AI in English as a Foreign Language Classrooms: Perspectives from Professors at Lebanese University

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI), defined as the simulation of human intelligence by machines, has revolutionized various fields, including education, by enabling innovative tools that enhance teaching and learning experiences. This article studies the perceptions of academic professors at Lebanese University about the integration of AI in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The main aim is to discover the benefits, challenges, and ethical concerns surrounding AI use in educational settings. A qualitative methodology was used, utilizing surveys distributed to 35 professors from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences. The findings expose a dichotomy in perceptions, with 19 out of 35 respondents viewing AI as an ally, enhancing personalized learning, engagement, and efficiency, while 16 show concerns over data privacy, ethical implications, and the possible oversimplification of language teaching. While AI offers noteworthy opportunities to convert EFL instruction by making learning more personalized and interactive, it also raises critical ethical and practical challenges. According to the findings, instructors must receive adequate training, and ethical concerns must be addressed for AI to be successfully integrated into EFL

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classrooms.The contribution of this study lies in presenting insights into how AI can be commendably integrated into EFL instruction, while also addressing the associated ethical challenges and teacher proficiency requirements.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, English as a Foreign Language, Academic Professors, Lebanese University, Ally or Adversary

I. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is in rapid action on different dimensions of society, starting from education by automating tasks, improving personalization, and enhancing accessibility. This technological evolution has brought AI-based applications into numerous fields; English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching is one of them in which its potential to make both teaching and learning processes easier was pointed out (Bahroun et al., 2023).

Although, for most people, AI has emerged as an opportunity to improve classroom instruction and also make learning more attractive, a section raises eyebrows on issues related to data privacy and the human touch in teaching, raising some important ethical considerations (Sætra, 2023). The impact AI has evoked in education has been quite immense. Going against the grain of the "one-size-fits-all" approach adopted by traditional teaching models, the technology applies personalized learning whereby the content is adjusted to suit the specific needs of students. This shift in approach makes it possible for students to learn independently at their own pace, an essential feature in most EFL classrooms, as learners therein often possess different proficiency levels (Illingworth, 2023a). In addition, AI has also been productive in administrative tasks and hence frees up a teacher to develop more interest in pedagogical development and interaction with the students. For example, AI-powered tools, such as automated grading systems, allow teachers to devote more time to student engagement in developing proper strategies for learning (Illingworth, 2023a).

AI democratizes education because it offers opportunities for learning that students in remote or socioeconomically disadvantaged areas might not have. Satellite Internet, as piloted through projects like Starlink, gives connectivity to enable learners in even the most isolated regions to access AI-powered learning platforms (Bahroun et al., 2023). In this regard, AI is creating increased equity in access to education. Despite such progress, however, a number of challenges remain to be overcome. Among those issues is that AI threatens the very existence of the teacher-student relationship. As much as AI seamlessly handles routine tasks and steps in the learning process, it cannot replace the emotional and human elements involved in teaching, which is important in the social and emotional development of a student (Freeman, 2024).

Other ethical issues also relate to data privacy. AI systems require enormous amounts of data to operate, which also raises questions concerning student data collection, storage, and usage again (Sætra, 2023). Another major issue involves unequal access to technology, increasing the educational gap between students who have access to more modern tools and those students who do not (Illingworth, 2023b).

The present study investigates Lebanese University academic professors' perception of the use of AI in EFL classrooms. In this respect, a total of 35 instructors from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences from five branches were surveyed to understand the advantages and challenges of using AI in higher education. Therefore, this paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on the possible role of AI in transforming educational practices in an ethically and equitably appropriate way.

2. Aim of the Study, Statement of the problem, Research Questions

2.1. Aim of the Study :

The present study investigates Lebanese University academic professors' perception of the use of AI in EFL classrooms. In this respect, a total of 35 instructors from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences from five branches were interviewed to understand the advantages and challenges of using AI in higher education. Therefore, this paper contributes to the ongoing discourse on the possible role of AI in transforming educational practices in an ethically and equitably appropriate way.

2.2. Statement of the Problem

There is a lack of detailed understanding of how academic professors perceive the use of AI in EFL classrooms, particularly in regions like Lebanon, where educational resources and technological setup may differ significantly in spite of the growing body of research on AI in education. This study pursues to address this by investigating the perceptions of academic professors at the Lebanese University regarding the integration of AI in EFL teaching. By examining the apparent benefits, challenges, and ethical concerns, this research has the aim to provide valuable visions into how AI can be effectively and ethically integrated into EFL instruction, while also identifying the barriers that need to be overcome to guarantee equitable and inclusive educational practices.

2.3. Research Questions

The primary research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are the perceptions of academic professors at the Lebanese University regarding the use of AI in EFL classrooms?
2. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of integrating AI into EFL teaching?

3. How do factors such as teacher competence and student motivation affect the successful integration of AI in classrooms?
4. What are the ethical concerns surrounding AI use in education, particularly in terms of data privacy and equitable access?

The research questions and the hypotheses are designed exquisitely to confront the principal research objectives of this study in multiple dimensions of professors' perceptions. The study investigates the level of familiarity that student teachers have with technology-enhanced English language education. It discovers their perceptions of the main advantages and challenges associated with integrating AI into EFL teaching. Additionally, it addresses how teacher competence and student motivation affect the effective use of AI in the classroom. The study also takes into consideration the role of AI in supporting educational practices, and the potential for AI to either match or challenge traditional teaching methods. The findings are discussed in terms of their implications for enhancing teacher training and improving student outcomes.

3. Literature Review

3.1-The Evolution of Artificial Intelligence

AI had its roots back in the mid-20th century when John McCarthy — a father of the field — first coined this term as far back as 1955. In 1956, McCarthy and his fellow researchers paved the way for AI at the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence. The original proposal for AI saw it as machines that can learn language, create abstractions and concepts, and solve the kinds of problems now reserved for humans to solve but who might have too much time on their hands (McCarthy et al., 2006). This primordial conception of AI set an outline for its deep-rooted establishment, as a typical subfield under computer science.

AI research has grown into a cross-disciplinary science endeavor, which encompasses various methodologies and insights from other domains such as Anthropology, Biology, Philosophy, Psychology, Linguistics, etc…. (Luckin et al., 2016; Nilsson, 2011). While having perspectives from multiple disciplines has broadened the field, it also resulted in a plethora of definitions and interpretations for AI. Early definitions emphasized the creation of machines capable of human-like intelligence, contemporary definitions also include a range of other capabilities such as machine learning, natural language processing, and robotics (Kurzweil 1990; Rich 1983; Stone et al., 2016). This development made AI a matter not only of the technical pursuit but also philosophy and ethics as researchers face what it means to develop machines that could mimic human thinking and actions (Russell & Norvig, 2020).

More recent studies are delving into the societal implications of AI and its ethical considerations. As an example of this, the 2023 AI Now Institute report includes recommendations for responsible and accountable systems to avoid abuse or discriminatory use (AI Now Institute, 2022). A new European Commission study (2024) underscores the urgency of designing strong regulatory frameworks to govern against these risks, while also shielding society from some of AI's potentially wider beneficial applications.

3.2.AI in Language Teaching and Learning

The use of AI in educational settings, especially in language teaching and learning, has been one far-flung move from the earlier uses in classrooms. It was, however, in the 1960s during the emergence of CALL Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) that the integration of AI into language education began. CALL was the first wave of integrating technology into language education; it provided tools that supported language practice through various drilling and tutorials. Levy (1997) has stated that the limitation intrinsic in these very early versions of the CALL systems made possible a need for developing sophisticated AI-based applications.

Until the 1970s, the advent of Intelligent CALL heralded a shift towards more interactivity and adaptability within the learning process. For example, the work done by Weischedel et al. (1978) on an AI-based German tutor is almost invariably cited as ushering in ICALL, which then evolved into Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) in the 1980s (Self, 1998). The first of these ITSs was designed to offer personalized instruction through the adaptation of learning to individual learners' needs.

With the advancement and development of AI technologies in the 1990s, language learning took a step further. More precision and effectiveness occurred with systems that were in place. This has been truer for the improvements that have happened with Natural Language Processing (NLP), enabling computers to perceive, interpret, and generate human language (Godwin-Jones, 2017; Stone et al., 2016). From then on, NLP technologies were integrated into AI-enabled language learning platforms, enabling learners and machines to interact in real time, thus, giving instant feedback on spoken or written language, along with personalized language lessons.

Recent breakthroughs in AI language education have been powered by deep learning and neural networks, which offer capabilities considerably beyond those of earlier models in understanding and generating human language. Confirmation is provided by Li and Zhao, whose 2023 study shows AI-driven speaking agents to be effective in enhancing speaking proficiency. Zhang et al., in their 2024 review, indicate the place AI can have in delivering adaptive feedback to individual learner profiles for an enhanced learning experience.

3.3. Benefits and Challenges of AI in Language Education

The integration of AI in language learning has been welcomed with enthusiasm as well as skepticism. These studies have shown the potential of AI to offer personalized learning opportunities, increase student motivation, and develop language abilities in speaking, writing, and reading (Bailey & Heritage, 2021; El Shazly, 2019; Yin & Chien, 2021). This makes AI-based tools, like grammar checkers and smart templates for feedback, significantly improve the language skills of the students as they provide personalized corrections on a real-time basis (Holland et al., 1993; Nagata, 1996).

Furthermore, AI can lend support to collaborative learning by enhancing communication and interaction between learners (Tafazoli et al., 2019). According to Plass et al. (2019), AI can help promote a collaborative task, which enables the learner for both peer-to-peer conversation and technology-mediated dialogue with language tools driven by AI. This interaction not only helps them learn the language but also boosts their self-esteem and motivation to use it outside of the classroom.

While personalization of this nature is a clear advantage, along with adaptability, AI in language education does not come without its challenges. In the early days of AI and education, several scholars (O'Brien, 1993) critiqued the use of technology in creating systems that might oversimplify language learning. In a similar vein, Salaberry (1996) posited that AI was far more efficient but he could never replace the rich contextual and highly informative instruction provided by human mentorship. These concerns have been further confirmed in more recent studies which addressed the difficulties natural and contextually appropriate language poses for AI systems (Pace-Sigge & Sumakul, 2021; Wilson & Spencer, 2021).

Also, the pedagogic design of AI tools has been subject to critique by Rieland (2017) and Zawacki-Richter (2019). Most AI applications in education are carried out without input from educators, but at least classify them as tools that do not fit with what is required by a classroom. There is also a lack of pedagogical know-how on the part of some teachers on how to use AI tools, and they may not even grasp all how these technologies can be productively embedded in their teaching approaches (Sumakul, 2019).

More recently, critics have sharpened their knives to argue that AIs themselves may be embedded with bias which can perpetrate inequality in the learning system. The 2023 work of Brown and Smith reveals the possibility for algorithmic-based biases to harm student populations, resulting in a call for more inclusive AI designs (Brown & Smith, 2023). Green is also clear that AI cannot serve as the silver bullet to all educational problems, though she stresses that its widespread adoption into classrooms simply may be inevitable and we will have an opportunity now "to make sure they" work for most students (in this case: by including evaluation upfront). This draws back on some of

our recommendations from Green and Black's (2024) other conversations about why monitoring applications after always seems passive.

In other words, the configuration of opportunities and challenges brought about by the integration of AI into language education is multi-leveled. While there is wide recognition of how AI can customize learning, motivation, and language acquisition, significant critiques against the technology also exist. Concerns about over-dependence on AI, the oversimplification of language learning, and the limitation of AI in replicating nuanced instruction from human teachers define the need for balance. Moreover, the pedagogical design of AI tools is usually weak due to inadequate collaboration with educators during conception and due to the complexity faced by teachers in embedding this technology into their practice. Further, the risks related to algorithmic biases and the potential enhancement of current inequalities in education have to be critically considered and submitted to continuous oversight. A commitment to equity, inclusivity, and pedagogical soundness should help guide further AI development and how the implementation of AI in language education can make AI benefits available for all learners.

3.4. Pedagogical Considerations

Much of the effectiveness sought in AI within language classrooms is deeply related to pedagogical design: AI tools can be most helpful when they have substantial inputs from educators as part of their development phase so that these technologies can meet effectively the educational aims and classroom realities. This has been supported by the fact that most studies suggest that AI holds the maximum potential to improve language learning when it supports meaningful interaction, personalized feedback, and adaptive learning pathways responding to individual student needs (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2021). According to Kukulska-Hulme et al. (2021), a significant gap exists between AI technology itself and how it is seamlessly integrated into teaching practices. Most AI tools have not been developed based on pedagogical principles and, therefore, fail to tally with the needs of the language learner and are further contradictory to the wider educational goals (Borthwick et al., 2020).

Educators need to be involved in the creation and refinement of AI tools so that these tools are not only pedagogically sound but also tweaked to classroom dynamics for a solution. Instructors, being the primary facilitators of learning, will valuably contribute insight as to how AI can complement and extend traditional teaching methods (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). In addition, the design of AI-powered learning experiences must consider not only the technical capabilities of the tools themselves but also those aspects related to fostering critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration among students (Luckin et al., 2016; Popenici & Kerr, 2017).

3.5. The Role of Teachers

Teachers play an indispensable role in the successful adoption of AI in language education. They must not only be direct implementers of AI in transformative ways but also serve as a guiding force to ensure its alignment with curriculum standards and its potential to enhance pedagogical practices for diverse learners.

Warschauer and Liaw (2021) argue that teachers are not merely users but also creators of AI-enabled learning experiences, leveraging these technologies' strengths. This perspective aligns with Heift and Vyatkina (2017), who emphasize the importance of task design that capitalizes on AI's features, such as personalized feedback and adaptive learning. Both studies highlight teacher agency, though the former focuses on holistic integration into broader pedagogical contexts, while the latter narrows in on the technical aspects of task creation using tools like Duolingo or Babbel.

Professional development remains a critical factor across studies. Zhu et al. (2021) underline the importance of continuous training to enable teachers to respond to the dynamic nature of AI in education. Similarly, the National Institute of Education's (NIE) 2024 program emphasizes the integration of technical and ethical training into AI-focused professional development (Tan et al., 2023). The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE, 2022) advocates for using AI to implement broader pedagogical practices while maintaining ethical boundaries.

Naffi et al. (2020) further add that equipping teachers with skills to implement AI effectively transforms AI from a mere accessory into a tool that promotes comprehensive student progress. This perspective aligns with the broader goal of enhancing student outcomes, yet it underscores the necessity of fostering a deeper understanding of AI's pedagogical and ethical dimensions.

In comparing these approaches, a common emphasis on the need for tailored professional development emerges. However, the studies differ in their focus.While Heift and Vyatkina (2017) prioritize task-specific applications, others, such as Zhu et al. (2021) and Naffi et al. (2020), emphasize the broader implications of teacher training and ethical considerations.

By synthesizing these perspectives, this study underscores the multifaceted role of teachers in AI adoption, highlighting the importance of professional development that bridges technical proficiency, task design, and ethical implementation.

4. Methodology and Analysis

The paper uses a type of study that is considered qualitative, specifically applying the strategy of structured surveys to purposely investigate how much academic professors perceive integrating AI in EFL classrooms at Lebanese University.

The survey questions are designed to collect primary data about respondents, including their age, gender, academic position, years of teaching experience, and areas of specialization. This information is crucial as it provides context for interpreting responses and helps assess how attitudes and perceptions might vary according to these personal and professional variables. They include aspects about familiarity with AI technologies and using these technologies in EFL classrooms. They cover the depth of AI adoption and common understanding by professors. They focus on the benefits that instructors believe AI technology could bring to teaching EFL. They ask about whether AI can make learning more personalized, provide instant feedback, and significantly enhance student engagement and motivation. Understanding these perceptions is crucial for assessing the potential of AI in language education. They also include some potential hurdles that teachers anticipate needing to overcome. While integrating AI as an ally in education may seem like a promising solution, it comes with its own set of challenges. These include the significant need for comprehensive training for educators, the risk that AI might oversimplify the complexities of language, and concerns about the financial impact of third-party rental fees. They also address the question of how teacher competency and student motivation influence the effective use of AI in the classroom. The study aims to identify the key factors that contribute to making AI impactful in education by exploring these driving elements. Finally, they address ethical dilemmas related to the use of AI in education, including issues of data privacy and inequities in access. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into educational environments, these concerns become more pressing. The survey questions allow respondents to elaborate on their views and opinions, providing qualitative insights. In general, the survey questions included covering the maximum benefits and challenges of using AI in an EFL classroom, the impact of teacher competence and student motivation, and ethical concerns related to AI use.

Most of the survey questions were distributed via email to academic faculty members at Lebanese University, facilitating broad and rapid participation, while some were conducted directly via Zoom. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with experience and knowledge in EFL and AI, ensuring that the data collected were relevant to the study's objectives.

The sample included 35 academic professors from the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences at Lebanese University, representing its five branches across Lebanon. This broad geographical representation was crucial to ensure that the concept of AI within the university setting is comprehensively perceived and addressed. Participants were purposively selected based on specific criteria, including their experience with integrating AI tools into teaching practices. The survey was distributed to 50 professors, achieving a response rate of 70%.

The teaching experience of the participants varied significantly, ranging from 5 to 30 years. This intentional range ensured the inclusion of relatively new educators who are more attuned to modern

technological trends, as well as veteran professors who may offer deeper insights into the evolution of teaching practices and the integration of technology over time. This variance in teaching experience allowed for an assessment of how the number of years in the profession may influence faculty members' perceptions of AI, particularly in terms of openness to adopting new technologies, understanding the pedagogical implications of AI, and navigating the challenges associated with its use.

Moreover, such a scale of variation could provide a broad spectrum of perspectives—from early adopters of AI to those who may be cautious or even skeptical about its integration. The data allowed for a fine-grained analysis of how AI is perceived at different career stages in teaching, highlighting generational differences in familiarity and unfamiliarity with AI technologies, as well as the varied uses of these technologies in language education.

The analysis was based on professors' perceptions of AI integration in EFL classrooms, guided by Davis' Technology Acceptance Model (1989), which focuses on two dimensions: perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. This study primarily concentrated on the second dimension—perceived usefulness—because it is more relevant to academics, whereas students may prioritize ease of use.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. Responses were categorized into specific themes related to the perceived benefits, challenges, and ethical concerns of AI in EFL teaching. These themes were then analyzed for trends and patterns, providing an overall understanding of professors' views on the practical usefulness of AI in their classrooms. The analysis aimed to draw conclusions related to the research questions and objectives through a critical discussion.

To ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants, all identifying information was removed from the responses. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. No names were used in reporting the findings, and any data that could potentially identify individual respondents was excluded from the analysis. In addition, all data were securely stored and only accessible to the researcher. These measures were implemented in accordance with ethical guidelines to protect the privacy of participants and ensure the integrity of the study.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Results

When asked about the perceptions of AI in EFL classrooms, it was found that all participants are acquainted with AI technologies to varying degrees. While a few participants indicated that they are "Very Familiar" with AI, the majority fall under the "Somewhat Familiar" category. Despite this

familiarity, only a limited number of respondents have actively integrated AI technologies into their EFL classrooms. This suggests that while awareness of AI is widespread, the practical application of these technologies in teaching is still in its early stages at Lebanese University.

5.1.1. AI as an Ally

Out of the 35 respondents, 19 classified AI as an ally in their teaching practices. The respondents highlighted the several positive features of AI.

The first theme is *personalized learning experiences facilitated*. The majority agreed or strongly agreed that AI personalizes the learning experience for students. Professors in this group observed that AI-powered tools enable instructors to better cater to the diverse learning styles and needs of students. This finding aligns with a survey conducted by Yin and Chien (2021), which found that the adaptability of AI leads to more personalized education through targeted learning experiences.

The second theme is ***immediate feedback.*** Most professors emphasized AI's ability to provide immediate feedback on student performance as a particularly valuable feature. This immediacy permits students to make necessary revisions and develop their understanding right away. This finding aligns with Godwin-Jones (2017), who elucidated that immediate feedback from AI tools can provide significant support to learners by providing timely and relevant corrections.

The third theme is ***higher engagement.*** Many respondents noted that AI fosters student engagement and motivation. Most agree that AI tools make class activities more interactive and inspiring. This supports previous research showing that AI can indeed improve active student engagement by making learning processes more dynamic and appealing (Yin & Chien, 2021).

These positive perceptions propose that the practical benefits of AI, as highlighted by the Technology Acceptance Model, are valued for their contribution to improved educational outcomes.

5.1.2 AI as an Adversary

16 out of 35 respondents viewed AI as an adversary, raising several concerns that were grouped into themes.

The first theme is oversimplification and costs. Some professors criticized AI tools for being too simplistic, arguing that they deprive learners of the challenges inherent in language learning. Additionally, the price and availability of AI tools were cited as potential obstacles to their use. Moving forward, the key may lie in striking a balance between automation and human contributions. However, as noted by Salaberry (1996), this balance may be difficult to achieve, especially if AI systems are not developed in a way that both leverage their affordances and avoid financially burdening educational institutions.

The second theme is *ethical concerns.* A strong consensus among respondents was the fear of breaching data privacy in AI Educational systems. They were worried that students' data would not

be safe, and AI tech could easily go wrong. This reflects wider worries about data privacy and technology ethics in education, as shown by Russell and Norvig (2020).

The third theme is *inequality*. There were major concerns regarding students gaining unequal access to AI technologies. Respondents also articulated concerns that existing educational inequities are likely to be further worsened by differing levels of access to technology. Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019) voice this worry and claim that there is a potential disadvantage as not every learner may benefit from technological access.

5.1.3. Impact of Teacher Competence and Student Motivation

The respondents showed insights into factors affecting the successful integration of AI. They were grouped into two themes.

The first theme is *teacher competence.* The role of teacher competence in AI integration was emphasized as crucial. Professors who consider AI positively often stress the need for adequate training and professional development to commendably utilize AI tools. Teacher competence influences how well AI is integrated into teaching practices and how effectively it supports learning results (El Shazly, 2020).

The second theme is *student motivation.* The respondents believed that student motivation is vital for the effective use of AI in the classroom. Motivated students are more likely to engage in AI-driven learning tools and benefit from their capabilities. Addressing factors that impact student motivation is therefore important for maximizing the advantages of AI in education.

5.2. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a strong dichotomy in the stance towards AI for EFL classrooms among academic professors as categorized into two major groups: those who believe that AI is a friend and another group who see it foe. This split illustrates the complexity of AI solutions within education and shows that establishments need to adopt a more nuanced understanding of what is likely to happen as we prepare for their emergence.

5.2.1. AI as an Ally

The pros of AI tools in teaching EFL way outnumber any cons, at least according to 19 out of 35 respondents. The main benefits these professors talk about are personalized learning, immediate feedback, and higher engagement.

AI has the potential to personalize learning for students, said most respondents. This is consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model, which suggests users are more likely to adopt technology if it provides a clear benefit (Davis, 1989). As AI can be customized to match course material, it holds the potential to provide more efficient and meaningful types of learning experiences (Yin &

Chien, 2021). Many have suggested that a mix of personalized learning can help to address the diverse needs and strengths of students (Godwin-Jones, 2017).

A lot of professors also appreciate the potential for AI to offer fast feedback on student performance. Real-time feedback is especially necessary to support learning, as it helps students learn from their errors and understand the content (Godwin-Jones 2017). It is especially necessary to support learning. Instant feedback is hugely significant because it helps students learn better by giving them constant actionable insights.

AI tools that could increase the ability of students to get and stay involved in learning were often discussed. AI-powered interactive, and adaptive learning environments also create a more engaging or fun way to learn. Indeed, research suggests that captivating learning environments are important.

5.2.2. AI as an Adversary

On the other hand, 16 out of 35 professors who perceive AI as an adversary raised several critical concerns, including ethical issues, educational inequality, oversimplifications, and costs.

Data privacy and ethical implications are major concerns for this group. Worries about the security of student data and potential misuse of AI technologies reflect broader discussions about AI's role in society (Russell & Norvig, 2020). The risk of data breaches and illegal access to sensitive information are noteworthy challenges that need to be addressed to guarantee that AI tools are used responsibly in education.

The other concern put forth by the respondents is unequal access to AI technologies. The fear is that it could expand the gap in educational inequalities in case of unequal technology access. According to Zawacki-Richter (2019), ensuring that all students have equal resources and tools will ensure no single student is left behind in achieving an inclusive and fair education.

Some professors voiced the opinion that AI cannot stop reducing the complexity of language learning to oversimplification. As Salaberry (1996), said, this may be quite dependent on how well the nuances of language acquisition and teaching can be captured by AI systems. Another shortcoming identified is the cost and availability of the AI tools. High costs combined with limited availability restrict the wide diffusion of AI in educational settings; as Pace-Sigge and Sumakul (2021), have observed.

5.2.3. Impact of Teacher Competence and Student Motivation

The responses also showed insights into factors affecting the successful integration of AI which are teacher competence and student motivation.

The role of teacher competence in AI integration was highlighted as vital. Professors who view AI positively often highlight the need for suitable training and professional development to effectively

employ AI tools. Teacher competence impacts how well AI is integrated into teaching practices and how effectively it supports learning consequences (El Shazly, 2020).

The study also found that student motivation is important for the effective use of AI in the classroom. Motivated students are more likely to engage in AI-driven learning tools and profit from their capabilities. Addressing factors that influence student motivation is therefore significant for maximizing the advantages of AI in education.

5.2.4. Future Directions and Ongoing Debates

One certain thing is AI will continue to develop at a rapid pace and play an increasing number of roles in language education. But the issue is far from over whether there could be a way of doing so both effectively and ethically. Thus, while the potential of AI education is to bring personalized flexible, and inclusive learning at scale, it also gives rise to issues related to data privacy (Luckin et al., 2016), de-humanizing educational experiences and arguably increasing inequalities in access as well as participation within our educative structures more broadly (Russell & Norvig; 2020).

Thus future research should clearly state the limitations of AI in education, and explore ways to make AI useful but fair. This involves probing the outcomes of AI for teaching and learning, where teachers fit into a classroom driven by AI, and constructing pedagogical models that not only protect but can amplify versus diminish educational experiences from AI. Educators and policymakers can thus ensure that AI is realized to the fullest extent possible, delivering maximum value in learning settings.

The discussions have recently illustrated the need for interdisciplinary research to address these overarching questions. In 2024, the AI Ethics Institute hosted a symposium that assembled experts from diverse disciplines to investigate how AI in education presents different ethical dilemmas and develop principles for responsible use of AI (AI Ethics Institute, 2024). Similarly, a workshop by the World Economic Forum in 2023 regarding AI in education highlighted cooperation towards frontier problems and opportunities (World Economic Forum, 2023).

6. Conclusion

The findings provide a clear image of academic professors' perceptions of AI in EFL classes, highlighting its potential benefits and challenges. AI has great potential to improve personalized learning, instantaneous feedback, and student engagement, but it also raises concerns regarding data privacy, educational equity, and the oversimplification of complex teaching-learning processes.

AI in education is a reality that is transforming lessons. This study has shown the dual perspectives of academic professors regarding AI's role in EFL classrooms at Lebanese University, reflecting broader global discussions about the impact of technology.

On the one hand, AI presents noteworthy opportunities. It has the potential to improve personalized learning, offer immediate feedback, and raise student engagement. These advantages align with the Technology Acceptance Model's focus on perceived usefulness, as AI tools offer tailored instructional support and interactive learning environments (Davis, 1989). For learners, especially in regions with teacher scarcities, AI can serve as a personalized tutor, adapting to individual needs and providing one-to-one interaction. For teachers, AI can support brainstorming ideas and familiarizing instructional materials to various language levels, proving to be a treasured resource in the classroom.

The study highlights substantial concerns regarding AI's application, echoing wider discussions in the field. A key problem is the presence of biases in training data, as pointed out by Stodd, Schatz, and Stead (2023). AI systems often reflect the biases of their creators, who primarily come from WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) cultures. This can lead to AI outputs that fail to precisely exemplify diverse geographical and cultural perspectives. The problem is further compounded by the over-representation of English and the lack of recognition for English varieties, which can negatively influence tasks like plagiarism detection and compromise the quality of results in minority languages.

With all these findings, it is clear that while AI offers huge potential in improving language learning and teaching, equally enormous are the challenges accompanying it. Responsible use of AI in education necessitates a nuanced understanding of how generative AI works and what it bases its data on. Critical strategies must include critical thinking, AI literacy, and the judicious use of AI tools in definite educational contexts. Teachers should be attentive in screening AI results through their competencies, ensuring that technology acts as a worthy and unbiased educational partner.

By understanding the relative assets and flaws of AI, educators, and policymakers will be better placed to get benefits from the technology while limiting its negative qualities. In this respect, planning to address these concerns will be critical if AI is to enhance inclusive, efficient, and sustainable education.

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