



Business English Education: Unleashing the Power of AI (The case study of teachers of business English in EST and ENCG Oujda)

Rhada Chit¹, Nassira Houat²

¹*Communication, Education, Digital Usage and Creativity Laboratory, Faculty of letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed I, Oujda, Morocco*

²*National School of Commerce and Management, Mohammed I University, Oujda, Morocco*

Corresponding author: Rhada Chit, **Email :** rhada.chit@ump.ac.ma

Abstract :

In today's globalized world, proficiency in English has become a prerequisite for success in the business world. Organizations strive to equip their employees with the necessary language skills to excel in their jobs. Business English education serves this end, as it aims at instructing the learners on the fundamental business-related knowledge, vocabulary, and skills to integrate business. Practitioners of business English must be up to date and continuously look for the latest and most innovative methodologies and teaching strategies to implement them in their teaching practices as well as to keep up and stay in tune with the fast pace of the pedagogical advancement in the educational arena. The integration of Artificial Intelligence in teaching stands as a prime example that should not be overlooked. This article explores the integration of AI in business English education in Morocco and investigates the prospects of this strategy as well as the perception of BE practitioners towards it. 10 teachers of business English took part in this study by filling a questionnaire. The results show that participants has a positive attitude towards integrating AI in their teaching practices and they are ready to teach the subject using AI tools and platforms.

KEYWORDS : Business English, Artificial Intelligence, innovation, technology, revolution.

Introduction:

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has revolutionized various sectors, changing the way people interact with technology, AI has partially influenced and transformed education which has led to a paradigm shift and offers a customized learning experiences and more innovative teaching methodologies. AI allows teachers to adapt to learners' different needs, styles and learning paces. It has facilitated curriculum planning, course design for teachers and practitioners from one hand and increased students' motivation and engagement. On the other hand, as it responds and caters to the individual needs of the current digital generation, who

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spend a significant amount of their time “on screen” and are less interested and motivated to learn using traditional, conventional “off screen” teaching methods and techniques. AI platforms and tools offer a range of benefits that traditional ways of language learning often struggle to provide. Students thus benefit from an exceptional personalized learning experience. AI can offer a great help to teachers of language. According to (Guo 2020), Machine translation in the field of artificial intelligence, natural language understanding, and speech recognition technology are all closely related to language learning. These AI powered tools can make teaching easier for practitioners and learning more personalized and engaging for students.

Significance of the study:

The study on the use of AI in business English teaching holds a great significance for both educators and learners in the field. By exploring the potential of AI technologies in language learning, this study has the power to revolutionize the way business English is taught and learned. It can provide valuable insights into how AI can enhance language proficiency, personalized instruction, and learners’ engagement. The findings of this study can inform the development of innovative teaching methodologies, adaptive learning platforms, and customized language tools that cater specifically to the needs of business English learners. Additionally, the study can address ethical considerations and guide the responsible integration of AI in language education. this research has the potential to shape the future of business English education, offering enhanced access, flexibility, and effectiveness in developing vital communication skills for professionals in the global business arena.

Research questions and hypothesizes.

The present research aims at answering the following questions:

- 1- How does the integration of AI influence the teaching of business English?
 - 2- What are the perceptions and attitudes of business English teachers towards the use of AI in Business English courses.
 - 3- Are practitioners of business English willing to integrate AI in their teaching practices?
- We assume that:
1. The integration of AI in business English can positively influence the learning and teaching processes both for teachers and students.
 2. Teachers are willing to integrate AI in their practices to benefit from its advantages.

Review of literature

The concept of artificial intelligent is not recent nor has recently seen the light, in fact it goes back to 1956 the year in which John McCarthy coined the expression. (Amudha 2021). It is when machines are programmed to perform and “think” as human beings in an attempt to mimic human intelligence and problem-solving skills based on machine learning algorithms allowing machines to perform task in an autonomous way. AI is “*the science and engineering of making intelligent machines*” or “*a machine that behaves in a way that could be considered intelligent if it was a human being.*”(Mccarthy,2007). According to (Ahuerma 2022), AI is characterized by its cognitive capabilities and level of autonomy, which contribute to enhancing efficiency and accuracy in various processes. In the same vein, Baker and Smith (2019) define AI as “computers [that] perform cognitive tasks, usually associated with human minds, particularly learning and problem-solving.” According to (Mehtora 2019) Artificial intelligence is a computer science technology which explores the development and analysis of smart machines and apps, and he adds that AI is the science of having a machine think and behave like an intelligent human being.

AI in education

The use of AI in education goes back to twenty-five years ago and it has been evolving since, (Roll & Wylie 2016). AI is capable of reshaping the learning and teaching processes. It has made breakthroughs in the field of education. By integrating AI in education, practitioners can create a whole new teaching experience for students. With its ability to simulate human intelligence, AI has the potential to revolutionize the teaching and learning process (Hou, 2021). By implementing AI new technologies such as natural language understanding and expert systems, educators can provide personalized learning experiences to students. This personalized approach can enhance engagement and motivation as students are more likely to be involved in the learning. (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019) claim that AI-supported instruction is expected to transform education. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to address some of the biggest challenges in education today, innovate teaching and learning practices (UNESCO 2023). The application of AI in education aims to make significant progress regarding teaching and learning strategies through “real world trials” and “the development of standard modular prototypes in statistical reasoning, “data visualization” and “learning analytics (Alam 2021). AI provides individuals with a vast array of personalized learning experiences, automating administrative responsibilities, and delivering real-time feedback. (Kamalov et al 2023).

AI in English language learning

The nature of English language as a universal language requires practitioners to use the latest methods and most innovative ways to teach it. Using AI in ELT remains one of the most revolutionary options to achieve this end. According to (Fitria 2021), AI is one of the drivers of 4.0 industrial revolution that has made teaching and learning easier. AI can effectively promote the reform of English teaching and learning as well as the quality of English classroom teaching (Wang 2019). AI has benefited both teachers and learners and it has revolutionized the domain. A study by (Wei 2023) revealed the potential of artificial intelligence in impacting English learning achievement and increasing motivation in second language learning; 60 university students were divided into two groups, the first group received traditional language learning methods while the second one was taught using AI. Results showed that the second group got better results in language learning, and they were more motivated.

Business English

Today's globalized and interconnected world created the dire need to have a universal language that could serve as a gateway to international communication and interaction in different fields. English has always been the dominant and the common language of communication, science, technology etc.... English is a lingua Franca; a global language and it is considered as an international language. Having all these characteristics that distinguish English among other languages has made it the best choice to use in studying different fields and domains. Business is no exception. In the modern business world English is used widely in international business trade and commerce, it serves the needs of international organizations that comprise workers and employees from different and nationalities with a variety of backgrounds. These employees need a common, universal language to communicate effectively and in different modes, which is done through English (Graddol 1997).

Business English is a type of special English that belongs to the realm of ESP (English for Specific Purposes). According to Ellis (2000) business English is distinguished from general English by focusing on developing vocabulary and terminology related to business contexts. (Nickerson et al 2016) categorized business English as a form of Lingua Franca which occurs between individuals who speak English as a second language or as a foreign language. Furthermore, they separate it from 'International business English which involves native speakers as well as non-native speakers of the language and they claim that this distinction, especially in the context of teaching of BE, is ascribed to the potential linguistic challenges that

can arise for participants in multilingual interactions when native speakers are involved. Business English targets students who are still studying but preparing to engage in the job market who pursue their studies in business fields: Marketing, Accountancy, Finance and Business Administration. As called by (Brieger 2007) Pre-experienced students or to the professionals who are already engaged in international business, adults who need to acquire some specific courses and knowledge in various business contexts. It involves teaching English to adults working in businesses of one kind or another or preparing to work in the same field. (Sylvie 2000). Those learners have specific needs and expectations from the course that are totally different from general English, mainly linguistic structures, vocabulary, communication skills and cultural nuances that will facilitate global trade and international business affairs. Practitioners of business English are often found in front of a challenging tasks; they are supposed to tailor curriculums and programs to respond to the specific needs of their students. After making a needs analysis to identify learners needs and expectations in order to build courses upon them. Needs analysis is a systematic collection and analysis of the needed information to design a curriculum that responds to the different needs and the language leaning requirements of the learners (Brown 2006). According to (Frendo 2005), *needs analysis helps the teacher to understand the difference between where the learners are*, needs analysis, syllabus design, course design and the development of authentic and specific materials are important elements that practitioners of business English must take into consideration (Frendo 2005). Given the specific and specialized nature of business English, teachers and educator must continually refine their teaching practices and embrace the newest and most innovative methodologies and strategies to implement business English courses and lessons keeping up to date with the rapidly evolving of education and the use of technology in their teaching practices to align with those needs.

The first concern of practitioners of business English and the key issue they all encounter is coming up with appropriate materials to teach the course to the learners, especially the low experienced ones who lack any previous knowledge about business or business communication. The choice of the materials is pivotal to convey practical and tailored to, the corporate world language skills to the learners in a successful way so as to enhance the learning experience and also make sure the relevance of the content to students' professional lives. This makes the job of a business English trainer harder and complex. The authenticity of the materials is essential in teaching business English to students since they need to be exposed to real life situations to help them deal with real life business scenarios (sales negotiations, meetings, job interviews....

While picking up the materials in teaching business English, the teacher should bear in mind and makes sure that the language in the coursebook comes from the real world, or has it been specially generated or substantially adapted for language teaching purposes. (Frendo 2005). Teachers of business English use a mixture of ready-made (coursebooks) which provide a solid framework to work with, particularly useful for the less experienced teacher or one who is under time pressure and tailored materials which can be integrated with authentic and framework materials to create authentic business contexts in classrooms (Frendo 2005).

(Brieger 1997) divides the materials into two types: raw and published materials: technical documentation, off air news broadcasts.... *These materials have not been specifically adapted for the language classroom.* Published materials. Which facilitates the tasks for trainers since it comes with readymade activities, units. Drawing from both sources is the best recipe for the trainer.

AI in business English education:

Business English traditional approaches and strategies were indeed proved effective and beneficial for business English teachers, yet the prevalence of smart devices and the fact that learners are always suing online social media and platforms, has slightly rendered these conventional teaching methods and they have become inadequate for meeting learners' needs and preferences. Adjustments in pedagogy are necessary to effectively engage and cater to the screen-dependent generation. Integrating AI in business English strategies can greatly impact the course teaching practices, by leveraging AI technologies, instructors can have access to a vast corpus of materials and teaching resources to support their instruction. Artificial intelligence can rely on big data to track and record various data of learners and It also plays an important role in promoting innovation and reform of business English teaching models (Guo 2020). A few studies were conducted about business English and Artificial intelligence. One of them by (Guo 2020), which examines the integration of AI technology in business English in the context of AI's rapid movements the study discusses the connotations of AI, its application in business English learning, results revealed that the use of AI in BE can support learners' listening and speaking practices. It also highlights the benefits of AI for teachers since it has transformed their basic functions and reduced their time burden in correcting students' homework and improved teaching quality.

Method

Sample/ participants.

In this study, the methodology employed to examine the use of AI in business English teaching education evolved administering a questionnaire to a sample of 10 business English teachers. All of them belong to Mohamed first university, specifically from EST (*Ecole superior de technbologie*) and ENCG ‘(*Ecole nationale du commerce et gestion*). Both schools are vocational institutions that prepare the enrolled students to the job market. The purpose from the questionnaires was to gather data on the experiences and perspectives of the practitioners towards the use of AI technology in their teaching practices. By employing a questionnaire as a primary tool, this study aims to explore the perceptions and insights of the involved teachers on integrating AI various technologies and platforms in business English courses. The choice of the tool was to offer a structured approach to collect data that allows to obtain standardized responses that can be quantified and analysed. The questionnaire was carefully designed to cover various aspects. Participants were selected based on their expertise and experience in teaching BE, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives.

Results :

The findings of this study shed light on the role of AI in the course of business English, revealing valuable insights into its impact on teaching and learning outcomes. Through an in-depth analysis of data collected from the questionnaires, several significant results emerged, providing a comprehensive understanding of the influence of AI technology in the domain of business English education.

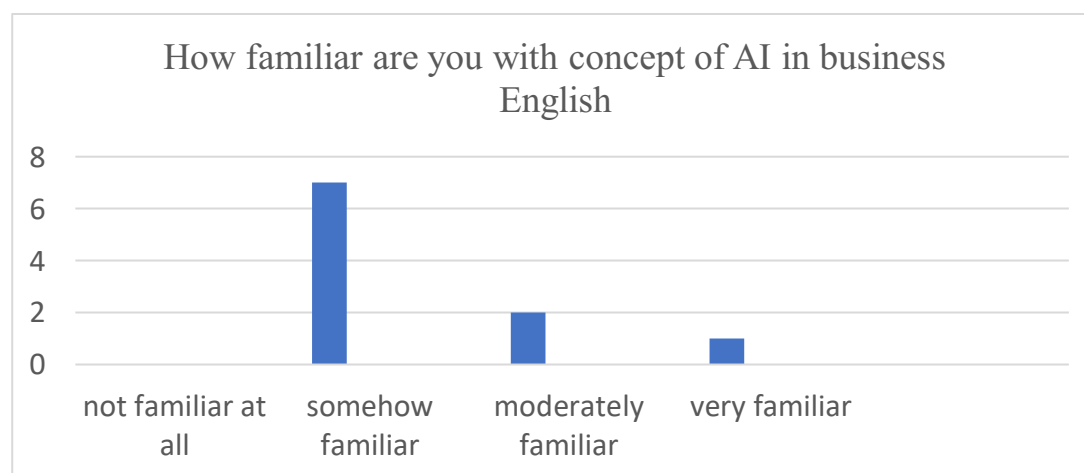
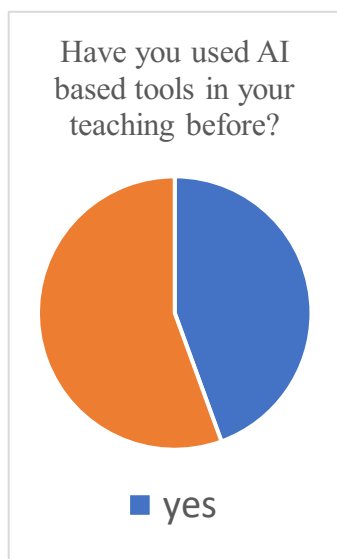


Figure 1: Familiarity with AI in language teaching

To inquire about the participants' familiarity of the concept of integrating AI in the teaching of business English, teachers were asked this direct question, and results revealed that 63,64% of

them are somehow familiar while 27,27% are moderately familiar and only 9,09% are very familiar with using AI to enhance language learning and teaching. No teacher said that they are not familiar at all with the concept.



Figures 2 : The use of AI

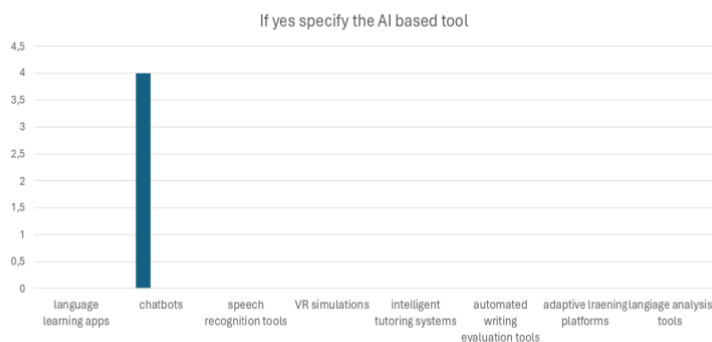


Figure 3: AI tools and platforms

Concerning the experience of the respondents with the use of AI in the pedagogical practices to teach business English, the study revealed these results: 54,55% said yes, they have used it in their practices while 45,45% answered with no. A related question was asked to teachers who have already incorporated AI into their teaching methodologies. All participants chose chatbots alone.

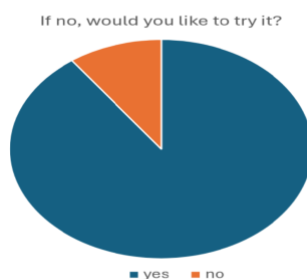


Figure 5 : Trying out AI in BE

The next question was addressed to the teachers who lack familiarity or any prior exposure to AI in so as to assess their readiness in integrating AI into their teaching practices. The

findings indicated that 90,91% of the participants are willing to incorporate AI. While only 9,09% expressed their lack of interest.

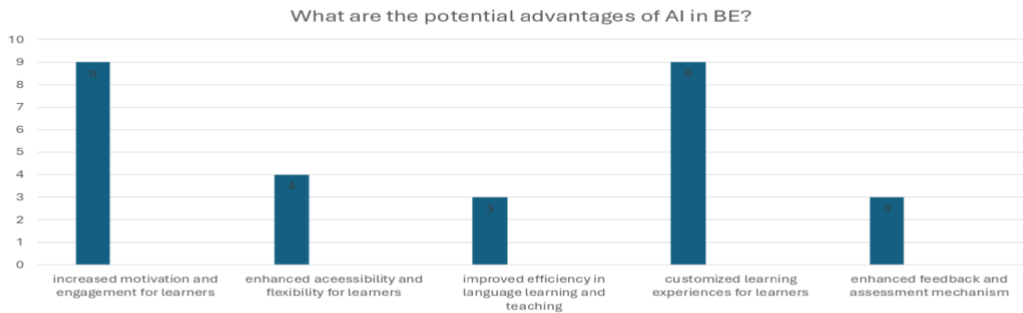


Figure 6 : Potential advantages

Concerning the possible advantages of AI in business English, 9 of 10 teachers believe that AI may increase students' engagement motivation, the same number think that customized learning experiences is one of the important pros of AI in business English. 4 teachers think that it enhances accessibility and flexibility for learners. 3 of ten respondents chose "enhances assessment and feedback mechanism" while 3 teachers opted for "improves efficiency in language learning".

Questions	Agree	Neutral	disagree
AI can enhance learners' language skills in BE	10	0	0
AI can provide personalized learning experiences for individual learners	10	0	0
AI can improve learners' pronunciation and fluency in BE	8	2	0
AI can accurately assess learners progress and provide timely feedback	6	2	2
AI can replace human teachers in business English courses	0	0	10

Figure 7 : Teachers opinions about AI

The table demonstrates teachers' opinions and insights about the potential benefits of AI in the course, it comprises questions about the role of AI in enhancing the teaching and learning process, participants answers were as follow: All respondents agree that AI can improve students' language acquisition in the BE class. They also agree that students who are taught using AI get more personalized learning. 80% of the participants agree that AI is capable of improving students 'pronunciation and fluency, while 20% are neutral. 60% agree that AI help teachers in assessing students' progress and providing timely feedback while 20% are neutral and 20% don't agree. Regarding the question about the possibility of having AI play the role of the teacher of business English 100% of the participants disagree.

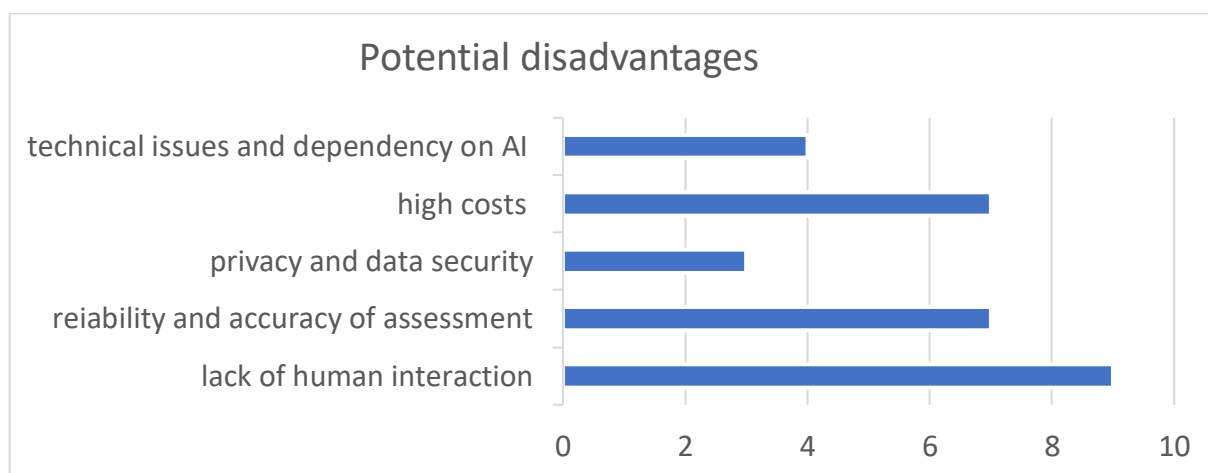


Figure 8 : Disadvantages of AI in BE

Concerning the disadvantages, teachers were given the choice to choose several options, nearly all teachers 9 of 10 % agreed that the primary disadvantage of AI in business English is the lack of human interaction, while 7 of 10 chose high costs and the concerns of reliability and accuracy of assessments, 4 out of 10 are concerned of the technical issues and dependency on AI while only 3 of the total number think that privacy and data security are an important concern.

AI platform	Number of participants
Intelligent language assessment	5
Adaptive learning	1
Natural language processing	0
Speech recognition and pronunciation	4
Virtual business simulations	9
Multilingual translation and communication tools	3
AI Chatbots	7

Figure 9 ; tools and platforms that teachers would like to see in BE

The table above shows the AI tools and platforms that participants would like to see implemented in business English course. According to the results, the first AI tool that teachers of business English would like to use in their practices is virtual business simulation and Chatbots comes second then intelligent language assessments.

Discussion

The results provided support for both primary hypotheses related to the positive influence of AI in Business English and teachers' willingness to integrate AI in their practices. Let's analyze the results in relation to the hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: AI in Business English can positively influence the learning and teaching processes both for teachers and learners.

The findings strongly support this hypothesis. A significant percentage of teachers (63.64%) reported being familiar with integrating AI in the teaching of business English, indicating their recognition of the concept and potential benefits. Additionally, more than half of the teachers (54.55%) reported having used AI in their pedagogical practices, demonstrating their firsthand experience with the positive influence of AI.

Teachers expressed positive opinions about the advantages of AI in business English. The majority believed that AI can increase students' engagement and motivation, provide customized learning experiences, enhance accessibility and flexibility, improve assessment and feedback mechanisms, and increase efficiency in language learning. These perceptions align with the potential benefits of AI, emphasizing its ability to enhance various aspects of the teaching and learning processes.

Furthermore, the preferences for specific AI tools, such as chatbots, intelligent language assessment tools, speech recognition and pronunciation, and multilingual translation and

communication, indicate that teachers recognize the potential of these tools to positively impact business English instruction. The choice of virtual business situations reflects their understanding of the importance of realistic and immersive learning experiences.

Hypothesis 2: Teachers are willing to integrate AI in their practices to benefit from its advantages.

The findings strongly support this hypothesis as well. Among the teachers who lacked familiarity or prior exposure to AI, a significant majority (90.91%) expressed willingness to incorporate AI into their teaching practices. This demonstrates their openness and desire to embrace AI as a tool for enhancing their instruction.

Additionally, when asked about the advantages of AI in business English, teachers agreed that AI can improve students' language acquisition, provide personalized learning experiences, and enhance pronunciation and fluency. While there were varying levels of agreement regarding AI's role in assessing students' progress and providing timely feedback, all participants disagreed with the possibility of AI replacing the role of the teacher of business English. This highlights their recognition of the complementary nature of AI and human instructors, further supporting the hypothesis.

However, it's important to consider the concerns raised by teachers regarding the disadvantages of AI. The primary concerns included the lack of human interaction, high costs, reliability and accuracy of assessments, technical issues and dependency on AI, and privacy and data security. These concerns indicate the need for addressing potential drawbacks and ensuring appropriate implementation and support systems are in place.

In conclusion, the results provide strong support for the hypotheses, indicating that AI can positively influence the learning and teaching processes in Business English, and teachers are willing to integrate AI into their practices to leverage its advantages. The findings emphasize the importance of considering teachers' familiarity, preferences, and concerns when implementing AI tools in the classroom, and highlight the need for appropriate training and support to maximize the benefits of AI while addressing potential challenges.

Conclusion and recommendations

this study explored the potential influence of AI in Business English instruction and teachers' willingness to integrate AI into their practices. The findings provide valuable insights into these areas and contribute to our understanding of the role AI can play in language education.

The results support the hypothesis that AI in Business English can positively influence the learning and teaching processes. Teachers demonstrated familiarity with integrating AI and reported having used AI in their pedagogical practices. They recognized the potential benefits

of AI, including increased student engagement and motivation, customized learning experiences, enhanced accessibility and flexibility, improved assessment and feedback mechanisms, and increased efficiency in language learning. The preferences for specific AI tools, such as chatbots, intelligent language assessment tools, and virtual business situations, further emphasized their recognition of the positive impact AI can have on business English instruction. Furthermore, the study confirmed that teachers are willing to integrate AI into their practices. Even among those who lacked familiarity with AI, a significant majority expressed a willingness to incorporate it into their teaching methodologies. This indicates their openness to embracing AI as a tool to enhance language instruction and improve learning outcomes.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions and policymakers consider integrating AI into Business English instruction. To facilitate successful implementation, professional development programs should be provided to support teachers in developing the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize AI tools. Additionally, efforts should be made to address teachers' concerns and ensure that appropriate resources and infrastructure are in place to support the integration of AI in language education.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on AI in education and provides valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to harness the potential of AI to enhance language learning and teaching in the context of Business English.

Limitations:

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. One notable limitation is the small number of participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. The study relied on a relatively small sample of teachers, and the results may not fully represent the diverse perspectives and experiences of educators in the field of Business English. Additionally, the study focused on a specific context and may not capture the nuances and variations that exist in different educational settings. Therefore, caution should be exercised when extrapolating the results to broader populations. Future research with larger and more diverse samples would be beneficial to further explore the influence of AI in Business English instruction and to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

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