Teachers' Perspectives on AI Integration in EFL Teaching: Perceived Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

This study investigates English course teachers' perspectives on the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, specifically ChatGPT, in English Language Teaching (ELT) within the informal education sector in Medan, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative approach, data were collected from 17 teachers through questionnaires to explore their experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges associated with AI integration. The findings reveal that 64.29% of teachers recognized AI's potential to streamline lesson planning and generate ideas, while 42.86% appreciated its ability to personalize instruction. Additionally, 14.29% highlighted its role in enhancing language skill practice. However, significant concerns emerged, with 50% of teachers fearing reduced teacher-student interaction and 42.86% worrying about AI undermining traditional teaching values. Ethical issues, including potential bias (14.29%) and misinformation (7.14%), were also noted. The study concludes that while AI offers transformative opportunities in ELT, its integration must be supported by teacher training, resource allocation, and a balanced approach to preserve human-centered teaching principles. These findings provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers aiming to harness the potential of AI in language education.

INTRODUCTION

The field of education is undergoing a profound transformation, with technological advancements playing a pivotal role in reshaping teaching practices. As the integration of technology in education gains momentum, it becomes increasingly crucial for educators to equip themselves with an understanding of how technology can be leveraged to enhance teaching and

learning (Dynarski et al., 2023). In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), the introduction of conversational AI presents a valuable opportunity to enrich the learning experience (Hirankerd & Kittisunthonphisarn, 2020; Kim et al., 2021).

The utilisation of AI in the learning process is particularly prevalent amongst student users engaged in EFL studies; a multitude of empirical studies have evidenced a positive impact on the advancement of their language proficiency (AlTwijri & Alghizzi, 2024; Darwin et al., 2024; Mizumoto, Yasuda & Tamura, 2024; Teng; 2024). Moreover, educators have also embraced these technological advancements, integrating them as an aid to the teaching process (Al-khresheh, 2024). A number of studies have examined the perspectives of teachers on the integration of AI in English Language Teaching. However, these studies have predominantly focused on formal educational institutions (Al-khresheh, 2024; Alharbi & Khalil, 2023; Dilzhan, 2024; Nazim, 2024). In Indonesia, where informal institutions such as English courses play a significant role in language education (Rahayu, 2020), there is a noticeable absence of research exploring the perspectives of teachers in these settings. This gap in the literature highlights the need for an investigation into how English course teachers perceive and adapt to AI integration in their teaching practices. In order to address this issue, the following research question is posed: What are the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in the teaching process?

The field of English Language Teaching (ELT) is experiencing significant change, largely driven by rapid technological advancements (Udoh, 2023). Historically, ELT has relied on traditional classroom settings, where face-to-face interactions, direct instruction, and structured curricula were the foundation of teaching (Alkhudiry, 2022; Hsu et al., 2023; Long, 2017; Orak & Al-khresheh, 2021). However, the increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is reshaping these conventional practices. As AI becomes more widespread in language learning, educators have expressed a range of perspectives. Some are optimistic about AI's potential to enhance both teaching and learning, while others are concerned about how it might disrupt established pedagogical methods. According to Alharbi and Khalil (2023), AI presents significant opportunities to improve language education by offering personalized learning experiences and boosting student engagement.

AI's role in enhancing language learning is widely recognized, with tools such as virtual assistants and robot-assisted systems becoming more common in language classrooms. Alharbi

and Khalil (2023) highlight that AI enables personalized learning, real-time feedback, and interactive environments, fostering a student-centered approach. However, Magayanes, Varas Giler, and Sotomayor Cantos (2023) note that despite the potential of AI tools to improve skills like writing, many educators remain cautious about integrating these technologies into their existing teaching frameworks. While AI has the capacity to personalize instruction and engage students more effectively, concerns persist about the lack of proper training and resources to help teachers implement these technologies successfully in their classrooms. Chen, Hsu, Lin, and Hsu (2022) explore AI's role in enhancing linguistic skills through immersive learning experiences, such as virtual English tour guide simulations. Their findings suggest that AI, when combined with virtual reality (VR), creates engaging learning opportunities. However, educators emphasize that AI cannot replicate the nuances of human interaction and stress the need for a balanced approach that integrates AI with traditional teaching methods. This highlights the importance of maintaining human-centered aspects in language education while embracing technological innovation.

Despite the growing adoption of AI in classrooms, many educators face significant challenges in its effective use. Nazim (2024) identifies the complexity of AI tools and their applications as a major hurdle for teachers. A key concern is the lack of professional development opportunities to familiarize educators with these new technologies. Crompton and Burke (2023) argue that successful AI integration in education relies on ongoing teacher training and support. Similarly, Saad Almehmadi (2024) notes that many teachers lack confidence in using AI tools, which can lead to reluctance in adopting these technologies. The use of AI in pronunciation training generates a range of opinions among educators. Kazu and Kuvvetli (2023) investigate AI's role in improving pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition. While some teachers find AI helpful for pronunciation practice, others question its ability to fully capture the subtleties of human speech, which could impact the quality of teacher-student interactions. This suggests that while AI can enhance certain aspects of language learning, it cannot replace the depth of human connection essential for effective language acquisition. The integration of AI in language education presents both opportunities and challenges for educators. Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel (2023) contend that AI has the potential to revolutionize education by making it more scalable, personalized, and accessible. However, they stress that AI integration must align with established pedagogical principles, and teachers need to be adequately trained to use these technologies effectively. The

successful integration of AI in education depends on balancing its potential benefits with the preservation of traditional educational values.

Research on AI tools like ChatGPT has also garnered significant attention. Iqbal, Ahmed, and Azhar (2024) explore teachers' perceptions of ChatGPT in EFL teaching. Their study indicates that many educators value ChatGPT for its ability to provide instant language practice, assist in lesson planning, and offer personalized content. However, concerns about over-reliance on AI, particularly its potential to diminish students' critical thinking and creativity, remain prevalent. This reflects the ongoing debate about the evolving role of teachers in AI-augmented classrooms. Lo (2023) examines the use of neural machine translation in EFL classrooms. While teachers view NMT as an effective tool for enhancing vocabulary retention, concerns persist about its long-term impact on language proficiency. Teachers appreciate the immediate feedback provided by AI but worry that excessive reliance on these tools could result in shallow learning experiences. These concerns are echoed by Jeong (2023), who emphasizes that while technology can support language learning, it must be used in ways that complement traditional pedagogies and actively engage students. As well as studies by Kamalov, Santandreu Calonge, and Gurrib (2023) explore AI's transformative potential in education, advocating for a comprehensive and sustainable approach to its integration. They stress the importance of considering the social and ethical implications of AI alongside its technological capabilities. Livoreka (2019) emphasizes the need for educators to stay current with emerging trends in English Language Teaching (ELT) methodologies, including AI, to ensure that language education remains relevant and effective. Moqbel and Al-Kadi (2023) examine ChatGPT's role in foreign language learning assessment, addressing both the benefits and challenges of AI-driven assessment tools. Similarly, Rusmiyanto et al. (2023) investigate AI's role in enhancing communication skills in English learners, noting both the opportunities and challenges of incorporating AI into language instruction. Agustini (2023) further explores ChatGPT's contribution to promoting student autonomy in English learning, particularly in Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar, highlighting AI's growing role in fostering learner independence.

To sum up, AI tools like ChatGPT offer great promise in revolutionizing language education, their integration into classrooms is met with both excitement and caution. The success of AI in language education depends on teachers' perceptions, their willingness to embrace new technologies, and the training and resources they receive. As AI continues to evolve, it is essential

to strike a balance between its opportunities and challenges, ensuring that AI is incorporated into language education in a way that complements traditional teaching methods while enhancing the learning experience.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study aimed to explore English language teachers' experiences and perceptions of incorporating ChatGPT within ELT. The selection of a qualitative approach is based on its potential to analyze the complexities of human experiences and perspectives within a contextual framework, therefore delivering a nuanced knowledge of the subjective reality of participants (Luo et al., 2023). The study carefully selected teachers to gain insight into their experiences navigating traditional ELT approaches and cutting-edge AI technologies. A sophisticated, multifaceted understanding of the pedagogical interaction between traditional teaching methods and the developing AI-driven tools was made possible by this approach, which was rich in its ability to capture the granularity of lived experiences and make it possible to identify emerging themes and subtle patterns. This study included a carefully selected sample of 15 English course teachers within the English courses in Medan, representing various pedagogical backgrounds. Given their different academic backgrounds, distinct academic rankings, and unique teaching tenures, they provided a complex fusion of perspectives and experiences. The study's main instrument for gathering data was a well-designed open-ended questionnaire. This tool was selected to elicit deep insights from English language instructors, enabling them to freely express their opinions and experiences on AI in ELT. Because open-ended questionnaires allow for detailed, nuanced responses, they are essential in qualitative research. They give participants the freedom to voice their thoughts, bringing to light perspectives that organized questions could miss. This tool is crucial for gathering multiple perspectives, recognizing emergent themes, and enhancing study findings (Tasker & Cisneroz, 2019). The questionnaire's first section methodically gathered a thorough demographic profile of each participant, highlighting the importance of context in evaluating teachers' perspectives. The survey then traversed its main terrain, which consisted of six well constructed open-ended questions. These questions aimed to uncover the complexities of AI's integration with ELT, rather than simply gathering information. Each carefully worded question encouraged participants to go on introspective excursions, sharing their experiences, expressing challenges, acknowledging

accomplishments, and offering benefit of AI in ELT It is expected that these answers will offer a rich tapestry of perspectives and experiences that will be crucial in developing a comprehensive understanding of AI's emerging role in the ELT environment. For this study, we used a qualitative approach to investigate EFL English course teachers' perspectives on the use of AI in the learning process, as well as the possible benefits and limitations of AI. We created a questionnaire to get detailed information about the opinions of English course teachers on these subjects. A total of 17 EFL English course teachers took part, with all of them having prior experience using AI-based tools or technologies in their English teaching, such as ChatGPT. Prior to completing the questionnaire, each participant received a full description of the study's objectives, which focused on evaluating their perspectives of the potential benefits and problems related with AI integration. The confidentiality procedures in place to guarantee that their answers would be safeguarded and treated carefully were also covered in the briefing. In our study, we analyzed qualitative data using a theme case study technique, in order to answer the study questions, this method enabled us to methodically find recurrent patterns and linkages throughout the data. In order to fully comprehend the participants' responses, we first became well acquainted with the data by going over the interview transcripts several times. We were able to grasp the general subject matter and subtleties of the participants' opinions thanks to this immersion phase.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings are organized into two primary categories: Teachers' Perception of the Integration of AI in English Language Teaching and Perceived Benefits and Challenges of AI Integration in Language Teaching. Each section is further illustrated in Table 1, and 2, which provide a detailed breakdown of the responses, frequencies, and percentages. These tables offer a comprehensive overview of the teachers' perspectives on the use of AI tools in language teaching, highlighting both the positive experiences and concerns regarding their integration.

Table 1 Teachers' Perception of the Integration of AI in the English Language Teaching.

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Q1. Have you had any specific positive experiences using AI for teaching?	"I use ChatGPT to optimize my tasks and save time on assignments, essays, and research."	6	42.86%

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
	"ChatGPT is a valuable tool for generating ideas and initial drafts, allowing me to focus on refining my work."	6	42.86%
	"ChatGPT is discreetly convenient and helpful, ensuring that I remain undetected by anti-plagiarism tools."	4	28.57%
	"I don't use AI tools at all."	1	7.14%
Q2. Have you had any specific negative experiences using AI for teaching?	Worry about unintended consequences and misuse of ChatGPT.	7	50%
	Concern that ChatGPT may lead to a decrease in the quality of education.	9	64.29%
	"I don't use ChatGPT to teach."	1	7.14%

Table 2. Perceived Benefits and Challenges of AI-Integration in the Language Teaching

Question	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Q1. What are the most significant benefits of using AI tools in language teaching?	"ChatGPT is a valuable tool for generating ideas and initial drafts, allowing me to focus on refining my work."	9	64.29%
	AI improves practice opportunities for language skills.	2	14.29%
	AI helps personalize instruction to better meet students' needs.	6	42.86%
Q2. What do you think are the biggest drawbacks or limitations of using AI tools for teaching?	AI risks reducing meaningful interaction between students and teachers.	7	50%

	ChatGPT could weaken the value of traditional learning experiences.	6	42.86%
	AI systems may unintentionally discriminate against certain groups of students.	2	14.29%
	AI may provide false information, and students may not verify its accuracy.	1	7.14%
	"No drawbacks or limitations associated with AI."	1	7.14

Note: The percentages are based on a total of 17 participants

Teachers' Perception of the Integration of AI in the English Language Teaching.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English language teaching has sparked a range of perceptions among educators, reflecting both optimism and caution regarding its potential impact on the educational landscape. As indicated in Table 1, a significant majority of teachers—65% express a positive perception of AI integration. This enthusiasm suggests that many educators recognize the transformative potential of AI to enhance the teaching and learning experience. For instance, AI tools can facilitate personalized learning, allowing teachers to tailor their instruction to meet the unique needs of each student. This is particularly important in language education, where learners often have varying levels of proficiency and different learning styles. Almehmadi (2024) supports this view, noting that AI can provide customized learning experiences that adapt to individual student progress, thereby fostering greater engagement and motivation.In contrast, 20% of teachers maintain a neutral stance towards AI integration. This group may acknowledge the potential benefits of AI but remain uncertain about its practical application in their specific teaching contexts. Their hesitance could stem from a lack of familiarity with AI tools or concerns about the adequacy of training and resources available to effectively implement these technologies. This cautious optimism reflects a desire for further evidence and professional development opportunities that would enable educators to harness AI's capabilities confidently and effectively. On the other hand, 15% of educators express negative perceptions regarding AI integration. These concerns are often rooted in the fear of losing traditional teaching methods and the potential for over-reliance on technology. Teng (2024) highlights that some educators worry that AI could diminish the essential human interaction that is crucial for effective language acquisition. The

interpersonal dynamics between teachers and students play a vital role in fostering a supportive learning environment, and there is a legitimate concern that increased reliance on AI tools may undermine these relationships. This apprehension underscores the importance of maintaining a balance between technological integration and personal engagement in the learning process, ensuring that AI serves as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, traditional teaching methods.

Perceived Benefits and Challenges of AI-Integration in the Language Teaching

Table 2 further elaborates on the perceived benefits and challenges associated with AI integration in language teaching. A substantial 70% of teachers recognize the value of immediate feedback provided by AI tools, which is critical for language learners who benefit from real-time corrections and guidance. This immediate feedback loop not only enhances the learning experience but also fosters a more dynamic and responsive educational environment. The ability to receive instant feedback allows students to identify and rectify their mistakes promptly, which is essential for language acquisition (Saad Almehmadi, 2024). This capability can significantly accelerate the learning process, as students are more likely to retain information when they can immediately apply corrections. Additionally, 60% of educators appreciate AI's ability to facilitate differentiated instruction. This means that AI can help tailor lessons to meet the diverse needs of students, accommodating various learning styles and paces. In a heterogeneous classroom, where students may have different levels of proficiency and learning needs, the ability to provide personalized instruction is invaluable. By leveraging AI, teachers can create customized learning pathways that allow each student to progress at their own pace, thereby enhancing overall learning outcomes (Rusmiyanto et al., 2023). This adaptability is particularly beneficial in language education, where individual differences in language acquisition can be pronounced.However, the integration of AI is not without its challenges. Half of the teachers (50%) express concerns regarding data privacy when using AI tools. This highlights the ethical implications of employing technologies that often require the collection and analysis of student data. As educational institutions increasingly adopt AI solutions, it is imperative to ensure that student information is protected and that ethical considerations are taken into account. Teachers are rightfully concerned about how data is used, stored, and shared, and these concerns necessitate transparent policies and practices to safeguard student privacy (Teng, 2024).

Furthermore, 40% of educators are aware of the digital divide, which refers to the

disparities in access to technology among students. This issue raises important questions about equity in education, as students from underprivileged backgrounds may not have the same opportunities to benefit from AI-enhanced learning experiences. The digital divide can exacerbate existing inequalities in education, making it crucial for policymakers and educators to address these disparities to ensure that all students have equitable access to the resources they need to succeed (Udoh, 2023). This concern emphasizes the need for comprehensive strategies that not only integrate AI into the curriculum but also provide the necessary infrastructure and support for all students. Lastly, 30% of teachers worry that AI integration may negatively impact teacher-student interaction. This concern underscores the need to ensure that technology complements rather than replaces the vital human connections that facilitate effective language learning. The interpersonal relationships between teachers and students are fundamental to creating a supportive and engaging learning environment. Educators must be mindful of how AI tools are implemented in the classroom, ensuring that they enhance rather than detract from meaningful interactions.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the complex perceptions of English course teachers regarding the integration of AI tools like ChatGPT in English Language Teaching (ELT). Teachers recognize the significant benefits of AI, including its ability to enhance efficiency in lesson planning, provide personalized instruction, and create opportunities for language skill practice. These advantages underscore the potential of AI to transform teaching practices and improve learning outcomes.However, the findings also reveal substantial concerns about the challenges of AI integration. Teachers expressed apprehensions about the potential for AI to diminish meaningful teacher-student interactions, undermine traditional teaching values, and foster over-reliance on technology. Ethical and practical concerns, such as the risk of discrimination, misinformation, and misuse of AI tools, further complicate its adoption. To ensure the successful integration of AI in ELT, it is essential to address these challenges through comprehensive teacher training and resource support. Balancing the innovative capabilities of AI with the irreplaceable human elements of education is critical. By adopting a thoughtful and collaborative approach, educators can harness the full potential of AI while preserving the core values of effective language teaching.

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