



Are Japanese University EFL Classrooms Ready for ChatGPT? Advantages Disadvantages, and Considerations

Dr. Andrew Enomoto

Bunkyo University, Tokyo, Japan
Email: aenomoto@bunkyo.ac.jp

Abstract- Dr. Andrew Enomoto from the faculty of International Studies at Bunkyo University in Tokyo Japan is submitting his academic paper entitled “Are Japanese University EFL Classrooms Ready for ChatGPT? Advantages, Disadvantages, and Considerations. This literature review looks at the research concerning the use of ChatGPT in the EFL Japanese University classroom setting. With the release of ChatGPT in 2022, classrooms in every academic department have been affected in one way or another by ChatGPT or other AI technologies. Many tout its advantages of 24/7 availability for students, tailored conversational options, increased reading and writing practice, immediate feedback possibilities, and the lightening of current teacher workloads, there are also an array of disadvantages and concerns that academics as well as students have. These include but are not limited to data privacy, reliability of correctness and cultural appropriation, and other ethics qualms. The author then talks about its possible usage in specifically the Japanese EFL university classroom setting and what considerations should be made based on the research thus far.

Keywords: ChatGPT, AI, EFL, Japanese Universities, Pros and Cons.

I. Introduction

Having emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, universities and educational institutions globally continue to leverage technological innovations in their teaching and learning experiences. These innovations have become pivotal not only in Japan but also around the world across various educational environments. Chat Generative Pretrained Transformer(ChatGPT) and other AI platforms have emerged as some of the most utilized technological innovations in education. ChatGPT, a natural language processing tool developed by OpenAI and launched in 2022, has garnered significant attention in the field of language teaching, particularly for its ability to generate human-like responses that are contextually appropriate and grammatically correct. In just 2 years, many have commended its ability to assist language learners, although critics warn of its several drawbacks.

In the Japanese university EFL classroom, AI and translation software have faced criticism for limiting students’ critical thinking ability regarding language concepts, diminishing their social skills, and raising ethical concerns regarding the lack of human connection. Despite over 7 years of formal English education, Japanese EFL university students often perform poorly on English communication exams (Bonk &Ockey, 2003; Ockey, 2009, 2011).

This literature review will examine the advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT in the Japanese university EFL context as well as the considerations that must be made to enhance genuine learning experiences.

ChatGPT, created by OpenAI and released in 2022, is an artificial intelligence language model specifically designed to create text and content that closely resemble human language (Adiguzel et al., 2023; Fulgencio, 2024). It can create images, answer questions, solve problems, plan events, and even write essays. The academic world has been significantly impacted by this technological advance, as many educators and institutions are still figuring out how to navigate it.

While there are numerous educational opportunities presented by AI in education, there are also abundant possibilities for cheating and other unethical behaviors. In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT)—particularly in speaking classrooms—ChatGPT may provide students with authentic conversation practice, allowing them to interact with the app to improve their English language skills. It can facilitate dynamic discussions tailored to students’ abilities, offering immediate feedback (Abd-Alzaraq et al., 2023). For Japanese students who eschew making mistakes in front of others, ChatGPT could be an especially valuable tool that enables them to practice speaking and learn English at their own pace without fear of embarrassment.



Although research on ChatGPT remains limited due to its relatively recent release, numerous articles and studies have emphasized its potential to enhance multiple language skills and improve learning outcomes (Grassini, 2023). Notably, students have shown marked improvements in both speaking fluency and self-confidence.

AI and other forms of smart technology in the Japanese EFL university classroom are largely centered around the practice of “kopiye,” in which students rely on translation software to translate Japanese to English and before copying and pasting the texts into their assignments. Several Japanese university English classrooms still rely heavily on rote memorization and testing. While there has been a shift toward more communicative skills, the reality is that most Japanese university English classrooms still lack instructional effective communication skills. According to Tracker (2020), Japanese students frequently use synchronous translation software to complete assignments. A study by Jordan (2010) revealed that over 50% of Japanese students admitted to using these apps and other technologies to assist with their assignments. However, the use of ChatGPT for communicative learning is less common, as it is challenging to assess. Moreover, its use can be monitored in real time by a human teacher. The integration of AI and ChatGPT in the Japanese university classroom has largely been limited to the copy-and-paste method for writing and essay assignments, necessitating careful thought and planning to ensure that its use leads to positive learning outcomes.

II. Advantages of ChatGPT

According to Songsingchai (2023), ChatGPT offers four primary advantages in conversational EFL classes. The first is enhanced learning motivation. Students feel empowered when they can effectively use ChatGPT to produce the answers they seek, which in turn boosts their confidence and motivation to practice with the technology. The second advantage is improved reading and writing skills. Since ChatGPT provides simultaneous written responses, students gain reading practice while interacting with the application. Furthermore, learners can enhance their learning abilities by composing inputs, enabling them to practice sentence construction and written communication. The third advantage is additional support, which may come in the form of immediate feedback from the app. Students can identify mistakes when ChatGPT corrects their grammar or expressions. For many Japanese students who often experience anxiety about making mistakes in front of their teacher, this could be a helpful way to practice their conversational skills until they gain the confidence to speak with a human. The final advantage pertains to educators. ChatGPT can enhance teaching practices. Educators may use ChatGPT to tailor assignments and curricula to meet students’ needs, allowing them to spend more time engaging meaningfully with students rather than on curriculum planning and grading.

In his study, Songsingchai (2023) found that students who actively engaged with ChatGPT to practice English conversation experienced a 20% increase in vocabulary, a 20% improvement in grammar, an 18% gain in reading comprehension, and a 22% increase in conversational fluency compared to those who did not use the tool.

The next four sections of this educational note will explore these advantages within the context of the Japanese EFL university classroom.

III. Motivation

According to Zhou and Li (2023), ChatGPT can significantly impact the motivation of university students. Their research, which was based on the self-determination theory, identified three integral aspects related to motivation: tension–pressure, perceived competence, and perceived value. Self-determination theory posits that three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—are essential for enhancing the intrinsic motivation of students (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy relates to self-initiated and selective behavior, competence pertains to feeling confident in performing tasks, while relatedness concerns the emotional support students receive or provide.

In their study, Zhou and Li (2023) examined 120 Chinese university students from various majors. The students participated in a comprehensive ChatGPT training session to ensure effective interaction with the AI platform. Questionnaires assessing the learning and motivation of students



who underwent the training compared to those who did not yielded a 73% positive correlation between motivation and ChatGPT use. Students who experienced greater pressure reported reduced motivation, while those with a higher sense of perceived competence reported positive effects on their motivation. Students reported using ChatGPT for less than 60 minutes a week and perceived high value in that time, further enhancing their motivation. Zhou and Li (2023) emphasized that effectively using ChatGPT as a learning tool requires students to demonstrate a high degree of competence, meaning that they must know how to interact with the tool and what prompts to provide to obtain the desired responses. Students who reported positive learning outcomes had to carefully analyze and evaluate the AI's responses to ensure their reliability and applicability. If an answer was deemed unsuitable, students had to reword or rephrase their prompts to elicit better responses. Thus, while ChatGPT has the potential to increase motivation, it heavily relies on the perceived competence students have in interacting with the app. If students lack this competence, they risk becoming frustrated.

In the Japanese EFL university classroom, students reported using translation devices and other AI tools for about 50% of their English assignments (Jordan, 2010). Moreover, following the COVID-19 pandemic, many Japanese universities opted to implement optional English test bank technologies into their curricula. However, due to the novelty of ChatGPT, a vast majority of Japanese EFL classrooms do not yet utilize it for conversational practice.

IV. Increases in Reading and Writing Skills

The integration of ChatGPT in EFL classrooms in Japan has the potential to improve digital literacy as well as reading and writing skills. Since ChatGPT utilizes a speech-to-text function, what the learner says to the device is displayed on the screen. ChatGPT then responds with spoken and written answers. This interaction not only supports the development of listening and speaking skills but also improves reading and writing skills. A study conducted by Athanassopoulos et al. (2023) examined the effectiveness of ChatGPT as a writing tool for foreign language learners. The study, which was conducted on eight 15-year-old students learning German in Greece, showed that not only did the participants experience improvements in their vocabulary acquisition but that their sentence length and grammatical accuracy also significantly improved.

Japanese university students who have typically completed 7 years of English courses before entering university still regularly score low on international English tests. However, introducing ChatGPT into classrooms—particularly for lower-level students—could improve their reading and writing scores.

V. Support and Feedback

Another advantage of ChatGPT in the EFL classroom is its ability to provide immediate feedback. By analyzing patterns and trends, ChatGPT offers educators valuable insights into student performance (Amin, 2023). According to Crawford et al. (2018), AI can identify when students struggle with specific skills or topics and provide personalized feedback to teachers, who can then intervene and assist the students. Assessments and evaluations using AI are becoming increasingly common, which can help alleviate teacher workload. Immediate feedback also allows students to recognize their mistakes in real-time (Barrot, 2023). In the context of Japanese university EFL classrooms, immediate feedback systems like ChatGPT could benefit students who experience difficulty with grammar patterns such as articles and plural forms. Additionally, Japanese students can privately engage with the technology, reducing feelings of embarrassment or pressure that may arise from real-world interactions.

VI. Enhanced Teaching Practices

Another benefit of ChatGPT is the fact that it enables teachers to create personalized teaching materials tailored to the specific needs of their students. This not only reduces teachers' workloads but also facilitates real-time feedback and individualized training from a vast knowledge base, offering a cost-effective learning experience (Mohammed, 2023). According to Kavak et al. (2024), curriculum developers can design learning tasks that leverage the potentials of ChatGPT.



Although these results are promising, there is a large group of critics who caution against its over usage and replacement for real teacher–student interactions. Teacher training programs are essential for a successful integration of ChatGPT into language learning. Additionally, collaborations between educational institutions and AI software developers can help create tailored algorithms and programs to enhance student learning and interaction with AI (Songsingchai, 2023).

For many Japanese university teachers, ChatGPT could alleviate the burden of overwork. Many educators report spending less time teaching and more time on curriculum planning and grading. According to Ryall (2023), teachers in Japan work an average of 54 hours per week, compared to an OECD average of 38 hours in other countries. Thus, one could argue that ChatGPT and its curriculum planning capabilities could help ease the burden faced by Japanese teachers, not only in the university EFL environment but also in other fields.

VII. Disadvantages

Like many other AI applications and technologies used in university classrooms, one of the primary dilemmas concerns the accuracy of the content provided (Rosmayanti, 2024). While many of the responses generated by ChatGPT are sophisticated, there are instances where illogical or incorrect replies are generated. Additionally, concerns arise regarding the tool's ability to detect and respond to cultural subtleties, which are crucial for mastering a second language. Scholars have noted that ChatGPT may lack the intricacy and cultural nuances that human teachers possess, potentially leading to misunderstandings (Teng, 2024; Vasiljevic, 2024). A notable example is the inability of ChatGPT to use idiomatic expressions and other pragmatic linguistic features such as jokes.

According to Rahman and Watanabe 2023, students using ChatGPT may inadvertently learn culturally inappropriate terms due to inaccuracies in its responses. Language acquisition involves not simply learning grammar and vocabulary but also understanding the cultural contexts and semantics that accompany them. This is especially true for Japanese EFL university classrooms, where stark differences exist between English and Japanese communication styles. Furthermore, ChatGPT lacks the emotional intelligence that a teacher may possess to support students outside of the classroom. One of the most controversial disadvantages of ChatGPT use in EFL classrooms relates to the concerns regarding data privacy. It is imperative to protect the data of both students and teachers and to implement robust data protection measures (Gharbi et al., 2024). When students interact with ChatGPT, their personal information, learning behaviors, and aptitudes are collected. The storage and utilization of these data require careful consideration and protection.

Other scholars have raised concerns about the use of AI for surveillance, profiling, and targeted advertising by AI companies (Amin, 2023). Additionally, not all students may have access to the internet or devices capable of supporting ChatGPT. In Japanese EFL classrooms, where there are strict laws regarding the use of personal data and educational institutions for commercial purposes, these issues present significant disadvantages that must be thoroughly investigated.

Finally—and perhaps most crucially—the use of ChatGPT in the EFL classroom risks diminishing human interaction. ChatGPT cannot replace the essential role they play in providing not only knowledge but also emotional support and fostering positive learning environments. According to Sun and Gao (2021), AI currently lacks the capability to address the emotional or psychological needs of students.

In Japanese university EFL classrooms, many students attend classes specifically to interact with foreign teachers. This interaction not only teaches them cross-cultural communication skills but also provides opportunities to converse with people from countries they may never have visited. The intrinsic value of human interactions in Japanese university EFL classrooms cannot be overstated.

VIII. Considerations

With advancements in technology and the growing integration of AI into EFL classes in Japan and around the world, the eventual use of ChatGPT in Japanese university EFL classes is merely a matter of time. Many Japanese university EFL classes have already adopted online curricula in the form of test banks and other apps. Some have even incorporated these into their formal curriculum, awarding bonus points or a portion of their final grade based on the results of these self-study online applications.



As discussed earlier in this literature review, the benefits to using ChatGPT in the EFL classroom include its 24/7 availability for students, tailored conversational options, increased reading and writing practice, immediate feedback possibilities, reduced teacher workloads, and cost effectiveness for schools. Nevertheless, research has also highlighted several disadvantages of AI use such as data privacy issues, equity and access for all students, ensuring that answers are accurate and contextually appropriate, as well as the loss of human contact with peers and teachers.

In light of these considerations, four recommendations should guide educational institutions when integrating ChatGPT into Japanese university EFL classrooms.

First, ChatGPT be used for conversation practice primarily with lower-level learners. Young and Shishido conducted a study to investigate which target audience would benefit most from dialogue materials produced by ChatGPT. Using multiple metrics, the researchers determined that elementary students at the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) A2 level would benefit the most. However, students at the intermediate B1 level also showed benefits and were able to harness much of the learning potential. Therefore, when choosing how to implement ChatGPT in the Japanese university EFL classroom, research indicates that lower-level students stand to gain the most.

The second consideration involves ensuring that students are well-educated on the correct use of ChatGPT. Zhou (2023) states that positive learning outcomes and motivation are contingent upon students feeling confident in their interactions with ChatGPT. When students feel empowered and can navigate the app to obtain their desired responses, they report a much higher degree of satisfaction and motivation. Thus, it is essential for Japanese universities and educational institutions to implement ChatGPT training programs prior to its usage, teaching learners how to input prompts and interact with the technology effectively to achieve the best and most accurate responses.

To protect students' interests and personal data, schools must carefully consider how and when to integrate ChatGPT into their curricula. It is also imperative that AI companies adhere to data protection legislation worldwide (Popescu, 2023). In Japan, which has strict data privacy laws, universities must ensure that students' data and information are protected and not exploited for financial gain.

The last consideration addresses the loss of human interactions. Amin (2023) argues that teachers must assume the role of facilitator in addition to that of teacher when incorporating ChatGPT into the classroom. They will need to balance technology with human interaction and the importance of developing digital literacy skills. Teachers will no longer merely provide knowledge and experience; they will also guide and support students in navigating their learning with technology. They must help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, encouraging them to explore topics and conduct research with their own understanding of the subject matter. Rosmayanti (2024) also states that the optimal utilization of ChatGPT involves adopting a model where ChatGPT supplements and complements the original curriculum developed by the teacher, rather than becoming the focal point. For Japanese university EFL classrooms, this strategy would enable teachers to leverage technology to reduce their workload while still maintaining their role as educational leaders and facilitator in the classroom.

IX. Conclusion

Within the short time since its release, ChatGPT has generated considerable controversy in the educational world. Universities and classrooms globally have had to consider how to address this new technology. This literature review has summarized some of the benefits of ChatGPT in a university EFL classroom context. Many authors have commended its advantages and argue that ChatGPT and other AI applications will shape the future of language training (Kavak et al., 2024). From personalized curriculum possibilities and 24/7 availability, immediate feedback potential and reduced teacher workloads, ChatGPT is proving to be a powerful tool for many educational institutions and learners worldwide. However, its use has also faced fierce opposition regarding ethical concerns and the reduction of human interaction, as well as critical thinking skills (Yu, 2023).

This literature review has also shown that ChatGPT cannot provide contextually and emotionally nuanced responses, which are essential for language acquisition. The issues surrounding data privacy and the potential exploitation of learners' data for commercial purposes still exist in Japanese university EFL classrooms; hence, utilizing ChatGPT as a supplemental tool for lower-level learners may hold great promise. One thing is certain: as technology continues to evolve, teachers in EFL



classrooms and across all fields will need to learn how to interact with it to create positive learning outcomes.

References

1. Abd-Alrazaq, A., AlSaad, R., Alhuwail, D., Ahmed, A., Healy, P. M., Latifi, S., Aziz, S., Damseh, R., Alrazak, S. A., & Sheikh, J. (2023). Large language models in medical education: opportunities, challenges, and future directions. *JMIR Medical Education*, 9(1), e48291.
2. Adigüzel, T., Kaya, M. H., & Cansu, F. K. (2023). Revolutionizing education with AI: Exploring the transformative potential of ChatGPT. *Contemporary Educational Technology*.
3. Amin, M. Y. M. (2023). AI and Chat GPT in Language Teaching: Enhancing EFL Classroom Support and Transforming Assessment Techniques. *International Journal of Higher Education Pedagogies*, 4(4), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.33422/ijhep.v4i4.554>
4. Athanassopoulos, S., Manoli, P., Gouvi, M., Lavidas, K., et al. The use of chatgpt as a learning tool to improve foreign language writing in a multilingual and multicultural classroom. *Advances in Mobile Learning Educational Research*. 2023;3(2):818–24. doi:10.25082/amler.2023.02.009
5. Barrot, J. S., Llenares, I. I., & del Rosario, L. S. (2021). Students' online learning challenges during the pandemic and how they cope with them: The case of the Philippines. *Education and Information Technologies*, 26(6), 7321–7338. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10589-x>
6. Bonk, W.J., & Ockey, G.J. (2003). A many-facet Rasch analysis of the second language group oral discussion task. *Language Testing*, 20, 89-110.
7. Crawford, A.V., De La Cruz, A., Kinslow, N., Kalin, D., Gore, J. (2018). Educational data mining and learning analytics: Applications to constructionist research. In *Constructionist theory of education* (pp. 3-18). Springer
8. Crawford, J., Allen, K. A., Pani, B., & Cowling, M. (2024). When artificial intelligence substitutes humans in higher education: the cost of loneliness, student success, and retention. *Studies in Higher Education*, 49(5), 883–897. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2024.2326956>
9. Gharbi, M., TaibMohtadi, M., & Fal Merkazi, A. (2024). Revolutionizing Moocs with fine-tuned Chatgpt: Personalized Learning At Scale. *International Journal of Computing and Digital Systems*, 16(1), 1–11.
10. Hatmanto, E. D., & Sari, M. I. (2023). Aligning theory and practice: Leveraging Chat GPT for effective English language teaching and learning. In *E3S Web of Conferences* (Vol. 440, p. 05001). EDP Sciences.
11. Jordan, A. E. (2001). College Student Cheating: The Role of motivation, perceived norms, attitudes, and knowledge of institutional policy. *Ethics & Behavior*, 11(3), 233-247.
12. Kavak, V. İ., Evis, D., & Ekinci, A. (2024). The use of ChatGPT in language education. *Experimental and Applied Medical Science*, 5(2), 72-82.
13. Mohammed, A.M., (2023). Exploring the potential of an AI-based chatbot (ChatGPT) in enhancing English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching: Perceptions of EFL faculty members. *Education and Information Technologies*. 2023. 29(3):3195-217.
14. Ockey, G. J. (2009). The effects of group members' personalities on a test taker's L2 group oral discussion test scores. *Language Testing*, 26, 161-186.
15. Ockey, G. J. (2011). Self-consciousness and assertiveness as explanatory variables of L2 oral ability: A latent variable approach. *Language Testing*, 61, 968-989.
16. Rahman, M. M., & Watanabe, Y. (2023). ChatGPT for education and research: Opportunities, threats, and strategies. *Applied Sciences*, 13(9), 5783.
17. Rosmayanti, V. (2024). Embracing AI: Chat gpt in english language teaching. *AI-Generated Technologies in ELT: Potentials, Risks, and Ethical Issues*, 146.
18. Ryall, J. (2023, April 27). Japanese shun teaching as educators are underpaid and at risk of 'working to death'. South China Morning Post. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/people/article/3218462/japanese-shun-teaching-educators-are-underpaid-and-risk-working-death>
19. Songsiangchai, S., Sereerat, B. O., & Watananimitgul, W. (2023). Leveraging artificial intelligence (AI): Chat GPT for effective English language learning among Thai students. *English Language Teaching*, 16(11), 68-79.
20. Tacker, J. (2020). Cheating with Smartphones in Japanese EFL classes. *The 40th Thailand Tesol Conference Proceedings 2020*, 40, 9-19.
21. Teng, M.F. (2024). "ChatGPT is the comparison, not enemies": EFL learners' perceptions and experiences in using ChatGPT for feedback in writing. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 100270.
22. Vasilijevic, Z. (2024). Integrating ChatGPT in foreign language education, *INTED 2024 Proceedings*, 1607 – 1611.
23. Xiao, Y., Zhi, Y. An Exploratory Study of EFL Learners' Use of ChatGPT for Language Learning Tasks: Experience and Perceptions. *Languages*. 2023; 8(3):212. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8030212>



24. Young, J.C., Shishido, M. Investigating OpenAI's CHATGPT potentials in generating Chatbot's dialogue for English as a foreign language learning. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*. 2023;14(6). doi:10.14569/ijacsa.2023.0140607
25. Yu, H. (2023). Reflection on whether Chat GPT should be banned by academia from the perspective of education and teaching. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1181712.
26. Zhou, L., Li, J. J. (2023). The Impact of ChatGPT on Learning Motivation: A Study Based on Self-Determination Theory. *Educ. Sci. Manag.*, 1(1), 19-29. <https://doi.org/10.56578/esm010103>

Author's Biography



Dr. Andrew Enomoto was born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii. He went to the University of Washington in Seattle and obtained a double degree in International Studies and Japanese Linguistics. He then got his Master's degree in TESOL from Columbia University in New York City. Finally he got his Ed.D from Northeastern University in Boston. He currently is a tenured lecturer at Bunkyo University in Tokyo, Japan. He teaches mainly English classes. His research interests include education and technology, as well as second language acquisition.