



A Study on Higher Education Policy Makers' Perceptions towards the Use of AI in English Language Learning

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Abstract. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been one of the powerful tools to teach and learn a new language. The presence of AI is also potential to transform the traditional English language teaching and learning methods into technology-based teaching and learning. On one side, the presence of AI is beneficial to teacher and students as it can be teachers' assistant in the class. However, on the other side, the presence of AI also challenges teachers and school managers to wisely place AI as learning assisting tools. The presence of AI has also called attention on the application of assessments. There have been previous studies related to AI in language teaching and learning focusing on students or teachers' voices but studies towards policy makers' stances and perceptions of the use of AI to enhance English language learning in higher education are still limited. This study is trying to take an inventory of how the higher education policy makers perceive the use of AI in English language teaching and learning. This study applied qualitative method in its data collection and analysis by employing open-ended questionnaire and interviews involving 10 respondents from various universities in Indonesia. Purposive sampling was employed in collecting the data. The results of this study emphasized the significant role of AI as assisting tools which are supposed to promote academic honesty, creativity, and critical thinking; concern on the students' dependency on the AI; and the importance of university to provide policy related to AI use by students and teachers.

Keywords: Higher education, policy maker, Artificial Intelligence (AI)

1 Introduction

The presence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has affected various areas of human life, including education. AI has impacted the teaching and learning process, the teachers, and the students. Within the world of English language teaching and learning, AI has been one of the powerful tools to enhance the English learning. In fact, it is also potential to transform the traditional English language teaching and learning methods into technology-based teaching and learning.

The use of AI has been seen as a part of new normal where teachers and students make use of AI in English teaching and learning process. AI provides flexible and accessible resources for teachers and students. Teachers can make use of AI to prepare their lesson plans, they can integrate AI in their teaching scenario, and teachers can create fun learning activities with AI assistance. Thus, teachers can save time. AI platforms also facilitate students to have self-study at their own pace. On one side, the presence of AI is beneficial to teachers and students when AI is playing a role as assisting tools both inside and outside the classrooms.

In the last few years, particularly since the significant increasing use of digital technology in the language classes, AI use has been seen as a part of the learning activities. At university level, students have been incorporating AI technology into their learning process, leveraging AI tools in completing their tasks. This phenomenon has challenged teachers and school managers to wisely place AI as learning assisting tools. The presence of AI should not stop students' creativity and analytical thinking skills.

There have been previous studies related to AI in language teaching and learning focusing on students or teachers' voices but studies towards policy makers' stances and perceptions of the use of AI for English language learning in higher education are still limited. This study is trying to take an inventory of how the higher education policy makers perceive the use of AI in English language teaching and learning. More specifically, this study explored the higher education policy makers' perceptions and concerns of the use of AI to support teaching techniques and to what extent universities need to provide policy regarding AI technology use in the teaching and learning process. The results of this study are expected to be valuable input or recommendation for higher education institutions in issuing the policy and ethics related to the use of AI for English language learning and teaching.

2 Literature Review

A study by Huang et al (2023) reveals that the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in language education has been significantly increasing recently. They reported the results of an investigation of studies on AI application in language education within almost two decades (2000-2019) showed a significant increase. It means that the application of AI in language education has been one of the most topics of research over the last decades. Further, this study mentions that there are 10 most popular topics related to AI use in language education. Those topics are "automated writing evaluation; intelligent tutoring systems (ITS) for reading and writing; automated error detection; computer-

mediated communication; personalized systems for language learning; natural language and vocabulary learning; web resources and web-based systems for language learning; ITS for writing in English for specific purposes; intelligent tutoring and assessment systems for pronunciation and speech training; and affective states and emotions” (King & S., 2017). The results of the study indicate that the subjects of the AI related studies are mostly students and teachers. In this paper, the writer highlights and shows more concern on policy makers' perception towards AI use in teaching and learning process with highlight on the importance of issuing policy related to the use of AI by teachers and students in higher education. The policy makers including rector, deans, head of study program, head of quality assurance, and coordinator of courses are considered as important stakeholders who will determine the success of AI application in the teaching and learning process.

AI as one product of technological advancement has been able to create personalized learning or experiences that are more engaging and relevant to learners (Huang et al., 2023). Further, the presence of technology can improve the quality of teaching and learning process. Stosic (2015) mentions that educational technology has three domains of use as the following:

1. Technology as a tutor:
AI as a product of advanced technology can help learners learn new languages through intelligent tutoring systems. The AI technology will help learners improve themselves through independent or personalized learning in writing, reading, vocabulary, grammar, speaking, and listening (King & S., 2017).
2. Technology as a teaching tool:
AI may help teachers in evaluation and scoring students' work.
3. Technology as a learning tool:
AI also offers facilities such as natural language processing, and automated speech recognition (King & S., 2017)

Technology can only function as a tutor, teaching tool, and learning tool when it works together with stakeholders including leaders, teachers, faculty, researchers, policy makers, funders, technology developers, community members and organizations, learners, and their family (Stošić, 2015).

In addition to the roles of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in supporting language learning, AI also requires educators to educate learners to be responsible digital citizens. The use of AI by learners should be under teacher's guidance to use it as meaningful, productive, and safe tool (Huang et al., 2023). In fact, among other things, an educational technology motivates students to work independently where the student is more motivated to return to learning and working because modern technical equipment is widely available at any given moment (Stošić, 2015).

This study tried to make an inventory of higher education policy makers' perceptions towards the integration of artificial intelligence in language learning. According to Underwood & Teresi (n.d.), perception is related to people's experiences of responding something. Below are the factors which affect people in building a perception (Mamgain, 2023):

1. The object that makes people perceive something
There must be an object or some objects which make people perceive. It may refer to something, someone, or certain conditions
2. Context where a person perceives something
The context where the object exists will affect the way people see the object
3. Personal characteristics such as personality, attitude, motives, interest, past experiences, expectation

Given a higher education context, this study tried to portrait how the policy makers in the institutions under this study see the potential, challenges, and the urgency of having or issuing ethical policy related to the AI use in the teaching and learning process in higher education. Their perceptions towards the use of AI in the language learning process at universities are much influenced by their experiences, affective states such as attitudes, motivation, interest, as well as their expectations for the future.

3 Research Methodology

This study was designed and developed as a qualitative inquiry. Creswell & Creswell, (2017) defines qualitative research as a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. This method is meant to dig and gain data from natural settings. This study employed qualitative methods to gain more in-depth data from the participants. The data were taken between March to May 2024.

3.1 Research Questions

This study was aimed at seeing the perceptions of university policy makers towards the use of AI in the teaching and learning process and how the university policy makers perceive the urgency of issuing policy related to AI use by teachers and students. The research problems were formulated in these following research questions:

1. What are the university policy maker perceptions towards the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the teaching and learning process?
2. How do university policy makers perceive the urgency of issuing policy related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) use by teachers and students?

3.2 Research Participants

Employing purposive sampling, this study involved 10 participants from several universities in Indonesia including Galuh University, Soegijapranata Catholic University, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Universitas Muria Kudus, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Universitas Atmajaya Yogyakarta, Unisbank, Universitas Negeri Jambi, Universitas Dian Nuswantoro, and Universitas Bung Hatta Padang. In each of their institutions, the participants play role as rector, dean, head of study program, head of quality

assurance department, and course coordinator. In the roles they are playing, the participants' voices contribute in making and issuing the policy in their institutions. All the respondents have given their approval to join and participate in this research. For confidential reasons, the names of the respondents are not presented in this article.

3.3 Instruments

The instruments used in this study were open-ended questionnaire and open-ended interviews. The digital open-ended questionnaires were distributed to the participants by means of google forms. The interviews were conducted online using some platforms such as Zoom meeting, Google Meet, and WhatsApp call.

4 Results and Discussion

From the results of open-ended questionnaire and interviews with the respondents, there are some main points regarding the use of AI technology to support English learning at universities. The following presents the results and discussions.

4.1 The University Policy Makers' Perceptions towards the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Teaching and Learning Process

Following the guided questions in the questionnaire and the results of the interviews, the discussion below highlights three main issues namely AI technology to enhance language learning, the potential benefits of integrating AI technology in English learning, and the challenges of implementing AI in English classrooms.

4.1.1 AI Technology to Enhance English Language Learning

Most of the respondents, 90% (9 of 10 questionnaire respondents) believe that AI technology can facilitate learning and bring benefits for the class. Most of the respondents have positive and strong beliefs that this time is the AI technology time. Educators cannot deny the presence of AI in the educational field. One of the respondents was not confident to say that AI technology can really facilitate learning. In further discussion during the interview, the respondent mentioned that not all teachers (lecturers) possessed high self-efficacy in AI use and their AI literacy skills were not yet developed.

As noted previously, it is posited that AI technology facilitates language learning. The arguments affirmed by respondents to support this stance are the ability of AI technology to provide quick and instant feedback on grammar, pronunciation, and mistakes; the flexibility of accessing the AI tools anytime and anywhere, interesting features of AI which can boost learners' moods, and the abundant resources which are accessible. The chart below confirms how AI technology can facilitate English language learning. Aside from the stance that AI technology facilitates English learning, the respondents highlighted that the AI technology should be placed as learning assisting tools not as the main actor in the teaching and learning process. Teachers and students may use AI technology to enrich themselves with related knowledge but not to grow dependency on AI technology. Teachers still need to design and prepare a teaching scenario which

incorporates AI technology. Further, teachers should carefully plan and choose teaching methods such as discovery learning, case-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, cooperative learning which challenge students' critical thinking.

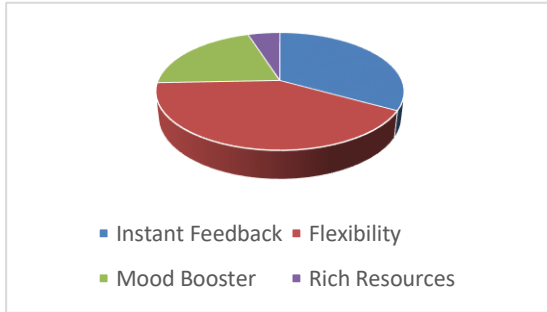


Fig. 1. AI Technology to Enhance English Language Learning

Some of the respondents also agree that flipped learning gives students the opportunity to equip themselves with related knowledge gained from AI before they come to the class. Again, all the activities should not stop at collecting materials and submitting tasks, but teachers need to provide more opportunities for students to reexplain what they learn from the AI technology and how the information relate to everyday use.

4.1.2 The Potential Benefits of Incorporating AI Technology in English Language Learning

Confirming the previous point above, below are some highlights of the potential benefits of incorporating AI technology in English language learning. During the interviews, the respondents argue that:

- a. AI technology can boost learners in learning languages
The new and sophisticated features of AI tools and features are great attractions for the learners coming from the Z generation. Considering the fact that today's learners are digital natives, the AI is a magnet for learners. The learners enjoy challenging themselves to try various and new AI applications or tools.
- b. AI technology provides interactive learning
There are AI tools for education which teachers and students can freely use both in the classrooms and self-study. Teachers can pick up AI tools which are suitable for their needs such as for lesson planning, getting sources, and quizzes. Students can also use AI tools for discovery learning, enlarging knowledge, and preparing their tasks. During the interviews, the respondents mentioned some AI tools which are familiar and mostly accessed by teachers and students such as Co-Pilot, ChatGPT, OpenAI, Quillbot, Grammarly, and Turnitin.
- c. AI technology improves personal learning
With the various kinds of AI tools, students can choose one which suits their needs

and level of proficiency. Teachers also admit that the AI helps them learn to personally develop themselves in catching up with the trends and newest technology.

- d. AI technology gives flexible learning
With AI technology, students may have self-study in their own pace. Students can adjust the time, place, and to what extent they will take the materials to enrich their knowledge.
- e. AI technology makes English learning more fun
AI technology helps students learn to improve their writing, grammar, speaking, and pronunciation skills in fun ways. The use of avatar, sounds, animation, and other verbal or visual features makes English learning more fun for students. From the interviews, the respondents added that AI technology could make English learning more fun as AI technology also provided tools which was interactive for learners. Some features of AI technology have facilities to create avatar or face and voice recognition which will not only interactive but also motivating learners. AI technology also provides models for pronunciation as well as correction for grammar and writing.
- f. AI technology opens many potential opportunities and challenges in English learning
Creative lecture presentations, personalized assessments, and rich resources are some of the benefits and potentials of AI technology. Despite those potential opportunities, AI technology also challenges teachers to wisely assess students' performance. Considering that students may use AI technology in completing their assignments, teachers need to anticipate and prepare more contextual and authentic assessment for students.
- g. AI technology helps paraphrasing, summarizing, synthesizing
AI technology can help its users to paraphrase, summarize, and synthesize a text. It saves time and energy for the learners. Learners may also learn from AI how to write academically.

4.1.3 The Challenges when Implementing AI Technologies in English Classroom

The challenges when implementing AI Technologies in the classrooms according to the respondents are:

- a. It is potential to reduce learners' motivation in thinking independently
Ease and flexibility offered by AI technology have potential to reduce learners' motivation in thinking independently. There is a high possibility of learners relying much on the AI to do all of their assignments.
- b. It might not be able to adapt to students' individual needs and learning styles
AI technology cannot automatically facilitate individual students' different needs and learning styles. Failures to choose and use AI technology will not result in the maximum achievements.
- c. It might need expensive infrastructure
One of the major challenges and obstacles of AI use is supporting infrastructures. Universities need to facilitate the learning process with supporting infrastructures such as stable internet connection, supporting LMS (Learning Management System), and supporting teaching devices. On students' sides, they also need to equip themselves with devices and internet connection. Poor internet connection is seen

- as a potential problem which hinders effective learning.
- d. Teachers might need training and support to do it
Considering that not all teachers have high AI technology skills, the universities need to provide professional development training to improve their ability of using technology and integrating technology in their teaching. Another important issue is raising awareness of the teachers that AI technology is present, and teachers have to accept the fact that AI use has been a part of the learning process.
 - e. Teachers and students may be dependent on it
For teachers and students who have been using AI technology there is a possibility of being dependent on it.

Some additional perspectives of the respondents which are revealed during the interviews underline the potential of students to be lazy and dependent on AI technology particularly when doing their tasks. Therefore, respondents insist on the importance of daily formative assessment which will develop learners' honesty, creativity and critical thinking. Some of the respondents argue that in some ways students' attendance in the class (either proven by recorded attendance digitally or conventionally with signature on a printed hard copy of attendance list) is significant for teachers to observe students' daily progress and improvements. Thus, assessments in the form of paper can be tricky. Therefore, teachers need to prepare assessments which are more contextual and authentic. This way is expected to reduce the risk of plagiarism and bias in assessing the students' performance. On the other side, universities should consistently provide teacher professional development programs or trainings which equip in-service teachers with knowledge and ability to use AI technology.

4.2 The Importance to Having Guidelines on the Ethical Use of AI in Educational Settings

Based on the results of the questionnaires and interviews, the respondents agree that formal convention in using AI is highly important. It is necessary for institutions to have guidelines on ethical use of AI which stresses the role of lecturers over AI technology. Although all respondents realize that having guidelines on the ethical use of AI is important, they admit that their institutions are not yet ready with the formal guidelines. Some are in the process of preparing the guidelines or they have it but the guideline is not specifically for AI technology use; it is inserted in more general ethical guidelines regarding the ethics of academic writing. The table below summarizes the existence of AI Technology policy in the respondents' institutions.

The respondents expect to have AI Technology Policy for their institutions which cover at least some key points:

1. The role of AI, teachers, and students in the teaching and learning process
2. The purposes and responsibility of using AI technology
3. Ethics and integrity (plagiarism)
4. The transparency (reliable sources)
5. Infrastructure and maintenance
6. Training and professional development for teachers

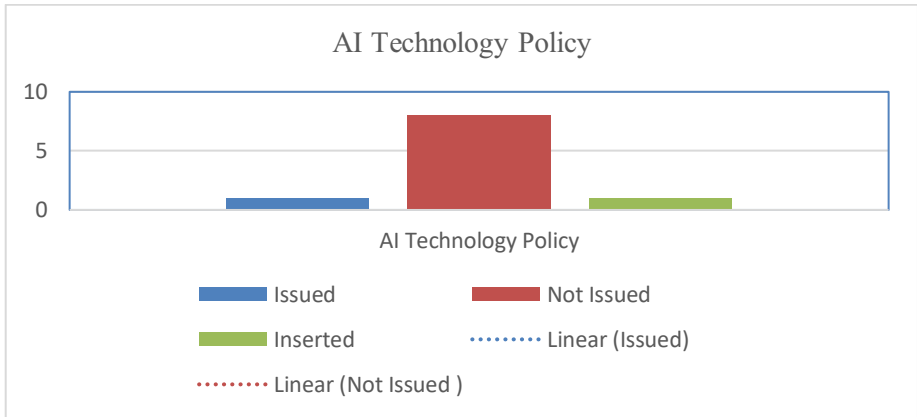


Fig. 2. AI Technology Policy

Based on the results and discussion presented above, it can be concluded that university policy makers under this study have concerns on the use of AI technology in English learning. There is optimism and positive atmosphere along with the potential benefits of AI technology use in English learning. The presence of AI technology opens more opportunities to motivate students and to make English learning more fun. However, it is necessary for the teachers to ensure that the integration of AI technology in the learning activities and assessment encourages students to develop their honesty, creativity, and critical thinking. To support that, teachers may apply learner-centered approaches with suitable teaching methods such as discovery learning, problem-based learning, case-based learning, or project-based learning. The following figure summarizes the results of this study.

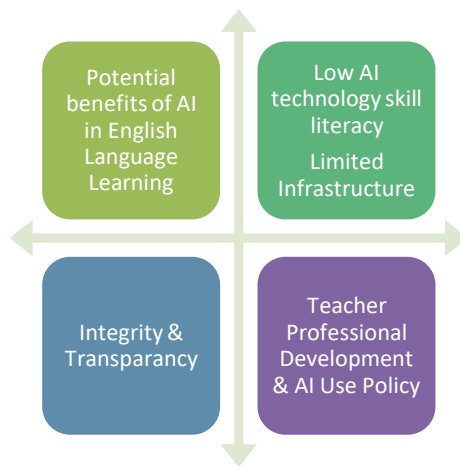


Fig. 3. The SWOT analysis of AI use in English language learning

Figure 3 describes the SWOT analysis of AI use in English learning based on the results of this study. The strength of this circumstance is the positive perspectives towards the potential benefits of AI technology to support English language learning. The weaknesses come as in general not all teachers or academic staff are ready to embrace and integrate AI technology in their classes. Their AI technology skill literacy is not sufficient. To some extent, the limited infrastructures provided by the universities may become the barriers or obstacles of the AI integration in the learning process. The integrity and transparency issues may become threats for the university stakeholders. Therefore, universities must ensure that there is no place for plagiarism. Regarding this issue, teachers also need to apply more formative assessments which are more contextual and authentic for their classes. With formative assessments, teachers can monitor their students' day-to-day progress as well as training their students to be responsible with their use of AI to support their learning process. Apart from strength, weakness, and threats, there is room to develop and improve the AI technology skill literacy by professional teaching development trainings. Issuing AI Use Policy also brings secure and clarity of university stances towards the AI used by teachers and students at the university.

5 Conclusion

This study concludes that AI technology is potential to support and facilitate English language learning. AI technology brings some benefits for both teachers and students if AI technology is placed as assisting tools. It will not replace teachers' role in the class. The existence of AI technology has challenged teachers to be more creative and thoughtful in preparing learning scenario which place students as the center of the learning process. Teachers need to carefully choose the most appropriate methods and ensure that the learning activities prepared will promote students' creativity, honesty, and critical thinking. Ideally, educational institutions need to have formal ethical guidelines on the use of AI technology for teaching and learning.

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