

The Role of AI Tools in Enhancing Understanding of British Civilization Among EFL Students

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Abstract

As advanced technologies are increasingly integrated into educational frameworks, it is essential to scrutinize the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) on teaching methods and learning outcomes. This research investigates how AI tools can be effectively utilized to improve EFL students' comprehension of British civilization content, a field that is characterized by linguistic complexity and cultural knowledge requirements. In contrast to traditional teaching approaches that emphasize classroom participation and textbook-based instruction, AI technologies offer varied data analysis proficiencies and personalized learning experiences. Taking into account the different aspects of AI tools applications, this study adopted a quantitative and qualitative approach to fulfill its aims. To collect data, a questionnaire was administered to second-year undergraduate students at the University of 08 May 1945 Guelma, Algeria. The main findings revealed a clear tendency towards dependence on AI technologies and further suggest that these tools function as mediating instruments simplifying the academic challenges of British civilization.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Comprehension, British Civilization

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I- Introduction :

To master the complexity of British civilization students must engage in a nuanced comprehension of its historical and political arrangements. This academic endeavor encompasses an analysis of the nation's profound cultural heritage, the far-reaching impact of the British imperial expansion, the transformative social movements, and the process of devolution that gradually reshaped the British Empire global influence. By exploring these social, political, and economic shifts, learners do not only gain cultural and linguistic fluency and awareness but also cultivate the ability to analyze pivotal events. These events include the signing of the Magna Carta, which paved the way for the rule of law and the establishment of the constitutional governance; the advent of the Industrial Revolution, which triggered economic and social transformations; civil rights; and women's suffrage movements, collectively entrenched the principles of British identity. It also solidified the enduring values of individual rights, democratic governance, cultural diversity, and social justice within the national fabric.

In the light of these complexities, it is necessary for English as Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy to keep pace with technological advancements. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered tools offers a digital environment where students can examine primary historical documents, engage in dialogue, utilize open-access resources, and decode complicated historical and political discourse. These AI-based platforms can provide customized learning proficiency by adjusting to each student's requirements and learning preferences in British civilization. Presenting interactive chronologies, virtual historical recreations, and data visualizations, AI presents complex historical texts in a more captivating way for EFL students and facilitates the comprehension of complex ideas. In addition, these digital tools encourage cross-cultural comparisons, assisting students in establishing connections between British civilization and their own cultural backgrounds, thereby improving their global outlook and analytical skills.

The study focuses on exploring how digital innovation can simplify the double burden of learning a complex history in second language. EFL learners face the challenge of learning a high-level content while at the same time struggling with the language that deliver it; the political jargon, for instance, devolution, first past the post, and the shadow cabinet are linguistically easy but conceptually heavy. In certain situations, students are asked to write essay that demand a specific style of analytical synthesis that many of them find different from storytelling. The linguistic, conceptual,

structural, and cultural differences create a significant difficulty for EFL learners to fully grasp British civilization.

This study is designed to examine these pivotal research questions:

- How the integration of AI tools facilitates EFL learners' comprehension of British civilization?
- Which categories of AI powered tools are frequently utilized when engaging with British civilization content?
- What are the most effective analytical capacities used in decoding historical and political texts?
- To what extent do EFL learners experience a shift in their understanding of British civilization after using AI tools compared to their baseline comprehension?

This study aims to examine how AI tools can be used not only as an application to fix grammar but also to provide deep conceptual learning and historical analysis, by breaking down complex academic primary and secondary sources into interactive content that increases students' retention and confidence. A considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to examine language skill development particularly grammar vocabulary and communicative competence but yet remain notably deficient in exploring how AI technologies facilitate the acquisition of content-based instruction in specialized subjects like British civilization.

The study demonstrates how AI tools are transforming into a personalized learning environment empowering EFL students to engage with content-based modules at their own pace thereby addressing both linguistic barriers and content specific challenges. In this situation AI foster learner's autonomy and allows them to explore the topic they are interested in. The findings enrich the ongoing academic discussion surrounding the integration of AI tools in second language learning. In particular it extends the current theoretical frameworks, thereby addressing the critical gap by providing evidence-based guidance for educators navigating the digital transformation of language learning.

Finally, this research underscores the necessity of AI driven pedagogical strategies to dismantle the linguistic barriers found in some of the historical and political documents. Therefore, maintaining a more engaging environment for non-native speakers. It also advocates for a cultivation of critical analytical skills that enables students to analyze and find biases within the learning materials. In addition, the move from rote memorization towards AI mediated inquiry fosters students to shift from being consumers of facts to interpreter of history.

II. Literature Review:

II.1.1. Comprehension in British Civilization

The term civilization encompasses different meanings; etymologically, it was developed from the Latin language, originating from the word "civis," related to citizen, and "civitas," meaning "city," and later entered the French and English context¹. The cultural dimension of the term denotes shared beliefs, values, and practices, including language, religion, and social norms. According to Huntington, civilizations contain the characteristics that distinguish one group from another by history, language, culture, tradition, and, most importantly, religion².

In this case, understanding British civilization involves the ability to make sense the cultural and historical narratives that occurred in the past and present. Therefore, comprehending the cultural identity and social diversity within Britian helps to form an idea about the different identities that exist in it, including English, Scottish, Welsh, and Northern Irish. In addition, understanding British civilization includes the examination of historical texts and documents that reflect the political and social values of the country.

The British Civilization course plays a crucial role in the EFL curriculum, as it effectively addresses the needs of EFL learners, particularly for LMD students aiming to obtain a "License" degree in English after three years of study. As Rodrigues notes, content-based courses like British Civilization integrate language and subject matter, with the objective of students to learn the target language through a specific subject³. This course is an important course in the EFL curriculum because it successfully meets the requirements of EFL learners, especially second-year LMD students working towards their license degrees in English.

In particular, the aim of studying civilization is to enable EFL learners to adapt to global trends and gain insights into the culture and civilization of the language being learned. in the book entitled *Teaching and Learning Language and Culture 1994* Byram, M., Morgan, C., et al. explain the importance of studying civilization by the growing tendency of learning the cultural aspect of the language⁴. He argues that comprehension is not only about facts but also about the skill of interpreting, which involves the ability to analyze historical and political documents while relating them to learners own cultural paradigms. Bayram elucidates that profound understanding demands "critical cultural awareness"; this encompasses the ability to

evaluate British socio-political perspectives through analytical criteria. Typically, this allows students to thoughtfully critique the studied culture and their own cultural background without bias. This allows them to shift from simple memorization and passive absorption of historical narratives into a more engaged active participation thus contributing to the intercultural academic dialogue, and building critical analytical skills necessary for engagement in academic discourse⁵.

Özturgut and Murphy (2009) further explains that for a student to acquire social skills and navigate the challenges associated with unfamiliarity in a foreign culture, they must overcome the differences between their native culture and the one being studied. Consequently, modern educators emphasize the importance of cultural education in preparing students to better understand the information presented to them. This approach primarily aims to foster character development that will facilitate a more effortless understanding of the target language⁶.

III. Stage of AI Development:

III.1. Definition of AI:

Intelligence is defined as the ability to perform appropriate techniques to solve problems and accomplish goals. In the case of computers, their systems are developed to improve virtual reality perception, thinking, and knowledge based on data or experience⁷. The term "artificial intelligence" can encapsulate different definitions; it is a multi-use technology that can be used in many different ways in different scenarios. The Oxford Dictionary defines it as "the capacity of computers, or other machines, to exhibit intelligent behavior"⁸. AI is a combination of three important components that work together to enable machines to perform intelligent behavior. The components include advanced algorithms that tell the computer what to do, data that tells the computer what to learn, and computing power that gives the machine the ability to learn and make decisions. Therefore, the intelligence of this system is derived from human knowledge and expertise (data) that are recorded and saved in a format that a computer can process (algorithms), and a computer learns how to perform and make decisions (computing power). Over time, AI systems have been developed to detect mistakes and enhance performance⁹.

Artificial intelligence, as defined by the European Commission Communications, is a system that exhibits intelligent skills by examining the input and output with some degree of autonomy in managing the process of producing ideas and achieving goals. AI systems are software in the

virtual world that can provide voice assistance, image analysis, and act as search engines. This system can be implemented using hardware tools such as robots, drones, Internet applications, and cars. This system, developed by humans, uses different approaches and techniques that involve the use of machine reasoning, which contains the representation of information, planning, and scheduling¹⁰.

III.2. History of AI:

In 1950, Alan Turing initiated preliminary efforts to establish the theoretical foundations of artificial intelligence¹¹. Alan Turing, a renowned British mathematician, played a crucial role in deciphering the enigma machine during World War II and established the groundwork for the world's initial computer. He is widely recognized as a pioneer of modern computing. Turing authored an influential paper titled 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence', which established the foundation for the earliest artificial intelligence evaluation method. This assessment, known as the Turing test, has contributed to increasing global awareness of advancements in AI research and the capacity of machines to emulate human thoughts and behaviors since 1950¹².

In 1990, three groundbreaking researchers laid the groundwork for AI learning systems and established the principles of deep learning in AI machines. The media later dubbed Yann LeCun, Geoffrey Hinton, and Yoshua Bengio as the godfathers of AI. In 2018, these pioneers were honored with the Turing Award for their transformative work, which led to major advancements in AI. Their contributions have been instrumental in developing systems that are now utilized in the majority of AI applications¹³. As a field of study, AI seeks to develop computer systems that mimic human cognitive processes, such as thinking, responding, and reasoning. It includes all algorithms and methods, both theoretical and practical sides, to perform tasks and solve problems. As artificial intelligence increasingly transforming educational practices, it is necessary for educators to remain informed about its applications and potential impact on teaching methodologies and student learning outcomes¹⁴.

III.3. Types of AI Tools

III.3.1. Machine Learning:

This AI category is developed using vast datasets, enabling the system to enhance its performance through learning. As Arthur Samuel states, "Machine learning is a field of study that gives computers the ability to

learn without being explicitly programmed". Essentially, it creates solutions for given problems by predicting them. The system utilizes hypotheses from previous data to construct a new model. Machine learning has applications in various areas, including pattern recognition, handwriting and speech recognition, and document and image analysis. It can also be used for text and document classifications¹⁵.

III.3.2. Natural Language Processing:

For computers to interact with humans effectively, they must understand the natural language humans use every day. NLP combines computer science, linguistics, and artificial intelligence. This technology is required for smart systems, such as robots, to follow instructions¹⁶. NLP powers a wide range of applications and devices that can translate text between languages, respond to typed or spoken commands, and recognize or authenticate users by voice. It also enables systems to summarize large volumes of text, analyze intent or sentiment in both written and spoken languages, and generate text, images, or other content on demand¹⁷.

III.3.3. Deep learning:

Deep learning is a specialized branch of machine learning that uses multilayered neural networks, known as deep neural networks (DNNs), to mimic the complex decision-making abilities of the human brain. These techniques have led to major advancements in areas such as sound and image processing, including facial recognition, speech recognition, computer vision, natural language processing, and text classification, such as identifying spam¹⁸. Deep learning requires substantial computing power because training deep neural networks involves processing massive amounts of data and performing complex calculations. High-performance Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) are well-suited for this task because they can perform large-scale computations across multiple cores with ample memory. Deep learning algorithms are highly complex, and different types of neural networks are designed to handle specific problems and datasets. One important approach is representation learning, which includes models such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs or ConvNets). CNNs are primarily used for computer vision and image classification tasks. They can automatically detect features and patterns in images and videos, making them ideal for applications such as object detection, image, pattern and facial recognition¹⁹.

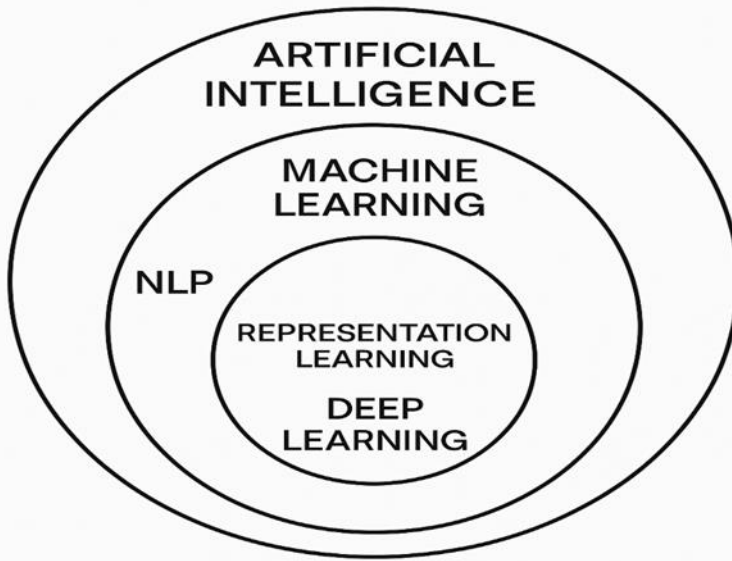


Figure 1: Representation of AI Types

IV. AI in the Field of Education

Since its inception in 1956, artificial intelligence has undergone different progressive stages to merge with the educational field. In 1970, the theoretical foundations were put to work in developing machine natural language and pattern recognition. After 1990, significant changes were made to advance machine planning and task learning, in which data storage and information processing were developed. From 2000 to 2010, text generation and image recognition improved, allowing AI to advance deep learning and data analysis. In the subsequent years, AI witnessed tremendous changes and evolved rapidly. The advent of reinforcement learning, virtual assistants, robotics, and language analysis offer students the ability to personalize their learning experience in relation to their needs. Subsequently, the COVID period empowered online learning and distance education, incorporating the support of AI in online learning. In 2021, AI tools evolved with the creation of computer-generated environments²⁰.

As one of the important components of Education 4.0, digital technologies revolutionize the educational system. Particularly, students and teachers are expected to develop cooperation and communication skills, technical skills, and personal characteristics to cope with this advancement²¹. AI has demonstrated efficacy across various scientific domains, including

chemistry, finance, smart buildings, and environmental studies. These technological innovations facilitate easier access to educational content and expedite the learning process by providing feedback on grammatical and pronunciation aspects. For example, AI applications can evaluate proficiency levels and suggest improvements for learners to enhance their skills. Moreover, AI tools complement traditional teaching methods by making learning more engaging and interactive. Unlike in the past, educators can now effortlessly monitor student progress using AI applications, allowing them to allocate additional time to areas that require improvement. Consequently, the individualized learning experience offered by these technological platforms enables learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, gauge their learning pace, and improve their overall outcomes²².

V. The Role of AI in Promoting Comprehension of Civilization Course

A meta-analysis conducted by Lee et al. in 2014 evaluated the outcomes of 17 studies that focused on AI-based tools. Their findings revealed that literacy instruction utilizing AI technology can lead to improved learning outcomes. The study found that artificial intelligence becomes more efficient when it integrates educators' expertise and insights in the realm of language acquisition²³.

The use of technological tools has undoubtedly simplified access to various historical texts and archives by reconstructing historical events in explanatory detail. With just a click, a student can search and find relevant information rather than flipping through thousands of books and losing interest while searching. Therefore, AI tools will not only save time but also improve the sustainability of their inquisitiveness. For instance, when using Gemini, students can select a keyword and then search for reliable historical documents related to it. Furthermore, students can concentrate on analyzing materials offered by teacher with the help of AI to simplify terms or to connect topic to current events. This helps them sustain their passion for the matter being studied and permits them to dig deeper into it²⁴.

In addition to summarizing text books AI functions as a synthetic converser enabling a form of connectivity and interactive dialogue with the students, particularly this helps to expand the learner's Zone of Approximal Development, a concept developed by Vygotsky in 1978, to refer to what students can perform with guidance. In this case AI facilitates the transition from superficial understanding of concept into a critical inquiry²⁵.

VI. Methodology

VI.1. Sampling and Instrumentation

This study was conducted using a quantitative and qualitative method. The sample evaluated in this research was composed of second-year license students at the University of Guelma. The study population was chosen because they are increasingly exposed to the use of advanced technologies in learning historical and political texts in the field of British civilization. The research methodology employed a questionnaire as a primary instrument, which was distributed among second-year undergraduates attending the English Department at the University of Guelma. To obtain more reliable data, the questionnaires were distributed randomly. A total of 55 questionnaires were collected, which increased the reliability of the data by investigating the impact of AI tools on EFL students' comprehension of British civilization.

VI.2. Data Analysis Techniques

To collect data for this study, a structured questionnaire was developed, consisting of 15 questions systematically based on validated scales, such as the Likert scale. It is also divided into three main sections: The questionnaire was designed to investigate how EFL learners use AI tools to enhance their comprehension of British civilization, with a particular focus on historical and political aspects, text analysis, and source evaluation. The first section of the questionnaire aimed to gather demographic data and participants' prior familiarity with the use of AI tools. The second section investigates how frequently students' use AI tools and how these tools were employed in the learning process. The third section deals with the impact of AI tools on students' comprehension of British civilizations. This section included both Likert-scale items and open-ended questions that examined how AI tools contributed to their learning. It also included a ranking task, where respondents evaluated suggested means of AI integration based on their perceived effectiveness.

Quantitative Data Analysis: A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to analyze the questionnaire data; the collected responses were analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS).

Qualitative Data Analysis: Following the influential work of Braune and Clarke (2006), Thus, the answers were analyzed using Thematic analysis approach that identifies recurring themes in terms of students' challenges and experiences while using AI tools.

VII. Findings from Questionnaire Data:

This section presents the findings regarding the participants’ views about the impact of AI on their comprehension of British civilization and how they incorporate these tools in their daily learning process. The analyzed data are presented in forms of graphs and it revealed the following results:

Figure 1: Comprehension level before using AI

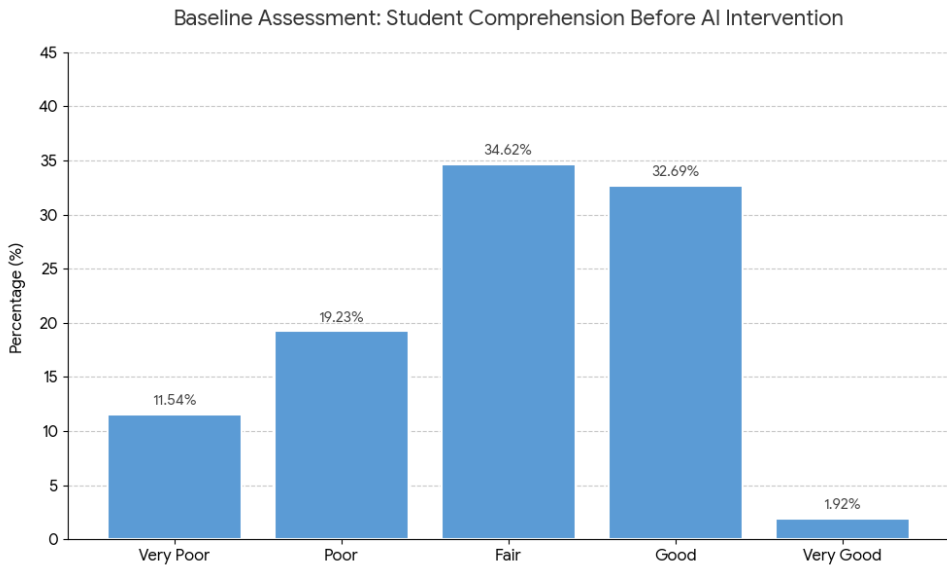
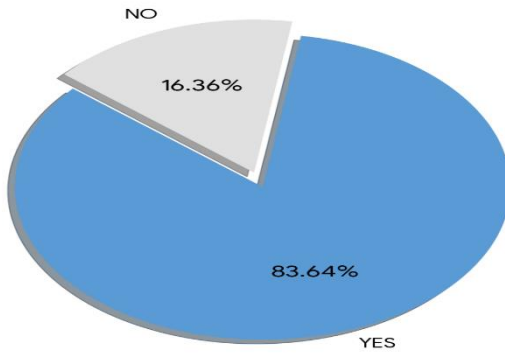


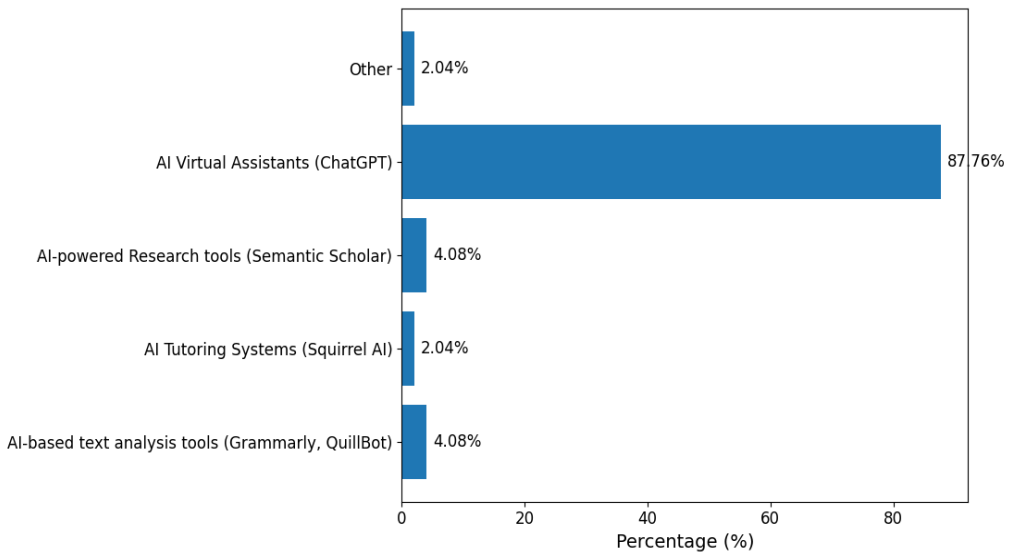
Figure 1 provides a quantitative diagnostic of EFL learner self-perceived comprehension of British civilization before using AI tools. The answers centralized between “Fair” and “Good” together constitute 67.31 percent. Whereas 30.77 identifies their initial understanding as “Poor” and “Very Poor”. The data represents a central tendency toward mediocrity and reveals critical deficiencies. The cognitive and linguistic demands of British civilization content become a real challenge for EFL learners who are expected to develop the ability to contextualize events, and construct interpretation from complicated texts.

Figure 2: Usage of AI tools to Understand British Civilization



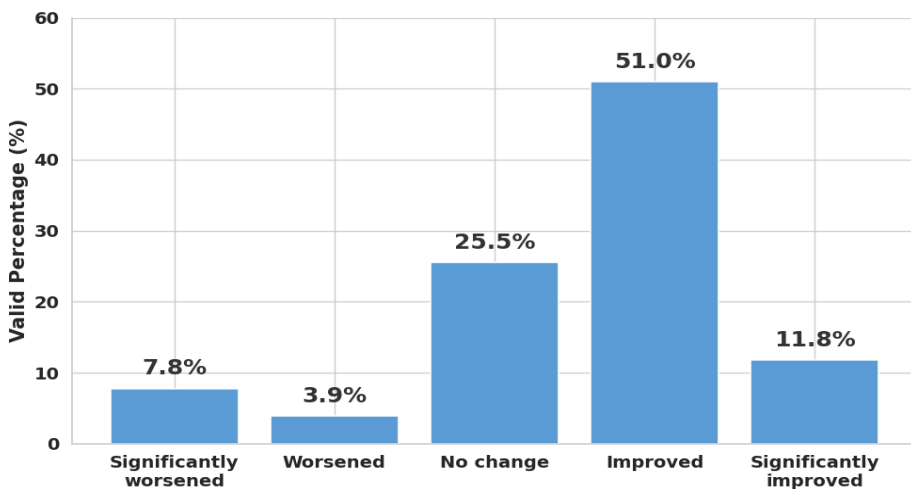
In figure 2 respondents were asked about their familiarity with AI tools and the majority 83,64 of the sample selected ‘Yes’ showing that the majority has adopted AI tools for their academic work, while the remaining 16,36 selected ‘No’ mainly refereeing to the category of students who do not use them. This proves that the majority of students are using generative AI tools such ChatGPT, Perplexity, or DeepSeek into their study of British civilization. The distribution justifies the research focus by demonstrating that AI powered tools have already become an integral part of students’ learning practices thus creating an urgent need to investigate the pedagogical frameworks to strategically optimize their effectiveness to deepen conceptual understanding.

Figure 3: Categories of AI Tools



The Data in figure 3 indicates a strong predominance of AI virtual assistants. The majority of students reported that they use ChatGPT to help them understand British civilization courses, with 87.76% prefer instant feedback to clarify concepts and historical events. This preference reveals the utility of virtual conversational AI in providing instant feedback and accessible explanations. By comparison, AI based text analysis like Grammarly and Quill Bot attract minimal usage (4.08%) which explains that students are less interested with linguistics aids. Other AI research tools such as Semantic Scholar show similarly the same adoption rate (4.08%) pointing to the unfamiliarity with AI tools that demands high research competencies. The minimal rate (2.04%) representing the other categories including tools used for Translation such DeepL indicates that they serve marginal function, typically word or sentence level comprehension. This analysis shows a clear tendency toward the use of dialogue AI tools to support comprehension of British civilization content.

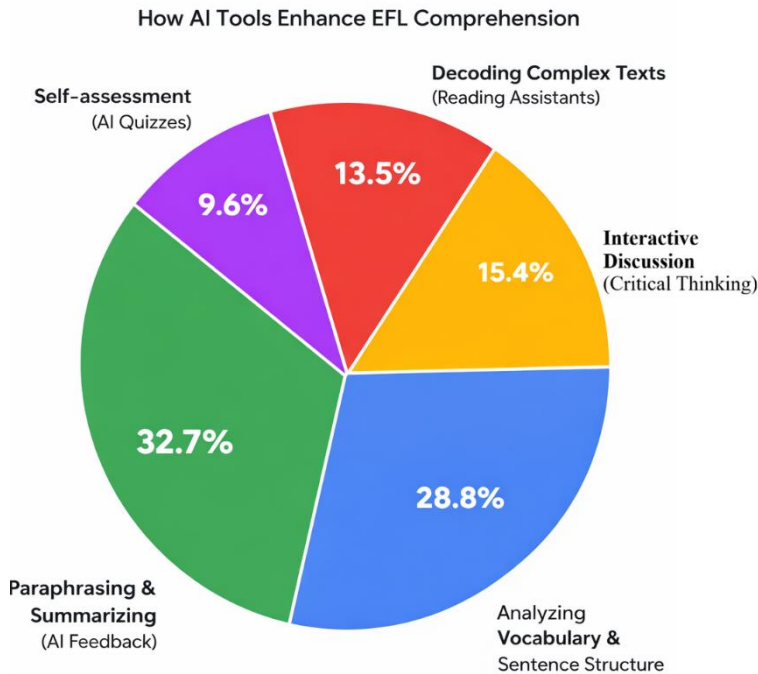
Figure 4: Impact of AI on Comprehension of Historical Events and Political Aspects



In Figure 4 a combined 62.8% of the students experienced a positive growth and reported a positive shift in their comprehension level. Particularly, 51% noted an “Improved” status while 11.8% achieved “Significantly improved” state. The results validate the role of AI tools in enhancing comprehension of British civilization. Whereas the neutral segment (25.5%) represents the students who experienced “No Change” which suggests that AI tools were used for superficial task rather than for deep conceptual analysis (referencing to the answer of Figure 2). The third category reported 7.8% as

“Significantly Worsened” and 3.9% counted for “Worsened”; this indicates that AI tools caused confusion rather than clarity and highlighted the need for teacher support.

Figure 5: Mechanisms of AI Enhanced Comprehension for EFL Learners



The findings in figure 5 focuses on the specific pedagogical functions EFL learners value the most when using AI. It demonstrates that these tools are used to provide linguistic and structural support when engaging with political and historical texts. Particularly, 32.7% of students use AI to practice paraphrasing and summarizing in order to verify their comprehension through interactive feedback responses and output refinement. Other students prefer to rely on AI to provide linguistic support, in which 28.8% use it to analyse vocabulary and sentence construction. Nearly 15.4% of students employ AI to facilitate engagement with critical thinking processes which are important in evaluating historical and political sources in British civilization, and at least 13.5% use it to decode complex texts, thus enhancing understanding through simplification of ambiguous terms. In contrast the self-assessment features used via AI generated quizzes

is the least adopted method, in which only 9.6% of students rely on self-testing.

VII.1. Results from the Open-end Questions:

The qualitative data that was extracted from the questionnaire solidifies the findings from the quantitative analysis. The recurring themes were: AI works as a facilitator; biases issues; AI drawbacks. For instance, students were asked if they could mention a specific area where they had employed AI tools that helped them better understand a specific course in British Civilization. Some students answered that AI tools such as ‘ChatGPT’ helped them get an overview and explained in detail the lesson of the Enlightenment and its major factors for its appearance. AI helped students prepare presentations about women’s right to vote during the Victorian era. AI facilitated their understanding of historical and political events. In addition, it facilitates the explanation of vocabulary by decoding difficult historical and political terminologies.

Furthermore, students were asked to provide examples of how AI tools improved their comprehension of British civilization. The answers explained that AI improved their understanding of British civilization by explaining lessons such as the Age of Reason and the Victorian Era in simple terms and providing simplified examples. Others have added that when they search to know more about the UK legal system, they easily find that information on AI websites, which provide more details and explanations. Some responses indicated that they used AI to summarize lessons.

The questionnaire also revealed the biases in some of the answers that led them question AI answers. Despite the positive side of AI tools, 11.7% of students clarified that when they searched for information about a specific course, they found some differences between what they studied in the classroom and AI information. Other students believed that AI tools could include fake ideas and use unreliable sources. One participant remarked, “ensuring the accuracy and relevance of AI can be challenging”. Other stated that AI tools provide them with extra information that is unnecessary. In addition, the lack of sources transparency is a major problem facing students who uses AI application without citing original reliable sources. These drawbacks contribute to the ethical risks including over reliance on AI summaries rather than engaging with primary original sources.

Other questions included the challenges, if any, that the participants faced while using AI tools in their studies. Some answers clarified that AI tools sometimes provide general information, not the specific information that the participants need. Others justified that these tools sometimes give them wrong answers.

VIII Discussion:

VIII.1. Artificial Intelligence Mediated Learning in British Civilization

This study examined the role of AI tools on students' comprehension of British civilization, analyzing usage patterns, improvement methods, effective features, and growing concerns. The results from the quantitative part proves that AI integration is transforming into a practical learning support, that aligns with the theory of Zone Proximal Development, where AI is considered as bridging tool between students' level of comprehension and their potential capacity. Filling this critical gap between students' knowledge and skills is particularly effective given that most students use AI tools to generate summaries, thus allowing for their independent and personalized learning to be enhanced through conversational chatbots and tutorial dialogues.

British civilization content requires students to engage with archaic political terminologies and historical writing styles that dates back to ancient times that is difficult to translated in students' native language. In this situation, they would use AI to convert these texts and terminologies into a simpler form, thereby reducing the mental stress allowing them to concentrate more on the analytical aspects of the course materials. This feature of cognitive scaffold is essential to accomplish tasks that the student could not complete independently.

VIII.2. AI Drawbacks and Ethical Issues

Despite the utility of AI in facilitating understanding of complex subjects, it is necessary to mention that this tool is a double edge sword. The ethical issues that threaten the integrity of learning process include the fine line between cognitive scaffolding and plagiarism. Typically, students who become completely dependent on AI in paraphrasing and summarizing lose their cognitive skills by time and this over reliance undermine the classrooms instructions given by the teacher when assigning writing summary to develop synthesis skill. The students would simply use AI summary with little modifications and eventually get credit for it with no

efforts at all. Therefore, this threatens the learning process and cause cognitive laziness and credential fraud.

A more transparency measures would present solutions to integrity issues, permitting for more restricted uses of AI features. Educators must address this risk with a shift toward AI Literacy teaching about the ethical limitation by training students to verify AI answers critically.

VIII. Conclusion:

This study highlights the importance of AI tools in enhancing EFL learners' comprehension of British civilization. It stresses the evidence that AI tools are becoming more integrated within educational pedagogy as they hold transformative potential for the integration of new strategies and techniques that will eventually enhance the student learning process. This study reveals that AI technologies provide a personalized learning experience and offer valuable help to students that would match their learning needs. The incorporation of AI tools can foster comprehension through automotive routing tasks and help students paraphrase and summarize lessons.

Integrating AI technologies into the educational process necessitates careful consideration of the ethical aspects and challenges. The potential distortion of information that may showcase biases and unclear information are of major concerns to educators. In this case, EFL learners should be aware of the ethical standards and the challenges of employing AI and stay informed on how to properly benefit from the advantages of this advanced technological tool.

To sum up, the future of pedagogical education may take various paths, particularly with the growing advancement and innovation of AI. However, it is crucial to integrate traditional teaching methods with the intellectual progress of machines.

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