What Do Teachers Think About ChatGPT? Exploring ESL Teachers' Perceptions in Pedagogical Practices, Professional Development, and Ethical Considerations

Huang Rui

PhD student at the Graduate School of Language and Communication, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Thailand
E-mail: 14804465@qq.com, ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2771-6604

Abstract

Background and Aim: The swift development of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly ChatGPT, has sparked a wide range of reactions among teachers and educators, particularly non-native English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers. This study explores teachers' perceptions of ChatGPT, focusing on its impact on pedagogical practices, professional development, and ethical concerns.

Materials and Methods: A literature review methodology was employed, analyzing published articles that examine ESL teachers' perceptions of using ChatGPT for educational purposes. The study specifically includes sources from Asian countries to gather implications of ChatGPT in ESL contexts.

Results: The findings reveal that many teachers view ChatGPT as a beneficial tool that can enhance teaching and professional development. However, concerns about academic integrity and reduced critical thinking of learners also emerged, highlighting the dual perspective on its educational impact.

Conclusion: The study underscores the importance of continuous evaluation of AI tools like ChatGPT in educational settings and the need for AI literacy among teachers. Future research should include a broader geographical scope and longitudinal studies to track evolving perceptions as AI technology continues to develop.

Keywords: ChatGPT; ESL Teachers; Pedagogical Practices; Professional Development; Ethical Concerns; Artificial Intelligence

Introduction

At the end of 2022, ChatGPT gained attention as university professors observed surprising improvements in students' writing assignments (Stanford University, 2023). More specifically, on 2 November 2022, OpenAI released GPT 3.5, which quickly gained over one million users within its first five days (Wilkinson, 2023, updated November 22). Let me clarify once again, ChatGPT is a chat box that utilizes artificial intelligence to understand and generate human-like text based on user instructions, positioning itself as a revolutionary tool in natural language processing (OpenAI, 2022). In the following months, both commercial investment and public attention increased globally, leading to what a craze that heralded a new era in AI. In education, especially language and English teaching, the educators are both eager to explore its potential and simultaneously feel threatened by it. Some teachers welcome ChatGPT as a novelty that will enrich teaching and contribute to their self-development, while others raise ethical concerns, including academic integrity and the possibility of misuse (Yu,2024). This paper aims to examine non-native English teachers' perceptions of ChatGPT in aspects of pedagogical practices, professional development, and ethical considerations. According to common knowledge and the well-accepted definition in the field of English teaching, non-native English teachers are individuals whose mother tongue is not English. They acquire English through education or immersion rather than as their first language (ERIC, 2002). Non-native teachers often struggle with their linguistic abilities compared to native speakers, especially in environments where their language skills are closely examined (Llurda & Calvet-Terré, 2022). Thus, they may feel disadvantaged in competing with AI, which also aligns with my reflective concerns that motivated me to conduct this research. To achieve this, previous literature will be analyzed to assess teachers' perceptions from published articles. However, as this study adopts only the literature review method and examines an insufficient number of research papers, the conclusions drawn may be limited. The paper is structured as follows: the next section reviews the literature on AI in education, with a particular focus on the impact of ChatGPT. This is followed by an analysis of teachers' perceptions

regarding its use for teaching purposes and their professional development. Finally, ethical considerations and implications for teachers will be discussed.
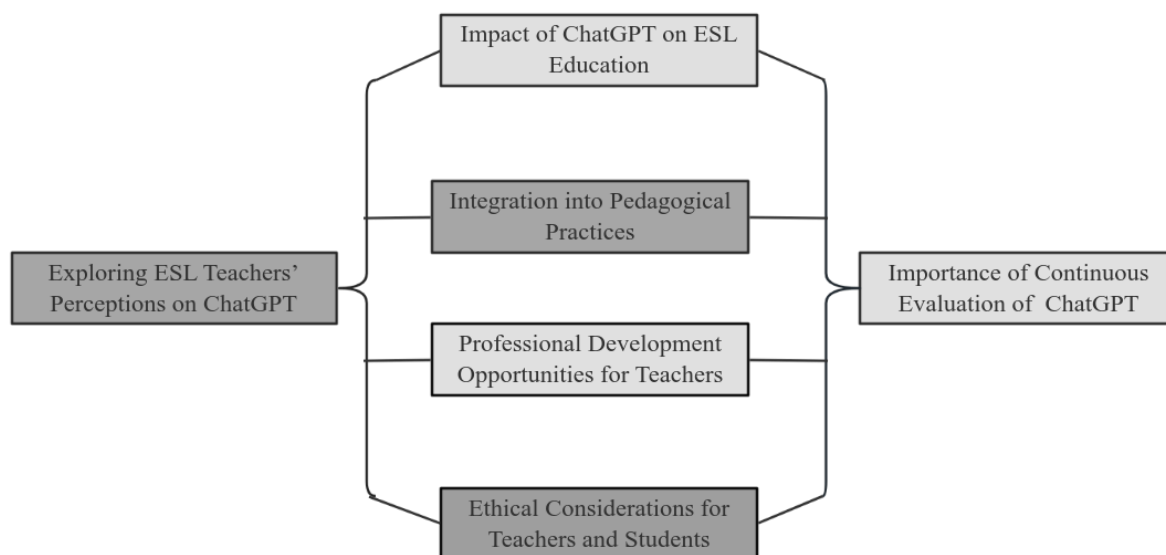

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
Note: (Author, 2025)

The Impact of ChatGPT on ESL Education

Due to its ability to generate human-like text and engage in interactive dialogues, the advent of ChatGPT has significantly impacted language teaching, with English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching as a representative example. First, ChatGPT can significantly improve the teaching and learning experience by taking on multiple roles like a coach, personal tutor, study buddy, motivator, and even a dynamic assessor, offering a wide range of educational support (UNESCO, as cited in Meniado, 2023). For example, when ESL students try to write an article, ChatGPT helps from topic selection to drafting and proofreading, as it provides feedback on grammar, sentence structure, and organization, helping students refine their work (Anders & Sahakyan, as cited in Kamali et al., 2024). Moreover, ChatGPT is a helpful tool in developing personalized ESL materials and assessments, which provides immediate feedback to enhance the overall learning experience for second language learners. For example, ChatGPT supports language learning by simulating authentic interactions, offering vocabulary assistance, and generating dialogues in different genres. It helps students understand complex texts and adapt the level of dialogue complexity to suit individual learners (Kohnke et al.as cited in Kamali et al., 2024). Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) may be able to explain the phenomenon, as ChatGPT offers scaffolding within the ZPD, helping students perform tasks they may not yet be able to do independently, with the tool acting as an interactive mediator for learning. Interestingly, Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory supports this idea that students feel more confident when they experience success in language learning with the help of ChatGPT. Du and Alm (2024) conducted interviews among 24 postgraduate EAP students. Many of them reported that ChatGPT boosted their confidence in areas like pronunciation, contributing to their overall sense of competence. Education is fundamentally an activity that traditionally involves two parties: students and teachers. ChatGPT can now assist teachers by providing personalized and instant feedback (Kamali et al., 2024). Interestingly, ChatGPT is considered to increase students' self-efficacy. Du and Alm (2024) conducted interviews among 24 postgraduate EAP students. Many of them reported that ChatGPT boosted their confidence in areas like pronunciation, contributing to their overall sense of competence.

While there are benefits, concerns have arisen regarding its potential risks to academic integrity, accuracy, and intellectual property rights in the context of education. UNESCO also put forward that: "Since its release, there have been concerns from the academic community regarding its potential threat to academic integrity, data privacy and security, information accuracy, soft skills development, intellectual property rights, and economic sustainability" (UNESCO as cited in Meniado, 2023). Referring to the personalized feedback mentioned earlier, ChatGPT, which is trained on a relatively limited set of texts, may generate biased perspectives. This limitation could potentially lead to unfair assessments when used for grading or feedback (Ray, as cited in Kamali et al., 2024). Min (2023) discusses how AI systems can reinforce existing biases within their training data. Another paper that discusses how AI models reflect dominant linguistic and cultural norms is by Jain and Menon (2023), which touches on how AI training can reinforce biases related to demographic features. This bias could affect students' opportunities for fair assessments and personalized learning experiences. Regarding data privacy, ChatGPT collects and potentially shares significant amounts of user data, which may be disclosed to third parties, including law enforcement and affiliated organizations (Adarkwah et al., as cited in Kamali et al., 2024).

Integration into Pedagogical Practices

Navigating the intersection of technological innovation and pedagogical practice, ESL teachers are strategically exploring ChatGPT in teaching activities, which can supplement traditional teaching methods. Pedagogically, ChatGPT enables teachers to tailor learning environments, create texts and dialogues, design lessons and interactive activities (Ma et al., 2024). This connects to Piaget's theory of constructivism (1973 the classical theory, which suggests that learners are very active in constructing knowledge, involving them in interacting with their surroundings. Thus, by making use of ChatGPT for creating engaging and personalized learning experiences, teachers could possibly, perhaps, offer better support to the specific needs of the learners. This might, in some way, help improve cognitive engagement at a deeper level, although the exact depth is not always clear. The knowledge-building process that happens might be enhanced by such tools, which could, in the end, provide a better approach to addressing how students learn, even though this depends on many factors, of course. Moreover, ChatGPT can now assist time-consuming tasks such as grading, designing rubrics, crafting test questions, and generating progress reports, so as to help teachers save time to focus more on areas where support that only human educators can offer (Zhai, as cited in Kamali et al., 2024). This aspect also echoes Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which posits that learning is a social process that benefits from guided interaction. In today's setting, ChatGPT's role as a "scaffolding" tool aligns with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where it can help students perform tasks they cannot do alone with support. A quantitative survey from 492 language teachers across 41 countries indicate that most teachers use ChatGPT focusing on teaching (64%) and learning (37%), with a smaller proportion related to research. Teachers utilize ChatGPT for various tasks, including lesson preparation, teaching language skills (especially writing), and creating assessment tasks (Ma et al., 2024). Many previous studies have proposed similar directions for teachers' use of ChatGPT. A distinctive idea from three Chinese researchers is to pay attention to ideological and political education in the process of adopting ChatGPT for English teaching. Specifically, by rationally applying the technical functions of ChatGPT, teachers should provide students with more humanistic care and fully implement the teaching concept of "Nurturing Morality and Fostering Talent" to ensure that students always maintain the right values towards technology, preserve integrity and self-discipline when using technology, and cultivate a sense of social responsibility and mission (Cao et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the same research conducted by Ma et al.(2024) also identified seven key challenges encountered by teachers integrating ChatGPT into practices: Access, Assessment, Ethics, Evaluation, Limitations, Prompts, and Teacher Readiness. Teachers highlighted several limitations of ChatGPT, including its tendency to generate overly general, irrelevant, inaccurate, repetitive, or verbose information (Ma et al., 2024). Teacher readiness refers to teachers' knowledge and preparedness to integrate ChatGPT into their teaching, as well as the persistence of some teachers' preference for traditional teaching methods (Ma et al., 2024). Pedagogically, while ChatGPT is finding a transition from tool to collaborator

in education, there is a fear that it not always be fitting for all learning contexts, because it disrupt traditional didactic practices, pushing the educational models toward a learner-centric, dialogic approach (Yu, 2024).

Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers

Teachers are continuous learners who strive for professional development throughout their entire career. The integration of ChatGPT presents significant opportunities for teachers' professional development. Professional development refers to the continuous process through which teachers improve their skills and knowledge to adapt to the evolving educational landscape (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Teachers can enhance their professional development through formal training sessions, workshops, seminars, and online courses. Thus, professional development can either be a result of teachers' proactive pursuit or a result of passive adaptation due to new pedagogical paradigms.

As proposed by Cao et al. (2024), college English teachers should continuously improve their digital literacy to adapt to ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence tools. This is considered to be a proactive action. Cao et al. (2024) also mention that universities should provide relevant technical training to equip teachers with skills in aspects of designing personalized learning plans, managing resources, and engaging with students. These necessary actions are taken to adapt to new paradigms, which represent a passive adaptation in teachers' professional development. Additionally, integration of ChatGPT enhances teacher professional development by providing personalized educational resources as well as reducing administrative workload (Liu&Wei as cited in Yu, 2024). Just as Piaget's (1973) constructivist learning theory states that active learning occurs through individual exploration and interaction with the environment. If we personalize professional development through ChatGPT, it can motivate teachers in ways that align with their career goals and learning needs. This is an example of how technology can facilitate self-directed learning for teachers, fostering deeper engagement and reflection on their own professional growth. Tsou et al. (2024) found that ChatGPT empowered English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) teachers in Taiwan by enhancing their confidence and competence when delivering lessons. This confidence arose from ChatGPT's function to provide immediate feedback and related resources, empowering teachers to be more assured in their teaching approaches. Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy supports this observation, as teachers' confidence in their ability to teach improves when they experience success and receive immediate positive reinforcement. Additionally, competence is a result of teachers' pedagogical skills promotion, particularly in content delivery and language proficiency. Ellis's (2003) task-based language teaching (TBLT) approach supports the idea that the use of advanced tools like ChatGPT can facilitate interactive learning tasks, enabling teachers to improve their competence in creating meaningful and engaging learning experiences for their students.

Ethical Considerations for Teachers and Students

A cliché that must be mentioned is that ChatGPT is a double-edged sword. While the above pros exist, the following are concerns. The adoption of ChatGPT in education raises a number of ethical concerns for both teachers and students. Cong-Lem et al. (2024) raise concerns about AI-driven academic dishonesty, ranging from simple copying and incorrect citation to severe plagiarism. Students may use AI tools to draft essays or reports and then submit them as their work. They might also paraphrase some text with the use of AI, so it seems like they have written it themselves. Without sufficient critical analysis of the text prepared by AI, using its low-quality content may finally lead to academic dishonesty and undermine the integrity of the academic community. This issue can be viewed through the lens of Breen's (2006) theory on academic integrity. Breen's (2006) theory emphasizes the need for students to understand the value of authentic academic work and the consequences of dishonest practices. According to Breen, academic integrity is not just about avoiding dishonest practices, but also about fostering a culture of ethical scholarship. The lack of critical engagement with AI-generated content can result in students failing to develop authentic academic voices and undermining their own learning process. On the other hand, Du and Alm (2024) argue that ChatGPT can support students' autonomy and competence due to its natural flexibility from the student's perspective. As Du and Alm (2014) studied EAP students in a New Zealand university context, one student noted, "ChatGPT gave me the confidence to work independently on my writing.". I felt like I had a personal tutor available whenever I needed help, which made me more self-sufficient.' Another student said, 'With ChatGPT, I can practice writing and get instant feedback, which

empowers me to revise my work on my own before submitting it." This view aligns with Holec's (1981) theory of learner autonomy, which suggests that autonomy in language learning is developed when learners take control of their learning process, including setting goals, choosing learning strategies, and evaluating their progress. ChatGPT can facilitate this process by offering immediate feedback and support, empowering students to become more independent in their language development.

For teachers, ethical considerations also involve ensuring data privacy and addressing biases that may be present in AI-generated content (Hua et al., 2024). According to Hua et al. (2024), toxic content, offensive text, and biased and inaccuracies information in ChatGPT can stem from biased training data and prompts, biased annotators, and reliance on human-labeled data. Such biases could result in discriminatory outcomes or the reinforcement of distorted ethical frameworks, potentially shaping students' emotional and ethical development in ways that may conflict with their cultural values (Akbar, as cited in Yu, 2024). In the case of ChatGPT, linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) is also relevant, as AI systems trained primarily on dominant English varieties may marginalize non-native dialects, reinforcing power imbalances in linguistic representation. For instance, an AI may be miscalibrated or never updated to change its direction toward the inclusion of diverse viewpoints and, through its performance, promote certain values or ideologies that do not coincide with the greater consensus or are underrepresented in the training data. This might lead to decisions that are biased toward some cultural, ideological, or social outlooks and dismissive of others. Such outcomes could exacerbate cultural hegemony in global education, further marginalizing non-Western perspectives and dialects (Phillipson, 2009). For instance, an AI may be miscalibrated or never updated to change its direction toward the inclusion of diverse viewpoints and, through its performance, promote certain values or ideologies that do not coincide with the greater consensus or are underrepresented in the training data. This might lead to decisions that are biased toward some cultural, ideological, or social outlooks and dismissive of others. Critical thinking remains essential when using AI in education because AI tools, while powerful, are not infallible. Teachers should be aware of the limitations and biases of AI, using it as a supplement to, rather than a replacement for, human judgment. As Akbar (as cited in Yu, 2024) points out, the unregulated use of such tools in education could unintentionally perpetuate these biases, raising ethical concerns about fairness and inclusivity.

Conclusion

This study has explored dimensions of perceptions among non-native English teachers regarding the use of ChatGPT in their pedagogical practices, professional development, and ethical considerations. At the same time, I have integrated classical theories to support and contextualize these perceptions, bridging traditional educational frameworks with the latest technological developments. To sum up, some teachers find ChatGPT to be valuable, as it helps with teaching and advances their professional level (Ma et al., 2024). On the contrary, concerns are raised about how it may lead to potential academic dishonesty and critical thinking reduction (Cong-Lem et al., 2024). This sort of dual perspective tends to underline how ChatGPT can make a big difference in how education takes place, not just positively but also negatively, answering the questions on the study's main focus (Kamali et al., 2024; Mutammimah et al., 2024). Additionally, the implications of this research are profound for educators, stressing the need for continuous evaluation of AI tools like ChatGPT in educational settings and for developing solid AI literacy among teachers to navigate the complexities of AI integration responsibly (Du and Alm, 2024; Meniado, 2023). The study's limitations include its reliance on already published articles and solely looked at ESL teachers in Asia, which may not capture a global viewpoint on AI. Future research would expand its geographical scope to include perspectives from ESL teachers beyond Asian countries to regions with cultural or linguistic similarities to English. It also needs a wider choice of literature from which a more holistic examination can be made. Since AI technologies like ChatGPT have been in rapid evolution for more than two years, future studies should also explore how perceptions of integrating ChatGPT into ESL teaching have changed over time, using a longitudinal approach. These research findings provide a clear overview of Asian ESL teachers' perspectives on integrating ChatGPT into ESL, in hopes that this will trigger further discussion among teachers in the ESL field concerning the use of AI technologies.

References

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman and Company.

Breen, P. (2006). Coming out of the darkness of the past. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education, 7*, 1-8.

Cao, J., Cao, J., & Tao, Y. (2024). Reform and development of English teaching in colleges and universities with the integration of ChatGPT technology. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Research, 8(6)*, 71–76. https://doi.org/10.26689/jcer.v8i6.7190

Cong-Lem, N., Tran, T. N., & Nguyen, T. T. (2024). Academic integrity in the age of generative AI: Perceptions and responses of Vietnamese EFL teachers. *Teaching English with Technology, 24(2)*. https://doi.org/10.56297/FSYB3031/MXNB7567

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development. Palo Alto*, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Du, J., & Alm, A. (2024). The Impact of ChatGPT on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Students' Language Learning Experience: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective. *Education Sciences, 14(7)*, 726. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14070726

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.

ERIC. (2002). *Nonnative-English-Speaking Teachers in the English Teaching Profession*. ERIC Digest. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED470982.pdf

Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning.* Oxford/New York: Pergamon Press. (First Published 1979, Council of Europe).

Hua, S., Jin, S., & Jiang, S. (2024). The limitations and ethical considerations of ChatGPT. *Data Intelligence, 6(1)*, 201–239. https://doi.org/10.1162/dint_a_00243

Jain, L., & Menon, V. (2023). *AI Algorithmic Bias: Understanding its Causes, Ethical and Social Implications*. 2023 IEEE 35th International Conference on Tools with Artificial Intelligence (ICTAI), 460-467. https://doi.org/10.1109/ICTAI59109.2023.00073.

Kamali, J., Paknejad, A., & Poorghorban, A. (2024). Exploring the challenges and affordances of integrating ChatGPT into language classrooms from teachers' points of view: An ecological perspective. J*ournal of Applied Language Teaching, 7(2)*. https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2024.7.2.8

Llurda, E., & Calvet-Terré, J. (2022). Native-speakerism and non-native second language teachers: A research agenda. *Language Teaching, 55(2)*, 154-169. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0261444822000271

Ma, Q., Crosthwaite, P., Sun, D., & Zou, D. (2024). Exploring ChatGPT literacy in language education: A global perspective and comprehensive approach. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 7*, 100278. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100278

Meniado, J. C. (2023). The Impact of ChatGPT on English Language Teaching, Learning, and Assessment: A Rapid Review of Literature. *Arab World English Journal, 14(4)*, 3-18. https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol14no4.1

Min, A. (2023). Artificial Intelligence and Bias: Challenges, Implications, and Remedies. *Journal of Social Research. 2*, 3808-3817. 10.55324/josr.v2i11.1477.

Mutammimah, H., Rejeki, S., Kustini, S., & Amelia, R. (2024). Understanding teachers' perspective toward ChatGPT acceptance in English language teaching. *International Journal of Technology in Education, 7*, 290-307. https://doi.org/10.46328/ijte.656

OpenAI. (2022). *Introducing ChatGPT*. https://openai.com/index/chatgpt/

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.

Phillipson, R. (2009). *Linguistic imperialism continued.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203857175

Piaget, J. (1973). *To understand is to invent: The future of education*. Viking Press.

Stanford Graduate School of Education. (2023). *Stanford faculty weigh in on ChatGPT's shake-up in education*. https://ed.stanford.edu/news/stanford-faculty-weigh-new-ai-chatbot-s-shake-learning-and-teaching

Tsou, W., Lin, A. M. Y., & Chen, F. (2024). Co-journeying with ChatGPT in tertiary education: Identity transformation of EMI teachers in Taiwan. Language, *Culture and Curriculum*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2024.2362326

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Wilkinson, L. (2023). *The rise of generative AI: A timeline of triumphs, hiccups and hype*. CIO Dive. https://www.ciodive.com/news/generative-ai-one-year-chatgpt-openai-timeline/698110/

Yu, H. (2024). The application and challenges of ChatGPT in educational transformation: New demands for teachers' roles. *Heliyon, 10(2)*, e24289. doi: 10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e24289.