Chapter 5
A Qualitative Journey on Instructors' Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in EFL Education

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence influences education, particularly language instruction. Despite its expanding attention, few studies have examined teachers' views on AI in education. This qualitative study explores EFL teachers' AI-related views and insights. The study uses semi-structured interviews with 21 instructors from diverse universities to uncover complex attitudes toward AI, pedagogical ideologies, perceived benefits and drawbacks of AI, and privacy concerns. The study highlights four main themes: AI's capacity to adapt to individual learning needs, its influence on pedagogical dynamics, the need for technical proficiency to integrate AI, and ethical and security issues related to AI use. These results highlight the perceived benefits and challenges educators face when using AI and emphasize the need for continued research to develop successful AI integration techniques for language instruction.

INTRODUCTION

The technological advancements of the digital era have catalyzed a significant metamorphosis across different sectors of society, not least within the labor market, and more pointedly in education (Kannan & Munday, 2018). The surge in Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, and their potential impact on education, has captured the attention of both researchers and practitioners, provoking intriguing debates

and explorations (Popenici & Kerr, 2017). AI's remarkable capacity for adaptive learning, bespoke instruction, and student engagement presents a plethora of unexplored opportunities within modern education (Chen et al., 2020). Simultaneously, it poses new challenges that necessitate a comprehensive understanding of the real-world intricacies involved in its integration (Knox, 2020).

At the heart of this pedagogical metamorphosis, the teachers are the key actors harnessing these innovative technologies to enrich students' learning experiences. Yet, a gap exists in the current research landscape, with limited studies focusing on teachers' perceptions towards AI integration in education and specifically language classrooms (Haristiani, 2019). The attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of instructors constitute a crucial determinant of the successful realization of AI-driven instruction and, consequently, its impact on learner outcomes (Celik, 2017; Malik et al., 2022).

Examining the perspectives of EFL teachers warrants special attention due to the inherent complexities of language instruction. Beyond the confines of subject-specific knowledge, language learning extends into a wider ambit, including linguistic proficiency, cultural appreciation, and communicative skills (Dodigovic, 2009). The incorporation of AI in this sensitive instructional ecosystem thus calls for a more profound exploration of language teachers' viewpoints and their interactions with these emerging technologies.

While AI is not an unfamiliar concept in educational technology discourse, its accelerating advancements and expanding influence warrant a refreshed and more focused scrutiny (Holmes et al., 2019). Considering the broad spectrum of AI's potential applications in language instruction, coupled with a wide variety of teacher perspectives, the narrative surrounding AI integration is multifaceted and complex.

This qualitative study endeavors to unearth these narratives by probing the beliefs and insights of EFL teachers concerning AI's integration into language instruction. By broadening our comprehension of teacher perspectives, this study aims to underpin more effective AI implementation strategies, thereby enhancing language learning experiences and equipping teachers to adeptly navigate the ever-evolving educational landscape. In this respect, this study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. How do EFL teachers perceive the use of AI in language classrooms?
2. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of AI in the language learning and teaching process from the perspective of EFL teachers?
3. What concerns do EFL teachers have about the impact of AI on teaching and learning?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND EDUCATION

Artificial Intelligence (AI), as a discipline, falls within the purview of computer science, specifically dedicated to the design and development of software and hardware systems capable of mirroring facets of human intelligence. The scope of these capabilities is quite expansive, including the ability to learn from experiences and surroundings, apply gained knowledge to troubleshoot issues, comprehend and process complex content, and refine performance continually through self-assessment and rectification of errors (Clark, 2020). AI fundamentally aims at fabricating machines that can emulate human cognition and learning patterns.

The genesis of the term 'Artificial Intelligence' can be traced back to 1956 when John McCarthy introduced it at the Dartmouth Conference, thereby marking the inception of AI as an independent academic discipline. The journey of AI has been characterized by alternating periods of intense enthusiasm

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