

Learning English Language FOR and FROM AI-Powered Tools in Pakistani Schools: Teachers' and Learners' Perspectives

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Abstract. This research was undertaken to gauge the views of teachers and learners of English on using AI-powered tools to improve language skills in Pakistani schools. Since language learning is deeply rooted in a society's environment and culture, the respondents were asked to share their perceptions, experiences, limits, and challenges in integrating such tools into English language education in schools. The study focuses on the tools used mostly by teachers and learners like chatbots (i.e. ChatGPT), applications (i.e. Duolingo), and adaptive learning platforms (i.e. Knewton). The findings conducted varied and thought-provoking analyses of perceptions, experiences, limits, and challenges regarding English language education and using AI-powered tools for learning it. Results favoured culturally and pedagogically rich and well-planned integration of selective tools in Pakistani schools. Adaptability and acceptance of English as a social, national, and international medium for communication is indispensable to attain a satisfactory proficiency level in Pakistani schools and society.

Key words: *Adaptive learning platforms, AI-powered tools, Chatbots, English language Education, Language learning apps, Pakistani schools.*

1) Introduction

Learning the English language has been a part of educational policies in Pakistan (Government of Pakistan, 2017). It is taught as a compulsory subject from class 1 to higher levels and from playgroups in government and private schools, respectively. It is also used as a medium of instruction for core subjects like science and mathematics, starting from class 5 in government schools and for all subjects except Urdu in most private sector schools (Channa, 2017). According to the National Professional Standards for Teachers (Government of Pakistan, 2009), every teacher must be proficient in English language skills. However, no application has been witnessed in teacher education programs and their selection by the government or HEC in a decade (Shaukat & Chowdhury, 2020).

English is regarded as an official and international business communication language, and higher education unanimously.

Moreover, it is a medium of instruction in public and private sector high schools however, it is used only in a few elite schools in the private sector. In schools belonging to the public sector, it remains challenging. As Nickson & Nudrat (2022) reported, the proficiency level is poor as Pakistan stands at 63rd out of 112 countries. A holistic approach in the pedagogy and language teaching methodologies is required to improve the outcomes.

There are factors behind the lack of English proficiency standards in Pakistan. Firstly, English teachers are unqualified to teach at professional levels as they are the product of the same system that is inefficient as the requirements or standards; a system that has failed to provide its teachers with vital language skills. Secondly, the assessment of the linguistic competence of teachers in the educational system also overlooks comprehension, creativity, listening, and speaking skills (Nisar, 2023, p. 59; Channa, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, English is used in different fields like education, law, business, commerce, tourism, etc. Proficiency in English is highly valued in Pakistan; the less noticeable the dialect is, the more ease and opportunity will be there in various fields (Rehman, 2019). To gain the benefits it carries, there have been noticeable efforts in recent years to improve English education in Pakistan. Still, mutual efforts need to be made by policymakers,

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education officials, educators, learners, and school communities to achieve a better ranking.

A remarkable asset to aid teachers and learners of English has been AI-powered tools. AI offers solutions to problems through various applications for language learning, adaptive learning platforms, and chatbots. These tools provide customized and personalized learning experiences that enable every learner to progress at their own pace along with quick feedback (Li & Wang, 2022; Wu et al., 2022; Alvarez & Schneider, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021).

While these AI-powered tools are employed by teachers and learners more or less, there is a lack of strategy and coordination among them for these utilities. In an educational setting, it is principally for discipline and programs to be designed strategically and carefully aligned to the objectives. The needs, limitations, challenges, and opportunities must be identified and properly addressed to take full advantage of such emerging technologies. Their suitability for teaching and learning the English language in Pakistani schools cannot be determined without collecting direct and diverse opinions of users in the educational system. Thus, this study explored what schoolteachers and learners perceive about using AI-powered tools in classroom settings. The research also examined the readiness of these users to adopt these tools, the challenges they face, and the problems they anticipate.

2) Materials and Methods

The study aimed to get the teachers' and learners' perspectives on using AI-powered tools for English language education. So, data was collected through interviews with English teachers and learners in the government and private schools using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data was collected using close-ended questions and qualitative data was collected through open-ended questions during interviews. The questions were asked to extrapolate knowledge about the AI-powered tools in English language learning, their perspective on using them, and individual experiences related to challenges, limitations, and opportunities while teaching and learning in Pakistani schools.

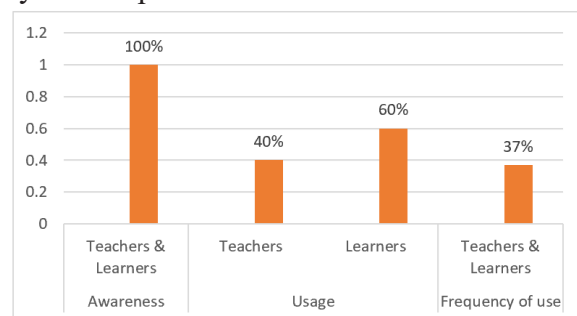
Two separate questionnaires were administered in person to collect data from 20 senior English teachers and 50, 10th graders employed and enrolled in 10 different public

and private high schools in Gujranwala, (Punjab) Pakistan. Upon initial assorting of the responses to survey questions from teachers and learners, quantitative data were examined using descriptive statistics to identify trends and challenges in using AI-powered tools for English language education. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were summarized and categorized using thematic analysis to identify key areas and insights. Findings were discussed in the light of research objective and related literature. Implementations were recommended for all the concerned parties before concluding the study.

3) Results

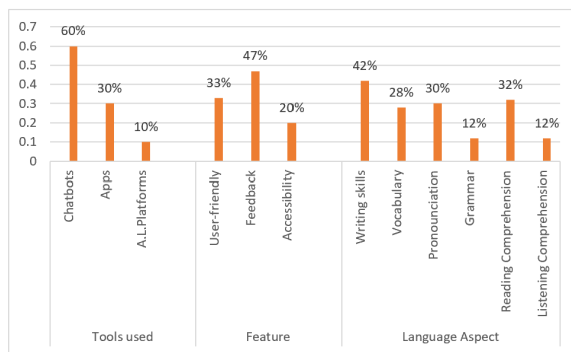
100% of teachers and learners were aware of AI-powered tools available for language learning. 40% of teachers and 65% of learners used one of the AI-powered tools but only 37 % of the respondents used them almost daily for learning any aspect of English language.

Figure 1. Use of the AI-powered Tools by the Respondents



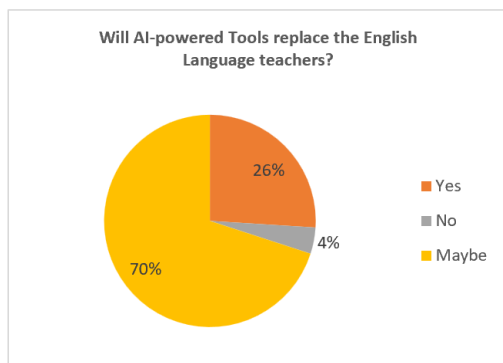
Among those who used the tools, 60% used chatbots, 30% used language learning apps, and only 10% used adaptive learning platforms. 47% of respondents found these tools effective based on their feedback, 33% due to their user-friendly nature, and 20% for their accessibility. Most learned aspects of language: 42% of respondents found the AI-powered tools they used to teach and learn English Language excellent in learning writing skills, 32% in comprehension, 30% in pronunciation, 28% in vocabulary, and 12% found them helpful in improving listening comprehension.

Figure 2. Most Used Tool, Feature liked, and Language Aspect Learned by the Respondents



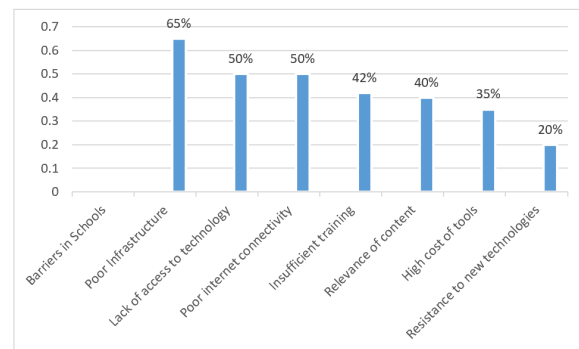
26% of respondents were sure about the replacement of traditional language methods by AI-powered tools, 70% of respondents remained unsure and only 4% were certain about it.

Figure 3. Perspective of the Respondents on the replacement of teachers by AI



65% of respondents cited poor infrastructure in schools as a major barrier. According to 50% of respondents, limited or no access to technological devices, power, and internet troubles hindered the adoption of AI tools particularly in rural areas. 42% of the respondents identified insufficient training was the main challenge of using AI-powered tools in English education. 40% of respondents expressed their concerns about the relevance and validity of curriculum and culture with the content offered by AI-powered tools. 35% of them said that the high cost of devices and internet services had made it difficult to utilize them for language learning. Only 20% of them stated resistance as an impediment to adapting to modern technologies due to unfamiliarity and comfort with traditional methods of teaching.

Figure 4. Challenges in Using AI-empowered Tools.

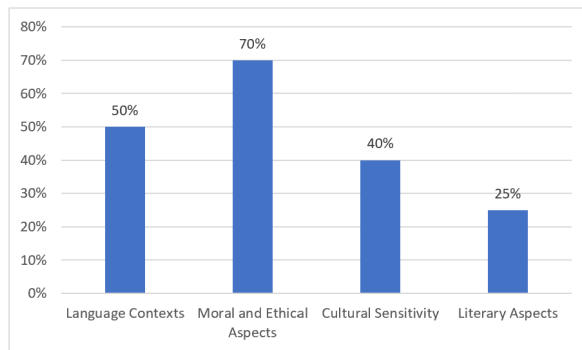


The majority, 70 % of the respondents pointed out the degeneration of ethical and moral values among their students using AI-powered tools. They are using AI for fun and entertainment more than for learning and getting education. They are forging shortcuts and finding easier paths to get through assignments and tests but attain no real learning or knowledge. Moreover, the learners using these tools for learning the English language have problems with consistency in their learning routines and behaviours. 24-hour access and availability to such resources could lead to indiscipline and unreliability in learners. Considerations regarding data privacy, consent, and ethical considerations were also highlighted.

78% of the respondents stated that the language of textbooks is far removed from the modern language used in communication nowadays. All the language teachers emphasized changing the assessment system for languages and including practical exams for listening and speaking skills.

50% of them noticed that AI-powered tools lack the ability to understand the contextual aspects which are highly important for effective communication and language attainment. 40% of them expressed how learning from AI provides no cultural learning to minimize social barriers. Often the language learned by using AI-powered tools ends up in ridicule and embarrassment on attempts. 25% of teacher raised their concern regarding AI-powered tools inclined towards handy language skills compared to literary aspects of language, like admiration of poetry, prose, and the intricacies of literature in a language. This may point to a utilitarian approach to learning languages and culminate in neglecting the aesthetic and philosophic richness of the language.

Figure 5. Limitations in Using AI-empowered Tools.



82% of the respondents mentioned that they have been teased and criticized for trying to speak English in Pakistani culture. More than 40% of them stated they would never learn English if given a choice because it was a foreign language. 76% of the respondents mentioned that more than one of their teachers expressed a distaste for the English language saying it, was 'a remnant of British Rule over the subcontinent' and a 'Foreigners' language'.

4. Discussions

As per the findings, reluctance to recent technologies has decreased during the past few years, especially among young teachers and learners. AI-powered tools are being used in English language education in Pakistan to aid educational activities due to their ability to personalize every learner's experience followed by immediate feedback (Chen et al., 2023; Huang & Yu, 2021). Teachers and students are aware of AI-powered tools as the findings of the study but the frequency of using them purposefully for English language education is not common; only a minority yet adopted them for English language education within schools.

AI-powered tools offer significant potential for enhancing English language proficiency in Pakistani schools. By providing personalized learning experiences, interactive content, and real-time feedback, these tools can help students improve their language skills and achieve better academic outcomes. However, realizing this potential requires addressing key challenges related to technology access, teacher training, curricular and cultural relevance, and the limitations of AI in capturing the full depth of language learning. By leveraging AI tools effectively, Pakistani educators can provide more personalized and effective English language instruction, improving teachers' techniques

and student outcomes and accelerating the country's educational development.

Among the three AI-powered tools targeted in this research, language learning applications were the most used, second to chatbots and adaptive learning platforms. Comparing the two sectors of school education, private is better than public but this difference is owing to the facilities and training provided to teachers and learners. The study found that AI helps teachers and learners improve language skills including writing, reading, listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (Li & Wang, 2022; Johnson et al., 2021).

There is a consensus among teachers and learners that AI-powered tools could be more beneficial in learning English taught as a compulsory subject in schools and is the language of instruction, official business, commerce, and communication across the country (Haider, 2024; Channa, 2017). Such learning tools are important in a developing country like Pakistan as there is a lack of resources like schools, teachers, infrastructure, and competent English language teachers and environment. After all, they offer to learn the language in a personalized, joyful, and approachable way (Wu et al., 2022; Alvarez & Schneider, 2020).

Teachers and learners are getting benefits from them to attain language proficiency, but their focus is on writing skills. That strengthens the statement about limiting AI-powered tools for creating written assignments and test preparation. It also highlights the Pakistani examination system that completely ignores listening and speaking skills (Nisar, 2023, p. 59). Unless these practical skills can be assessed in the examination, mastering the four skills of the language would remain a dream.

The availability of adequate infrastructure, access to technological devices, power, and the internet is a big challenge for Pakistani teachers and learners. Trained English teachers are required to teach and instruct as per educational plans and policies regardless of the integration of AI-powered tools. Also, there is a dire need to update and develop the language curriculum according to modernization and globalization.

Authorities and officials can enhance the proficiency of English education in Pakistan by providing the schools with funds for infrastructure and training sufficient to integrate AI-powered tools in language learning. Teachers can teach English and

introduce varied techniques to learn English themselves using these tools. Instead of waiting for their authorities to provide the facilities, they can choose and integrate the most relevant and suitable tools into their lessons. They can save a lot of time and energy by designing interactive material for instructing their students. The content can be personalized and differentiated according to each learner's level, especially regarding interactivity and practicality in teaching and assessing English. At a minimal level, teachers can improve their accents to deliver an acceptable dialect to their learners by using such tools. (Alvarez & Schneider, 2020)

Learners' assessment can be done, and immediate and constructive feedback can be provided with the help of these tools. Such specific and focused-on-the-deficiency aid can be a reliable source of language acquisition in schools. Furthermore, it carries a subtle message for Pakistani teachers about their personal and professional development. Learners prefer AI-powered tools over human teachers because of their qualities like no judging and labelling. They like them for being readily available to help, ignoring their deficiencies, and shouting out their strengths. They also compare them for providing individual attention and feedback. Thus, teachers should try these traits to lower the affective barriers and get positive results (Nisar, 2023, pp. 39, 274).

Due to its education system, learners struggle with self-learning in Pakistan and depend heavily on teachers for their academic learning and achievements (Nisar, 2023, pp. 39 & 216). AI-powered tools can be their learning partners possessing the benefits of teachers such as knowledge and skills in the language. Although they use AI-powered tools more frequently than their teachers, they need to use them for educational purposes more than just entertainment. Making a strict schedule for continuous progress and sticking to it can enhance their efforts and outcomes.

The efforts of both learners and teachers can be multiplied if done according to an implemented policy, planned curriculum, equipped language lab, and improved way of assessment. Troubles like limited or no access to technological devices, power, and internet disruption impede the adoption of AI tools particularly in rural areas (Khan & Aslam, 2022). Removing these barriers can reduce the educational gaps between rural and urban areas (Ahmad & Saeed, 2023).

The dichotomy between national and official languages has weakened English

language education in Pakistan. It has forged huge gaps in schooling systems based on the language of instruction commonly known as 'English-medium' and 'Urdu medium' schooling (Haider, 2024). Teachers and parents talk against the language viewing it as a foreign language. Then push their children to master it. This contradiction is a major barrier to adopting it as an International and intercultural communication language. English language learners face the incivility of peers and problems like indecisiveness, resistance, and fear of becoming a laughingstock (Nisar, 2023, p. 37). Social institutions and organizations can raise awareness regarding such barriers to progress and promote civility among the Pakistanis. Thus, the accessibility of English language learning tools can bridge the gaps between the classes within Pakistan. (Haider, 2024; Ahmad & Saeed, 2023).

AI-powered tools have enormous potential to teach English to teachers and learners in Pakistan. Both can be proficient by teaching systematically and objectively. Awareness of ethical and moral aspects like data privacy, plagiarism, and obtaining consent is essential to gaining academic integrity. Although, available tools have yet to cover cultural context, social norms, and literary aspects of language. They can be adapted to master the foundational and functional ones.

The findings point to AI's utility approach to learning languages that can be the end of the aesthetic and philosophic richness of the literature. This area of language learning through AI-powered tools opens doors for further research.

5. Conclusions

English is a compulsory subject to be taught and learned in Pakistan (Channa, 2017), and every teacher is required to be proficient in it as per the National Professional Standards for Teachers (Government of Pakistan, 2009). Nevertheless, even university graduates are not good at English language education because of low-quality education, poor infrastructure, unqualified teachers, and cultural bias. AI-powered tools such as chatbots, learning applications, and adaptive learning platforms have enormous potential to contribute to achieving the desired outcomes. Moreover, there is a pressing need to explore their features to determine their relevance, appropriation, and suitability before using them. In other words, AI-powered tools are being used both by teachers and learners

in English language education in Pakistani schools. All they need is to integrate them into teaching and learning strategically. Unless all the stakeholders assume their role in this undertaking to reach the proficiency level required to be successful (Nickson & Nudrat, 2022) in a guided and systematic way, the challenge will not be overcome.

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