

RISKS, ETHICAL CONCERNS, AND TEACHER CAUTION IN AI-SUPPORTED EFL INSTRUCTION

Usmonova Diyoraxon Furkatjon kizi

FSU, teacher

E-mail: diy.usmonova@gmail.com

ORCID: 0009-0001-3349-8955

ABSTRACT

This article investigates Uzbek ESP/EFL teachers concerns about AI integration in language classrooms. The results show that teachers strongly support careful use of AI and express concerns about professional skill loss, reduced personalization, workload uncertainty, and broader ethical risks. The article argues that responsible AI integration requires clear institutional rules, academic integrity guidance, data privacy awareness, and training that preserves the central role of the teacher.

Keywords: *AI ethics; EFL; academic integrity; data privacy; teacher skills; artificial intelligence; Uzbekistan*

INTRODUCTION

The integration of AI into EFL education is not only a matter of efficiency and innovation. It also raises questions about teacher authority, human interaction, professional skills, academic integrity, student dependence, and data privacy. In language classrooms, these questions are especially important because communication, feedback, creativity, and personal interaction are central to learning.

This article examines Uzbek ESP/EFL college teachers concerns about AI in language teaching. It focuses on their negative attitudes, caution toward AI tools, and implications for ethical classroom practice.

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Ethical issues are among the most important challenges in AI-supported education. Akgun and Greenhow (2022) note that AI can support teaching, but it may also produce risks related to privacy, bias, surveillance, fairness, and student agency. These risks are especially relevant in educational settings because teachers work with learners' personal data, academic performance, written work, and sometimes sensitive information about learning difficulties.

Holmes and Tuomi (2022) similarly argue that AI in education should be discussed through pedagogical and ethical questions rather than technical possibilities alone. From this perspective, the central issue is not simply whether AI can generate

materials, assess writing, or provide feedback. The more important question is whether such use supports meaningful learning, protects students' rights, and preserves the professional role of teachers.

Teachers often express mixed attitudes toward AI. Cojean et al. (2023) found that teachers may have more ethical concerns about AI-based educational tools than about non-AI technologies. This is understandable because AI tools often operate through complex systems that are not fully transparent to users. Teachers may not always know how student data are processed, how feedback is generated, or what kinds of bias may appear in AI-produced content.

In EFL classrooms, Stevkovska (2025) reports concerns about students' inappropriate use of AI tools, academic dishonesty, overreliance on technology, and the need for clear classroom rules. These problems are highly relevant for writing tasks, translation assignments, vocabulary work, and independent learning activities. If students use AI to complete assignments without understanding the language, the learning process becomes weaker.

Pokrivčáková (2023) also found that some future teachers feared that AI could make EFL teaching less personal or weaken teachers' professional skills. This concern is important because teaching is not only the delivery of content. It includes decision-making, explanation, classroom management, motivation, adaptation of materials, and human feedback. If AI is used without reflection, it may reduce teachers' active pedagogical role rather than support it.

METHODOLOGY

This article draws on survey responses from 35 Uzbek ESP/EFL teachers working in professional and vocational colleges. The questionnaire included items on possible teacher replacement, caution in classroom use, loss of professional skills, depersonalization of learning, workload burden, and broader concerns about AI. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the response patterns.

The participants represented vocational English teaching contexts where ESP instruction is connected with practical professional fields. This context is important because ESP teachers often need to prepare specialized materials, adapt content to learners' future professions, and develop communicative competence for workplace situations. As a result, their views on AI are shaped not only by general EFL teaching, but also by the specific demands of vocational education.

The survey results were interpreted in relation to current discussions on responsible AI use in education. Particular attention was given to how teachers balance potential benefits with risks such as loss of human interaction,

overdependence on automation, ethical misuse, and uncertainty about teacher authority in AI-supported classrooms.

RESULTS

Table 1. Concerns about AI in EFL teaching (n = 35)

Statement	Main result	Interpretation
AI will replace human EFL teachers.	Agree: 20.0%; Not sure: 40.0%; Disagree/strongly disagree: 40.0%	Replacement was not a dominant belief, but uncertainty was high.
Teachers should be careful when using AI tools.	Agree/strongly agree: 91.5%	Caution was the strongest shared position.
Teachers may lose skills when using AI.	Agree/strongly agree: 54.3%	Respondents feared professional deskilling.
AI will make EFL learning less personal.	Agree: 51.4%; Not sure: 37.1%	Personalization and human interaction were major concerns.
AI will be another workload burden.	Agree: 40.0%; Not sure: 40.0%	Teachers were divided about workload effects.
AI will become a threat to humankind.	Agree/strongly agree: 54.3%	Broader social anxiety toward AI was visible.

The strongest response concerned the need for caution: 82.9% of teachers agreed and 8.6% strongly agreed that teachers should be careful when using AI tools in their classes. This indicates that teachers are not rejecting AI, but they want its classroom use to be controlled and pedagogically justified. In other words, teachers seem to recognize the value of AI, but they do not support uncontrolled or uncritical use.

The fear of teacher replacement was less dominant. Only 20.0% agreed that AI would replace human EFL teachers, while 40.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed and another 40.0% were not sure. This result suggests that most teachers do not fully believe in direct replacement, but a large group remains uncertain about the long-term influence of AI on the teaching profession. Such uncertainty may reflect broader public debates about automation and future employment.

However, concerns about professional deskilling were stronger: 42.9% agreed and 11.4% strongly agreed that EFL teachers may lose some of their skills when applying AI in practice. This concern is especially important because language teachers regularly use professional skills such as correcting errors, designing materials, explaining grammar, selecting vocabulary, adapting tasks, and evaluating communicative performance. If these tasks are transferred too quickly to AI systems, teachers may become less active in making pedagogical decisions.

Responses to workload were divided: 40.0% agreed that AI would become another burden, and 40.0% were not sure. This finding is important because AI is often presented as a tool for reducing workload. However, teachers may also see it as an additional responsibility. They may need time to learn new tools, check AI-generated materials, correct inaccuracies, explain AI rules to students, and monitor misuse.

Broader anxiety was visible as well, with 54.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing that AI could become a threat to humankind. Although this statement is wider than classroom practice, it reflects a general sense of caution toward AI technologies. Such concerns may influence how teachers accept or resist AI tools in education. If teachers associate AI with social risks, they may require stronger ethical guidance and institutional reassurance before using it confidently.

DISCUSSION

The results show a balanced but cautious position. Teachers accepted the possible usefulness of AI, but they were clearly aware of risks. The high level of caution is important because it points to the need for institutional guidelines. Teachers need to know what kinds of AI use are acceptable for lesson planning, classroom tasks, writing support, assessment, and student independent work.

Concerns about professional skill loss deserve special attention. If teachers rely on AI for planning, feedback, assessment, and materials creation without critical evaluation, their own pedagogical decision-making may weaken. This supports earlier arguments that AI should assist teachers rather than replace professional judgment (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Holmes & Tuomi, 2022).

The concern that AI may make EFL learning less personal is also pedagogically significant. Language learning depends on interaction, emotional support, feedback, and classroom relationships. AI can provide additional practice and quick feedback, but it cannot fully replace teacher-student communication. Therefore, ethical AI integration should protect human interaction instead of reducing it.

Academic integrity and privacy should be included in teacher training. Teachers need practical strategies for explaining acceptable AI use, detecting overdependence, designing tasks that require personal input, and avoiding the transfer of sensitive student data to external platforms. These issues are not secondary; they are part of responsible AI literacy (Akgun & Greenhow, 2022; Stevkovska, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Uzbek ESP/EFL teachers expressed strong caution about the use of AI in language classrooms. They were especially concerned about careful classroom use,

possible loss of teacher skills, reduced personalization, workload uncertainty, and ethical risks. These findings show that teachers do not necessarily reject AI, but they expect its use to be guided, limited, and pedagogically justified.

The results also suggest that AI integration should not be treated only as a technical innovation. In EFL and ESP classrooms, AI affects assessment, feedback, writing support, independent learning, classroom interaction, and the teacher's professional role. Therefore, its implementation should be accompanied by clear institutional policies, teacher training, academic integrity rules, and data privacy guidance.

Responsible use of AI in EFL depends not only on access to tools, but also on ethical and pedagogical control. Teachers need to know how to evaluate AI-generated materials, prevent student overdependence, protect personal data, and design tasks that encourage real language use. In vocational colleges, this is especially important because students need English for practical professional communication, not only for completing assignments.

Overall, AI can support ESP/EFL teaching if it is used as an assistant rather than a replacement for the teacher. Its value depends on how well it is connected to learning objectives, classroom needs, and responsible educational practice. For this reason, future teacher training programs should focus not only on how to use AI tools, but also on when, why, and under what conditions they should be used.

REFERENCES

1. Akgun, S., & Greenhow, C. (2022). Artificial intelligence in education: Addressing ethical challenges in K-12 settings. *AI and Ethics*, 2, 431-440. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43681-021-00096-7>
2. Cojean, S., Brun, L., Amadiou, F., & Dessus, P. (2023). Teachers' attitudes towards AI: What is the difference with non-AI technologies? *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, 45, 2069-2076.
3. Holmes, W., & Tuomi, I. (2022). State of the art and practice in AI in education. *European Journal of Education*, 57(4), 542-570. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12533>
4. Pokrivčáková, S. (2023). Pre-service teachers' attitudes towards artificial intelligence and its integration into EFL teaching and learning. *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, 11(3), 100-114. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jolace-2023-0031>
5. Stevkovska, M. (2025). The use of AI tools in the EFL classroom: Teachers' perspectives. *Educational Role of Language Journal*, 2025-1(13), 95-107. <https://doi.org/10.36534/erlj.2025.01.12>
6. Zawacki-Richter, O., Marín, V. I., Bond, M., & Gouverneur, F. (2019). Systematic review of research on artificial intelligence applications in higher

education - where are the educators? International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 16, Article 39. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-019-0171-0>

7. Usmonova, D. F. (2025). Ingliz tilidagi grammatik tushunchalarni o'zlashtirishda tillararo farqlarni hisobga olish. FARS International Journal of Education, Social Science & Humanities, 14(1), 218-225. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15734203>