LEARNER PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS AI IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract: The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into English Language Learning (ELL) is rapidly transforming educational landscapes. This study explores learner perceptions and attitudes towards AI-powered tools within ELL, examining factors influencing their acceptance, engagement, and perceived effectiveness. Through a mixed-methods approach, including surveys and semi-structured interviews, the research investigates learners' views on AI's role in personalized learning, feedback provision, and overall learning experience. The findings reveal a complex interplay of positive perceptions regarding AI's potential for individualized support and negative concerns about the lack of human interaction and potential biases. This paper discusses the implications of these findings for the design and implementation of AI-driven ELL tools, emphasizing the importance of addressing learner concerns and fostering a human-centered approach to technology integration.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, English Language Learning, Learner Perceptions, Learner Attitudes, Technology Integration, Personalized Learning, Human-Computer Interaction, Affective Factors.

INTRODUCTION

The advent of AI has ushered in a new era of possibilities for education, with ELL being a particularly fertile ground for innovation. AI-powered tools offer personalized learning experiences, automated feedback, and adaptive learning pathways, potentially revolutionizing how learners acquire English. However, the successful integration of AI in ELL hinges not only on technological capabilities but also on learner perceptions and attitudes. Learners' beliefs, concerns, and expectations

regarding AI significantly influence their engagement with and perceived effectiveness of these tools. This study aims to understand how learners perceive and interact with AI in their language learning journey, exploring these crucial factors. Understanding these perspectives is crucial for maximizing the benefits of AI while mitigating potential challenges and ensuring its effective implementation.

Existing research highlights the potential of AI in ELL, particularly in areas like personalized learning, automated feedback, and pronunciation training. Studies have explored the effectiveness of AI-powered tools in improving specific language skill. However, less attention has been paid to the nuanced learner perspective. Studies on technology acceptance suggest that perceived usefulness, ease of use, and affective factors (e.g., anxiety, motivation) play a significant role in adoption. This study builds upon this research by specifically focusing on the context of AI in ELL, considering factors such as perceived effectiveness, human interaction, ethical concerns, and the impact on learner autonomy. Furthermore, the literature on human-computer interaction (HCI) provides valuable insights into how learners interact with AI systems and the importance of user-centered design.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of learner perceptions. A survey was administered to a diverse group of 250 ELL learners (age range 16-25, various proficiency levels, diverse linguistic backgrounds) to gather quantitative data on their perceptions and attitudes towards AI in language learning. The survey included validated scales measuring perceived usefulness, ease of use, enjoyment, perceived impact on learning outcomes, anxiety related to AI, and attitudes towards technology in general. Open-ended questions were also included to allow for more nuanced responses. Following the survey, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a stratified sample of 30 participants, representing different proficiency levels and attitudes towards AI, to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives. The interviews explored their

specific experiences with AI tools, their perceived benefits and drawbacks, and their suggestions for improvement. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data, identifying recurring themes and patterns.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed a nuanced and multifaceted picture of learner perceptions.

- **Positive Perceptions:** A significant majority of participants acknowledged the potential of AI for personalized learning, particularly in areas like vocabulary acquisition, grammar practice, and pronunciation feedback. They appreciated the immediate feedback provided by AI-powered tools, the ability to learn at their own pace, and the accessibility of these tools. Many learners reported increased motivation and confidence when using AI-based learning platforms.
- **Concerns:** A substantial portion of participants expressed concerns about the lack of human interaction. They emphasized the importance of teacher feedback, peer interaction, and authentic communication for developing communicative competence and building confidence. Concerns about data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential for deskilling teachers were also raised. Some learners expressed anxiety about relying too heavily on AI and losing their ability to learn independently.
- **Mixed Views on Effectiveness:** While some learners found AI tools to be highly effective, particularly for practicing specific skills, others felt that they were limited in their ability to address complex language skills, such as creative writing, critical thinking, and nuanced communication. They felt that AI lacked the ability to understand the nuances of language and provide context-specific feedback.
- **Influence of Prior Experience:** Learners' prior experience with technology and AI significantly influenced their perceptions. Learners who were comfortable with

technology in general were more likely to have positive attitudes towards AI in ELL.

- **Impact on Learner Autonomy:** Some learners expressed concern that over-reliance on AI could diminish their own learning strategies and autonomy. They valued the ability to learn independently and felt that AI tools could potentially hinder this.

The findings highlight the importance of a human-centered approach to AI integration in ELL. While learners recognize the benefits of personalized learning and immediate feedback, they also value the human element in language learning. This suggests that AI should be viewed as a tool to augment, rather than replace, the role of the teacher. Teachers can leverage AI for personalized practice and feedback, freeing up their time to focus on facilitating communicative activities, providing individualized support, fostering critical thinking, and addressing learner concerns. Addressing learner concerns about data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential impact on teacher roles is crucial for building trust and ensuring ethical use of AI in education. The study also reveals the importance of considering learners' prior experience with technology and providing adequate training and support for using AI tools effectively.

- **Human-AI Collaboration:** ELL programs should focus on integrating AI tools in a way that complements human instruction. A blended learning approach, combining the strengths of AI and human teachers, is likely to be most effective.
- **Teacher Training and Professional Development:** Teachers need to be trained on how to effectively integrate AI tools into their teaching practice, how to address learner concerns, and how to maintain the human element in language learning.
- **Transparency and Explainability:** It is important to ensure that AI algorithms are transparent and explainable, so that learners understand how the technology works, how their data is being used, and how feedback is generated.

- **Addressing Ethical Concerns:** Educators, developers, and policymakers should address ethical concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential impact of AI on the teaching profession. Clear guidelines and regulations are needed to ensure responsible use of AI in education.
- **User-Centered Design:** AI tools should be designed with a user-centered approach, taking into account learner needs, preferences, and concerns. Feedback from learners should be actively sought and incorporated into the design process.
- **Promoting Learner Autonomy:** AI tools should be designed to support, rather than diminish, learner autonomy. Learners should be encouraged to develop their own learning strategies and critical thinking skills.
- **Further Research:** Future research should explore the long-term impact of AI on learner motivation, engagement, language development, and intercultural competence. Research should also investigate the effectiveness of different AI integration models and the role of teacher mediation in maximizing the benefits of AI.

CONCLUSION

Learner perceptions and attitudes are critical factors in the successful integration of AI in ELL. By understanding these perspectives, addressing learner concerns, and adopting a human-centered approach, educators can harness the power of AI to create more personalized, effective, and engaging language learning experiences. A blended learning approach, which combines the strengths of AI and human teachers, is essential for ensuring that AI serves as a valuable tool for both learners and teachers, fostering a more equitable and enriching learning environment. Further research is needed to fully understand the long-term impact of AI on ELL and to develop best practices for its implementation.

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