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Original scientific paper
UDC: 378.147:004.8
http://doi.org/10.5937/IstrPed2602218V

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ART STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF AI TOOLS IN ESP CLASSROOMS

Abstract: This study addresses the following research question: How do students of applied and dramatic arts perceive the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in English for Specific Purposes courses, education and artistic practice? Drawing on theoretical discussions of criticial thinking, pedagogical innovation, creativity and ethical AI integration in education, it examines the pedagogical potentials and limitations of AI-assisted learning in higher education. Based on three-phase sequential multi-method design, it combines qualitative and quantitative approaches. Phase 1 included a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) of eight AI tools, used to assess their suitability for ESP instruction. Phase 2 consisted of a quasi-experimental AI-enhanced ESP intervention implemented with four student groups from the Faculty of Applied Arts and the Faculty of Dramatic Arts. Phase 3 questionnaire-guided semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate students' perceptions of AI use. A convenience sample of 144 first- and second-year students was included. Data were collected using an MCA quality-criteria checklist ($\kappa = .68$), corpora of AI-enhanced exercises and prompts, Likert-scale items ($\alpha = .858$), semi-structured interviews and digital teacher diaries. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and t-tests, while qualitative data were examined through a descriptive-interpretive approach.

Across the variables of imotivation, creativity, interactivity and language skills development, the findings indicate that the selected AI tools were generally beneficial for structured language practice, but insufficient on their own for integrative ESP learning. Twee, Perplexity and Ginger Software mainly proved useful, whereas TTS tools and Skybox AI by Blockade Labs required additional pedagogical support. All groups repeatedly emphasised the importance of teacher guidance and human interaction in language learning. Although recognising the usefulness of AI for vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation practice, or in writing and repetitive tasks, students were critical regarding reliability, ecological impact, ethical implications and transparency in AI-based work. The future artists largely rejected the use of AI in creative practices, seeing it as a potential threat to artistic identity. These findings underscore the importance of critical thinking, transparency, trust and ethical awareness in AI-enhanced language teaching and education, and contribute to the limited research on AI tools beyond ChatGPT in ESP teaching for artistic purposes.

Keywords: applied arts, artificial intelligence (AI), dramatic arts, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), creativity.

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Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?
(Paul Gauguin, 1897–1898)

1. Introduction

Art is deeply human. Many works have outlived their creators, continuing to inspire audiences through their beauty and resonance. Whether embodied in the legacy of great masters or in everyday aesthetic experiences, art remains an essential expression of human creativity and, for many, a life's calling. In an era of rapid technological change and emerging forms of intelligence, an important question arises: do these developments expand the boundaries of human progress or impose new limitations?

Our acceptance of change depends not only on personal attitudes but also on its compatibility with the nature of our profession. Owing to its universal and intercultural character, art naturally lends itself to internationalisation. In a world shaped by migration, cross-cultural cooperation and technological innovation, foreign language proficiency is an important component of professional preparation and social responsibility. Courses in languages for specific purposes play a key role in developing students' career-related competence and self-confidence, as confirmed by a recent multilingualism study involving 1,882 students from nine universities of the Circle U. Alliance (Janković et al., 2023, pp. 20-26).

Fostering critical thinking (CT) is a cornerstone of contemporary higher education, requiring a shift from factual knowledge acquisition towards higher-order cognitive processes. Students' active engagement in learning contributes not only to educational outcomes but also to the development of cultural capital (Reed & Johnson, 2023). According to the Delphi Report, CT promotes "rational autonomy, intellectual freedom and the objective, reasoned and evidence-based investigation" of diverse issues, while higher education institutions are encouraged to "foster students' confidence in their own powers of reason, rather than dependency on rote learning" (Facione, 1990, pp. 14, 20).

In Bloom's revised taxonomy, critical thinking involves progression from remembering, understanding and applying knowledge to analysing, evaluating and creating (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). In foreign language education, this entails not only linguistic production and creativity but also critical reflection on learning and professional practice. In art education, it further encompasses analytical reasoning about creative proficiency and social responsibility.

Critical thinking is widely regarded as a domain-general competence essential in the information- and technology-driven knowledge economy. It supports communication, creativity, self-reflection, objective reasoning and informed judgement (Lau, 2026). Similarly, Gojkov, Stojanović and Gojkov Rajić (2015) identify CT as a major objective of the Bologna reform but argue that its development requires a stronger communication-oriented approach in students' higher education: "They have to be partners in teaching and they have to become partners in professional discussions" (Gojkov et al., 2015, pp. 595-596). Such preparation for active, interculturally appropriate communication is a key objective of foreign language courses for specific purposes.

Pedagogical innovation involves developing new teaching strategies and learning styles, adapting materials, and creating conditions for effective learning. Initiated by individual educators or institutions, it is an evidence-based process aimed at improving student engagement, learning and professional development (Bojičić et al., 2026; Pettersson, 2021). In higher education, language teaching should be student-centred and aim at developing communicative competence through intensive work on integrated skills, professional lexis and structures, communicative functions, academic writing and presentation skills. It also seeks to strengthen students' self-confidence through debate and critical reflection on both subject matter and pedagogical innovation itself.

Contemporary educational theory explores participants' perceptions of innovative teaching practices and how new ideas, methods and approaches can improve educational outcomes (Walder, 2017; Wang et al., 2024).

Innovation may involve curriculum design, instructional strategies, assessment, teaching materials, resources, and digital technologies (Tanasijević & Janković, 2021; Wang et al., 2024). It can foster creativity and critical thinking through collaboration, interdisciplinary perspectives, and interactive or personalised digital environments (Bojičić et al., 2026; Circle U., 2026[3]; Janković, 2025). However, Selwyn, Nemorin, Bulfin and Johnson (2018, p. 11) caution that the role of digital technology in education cannot be reduced to questions of effectiveness, arguing that "schooling in the digital age requires sustained debate and dissection, scrutiny and contestation".

The rise of AI has intensified concerns regarding academic integrity and non-ethical use of technology (Lo, 2023; Seviour, 2019). It can cause our growing dependence on generative systems that may weaken independent thought and self-directed inquiry, and limit "learners' imagination, creativity and alternative perspectives of expressions" in written pieces and artwork (UNESCO, 2023, p. 37). It can also lead to deskilling by either causing an atrophy of skill and knowledge in skilled individuals, due to prolonged use and reliance on intelligent systems, or by limiting novice individuals' and professionals' expertise development (Sutton et al., 2023, p. 12).

Analysing the potentials and challenges of GenAI, Dumančić, Ružić and Kadum (Dumančić et al, 2025, p. 97) argue that its integration in higher education is context-dependent and conclude that "the future of GenAI in academia lies in the creation of integrated, transparent, and ethically aligned ecosystems that strengthen – rather than replace – the human dimensions of teaching and learning".

The literature on AI-assisted learning in arts education, particularly regarding ESP in dramatic and applied arts, remains limited. Existing studies and systematic literature reviews primarily examine AI integration in arts education more broadly, without focusing on foreign language learning or ESP (Tongori et al., 2025), or general development of writing, reading and vocabulary skills in language learning (Crompton & Burke, 2023). Covering the period 2022–2026 and diverse geographical contexts, most studies recognise both the benefits and challenges of AI integration in education.

However, according to relevant findings, "a stunningly low number of authors, only two out of 146 articles (1.4%), critically reflect upon ethical implications, challenges and risks of applying AI in education" (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Other researchers have also found that "higher order thinking, complex problem solving, critical thinking ability, and collaborative learning tendencies" need to be considered in AILEd studies much more, and recommend studying AI applications in language education (Liang et al., 2023, p. 4270).

As reflective practitioners (Janković & Vuletić, 2025; Vuletić & Janković, 2023), we explore how students of applied and dramatic arts perceive the use of certain AI tools in English for Artistic Purposes, as well as in education and artistic practice more broadly. The research was conducted in academic year 2025/2026, and the following chapters examine how students' critical reflections inform future iterations of the pedagogical innovation implemented in the courses of English for Artistic Purposes presented in this study.

[3] https://www.circle-u.eu/cops

2. Research description and Methodology

This study addresses the following research question: How do students of applied and dramatic arts perceive the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in English for Specific Purposes courses, education and artistic practice? A sequential multi-method design was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Methodological triangulation was used, incorporating: 1) a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA), as a classification method used to evaluate and score a set of eight AI tools regarding their applicability in ESP courses; 2) a quasi-experimental pedagogical intervention with parallel groups introducing selected AI tools into ESP lessons, generating quantitative data; and 3) post-experimental semi-structured interviews, examining students' perceptions of the use of AI tools in ESP courses, education and art. Data were analysed using a descriptive-interpretive approach, while quantitative results were examined through descriptive statistics and t-tests.The key variable was students' awareness of AI-enhanced task design: students of the Faculty of Applied Arts (FAA – intervention groups) were informed that AI tools had been used, whereas students of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts (FDA – comparison groups) were initially unaware of it. However, this variable was partially compromised when some comparison-group students recognised the AI-generated nature of the activities before the final data collection. This paper focuses primarily on Phase 3, i.e. students' perceptions of the use of AI for the stated purposes.

Research instruments. To provide the contextual background, we shall briefly present all the phases and the research instruments applied in each of them:

Phase 1 – **A quality-criteria checklist for the Multi-Criteria Analysis of AI tools**. Based on prior experience and a comparative review of relevant literature and resources, eight AI tools (Twee, NaturalReader AI Text to Speech, TTSMaker Text to Speech, Perplexity, Ginger Software, Canva, Skybox AI by Blockade Labs, and Kahoot!) were systematically classified and evaluated using a quality-criteria checklist. Twelve criteria, established through expert consensus between the two researchers, assessed the tools' suitability for ESP teaching, including language-skill integration, alignment with ESP aims and CEFR B1–C2 levels, learner-centredness, content and output quality, multimodality, usability, lesson preparation efficiency, accessibility, and cost-free use. To ensure scoring reliability, two researchers independently coded the items based on the 12 Q-matrix predictors and assessed the inter-rater agreement with Cohen's kappa ($\kappa = .68$, 95% CI [0.63, 0,72]), which indicated substantial agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Discrepancies were then resolved through discussion, resulting in a final Q-matrix for AI Tool Assessment (QMAITA), which was used for the evaluation of AI tools. The final selection of AI tools was based on the predominance of positive over negative ratings, comparison of both researchers' evaluations, and consensus on the four tools selected for each faculty.

Phase 2 – **Corpora of AI-enhanced exercises and prompts.** The corpora consisted of AI-enhanced exercises and prompts for students to use in teacher-guided activities, designed to foster student engagement, creativity, interaction and spontaneous language use during the four-week quasi-experimental intervention. The exercises were created by each practitioner for their own students and tailored to the specific ESP content of the respective art disciplines.[4] To develop the corpora of exercises, both practitioners used four AI tools, two shared and two distinct. AI-tool selection

[4] Applied Arts: Applied Painting, Applied Sculpture, Ceramics, Stage Costume, Scenography, Contemporary Clothing, Graphics and Books, Photography, Animation, Graphic Design, Industrial Design, Design of Interiors and Furniture, Textile Design, Conservation and Restoration of Paintings and Artwork on Paper, Conservation and Restoration of Sculptures and Archaeological Artefacts.
Dramatic Arts: Acting, Dramaturgy, Theatre and Radio Directing, Film and Television Directing, Film and Television Production, Camera, Editing, Sound Recording and Design, Management and Production in Theatre, Radio and Culture, Visual Effects, Animation and Game Art.

differences were not treated as moderating variables, as all activities were independently designed and adapted to the specific study areas. This phase generated quantitative data through teacher and student Likert-type ratings and informed subsequent qualitative analysis. Teachers used a structured Likert-type observation rubric to rate students' participation in activities during the intervention phase. The Likert scale measuring students' perception of AI tools in ESP (SPAIESP) demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .858). The SPAIESP data were analysed using descriptive statistics and t-tests.

Phase 3 – **Questionnaire-guided semi-structured interviews and digital teacher diaries.** These instruments were used to record students' perceptions of AI tools application in English classes. An interview protocol was applied, consisting of a brief visual reminder of the intervention exercise types and a non-standardised questionnaire comprising seven open-ended questions and one Likert-type question. As the latter (Q8) was added at the end of the intervention to generate quantitative data on students' class-related evaluations, it is reported as part of Phase 2 results. The interviews were conducted in English, with four separate student groups, following the intervention and the students' informed consent. Questions Q1-Q3 and Q8 were aswered only by intervention participants, whereas questions Q4-Q7 were open to all students. Responses were recorded in digital teacher diaries and compiled for analysis. Owing to variations in attendance and participation, the number of responses varied across questions. Interview responses for this study were selected through researcher consensus and assigned identification codes for reference purposes, Response labels indicate students' faculty, year of study and the order of collection, and do not correspond to the same students across questions.

Research sample. The participants were students of two faculties of the University of Arts in Belgrade, comprising a convenience sample consisting of four student groups. The full sample (N = 144) includes 37 first-year students and 34 second-year students of the Faculty of Applied Arts (FAA), and 42 first-year students and 31 second-year students of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts (FDA), who were regular attendees during the pedagogical intervention period and could, thus, assess the AI-enhanced activities on a Likert scale. Due to the fact that student attendance fluctuated throughout the research period, students who participated in some, but not all, of the quasi-experimental lessons were eligible to respond to the more general interview questions not directly related to the intervention activities. The interview sample, thus, comprised all students who were present and provided responses to some, or all of the interview questions. The data collected were voluminous and in the selection of students' responses for the qualitative analysis, we were guided by the principle of structured and illustrative sampling.

3. Research results

This paper focuses primarily on students' responses to the interview questions. Detailed descriptions of the first two phases will be provided in a separate study, while here they are only briefly presented.

Phase 1. The Phase 1 Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA), based on the assessment of the eight AI tools, and the predominance of positive over negative Q-matrix (QMAITA) ratings, resulted in the following final selections: a) Twee, Ginger Software, TTS NaturalReader and Skybox AI by Blockade Labs for the Faculty of Applied Arts, and b) Twee, Ginger Software, TTSMaker and Perplexity for the Faculty of Dramatic Arts. The MCA showed that Twee and Ginger Software met most of our teaching needs in terms of variety of activities we could plan, so both teachers decided to use them. The two Text-to-Speech applications met only part of our needs related to language skills, by turning printed texts into audio materials, and had to be combined with the other tools or teacher-made exercises. One teacher opted for the TTSMaker, whereas the other chose the TTS NaturalReader. While Perplexity better suited creating interactive tasks for dramatic arts students, Skybox AI by Blockade Labs was the chosen tool for applied arts.

Phase 2. The quasi-experimental intervention focused on AI-enhanced tasks designed to promote interactive practice and spontaneous language use in ESP. One AI tool was in focus each week, occasionally supplemented by other tools to support specific learning objectives. The activities combined listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and communicative functions to foster integrated language skills. Twee and Ginger Software helped create versatile lexical and task-based materials; text-to-speech tools supported listening activities; Perplexity generated profession-related texts; while Skybox AI by Blockade Labs transformed students' linguistic input into visual representations. Many activities served as a basis for speaking practice and discussions on artistic topics. However, as the AI tools themselves could not simulate or prompt authentic interaction, it was the teachers' responsibility to convert AI-generated content into live communication.[5] Quantitative data on students' perceptions of AI tools in ESP (SPAIESP) from this phase were collected through Likert-type ratings and analysed using descriptive statistics and t-tests.

Student participation (responsiveness and willingness to contribute) was rated after each intervention lesson by each teacher for their respective groups (ratings being aggregated evaluations for first- and second-year students), and the weeks were labelled according to the predominantly used AI tool. Although other tools were occasionally used and ratings were based on teacher judgement, consistency was supported by long-term teaching experience. Individual ratings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Teachers' Ratings of Student Participation in AI-enhanced Lessons*

Teachers' rating of student participation			
FAA – Faculty of Applied Arts		**FDA –** Faculty of Dramatic Arts	
Twee	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – **5**	Twee	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – **5**
Skybox AI by Block. Labs	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – **5**	Perplexity	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – **5**
TTS NaturalReader	1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – **5**	TTSMaker	1 – 2 – **3 – 4** – 5
Ginger Software	1 – 2 – 3 – **4 – 5**	Ginger Software	1 – 2 – 3 – **4 – 5**

As noted in the Methodology section, during lesson 3 of the intervention (TTSMaker), some FDA students recognised the AI-generated nature of the speech and began questioning the activities. From that point, the teacher could no longer withold the fact that tasks had been AI-enhanced, which influenced FDA students' affective response, as reflected in their interview answers. Consequently, all groups were aware of AI involvement by the time of data collection, which may have reduced the distinction of the awareness variable, making it relevant for further quantitative results interpretation.

The Likert-type question (SPAIESP) was administered at the end of the intervention to ensure that as many participants as possible were included in the numerical evaluation of AI-enhanced activities. It aimed to check to what extent the students found AI-assisted activities helpful in terms of motivation to participate, creativity, interactivity and language skills, and was answered by 37 first-year and 34 second-year FAA students, and 42 first-year and 31 second-year FDA students. Students' responses to the five-point Likert-type question (Q8) about the AI-assisted language learning process are presented in Table 2, showing comparative values for the intervention (FAA) and comparison (FDA) groups.

[5] Example: Twee generated multiple short dialogues in the form of paired sentences using the target vocabulary provided by the teacher. The dialogues were then cut into individual sentence strips and distributed among students. Those holding prompt sentences (A) read them aloud, while students holding the response sentences (B) identified their match and responded accordingly. For instance (Camera / Editing target vocabulary):
A3: This shot needs some colour correction, or just adjusting the white balance. It's a bit too warm.
B3: Sure. We can use filters or adjust the color temperature to make it cooler.

Table 2. *Frequency Distribution for Q8: Perceived Helpfulness of AI-assisted Activities*

Q8: *On a scale 1-5 (1 = lowest, 5 = highest), to what extent did you find such AI-assisted activities helpful for your language learning regarding ...:*							
	Faculty - year	1	2	3	4	5	Total
... your motivation to participate:	FAA-first	3	2	6	18	8	37
	FDA-first	13	3	7	10	9	42
	FAA-second	5	5	6	12	6	34
	FDA-second	5	4	7	8	7	31
... your own creativity:	FAA-first	6	11	13	4	3	37
	FDA-first	17	12	9	2	2	42
	FAA-second	8	13	9	2	2	34
	FDA-second	15	9	4	3	0	31
... interactivity during the lesson:	FAA-first	2	3	10	14	8	37
	FDA-first	9	2	8	13	10	42
	FAA-second	3	4	8	12	7	34
	FDA-second	1	2	8	12	8	31
... language skills practice:	FAA-first	0	2	5	14	16	37
	FDA-first	9	4	4	13	12	42
	FAA-second	1	3	7	9	14	34
	FDA-second	0	1	7	11	12	31

To summarise the responses and provide an overview of the observed trends in the data, descriptive statistics (N, mean, standard deviation, and standard error of the mean) for the intervention and comparison groups were also calculated. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for the Four Study Groups across the Examined Domains (Q8)*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
motivation	FAA First year	37	3.70	1.127	.185
	FDA First year	42	2.98	1.569	.242
	FAA Second year	34	3.26	1.333	.229
	FDA Second Year	31	3.26	1.390	.250
creativity	FAA First year	37	2.65	1.136	.187
	FDA First year	42	2.05	1.125	.174
	FAA Second year	34	2.32	1.093	.187
	FDA Second Year	31	1.84	1.003	.180
interactivity	FAA First year	37	3.62	1.089	.179
	FDA First year	42	3.31	1.456	.225
	FAA Second year	34	3.47	1.212	.208
	FDA Second Year	31	3.77	1.023	.184
language skills	FAA First year	37	4.19	.877	.144
	FDA First year	42	3.36	1.527	.236
	FAA Second year	34	3.94	1.127	.193
	FDA Second Year	31	4.10	.870	.156

The t-test comparisons of the groups showed a statistically significant difference between FAA and FDA first-year students in two of the four domains examined: motivation ($t = 2.33$; $p < .05$), and language skills ($t = 2.92$; $p < .01$). In the domains of creativity ($t = 2.36$; $p > .05$) and interactivity ($t = 1.07$; $p > .05$), no significant difference was found. The two scales on which the statistically significant differences were observed report higher ratings from the FAA students than the FDA students. The t-test comparison of the second-year groups showed no statistically significant difference between the two faculties: motivation ($t = 0.02$; $p > .05$); creativity ($t = 1.86$; $p > .05$); interactivity ($t = -1.09$; $p > .05$) and language skills ($t = -0.62$; $p > .05$).

The comparison of the FAA first-year and second-year students showed no statistically significant difference on any of the scales (motivation: $t = 0.02$; $p > 0.05$; creativity: $t = 1.85$; $p > 0.05$; interactivity: $t = -1.08$; $p > 0.05$; language skills: $t = -0.62$; $p > 0.05$). Finally, the comparison of the FDA first-year and second-year showed a statistically significant difference on the scales of interactivity ($t = -1.52$; $p < 0.05$) and language skills ($t = -2.42$; $p < 0.01$), with the second-year students giving higher ratings on both scales. The other two scales – motivation ($t = -0.79$; $p > 0.05$) and creativity ($t = 0.82$; $p > 0.05$) did not show statistically significant differences between the first- and second-year students.

Phase 3. The interviews with the four groups were conducted in the first post-intervention week. Responses to Q1 – Q3 were provided by intervention participants, while Q4 – Q7 were also open to other students who wished to comment on broader AI-related issues beyond the interventon. Participant codes indicate faculty, year of study and respondent number (e.g. AA1.1; DA2.4). Students expressed a range of views, from positive to critical, regarding the pedagogical implications of AI-generated materials. Due to the large volume of data, a limited selection of representative responses illustrating positive, neutral or ambivalent and critical perspectives are presented in this paper.

Q1 and Q2 refer to the same AI tools applied at each faculty, Since students' responses to Q2 were often brief and already contained in their answers to Q1, they will be jointly presented.

Q1: ***Describe your impressions after the lesson/activities in which the following AI tool was used:*** **Q2:** ***Did you find that lesson or activity useful / interesting / motivating?***

a Twee:

AA1.9 - I was truly impressed with how a teacher can use Twee to create almost a whole lesson using the text from the book. Because we did multiple choice tasks and open-ended questions and True/False exercises. And we also had very interesting discussion questions, facts, and quotations from well-known people related to the topic.

AA2.12 – It was useful and interesting for me, but I think the most important factor was the way you organized and led the class.

DA1.4 – As far as I understood, Twee is used to make lessons, help come up with activites during the class, talking points, etc. I think it's lazy and honestly, a little sad. A teacher should be able to pass on their knowledge and engage with students on a topic unassisted. Having an AI make essentially a lesson plan for them just makes me feel like they don't know how to present the topic at hand properly.

DA1.19 – In general, the AI provided good questions. If we were not told that AI had been used I wouldn't have been able to tell.

DA1.25 – It was fun when J. was answering the qustions as a professional. It was more fun when we talked to each other and practised real skills than reading from a text.

DA2.29 – Functional. I mean these work simply because there was human supervision.

b1 Skybox AI by Blockade Labs

AA1.1 – Somewhat interesting, but I do not want to use it because it undermines human creativity, the creativity of visual artists.

AA2.7 – I don't think that most young artists would enjoy learning English in Art this way, with this tool, no...

AA2.15 – It doesn't truly reflect my imagination to the full extent, because it depends on your vocabulary and how well you describe your idea, and so… it definitely restricts my artistic expression.

b2 Perplexity:
DA1.3 – Works fine in this instance, but should be fact-checked in case the AI slips in some false information.
DA1.10 – The text here is more interesting and uses new words quite well. It was engaging to read and fairly easy to understand.
DA2.8 – I think it can serve well as a search engine which can produce practical texts for classes like these or maybe for our individual study. It can help us learn how to summarise longer texts and paraphrase things by also using professional terms. But then, there is the risk of people overusing it to do things for them or instead of them, and that's the bad side of it.

c1 TTS Natural Reader:
AA1.3 – I think this tool is perfectly fine. Various English speakers, different accents and dialects – it's useful.
AA1.5 – It was okay for me to listen; interesting and helpful, though I prefer real speakers. At least I didn't have to read endless paragraphs myself.
AA2.11 – I don't agree and I don't use such tools. I'd always rather listen to my professor than AI.

c2 TTSMaker:
DA1.21 – I'm absolutely against text-to-speech. I think either the professor or the students should read all texts we use in class because we should practise both reading aloud AND listening. We're supposed to work in a professional setting one day, we need to be able to talk coherently and with confidence.
DA1.23 – I don't really know what to say. It sounded good, but I prefer human voices. It's simply more natural.
DA2.9 – It's good for dictations and listening practice – such activities are always useful. For actors it's very good to practise varieties of English accent.

d Ginger Software:
AA1.3 – This software offers idiomatic and natural formulations, which is especially important for those learning English as a foreign language.
AA1.4 – Ginger AI helped me write better. My grammar and spelling were corrected. But we shouldn't get lazy about learning how to spell and rely on it all the time.
AA2.16 – The vocabulary practice with those different forms of the same words was useful, and it is important for us to learn as many of such words as possible.
DA1.4. – Useful for learning and adjusting to a language in the short term, but if you keep relying on it to fix your grammar, rephrase your sentences and so on, you will never actually learn anything.
DA1.21 – If I didn't know they were partially AI, I would enjoy all of these exercises.

Responses to Q1 and Q2, show that, besides the need for quality skills development (expanding vocabulary, listening and pronunciation practice, reading art-related texts, writing support, etc.), students favour a limited, rather than extensive use of the selected AI tools in language courses, and express greater confidence in the teacher's guidance. The next segment examines their broader perceptions of AI-assisted language learning.

Q3: ***Do you see any shortcomings / downsides of utilising the AI tools your teacher used?***

AA1.4 – These are all well prepared exercises, but the quality of teaching and our practice depends on the teacher who creates them.
AA1.6 – The tools we used were helpful because they don't make our learning much different from what we are used to, but they even add to the choice of activities we can do.

AA2.16 – I believe we should trust our teachers and their experience in deciding what's good for us and what's not. I don't think they'll ever use anything they don't find appropriate for us or for our classes.

DA1.9 – Yes. It defeats the purpose of having a teacher and going to class. I could just use AI to learn anything, but I know AI isn't nearly as good at teaching as humans are. There are so many books and scripts we could learn from rather than generating more content and damaging the environment.

DA1.20 – I will always stand by the fact that human work cannot be replaced by an algorithm. […] I think AI can make many mistakes. And it cannot adapt to our needs as well as a teacher can. I will also mention the fact that casual usage of AI is ruining the environment due to the cooling systems used to power this technology. Every day we're wasting gallons of fresh water for something that can be done by a human. […].

DA2.9 – As useful as they can be, they raise the question of the ethics of the use of AI in education.

Q4: *To what extent and in what way do you see the potential use of AI tools in future teaching of foreign languages (for specific purposes)?*

AA1.4 – Both general English and English for specific purposes can be better learned with the help of AI tools. What is needed are good instructions from a professional on how and which tools to use… Not all students are the same in knowledge, character, and learning strategies.

DA1.3 – The best way I could describe AI is that it's a double-edged sword. On one hand, it can easily make personalized exercises catered to a student's needs and proficiency level. On the other hand, though, it can make us reliant on using it, which impacts our brain and critical thinking. I don't think it should ever be used for conversation practice. Language itself is extremely human, an algorithm can never replace actual conversation with a native speaker.

DA1.19 – It probably can be a good tool for teachers if it's used alongside traditional methods, with human input and as long as the previously mentioned concerns are addressed.

DA2.8 – Using it occasionally as an additional tool in teaching for revision or for showing examples may sound acceptable as long as such activities don't prevail and stifle the natural way we progress.

Q5: *Do you think the teacher should recommend AI tools which students could use when learning a language (for specific purposes) in class or on their own?*

AA1.6 – I believe a good teacher is obliged to motivate students in every possible way to improve their foreign language learning.

AA2.6 – There are many such tools, but nothing can be as effective as when you speak to people around you and learn from that experience.

DA1.9. – No. AI help is slowly making us dumber. We need to work to learn something, that's how it really stays in our brains. Teachers and homework exist for a reason, and a lot of information is available on the Internet.

DA1.19 – At this point in time, I think it's not ethical for AI tools to be used widely in classrooms, and for teachers to be recommending them. It's a slippery tool, and it can often make mistakes and mislead students because it is known for AI to "lie".

DA2.2 – I think that the teacher should recommend AI tools because Ginger Software could help with easily confused and misspelled words. Twee is good for generating definitions of the key words and that can help beginners to learn new words faster.

The findings for Q3-Q5 suggest that students evaluate AI tools through the lens of human interaction and the teachers' responsibility for the organisation of the learning process. Although

AI is seen by some respondents as useful, mainly when carefully controlled and selectively applied, a lot of students express a negative opinion towards the use of AI in language learning, especially in the first-year FDA group. The last two questions will show how they perceive it within broader educational and professional contexts.

Q6: *Would you like to share any other impressions / opinions / attitudes on the use of AI in education not included above?*

AA1.7 – It seems we can't avoid AI in education now that it's here, but I think good balance is the most important. Teachers should make that balance.
AA1.9 – Teachers need to be educated in the use of AI, and then they should educate the students…
AA2.3 – AI will be incorporated in all areas of our lives and we should learn to use it wisely.
DA1.3 – AI should only be used as a helping hand by educated professionals, nothing more, especially not as a replacement for actual teachers. I am more concerned about students using AI these days, especially children in their formative years. There's been numerous instances of teachers saying that students in their class literally cannot read above a primary school level. This is immensely concerning, and not enough is being done to regulate the use of AI and improve learning conditions.
DA2.21 – There's no point in debating until the environmental/ecological issue is resolved, as well as copyright and plagiarism issues. But even then, when it comes to art, I find it unacceptable.

Q7: *Where do you see some advantages or disadvantages of AI use in your field of art?*

AA1.3 – Visual art is under attack from AI. However, the difference between visual artworks created by artists and those generated by AI is very clear – in favor of the artists, of course…
AA1.9 – In their private lives, it is ok for visual artists too to use it... On the other hand, many artists and designers who value themselves and their originality do not use AI tools and software in their work...
AA2.5 – I totally agree, beacause with AI, people don't even know who is credited or copyrighted with a piece of artwork.
DA1.3 – AI is serviceable in cases where the artist/client has to get an idea out quickly, such as very early concept art. It is amazing at doing tasks that are otherwise tedious and boring, like rotoscoping, chroma keying or retopologizing 3D models. Yet, I feel like its potential is not being used in the right places. Currently, in the VFX/ Animation/ Game Art industry, AI is mostly being used as a way to cut down on staff by churning out quick and soulless visuals. This is extremely tragic to me, because AI has so much potential to give humans more freedom to do the "fun part" by doing the monotonous work for them.
DA2.5 – I think in the field of management it can be good for making budget plans and those boring tasks that don't require a lot of creativity.
DA2.10 – I can say as an actress that you can never replace a human emotion.

The responses to the final questions Q6-Q7 indicate that most students are guided by the judgement whether AI supports or replaces human creativity and expertise. Therefore, they reject the involvement of AI in creative processes pertaining to their artistic disciplines, such as acting, scriptwriting, visual art, authorsip, etc., whereas they seem more inclined to accept it in technical and repetitive tasks, concept development or workflow optimisation.

At the end of the interview, students were asked if they had any other comments to add. At this point, some of the FDA students were quite honest and said:

DA2.1 – We liked the activities, but they are normal and typical acitivities.
DA2.2 – We didn't know AI was being used. When you first told us it had been used, we felt betrayed, and changed our perspective on practice.
DA2.3 – We felt miffed.
DA2.4 – It could have been much more interactive and immersive to the maximum. It was like doing a test.
DA2.5 – I don't think it can be any more immersive. I don't think it can do any better than a human.
DA1.21 – Hopefully there won't be any more use of AI moving forward. I'll always be against AI – too many down sides. Everything we did a human could've made. It leaves a sort of bitter feeling knowing AI was used.
DA1.33 – I am less motivated to pay attention when the professor didn't even write the class material.

The strength of these final student reactions highlighted the importance of transparency in implementing pedagogical innovation and maintaining trust built between the teacher and students over years of collaboration, and prompted a reconsideration of whether delayed disclosure represents an appropriate pedagogical strategy in similar contexts.

4. Discussion

The AI tools selected in Phase 1 by means of Multi-Criteria Analysis provided a framework for interactive language practice activities. Although some tools were more versatile than others, offering more possibilities for language practice (Twee, Perplexity, and Ginger Software as compared to TTS tools and Skybox AI by Blockade Labs), their effectiveness largely depended on the teachers' adaptation of AI-generated materials for communicative purposes, their lesson preparation and management, which was often emphasised as crucial in the interviews. The findings in this study thus align with the call from our theoretical framework (Liang et al., 2023, p. 4270) for studying AI applications in language education and developing students' critical thinking ability. As the existing research has focused primarily on students' use of ChatGPT as a learning support tool (Lo, 2023), with little or no attention paid to the tools examined here, particularly in ESP courses, our study represents a step towards addressing that gap, while further research in this area remains necessary.

According to the teachers' ratings, students' initial engagement in Phase 2 was consistently high in the first weeks of the intervention at both faculties. However, FDA students' discovery that some activities had been AI-assisted, rather than entirely teacher-made, altered their motivation and perceptions of the practice activities, which is reflected in both Likert-type activity ratings (Table 1 – lesson 3; Table 2 – rating value 1) and students' interview responses. Despite that, except for the creativity variable, most students rated the effectiveness of the activities with predominantly high Likert values 4 and 5 (Table 2), most probably taking the teachers' contribution into account. Our pedagogical innovation thus responded to Walder's (2017) recommendation to give students a voice in evaluating innovative teaching practices and their potential to improve educational outcomes. A limitation of this study, though, is that, given the scope of a single paper, it is not possible to present both the designed tasks and students' responses in full, leaving a more detailed presentation and discussion for future publications.

The descriptive statistics and t-test results for Q8 (Table 3) suggest that students' perceptions regarding AI-assisted activities were generally similar across faculties and years of study, with significant statistical differences found on: a) motivation and language-skill variables in favour of FAA first-year students compared to their FDA peers, which may be reasonably attributed to the compromised awareness variable; and b) interactivity and language-skill variables in favour of second-year FDA students compared to their first-year colleagues, while FAA students show stable high ratings throughout the process. If not also affected by the compromised trust in the learning

process, the language-skill ratings and developmental gain in favour of second-year FDA students may be resulting from greater academic maturity, experience, or familiarity with versatile learning approaches among more advanced students, which is verifiable through their argumentation during interviews. Creativity clearly remains the weakest perceived dimension across all groups at both faculties, aligning with interview findings showing that students are very cautious about the use of AI in creative processes.

During Phase 3 interviews, students across all groups consistently evaluated the use of AI tools through the lens of teacher mediation and human interaction, emphasisting the importance of the teacher's role in designing, organising and controlling classroom activities. This apect of our research responds to the calls for fostering "students' confidence in their own powers of reason" (Facione, 1990), and a stronger communication-oriented approach in higher education, making students partners in professional discussion (Gojkov et al., 2015).

Among the numerous responses collected, the selected examples, though limited in number, reflect a range of students' perceptions of AI-generated materials in language learning, education and artistic practice, from positive and ambivalent to clearly critical views. The broader interview corpus suggests that a more comprehensive qualitative analysis may yield a less favourable overall assessment of AI tools than that indicated by the quantitative ratings alone. Owing to space limitations, such detailed analysis of all students' responses is reserved for a separate study.

One area that recurrently concerns many of our students in both generations is the broader ecological impact of AI use. Supported by extensive and often elaborate argumentation, only part of which could be included in this paper, students' opinions are consistent with evidence reported in other sources (e.g., Gorey, 2025). For these reasons, the researchers chose to carefully balance the application of AI in future teaching by reusing existing materials rather than generating new ones, or even minimising the use of AI in ESP courses.

The ethical dimension of AI use in education emerged as a particularly relevant issue for our respondents. As higher education is context-dependent (Dumančić et al, 2025, p. 97), and relatively few studies address the ethical implications and risks of AI in education (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019), our findings highlight the importance of this neglected area. Some FDA students expressed feelings of eroded trust in response to the lack of transparency in the implementation of the innovation, with statements such as "we felt betrayed" underscoring the need for clear communication about AI involvement in pedagogical design. Although such reluctance is not specific to the presented English for Artistic Purposes course, these reactions emphasise the central role of trust in teacher-student relationships and show that transparency is crucial for successful integration of pedagogical innovations across disciplines.

A key concern for our students relates to the use of AI in the world of art. As higher-order cognitive processes and critical thinking extend beyond educational contexts into cultural capital development (Reed & Johnson, 2023), students in Phases 2 and 3 of the study drew a clear distinction between acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI. While being open to its use for structured practice and technical or workflow support in repetitive tasks, our learners oppose to its interference with their "imagination, creativity and alternative perspectives of expressions" (UNESCO, 2023, p. 37). As future artists ready to engage in the "sustained debate and dissection, scrutiny and contestation" of digital technolgies in education (Selwyn et al, 2018), they largely reject AI in creative processes, viewing it as a potential threat to their creative identity.

Several limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. As a quasi-experimental design involving four student groups over a one-month period, respondent numbers fluctuated, making it difficult to systematically represent all responses or ensure a consistent number per lesson or interview question. The compromised dependent variable may also have influenced students' affective

responses prior to the end of the intervention, thereby affecting overall Likert-scale scores across the four variables. The interview data can be considered candid and reflective of students' genuine perceptions of AI use in ESP courses for applied and dramatic arts students. However, as noted above, further analysis of the Phase 3 interview corpus is required to determine the extent to which these qualitative findings qualify or reshape the overall picture emerging from the quantitative results.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore how students of applied and dramatic arts perceive the use of AI tools in English for Artistic Purposes courses, their education and artistic practice, and whether they find AI-assisted activities helpful for motivation, creativity, interactivity and language skills development. The findings suggest that students' perceptions of AI were complex and nuanced. Although the quantitative results indicated generally favourable evaluations of certain pedagogical benefits, particularly with regard to motivation, interactivity and language skills development, the qualitative findings revealed a more cautious and critical stance toward the broader role of AI in education and artistic practice.

The study employed three-phase sequential multi-method design involving Multi-Criteria Analysis of AI tools, a quasi-experimental AI-enhanced intervention in ESP lessons, and post-intervention interviews exploring students' responses. It focuses primarily on Phase 3, with the aim of examining how applied arts (intervention groups) and dramatic arts (comparison groups) students evaluate AI-assisted learning in relation to language development, education, and artistic practice.

The AI tools selected through Multi-Criteria Analysis supported structured language practice but were insufficient for fully integrated ESP learning without substantial teacher mediation. Tools such as Twee, Perplexity and Ginger Software proved more versatile, while others (TTS NaturalReader, TTSMaker and Skybox AI by Blockade Labs) required additional pedagogical support. Students of both faculties consistently emphasised the central role of the teacher in designing and guiding AI-enhanced activities.

Quantitative findings showed mainly positive evaluations of motivation, interactivity and language skills development, while the creativity aspect of AI-enhanced lessons was rated the lowest across all groups. Certain differences between groups (related to motivation, interactivity and language skills) were partly linked to a compromised awareness variable, as some students in comparison groups recognised AI use prior to the end of intervention.

Interview data revealed broadly consistent perceptions, ranging from positive and amibvalent to critical, but unified by a strong preference for human guidance and transparency. While students partially acknowledged AI's usefullness as a support tool for language-focused and repetitive tasks (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, formal writing, etc.), they largely rejected its role in creative processes, viewing it as a threat to artistic identity, and resisting its limitation of "imagination, creativity and alternative perspectives of expression" (UNESCO, 2023, p. 37). Ethical concerns also emerged, particularly regarding ecological impact of AI use in general (Gorey, 2025) and in the context of pedagogical transparency and trust, with some students expressing feelings of 'betrayal' when they identified AI use before the planned post-intervention disclosure.

Resulting in perceptions that were cautious and often critical rather than unequivocally positive, these findings highlight the importance of ethical awareness, transparency and trust related to AI-enhanced pedagogy, especially in higher education contexts, where human interaction remains central. They also align with broader literature concerns about dependency, skill degradation, and the need to preserve critical thinking and creativity in education and professional practice (Facione, 1990; Sutton et al., 2023).

The study contributes to the limited research on AI tools beyond ChatGPT, specifically in ESP teaching in art contexts, and supports calls for further investigation into ethically grounded and balanced integration of AI in pedagogical practice. Despite limitations related to fluctuating participation, a partially compromised awareness variable, and the scope of data presentation (to be supplemented in future publications), the findings in this study offer insight into how applied and dramatic arts students critically negotiate the tensions between technological innovation and creative identity.

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Submitted/Received	Accepted
9 April 2026	2 June 2026