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Teachers' Perspectives on Artificial Intelligence as a Motivational Tool for English Language Learners: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The present research explores lived experiences and perceptions of in-service English language teachers on the topic of artificial intelligence (AI) as a motivational tool to be used with English language learners in various ESL and EFL settings. Based on the Self-Determination Theory and the associated motivational models, the study fills a very urgent gap as it anticipates the interpretative views of teachers during the booming adoption of AI technology, including chatbots, adaptive gamified environments, and automated feedback tools, and generative models like ChatGPT. Semi-structured interviews and reflective journals were used to collect data on 15 purposely selected teachers in both the public and the private schools in different countries. The results indicate that there are four main advantages: personalization that leads to a sense of autonomy, self-efficacy and intrinsic interest; greater engagement through interactivity, immediate feedback, gamification and flow-like experiences; the sense of safety and low-stakes practice environments that help to build confidence, and long-term motivation due to sustained variety and novelty. At the same time, when asked to identify significant constraints, teachers listed over-reliance, which kills intrinsic motivation, equity obstacles because of digital divides and disproportionate access, the failure of AI to deliver authentic emotional and relational support, which is crucial to relatedness, and flaws in teacher preparation and professional training. The respondents suggested implementing AI in a balanced way as a complement and not a substitute of human instruction and proposed pedagogical solutions including efficient prompt engineering, and hybrid classroom activities, which involve AI productions and teacher-designed interaction, to optimize the motivational gains without interfering with relational dynamics. They highlighted the importance of continuous professional education in AI literacy, the attentive approach to the ethical questions such as the agency of learners, the algorithmic bias, data security, and the risks of plagiarism and the institutional response to these risks through the enhancement of infrastructure, curriculum design, and policy solutions. The discussion frames these findings in the existing literature, which proves the consistency with evidence on AI motivational role in language education, in addition to raised equity and relational issues in diverse global contexts. In theory, the research contributes to motivational theories by proving that autonomy and competence can be reinforced by artificial intelligence but must be mediated by a human to ensure relatedness and avoid demotivation. In practice, it also encourages teachers to adopt hybrid models, the teacher educators to implement AI pedagogy in training programs, and the policymakers to advance equitable and ethical adoption. This is limited by the small sample size and context-specificity of the data which recommends future studies with larger longitudinal cohorts, the perspective of learners and comparative

quantitative-qualitative methods. Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, English language learning, teacher viewpoint, learner motivation, qualitative research, educational technology.
Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, English Language Learning, Teacher Perspectives, Learner Motivation, Qualitative Study, Educational Technology.*

Introduction

The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in the educational sector is a trend whose pace has gained significant momentum over the past few years and is transforming the educational environment in multiple aspects, especially in the language learning domain. By 2025, AI technologies will be more and more integrated into the classroom across the globe, providing a more personal approach to learning based on the specific needs of the students through such solutions as intelligent tutoring systems and adaptive platforms. This development is observed in English language learning (ELL) in applications that allow real-time feedback, immersive simulation, and gamified communication to enable greater engagement and acquisition of skills. Motivation of learners is the key to successful acquisition of second/foreign language and it encourages their endurance, hard work, and eventual mastery. According to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), motivation succeeds when primary psychological needs of autonomous, competent and relatednes are satisfied, which results in intrinsic involvement instead of extrinsic compliance (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Noels et al., 2000). On the same note, the ARCS model also focuses on attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction as crucial motivating factors, which can be used strategically to maintain interest in language activities in learners (Keller, 1987; Jin, 2024). These frameworks highlight that motivation is not simply quantitative but is qualitative as well which affects the long term language retention and application in the real life situations.

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, including chatbots, adaptive applications like Duolingo, writing-support Grammarly, and generative AI like ChatGPT, has made them a powerful tool to boost the motivation of students in English as a Second (ESL) or English as a Foreign (EFL) language (Wei, 2023). The most recent empirical findings (2023-2025) emphasize that such tools generate immediate and personalized feedback, which leads to the reduction of anxiety and enhances self-efficacy, which, in turn, is the focus of SDT competence (Ekizer, 2025). As an example, the gamified design of Duolingo integrates the aspects of ARCS by keeping the attention with streaks and rewards, relevance with context-based exercises, and confidence building with the progressive challenges, which leads to increased engagement and readiness to communicate (Phanwiriyarat, 2025). Grammarly and ChatGPT also contribute to that, allowing the scaffolding of writing and speaking, allowing learners to afford trial and error, which maintain intrinsic motivation. This change in the learner-centered modes justifies the motivation capabilities of AI, which is no longer the teacher-centered mode to further control the learning process, but rather the students gain the freedom of their learning processes. Nevertheless, the contribution of the teachers views in fulfilling this potential has not been well researched, although they play a central role in mediating the use of technology and countering the contextual peculiarities.

Regardless of these improvements, there remains a significant gap in the research on the qualitative understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of AI as a motivational tool in ELL in particular, among teachers. Although the leading role is taken up by quantitative studies that prove the beneficial effects of AI on proficiency and engagement, they rarely take into consideration the individualized, situational understanding of educators, including ethical issues, equity challenges, and pedagogical adjustments (Kabdrgalinova, 2025; Wang, 2025). The qualitative investigations are few and far between, with limited studies becoming ambivalent as they present advantages such as a decrease in workload and a stronger personal approach, but

none of the studies looks solely at motivation through the perspectives of teachers (Tripathi, 2025; Wu, 2025). One of the gaps that this study fills is that it qualitatively explores the views of the teachers regarding how AI can be used to motivate English language learners. This is to reveal the perceived benefits, challenges, and integration recommendations.

Literature Review

The theoretical basis of motivation in language learning greatly relies on the already existing models that explain why learners continue to acquire a second or foreign language. One of the foundations is Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which assumes that intrinsic motivation thrives when the psychological needs of the learners (autonomy self-directed choices), competence (mastery and efficacy), and relatedness (fulfilling meaningful connections) are met, resulting in long-term engagement and higher learning outcomes (Ryan and Deci, 2020). SDT has also been used in English language situations to show how volitional persistence thrives in conducive conditions compared to the opposing force of controlled extrinsic pressures (Noels et al., 2000; Annamalai et al., 2025). In addition to this, self-efficacy theory highlights the views of learners on their abilities to perform language tasks effectively, which directly affects effort and perseverance in the face of adversities (Bandura, 1997). The flow theory also adds value to the discussion since it explains ideal experiences that see learners get completely absorbed in an activity that is neither too hard nor too easy to accomplish, leading to increased enjoyment and intrinsic motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). All these theories together emphasize motivation as a complex phenomenon in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL), where affective variables tend to dictate the long-term proficiency that is not merely a cognitive input (Ma et al., 2025). The most current syntheses confirm that the motivational constructs mediate technology-enhanced learning, and AI tools can enhance the need satisfaction in case it is pedagogically aligned (Xu & Liu, 2025).

Language education Artificial intelligence has been widely applied in language education: intelligent tutoring systems (ITS), chatbots, automated feedback generation, and gamified adaptive systems that provide personalized and scaled instruction. ITS and adaptive systems determine the performance of learners in real-time and modify the difficulty, sequencing, and scaffolding to optimize the integration of vocabulary, grammar, and skills (Chen et al., 2021). Chatbots and generative AI, including ChatGPT variants, are simulated conversations to practice speaking and writing with the ability to respond to these tasks in real-time and without judging performance, which helps to overcome affective filters (Du et al., 2024). Spaced repetition, rewards and progress tracking Gamified applications such as Duolingo keep the user interested by providing extrinsic motivation that may then evolve into intrinsic motivation (Zeng and Fisher, 2023; Xu and Liu, 2025). Syntactic, coherence and style feedback machines assist teachers with lower-order corrections, allowing them to concentrate on more advanced facilitation. All of these are tools that allow scalable personalization, accommodating the needs of various levels of proficiency and learning rates in the EFL/ESL classroom, and integrations obtained through empirical methods demonstrate improved interactivity and less work on the part of the teacher (Ekizer, 2025). The success of these, however, depends on design in line with pedagogical objectives because poorly applied aspects may result in shallow interaction, rather than profound linguistic processing.

Empirical studies concerning the impact of AI on motivation and engagement of English language learners indicate mostly positive but contradictory findings, and the latest studies of 2024-2025 show that the impact of AI depends on the context with both advantages and disadvantages. The quantitative meta-analyses reveal moderate to large effect sizes of AI interventions to enhance motivation, self-efficacy and engagement especially with individualized feedback and

gamification, which meets SDT needs. As an example, writing assignments with ChatGPT have been associated with a higher level of intrinsic motivation and a decrease in anxiety through the development of competence through continuous, less stakes revisions. Gamified apps like Duolingo keep people interested in the long-run with streaks and adaptive challenges, but without any additional human aspect, the effect of novelty may decrease (Xu and Liu, 2025). Qualitative data highlight the benefit of increased enjoyment and autonomy in AI-mediated practice but describe frustration among learners in response to inaccurate outputs or excessive dependency that leads to the lack of critical thought (Wei, 2023). In longitudinal designs, mixed results are obtained, and long-term motivation is associated with teacher mediation to put AI interactions into context, and avoid demotivation through the constraints of algorithms (Ma et al., 2025). In general, whereas AI clearly increases interaction in regulated environments, the variability of the real life due to its access, abilities, and the quality of integration provides uneven transferability to more inclusive motivational profiles.

The studies of the role of teachers and their attitudes toward the integration of technology in the English Language Teaching (ELT) context are always characterized by the mediating position of the teacher, and the advantages of the use of technology are described in the terms of personalization, efficiency, and better student performance in contrast to the long-term concerns. Educators appreciate AI as it allows offering differentiated instruction, immediate feedback, and reduced work during which prompt scaffolding benefits learners by providing them with motivation (Sayici and Aydin, 2025). Qualitative investigations show hopefulness over the potential participation through interactive tools, but concerns of over-dependence on such tools and subsequent loss of critical thinking, disparity due to digital distances, and loss of human interaction necessary to support and feel related (Benek, 2025; Al-Khresheh, 2024). Teachers have moral concerns about privacy of data, bias of algorithmic reactions and possible suppression of creativity, and highlight the element of inimitable human element in the development of authentic communicative ability (Sayici & Aydin, 2025). Although it becomes increasingly adopted, poor training is frequently reported and causes one to be ambivalent about maximizing AI motivational affordances (Kabdrgalinova, 2025). This literature highlights the fact that the views of teachers predetermine the success of the implementation and the positive attitude is associated with the balanced, pedagogy-based integration.

There is still an acute gap in the literature: it is the lack of qualitative research focusing solely on the experience of teachers and subtle attitudes to AI as a motivational tool towards English language learners. Although quantitative dominance demonstrates the proficiency gains and the overall level of engagement increase, the profound investigations of educators interpretative frameworks, especially their comprehension of how AI fits the concept of motivational theories such as SDT in real classrooms, are scarce (Ekizer, 2025). Current qualitative research tends to attribute general attitudes towards technology or those of students and ignores teacher-specific feedback on the advantages such as robust intrinsic motivation through autonomy support) and drawbacks e.g., relational losses through relatedness (Benek, 2025; Sayici and Aydin, 2025). This paucity restricts the knowledge of pedagogical mediation approaches that can maximize the motivational potential of AI, with a necessity to focus on healthy phenomenological or thematic research to get the voices of educators when AI is evolving rapidly.

Problem Statement

Although AI tools, including chatbots, adaptive gamified applications, automated feedback, and generative models like ChatGPT, have been quickly adopted in English language education, their motivational possibilities of their remains in the perspectives of practicing teachers have not been researched. Persistence, self-efficacy, and communicative competence is motivated in

second/foreign language acquisition. AI will deliver personalization, instant feedback, less anxiety and long-term engagement, but it also will bring the threat of over-dependence, inequality, and inaccuracy of the algorithms, as well as the loss of the human empathetic touch. Quantitative research puts more emphasis on advantages but does not focus on teachers in their complex perceptions as mediators of integration. A lack of qualitative studies that pay special attention to the perception of AI as a motivational instrument in the teachers contributes to an important gap that narrows the possibilities of providing effective and balanced usage of a motivational tool in a variety of EFL/ESL situations.

Objectives

- To identify perceived benefits of AI in enhancing learner motivation
- To examine perceived challenges or limitations
- To uncover teachers' recommendations for effective integration

Research Methodology

The current study utilized a qualitative phenomenological design in the process of investigating the lived experiences and subjective perceptions of in-service English language teachers about artificial intelligence as a motivational tool among English language learners. The reason behind the selection of phenomenology was its capability to reflect the meaning of how teachers perceive and incorporate AI into their motivational behavior in real classroom settings. The target population comprised of 15 purposely sampled in-service English educators working in different ESL and EFL contexts in both public and privately-run schools/universities in various countries. The sample was selected with the purpose of incorporating diverse teaching experience (3 to more than 20 years), the level of learner proficiency (beginner to advanced), and the level of exposure to AI tools, which provided multiple, diverse points of view. Semi-structured interviews (45-60 minutes each), held either virtually or face-to-face, using an open-ended guide to guide interviewees to share detailed descriptions of their perceptions of AI motivational affordances, perceived benefits and challenges, and strategies to integrate AI into their workflows were used as the main method of data collection, with these sessions being flexible to allow the emergent probing of the available responses. Participants were also asked to fill in reflective journals in which they recorded particular AI-based applications in their lessons within two weeks to gain deeper insight and facilitate triangulation.

It was analysed using a six-phase thematic analysis methodology developed by Braun and Clarke familiarization by reading the data repeatedly, first-order coding of the whole dataset, searching and collating possible themes, reviewing and refining the themes in terms of coded extracts and the whole dataset, defining and naming themes based on illustrative quotations and creating a consistent analytical narrative. Reliable and validated through member checking (participant validation of summaries), peer debriefing, researcher reflexivity in terms of an audit trail and a rich contextual description. Ethical protection measures were informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality by the use of pseudonyms and safe storage, and a prior institutional review board approval.

Perceived Benefits of AI as a Motivational Tool

The results of this research show that personalization and increased learner autonomy were the benefits of AI tools, which were most frequently reported by English language teachers to motivate students. According to teachers, adaptive platforms and generative AI tailors content to the individual level of proficiency, interests, and learning rates, which directly increase intrinsic motivation since it meets competence and autonomy needs according to the Self-Determination Theory. As an example, AI applications (such as ChatGPT or adaptive apps) create specific exercises, vocabulary lists, or reading passages in consideration of the particular weaknesses or

cultural background of the learners to feel relevant and achievable. According to the respondents, such personalization leads to a greater sense of self-efficacy since the students get repeated small successes without having to be constantly attended to by teachers. The same teacher noted, "When AI changes the difficulty in real time in response to the reactions of my students, they feel that they control their progress more than the tool does in a large classroom, and it is this motivation that I can ignite in my students to continue going. Another highlighted point, is that, Students who previously were disengaged now select their own topics by prompting them with AI; it makes passive students active explorers. This change makes the learners self-regulate, which helps them maintain their efforts even after extrinsic rewards and encourage them to be owners of English learning in a long-term perspective in a variety of EFL/ESL settings.

The second important theme was on engagement using interactivity and gamification, where the teachers emphasized the use of AI tools to provide instant feedback, chatbots, and reward systems that enable ordinary practice to be dynamic and enjoyable. Chatbots mimic real-life conversations and offer non-judgmental replies that people make people want to retry it again, and game mechanics like streaks, badges, points, and leaderboard in applications are extrinsic motivators that tend to become intrinsic interest. The teachers noted increased engagement with the learning, particularly in the reluctant learners since these features keep the attention and provide flow like conditions. Some of the quotes that were provided in support were: The chatbot provides feedback immediately, I do not have to wait until I have to correct 30 essays to make the student remain in the zone and have the interest to make things better the next time. Someone else stated, "Duolingo-type gamification makes them come back to the platform every day; with their rewards, they compete with themselves, not only grades. This teacher, in an analytical way, gave rise to the increased readiness to communicate, a decrease in dropout rates in self-studying, and increased classroom vigor when AI results were used to inform post-engagement activities, highlighting the importance of AI in maintaining engagement when working with large classrooms or limited contact time.

The teachers also reported that confidence-building and anxiety reduction were some of the motivational benefits of the AI, with particular focus on the fact that AI can provide a safe, low-stakes practice setting without peer judgment or teacher assessment pressure. Generative AI and chatbots enable a risk-free and safe way to speak or write or pronounce, with mistakes being followed by constructive suggestions instead of criticism, reducing affective filters and increasing self-efficacy. Respondents recounted how anxious or introverted students were able to acquire confidence in a one-on-one interaction with AI, then perform in front of the audience. Examples of this included: My timid students talk to the AI on and on and on without the fear of being embarrassed, their confidence in their speech rises when they finally get to say it in a classroom. According to one of the teachers, patient, neutral feedback created by AI develops their faith that they can make it better; it is like a coach that never becomes tired. This theme is related to the sustenance of interest in the long term due to diversity and novelty as AI provides new issues, situations, VR/AR features, which avoid boredom and rekindle interest over time. Educators said they continued to be motivated as students were introduced to unpredictable but relevant information and one wrote, "The ever-changing new stories, debates, or games created by AI keep even high-level students glued; they no longer feel bored. Taken together these interdependent advantages make AI an extremely potent complementary motivator when intelligently mediated by educators.

Challenges and Limitations

The findings of this research shed light on major obstacles and constraints that English language instructors see in using AI as a motivational instrument to encourage the learners, over-reliance and lack of intrinsic motivation become the main issue. It was also feared by teachers that the continued reliance of AI as a source of feedback, corrections, and content generation will destroy independent thinking, self-regulation, and real effort among students and transform motivation from personal motivation to dependence on tools. According to the Self-Determination Theory, over-scaffolding AI will jeopardize autonomy and competence by diminishing the chances of struggle and individual success. It was repeatedly observed that when learners are accustomed to asking AI questions or writing compositions, the level of engagement starts to be shallow and motivation goes down as soon as these tools are not accessible. According to one teacher, students now expect ChatGPT to provide flawless answers immediately; to think on their own, most of them will surrender easily, their motivation is unnatural, and not theirs. Another one, "Gradually, the novelty fades away and they lose the pleasure of working things out by themselves, AI is a crutch which undermines actual endurance. This, analytically associated with the teachers, was potentially long-term demoralizing as AI efficiency avoids the mental work required to internalize motivation on a profound level when learning a language.

One of the themes that were quite closely related but not identical was that of equity/issues of access, which included digital divide, prohibitive costs, and unreliable infrastructure as well as unequal opportunities that would intervene in motivational potential of AI in different EFL/ESL settings. Instructors working in under-resourced schools pointed to the low internet speed, old hardware, or high costs of premium tools to indicate that the disadvantaged students are locked out instead of reducing the motivational inequity. It produces a more or less paradoxical effect because AI promises personalization but without realizing it increases individual achievement gaps, which discourages those lacking regular access due to frustration or feeling cheated. Quations were taken to show the exasperation: In my rural school, 50 percent of the classroom has no idea how to use Duolingo correctly because of a bad connection how can AI encourage when it cannot even be accessed? One more teacher commented on how premium features available that make learning enjoyable and customized are behind paywalls; less fortunate students feel excluded and lose their interest drastically. Analytically, such structural barriers are damaging the fair motivational provisions of AI since they have strengthened the socioeconomic inequalities and have undermined inclusive pedagogy in global language education.

One of the key limitations identified by the teachers all the time was the absence of emotional/human connection, insisting that AI could not achieve the same subtly promoted encouragement, empathy, culture and relationship bonding that teachers use to maintain motivation. Although AI is efficient and does not present biased support, it does not achieve the warmth, personalized praise, and motivational scaffolds based on human rapport, which is crucial in the development of relatedness and emotion investment in language acquisition. The participants explained the situations where anxious learners would perform better when the teacher reassured them but fail to engage with cold AI feedback. The examples of quotes were: It can fix the grammar, but AI can also not say I believe in you with a real care students require that human touch to make it through difficult times. One of the educators commented that their support provides the students with confidence that a chatbot has never been able to achieve; otherwise, the motivation would be more formal and short-lived. This theme highlights the motivational ceiling of AI, which is the insufficiency of technology to serve its purpose in a way that is more human and comprehensive and enduring. Other related issues revolved around accuracy issues which result in misinformation or frustration, teacher preparedness and training deficiencies. Teachers also mentioned that AI develops hallucinations, biased responses, or

culturally unresponsive recommendations that disorient learners, destroy trust, and cause demotivation by making same errors over and over again. At the same time, a significant number of people were not sufficiently ready to incorporate AI into the teaching process, which is due to a lack of professional growth to use it regularly or to an approximate level. One of them wrote, AI provides false answers and students become frustrated and do not see the point of anything anymore. Another one pointed out that, in the absence of training, they are afraid of using these tools well; they are afraid to lead students in the right direction. All these restrictions contribute to the restraining effect on the motivational prospect of AI, which supports the significance of balanced implementation mediated by human beings.

Teachers' Recommendations and Practical Implications

The recommendations of the teachers in this study focus on the balanced incorporation of AI as an addition but not substitution of human teaching as the findings reflect the general view that AI should complement and not replace the non-substitutable aspects of educator presence in the English language classrooms. The educators promoted intentional and planned usage where AI takes care of the mundane duties such as rough writing, vocabulary exercises, or machine-assisted editing so that teachers can concentrate on those more demanding competencies, including critical thinking, cultural sensitivity, empathy, and intrapersonal inspiration. The methodology is in line with pedagogical frameworks, which emphasize human mediated learning as an approach to developing authentic communicative competency and emotional investment. The participants emphasized that excessive reliance will lead to a reduction in teacher-student relationships and learner agency, whereas considerate addition will enhance motivation without reducing intrinsic motivation. One of the teachers said, AI is a strong practice/personalization assistant, but it has to be kept to the background, my task is to be able to communicate emotionally and help to better comprehend, lack of that balance, motivation will be superficial. Another one added, "We use AI to do what it is best at in the short-run quick and adaptive assistance but no more than discussions, role-plays, or encouragement that a teacher can only offer. Analytically, such a suggestion is practical in light of the strengths and weaknesses of AI in the aspect of scalability and immediacy as opposed to the aspect of emotional richness, which encourages hybrid design that ensures sustained engagement of learners in various EFL/ESL environments.

The need to train teachers and develop them professionally was also identified as a recurrent and urgent suggestion because most of the participants mentioned that they were not sufficiently trained to use the motivational power of AI successfully. Educators demanded systematic, continual initiatives that develop AI literacy, the ability to integrate pedagogically, and the ability to be confident in the choice and assessment of tools. In the absence of this support, integration is either inconsistent or superficial and restricts the motivational benefits and worsens inequities. This priority was demonstrated by quotations: "Schools are obliged to invest in frequent workshops on timely writing and ethical usage otherwise we are guessing and failing to tap into opportunities to inspire students in the right way. One of the educators had a comment to make: I would like to be trained on how to integrate AI into the communicative activities and not only the introduction to the tools; professional development is the only way to make AI a real motivator but not a distraction. It is a theme that points to systematic deficiencies in existing teacher training, in which the evolution of AI far exceeds official teacher training, and demonstrates the need for long-term, context-based training that will enable educators to become knowledgeable in broadcasting motivation through the use of technology.

The teachers provided specific pedagogical strategies to make the most of AI as a motivational factor, especially with the help of prompt engineering and conscious integration with classroom

tasks. It was considered that successful timely design of accurate, context-driven inputs were necessary to create pertinent interactive outputs that are aligned to lesson objectives and learner requirements. Educators suggested workflow hybrids: AI can be used to prepare differentiation material (e.g. before classes), scaffolding during the lesson (e.g. use chatbots to do pair practice before group discussion) and extending the lesson (e.g. semi-automatic reflective writing prompts). Quations to support practical wisdom included: Teach students prompt engineering, so they achieve better results, which is that the engineering develops autonomy and will continue to want to experiment. A different one shared, "I intermix AI feedback and classroom discussions, students work on AI recommendations together, and transform tech generated output into human communication and engagement. These plans highlight active teacher orchestration to change AI to be the passive instrument to dynamism in motivation so that it will not be a passive instrument but the dynamic one that supports communicative approach and learner-centered approach.

Lastly, there was an emphasis on ethical implications and learner agency by teachers, future-oriented recommendations, including institutional support and curriculum adjustments. Ethical challenges were data privacy, bias in the algorithm, the potential of plagiarism, and equitable access, and suggestions were made to promote transparent policies, discussion the limitations of AI critically, and encourage learner agency by encouraging them to reflect on their tool usage. The participants pressured institutions to deliver infrastructure, training funds, and new curricula with AI literacy and ethics. One educator said, "We should have school policies about ethical AI use and agency as students learn to challenge outputs, cite effectively, and take charge of their education. The other recommendation is to update curricula to encompass AI ethics courses and institutional technological support or the motivational benefits remain unbalanced. Such futuristic prescriptions promote responsible and inclusive models that protect motivation as they prepare learners and teachers to work with an AI-infected future in the English language teaching profession.

Discussion

The results of this qualitative research are very similar to the emerging literature on AI in English language teaching, especially in defining dual perception of teachers towards AI as an effective motivational stimulator and the phenomenon that represents significant limitations. The focus of personalization, interactivity, anxiety reduction, and novelty as advantages by teachers is a resonance of the recent research that demonstrates that AI tools help create an engaging experience with adaptable, immediate, and gamified features that can fulfill the needs in competence and autonomy. Likewise, the specified issues a lack of intrinsic motivation due to excessive reliance on it, equity, insufficient emotional engagement, inaccuracy, and gaps in training are echoed by the perennial issues present in the industry about dependency risks, digital divide, and the importance of the human factor in offering a human touch. Such intersection indicates that the current understandings reflect more general trends in the lived experiences of teachers in the era of the rapid adoption of AI, when a fascination with efficiency and customization coexists with ethical warnings about pedagogical and moral consequences.

The findings show a high correspondence with the already available qualitative and mixed-methods studies, which often indicate positive attitudes of teachers to motivational affordances of AI, and express concerns about the over-reliance and lack of relationships. As an example, several studies establish that teachers perceive AI as an addition to enhance engagement and confidence with the correct balance of human mediation, and the lack of correspondence between results in the strength of concerns: some studies have reported more optimism in tech-savvy situations, and this heterogeneous sample of ESL/EFL settings increased equity and access

concerns due to contextual heterogeneity. Other theoretical contributions are seen in the extension of Self-Determination Theory to tech-enhanced language learning; results have shown that AI can facilitate autonomy and competence in personalization but can compromise relatedness without instructor assistance, thereby improving the application of SDT to the context by focusing on the modifying role of human factors in maintaining intrinsic motivation. In practice, implications compel educators to use hybrid strategies, educators of AI to focus on the issue of AI literacy during their training, and policymakers to invest in fair infrastructure and principles to ensure that motivational benefits are given as much as possible, and the downsides are limited. The small sample size of 15 participants is a limitation in itself, though it was purposely made diverse; this restricts the possibility of extrapolation to other contexts than those covered by the sample to ESL/EFL issues in both public and private institutions. The transferability to other settings may be limited by context-specificity that is determined by different institutional resources, cultural influences, and exposure to AI. Interviews and journals generate self-reported information which presents the possibility of recall or social desirability bias but measures of trustworthiness countered this. These could be overcome in future studies through larger longitudinal studies that include the voice of learners and objective measures of motivational outcomes.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study indicates that English language educators see AI as a multidimensional motivational tool that has significant advantages in terms of customization, interactivity, confidence-building, and prolonged novelty and has multiple challenges concerning over-reliance, inequity, detachment of emotions, limitations of accuracy, and insufficient preparation. These subtle opinions emphasize the potential applicability of AI with increasing the learner autonomy, engagement, and self-efficacy when implemented in a considered manner, but note the need to retain the human factor to promote the relatedness and intrinsic motivation in language learning. In conclusion, AI has a high prospect of being used as a motivational tool in English language classes when used as an addition, but not a replacement, and through a balanced approach to pedagogy, sufficient teacher training, ethical consciousness, and institutional backing. In a changing environment, teachers still have a key role to play in the shift of being primary educators to being competent orchestrators of AI output, scaffolders of learning and emotional and relational facilitators of motivation and communicative abilities that last over time. Future research must seek longitudinal studies on long-term motivation patterns, directly involve the student to offer a more ecological perspective, and adopt comparative quantitative-qualitative research methods to empirically test hybrid theories in a wide range of global settings, which will enhance the evidence-based approach of using AI in language education.

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