

Report Review

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1 Report introduction

1.1 Overview

This comprehensive report by the British Council represents one of the most timely investigations into the burgeoning role of artificial intelligence (AI) in English language teaching and learning (ELT/L) systems worldwide (Edmett et al., 2023). Given the tidal wave of mainstream interest sparked by AI's remarkable linguistic breakthroughs, exemplified by ChatGPT, this multi-perspective publication provides critical insights. It clarifies the specific capabilities, limitations, perceptions, challenges, and potential growth trends associated with the increasingly integral role of AI in ELT/L contexts globally, making it a crucial resource for understanding the intricate impact of AI in the field of language education.

1.2 Context

The unparalleled status of English as the global lingua franca underscores the transformative potential of AI in enhancing language learning efficiency, equity, and quality in developing the communication abilities vital for socioeconomic opportunities worldwide. However, harnessing AI's full potential in an ethical and sustainable manner, particularly in ELT/L, is essential to understanding the risks and developing responsible, innovative approaches, particularly in the face of rapid technological evolution (Peta, 2023). This report addresses this necessity by elucidating AI's implications for English teaching practitioners and policymakers worldwide through insights from 1,348 educators and 19 experts. It extends beyond mere technological aspects, situating advancements like ChatGPT within broader political and economic contexts that influence AI's integration into educational systems.

1.3 Purpose

This report synthesizes analysis of recent research literature, global teacher surveys and expert qualitative interviews to conclusively establish AI's current functionality for ELT/L. Moreover, it identifies evidence-based opportunities for AI utilization while outlining the risks that require careful public intervention and community involvement. The report also charts out responsive policies and pedagogies for the effective integration of AI on a multi-stakeholder basis. The overarching goal is to facilitate universal access to high-quality English proficiency as a gateway for equitable global citizenship.

1.4 Contents

Structurally, the report examines the contemporary ELT/L scenario through an AI lens across three sections. Section one reviews existing literature situating investigated applications, benefits and challenges. Section two summarizes teacher-surveyed views from diverse global regions. Section three extracts key themes from interviews with ELT/L experts spanning multiple roles.

The first section documents how ELT/L-focused AI investigations predominantly employ technologies for developing productive linguistic skills, such as personalized precision pronunciation coaching and academic writing practice productivity over enhancements to receptive linguistic processing while also aiding motivation and metacognition tracking (Dizon & Gayed, 2021; Dizon & Tang, 2020; Shivakumar et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2018). Yet this section also highlights enduring research gaps around adult learner impacts, predictive analytics, inclusion barriers and technical transparency.

Augmenting this research grounding, section two aggregates survey findings from English teachers worldwide on AI tool access and usage in everyday teaching. Around half of respondents report actively utilizing aids like grammar checkers and chatbots for core teaching activities, including materials creation, language practice and writing correction. However, nearly a quarter indicate present non-adoption. While recognizing assistive promise for personalized content and autonomous skill improvement, prevailing concerns surface regarding over-reliance, plagiarism and diminished human interaction. 54 % rate present training as inadequate for ethical, pedagogically-aligned AI incorporation and strongly advocate expanded provisions.

In section three, interviews with 19 ELT/L experts from 12 countries elaboratively map 11 key themes identifying acute needs to re-envision learning theories for more collaborative AI integration, improve algorithmic transparency, balance commercial interests with the public good, mitigate encoded biases, foster

far more sophisticated and critical learner evaluation mindsets towards AI and co-construct appropriate, ethical human-AI hybrid ELT/L ecosystems centered on human development through holistic, culture-situated pedagogies.

This tripartite analysis firmly identifies the technical aspects, economic motivations, and significant ethical concerns related to human rights, identity, and transparency that are influencing, and often hindering, the swift incorporation of AI. It emphasizes that human interests and wisdom, particularly those of practitioners, remain steadfastly at the center of this integration (Viktorivna et al., 2022).

1.5 Relevance for ELT/L stakeholders

The report offers a wealth of previously unavailable insights, proving invaluable to front-line English practitioners, policy-level curriculum designers, and researchers. Classroom teachers will find practical applications, such as pronunciation coaching, academic writing tools, adaptive learning analytics, and accessibility improvements. However, they are also advised to be aware of the risks of overreliance and deprofessionalization, underscoring the need for more discerning integration of these tools. Educational leaders must urgently address the need for comprehensive AI literacy among teachers (Pokrivčáková, 2019, p. 145) and work towards updating privacy safeguards, ethical protocols, and impact assessments to balance innovation with maintaining essential interpersonal dynamics. The need for assessment reforms tailored to the AI era, integration of the CEFR, recognition of language variety, and maintaining motivation are also identified as vital areas requiring thoughtful, evidence-based decisions in preparation for impending changes. Overall, this report serves as an essential guide, outlining the myriad opportunities, risks, and responsibilities involved in implementing human-centered AI in a way that democratizes English proficiency, which is key to unlocking life opportunities on a global scale.

2 Critical evaluation

The report offers an insightful exploration into the intersection of AI and ELT/L, presenting a wide-ranging overview of this evolving field. Its strength lies in its multifaceted approach, incorporating views from ELT practitioners and recognized field experts, thereby fostering a nuanced comprehension of AI's potential and pitfalls in this domain. The use of varied sources such as literature reviews, surveys, and interviews provide a robust mechanism for cross-validating emerging opportunities and challenges. For example, the juxtaposition of teachers' recognition of AI's assistive capabilities against experts' warnings about misuse and overreliance

adds depth to the discourse, informing balanced policy development. The report thus offers valuable and actionable insights for stakeholders seeking to leverage AI to enhance ELT/L.

However, identified limitations constrain these strengths. The report's literature review displays a geographical bias, mainly focusing on Asian contexts, and the absence of grey literature and limited global research representation affects the generalizability of its findings. The teacher surveys and expert interviews also remain limited in scale and diversity. Additionally, more thorough cross-referencing within the report could enhance the synthesis of insights, such as using expert feedback to shape teacher surveys for better corroboration. The report also falls short of exploring how to operationalize inclusivity and empowerment through specific socio-technical designs, despite outlining key ethical considerations.

A critical oversight in the report is the absence of the learner's perspective. The term ELT/L inherently includes "learning", yet the report does not sufficiently incorporate the views or experiences of learners with AI in language education. However, as the ultimate beneficiaries and users of AI technologies and content, learners' direct voices and attitudes are equally crucial for understanding the actual effects on English learning. This deficiency further constrains the integrity and completeness of the investigation.

More broadly, four salient interconnected implications stem from these limitations. First, the constrained literature review affects the transferability of results for informing policies in regions just beginning to explore AI, potentially exacerbating global disparities. Second, the sample bias towards technology-literate teachers may obscure the challenges faced by less-resourced educators, affecting support prioritization. Third, a lack of connection between local constraints and ethical considerations risks perpetuating one-size-fits-all technology solutions, overlooking unique community needs (Toyama, 2015). Finally, the lack of detailed transition frameworks could lead to replicating existing implementation deficiencies (Warschauer, 2003). Additionally, the lack of learner perspectives leads to further issues. The inability to gauge the actual effects of AI tools on English learning affects evidence-based tool development for learners. The omission of learner attitudes also risks exacerbating digital inequities if policy decisions fail to address genuine user needs and access barriers.

Despite these concerns, the report's findings can inform and inspire multiple stakeholders. It urges ELT/L practitioners to critically evaluate AI applications in line with sound pedagogical principles and ethical standards. It also highlights the need for policymakers to prioritize teacher AI readiness, emphasizing the importance of critical data literacy and ethical usage (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). For researchers, the report identifies significant gaps in understanding adoption drivers, assessment systems, and auditing mechanisms, calling for further investigation to achieve the

proposed ethical goals. Moreover, the current lack of learners' attitudes and adoption experiences also represents major research gaps. As the actual users of AI tools, learners' direct input could provide authentic evidence on how these technologies assist or hinder language learning. Therefore, future studies should enhance the focus on learners and collect more empirical evidence from the user standpoint.

In conclusion, Edmett et al.'s report (2023) is a foundational work that spurs essential actions from various stakeholders towards integrating AI in ELT/L in a manner that humanizes and is conducive to quality education. It highlights current challenges and serves as a call to action for further progress, underscoring the necessity of developing inclusive strategies and frameworks that acknowledge the diverse global context of AI in education. This report sets the groundwork for future initiatives to implement these strategies through informed policy-making and pedagogical practices that are attuned to the varied needs of learners and educators worldwide.

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