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PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF AI IN ESP/EFL TEACHING: EVIDENCE FROM UZBEK VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

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Abstract
This article explores Uzbek ESP/EFL college teachers positive attitudes toward AI-supported language teaching. Survey findings from 35 teachers indicate that respondents believe AI can improve EFL teaching and learning, increase assessment objectivity, reduce workload, and support repetitive classroom tasks. The article concludes that teachers are generally open to AI integration when tools are linked to clear pedagogical purposes and practical classroom needs.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence; EFL teaching; ESP; teacher attitudes; assessment; workload; vocational colleges.

Introduction

AI-supported tools are increasingly used in EFL classrooms for materials development, writing feedback, translation, pronunciation training, assessment, and individualized practice. These tools are often presented as a way to increase instructional efficiency and support teachers in routine tasks. However, teachers acceptance of AI depends on whether they perceive it as pedagogically useful rather than merely technologically advanced.

This article examines Uzbek ESP/EFL college teachers positive attitudes toward AI-supported language instruction. It focuses on their perceptions of AI as a tool for improving education, enhancing EFL teaching and learning, increasing assessment objectivity, reducing workload, and supporting repetitive classroom tasks.

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Literature Background

Research on AI in education commonly identifies several pedagogical benefits, including personalization, automated feedback, learning analytics, and support for assessment (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Holmes & Tuomi, 2022). In language education, AI tools may assist with vocabulary practice, grammar support, writing revision, and pronunciation work, especially when teachers need to adapt materials to learners specific proficiency levels and professional needs (Stevkovska, 2025).

Teachers attitudes are central to successful AI adoption. Akgun and Greenhow (2022) argue that AI can support teachers, but responsible integration requires educators who understand both benefits and risks. Pokrivčáková (2023) also found that pre-service EFL teachers expected AI to improve education, while Stevkovska (2025) reported that teachers often use AI for lesson preparation and classroom materials. These studies suggest that teachers are more likely to adopt AI when its practical value is clear.

Methodology

The data were collected through a survey of 35 ESP/EFL teachers from Uzbek professional and vocational colleges. The questionnaire was adapted from Pokrivčáková (2023) and Stevkovska (2025). Items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, and descriptive statistics were used to identify dominant response patterns.

Results

Table 1. Positive attitudes toward AI-supported EFL instruction (n = 35)

Statement	Agreement	Interpretation
AI will improve education in general.	Agree/strongly agree: 71.5%	Teachers generally viewed AI as a positive educational innovation.
AI will improve EFL learning and teaching.	Agree/strongly agree: 80.0%	The strongest optimism concerned EFL-specific teaching and learning.
AI will make assessment more objective.	Agree/strongly agree: 74.3%	Teachers associated AI with greater assessment consistency.
AI will reduce teachers workload.	Agree/strongly agree: 68.6%	AI was perceived as a tool for reducing routine work.
AI will support repetitive classroom tasks.	Agree/strongly agree: 82.9%	Teachers saw practical value in drills and routine activities.

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The findings indicate a predominantly positive perception of AI in EFL education. A total of 71.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that AI would improve education in general. This result suggests that most Uzbek ESP/EFL college teachers do not perceive AI only as a technical novelty, but as a potentially useful educational resource. Their responses show that AI is increasingly viewed as part of the broader transformation of teaching and learning.

The percentage was even higher for EFL teaching and learning, where 80.0% agreed or strongly agreed that AI would improve the learning and teaching process. This is a significant result because it shows that teachers see AI as relevant not only for education in general, but also for language instruction specifically. In the EFL classroom, AI can support vocabulary learning, grammar practice, pronunciation development, writing feedback, translation activities, and the creation of adapted reading materials. For ESP teachers, these possibilities are especially important because they often need to prepare subject-specific materials for different professional fields.

Teachers also associated AI with more objective assessment. In this item, 74.3% agreed or strongly agreed that AI could help EFL teachers make assessment procedures more objective. This finding indicates that teachers may expect AI tools to reduce subjectivity in checking written assignments, grammar tasks, vocabulary tests, or pronunciation exercises. Automated feedback and rubric-based assessment may help teachers provide more consistent evaluation, especially when they work with large groups. However, this result should be interpreted carefully because assessment in language learning also requires human judgment, contextual understanding, and attention to communicative meaning.

Workload reduction was also viewed positively: 68.6% agreed or strongly agreed that AI implementation would reduce teachers' workload. This result shows that teachers recognize the practical value of AI in managing routine professional tasks. AI tools can help generate exercises, adapt texts, prepare quizzes, suggest lesson ideas, and create supplementary materials. For college teachers who work with ESP groups from different professional areas, this support may be particularly valuable because lesson preparation often requires additional terminology work and content adaptation.

The strongest positive response concerned repetitive classroom tasks, where 82.9% agreed or strongly agreed that AI could help with activities such as

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pronunciation drills. This suggests that teachers clearly see AI as useful for repeated practice, mechanical exercises, and individual student support. In EFL learning, repetition is necessary for pronunciation, vocabulary retention, grammar accuracy, and fluency development. AI-supported tools may allow students to continue practicing outside the classroom, while teachers can focus more on interaction, explanation, feedback, and communicative tasks during class time.

Overall, the results demonstrate that Uzbek ESP/EFL teachers see AI as a practical and pedagogically useful tool. Their positive attitudes are strongest when AI is connected with concrete classroom needs: repetitive practice, assessment support, EFL learning improvement, and workload reduction. This indicates that teachers are more likely to accept AI when its benefits are directly connected to their everyday teaching responsibilities.

Discussion

The results show that Uzbek ESP/EFL teachers see AI primarily as a practical support mechanism. Their positive attitudes are not abstract; they are connected to specific classroom functions such as assessment, repetitive practice, and workload management. This confirms the idea that teachers value AI most when it solves concrete pedagogical problems (Holmes & Tuomi, 2022; Stevkovska, 2025).

The high level of agreement about repetitive tasks is particularly meaningful in EFL and ESP teaching. Pronunciation drills, vocabulary practice, grammar exercises, and terminology work can require considerable time and repetition. AI tools may help teachers create practice materials and provide additional input outside class time. For example, AI can generate pronunciation exercises, vocabulary lists, gap-filling tasks, short dialogues, professional role-play situations, and field-specific reading passages. This can be useful in vocational colleges where students need English for medicine, engineering, transport, law, agriculture, car maintenance, and other practical fields.

The positive response to AI-supported assessment is also important. Many EFL teachers face difficulties in providing timely and consistent feedback, especially when they teach several groups or work with written assignments. AI tools can support grammar correction, vocabulary feedback, writing organization, and preliminary evaluation. This may help teachers save time and identify common

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student errors. However, these tools should not replace teacher judgment. Language assessment involves meaning, context, communicative purpose, creativity, and learner progress. These aspects cannot be fully measured by automated systems.

The findings also suggest that AI is seen as a way to reduce teachers' routine workload. This is an important issue in ESP/EFL contexts because teachers often need to prepare materials that are not available in standard textbooks. For example, a teacher working with agriculture students may need texts on irrigation, soil, crops, and machinery, while a teacher working with medical students may need materials on symptoms, patient communication, or hospital procedures. AI can help produce drafts of such materials, but the teacher must still check accuracy, terminology, language level, and cultural appropriateness.

At the same time, positive attitudes should not be interpreted as full readiness for AI integration. Teachers may believe that AI is useful, but they still need training on how to use it effectively. Optimism must be supported by methodological knowledge. Teachers need to know how to write prompts, evaluate AI-generated content, adapt materials to students' levels, prevent overdependence, and design tasks that develop real language skills rather than passive use of technology.

As Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019) note, the pedagogical role of educators must remain central in AI-supported education. AI should support the teacher, not replace professional decision-making. In EFL classrooms, the teacher remains responsible for selecting materials, explaining language, organizing interaction, motivating students, monitoring progress, and creating a human learning environment. AI can assist with preparation and practice, but it cannot fully understand classroom dynamics, student emotions, local needs, or institutional expectations.

Positive attitudes toward AI also suggest readiness for professional development. Teachers who already believe that AI can improve instruction may be more willing to participate in training. This creates a good foundation for introducing AI literacy programs in teacher education and professional development. Nevertheless, training should not focus only on demonstrating popular AI tools. It should show how to connect AI tools with learning objectives, assessment criteria, ESP vocabulary needs, classroom interaction, and ethical standards.

The findings therefore point to a balanced implication: Uzbek ESP/EFL teachers are open to AI, but this openness needs to be guided. If AI is introduced without

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training, teachers may use it only for surface-level tasks. If it is introduced through structured professional development, it can become a meaningful tool for improving lesson preparation, assessment, student practice, and ESP material development.

Conclusion

Uzbek ESP/EFL college teachers expressed strong positive attitudes toward AI-supported instruction. They believed that AI can improve education, support EFL teaching, increase assessment objectivity, reduce workload, and assist with repetitive classroom tasks. These findings suggest that AI has practical potential in Uzbek vocational language education, especially if teachers receive guidance on how to use it for clear pedagogical purposes.

The results also show that teachers are most positive about AI when it is connected with their everyday classroom needs. They see value in using AI for drills, vocabulary practice, assessment support, material preparation, and workload management. This means that AI integration in ESP/EFL contexts should be practical, needs-based, and directly connected to teaching realities.

However, the positive perception of AI should be supported by systematic training. Teachers need to learn not only how to use AI tools, but also how to evaluate their outputs, adapt them to professional fields, protect pedagogical quality, and maintain the teacher's central role in the classroom. In this sense, AI should be treated as a support tool rather than an independent teaching solution.

Overall, AI can become a useful resource for Uzbek vocational EFL education if it is introduced responsibly, methodologically, and with attention to real classroom needs.

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