign Language:

The interviews reveal that several students become conscious of ChatGPT as a valuable tool for encouraging autonomous learning in their study of the English language as a foreign language (EFL). When asked whether they "Have you ever used ChatGPT to help with your studies?" students provided diverse examples of how AI technology is fundamental to their self-directed study practices. Based on their perception of the value of ChatGPT in assisting the design and implementation of academic assignments, a

student affirmed that ChatGPT proved to be useful as it created “real-time and adaptive feedback, allowing me [student] for instant corrections and clarification in my writing task process”. One of the interviewees also reflected on the potential of ChatGPT to offer assistance in completing translation tasks. This student started to employ ChatGPT in task-based activities after they realized its wide and common use among colleagues and friends on campus. The student confirmed that one of the genuine advantages of ChatGPT is its ability to do many tasks in a short period of time, thus allowing them to become more punctual in terms of precision and deadlines. The ability of ChatGPT to correspond directly with the student’s “question-oriented” personalized experience, as noted by other participants, makes what is complicated in terms of theoretical conceptualization comprehensible, easy, and manageable. Accordingly, one can draw out information from ChatGPT-based data based on their understanding, needs, and ways of understanding complex subjects or concepts. To exemplify, an interviewed student recommended the employment of ChatGPT to “illustrate specific concepts” which they found challenging. Other students also revealed their interest and expressed a deep appreciation of the potential of ChatGPT to organize their ideas and make them concrete. One student particularly mentioned that ChatGPT was a great site for “brainstorming for assignments or essays”, regulating the produced ideas, and generating elaborate information that helps guide the skills and experiences of writing. Such faculty, another student elaborated, becomes importantly inspiring when students are assigned presentations as they need intriguing and provocative thoughts for discussion.

A number of students argued that it was not easy for them to manage submissions on time; therefore, ChatGPT acted as a time-saving technology as it helped them to focus on other academic duties and research activities. In their reflection on translation tasks the teacher assigned in the classroom, one of the students defended their perspective on the far-reaching practicality of employing ChatGPT to write these tasks and provide summaries when necessary. Even though ChatGPT was a convenient tool that could save time immensely, the student was fully aware that the information provided by this tool was occasionally imprecise or inexact. The ability of ChatGPT to write coherently was approved by other students who also commented that using this AI tool for completing assignments either in literary courses or in translation studies was handy for giving feedback on the written language and offering alternative writing samples in the form of drafts and redrafts.

One of the essential uses of ChatGPT, as noted by one student, is being a rich source for final exam preparation. The student, in other words, emphasized the invaluable serviceability of ChatGPT to help students' study for exams by operating as a memory for lost knowledge, specific data, or complex pieces of information. In the interview, the student mentioned that ChatGPT "helped me check out the material, and when I couldn't recall other information, it provided the support I needed." This opinion aligns with similar suggestions made by several interviewed students who argued that the employment of AI made a huge difference in their mode of learning as it made the exam material more concise and their mode of study more straightforward. AI, as described by these students, reduces the impact of longer times of study on students' performance without having to wade through long text with extensive details. It delves into specific aspects of their studies without having to wade through extensive texts. The real use of ChatGPT in learning, as pointed out by a different student, appears in its multi-functional abilities; one of which is that it gives students the chance to "extract specific details of research [which they] thought was useful". This function made the process of writing assignments and submitting them more straightforward and less exhausting in terms of time when compared with conventional approaches to research and learning.

Students also commented on the abundance of sources on the Internet, but ChatGPT for them was the fastest, easiest, and most approachable media. In their comparison between ChatGPT and other platforms, a student insisted that Google can be treated on equal terms with ChatGPT since the latter endows students with the opportunity to "get quick, focused explanations without distractions". The student's desire for direct answers that answered their questions in a concise and customized manner implied that ChatGPT could easily suit their essential need for a self-directed learning environment in which they could deal with intricate notions and tasks that were difficult to understand. Dealing with complicated questions, assignments, and tasks, another student added, was equally paralleled with ChatGPT's tendency to rewrite or reframe these difficult concepts in a digestible way. Asking ChatGPT to paraphrase this prompt "Explain this to a 12-year-old student" in a language lesson was mostly met with success as this AI technology broke down hard linguistic constructs into comprehensible and accessible sets of information. Some students also remarked that if they still felt they did not grasp the full meaning of the concept, they demanded further explication, which gave them the chance to improve

their apprehension of grammatical structures, stretch their knowledge of lexical choices beyond what they already knew, and get revisions or modifications on their written submissions whenever they felt the urge to do so without seeking a teacher's counseling or recommendations. Instead of approaching a teacher, another student emphasized how generating semi-human correspondence with ChatGPT reflected positively on their level of communication as it made them practice speaking and writing the English language in a convivial and enjoyable way.

Even though many students recognized the emergence of ChatGPT as a vital source of learning, especially in the field of English language, literature, and translation, they were somehow skeptical about its moral uses to develop their personalized progress of learning. An interviewed student stated that they would rather prefer to "improve themselves and develop their abilities over cheating by using AI", a view which did not also fail to acknowledge the power of AI in contemporary education. This perspective coincided with a similar proposition exchanged by another student who strongly conveyed doubtful remarks about the use of ChatGPT in learning. The student thought that ChatGPT could be merely used as a copy-and-paste tool; rather, it could be employed to enhance their motivation to look into further ideas on the subject under examination.

Theme 2: Perspectives on the Power of ChatGPT to Enhance Autonomous Learning Regardless of Teacher Assistance

In response to questions posed by the researcher in the interviews about the applicability of ChatGPT in enhancing the autonomy of learning regardless of the presence of teachers in the classroom, the students offered responses that varied between vehement reluctance and obvious certitude and conviction of the likely academic prospects of its uses. In a discussion of their skepticism, one student answered: "No, I am convinced that AI cannot reach the level of human intelligence, and interacting with people around me helps in education more than machines". Recognizing its place in contemporary learning spaces, the student also reflected on the doubtful use of AI, which must not replace or exceed human intellect and intervention; therefore, it remains secondary in position compared to the essential involvement and interaction of human subjects. In a similar vein, a different student affirmed that they "believed that ChatGPT is making learning easy, in addition to its capability of answering personalized questions, but I still believe that the role of teachers can't be replaced, at least for now". The majority of students added that ChatGPT

remains deficient when it comes to the creative human touch and its close association with a full comprehension of the psychological, emotional, and strategic desires of individual students, which can be experienced and provided while dealing with teachers. Improving AI, as they noted, could be made real if it met students' prompt needs and responded to their queries in the best way possible.

In their defense of this statement, other students similarly presented views of the role of teachers as unique and unparalleled in many educational contexts. One of these students stated: "No, I don't believe ChatGPT can replace the role of teacher. It's simply a tool that makes the learning process more convenient for both teachers and students". They also considered that showing deep emotional interaction when explicating complex topics, particularly in literary analysis and criticism, and offering creative responses to students' critical questions are not always possible with the use of ChatGPT. Speaking of interaction and students' commitment, another student emphasized the significance of meeting deadlines and following well-defined plans and guidance. They explained that "self-driven commitment is only found in a small percentage of students. So being under the pressure of deadlines and exams makes one study productively". Accordingly, they suggested that this sense of commitment to autonomous learning on the part of students was possible if ChatGPT could become more systematic, structured and strict.

Several students provided mixed responses as they both acknowledged the benefits of ChatGPT and commented on its constraints. In this regard, one student mentioned that "my answer is somewhere between no and yes. Yes, where it helps me to learn on my own without needing outer assistance. No, it sometimes gives inauthentic answers or rather skeptical ones." They noted ChatGPT has the habit of changing answers or giving alternative responses when they re-asked it about the answer it already provided. The model of answer offered by ChatGPT occasionally shifted its response, even if its first answer was correct, which ultimately raised suspicions about its reliability. Another student pointed out that traditional ways and methods of teaching were still more favorable, arguing as such: "No, I prefer face-to-face learning. I find personal experiences and personal interactions much more interesting and motivating." They humorously proposed that adding a face to ChatGPT could make this experience more personalized, suggesting that a more human-like interaction was needed.

Some students contended that ChatGPT was unfamiliar to them, and this made them rely on other common avenues of knowledge and sources for learning. One student remarked: “No, and honestly I am not very familiar with ChatGPT as I haven’t used it much, but I think getting needed information can almost certainly be found on the internet posted on websites by real people”. They contended that creativity was more aligned with the human mind, which must be sought as the primary source of creative intellectual expression and information. Another student gave a more balanced perspective by recognizing the potential of ChatGPT as a supportive platform for autonomous learning while confirming the essential roles of teachers and their indispensable guidance: “Maybe it does in some way, as it provides immediate answers which may help in autonomous learning for students. However, I think a teacher’s guidance and support is still the most efficient.” Teachers, as they argued, could tailor their teaching to meet the educational demands of each student, push them out of their comfort zones to think critically, and encourage creativity in ways that ChatGPT’s structured, or non-human, answer could not.

Some students, on the other hand, had more positive views about ChatGPT’s ability to enhance autonomous learning. One student was confident that ChatGPT added huge benefits to their education. In their reply to this question in the interview, they answered: “Yes, I do. Based on my experience, ChatGPT has facilitated the learning process. It helps me understand many concepts, providing me with explanations and examples.” However, they highlighted the fact that replacing teachers is impractical. Another student also showed confidence in stressing the value of teachers and their roles in contemporary education while acknowledging the potential of AI in achieving different academic stuff. The student demonstrated that building a learning environment where constant interactions with teachers and peers take place is vital to the process of knowledge production. The student clearly stated: “No, I don’t believe so. We, students, are more likely to learn through interaction with teachers and real people. ChatGPT lacks these features.” They also reflected on the language employed by ChatGPT, which is too advanced and challenging to students even though it can be simplified. The student, moreover, suggested that repeating questions to the model and having to explain them with each entry cause exhaustion and frustration. Lastly, one student strongly endorsed the potential use of ChatGPT by affirming: “Yes, I agree that ChatGPT makes it easier to learn on your own without a teacher’s contestant guidance.” Believing that AI could

provide alternative ways of learning and other referenced information, they expressed their appreciation of ChatGPT and the fact that it made them feel more confident and autonomous in multiple educational contexts.

Theme 3: Diverse Perspective: ChatGPT's Influence on Students Motivation

Based on the researcher's question of whether ChatGPT can motivate students in their learning process, the interviewees gave various responses, which reflected a range of experiences and orientations. According to some students, ChatGPT helped them to become motivated as it provided prompt and relevant answers to their inquiries. In response to this question, a student illustrated: "Yes, sometimes it helps because it quickly and easily gets me the information I'm looking for." They elaborated the ChatGPT was a useful tool that not only helped them find relevant information on Mahmoud Darwish's poetry but also provided them with certain themes for further exploration. Preparing their written assignments, which were mainly reflection passages and essays, became more attainable and interchangeably productive. More importantly, a student remarked that they constantly faced dire challenges when assigned research-based tasks. The main difficulty emanated from the failure to grasp the full meaning of philosophical and critical concepts, which ChatGPT handled in an appropriate, interactive, and student manner. Based on their experience of using ChatGPT for research-based tasks, this student elaborated that they were "confident that the information I get is true," a statement which made them more assured in terms of being engrossed in the main research questions they had to answer and analyze.

Despite the optimistic considerations expressed by students about the academic value of ChatGPT in education, many of them were more alert and cautious of launching such statements of confidence. A student, for instance, maintained that "I do not consider ChatGPT to be a source of inspiration at all, for it is a tool that answers my questions when I ask them; the source of motivation in this case, I believe, is intrinsic." Creativity and the inspirational cultivation of knowledge are values that are built within the human self, which is the only source of power that is capable of affecting change, not AI tools. This perspective was endorsed by another student who held that ChatGPT was "too robotic", a suggestion that functioned as a direct protest against the absence of human interaction and emotionalism which were indispensable parts of individual experience in education. The student further noted that Google provides multiple choices for

information and interaction, one of which was “Anki”. In this particular tool, learners could engage with literary texts collaboratively and analytically. According to the student, this experience was facilitated by “Anki” due to its scientific objectivism, a quality that was supposed through the employment of the Spaced Repetition method in this tool. The crucial need for human intervention, a different student professed, was justified on the ground that ChatGPT, unlike natural human working, was deficient in accounting for contextual meanings that were immensely significant to the intricate understanding of literary narratives. The student claimed that data were collected easily, yet contexts within which these data are framed were often missing. This implied that other approaches, tools, and media such as book reading, which the student described as the best technology of the eye, should be taken into account to make the experience of learning more authentic, totalizing, and realistic.

The use of ChatGPT in today’s learning environments, as suggested by several students, could be revamped to boost students’ confidence and ease of dealing with different academic tasks. Among these suggestions is a student’s reflection on the incorporation of ChatGPT’s visual aids of learning such as image colors, interactive pictures, and GIFs. The inclusion of these elements in ChatGPT would make it more visually compelling and captivating. They did not completely object to the possibility of depending on visually interactive AI technology in the future, but for the time being, they opted for conventional ways of learning, such as book reading and discussion as well as note-taking and writing in the classroom. In correspondence with this premise, another student interviewed in this thesis also highlighted the pivotal value of the ChatGPT-picture-oriented mode of learning in which human language could be duplicated and reproduced naturally.

A small number of students demonstrated a fair and balanced judgment of the use of ChatGPT in the sense that it provided assistance in learning new things but did not fully inspire them to make extra academic efforts. This process is fair and balanced since it grants all students the opportunity to gain access to a rich and unbiased ChatGPT learning experience irrelevant of individual differences. The only motivation that can be spotted in the employment of ChatGPT, as manifested by one student, is its ability to function as a multi-task tool, especially in working on PowerPoint presentations. To them, ChatGPT created various intriguing scenarios for preparation, either with ideas, quality, or structure of slides. Another student shared that although ChatGPT does not motivate them *per se*,

it helps them plan out and organize their thoughts, which in turn motivates them to complete tasks independently. They noted that over-reliance on AI could discourage students from developing their problem-solving skills, but when used correctly, it can act as a convenient organizational tool.

Despite these mixed opinions, some students adopted the view of ChatGPT as a study companion. One stated: “Of course I do. I consider ChatGPT as a study partner with whom I converse and discuss many issues.” This student noted that employing ChatGPT in study and research to explore representations of characters in postcolonial literature was truly easy, motivating, and interactive. Similarly, another student explained that ChatGPT offered a quick analysis of concepts in a highly effective way, which takes the idea of motivation to a different level beyond the traditional sense. ChatGPT, according to this student, was convenient and functional during their preparation for final exams at home. When reading, analyzing, and studying difficult poems became too challenging and demanding, as posited by the student, ChatGPT came to the rescue. This process of studying for exams meant that students could use their time wisely and save their mental activities and concentration for other course-related tasks. One student wrapped it up by suggesting that ChatGPT redefined our way of studying to become a “process of getting things quickly [which is] motivating”.

From the prospect of many interviewed students, ChatGPT did not only offer immediate responses to questions and intellectual postulations but also presented these details in a highly ordered, logical, and coherent manner, which made their writing, tasks, and presentations look more attractive and creative. This endowed the students’ search for knowledge with self-confidence, particularly in working on projects as groups. In their interview, a student reflected on the value of ChatGPT to make them feel safe in teamwork as it supplied them with new ideas that made them look confident and powerful in front of their peers.

Some of the ideas supplied by ChatGPT, another student added, were original and provocative, meaning that they added extra flavor to the overall knowledge of topics discussed in the classroom. In literature courses, for instance, they found ChatGPT’s explication of literary concepts such as narrative structure in modern fiction sufficient and new, which encouraged them to search for more information on their own.

At the levels of grammar, lexis, and sentence structure, ChatGPT also made writing easier and more fathomable, as noted by a different student. According to this student, they were able to comprehend difficult narratives by knowing how each unit and concept functioned in these narratives. By understanding the small parts of the narrative, the student could approach the text, engage with the material, and provide their analysis without fear or hesitation. All of these benefits, as suggested by another student, were coupled with the commentary that ChatGPT offered in no time, and this made the search for the teacher's help and guidance less favorable.

Theme 4: The Role of ChatGPT in Enhancing Critical Thinking

The questions posed by the researcher about the potential of ChatGPT to enhance students' critical thinking or to function as a technological tool that created prompt answers generated varying views among participants. Many of these views revealed disapproval of its capacity to reinforce critical perspectives. The reason for this is what students believed to be rooted in the designation of ChatGPT to respond instantly to questions without expanding on answers and, thus, giving them a space for mental processing or intellectual reflection. Noting this particular dysfunction, a student stated: "No! I do not think so because when I use it, I rely on it without thinking". This statement leaves no doubt that students were highly conscious of ChatGPT's denial of their progression and ability to produce knowledge themselves due to its speed and uncritical stance on students' need for reflective internalization of information. In the case of showing relevant answers, the students suggested that ChatGPT could be more successful and trustworthy if it guided the conversation toward a concentrated commentary based on specified inquiries about certain topics, which makes it possible to unfold data for interactive, reflective, and deep thinking. One student displayed utter dissatisfaction with the functionality of ChatGPT in this regard by stating that it only "answers the questions I pose." This suggested that it could operate more effectively by putting forward critical follow-up questions to foster a culture in which students would be more deeply engaged with the topic.

Depending on the way students use ChatGPT; however, some students demonstrated that it has the potential to further critical thinking. One student explained that while ChatGPT presents a wide range of overviews on various topics, it often pushes them to explore these topics more comprehensively, which generates interesting ways of critical analysis.

In their literature classes, the students exemplified how using ChatGPT could help with literary analysis: although the tool provided an overview of the themes, it did not provide cultural details, which prompted students to conduct more research to fill in the gaps and look for more information. This experience pushed them to think critically about ChatGPT's constraints and conduct research independently. Another student emphasized the usefulness of the "answer-question sequence" that ChatGPT provides, which produces a deeper exploration of a certain subject. They employed an example to show how ChatGPT's response to a phonology-related question unraveled a deep critical perception in their textbook, leading to a more in-depth analysis of the material.

Some students thought that ChatGPT could be improved at the levels of interaction and collaboration in terms of the writing process. One student elaborated that ChatGPT should "give me the beginning and then I have to write the next section," which would encourage the culture of participation and critical reflection in the task. Another student mentioned that ChatGPT can usefully contribute to providing initial ideas, like synonyms for translation tasks. Yet, relying entirely on them can be counterproductive as it is vital to build on base ideas independently to foster critical thinking. Others noted that many students depend on ChatGPT to obtain quick answers without a critical engagement with the material, which could be addressed by ChatGPT's asking follow-up questions or providing parallel or different arguments. One student also added that ChatGPT mostly "limits thinking" by giving definite answers, which they find restricting rather than engaging and explorative.

One of the themes that was frequently repeated in the students' responses was the notion that ChatGPT could better support critical thinking by asking users "why" or "how" questions before giving final answers. One student proposed that giving more room for discussion and exchange between the user and ChatGPT could produce more meaningful thought processes and critical analysis. A different student expressed the desire for ChatGPT to offer transparent answers without following a certain one to promote more critical security for the user. Overall, while students see value in ChatGPT's ability to provide prompt and helpful responses, many think that it has the potential for development into a more interactive and critical learning experience.

Theme 5: The Rise of ChatGPT as an Autonomous Learning Tool for Reinforcing Self-directed Learning

Autonomous learning and its reinforcement by the employment of ChatGPT incurred multiple responses on the part of students who adopted various perspectives regarding the general belief of its abilities and general satisfaction. Doubt was one of the keywords used to describe students' relationship with ChatGPT in the domain of autonomous learning, which could only be enhanced via human intervention. Human activity, in this case, was necessary to account for the sensitive and intricate cultural contexts that shaped and colored the learning process. On this, a student commented: "I cannot rely entirely on AI. It helps with good education, but engaging in discussions and questions with close people who have expertise is more beneficial for learning." Ideas that relate to social traditions or customs and religious festivals or ceremonies, as pointed out by students, could not be completely explicated by ChatGPT. On the other hand, others determined that regardless of these concerns, ChatGPT operated as a platform that they appropriated easily to fit their learning styles. Upon the moment of asking too many questions, ChatGPT came back with answers, which meant that it could not be restrained as it was realistically manageable or governable with regard to the number of questions one could ask instantaneously. More interestingly, the students did not hesitate to compliment the manageability of ChatGPT since it allowed them to obtain answers that were appropriate for adults' philosophical writing or even suitable to a 5-year-old kid.

The commentary on the ability of ChatGPT to construct a customized experience of learning autonomously was also praised by some students. During the preparation for the submission of assignments in translation courses, a student was vocal about the great assistance they received from ChatGPT because it refined their writing through extensive proofreading. While they received amendments to their writing, they found that ChatGPT was an easily accessible communicator which helped them improve their conversation skills. One of the students elaborated on this by stating that ChatGPT not only kept a saved copy of the conversation but also generated specifically tailored responses which this student favored as they helped them form precise textual analysis and produce coherent pieces of writing. The fact that ChatGPT saved the data of human-machine conversation was a benefit for another student who expressed their deep gratitude to AI technology as it improved their personalized sense of learning. An example used by this

student was the improvement of punctuation and how ChatGPT helped them overcome punctuational mistakes through the frequency of writing, correction, and re-correction.

Contrary to what previous students proposed, other interviewees suggested that the current way ChatGPT was employed in the process of learning would make it difficult for them to improve a personalized culture of autonomy. This means that students' awareness of their place in the learning process and their self-conscious ability to become independent learners with autonomous learning experiences are hindered due to the way ChatGPT was employed in the classroom, but this could be improved if ChatGPT was properly and differently tailored to their specific needs, levels, and experiences. Another problematic issue with students' over-reliance on ChatGPT, one student asserted, was the distraction it created in the sense that it limited students' access to other resources, ways of learning, approaches, and potential pedagogies that were adopted by thousands of individuals and institutions around the globe. Instead of giving students the necessary exposure to different types of material, one student criticized the difficulty of adapting ChatGPT to their specific learning means, methods, and style. The student also elaborated that while many would think of ChatGPT as a crucial tool of feedback support, they did not find it useful in this regard. Another student, moreover, was affirmative in pointing out that ChatGPT could not enhance their personalized way of learning despite the fact it made information more digestible and approachable. The student added that canceling teachers from the learning process would be a huge mistake because they should always be centralized in education, which could benefit from AI, but never institutionalize it and make it a replacement of teachers who were willing to help students and guide them through their courses.

This perspective had its opponents, too, as some students thought of ChatGPT as a rich source of information, which it could always break down into comprehensible ideas. For them, this ultimately meant that ChatGPT spoke directly to their learning needs in terms of autonomy and personalized styles. When they studied semantics, one student noted that, they sometimes faced challenges in understanding relevant concepts that needed detailed analysis, but using ChatGPT provided an immediate and accessible environment through which these concepts were not only explained but also discussed via exemplification. Using ChatGPT in literature, one student suggested, was fruitful as it helped them to make appropriate use of literary techniques and concepts, which they

never understood, in writing essays. These students, nevertheless, did not fully support the idea of employing ChatGPT freely without paying any attention to possible negative outcomes. Because over-reliance on ChatGPT as a central tool for learning could sometimes lead to disadvantages, they proposed that a rational view would be to combine it with the human intelligence, support, and guidance of teachers.

In response to the question of ChatGPT's ability to lead them to a self-directed learning style, many students thought this AI tool was versatile and adjustable which increased their confidence and gave them the ability to search for knowledge on their own. ChatGPT, as exemplified by one student, was practical and user-oriented as it allowed them to lead the learning process toward a desired end as they used it to look into more illustrations of ideas they found demanding. To borrow the student's words, in particular, they articulated: "I often use ChatGPT when I am working on assignments late at night when teachers or peers are not available. It is like having a tutor who is ready to help 24 hours every single week. I can ask questions frequently and get answers without feeling self-conscious which gives me the confidence to deal with topics I am uncertain of." The logic behind the student's answer, as they reflected further on this question, was that using ChatGPT made their dependence on teachers less important since AI technology could reduce the difficulty of conceptualized material to their level, meaning that they would understand it easily and, thus, work separately as they had self-sustenance or management of their learning. One of the students stated that vocabulary was a primary obstacle that made English difficult and uncontrollable, but conversations with ChatGPT made things easier as they learned new words. For instance, ChatGPT mostly supplied them with antonyms and synonyms to use in certain contexts. They summarize this experience by arguing that "if I am unsure about a word, I ask ChatGPT for suggestions. It gives me a list of synonyms. This helps me learn new words and phrases on my own, which I then use in future assignments".

Overall, several students agreed on the point that ChatGPT fostered a self-catering philosophy of learning by which students could devise their schedules, plans, and agendas. It was often difficult for students to arrange their thoughts and organize the notes they took in lectures, an experience which one of the interviewed students demonstrated by saying "I asked ChatGPT to help me prepare for an advanced grammar course exam, and it created a detailed study plan that outlined which grammar topics I should review first, starting with basic tenses and gradually moving on to more complex structures like

conditionals. It also gave me exercise to practice each topic, making the process feel structured and tailored to my pace.” Employing ChatGPT in this case equipped students with the necessary skills to design their learning, structure their study plans, and organize their notes when they had a huge amount of information to deal with. By focusing on these elements, a different student importantly added, ChatGPT assisted them in knowing what aspects they needed to improve in their learning personality, style, and behavior. To quote the student’s words, they explained that “I asked ChatGPT to help me figure out where I struggle most in my course, and it suggested many diagnostic quizzes that tested my skills in areas like vocabulary, writing, or grammar. After this, ChatGPT gave me feedback on the areas where I performed poorly and then provided extra resources, including examples, exercises, and explanations, to help me improve.” ChatGPT can also make students well-equipped in preparing for exams by offering specified study materials. One student shared that “before my exam, I use ChatGPT for a review program, and it not only provided me with summaries of key concepts, but it also generated practice questions similar to what I face on the exam, and get me immediate feedback on my answer, and review any mistakes I made. This made me feel more confident and well-prepared for the real exam.” These abilities of ChatGPT enable students ideally to point their attention to their needs, ultimately enhancing the notion of self-directed learning.

Summary:

The researcher developed the questions of the interview to explore the perspectives of students regarding the use of ChatGPT to create a learning environment that can be identified as autonomous and self-directed at the same time. The main areas that the questions cover can be summarized as follows: outlining the goals of learning, keeping a record of progress, and assessing the value and quality of students’ work through the integration of AI-aided knowledge. The researcher developed these questions to correspond directly to the main objectives of this study and the relevant studies explained in the section entitled “Previous Studies”, thus making sure these questions align and reflect the study’s objectives. The nature of the questions was more oriented toward an open-ended format to produce comprehensive and critical responses that would get students engaged in terms of expressing their experiences and ideas freely and elaborately. The structure followed and adopted in this case is meant to cultivate abundant qualitative data that embody a vital understanding of the role AI can play concerning the encouragement of students’ independent ways of learning.

Chapter Four

Discussion, Results, and Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses EFL students' perspectives on the impact of ChatGPT-assisted autonomous learning in enhancing self-directed learning at two Palestinian universities, which are An-Najah National University and Al-Qudes Open University. The study adopts quantitative analyses of the study tool by discussing each domain in the question. Finally, the last chapter proposes recommendations concerning EFL students' perspective on the impact of ChatGPT-assisted autonomous learning in enhancing self-directed at two Palestinian universities.

4.2 Discussion

Discussion of results of the first research question, which is:

What are the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous learning in enhancing self-directed learning?

It is noticed that the percentage of EFL students' perspective on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning was "high". General information, Integration with Traditional Learning and ChatGPT, and Self-directed Learning estimation levels were high. The total degree of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning (General information) was (3.86), which suggests a high level of estimation. The highest means were given to the items as such: (The effectiveness of ChatGPT for learning depends on how the student uses it, ChatGPT offers information on various domains, and students can save time by using ChatGPT). This signifies the crucial power of employing ChatGPT as an autonomous tool in teaching, particularly in encouraging self-directed learning. Initially, the efficacy of ChatGPT is based on how students utilize it, indicating that students have the agency to administer their own learning experience. This reinforces the idea that ChatGPT stimulates students to navigate their educational process by allowing them to enquire about relevant questions and adjust the tool to their needs. When students approach ChatGPT with curiosity and a target to deepen their comprehension, they can productively use the tool to consolidate practices, critical thinking, and self-improvement. These findings highlight how ChatGPT can serve a diversity of learning

techniques, as it can respond to how the learners interact with it, making it a flexible and adjustable tool for autonomous learning. This aligns with (Ali et al., 2023) who explore the challenges of promoting self-directed learning by improving an AI chatbots (Teacher GAIA). This is intended to asynchronously support learners in their self-directed learning to help students take responsibility for their learning goals, needs, and outcomes outside the classroom. This also agrees with what (الكعبي & جعواني, 2024) assured, thanks to artificial intelligence, that it has become potential to customize the learning experience based on the needs of each learner accurately. This also aligns with the propositions of Yang (2024a) & Pang et al. (2024), who affirmed that AI technology strengthens personalized language teaching by providing real-time and appropriate feedback, individualized learning plans, and immediate direction to facilitate interactive learning journeys and improve communication in language learning according to student's capability and progress. This eventually contributes to improving learning competence and supporting teachers in tracking progress and modifying educational strategies.

The second place is the belief that ChatGPT supplies information on different fields and considers its variation as a learning tool. Whether students are studying literature, history, or science, ChatGPT can provide related information and clarification, which expands its usefulness beyond relevant subjects. This multidisciplinary support helps students acquire content from several fields and fosters multiple ways of thinking. Students can promptly make associations between different learning subjects through the use of a specific tool to find and accumulate information, thus forming a holistic experience of knowledge acquisition. This aligns with the purpose of autonomous learning, where students perceive various topics independently and develop a deeper, integrated comprehension of different domains. This result agrees with (Wei, 2023; Ali et al., 2023; Hsu et al., 2023; W. Kim et al., 2023; Karataş et al., 2024; & Allen & Mizumoto, 2024), all of whom show that students receiving AI-mediated teaching outperformed those receiving conventional teaching, revealed higher motivation, and used more self-directed learning strategies in grammar, vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension. This impact on speaking, listening, and writing skills, additionally, fosters motivation and engagement through its adaptable and accessible nature. Eventually, the time-saving feature of using ChatGPT is valuable in today's fast-paced educational environment. Students often face concise deadlines and intensive workloads, and ChatGPT's power to quickly offer clear and

pertinent information assists them in facilitating their study sessions. This can be aligned with Yang (2024a), who mentions that EFL students apply the AI tool to achieve writing tasks more swiftly, highlighting the tool's effectiveness. By decreasing the time spent searching for responses or explanations, learners can focus more on analyzing, synthesizing, and applying the knowledge they obtain. According to Biswas, (2023), ChatGPT supplies direct and prompt help to students, simplifies their elaboration of assignments, and responds to any questions they may have. This effectiveness increases productivity and ensures that learners can balance their academic assignments more effectively, making it easier to administer self-directed learning.

The lowest were for the following items: (ChatGPT makes me too lazy to think, ChatGPT contributes to developing my creative thinking abilities within the English language context, and ChatGPT can help me develop my critical thinking skills in the context of the English language). While these findings may appear to propose limitations in the utilization of ChatGPT for enhancing deep cognitive skills, they offer valuable comprehension of how students can best use the tool to their advantage and detect areas where educational guidance can increase its efficiency. Firstly, the perception that ChatGPT makes students lazy to think could arise from how learners interact with the tool. If students depend too heavily on ChatGPT for effortless answers without actively engaging in the material, it may contribute to passive learning. However, this finding highlights a significant opportunity, teachers and learners can be encouraged to use ChatGPT as a stepping stone for deeper investigation. When used correctly, ChatGPT can spotlight inquisitiveness and serve as a starting point for learners to ask more complex questions, encouraging them to move forward with their research. Thus, the crucial result here is not that ChatGPT inherently enhances laziness, but rather that with appropriate advice and conscious effort, learners can learn to use it in a way that refreshes their cognitive interaction rather than hinders their critical thinking.

Moreover, the lower estimation for ChatGPT leads to developing critical thinking, suggesting that students may not yet be entirely aware of its possibility to support higher-order thinking skills. While ChatGPT supplies prompt and straight answers, it can also be a successful tool for fostering critical thinking when students use it to question and analyze the information provided. For example, students can challenge the responses they are given, ask ChatGPT follow-up questions, and interact in reflective differentiation

between their prior knowledge and the information provided. Therefore, critical thinking might not develop automatically through employing ChatGPT, but it can be encouraged by training students to use it more analytically, such as examining multiple perspectives on a topic or testing the validity of responses. Enhancing learners to approach ChatGPT's responses critically can bestow on them a valuable advantage for reshaping critical thinking skills. In terms of creative thinking, the low estimation likely considers a similar pattern. Creativity often demands open-ended exploration and varied thinking, areas where AI tools like ChatGPT may seem limited when approached simply as an information supporter. However, ChatGPT can be a stimulus for creative thinking when learners use it to generate ideas, brainstorm authentic bodies of knowledge, or approach problems from different views. In many cases, ChatGPT functions as a platform that generates responses creatively, which helps students think differently about their academic work in terms of relevance, multiplicity, originality, and potential. The adoption of the view of ChatGPT as a marker of difference and academic progress in the sense that it provides multiple scenarios for creativity and various contextual readings of one prompt inserted by a student shows that it fosters a culture of creativity. This perspective confirms the findings of Hıncız (2024) whose suggestion points to the applicability of AI technology in the classroom and the potential to transform into teachers who guide the learning process and facilitate students' growth in terms of creativity, digital skills, and advanced thinking. The findings also are consistent with Tamil Selvam & Khairani Zakaria (2024b) research which shows that the value of AI technology in this context is double-fold: while it fosters creative and critical reasoning, it builds on students' linguistic knowledge and mastery. Not unlike the previous study, the outcomes concur with the conclusions elaborated in the research of (Michalon & Camacho-Zuñiga, 2023; & Al Shloul et al., 2024). Both research projects see ChatGPT in active roles as it contributed hugely to the restructuring of learning by making it a more creative, critical, and interactive process in which students increase their language input and improve their ability to communicate effectively.

The total degree of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning (ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning) was (3.66), which suggests a high level of estimation. The highest means were given to the items (I am concerned about the accuracy of the information provided by

ChatGPT, ChatGPT can provide me with personalized learning materials based on my needs, and Using ChatGPT for academic work worries me as it can lead to plagiarism). In the first place, the statement that learners worry about the information offered by ChatGPT reflects a safe level of critical consciousness. This proposal is not passively accepting ChatGPT's responses but is actively questioning the authenticity of the information. This critical perception is positive because it stimulates students to fact-check and compare ChatGPT's responses with other reliable sources, enhancing a more cautious and investigative approach to learning. This increased concern can be seen as a sign of "growing digital literacy", where students understand that while ChatGPT can be a strong tool, its outputs comply with algorithms that may not always offer the most precise or context-specific information. Therefore, this concern agrees with the comprehensive goal of developing autonomous learners who are qualified to choose between reliable and unreliable sources. This result aligns with, Pan et al. (2024) research that ensures the beneficial role that ChatGPT can support student learning when used responsibly, encouraging a balance between AI assistance and individualistic academic integrity. This finding is also consolidated by (Soleimani et al., 2022), who confirmed that ChatGPT can generate inaccurate information, and inherent biases as well as hinder ethical concerns.

As regards the item "ChatGPT can provide me with personalized learning materials based on my needs," students realize that ChatGPT can adapt to their learning styles, levels of comprehension, and specified questions, which allows for a more customized learning process. The evolution of ChatGPT as a source of information that can be adapted to suit students' special learning requirements engenders a community of autonomous learners who can seek knowledge and simplifications of provided data on their own. To rephrase this, it becomes plausible to use ChatGPT as a substitute teacher by designing material and incorporating information that reflects students' ways and levels of interaction in their academic contexts, each according to students' desires and wants. Students' use of ChatGPT as a flexible site in which information can frequently be modified is discussed, defended, and concluded in a number of studies such as (Pan et al., 2024, Pang et al., 2024; Hınız, 2024; Yang, 2024a; Utami et al., 2023; Hsu et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2023; Wei, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023; الكعبي & جعواني, 2024; البراهيم, 2024). All of these studies arrive at similar conclusions which show that ChatGPT is a rich source of information

that students can use to cultivate other benefits such as encouraging autonomous learning, consistent motivation, and provision of customized commentary and directed tutoring, hence building on students' self-directed personalities and orientations.

In spite of this, students are highly conscious of acts of plagiarism that could disrupt their academic work and progress. It is a sensitive moral issue that unpacks a deep concern about the preservation of integrity in education. The easy way of using information from ChatGPT, therefore, goes hand in hand with the general fear of adopting an effortless copy-and-paste action as some students might find it demanding or trouble-free to use data in written assignments, for instance, without checking the validity, reliability, and accuracy of what ChatGPT offers, let alone if these data are appropriately cited and fully understood. The real risk, hence, lies in the probable use of ChatGPT to generate ideas without fully engaging with them in an autonomous fashion, and this functions as a direct invitation for teachers to be responsible during the process of teaching and remind their students of this responsibility. An important part of this responsibility is the teachers' insistence and follow-up on their students' use of ChatGPT as a form of autonomy, not an accelerated or alternative route to achieving something that needs students' individualized work, reflection, and interaction. Students' knowledge and moral awareness of this implies that they take charge of addressing issues related to citation for the sake of originality and appropriateness. If students stick to academic rules concerning plagiarism and the use of AI in learning, they can stabilize ChatGPT in the process of their learning and intellectual growth. In fact, an intrinsic part of this conscious growth is their adoption of a strategy to weigh AI tools against research ethics in a fair and balanced way that does not affect their development as critical thinkers. This is supported by Vaccino-Salvadore (2023), who examined the ethical dimensions of using ChatGPT, involving privacy issues, reliability, bias, accessibility, authenticity, and academic integrity concerns. As a result, learners should be made conscious of these possible drawbacks and support to know how to approach ChatGPT during the learning experiences.

The lowest degrees were for the items (Using ChaGPT for self-directed learning might lead to social isolation in my language-learning journey, ChatGPT can help me connect with other EFL learners for collaborative learning activities, and ChatGPT can help me set and track my own learning goals). Firstly, the idea that "Using ChatGPT for self-

directed learning might lead to social isolation in my language-learning journey” reveals that learners do not comprehend the use of ChatGPT as a replacement for human interaction in their learning experiences. This indicates an affirmative balance in how learners interact with AI in their teaching since they consider ChatGPT as a tool for complementing their understanding and learning autonomously, but they are not excessively relying on it to the point where it influences their engagement socially. It is comprehensible from this result that learners acknowledge the value of human collaboration, connection, and face-to-face interactions in educational environments, and that ChatGPT is more of a supportive tool rather than one that could command isolation. This result suggests that autonomous learning by ChatGPT can be agreed with collaborative and social learning, providing students with a balanced approach that does not subvert human interaction.

The second item reveals that learners may not apply the tool for interaction or group-based learning activities. While ChatGPT is very virtuous at supplying customized answers, its absence has the intrinsic capacity to enhance real-time collaboration among peers. However, this consequence provides an opportunity to broaden the use of ChatGPT as a facilitator for group discussions or an associate tool in peer environment settings. For example, learners could use ChatGPT to generate discussion prompts or to explain complex concepts that can then be discussed further in group study meetings, helping to combine AI assistance with social learning. Teachers might also consider guiding learners on how to engage ChatGPT in collaborative tasks, potentially stimulating the tool’s use for group learning activities.

Finally, the third item points out that learners are not presently leveraging the tool for self-directed learning administration. While ChatGPT can surely support offering answers and clarification, the results propose that students may not be aware of how to use it as a tool for structured goal-setting and progress tracking. This exemplifies a notable opportunity to foster ChatGPT’s role in autonomous learning by teaching learners how to use it for creating personalized learning outlines and keeping track of their progress. This, for instance, can take place through assisting them in dividing a large goal into smaller, achievable tasks with timelines. Emboldening students to use ChatGPT in this way would help them take total advantage of its possibility as a supportive tool for self-directed learning, containing long-term goal control and pursuit improvement. These results align

with (Ulla et al., 2023; Hınız, 2024), who emphasize that using ChatGPT must follow a balanced approach, merging human teaching proficiency with AI competence, as over-relying could lead to insufficient or superficial-level learning outcomes. It stimulates student-led learning, such as knowledge structure, inquiry-based learning, peer teaching, and self-assessment. Instructors are increasingly seen as designers of the learning process and promoters of social-emotional learning, while AI tools complement their pedagogical efforts.

The total degree of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT-aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning (Integration with Traditional Learning) was (3.75), which suggests a high level of estimation. The highest means were given to the items (EFL instructors need to be aware of the limitations of ChatGPT and teach students how to critically evaluate the information it provides, ChatGPT should not be used as a substitute for qualified EFL teachers, and I would like my instructors to provide a guide on how to integrate ChatGPT into my studies). Speaking of the first item, while ChatGPT sounds competent in providing inclusive information across a domain of subjects, it is still an AI model that can generate inexactness or contextually insufficient answers. Therefore, instructors must help students gain digital literacy skills by supporting them to question, confirm, and cross-reference the answers they receive from ChatGPT. This approach empowers students to use ChatGPT as a stepping point for examination rather than the final source of truth. It is, accordingly, possible for teachers to check on their students' critical progress and development if they grant students the opportunity to engage with ChatGPT in a style that does not strip them of authority or agency as they continue to learn autonomously. In other words, they use AI technology as a tool that complements and enriches their autonomy of character rather than establishes it as a dependent entity that appears to be constantly in need of assurance.

In terms of the second idea/item, it should be noted that replacing highly competent and qualified teachers with ChatGPT is not an option, a value that teachers themselves must confirm, accept, and declare. Regardless of the immense blessings that ChatGPT can bestow on its users such as modifications and corrections of grammatical mistakes, expansion of words and phrases, and guidance on practices and off-campus exercises, the actual presence of teachers in the classroom is an undeniable need that technology cannot eventually silence or replace. If we consider, for example, the question of human

intelligence and emotionality of response, we find that ChatGPT is still lacking as it frequently fails to correspond emotionally and interact pedagogically, a lack or gap that only human teachers can bridge. There are certain elements that human teachers can guide their students through in EFL classrooms successfully. Good examples, here, would be the notion of culture, special contexts of learning, EFL students' different ways of learning, and the full comprehension of their styles, which ChatGPT frequently fails to address and rectify. Therefore, it makes sense to argue that EFL teachers are better equipped to pass their knowledge and expertise to students as they give face-to-face commentaries, notes, and suggestions to students who also become encouraged to fulfill an expected role of communicative capacities and high levels of interaction. These accomplishments on the part of instructors mean that their role is vital and cannot be eventually substituted by ChatGPT, which only contributes to the improvement of students in a supplementary way. Regarding the third point/item, it lies within the capacity and responsibility of teachers to indoctrinate their students about the best ways, strategies, and styles to incorporate ChatGPT in their modes of learning. While instructors, for instance, can lecture their students on the benefits of ChatGPT in the domain of learning new vocabularies, communication skills, grammatical structures, and thought production, they can impartially warn them against crossing the boundaries regarding the ethical abuses of ChatGPT plagiarism.

Based on this, instructors can also provide guidance on how to integrate AI-generated perception with conventional learning techniques, such as peer review, group discussions, and personalized writing tasks, emphasizing that students benefit from both human interaction and technology. Through directing learners on how to use ChatGPT productively, teachers can help learners maximize the benefits of AI tools while preserving the depth of the learning experiences and integrity. These findings are supported by (Hınız, 2024; Tamil Selvam & Khairani Zakaria, 2024a; Pang et al., 2024; Jeon, 2024a; Kohnke et al., 2023; Loncar et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2023; Tlili et al., 2023). They argue that ChatGPT is seen as a valuable complement to conventional teaching; it is not a replacement for educators, thus positioning teachers as a directory that encourages higher-order thinking, creativity, and digital literacy. They emphasized that there are four functions for ChatGPT: interlocutor, teaching assistant, evaluator, and content supplier. It also points out three key characteristics for teachers: combining resources, fostering

student inquiry, and encouraging ethical AI comprehension. Even though AI enhances instruction, the limitations concerning technology, equity, and ethics emphasize the value of teachers' pedagogical expertise in leveraging AI effectively.

The lowest degree was for the items (I am concerned that using ChatGPT might give me an unfair advantage over classmates who do not use it, ChatGPT can free up classes for more interactive learning activities with my EFL instructor, and ChatGPT can help me prepare for upcoming exams and assessments in my EFL courses). In the first statement, which is "I am concerned that using ChatGPT might give me an unfair advantage over classmates who do not use it," the result suggests that learners do not view the tool as something that creates an important separation in their learning experiences. This probably designates that learners acknowledge ChatGPT as a complementary tool, not something that inherently offers students a border over those who do not use it. It reflects an inclusive comprehension that ChatGPT is available to everyone, and success still mostly depends on how learners engage with the content and use AI responsibly. This means that the attitude is positive because it appears that learners feel empowered to use ChatGPT without concern about inequality, suggesting that its use can enhance equity rather than competition when incorporated accurately into the learning experiences. In the second statement, the low estimation might indicate that learners are not yet knowledgeable about the possibility of AI organizing certain learning assignments. Whereas ChatGPT can aid with responding to basic inquiry and offering practical exercises, students may not yet completely appreciate how this could allow their instructors to emphasize more engaging, interactive classroom activities. This result points out an opportunity for EFL educators to reshape how ChatGPT is used. By using the AI tool to deal with more routine tasks, in other words, educators could free up quality classroom time for group discussion, role-playing, speaking practice, and other dynamic activities that enhance communicative skills. If learners are better aware of how ChatGPT can reinforce a more interactive and customized classroom experience, they may come to recognize its role in fostering an inclusive learning environment.

Finally, the third item may suggest that learners are not entirely employing the tool for exam preparation, or it shows that they still prefer traditional ways of study such as revising textbooks or working on previous exams. While ChatGPT can surely assist students by supplying clarification, quizzes, and practice exercises appropriate for

specific exam themes, they might not yet perceive their full possibility in this realm. This contribution is an opportunity for educators to guide learners on how to successfully use ChatGPT as a study tool, especially in preparing for exams. For example, ChatGPT can generate patterns of questions, provide prompt reviews of main concepts, and offer customized simplification for complex topics, assisting students in targeting their weaknesses and studying more efficiently. By showing these potentials, educators can help learners see how ChatGPT can complement their traditional ways of study and progress with their exam preparation.

As confirmed by Hınız (2024) & W. Kim et al. (2023), ChatGPT is a more encouraged, engaged, and supported learning environment, enhancing a feeling of belonging among learners who may feel marginalized in traditional environments. In addition to supporting inclusivity and fairness in the classroom, they perceive that ChatGPT reveals potential as an effective associate for students, facilitating language learning through engaging in discussions and task-based activities inside the classroom.

Bearing in mind the results of these statements, the researcher found that ChatGPT enhances learning goals and activities for English language students, and this reflects the fact that it is globally considered the modern representation of technology in education to enhance aided Autonomous Learning in enhancing self-directed learning. Besides, ChatGPT enables students to choose topics and provides them with different learning samples in a good learning context. In other words, samples of ChatGPT contain logical, systematic, and informative productions with a reference to meaningful linguistic outcomes. Consequently, ChatGPT is an effective and modern solution for improving self-directed learning. Ultimately, ChatGPT is considered a valuable complement to traditional teaching with the potential to amplify learning when used responsibly alongside strong pedagogical support.

Discussion of the Results of the First Sub-question, which is:

Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to gender?

And its related Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to gender.

It is noticed that there are statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to gender. The significant value was (0.000) which is less than (0.05) and these differences are in favor of males due to the mean of (3.96) while females' mean is (3.70). Also, statistically significant differences in the domains of (General information, ChatGPT, and Self-directed Learning and Integration with Traditional Learning) are in favor of males, and this means that males have more perspectives towards the *role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning*.

The researcher relates these results to the fact that because of the advantages of ChatGPT on learning, differences have occurred between males and females. Males may be associated with diverse levels of comfort and knowledge of technology. Research often suggests that, in particular contexts, males may reveal higher confidence or more frequent engagement with digital aid and AI technologies compared to females. This familiarity reflects that males are both aware of ChatGPT and more proficient at using it to explore subjects independently, regulate their studies, and require customized feedback. Additionally, sociocultural components may affect how different genders deal with technology in learning environments, where males may feel more oriented to investigation with AI-driven tools to improve their autonomy and direct their learning. Moreover, males tend to be dependent, so they resort to ChatGPT to facilitate the educational experience for them, save their time, and help them acknowledge and enrich educational content. In addition, males may have more qualification degrees and different levels of experience. These differences reflect diverse attitudes toward technology use, which could explain why Mael's reports stronger perspectives on the advantages of ChatGPT for self-directed learning.

Discussion of the Results of the Second sub-Question, which is:

Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to the Year of study?

And its related Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to the year of study.

It is noticed that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to the variable of academic level. The significant value was (0.435) which is more than (0.05). Also, no statistically significant differences were found in the domains of (General information, ChatGPT, and Self-directed Learning and Integration with Traditional Learning). This result means that students from different levels of academic years have the same perspectives toward the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning.

The researcher relates these results to the fact that because of the advantages of ChatGPT on learning, no differences have occurred between the levels of the study sample from different years of study because they have the same knowledge of technology. Moreover, this reveals that regardless of whether learners are in their early or later years of study, they are conscious of the tool's potential for fostering the autonomy of learning, providing customized assessments, and helping them to be in charge of their educational outcomes. This consistent perspective across different academic levels highlights ChatGPT's inclusive appeal and effectiveness, indicating that its benefits in supporting self-directed learning are not confined to a particular stage of a student's academic experience.

Discussion of the Results of the Third Sub-Question, which is:

Are there any significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to university?

And its related Hypothesis: There are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha=0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to university

It is noticed that there are no statistically significant differences at ($\alpha= 0.05$) in the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to variables of the university. The significant value was (0.800), which is more than (0.05). Besides, no statistically significant differences were found in the domains of (General information, ChatGPT, and Self-directed Learning and Integration with Traditional Learning). This means that students from both universities have the same perspectives on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning.

The researcher relates these results to the fact that because of the advantages of ChatGPT on learning, no differences have occurred between the levels of the study sample from different universities since their universities perceive similar perspectives on ChatGPT's potential to enhance self-directed learning. This proposes that ChatGPT's effectiveness in enhancing autonomous learning is accepted universally by students from different educational environments. This implicitly reflects that its benefits exceed specific university settings or educational styles. It also shows that the consistency in learner's understanding across universities strengthens the idea that ChatGPT provides broadly appropriate support for self-directed learning, making it a valuable tool in multiple educational contexts.

4.3 Discussion of the Results of the Interview

The researcher concluded that responses in the interviews, which were conducted with students anonymously, affirmed the practicality of ChatGPT as a vital source of support and encouragement that can foster an autonomy-oriented learning culture without canceling the primary role of teachers in the classroom. The responses, likewise, demonstrated that educational practices and the pursuit of knowledge on the part of students are viable through ChatGPT if they know how to employ it to overcome problems and defects in education and guide their learning practices autonomously. The value of autonomous learning in this particular context is embodied in students' use of ChatGPT to support their needs and emphasize their specific orientations in knowledge acquisition. Despite the fact that ChatGPT has become a handy tool in today's learning environments, as acknowledged by some students, it goes without reflection that a solid apparatus has to be used in order to justly scale the students' individualized employment of ChatGPT and their search for outside help. The responses eventually point to a central value in students' learning, which is the necessity of remaining active learners while

depending on ChatGPT due to its practical and functional effects on the learners' activity and progress.

It is true that self-directed learning can evolve as an aftermath of the role played by ChatGPT in education, which the diverse range of students' responses clearly showed. Yet, other students questioned the limitations imposed on them while using AI tools. One instance of limitation is the incapacity of ChatGPT to perform human duties, correspond emotionally, think creatively, and engage critically, which can only be fulfilled by human presence. Teachers, to be more exact, form a body of dynamism in the classroom at a time when ChatGPT would mostly organize students' thoughts, rearrange in-class notes, manage self-material, and provide illuminations of all. Additionally, concerns were raised about over-dependence on ChatGPT's capability which could reduce exposure to various learning techniques and cultural contexts. Overall, while ChatGPT boosts autonomy and motivation for many learners, the outcomes show the need for a balanced approach that combines traditional teaching techniques and human interaction to make sure students get the most out of AI-driven learning tools. The conclusion of these interviews agreed with (Hiniz, 2024), (Tamil Selvam & Khairani Zakaria, 2024a), (Pang et al., 2024) , (Jeon, 2024a), (Kohnke et al., 2023), (Loncar et al., 2023), (Lim et al., 2023), and (Tlili et al., 2023). All of these researchers not only confirmed that ChatGPT reinforces self-directed learning and autonomous learning, but they also ensured the significance of a balanced approach that integrates human teaching proficiency with AI capabilities.

4.4 Conclusion

The study has examined the role of ChatGPT-aided autonomous learning in enhancing self-directed learning among EFL students, particularly in the context of higher education in two Palestinian universities, which are An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University, thus exposing its potential for learning experience. The study was conducted on (348) undergraduate (BA) students. While ChatGPT has shown itself to be a valuable supplement to traditional learning, offering customized and immediate feedback, facilitating autonomy study, and supporting efficient learning processes, its benefits lie in how it is integrated into educational practices. Students found ChatGPT is useful in managing their studies and accessing the information on demand, which has positively impacted their ability to set and keep track of personalized learning goals.

Taking the role of teachers in traditional educational settings is not a possible option for those who believe that ChatGPT can act accordingly. Certain issues that relate to students' cognitive abilities cannot fully be accomplished and facilitated by the use of ChatGPT. Put differently, students' cognition of culturally sensitive material, critical engagement with texts, and creative production of knowledge go beyond the control of technology and eventually become characteristics of human exceptional capacities. The unparalleled centrality of human teachers is, thus, manifested in the support, guidance, and instruction they provide to students, not only in the realm of knowledge and learning language, culture, and creative thinking but also in the value of taking academic integrity into high consideration by learning to hold responsibility for incorporating AI in learning.

The study, in conclusion, cultivates a discourse in today's philosophy of teaching and learning at a time when learners have witnessed the upsurge of AI in contemporary education. The discourse centers on the importance of finding ways of negotiating teacher support and instruction and AI employment in the classroom. A balanced practical use of AI necessitates that teachers are also directly and primarily involved in the process of learning to ensure the students' safe culmination of customized learning activities and self-directed modes of thinking. Not only do teachers build a supportive community of learners who are imbued with learning personalized abilities and thorough reflective criticism, but they also function as instructional references to the ethical uses of ChatGPT. Overall, there needs to be more research that focuses on the possible uses of AI, here ChatGPT, in today's education, to generate more impact on learners' creativity and critical production of knowledge.

4.5 Recommendations

This study suggests the following recommendations, which are based on the results:

1. ChatGPT must be incorporated in the classroom to complement the styles and approaches used in the classroom so that it does not take over the central role of teachers.
2. It is important that teachers provide students with clear-cut instructions on the possible employment of ChatGPT in the learning process so that students can avoid problems related to plagiarism and stabilize other ethical considerations of the kind with their personalized development.

3. Teachers must be held responsible for the creation of a motivating environment that does not involve students in using ChatGPT in copy-and-paste practices but rather redirects their efforts to a productive search for knowledge through creative examination and critical questioning of material.
4. Institutionalized policies, with the assistance of teachers, must be applied to ensure that ethical guidelines are met and considered when using ChatGPT so that high levels of integrity, justice, and originality in students' tasks are maintained.
5. Teachers must be alert to the methods that combine ChatGPT with students' practices in the sense that it feeds into their specific ways of learning and positively adds to relevant techniques in cultivating new knowledge.
6. It must be noted that the approach to self-directed learning, which enhances students' immersion, engagement, and creative participation in the formation of knowledge, can be further examined to study and assess the enduring impact of ChatGPT on students' performance in different contexts of education.
7. Instructors should facilitate the passage of students into a self-directed environment by making sure that they are fully competent in building and leading their autonomous experience of learning, which manifests itself in the students' ability to structure learning schemes, follow up on their development, and foster a tendency to perpetuate their progress.

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Appendices

Appendix (A)

Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire. The researcher is conducting a thesis which is a comparative study of EFL students' perspective on the role of ChatGPT-assisted autonomous learning in enhancing self-directed learning at two chosen Palestinian universities which are An-Najah National University and Al-Quds Open University. Your response is a valuable scholarly contribution to understanding the perspectives of ChatGPT-assisted technologies on improving students' performance in terms of self-directed learning. Please review the statements attentively and indicate your level of agreement or disagreement by marking (ü) next to the appropriate response. Your response will remain confidential and only contribute to the scientific analysis of this study.

Part One: personal information

1. Gender:

- a. Male () b. Female ()

2. Academic level:

- a. First-year () b. Second-year () c. Third-year () d. Fourth-year ()

3. University:

- a. An-Najah National University () b. Al-Quds Open University ()

Before we begin, a quick question to help us understand your background:

- () I have no prior knowledge of ChatGPT.
() I have a basic understanding of ChatGPT and its capabilities.
() I have heard of ChatGPT but have not used it
() I have some experience using ChatGPT.

Note:

Autonomous learning: Holec (1981), defines it as the ability to take charge of one's own learning, which includes decision-making about various aspects of learning such as goal setting, materials selection, and pace of learning. In the context of this study, autonomous learning specifically refers to the ability of students to independently navigate (direct) their learning journey in asynchronous (غير المتزامن) online environments, make decisions regarding their learning goals and strategies, and reflect on their learning experiences without constant supervision from instructors.

Self-directed learning: refers to a process in which individuals take initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learner needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles, 1975). For this study, self-directed learning is understood as the capacity of individuals to engage in the learning process actively, make informed decisions about their learning objectives, and utilize available resources to achieve those objectives in asynchronous online learning settings.

Instructions: Please rate your level of agreement with each statement using the following scale:

- Strongly Agree (SA)
- Agree (A)
- Neutral (N)
- Disagree (D)
- Strongly Disagree (SD)

Part Two: read the items below carefully and respond to each one by placing () next to the answer corresponding to your response.

First Domain: General information

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. Using ChatGPT is user-friendly.					
2. ChatGPT provides prompt responses.					
3. ChatGPT makes me too lazy to think.					
4. ChatGPT functions as a search engine.					
5. Students can save time by using ChatGPT.					
6. ChatGPT offers information on various domains.					
7. ChatGPT can be a valuable tool for expanding my English Vocabulary.					
8. ChatGPT offers a secure environment for practicing English within my field.					
9. ChatGPT can help me develop my critical thinking skills in the context of the English language.					
10. ChatGPT contributes to developing my creative thinking abilities within the English language context.					
11. ChatGPT can be a useful resource for improving my cultural understanding of English-speaking countries.					
12. Excessive use of ChatGPT could decrease my ability to learn effectively through traditional methods.					
13. the effectiveness of ChatGPT for learning depends on how the student uses it.					
14. ChatGPT is a new technology, and its long-term impact on EFL learning requires further investigation.					

Second Domain: ChatGPT and Self-directed Learning

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. ChatGPT can provide me with personalized learning materials based on my needs.					
2. ChatGPT can help me identify my weaknesses in English language skills.					
3. ChatGPT can offer immediate feedback on my writing and speaking practice.					
4. Using ChatGPT can motivate me to learn English more independently.					
5. ChatGPT can help me set and track my own learning goals.					
6. ChatGPT can suggest relevant learning resources (e.g., websites, and articles) to supplement studies.					
7. ChatGPT can help me practice different English language skills (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation).					
8. ChatGPT can create engaging exercises for self-directed learning.					
9. I feel confident using ChatGPT to navigate and find information related to English language learning.					
10. I am concerned about the accuracy of the information provided by ChatGPT					
11. I am worried that relying on ChatGPT might hinder my development of critical thinking skills in English					
12. Using ChatGPT for self-directed learning might lead to social isolation in my language-learning journey.					
13. Using ChatGPT for academic work worries me as it can lead to plagiarism.					
14. ChatGPT can help me connect with other EFL learners for collaborative learning activities					
15. I would be comfortable using ChatGPT to practice conversation skills with a simulated English speaker.					

Third Domain: Integration with Traditional Learning

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. ChatGPT can be a useful supplement to my current EFL classes at university.					
2. ChatGPT can help me prepare for upcoming exams and assessments in my EFL courses.					
3. I would like my instructors to provide a guide on how to integrate ChatGPT into my studies.					
4. Collaboration between ChatGPT and EFL teachers can create a more effective learning environment.					
5. ChatGPT can free up classes for more interactive learning activities with my EFL instructor.					
6. I am concerned that using ChatGPT might give me an unfair advantage over classmates who do not use it.					
7. ChatGPT should not be used as a substitute for qualified EFL teachers.					
8. The ideal learning environment would combine the strengths of both ChatGPT and traditional EFL instruction.					
9. ChatGPT could be used in class to facilitate discussions and debates on various English language topics.					
10. EFL instructors need to be aware of the limitations of ChatGPT and teach students how to critically evaluate the information it provides.					
11. I believe ChatGPT can complement and enhance my learning experience in EFL courses.					

Appendix (B)

Interview Questions

1. Have you ever used ChatGPT to help with your studies?

If Yes > What motivated you to use it > Can you give me an example of when it was most useful for you?

If No > Why have not you tried it yet > What do you think it might offer if you did?

2. Do you think ChatGPT makes it easier to learn on your own without a teacher's constant guidance?

If Yes > How does it help you study independently?

If No > What do you think is missing? > How can ChatGPT be improved to support your learning better?

3. Do you feel more motivated to study when you use ChatGPT?

If Yes > Why do you think so? > Can you give an example of a task or topic that kept you engaged?

If No > What do you think makes it more engaging for you? > Do you prefer other study tools?

4. Do you think ChatGPT helps you think critically about your assignment or just gives you a prompt answer?

If Yes (help you think critically) > How does it challenge you to think more deeply? Can you give an example of a situation that motivates you to find your own solution?

If No (give a quick answer) > How do you think it can be improved to help you think more critically?

5. Do you think ChatGPT makes learning more autonomous for you?

If Yes > How does it adapt to your learning style or pace? Can you give an example of how ChatGPT tailored its responses to what you needed?

If No > How would you like to adjust to your learning preferences?

Appendix (C)

Permission from Al-Quds Open University

An-Najah
National University
Faculty of Graduate Studies



جامعة
النجاح الوطنية
كلية الدراسات العليا

التاريخ : 2024/08/29م

حضرة الدكتور عبدالسلام الخياط المحترم
نائب الرئيس للشؤون الأكاديمية

تحية طيبة وبعد،،

**الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة الطالبة / اية نضال فالح الاطرش . رقم التسجيل (12154592)
تخصص ماجستير أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية**

نهديكم اطيب التحيات ونعلمكم بأن الطالبة اية نضال فالح الاطرش هي طالبة دراسات عليا في برنامج ماجستير أساليب تدريس اللغة الانجليزية وهي بصدد اعداد الاطروحة الخاصة بها والتي هي بعنوان:

" استكشاف تصورات طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول دور التعلم الشخصي بمساعدة ChatGPT في تعزيز التعلم الذاتي في التعليم العالي الفلسطيني "

يرجى من حضرتكم مخاطبة الأستاذ الدكتور سمير النجدي رئيس جامعة القدس المفتوحة لتسهيل مهمة الطالبة، حيث تحتاج الطالبة الى توزيع استبيان (الكثروني) على طلبة قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وأدائها في جامعة القدس المفتوحة، وذلك لجمع معلومات حول تصورات طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول دور التعلم الشخصي بمساعدة ChatGPT في تعزيز التعلم الذاتي في التعليم العالي الفلسطيني. مؤكداً لكم بأن كافة المعلومات التي سوف يتم جمعها هي لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط، وسوف يتم الحفاظ على السرية التامة وعدم استخدام هذه المعلومات لأغراض أخرى.

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم

مع وافر الاحترام ،،،

د. فادي حسونة

عميد كلية الدراسات العليا



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Appendix (D)

Permission from An-Najah National University

An-Najah
National University
Faculty of Graduate Studies



جامعة
النجاح الوطنية
كلية الدراسات العليا

التاريخ : 2024/08/29م

حضرة الدكتور عبدالسلام الخياط المحترم
نائب الرئيس للشؤون الأكاديمية

تحية طيبة وبعد،،،

**الموضوع: تسهيل مهمة الطالبة / اية نضال فالح الاطرش . رقم التسجيل (12154592)
تخصص ماجستير أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية.**

نهديكم أطيب التحيات ونعلمكم بأن الطالبة اية نضال فالح الاطرش هي طالبة دراسات عليا في برنامج ماجستير أساليب تدريس اللغة الانجليزية وهي بصدد اعداد الاطروحة الخاصة بها والتي هي بعنوان:

" استكشاف تصورات طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول دور التعلم الشخصي بمساعدة ChatGPT في تعزيز التعلم الذاتي في التعليم العالي الفلسطيني "

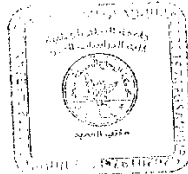
يرجى من حضرتكم تسهيل مهمة الطالبة ، حيث تحتاج الطالبة الى توزيع استبيان (الالكتروني) على طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها وقسم أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة النجاح الوطنية، وذلك لجمع معلومات حول تصورات طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول دور التعلم الشخصي بمساعدة ChatGPT في تعزيز التعلم الذاتي في التعليم العالي الفلسطيني. مؤكداً لكم بأن كافة المعلومات التي سوف يتم جمعها هي لأغراض البحث العلمي فقط، وسوف يتم الحفاظ على السرية التامة وعدم استخدام هذه المعلومات لأغراض أخرى.

شاكرين لكم حسن تعاونكم

مع وافر الاحترام ،،،

د. فادي حسونة

عميد كلية الدراسات العليا



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Appendix (E)

Tables

Table (11)

Independent two-sample t-test result of the perspectives of EFL students on the role of ChatGPT in enhancing self-directed learning due to university

Domain	Category	N	Mean	S. D	t	Sig.*
General information	An-Najah National University	173	3.8596	0.46654	-0.104	0.917
	Al-Quds Open University	175	3.8649	0.48047		
ChatGPT & Self-directed Learning	An-Najah National University	173	3.6763	0.51843	0.230	0.818
	Al-Quds Open University	175	3.6636	0.50962		
Integration with Traditional Learning	An-Najah National University	173	3.7299	0.55388	-0.752	0.453
	Al-Quds Open University	175	3.7756	0.57922		
Total degree	An-Najah National University	173	3.7553	0.46655	-0.253	0.800
	Al-Quds Open University	175	3.7680	0.47455		

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.



جامعة النجاح الوطنية
كلية الدراسات العليا

استكشاف تصورات طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية
حول دور التعلم الذاتي في التعليم العالي الفلسطيني
بمساعدة التعليم الشخصي ChatGPT

إعداد
آية نضال فالح الأطرش

إشراف
د. خالد دويكات

قدمت هذه الرسالة استكمالاً لمتطلبات درجة الماجستير في أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية الدراسات العليا في جامعة النجاح الوطنية في نابلس، فلسطين.

2024

استكشاف تصورات طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول دور التعلم الذاتي في التعليم العالي الفلسطيني بمساعدة التعليم الشخصي ChatGPT

إعداد

آية نضال فالح الأطرش

إشراف

د. خالد دويكات

المُلخَص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء وجهات نظر طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية حول دور التعلم الذاتي بمساعدة الشات جي بي تي في تعزيز التعلم الموجّه ذاتيًا في جامعتين فلسطينيتين، وهما جامعة النجاح الوطنية وجامعة القدس المفتوحة. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، استخدمت الباحثة هيكلًا بحثيًا متعدد المقاربات، حيث تمّ جمع البيانات من خلال أدوات الدراسة، وهي عبارة عن مقابلات واستبانة من عينة من طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وفقًا للمتغيرات الديموغرافية مثل الجنس والمستوى الأكاديمي والجامعة. تمّ استخدام منهج وصفي تحليلي من خلال توظيف الاستبيان كأداة للدراسة، وتمّ تحليله باستخدام برنامج التحليل الإحصائي (SPSS V.23). تكونت عينة الدراسة من (348) طالبًا تمّ اختيارهم بالطريقة العشوائية الطبقيّة. وقد كشف التحليل الكمي عن وجهات نظر إيجابية بشكلٍ عام لفعالية الشات جي بي تي في تعزيز التعلم الموجّه ذاتيًا. أظهرت نتائج الاستبيان استجابةً عاليةً للدرجة الإجمالية للسؤال الرئيسي. إضافةً إلى ذلك، لا توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية تُعزى إلى متغيرات المستوى الأكاديمي والجامعة، بينما توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بسبب متغير الجنس لصالح الذكور. وأكّدت البيانات النوعية كذلك على إمكاناتها كأداة تكميليّة، حيث أنّها توفّر للمُتعلمين طرقًا لتوجيه التعلم الأكاديمي بشكلٍ أكثر كفاءة. وشدّدت الدراسة أيضًا على الحاجة إلى توجيه المعلمين لضمان الاستخدام المتوازن. بشكلٍ عام، يُنظر إلى الشات جي بي تي على أنه فائدة قيّمة في العملية التعليميّة، على الرغم من أنّ نجاحه يعتمد على التكامل المدروس مع طرق التدريس

التقليديّة. أوصت الدراسةُ بشكلٍ عام بضرورة رفع مستوى الوعي بوجهاتِ النظر حول تأثير التعلم المستقل بمساعدة الشات جي بي تي في تعزيز التعلُّم الموجّه ذاتيًا والدراسات الجذريّة في هذا المجال.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذكاء الاصطناعي في التعليم؛ شات جي بي تي؛ التعلم المستقل؛ التعلم الموجّه ذاتيًا؛ طلاب اللغة الإنجليزيّة كلغة أجنبيّة.