

Challenges Faced by ELT Teachers in Adopting ChatGPT as an Instructional Tool

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Abstract

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Generative artificial intelligence (AI) ChatGPT hold remarkable opportunities for enhancing language teaching and learning. However, integrating ChatGPT into classroom activity created challenges for teachers such as lack familiarity with the technology, difficulty to differ AI or students' generated work, weaken students' creativity and critical thinking. The purpose of the research was to find out challenges faced by ELT teachers in adopting ChatGPT as an instructional tool. This was descriptive qualitative research. It was conducted to thirteen private senior high school teachers in Riau. The sample was taken by purposive sampling technique. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted over Zoom and WhatsApp voice calls. The data were analysed thematically by applying Braun and Clarke's theory. The finding indicated that ChatGPT adoption among ELT teachers remains constrained by pedagogical uncertainty, ethical concerns, limited technical competence, and inadequate institutional support. Teachers continue to struggle with aligning AI tools to learning objectives, ensuring academic integrity, and verifying the accuracy of AI-generated content, while also navigating unclear policies and unstable technological infrastructure. In conclusion, language teachers faced many challenging in adopting ChatGPT in their teaching. Therefore, it was suggested to educational institution who willing to adopt it into their instruction needed to facilitate workshop or training on AI, especially ChatGPT and digital literacy for their teachers.

Kata Kunci:

*ChatGPT,
Kecerdasan Buatan,
Literasi Digital,*

Abstrak

Kecerdasan buatan (AI) generatif ChatGPT menciptakan peluang besar untuk meningkatkan pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa. Namun, mengintegrasikan ChatGPT ke dalam kegiatan pembelajaran di kelas menimbulkan tantangan bagi guru, seperti kurangnya pengetahuan tentang teknologi, kesulitan membedakan

karya AI atau karya yang dihasilkan siswa, serta melemahkan kreativitas dan pemikiran kritis siswa. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru ELT dalam mengadopsi ChatGPT sebagai alat pengajaran. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Penelitian ini dilakukan terhadap tiga belas guru SMA swasta di Riau. Sampel diambil dengan teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur yang dilakukan melalui panggilan suara Zoom dan WhatsApp. Data dianalisis secara tematis dengan menerapkan teori Braun dan Clarke. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa adopsi ChatGPT di antara guru bahasa masih dibatasi oleh ketidakpastian pedagogis, masalah etika, kompetensi teknis yang terbatas, dan dukungan institusional yang tidak memadai. Para guru terus berjuang menyelaraskan perangkat AI dengan tujuan pembelajaran, memastikan integritas akademik, dan memverifikasi keakuratan konten yang dihasilkan AI, sembari menghadapi kebijakan yang tidak jelas dan infrastruktur teknologi yang tidak stabil. Kesimpulannya, guru ELT menghadapi banyak tantangan dalam mengadopsi ChatGPT dalam pengajaran mereka. Oleh karena itu, disarankan kepada lembaga pendidikan yang ingin mengadopsinya ke dalam sistem pengajaran mereka untuk memfasilitasi lokakarya atau pelatihan tentang AI, khususnya ChatGPT dan literasi digital bagi para guru mereka.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of generative AI in education has created a demand to understand how tools like ChatGPT affects the work of language teachers. They were expected to implement the technologies into their classroom activity with limited preparation. This condition created some challenges for teachers as most of them were lack familiarity with the technology (Athanasopoulos et al., 2023). The implementation ChatGPT as instructional tool also made teachers face difficulty to differ AI or students' generated work (Rudolph et al., 2023). Then, students' over-reliance on ChatGPT weaken their creativity and critical thinking. This situation highlighted the urgent need for systematic research that centred teachers' real classroom experiences to ensure that AI tools were implemented in ways that genuinely support both teaching and learning.

The successful integration of ChatGPT required not only teachers' initiative but also depend on institutional readiness. Many educational institutions, particularly in developing contexts, lack adequate infrastructure, training programs, and policy frameworks to support AI adoption (Ayyoub et al., 2023). Teachers received little to no professional development regarding AI pedagogy which led in feeling of isolation and uncertainty when attempting to integrate ChatGPT. Without structured training, teachers must rely on trial-and-error approaches, which time-consuming and discouraging. Institutional barriers also included inconsistent internet access, limited device availability, or restrictive school policies surrounding digital tools, which further hinder adoption. Some institutions express concerns about copyright, data privacy, or ethical risks, leading to inconsistent or unclear guidelines for teacher use. In addition, administrators may hold unrealistic expectations about the transformative potential of AI without providing the necessary support to ensure responsible implementation. This misalignment between institutional vision and teachers' reality contributed to a fragmented adoption landscape in which teachers must navigate challenges independently. As a result, many teachers hesitate to adopt ChatGPT fully, even when they recognize its potential benefits.

Recent studies showed that teachers were unprepared to evaluate AI-generated content, redesign assessments, and manage issues of academic integrity that arise when students rely heavily on ChatGPT (Cotton et al., 2023), (Bai & Mintz, 2022). At the same time, reports highlighted significant gaps in institutional support and training, leaving teachers responsible for resolving challenges largely on their own (Ayyoub et al., 2023). Without a clear understanding of the specific barriers teachers face, efforts to expand AI-enhanced instruction risk becoming misaligned with classroom realities and may unintentionally increase teacher workload or diminish instructional quality (Bai & Mintz, 2022). Based on the findings, it was essential to investigate the challenges faced by ELT teachers, especially how ChatGPT was adopted and how its' pedagogical potential has not fully implemented yet in classroom context.

Although ChatGPT offered promising opportunities for enhancing ELT, many teachers encountered substantial challenges when attempting to integrate it into their classrooms. One of the most frequently reported difficulties concerned the uncertainty about how to align AI-generated content with curriculum goals and pedagogical expectations. It made teachers confused about the appropriate role ChatGPT in supporting learning (Kasneci & al., 2023). Teachers struggled with the accuracy and reliability of the tool, as ChatGPT produced convincing yet incorrect explanations (Alkaissi & McFarlane, 2023). ChatGPT frequently gave fabricated response or misleading information as it relied on statistical pattern (Mogavi et al., 2024). In this case, the response required constant verification and increasing teacher workload (Bai & Mintz, 2022). Ethical issues further complicated adoption (Baskara & Mukarto, 2023), particularly as teachers faced difficulties distinguishing between student-generated and AI-generated work (Fleckenstein & al., 2024). It raised concerns about plagiarism, fairness, and assessment integrity (Cotton et al., 2023). These challenges were intensified by varying levels of AI literacy among teachers, many of whom feel unprepared to design prompts (Ma et al., 2024), evaluate AI output (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023), or teach students critical AI-use skills (Moser et al., 2021). Compounding these issues was the lack of institutional support, with many teachers receiving limited training, unclear guidelines, and inconsistent technological infrastructure, making the integration of ChatGPT largely an individual effort rather than a systemic initiative (Ayyoub et al., 2023). Collectively, these challenges reveal the complex and multifaceted barriers that language teachers must navigate when adopting ChatGPT as an instructional tool.

Although interest in AI for ELT has grown rapidly, empirical research focusing specifically on the challenges teachers faced in adopting ChatGPT remains limited. A large portion of existing literature discussed the potential benefits of generative AI, explores ethical implications, or examines students use, while relatively few studies investigated the lived experiences of language teachers implementing ChatGPT in classroom settings. Research which addressed teachers' challenges frequently focused broadly on digital literacy or technology integration

rather than the specific nature of AI-driven platforms (Zhai, 2023). Moreover, the existing findings tend to be conceptual rather than empirical, leaving a lack of data-driven insights on what teachers struggle with during implementation. This gap was especially significant because teachers were central agents of change in the integration of educational technology. Without understanding their concerns, barriers, and needs, efforts to promote AI-enhanced instruction might fail to support sustainable adoption. Therefore, this research aimed to fill an important gap by exploring the challenges ELT teachers encountered when attempting to adopt ChatGPT as an instructional tool.

Understanding the challenges faced by language teachers in adopting ChatGPT was essential for developing realistic, sustainable, and ethically responsible practices in AI-enhanced education. As institutions increasingly encouraged the integration of AI tools, teachers must be equipped with the knowledge, support, and confidence required to implement them effectively. Ultimately, this research emphasized the importance of listening to teachers' experiences and acknowledging their challenges as crucial steps toward shaping the future of AI-supported language education. Without such insights, efforts to integrate ChatGPT may remain superficial or unsustainable, thereby limiting the transformative potential of AI tools. Thus, this research was conducted to find out challenges faced by ELT teachers in adopting ChatGPT as an instructional tool.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative research design grounded in descriptive method. Descriptive was appropriate to describe situation of the real condition or phenomenon at the time of the research, then it aimed to verify and describe the existing one (Best in Maspufah and Zuriati, 2022). Qualitative approach was implemented to describe challenges faced by language teachers in adopting ChatGPT as an instructional tool.

This research involved 13 English language teachers from five private senior high schools in Riau, selected using purposive sampling. The schools were chosen because they had begun integrating digital learning tools and provided relatively

flexible instructional environments, making them appropriate contexts for examining teachers' early experiences with adopting ChatGPT as an instructional tool. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that all participants had prior experience using ChatGPT for instructional purposes, enabling the collection of relevant and information-rich data aligned with the study's objective. The sample size of 13 teachers was considered adequate for qualitative inquiry, as the focus of the study was on gaining in-depth insights rather than statistical generalization. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached, indicated by the repetition of themes and the absence of new insights in subsequent interviews. The participants consisted of eight female and five male teachers, with teaching experience ranging from three to twenty-two years, allowing for diverse perspectives on the challenges of adopting ChatGPT across different levels of professional experience.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom and WhatsApp voice calls, each lasting approximately 40–60 minutes. The interview guide consisted of 8–10 main open-ended questions, with follow-up probes used to encourage deeper reflection. Sample questions included: *"How do you integrate ChatGPT into your English teaching practices?"* and *"What difficulties have you encountered when using ChatGPT in classroom activities or assessment?"* The interview questions were organized around five key challenge areas: pedagogical uncertainty and the lack of a clear integration framework; concerns regarding the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated content; ethical and assessment-related dilemmas; limited AI literacy and reduced teacher confidence; and institutional constraints and insufficient support. These areas were derived from a synthesis of the literature review and preliminary informal discussions with ELT teachers prior to formal data collection, ensuring both theoretical grounding and contextual relevance. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized using pseudonyms to protect participants' identities.

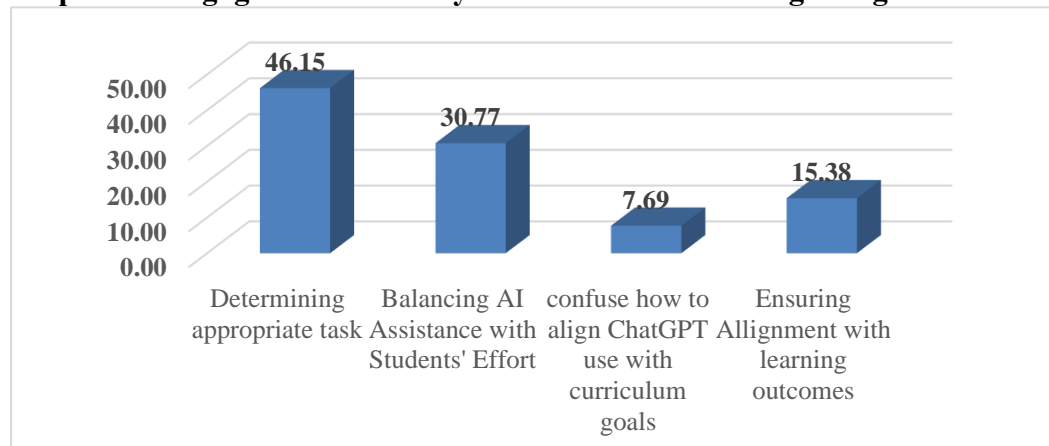
The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, which included familiarization with the data, initial

coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. Coding was conducted manually using a combination of inductive and deductive approaches to allow themes to emerge from the data while also aligning with concepts identified in the literature. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, member checking and peer debriefing were systematically implemented in line with qualitative rigor criteria. Member checking involved sharing summarized interpretations of preliminary themes with selected participants to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of the findings. Participants were invited to clarify meanings or provide additional insights, and their feedback was incorporated into the final analysis. Peer debriefing was conducted through reflective discussions with two colleagues experienced in qualitative research and ELT. During these sessions, coding decisions and thematic interpretations were critically examined. Any discrepancies in data interpretation were resolved through collaborative discussion and re-analysis of the original transcripts until consensus was achieved, thereby minimizing researcher bias and strengthening analytical rigor.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The finding and discussion presented based on the question concerning to the challenges faced by language teachers in adopting ChatGPT as in instructional tool. The followings were the description of the teachers' response:

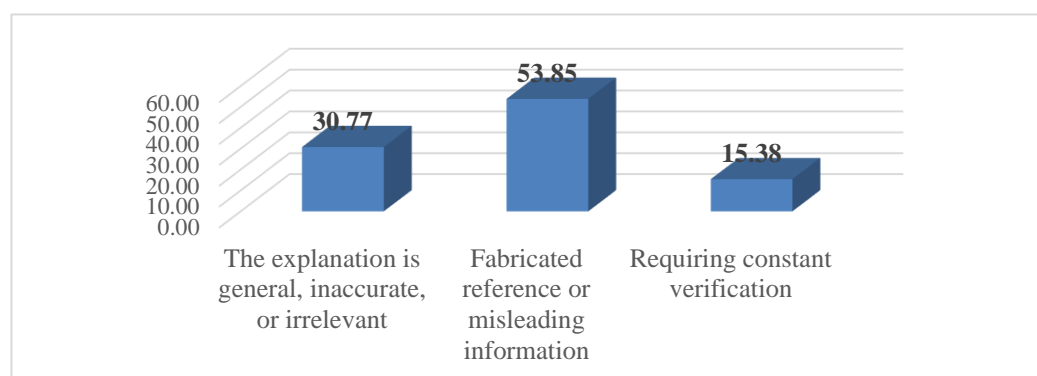
Graph 1. Pedagogical Uncertainty and Lack of Clear Integrating Framework



The most frequently cited challenge involved uncertainty about how to integrate ChatGPT meaningfully into pedagogy. Teachers acknowledged that ChatGPT was powerful but struggled to translate this into pedagogically coherent classroom practices. Most responses to this question were related to determining appropriate task for about 46,15%, balancing AI assistance with students' effort about 30.77 %, lack of balancing AI-generated feedback with teacher input about 15,38%, and confused how to align ChatGPT use with curriculum goals about 7,69%.

The findings revealed that teachers' pedagogical ambiguity in using ChatGPT reflected not simply limited technical experience, but a deeper gap between the tool's instructional potential and teachers' pedagogical readiness to integrate it meaningfully within ELT frameworks (Kasneci & al., 2023). Although teachers recognized ChatGPT's usefulness for supporting reading and writing activities, uncertainty regarding appropriate levels of student reliance and task design that would sustain learners' cognitive and communicative engagement. In ELT contexts, where effective instruction relies on scaffolding, interaction, and higher-order language use, such ambiguity is pedagogically significant because it risks reducing AI integration to unsystematic experimentation rather than informed instructional practice. This finding reinforced previous research indicating that the absence of clear pedagogical and institutional guidance placed teachers in an experimental role, thereby widening the gap between technological innovation and effective classroom implementation (Ayyoub et al., 2023). Then, the following graph illustrated the learners' responses to the second question.

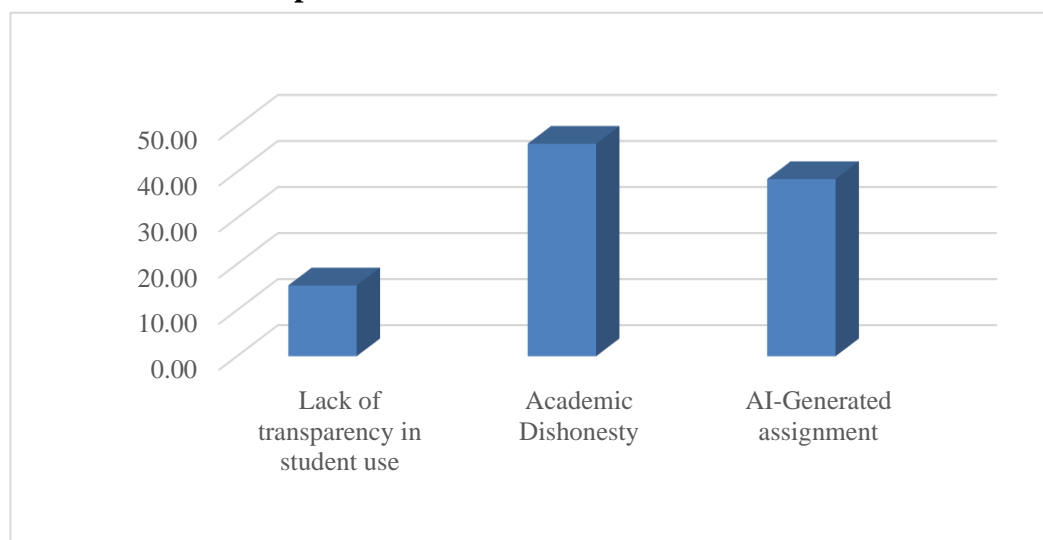
Graph 2. Accuracy and Reliability Concern



Teachers' responses consistently highlighted concerns about the accuracy and reliability of ChatGPT. Many teachers reported that ChatGPT tended to produce fabricated references or misleading information when they sought further explanations on specific topics (53.85%). Others noted that the responses were often too general, inaccurate, or irrelevant to instructional needs (30.77%), while some emphasized that AI-generated content required continuous verification before classroom use (15.38%).

These findings underlined that accuracy issues remain a major limitation of ChatGPT and confirmed that AI cannot replace teachers' evaluative roles in ELT classrooms (Bai & Mintz, 2022). Several teachers explained that ChatGPT's explanations frequently appeared convincing but were, in fact, incorrect, which aligns with previous research on AI hallucination (Alkaissi & McFarlane, 2023). As a result, teachers were required to double-check AI outputs, leading to increased workload and reduced instructional efficiency (Bai & Mintz, 2022). Similar concerns have been reported in previous studies, where AI-generated responses were found to be inaccurate, outdated, or fabricated (Mogavi et al., 2024). These reliability issues made teachers hesitant to rely on ChatGPT for content generation or student support, as they feared students might accept incorrect information without proper verification. Next, the following description was the teachers' respond to the third question about ethical and assessment.

Graph 3: Ethical and Assessment Dilemma

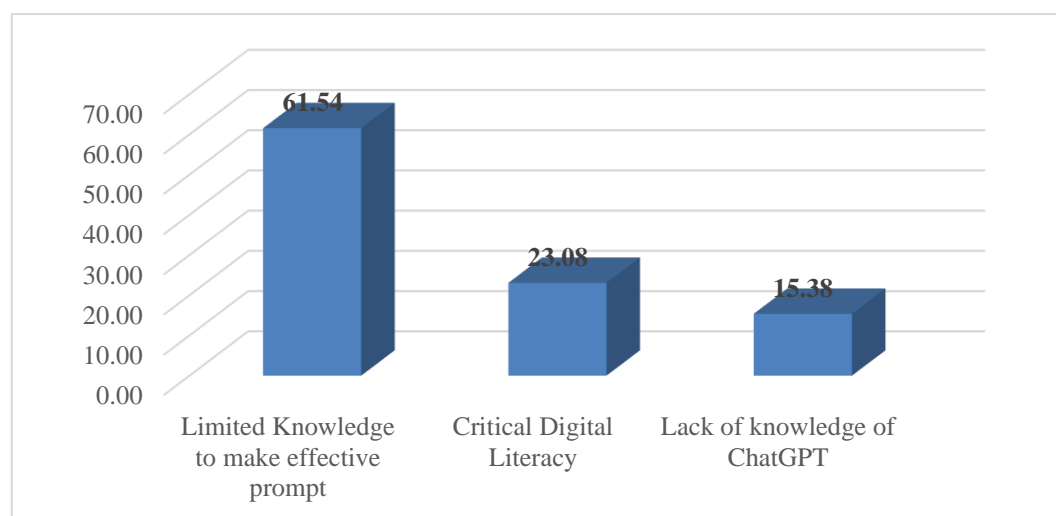


Teachers gave mostly similar response in ethical and assessment dilemma. Most of them complained for students' academic honesty of using ChatGPT (46,15%), AI generated assignment (38,46), and lack of transparency in students use (15,38%)

The findings indicated that teachers' concerns about academic dishonesty were closely linked to threats to assessment validity and academic integrity in ELT classrooms. Teachers reported difficulties in distinguishing between student-generated and AI-generated work, particularly in writing tasks, which undermined the validity of assessments as accurate measures of students' actual language proficiency (Fleckenstein & al., 2024). In several cases, students submitted linguistically sophisticated texts that did not reflect their true abilities, raising concerns about whether assessment results genuinely represented learning outcomes. This challenge was further intensified by the limited availability of institutional tools and policies to address AI-assisted misconduct, leaving teachers uncertain about how to uphold academic integrity (Cotton et al., 2023). Moreover, teachers perceived that the use of ChatGPT as a shortcut encouraged surface learning and reduced student effort, creating ethical dilemmas related to fairness, responsibility, and the credibility of assessment practices.

Then, the following description was the teachers' response to the fourth question.

Graph 4: Lack of Literacy and Reduced Confidence

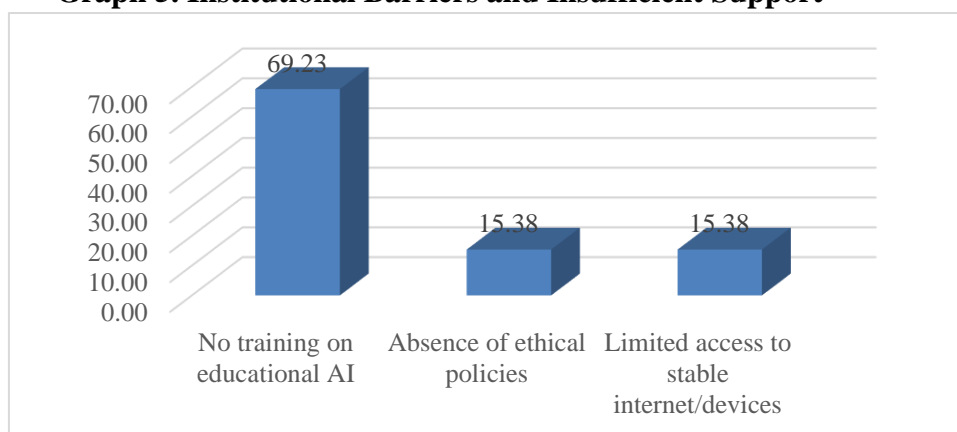


The teachers mentioned various response about literacy and their confidence in using ChatGPT. Most of them said that they have limited knowledge to make effective prompt. Some of them responded that they have low critical digital literacy (23,03) others noted that only have adequate AI literacy to fully utilize ChatGPT (15,38%)

From the findings, it was found out that many teachers described limited knowledge of effective prompt design (Ma et al., 2024), content verification, or critical AI literacy. Teachers also struggle to integrate ChatGPT effectively due to a lack of familiarity with the technology (Athanasopoulos et al., 2023). Other teachers mentioned that students sometimes know more about ChatGPT than them and made them felt embrace (Moser et al., 2021)

At last, the following description was the teachers' response to the fifth question.

Graph 5. Institutional Barriers and Insufficient Support



The teachers' response for the fifth question about institutional barriers and insufficient support were 69,23 % complained for no training on education AI. Then 15,38% the absence of ethical policies and limited access to stable internet or devices.

From the response it can be inferred that their institution promoted digital innovation but provided little support. The teachers response proved that they were demanded to adopt innovation in teaching but they have to figure everything out by themselves (Ayyoub et al., 2023). Some of teachers also complained with unstable internet connection in their area (Ma et al., 2024). Other teachers said that the

absence of clear and enforceable ethical policies about the use of ChatGPT has placed language teachers in a difficult position, requiring them to make independent decisions about classroom implementation, assessment integrity, and responsible student use without sufficient institutional guidance.

From the findings, it can be inferred that language teachers experienced multidimensional challenges when adopting ChatGPT in classroom practice. These challenges were not limited to technical issues but extended to pedagogical uncertainty, ethical anxiety, digital competence gaps, instructional workload, and institutional limitations. Teachers appeared to operate in a context where expectations to innovate were high, yet structural support, training, and formal guidance were insufficient. The data also showed that teachers were highly cautious because they perceived ChatGPT as a tool that able both to support and undermine learning. Their hesitation was strengthened by fears of academic dishonesty, difficulty in verifying student work, and concerns over the reliability of AI-generated content. Overall, the findings suggested that teachers were positioned as frontline decision-makers who must balance innovation with responsibility without adequate institutional backing.

CONCLUSION

Despite the growing potential of ChatGPT to enhance language instruction, its adoption by ELT teachers remains hindered by pedagogical uncertainty, ethical concerns, limited technical competence, and insufficient institutional support. Teachers continue to face challenges in aligning AI use with learning objectives, maintaining assessment validity and academic integrity, and verifying the accuracy of AI-generated content, while also operating within unclear policy frameworks and unstable technological infrastructure.

Based on the findings, it was recommended that educational institutions developed clear ethical policies and pedagogical guidelines to support the responsible use of ChatGPT in ELT classrooms, particularly in relation to assessment validity and academic integrity. The findings also suggested the need for targeted professional development to strengthen teachers' AI literacy, prompt

design skills, and critical evaluation of AI-generated content. In addition, AI-supported learning activities should be integrated in a structured manner to ensure alignment with learning outcomes, while policymakers were encouraged to improve technological infrastructure to reduce access disparities. Thus, this research was limited by its small sample size and regional focus. Future research were expected involve more diverse educational contexts and examine the long-term instructional impact of ChatGPT in language learning.

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