



## Sirte EFL Preparatory English Teachers' Views on Students' Use of ChatGPT for Completing English Homework

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### Abstract

This study examines the impact of Chat GPT as part of AI in education on English homework practices in the EFL context of preparatory schools in Sirte, Libya. It explores preparatory teachers' perspectives on students' increasing reliance on Chat GPT for completing assignments. Grounded in social constructivism and cognitive load theory, the study explains the tension between technological support and reduced learner effort. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six experienced teachers. The findings reveal mixed attitudes: while Chat GPT offers valuable language support, teachers expressed concern that overuse weakens critical thinking and encourages cognitive laziness, particularly in writing tasks. The results also highlight a gap between students' technological skills and schools' readiness to manage AI use. The study recommends redesigning homework, strengthening classroom-based assessment, and providing AI literacy training to ensure that AI supports learning rather than replacing students' own efforts.

### Keywords

Chat GPT, AI in education, EFL, preparatory teachers, critical thinking,

آراء معلمي سرت للغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الإعدادية حول استخدام الطلبة لبرنامج ChatGPT في أداء واجبات اللغة الإنجليزية.

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### الكلمات المفتاحية:

تطبيق *Chat GPT*، الذكاء الاصطناعي في التعليم، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، معلوم المرحلة الإعدادية، سرت، التفكير النقدي، البناء الاجتماعي، العبء المعرفي.

### الملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تقصي أثر استخدام Chat GPT بوصفه أحد تطبيقات الذكاء الاصطناعي في التعليم في إنجاز الواجبات المنزلية ضمن سياق تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مدارس مرحلة التعليم الإعدادي بمدينة سرت. كما سعت إلى استكشاف تصورات معلمي المرحلة الإعدادية تجاه توظيف التلاميذ لهذه الأداة في ظل تنامي الاعتماد عليها في التعليم. واعتمدت الدراسة على إطارَي البناء الاجتماعي ونظرية العبء المعرفي لتفسير العلاقة بين ما يقدمه الذكاء الاصطناعي من دعم تعليمي وبين احتمالية تراجع الجهد المعرفي المبذول من التلاميذ. وتم توظيف المنهج الوصفي النوعي من خلال إجراء مقابلات مع ستة معلمين ذوي خبرة. وأظهرت النتائج تبايناً في آراء المشاركين؛ إذ أقرّوا بفوائد تطبيق Chat GPT في دعم تعلم اللغة، إلا أنهم عبّروا عن مخاوف تتعلق بالإفراط في استخدامه وما يترتب عليه من إضعاف التفكير النقدي وتراجع تنمية مهارات الكتابة لدى التلاميذ. وأوصت الدراسة بضرورة إعادة تصميم الواجبات المنزلية، وتعزيز أساليب التقييم الصفّي، وتوفير برامج تدريبية في الوعي بالذكاء الاصطناعي، بما يضمن توظيفه كأداة داعمة للتعليم لا بديلاً عن جهد التلاميذ.

### Introduction

The rapid development of digital technologies has begun to reshape many aspects of education. Among the most influential developments in recent years is the emergence of artificial intelligence–based language tools that are capable of generating extended written responses, explanations, and examples in natural language. Applications such as ChatGPT are increasingly accessible to students and are now commonly used to support academic tasks, including homework and writing assignments. Their ability to produce coherent text, explain complex concepts, and offer linguistic suggestions presents new possibilities for language learning, while at the same time raising important pedagogical questions (Adeshola & Adepoju, 2024; Lo, 2023).

Within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, such tools can offer immediate assistance to learners. Students may use them to clarify grammatical structures, expand vocabulary, and generate ideas before beginning a piece of writing. Research has shown that AI-based language tools can provide immediate feedback and linguistic scaffolding that may enhance students' writing performance, particularly for learners with limited language proficiency (Nguyen et al., 2023; Lo, 2023). These forms of assistance can potentially support learners who struggle with language production and who require additional guidance outside the classroom. However, the increasing availability of automated writing tools also raises concerns regarding students' cognitive engagement in the learning

process. Studies indicate that excessive reliance on AI-generated responses may reduce opportunities for active problem-solving, critical reflection, and independent revision, all of which are essential for language development (Lee & Park, 2024; Mutammimah, 2024). From the perspective of cognitive load theory, while such tools may reduce extraneous cognitive load by simplifying complex tasks, overdependence may also decrease germane cognitive effort, limiting the deeper processing necessary for meaningful learning and long-term language acquisition (Sweller, 1988).

These concerns are particularly relevant at the preparatory stage of schooling in Libya, where students are expected to consolidate foundational linguistic competencies that support later academic development. At this educational level, homework assignments play an important role in reinforcing classroom instruction, promoting independent practice, and strengthening language retention beyond the classroom environment (Vygotsky, 1978). However, recent studies suggest that when students rely extensively on automated responses to complete assignments, the pedagogical value of homework may be diminished, as opportunities for active cognitive engagement and independent language production are reduced (Lee & Park, 2024; Mutammimah, 2024). This overreliance may also create challenges for teachers in accurately evaluating students' genuine language abilities and monitoring authentic progress in writing development (Lo, 2023; Adeshola & Adepoju, 2024).

Sirte, a coastal city in central Libya, offers a meaningful educational context in which to explore these emerging issues. Preparatory schools in the city, including Al-Majd, Al-Yarmouk, Al-Suqour, Al-Qardabiya, and Sirte Central, have reported increasing student reliance on digital language tools when completing English homework. Despite these developments, there remains limited empirical research examining how English teachers perceive this phenomenon and how they believe it influences students' learning processes. Understanding teachers' perspectives is particularly important because they are directly responsible for designing assignments, monitoring student progress, and adapting classroom practices to changing educational realities.

This study therefore investigates preparatory English teachers' views on students' use of ChatGPT when completing English homework in

Sirte. It aims to explore how teachers interpret the educational implications of this practice and to identify the strategies they propose for managing and integrating such tools within the homework process. By providing insight into teachers' experiences in a specific Libyan context, the study contributes to the growing discussion on artificial intelligence in education and offers practical considerations for schools and policymakers.

### **Research Problem**

Based on our experiences as EFL teachers, it has been observed that despite the increasing use of artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT among students, there is growing concern regarding their influence on learning processes, particularly in EFL contexts. Recent studies indicate that while AI-based writing tools can provide valuable linguistic support, their misuse may reduce students' cognitive engagement and weaken opportunities for independent language production and critical thinking development (Lo, 2023; Mutammimah, 2024). In preparatory schools in Sirte, students increasingly appear to rely on ChatGPT to complete English homework assignments. Such dependence may limit authentic writing development and create challenges for teachers attempting to accurately assess students' actual language proficiency and progress (Lee & Park, 2024; Adeshola & Adepoju, 2024). Furthermore, despite growing international research on AI integration in education, there remains limited empirical evidence within the Libyan educational context examining teachers' perspectives on this issue and its implications for classroom practices. This gap highlights the need to investigate how preparatory English teachers perceive students' use of ChatGPT and how this practice may influence learning and assessment in EFL settings.

### **Research Aims**

This study aims to:

1. Examine preparatory English teachers' perspectives on students' use of ChatGPT for completing English homework.
2. Investigate the perceived impact of ChatGPT use on students' learning processes, particularly writing development and cognitive engagement.

### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do preparatory English teachers perceive students' use of ChatGPT for completing English homework?
2. What are the perceived effects of ChatGPT use on students' writing development and cognitive engagement?

### **Literature Review**

The integration of artificial intelligence technologies into educational environments has become an increasingly visible phenomenon in recent years. Artificial intelligence broadly refers to computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human cognitive abilities, including reasoning, learning, and language processing. One of the most recent developments in this field is generative artificial intelligence, which can produce new content in response to written prompts. Language-based systems such as ChatGPT are capable of generating extended written responses, answering questions, summarising information, and producing text that closely resembles human writing through advanced natural language processing and large-scale machine learning models (Lo, 2023; Adeshola & Adepoju, 2024).

In educational settings, such tools have quickly attracted attention for their potential to support learning. Students may use them to obtain explanations, review grammatical rules, generate examples, or receive assistance when composing written work. In the field of EFL education in particular, these tools may serve as supplementary resources that provide immediate feedback and linguistic support outside classroom hours. For learners who struggle with vocabulary selection or sentence formation, such assistance may help reduce frustration and increase confidence when completing writing tasks.

At the same time, the growing availability of automated writing tools has raised questions concerning academic integrity and the nature of learning itself. Several scholars have expressed concern that students may use these systems to generate entire assignments rather than engaging with the intellectual processes required to produce original work. When learners depend excessively on automated outputs, the cognitive effort associated with analysing information, organising ideas, and revising drafts may be diminished. This has led some researchers to question whether the widespread use of such tools might weaken the

development of independent thinking and writing skills (Lee & Park, 2024; Mutammimah, 2024).

The educational implications of these tools can be examined through theoretical perspectives on learning and cognition. From a social constructivist standpoint, learning is understood as a process that develops through interaction with others and through engagement with cultural tools. According to Vygotsky (1978), learners progress by working within the Zone of Proximal Development, where guidance from more knowledgeable individuals or mediating tools supports the transition from assisted performance to independent competence. Digital language tools may function as a form of scaffolding by offering explanations, examples, and suggestions that assist learners in completing tasks they might otherwise find difficult. However, social constructivist theory also emphasises the importance of meaningful interaction and dialogue in the learning process. If learners substitute interaction with teachers and peers with automated responses, the social dimension of knowledge construction may become limited. Instead of negotiating meaning, asking questions, and reflecting on feedback, students may simply reproduce generated content without deeper engagement.

Another relevant perspective is offered by cognitive load theory, which focuses on the mental effort required to process information in working memory (Sweller, 1988). According to this theory, learning tasks involve different types of cognitive load: intrinsic load related to task complexity, extraneous load associated with poor instructional design, and germane load, which refers to the effort devoted to constructing and refining knowledge structures. Educational tools can support learning when they reduce unnecessary cognitive burden while still encouraging productive mental effort. In principle, automated explanations or examples may help reduce extraneous load by clarifying complex material. However, if learners rely on these tools to avoid engaging with challenging tasks, the germane cognitive effort necessary for meaningful learning may also be reduced.

Empirical research on the use of automated language tools in EFL contexts presents mixed findings. Some studies report that such systems can help learners improve aspects of writing, including grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, and organisation, particularly for students with limited proficiency (Nguyen et al., 2023). Others highlight

teachers' concerns that these tools may encourage superficial engagement with tasks and make it difficult to determine whether submitted work genuinely reflects students' abilities (Lee & Park, 2024).

In the Middle Eastern and North African region, research on this topic remains relatively limited. Educational systems in many countries within the region continue to rely heavily on homework assignments and written assessments. As a result, the increasing availability of automated writing tools raises new challenges for teachers who must evaluate students' progress and maintain academic standards. Scholars have therefore emphasised the need for context-specific studies that explore how teachers perceive these technologies and how educational institutions can respond to their growing use (Hassan & Al-Saleh, 2024).

Despite the rapid spread of digital language tools among students, little empirical research has examined their use within Libyan schools. In particular, there is limited evidence concerning teachers' experiences and perceptions at the preparatory level, where foundational language skills are developed. Exploring teachers' views in this context can provide valuable insights into how technological change is influencing classroom practices and how educators may adapt their approaches to homework and assessment.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' perspectives regarding students' use of ChatGPT. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows for the exploration of participants' experiences, beliefs, and interpretations in a natural educational context. The descriptive nature of the design enabled the researcher to present teachers' views as they are expressed, without imposing experimental manipulation or quantitative measurement.

### **Research Instruments**

The primary research instrument used in this study was semi-structured interviews. This instrument was selected because it provides flexibility in exploring participants' responses while maintaining a clear focus on the research objectives. The interview guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed insights into teachers' perceptions, observations of student behavior, and suggested pedagogical strategies.

Follow-up prompts were also used to encourage elaboration and clarification where necessary.

### **Research Sample and Participants**

The study involved six preparatory school English teachers from selected schools in Sirte, Libya, including Al-Majd, Al-Yarmouk, Al-Suqour, Al-Qardabiya, and Sirte Central. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that they met specific criteria relevant to the study. These criteria included having a minimum of three years of teaching experience and being familiar with students' use of digital language tools such as ChatGPT. The selected participants represented experienced educators who could provide informed and reflective insights into the research topic.

### **Data Collection Tools**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted either face-to-face or online, depending on participants' availability. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. The use of audio recording allowed for detailed examination of participants' responses and minimized the risk of data loss. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006), involving familiarization, coding, theme identification, and interpretation.

### **Results**

The analysis of the interview data revealed two main themes that reflect teachers' perspectives on students' use of ChatGPT when completing English homework in preparatory schools in Sirte. These themes highlight the tension teachers experience between recognising the potential educational support offered by the tool and observing its negative influence on students' engagement with learning tasks.

#### **Cognitive Shortcuts versus Scaffolding**

The first theme concerns the tension between assistance and cognitive shortcuts. Several teachers acknowledged that the tool can sometimes help students understand language structures and generate ideas for writing. For example, T1 explained that "*some weaker students use it to check vocabulary or grammar before writing, and this sometimes helps them understand the sentence better.*" Similarly, T4 noted that "*it can give students examples that they may not find easily in their textbooks.*" From this perspective, the tool

can function as an additional source of support that students use outside the classroom. However, most participants expressed concern that students frequently rely on it to produce complete answers rather than using it as guidance. T3 observed that *“many students copy the answer directly and only change one or two words.”* In a similar way, T2 stated that *“when I read some homework, the language is much more advanced than the student’s real level.”* Teachers believed that this practice reduces the effort students invest in developing their writing skills. T1 commented that *“writing improves only when students try, make mistakes, and correct them, but if the answer is already written for them, they skip this process.”* These views suggest that while the tool can provide useful linguistic support, its misuse may lead students to avoid the cognitive effort required for meaningful learning.

### **Redefining Homework and Assessment**

The second theme relates to the need to reconsider traditional approaches to homework and assessment. Many teachers indicated that the growing use of digital writing tools requires changes in how assignments are designed and evaluated. Rather than suggesting a complete ban, participants proposed adjusting teaching practices to encourage students to demonstrate their learning process. T3 explained that *“instead of asking only for the final paragraph, we could ask students to show their outline and first draft as well.”* In the same vein, T1 suggested that *“teachers need to see how the student develops the idea, not only the finished answer.”* Several participants also recommended increasing classroom-based activities that allow teachers to observe students’ real language abilities. T5 stated that *“short in-class writing tasks can help us see the student’s real level without outside help.”* Likewise, T6 highlighted the importance of oral work, noting that *“presentations and discussions in class make it harder for students to rely completely on technology.”* Finally, T2 emphasised the importance of guiding students rather than prohibiting the tool, explaining that *“students will continue to use these technologies, so the role of the teacher is to teach them how to use them responsibly.”* Together, these responses indicate that teachers view pedagogical adaptation, rather than prohibition, as the most practical response to the increasing use of digital language tools in homework tasks.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The findings of this study highlight the complex role that automated language tools now play in the learning experiences of preparatory school students. Teachers’ perspectives suggest that these tools cannot be understood simply as either beneficial or harmful. Instead, their educational impact depends largely on how they are used and how teachers adapt their instructional practices in response.

Teachers’ views that such tools can provide useful explanations and examples align with research suggesting that digital language technologies may function as forms of scaffolding for learners who require additional support (Nguyen et al., 2023). For students who struggle with vocabulary or sentence construction, access to immediate linguistic guidance may help reduce frustration and encourage engagement with writing tasks. From this perspective, automated tools may complement classroom instruction by providing additional opportunities for practice.

However, the concerns expressed by participants also reflect wider debates within educational research regarding the potential consequences of excessive reliance on automated systems. When students use these tools to generate complete assignments, the opportunity to engage in deeper cognitive processes may be diminished. This observation corresponds with theoretical arguments that meaningful learning requires sustained mental effort and active engagement with tasks. If learners bypass these processes, the development of durable knowledge structures may be limited. Similar concerns have been reported in previous research, where scholars noted that overdependence on AI-generated responses may reduce students’ critical thinking and independent writing abilities (Lee & Park, 2024; Mutammimah, 2024).

The findings also suggest that the widespread availability of digital writing tools is prompting teachers to reconsider established approaches to homework and assessment. Traditional assignments often emphasise the final written product, which can now be easily generated by automated systems. As several teachers in the study suggested, shifting attention towards the writing process may help preserve the educational value of homework tasks. Requiring students to produce drafts, reflections, or in-class demonstrations of their understanding may

encourage greater accountability and engagement. This perspective is consistent with recommendations in recent studies, which argue that process-oriented assessment can help educators maintain academic integrity while allowing students to benefit from digital learning tools (Nguyen et al., 2023; Lo, 2023). Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of institutional guidance and teacher preparation. Participants frequently indicated that schools currently lack clear policies regarding the appropriate use of digital language tools. Without such guidance, teachers may struggle to respond consistently to students' use of these technologies. Professional development opportunities that focus on digital literacy and pedagogical adaptation may therefore be essential for helping teachers navigate these changes effectively. Previous research similarly emphasises that clear institutional policies and teacher training are necessary to ensure responsible integration of AI-based tools in educational settings (Adeshola & Adepoju, 2024; Hassan & Al-Saleh, 2024).

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed to enhance the effective use of ChatGPT in EFL education:

1. Teachers should redesign homework tasks to emphasize the learning process, such as requiring drafts, outlines, and reflections.
2. Schools should increase the use of classroom-based assessments to ensure accurate evaluation of students' abilities.
3. Educational institutions should provide training programs to improve teachers' AI literacy and pedagogical adaptation skills.
4. Clear policies and guidelines should be established regarding the ethical use of AI tools in education.
5. Students should be guided on how to use ChatGPT as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for their own work.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small, involving only six teachers, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study focused on a specific geographical context (Sirte), and therefore the results may not fully represent other regions in Libya or different educational settings. Third, the data were based solely on teachers' perspectives without direct observation of students' actual use of ChatGPT. Finally, as a qualitative study, the findings are interpretive in nature and depend on participants' subjective experiences.

### **Conclusion**

This study examined preparatory English teachers' perspectives on students' use of ChatGPT for completing English homework in schools in Sirte, Libya. The findings indicate that teachers acknowledge the potential benefits of such tools in supporting language learning through explanations and linguistic assistance; however, they also express concern that students often rely on them to complete assignments with minimal personal effort. This reliance may reduce students' engagement in important cognitive processes involved in writing and language development. The study further suggests that the increasing availability of digital writing tools requires teachers and schools to reconsider traditional approaches to homework and assessment by placing greater emphasis on the learning process rather than the final product. Overall, the findings highlight the need for clearer institutional guidelines, greater awareness among students, and professional development for teachers to ensure that digital tools support meaningful learning rather than replace students' independent effort.

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