

Bridging the Skills Gap: Assessing Teacher Preparedness, Digital Literacy, and Institutional Support for AI Integration in ELT

Dr.Ruth Carol.Voola

ruthcarol_1968@yahoo.com

Department of English / College of Education /University of Sabratha /Libya

Abstract

The consequences of integrating Generative AI tools like ChatGPT into English Language Teaching (ELT) for personalized learning, immediate feedback, and administrative task automation could be of great importance, and the educational field has already begun to recognize it. Integrating these tools into pedagogy should be easier than it currently is. The literature reveals that the majority of teachers using AI tools is much larger (76%) than that of teachers feeling sufficiently trained to use pedagogy that incorporates AI tools (20%). Our research attempts to bridge this gap by evaluating the degree of teacher educational preparation and digital literacy relating to the ethical and pragmatic integration of AI. Through literature, this study concludes that professional qualifications and the associated pedagogical training must evolve to minimize the negative consequences of AI to be flexible and functional. There are certain minimum institutional requirements to be met to ensure the consequences of the learning module implemented are maximally useful, clearly defined governance frameworks, digital equity, controlled data privacy, and baseline soft and hardware capabilities. An AI-enabled curriculum in ELT is what this paper advocates for, and to make it acceptable, focused training programs, policies of educational baseline equity, and AI-enabled balanced pedagogy are the minimum requirements.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, ELT, Teacher Readiness, Digital Literacy, Institutional Support, Skills Gap.

سد فجوة المهارات: تقييم جاهزية المعلمين، ومحو الأمية الرقمية، والدعم المؤسسي لدمج الذكاء الاصطناعي في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية
روث كارول فولا / قسم اللغة الإنجليزية / كلية التربية / جامعة صبراته / ليبيا
ruthcarol_1968@yahoo.com

الكلمات المفتاحية

الذكاء الاصطناعي،
تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية
كلغة أجنبية،
الثقافة الرقمية،
الدعم المؤسسي،
فجوة المهارات.

الملخص

قد تكون لنتائج دمج أدوات الذكاء الاصطناعي التوليدية، مثل ChatGPT، في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، من أجل التعلم الشخصي، والتغذية الراجعة الفورية، وأهمية المهام الإدارية، أهمية بالغة، وقد بدأ المجال التعليمي بالفعل في إدراك ذلك. ينبغي أن يكون دمج هذه الأدوات في أساليب التدريس أسهل مما هو عليه الآن. تشير الدراسات إلى أن غالبية المعلمين الذين يستخدمون أدوات الذكاء الاصطناعي أكبر بكثير (76%). مقارنةً ببنسبة المعلمين الذين يشعرون بأنهم مدربون تدريباً كافياً لاستخدام أساليب التدريس التي تتضمن أدوات الذكاء الاصطناعي (20%). تسعى دراستنا إلى سد هذه الفجوة من خلال تقييم مستوى إعداد المعلمين ومعرفتهم الرقمية فيما يتعلق بالتكامل الأخلاقي والعملي للذكاء الاصطناعي. وتخلص هذه الدراسة، من خلال مراجعة الأدبيات، إلى ضرورة تطوير المؤهلات المهنية والتدريب التربوي المرتبط بما تقليل الآثار السلبية للذكاء الاصطناعي وجعله مرتناً وفعلاً.

هناك متطلبات مؤسسية دنيا محددة يجب استيفاؤها لضمان تحقيق أقصى استفادة من نتائج وحدة التعلم المطبقة، وتشمل هذه المتطلبات أطر حوكمة واضحة للعالم، والإنصاف الرقمي، وحماية خصوصية البيانات، والقدرات الأساسية للبرمجيات والأجهزة. تدعو هذه الورقة إلى منهج دراسي مدعوم بالذكاء الاصطناعي في تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، ولجعله مقبولاً، تُعد برامج التدريب المركبة، وسياسات الإنصاف التعليمي، ومنهجية التدريس المترادفة المدعمة بالذكاء الاصطناعي من المتطلبات الدنيا.

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3. Introduction

Educational settings, including English Language Teaching (ELT), are being radically changed by Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies, especially generative tools like ChatGPT. The educational sector, particularly the world education system, has been abuzz since the launch of the first of many Large Language Models (LLMs). Aktay, Seçkin, & Uzunoğlu (2023) observed that while the majority of teachers (76%) report using AI tools, a much smaller percentage (20%) feel they are adequately trained to integrate AI into their pedagogy. This significant gap between adoption and training increases the risks associated with AI use. The educational pivot point because of the AI technologies is the ability to provide personalized and adaptive learning experiences. The research cited by Kohnke, Moorhouse, & Zou (2023) suggests that the implementation gap is due to the absence of teacher preparedness and competence in Generative AI for Education (GaiE) and is compounded by inadequate institutional support and ambiguous governance. The

technology to provide individualized and custom instruction interactivity is now a necessity in contemporary language instruction.

There are significant educational advantages associated with the use of AI technology within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). For instance, AI can operate as a conversation partner, allowing learners to practice public speaking one of the most anxiety-inducing skills within a safe environment and at their own pace. Mohamed (2023) and Mohammad karimi (2023) relate this lack of training to ethical oversight, noting that untrained educators may be unable to properly handle academic dishonesty concerns. This lack of AI literacy erodes the ability of teachers to exercise humane oversight and articulate a critique of the technology. Public speaking anxiety is a significant barrier to success in numerous careers and AI technologies can help eliminate this barrier. In addition, AI can automate the time-consuming process of providing learners with individualized and immediate feedback on their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary,

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and writing organization something highly desirable in many educational contexts, yet typically unattainable within the large enrollment and classroom size of ELT(4). Utami, Andayani, Winarni, & Sumarwati (2023) confirmed that the critical lack of knowledge and skills among ELT educators hinders their ability to use AI technologies effectively and responsibly. Finally, there is a multitude of time-consuming administrative tasks that can be more quickly and efficiently completed with the help of AI, such as grading, assessing, and preparing lesson plans. As a consequence, teachers will be able to devote more time to essential and complex tasks such as individualized learner support and critical thinking. Bonner, Lege, & Frazier (2023) posit that the ability to offer individualized and custom instruction interactivity is now a requirement in contemporary language instruction.

Unlike the educational advantages associated with the use of AI, there is a lack of adequate preparation among teachers that is critical to the integration of AI technologies into the educational environment. For

example, there is a vast discrepancy in digital literacy among teachers and the expected standard of digital literacy that is required to operate advanced educational AI tools. Instructors are reporting the use of AI educational tools in increasing numbers, and while 76% of teachers surveyed claimed to use AI educational tools, 54% of those same teachers stated that they did not have adequate professional development to use the tool effectively within a classroom and only 20% of those teachers surveyed felt they had adequate training relative to the associated AI educational tool. These findings show that teachers are unprepared to use AI technologies in a classroom, and this lack of preparation is creating a barrier to the successful application and purposeful use of AI technologies.

The impact of these oversights are far reaching. Untrained Block modeling integrates new and critical complexities relative to the responsible and equitable use of any form of emerging technologies. Concern about the use of AI to generate text without any intelligent thought and the potential for

plagiarism is common among educators. Many educators do not have the AI literacy required to understand fundamental issues of data privacy and security and how the data may be used, especially data pertaining to students. Systems of algorithmic bias may also be a concern for students who are non-standard English speakers and those from underrepresented groups as these AI technologies are often trained on non-representative data sets. Chen, Zou, Xie, Cheng, & Liu (2022) noted that AI provides significant educational advantages, such as operating as a conversation partner for practicing anxiety-inducing skills like public speaking in a safe environment. AI can also automate time-consuming processes by providing immediate, individualized feedback on grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and writing organization—tasks that are often unattainable in large ELT classes.

The response these overlapping challenges require must be grounded in a triad of adequate teacher training, digital literacy, and institutional support. The educational sector is

only beginning to understand the impact of emerging technologies and the training needed to address the challenges. Laupichler, Astar, Schirch, & Raupach (2022) described how AI systems act as individualized virtual tutors, adjusting instructional pace and content based on a student's mastery level and interests, which promotes learning independence. Successful integration requires defined governance frameworks, adequate investment in infrastructure, ongoing support, and proper resource allocation in order to improve access equity. Without institutional efforts to address the digital divide, unequal resource allocation to lower resource contexts poses risks of AI prioritization for technology adoption. However, Roe, Renandya, & Jacobs (2023) suggest that realizing the full potential of AI requires a pedagogical shift toward incorporating AI into models that promote advanced language practice or constructive collaboration, rather than merely automating mundane pedagogical activities like grading. This research endeavours to comprehensively examine and determine the gaps that exist in teachers' knowledge and

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readiness levels, as well as their digital competencies, evaluate the critical components that constitute AI literacy and determine the level of institutional and policy support that are necessary to promote the ethical, inclusive and meaningful use of AI in various ELT settings. Concerns cited in relation to Lee, Shin, & Noh (2023) focus on the issue of over-reliance, which may inhibit the development of critical skills such as autonomy in learning and critical thinking.

Objectives

1. To investigate the extent and level of AI-related training and professional development, as well as the gaps therein, that ELT practitioners have received, and to characterize the gaps as the skills gap.
2. To determine the most crucial elements of digital and AI literacy competencies that ELT practitioners must possess in order to fuse AI in their teaching and learning activities in a responsible and pedagogically sound manner.
3. To identify the institutional and policy frameworks that are necessary to provide and ensure equitable and responsible use of AI in ELT.

5. Significance of the Study

The study assesses the first gap in the literature. The study assesses the first gap in the literature. Focusing on the measurement of the need for specific training modules, this study contributes to the design of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs and facilitates targeted evidence-based training. The findings suggest necessary actions to be taken to improve teachers AI literacy, and further focus on the ethical, data privacy, and algorithmic bias issues. Moreover, the study assists, policy makers and administrators to provide appropriate institutional arrangements to support equitable and responsible AI access and use in various educational contexts.

6. Statement of the Problem

Implementation gap owing to the absence of teacher preparedness and teacher education in Digital Literacy, competence in Generative AI for Education (GaiE) is being adopted. Most of the educators lack the pedagogical training to exploit the potential of AI and mitigate the ethical issues, such as academic dishonesty, over-dependence, and algorithmic bias. The gap is further

exacerbated by the absence of adequate institutional support and the ambiguity surrounding governance, and is shallow (10). These issues require urgent attention, in order to engage in responsible, equitable, and effective AI use in the classroom.

7. Research Questions

1. What is the extent of AI-specific training and professional advancement for English Language Teaching educators?
2. Which foundational elements of digital and AI literacy are necessary for ELT professionals for the appropriate and ethical application of AI?
3. What policies and institutional supports are required to provide equity and responsible access to AI technology within different contexts of ELT?

8. Methodology

This work incorporates a complex deliberate research methodology that focuses on and integrates various types of research, including systematic and scoping reviews and studies of empirical research on the incorporation of artificial intelligence in English Language Teaching (ELT) and (L)Teaching. Guided by the

principles of thematic qualitative analysis, a Construct was devised to assess and respond to various findings that deal with Teacher readiness, digital literacy and institutional support. The criteria for selection focused on policy and other peer-reviewed literature of the promises, challenges, and ethical issues, training needs of AI in the practice of ELT. This provided a comprehensive perspective of the present state of the AI and education literature, specifically the incorporation of AI into ELT, which, in turn, exposes the primary advanced professional education and policy development to respond to the needs of educators and policymakers. The impact of technologies such as Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) and Large Language Models (LLMs) on English Language Teaching and Learning (ELT/L) have been thoroughly documented and analysed (8). Such technologies have contributed to explaining and predicting the large potential and significant vertical and horizontal implementation gaps in AI systems across education systems globally.

9.1 The Unexpected Growth of AI

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and ELT Nexus

The unexpected emergence of GenAI has spawned significant attention in the academic world and related studies. The number of studies published in 2023 focusing on the use of AI in ELT (32 studies) was almost equal to the number of studies published in the preceding nine years (34 studies) and post 2022, there has been a marked surge in the appetite for scholarly attention in this field. This phenomenon appears to be heavily concentrated in Asia, specifically 68 – 72 % of the published studies on AI in ELT (11). This concentration validates the assertion that the phenomenon although global in nature, has primary focus on the educational systems of the region, specifically China.

9.2. Benefits in Personalization and Learning Enhancement

One of the most mainstream and most discussed advantages of AI is its ability to offer highly customized and personalized learning experiences. AI systems can act like individualized virtual tutors and refine the instructional content, feedback, and pace of learning, according to every specific student's level mastery,

interests, and ways of learning. Perkins (2023) stressed that institutional arrangements are necessary to provide adequate technical infrastructure, reduce the high costs of AI implementation, and ensure equitable access. Mizumoto & Eguchi (2023) found that the high cost of implementing AI systems aggravates digital inequity for schools and students with few resources. This level of orthogonal instruction is the one that enhances student involvement and motivation, promotes learning independence, and alleviates learning-related tension commonly associated with practicing speaking in non-threatening environments.

9.3. Focus on Productive Skills and Automated Feedback

AI applications have the most extensive and the most documented impact on improving the productive skills of the language, which is speaking and writing. Writing assistance is the application most widely documented in systematic reviews and in the overwhelming majority of the studies analyzed and constitutes more than half of this corpus, mainly relying on the

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integration of grammar checkers and writing assistant tools. AI applications deliver feedback on the grammar, vocabulary, spelling, writing structure, and even pronunciation in real time, and instantly, which teachers in overcrowded classrooms are often unable to offer. This time saved can also be easily applied to administrative tasks, such as lesson planning and other material preparation, and so the time saved translates directly to more productive teaching.

9.4 The Critical Skills Gap in Teacher Preparedness

There is a massive skills gap in training and preparedness, particularly in the context of AI technology adoption. Approximately 76 percent of teachers surveyed AI technology, and 20 percent claim to have received appropriate training to use AI. Within this context, 54 percent of teachers believed they had insufficient training. This gap in professional development training is one of the biggest challenges to adjusting to the use of AI, demonstrating the dire need for AI training to develop skills in teachers.

9.5 Ethical Concerns: Academic

Integrity and Over-reliance

The introduction of AI is raising pivotal ethical questions regarding its use, such as its potential for academic dishonesty and its over-reliance. 27.27 percent of the analyzed articles addressed the concerns of plagiarism, cheating, and the unauthorized use of AI, as well as the notion of students receiving credit for work done by AI, which is a common concern. Over-reliance is a concern in many studies as it inhibits the development of a number of critical skills such as self-regulation, autonomy in learning, and critical thinking. Zhang, Zou, & Cheng (2023) argue that policy frameworks must address digital inequity exacerbated during implementation, ensuring that the costs of high-quality tools do not economically exclude students in low-resource countries.

9.6. Institutional Challenges: Data, Bias, and Digital Divide

There are systemic inequities embedded within institutions due to policies (or absence of policies) pertaining to data and equity. There is a lack of attention to privacy, protection, and other security related risks associated with sensitive student

data when there is a need for data to train AI models, which is to address a pertinent concern. Another malicious form of inequity comes from algorithmic bias where there is a loss of diversity in data and insufficiently trained systems in AI. Zhang, Zou, & Cheng (2023) argue that policy frameworks must address digital inequity exacerbated during implementation, ensuring that the costs of high-quality tools do not economically exclude students in low-resource countries. Such systems may promote a dominant, standard, and imperialist English language while other English dialects are dismissed, thus resulting in a form of discrimination and marginalization of non-native speakers. The implementation of AI systems comes with exorbitant costs, which aggravates the digital inequity for students and schools with few resources and deepens the socio-educational inequity.

9.7. The Irreplaceable Role of the Human Educator

A recurrent theme in the literature is the agreement that while AI is a valuable tool, human teachers are not and should not be replaced. Teachers

go beyond knowledge dissemination and include giving emotional warmth, contextual and cultural anchoring, innovative pedagogical flexibility, and socio-intellectual coaching for the more complex aspects of thinking that are not within the current reach of AI.

10. Results and Discussion

10.1. Synthesis of Findings (Answering the Research Questions)

Research synthesis acknowledges the fluidity and complexity of the situation of AI in ELT and confirms the legitimacy of the primary research questions and objectives.

RQ1: In what ways may AI influence and improve the teaching of the English language?

Enhancing teaching with AI includes tools for automated writing (54.55% of the documented instances), for instant feedback of language practice and for lesson modification (used as 57% and 43% of teachers surveyed, respectively). Teachers AI tools such as chatbots (63.63%) and grammar checkers (63.63%) aimed to reduce their workload and provided spearhead assistance at all levels, although the literature heavily emphasized the productive (writing and speaking) skills.

RQ2: What are the basic constituents, in terms of digital and AI literacy that an ELT professional should possess to incorporate AI in a meaningful and ethical way?

The research synthesis has identified the basic constituents to be framed AI literacy, in both its technical and ethical dimensions. This literacy is overwhelmingly absent: a considerable proportion of teachers where AI is used (76%) purported to be AI untrained (20%). Knowledge and understanding to identify bias, misinformation, and a lack of ethical data management and transparent data practices, along with pedagogical techniques to curb AI overuse and academic dishonesty, are the system shortcomings that require immediate intervention.

RQ3: What institutional and policy support mechanisms are necessary to ensure fair distribution and responsible access to and use of different forms of AI technology in various ELT contexts?

Some of the necessary mechanisms are obligatory professional development training (to attend to the skills gap) and specified governance frameworks for ethical use (inclusion,

and data protection and privacy). Institutional support is essential to provide the adequate and necessary technical infrastructure to reduce the high costs of AI implementation and to prevent the widening of the digital divide and to ensure equitable access.

10.2. Discussion: Closing the Skills Gap and Reducing the Risks

The central issue is the significant gap between the level of adoption of AI tools and the almost total absence of training for teachers in how to use them. This gap produces a situation in which the risks associated with the use of AI are likely to be increased . The ability to tackle major issues drops dramatically when AI incorporation occurs, without any prior training for the teachers involved:

1. Increased Ethical Concerns: Untrained educators are unable to fulfill the policy procedures for addressing academic dishonesty which leads to a focus on AI detection rather than positive changes to the curriculum that stimulate higher-order thinking. Furthermore, loss of AI literacy, allows teachers to incorporate biased (especially pro-standard English) systems without

adequate frameworks for protecting the student's informational privacy which compounds existing issues of trust and inclusivity. The ability to exercise humane oversight, a hallmark of the responsible use of AI, is eroded when teachers are unable to articulate their critique of the technology.

2. Unrecognized Efforts in Pedagogical Advancement: The potential for AI to engage students and facilitate self-regulated learning through personalization has been documented, but to truly realize these benefits, a shift in pedagogical practices is necessary. Sophisticated pedagogical practices are not replacing older AI systems with contemporary ones that automate mundane pedagogical activities, like grading or templated materials generation. Instead, the focus should be on the incorporation of AI into models that promote constructive collaboration or advanced practice of language to stimulate and sustain active learning, rather than passive pedagogical paradigms.

3. Escalated Digital Divide: The increased implementation cost of effective AI (considered beneficial but

currently inaccessible technology) remains a fundamental obstacle for underfunded schools. The lack of institutions' commitment to allocating resources for developing training programs for staff certifiably strengthens the socio-economic gaps. In the final analysis, the results show that closing the skills gap, through compulsory and situational professional advancement, transcends the improvement of productivity, as it also secures the right to ethical oversight, access to resources, and inequality of outcomes in the concern of enduring pedagogical closure of AI-assisted ELT systems.

11. Result Summary

From the literature synthesis, the following fundamental results stand out:

Discreet Use vs. Training Gap: The bulk of English language educators (76%) acknowledged their use of AI-powered resources, especially for content generation and guidance of student practice. Though, a significant training gap exists, as only 20% of educators believed to be sufficiently equipped to utilize AI.

Emphasis on Writing and Feedback: according to Roe, J., Renandya, W. A.

& Jacobs, G. M. (2023) The most immediate and well-documented use of AI within the field of ELT relates to assistance in the writing skills (54.55% of the literature), followed closely by the prompt provision of individualized corrective feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Significant Ethical Risks: Ethical implications, particularly concerning plagiarism and the excessive dependence on artificial intelligence, impact the loss of critical thinking skills and learning independence, and yet, remain a concern in more than a quarter of the studies. \n\n• **Digital Disparities and Bias:** The absence of regulatory frameworks in the rapid adoption of technology, particularly artificial intelligence, increases the risk of bias in the algorithms used and widens the digital divide as a result of the expensive infrastructure required, in addition to the lack of access to quality training. The contribution of artificial intelligence to the educational sector is widely recognized. Yan, D. (2023) The acceptance is, however, more positive where there is a need to enhance efficiencies, especially in

individualized learning. The educator, however, is a critical component in providing a human connection, adapting the contextual framework, and teaching more advanced skills such as critical thinking.

12. Conclusion

This study has illustrated how a critical lack of knowledge and skills among ELT educators regarding AI technologies and their integration impacts their ability to use it responsibly and effectively. The challenge does not stem from the capabilities of AI technology; it is from the lack of preparedness of educators and educational institutions to control the use and manage the educational benefits of AI. AI technologies create opportunities for personalization, increased motivation, and efficiency in language learning and teaching in the areas of writing and speaking, which are highly important for learners. However, the proliferation of the use of AI technologies poses significant new challenges and potential risks, and although the integration is governed by a loose framework, the ethical issues of educational integrity, the inequitable bias of the algorithms

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against non-native speakers, the under-resourced and poorly designed educational algorithms, and the critical issues regarding data privacy are overwhelming. In view of the potential inequitable outcomes and the challenges of ethical integration of AI technologies in education, the following must be done to address this skills gap. If institutions are expected to provide AI-focused education for ELT educators, AI education must include the design of context-appropriate professional development programs to ensure AI education includes the development of skills and knowledge that empower educators to assess AI outputs.

Educators need to understand how to manage data, construct education strategies, and integrate AI in a way that enhances the learning activities of students and ensures that the learning activities are still educator-led. **Policy and Governance:** There is an immediate need for definable and explicit data governance policies and institutional frameworks concerning the responsible use of AI, data privacy, and accountability. Policy frameworks need to prioritize the digital inequity that is exacerbated

during policy implementation, ensuring that costs and access to quality tools and infrastructure, for high-resource countries, do not economically exclude students in low-resource countries. The potential of AI to positively disrupt English language teaching and learning to become inclusive, equitable, and human-centered, will only be realized through sufficient investment in teacher training and optimal ethical governance.

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