
The Paradox of AI Integration in Moroccan Higher Education: A Qualitative Study of Educators' Attitudes and Perceptions

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Abstract

In the rapidly evolving area of digital transformation and technological advancement, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a significant force shaping global higher education. The growing integration of these tools into higher education has fundamentally changed how students engage with language learning and communicative development. Moving beyond rote memorization and traditional textbooks, contemporary learners now interact with sophisticated applications that simulate real-life conversations and diverse cultural contexts. These platforms provide personalized learning experiences, enabling learners to progress at an individual pace while receiving instantaneous feedback, a shift that fosters a deeper understanding of language nuances. To investigate these dynamics, this study explores university professors' perceptions of AI integration and its subsequent impact on language learning outcomes. A qualitative approach was adopted, using semi-structured interviews administered to 16 university professors to determine whether AI genuinely enhances students' language development or merely facilitates cognitive offloading, in which learners rely on technology to perform tasks that would otherwise require active cognitive engagement. The research indicates that AI tools are widely used to support grammar correction, vocabulary expansion, pronunciation practice, and writing enhancement. However, data highlights significant concerns about overreliance on AI, reduced critical thinking, and the erosion of depth in language learning. Furthermore, institutional infrastructure, policy orientation, and faculty preparedness emerge as essential barriers to effective integration of AI in teaching. The study concludes that successful AI adoption in Higher education requires more than technological availability; it demands comprehensive digital literacy programs, transparent ethical guidelines, and pedagogical frameworks that prioritize the meaningful human-centered integration of AI tools.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, Moroccan higher education, professors' perception, English language learning

1. Introduction

In today's interconnected world, English language proficiency has become an essential skill for individuals seeking to thrive in various personal, academic, and professional contexts (Sari, 2023). The ability to communicate effectively in English opens doors to educational opportunities, international collaboration, and global career prospects (Sari, 2021). As the demand for English-language skills continues to grow, educators and researchers are exploring innovative approaches to enhance language-learning outcomes. One such approach that has gained considerable attention is the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies into English language instruction.

While the technical capabilities of these tools are undisputed, their pedagogical impact remains a subject of intense debate. This raises a fundamental question currently facing language departments worldwide: Is AI providing students with a necessary scaffold, or is it facilitating the silent erosion of foundational linguistic skills? To address this, the current study examines university educators' perceptions of AI integration and its subsequent impact on learners' language learning outcomes.

2. Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence, characterized by its ability to simulate human intelligence, has made significant advancements in recent years, permeating various domains of society. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into global educational frameworks has catalyzed a transformative shift in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). AI-driven technologies have redefined the traditional boundaries of pedagogy by introducing personalized, interactive, adaptive, and ubiquitous learning environments that cater to individual learners' needs and preferences and transcend the limitations of the physical classroom (Zhai & Wibowo, 2023). Within the specific domain of English Language Learning (ELL), this impact is characterized by a dual-effect phenomenon: while AI acts as a sophisticated cognitive enhancer that facilitates rapid proficiency gains, it simultaneously introduces potential risks related to academic stagnation and the erosion of critical thinking skills (Morales & Calla, 2025; Taylor & Francis, 2025). This paradox is particularly pronounced in developing educational ecosystems, such as Morocco, where students' rapid adoption of digital tools often outpaces the formalization of institutional policies and pedagogical frameworks (Dahia, 2024).

The primary advantage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the English-language context lies in its ability to provide a low-anxiety, highly responsive environment for linguistic practice. Unlike traditional classroom settings where students may experience foreign language anxiety, AI-mediated platforms offer a private space for trial and error, which significantly boosts student confidence and oral production (Morales & Calla, 2025). In higher education, integrating AI into language programs is fundamentally reshaping students' perceptions of language acquisition. Research at Moroccan universities indicates that learners no longer consider English mastery to be confined to rote memorization or outdated textbooks; instead, they increasingly engage with interactive applications such as chatbots and conversational agents that simulate real-life dialogue and diverse cultural contexts (Dahia, 2024; Saddati et al., 2026).

This technological shift not only makes the acquisition process more engaging but also cultivates a deeper understanding of linguistic nuances through continuous, contextualized practice. Moreover, AI's ability to perform sophisticated data analytics enables educators to monitor performance trends and refine their pedagogical strategies to meet individual student needs with greater precision (Klimova & Pikhart, 2025). Furthermore, the implementation of AI in language instruction has significantly promoted learner autonomy. By providing a decentralized learning model, these tools allow students to access high-quality resources and receive immediate, formative feedback independently, regardless of time or location (Zhai & Wibowo, 2023).

Additionally, AI facilitates individualized learning. It adapts to a learner's specific progress, cognitive preferences, and unique learning styles through machine learning algorithms (Klimova & Pikhart, 2025). In the context of developing educational systems like Morocco's, the integration of AI in language learning environments directly addresses critical systemic challenges. It effectively mitigates the lack of access to native speakers, provides the immediate feedback necessary for rapid correction, and offers the individualized attention that is often impossible to achieve in high-enrollment, traditional lecture formats (Saddati et al., 2026; SSR Publisher, 2026).

However, alongside the potential benefits, the incorporation of AI in language learning raises important considerations and challenges. Ethical concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the nature of human-AI interaction must be addressed to ensure responsible and equitable use of AI technologies in language learning contexts. Additionally, understanding the effectiveness of AI in promoting long-term language proficiency and optimal integration into

instructional practices requires further research. Moreover, traditional English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly in Moroccan universities, is often hindered by large class sizes and limited opportunities for individual oral production. AI-powered tools, ranging from intelligent tutoring systems (ITS) to large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, address these gaps by offering real-time, personalized feedback on syntactic accuracy and phonetic precision (Saddati et al., 2026). Recent data suggests that approximately 85% of Moroccan students utilize AI for drafting and translating, perceiving these tools as essential learning companions that enhance their confidence in cross-cultural communication (Dahia, 2024). By automating repetitive tasks such as grammar correction and vocabulary drilling, AI allows learners to focus on higher-order communicative competence, connecting theoretical knowledge and practical fluency (Zhai & Wibowo, 2023).

Few studies have explored ethical concerns associated with AI technologies, including but not limited to AI hallucinations (Gao et al., 2022), algorithmic biases (Mbalaka, 2023), plagiarism (De Angelis et al., 2023), privacy concerns (Alrazaq et al., 2023), Algorithmic Authority (Aljović, 2025), and transparency concerns (Carvalho et al., 2019). AI hallucinations in AI dialogue systems are characterized by the generation of inaccurate or misleading information (Hatem et al., 2023). Research indicates that these ethical concerns could contribute to an over-reliance on AI dialogue systems (George & Wooden, 2023; Song & Xiong, 2021; Zhai & Wibowo, 2023), potentially impairing critical cognitive skills such as critical thinking (Dergaa et al., 2023), decision-making (Duhaylungsod & Chavez, 2023), and analytical thinking (Grassini, 2023). When AI handles tasks like writing, decision-making, or problem-solving, human cognitive engagement decreases, leading to diminished mental effort, memory retention, and creative ability (Bai & Wang, 2025; Chan et al., 2025).

The literature also highlights significant hindrances that may impede long-term linguistic development. A critical concern is the "over-reliance" on AI-generated content, which can lead to cognitive passivity. When learners use AI to bypass the productive struggles inherent in writing and synthesizing ideas, they may fail to internalize the complex morphological and pragmatic nuances of the English language (Taylor & Francis, 2025). In the Moroccan context, research indicates a growing "policy-practice gap," as the widespread use of AI for academic assignments occurs in a vacuum of ethical guidance, potentially fostering a culture of superficial engagement rather than deep learning (SSR Publisher, 2026). Furthermore, the digital divide remains a major obstacle; the benefits of AI-enhanced English learning are often concentrated

in urban centers, leaving students in rural or under-resourced areas at a disadvantage due to limited connectivity and a lack of localized, culturally relevant AI support (Saddati et al., 2026).

Consequently, the current research investigates higher education educators' perceptions of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its capacity to either enhance or impede linguistic development. This research adopted a qualitative approach.

The study seeks to address the following core research questions:

1. How do university educators perceive the impact of generative AI on students' development of linguistic and communicative competence?
2. In what ways do educators perceive generative AI as facilitating or inhibiting cognitive offloading, and how does this influence their views on the mental effort required for language mastery?
3. How has the integration of AI reshaped the perceived roles of both the instructor and the student in the language-learning process?
4. Is AI enhancing English language learning, or is it quietly weakening the very skills it appears to support?

3. Methodology

The respondents to this study are Moroccan educators teaching in higher education institutions. 12 university English language teachers from different universities and institutions participated in semi-structured interviews, 7 females and 5 males. The sample was purposively selected to include both veteran perspectives (n=8 with >20 years of experience) and early-career insights (n=4 with <10 years of experience). The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through inductive thematic coding to identify key pedagogical opportunities and challenges. Professors provide expert observation on whether AI is truly enhancing language development or merely facilitating cognitive offloading.

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed a complex pedagogical landscape where the potential benefits of Artificial Intelligence are currently at odds with student readiness and institutional support. The findings are organized into two overarching themes. Theme 1: The paradox of AI Integration. It examines the dual-edged nature of AI as both a linguistic scaffold and a catalyst for cognitive de-skilling. Theme 2: The Readiness and Responsibility Gap, which

explores the systemic tension between undergraduate passivity, driven by a reliance on Algorithmic Authority, and a perceived vacuum in university policy.

4.1. Theme 1: The paradox of AI Integration in higher education

Regarding the first theme, the Paradox of AI Integration, educators highlighted a sharp contrast between the great potential of AI to enhance efficiency, personalize learning, and act as a cognitive tool, and the significant risks of reducing student critical thinking, fostering dependency, and increasing academic dishonesty.

The findings reveal that the majority of participants perceive AI tools as having strong potential to enhance students' English-language abilities, particularly vocabulary expansion, grammar accuracy, writing fluency, and pronunciation practice through immediate, personalized feedback and adaptive exercises.

Participant 4 (≥ 20 years' experience) explained:

The integration of information technology in language education has evolved dramatically since the COVID-19 pandemic. We have witnessed rapidly increasing adoption of emerging technologies in Morocco, particularly Generative AI, including chatbots, intelligent tutoring systems, and writing support tools in language education contexts. Besides, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in language development in Moroccan higher education has made significant advancements, primarily by enhancing accessibility, personalization, and efficiency in language learning and acquisition.

Participant 7 (≤ 10 years' experience) added:

No one can deny the effectiveness of AI across various language-learning domains. AI applications can improve vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension, where immediate feedback reduces extraneous cognitive load. AI facilitates quick access to educational resources, reduces the time required to find information, and helps them better organize their academic activities.

Participant 12 (≤ 10 years' experience) explained:

What I see in practice is that AI feedback gives students the confidence to keep revising on their own. They don't have to wait for me to mark their work; they can submit, get instant feedback, and immediately decide what to improve!! Over time, this builds their

sense of control over their learning and makes them more strategic and reflective about how they use feedback.

The participants emphasized that AI can serve as a powerful assistant for automating lower-order cognitive tasks and offer an authentic and ubiquitous learning environment. This technological integration facilitates the entire learning experience, making it more engaging and economical. Immediate, personalized feedback from AI allows students to self-regulate learning: they can try, revise, and resubmit without waiting for the instructor, which strengthens metacognition and independent practice. Wang et al. (2026) and Abar et al. (2025) report that AI-driven feedback increases self-directed learning readiness and learners' sense of control over their progress, especially when feedback is formative, specific, and focused on improvement rather than just correction. Furthermore, many instructors highlighted that AI-driven platforms can increase student engagement, motivation, and autonomy, because learners can practice anytime, receive tailored explanations, and experiment with language in low-anxiety environments.

Participant 11 (≥10 years' experience) said:

Some students use AI as a prewriting companion to overcome blank page syndrome and generate ideas. They also use it to provide linguistic support in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and spelling, which is great!!

The findings indicate that AI tools are frequently utilized as generative assistants that alleviate the psychological burden of the *blank page*. Rather than a replacement for thought, some educators viewed AI as a pre-writing facilitator that helps students overcome creative blocks. By providing immediate personalized linguistic support and conceptual starting points, these tools serve as a form of scaffolding that boosts students' confidence and facilitates the transition from ideation to formal composition. Nonetheless, educators expressed concern that this support often leads to cognitive offloading, where the student abdicates the critical effort required to internalize these linguistic structures. Over-reliance on AI will lead to the atrophy of higher-order critical thinking and analytical skills. Several instructors worry that students may become dependent on AI for tasks such as paraphrasing, generating essays, or correcting grammar, which can reduce opportunities for independent thinking and genuine language production. Some fear that over-use of AI might weaken students' self-regulation and problem-solving strategies in language learning, especially if learners treat AI as a crutch rather

than a scaffold. Professors also note that the interface, speed, and volume of AI feedback can sometimes increase cognitive load, especially for less-proficient learners who struggle to process multiple suggestions, corrections, or explanations at once. Some report that students become overwhelmed by competing AI-generated options (e.g., multiple paraphrases or grammar corrections), leading to confusion or superficial copying instead of deep understanding.

Participant 3 (≥ 20 years of experience) stated:

Students are bypassing the struggle of writing, where the actual learning is happening. They copy-paste citations that do not exist because they trust the machine more than the library. It will be more informative if they use AI as an extension of thinking rather than a replacement for their cognitive abilities.

Participant 6 (≥ 20 years of experience) expressed his frustration:

I feel frustrated with students' behavior. Even the simplest tasks, such as summarizing a paragraph or writing an email correspondence, are being outsourced to AI. Instead of searching for articles and reading extensively to synthesize ideas, students refer to AI tools to summarize complex topics in seconds. If students do not practice these simple tasks independently, they lack the foundation for complex synthesis.

Participant 8 (≥ 20 years of experience) explained that:

In traditional education, we encourage students to take an active role in their learning by developing skills in exploration, analysis, and problem-solving. Critical thinking skills are essential to shaping students' overall learning experiences, and to develop these skills, we use questioning techniques, collaborative activities, and assignments to enhance students' ability to evaluate information and think independently.

This participant's view underscores a traditional ideal of education: students as active, curious agents who develop critical thinking through exploration, analysis, and problem-solving. In relation to AI, educators worry that when students outsource questioning, drafting, or problem-solving to generative AI, they risk becoming passive recipients of ready-made answers rather than active constructors of knowledge. At the same time, some professors argue that AI, when used deliberately, for example, to generate prompts, simulate debates, or provide alternative perspectives, can actually extend opportunities for exploration, analysis, and

collaborative sense-making, provided that assignments are designed to keep students in the driver's seat of thinking rather than in the back seat of copy-pasting

Moreover, some educators argue that AI is no longer a tool for higher-order thinking but a substitute for foundational thought. One professor (**P1**) explains:

This suggests that AI is no longer functioning as a support for higher-order thinking, but as a substitute for foundational thought. When students use AI for basic tasks like reflections, they bypass the cognitive struggle that builds neural pathways, leading to what I call a loss of *cognitive muscle memory*; the repetitive mental exercise required to develop independent critical thinking is being replaced by intellectual passivity.

Participant 5 (≥ 20 years' experience) explained:

I agree However, complex skills like accuracy (correct word usage, appropriate tone) and revision require sustained practice with subjective, contextual feedback, making them hard to scaffold through automated systems alone. More than that, when students rely on AI, they get grammatically perfect English that is completely devoid of authentic voice, emotional nuance, or appropriate pragmatic tone.

Participant 2 (≥ 20 years of experience) pointed out:

It is not just the challenging essays; they are using it for basic reflections. When relying on AI output, students' essays all share a similar structure, tone, and vocabulary. Their essays appear polished and error-free on the surface but lack depth, original thinking, and a clear intellectual core. As a consequence, they are losing the muscle memory of thinking and their voice, leading to a superficial understanding of the language!!

Professors report a rise in submissions that are stylistically flawless but intellectually empty, leading to the perception that traditional take-home essays may no longer be fit for purpose in assessing true language development. When students rely on AI even for basic tasks such as reflections, they circumvent the mental effort that strengthens neural pathways and consolidates learning. Educators interpret this as a loss of "cognitive muscle memory," where the repetitive, effortful practice required to build independent critical thinking is replaced by a pattern of intellectual passivity rather than deliberate engagement. According to Kabashkin (2025), the frequent use of AI for routine tasks may cause the atrophy of foundational mental skills necessary for language and knowledge acquisition.

While AI can act as a helpful critical friend when used for feedback, professors emphasize that it must scaffold rather than replace the cognitive effort necessary for genuine human learning.

Participant 10 (≤ 10 years' experience) pointed out:

Students no longer ask *when* or *why* we use this grammatical rule, or how it functions across different contexts. They have become passive recipients of language instruction rather than active participants in the learning process. The curiosity that fuels genuine language acquisition is increasingly being replaced by a desire for quick, AI-generated answers and instant results.

Educators describe a growing death of curiosity among students, observing that many no longer ask *when* or *why* a grammatical rule is used, or how it functions in different contexts. Instead of actively engaging with the logic and nuances of the language, students treat AI as a quick fix, seeking instant answers rather than deep understanding. This shift from inquiry-driven learning to outcome-driven performance worries professors, who feel that the intrinsic curiosity required for genuine language acquisition is being eroded.

Participant 9 (senior lecturer with 15 years of experience) said:

The majority of students consider AI output as an objective oracle. Because the prose is polished, students assume the facts and logic are equally polished. In their written assignments, they submit hallucinations without a second thought.

Participant 4 (≥ 20 years of experience) stated:

Now, students trust the automated process more than their own judgment or even a human expert. I force them to defend, deconstruct, and verify what the AI produced. In this case, they move from cognitive offloading to cognitive engagement.

According to the participants, there is a clear human-AI relationship. While AI provides efficiency, humans must verify AI output. That is to say, educators' role in English language education has evolved from a transmitter of knowledge to a critical auditor of AI-generated content. When students passively accept AI output without critical scrutiny, the brain's active recall and problem-solving pathways begin to decline. Participants noted that undergraduate students, in particular, fall victim to Algorithmic Authority because they lack the foundational critical thinking skills to interrogate AI's output; they default to a passive role, accepting

hallucinated facts as perfect academic prose and view the machine as a neutral, objective oracle. Students no longer trust their own reflective processes.

Participant 1 (≤ 20 years' experience) highlighted:

Most Large Language Models (LLMs) are trained on Anglo-American data. They often lack accurate nuances regarding Moroccan culture, history, or local educational contexts. Students who lack strong foundational language skills cannot spot when the AI is confidently generating incorrect and biased information.

Participant 1 noted that AI lacks the cultural empathy and pragmatic awareness (slang, idiom, tone) essential for mastering a language. This linguistic limitation directly compounds the issue of algorithmic bias (Amaro & Zhang, 2025). Because the training datasets of major LLMs are predominantly Eurocentric, the tools output a sanitized, Western-aligned version of language and culture. For Moroccan students operating under the illusion of algorithmic infallibility, this creates a dual risk: they adopt a sterile, socio-pragmatically detached communicative style while passively absorbing and reproducing culturally biased or inaccurate perspectives.

Participant 6 (≤ 20 years' experience) highlighted:

Students are developing a dangerous dependency; the moment they encounter a complex prompt, they immediately open AI instead of engaging their own brains. It is terrifying because they are no longer learning how to struggle with an idea, synthesize information, or build an argument. They are outsourcing their intellect to a machine, and if we don't intervene, we will graduate a generation that literally cannot think for themselves.

Participant 8 (≤ 20 years' experience) argued:

Students are developing a dangerous dependency... They are outsourcing their intellect to a machine, and if we don't intervene, we will graduate a generation that literally cannot think for themselves.

The majority of the respondents expressed reservations about the accuracy of AI-generated content, while others pointed out the risks of technological dependence, which may undermine critical thinking and human interaction. These concerns are also reflected in the literature. A recent study has stressed the negative impact of AI on critical thinking and human interaction, emphasizing the need for validation mechanisms and ethical regulations for technology use (Ju, 2023). Similarly, Săseanu et al. (2024) recommend control measures to mitigate the negative

effects of AI, and Łodzikowski et al. (2023) emphasize the need for ethical regulations in AI use in education. The responsible implementation of AI in education can bring significant benefits, contributing to more adaptable and efficient academic preparation. AI should not replace traditional methods but should complement them, offering a personalized and optimized learning experience.

4.2. Theme 2: The Readiness and Responsibility Gap

The first theme focused on how generative AI can support students' English-language development while also raising concerns about overreliance, cognitive atrophy, and output accuracy. The second theme shifts to the broader institutional and ethical context, highlighting a readiness and responsibility gap. This gap refers to the mismatch between the rapid integration of AI tools in teaching and the slow or absent development of clear policies, guidance, and shared responsibility for how AI should be used, policed, and taught within the university. In what follows, educators' voices illustrate how this ambiguity shapes their sense of uncertainty, workload, and ethical unease when dealing with AI in the classroom.

Participant 10 (≤ 10 years' experience) reported:

We don't have clear measures or shared criteria for when AI use becomes overuse or even misconduct. It's left entirely up to each instructor, which creates a foggy, inconsistent environment for everyone. University institutions should implement comprehensive ethical frameworks, clear institutional policies, and targeted AI literacy programs designed to foster critical awareness among students.

Participant 11 (≤ 10 years' experience) added:

This lack of clear policy creates real ambiguity for students, for us, and even for the institution. Some students think they're doing nothing wrong, while others feel they're constantly being watched and judged.

Participant 12 (≤ 10 years' experience) explained:

The line between using AI for support and using it as a substitute is so blurry. Without clear guidelines, students end up confused about what is allowed, and educators end up anxious about enforcing rules that no one has clearly defined. So, training should move beyond technical operation to teach students how to critically assess AI output for bias, distortion, and misinformation.

Furthermore, participants argued that AI output is neither fully accurate nor neutral: it can be biased and inconsistent. When students do not provide the right input or prompts, they may receive misleading or false information, which can distort their understanding and compromise the reliability of their work. This finding is in line with Chaka (2023, 2024), Perkins, Roe, Postma, et al. (2024), Perkins, Roe, Vu, et al. (2024), and Weber-Wulff et al. (2023), who found that these tools are often inaccurate, easily circumvented, and potentially biased. Therefore, because AI outputs cannot be trusted for accuracy or cultural neutrality, assessment models must shift. We cannot rely on home assignments where students act as passive vectors for biased AI data. Instead, in-class, process-based assessments are required to force students to verify facts and defend their own arguments.

Participant 7 (≥ 20 years' experience) observed:

I feel like I'm policing in a vacuum. I'm supposed to monitor AI use, catch over-reliance, and deal with plagiarism, but we don't even agree on what counts as acceptable help. Therefore, there is a need for the implementation of assessment scales, such as the EAP AI Assessment Scale (English for Academic Purposes AI Assessment Scale), which provides five levels of AI integration, ranging from "No AI Use" to "Selective AI Integration for Advanced Skills", to give students concrete boundaries for each assignment. In that case, students are conscious of the boundaries that they should not cross.

Those early-career educators who referred to "EAP-AI" practices in the interviews were implicitly engaging with the kind of structured, level-based guidance formalized by Roe et al. (2024) in the EAP-AIAS, a five-level framework for integrating generative AI into English for Academic Purposes tasks while preserving language development and academic integrity. Their informal references to EAP-AI resonate with the broader work on the AI Assessment Scale (AIAS) by Furze et al. (2024) and its adaptation in language-teaching contexts by Perkins, Furze, and Roe (2024), which together propose how much and in what ways AI support should be allowed in writing, translation, and other EFL/EAP assignments. Nevertheless, these educators acknowledged that no such framework is clearly institutionalized in their university, reinforcing the readiness and responsibility gap at the heart of the second theme: AI-integrated EAP practices are being negotiated locally by relatively new, digitally-oriented faculty, without shared, transparent guidelines that would help both students and more experienced educators navigate the ethical and pedagogical complexities of AI use.

According to the participants, institutions should shift from product-oriented to process-oriented assessment, a view that aligns with Zhao (2024). Their study concluded that traditional product-oriented assessment focuses too heavily on final outputs, whereas process-oriented assessment better supports learning by emphasizing continuous feedback, sustained student engagement, learning development over time, and alignment between assessment tasks and intended learning outcomes. Assignments can require students to submit drafts, outlines, and reflective reports that critique their rationale for using (or not using) AI tools. Increasing the use of oral presentations, viva voce, and in-class handwriting tasks can ensure that the ideas and critical thinking remain the student's original effort. In addition, marking criteria should be restructured to focus less on linguistic perfection, which AI can easily provide, and more on originality, argumentation, and structural organization.

Participant 8 (≥ 20 years' experience) pointed out:

Moroccan higher education institutions must establish clear guidelines to protect data privacy from opaque AI systems while ensuring equitable access to tools so that underprivileged students are not structurally disadvantaged. All students should have equal access to AI technologies.

Moreover, educators also emphasized that institutions must provide guidelines on the ethical handling of data, warning users against inputting personally identifiable information or intellectual property into opaque GenAI systems, and must ensure equitable access to high-quality AI tools, so that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are not disadvantaged by an inability to pay for subscriptions or advanced devices.

Participant 7 (≤ 10 years' experience) noted:

We have been completely left to fend for ourselves in a total policy vacuum. The administration remains silent while we are forced to play the role of AI detectives...

At the same time, educators highlight the lack of a transparent institutional framework for AI use. Many report that their universities have not issued clear, consistent policies on how AI tools should be integrated into assessment, feedback, or classroom practice. Without shared guidelines, rules differ from course to course, leading to confusion and uneven expectations for both students and instructors.

5. Conclusion

This research underscores that artificial intelligence has become a permanent fixture in the modern academic landscape, offering transformative benefits such as personalized learning, enhanced student engagement, and streamlined instructional workflows. However, university instructors exhibit a state of persistent ambivalence, weighing these pedagogical affordances against acute risks, including algorithmic bias, the erosion of critical thinking, and the potential for severe cognitive atrophy through over-reliance. The findings suggest that the Human-AI Equation in English language education is currently unbalanced; the immense opportunities for linguistic scaffolding are frequently undermined by student passivity and a profound institutional policy vacuum. For AI to serve as a tool for empowerment rather than a catalyst for intellectual abdication, universities must move beyond administrative silence to provide transparent frameworks that prioritize critical engagement over algorithmic deference.

To bridge these institutional and pedagogical gaps, this study advocates for the structural implementation of standardized assessment frameworks, specifically the EAP AI Assessment Scale. Rather than resorting to unenforceable bans, this five-tier taxonomy provides a nuanced approach to AI integration, ranging from "No AI Use" to "Selective AI Integration for Advanced Skills", equipping educators with a transparent tool to regulate cognitive offloading while intentionally fostering critical digital literacy. Ultimately, this framework shifts the institutional focus from the final written product back to the cognitive learning process, dismantling the student assumption that an unverified, AI-generated essay is the sole metric of academic success.

Crucially, the synthesis of this data confirms that while AI provides the technical scaffolding for language acquisition, the human educator remains entirely indispensable. AI inherently lacks the capacity for cultural nuance, authentic empathy, and the pragmatic awareness necessary for genuine human expression. Therefore, university educators are not locked in a battle against technology, but are engaged in a critical "race for relevance" that necessitates an evolution from traditional text-transmitters into strategic mediators and facilitators of learning.

The future of higher education lies in a rigorously defined Hybrid Pedagogy. In this new paradigm, AI may manage information retrieval and routine linguistic tasks, but the human educator must govern cognitive transformation and deep intellectual growth. Higher education institutions cannot afford to remain passive spectators to this technological shift. There is an

urgent, systemic need for universities to mandate comprehensive data privacy guidelines, invest in equitable access for socio-economically marginalized students, and officially integrate progressive assessment matrices. Only through proactive, structurally enforced policy can higher education ensure that artificial intelligence supports human interaction rather than replacing the critical friction required for meaningful language development.

Disclosure Statement

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. No financial, personal, or professional relationships have influenced the research, analysis, or conclusions presented in this work.

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