



Exploring the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Student Creativity in Vietnamese Tertiary EFL Classrooms: Teacher Perspectives

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Received: March 20, 2024; Accepted: May 18, 2024; Published: July 31, 2024

ABSTRACT

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in education is rapidly transforming traditional teaching methodologies and learning experiences. This qualitative study investigates the perceptions of Vietnamese tertiary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers regarding the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on student creativity in language learning. Amidst the rapid integration of AI in educational contexts, this research focuses on a relatively unexplored area: the intersection of AI technology and creative language pedagogy in the Vietnamese educational setting. Nine EFL teachers from two institutions in Vietnam, representing novice, mid-career, and near-end career stages, participated in semi-structured interviews. The study employed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Creativity in Language Learning Framework (CLLF) as its theoretical basis. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed four key themes: the perceived impact of AI on creative language practice, challenges in integrating AI with creative pedagogy, varied perceptions of AI's role in developing student autonomy, and the impact of AI on traditional teaching methods and teacher roles. The findings indicated a spectrum of perspectives, from viewing AI as a beneficial tool for creative engagement to concerns over its potential to limit creative thinking and traditional pedagogical approaches. The study highlights the complexity of integrating AI into language learning and its influence on both teaching practices and student creativity. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on AI in education by providing insights into how AI can be harnessed to enhance creative pedagogical practices, thereby informing future policy and curriculum development in EFL contexts.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Student Creativity, Teacher Perspectives, EFL Classrooms*



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INTRODUCTION

In the evolving landscape of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, particularly within the context of Vietnamese tertiary institutions, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a focal point of academic inquiry (Nguyen, 2024). This study narrows its lens to address a pivotal question within this domain: How do Vietnamese tertiary EFL educators perceive the impact of AI on students' creative capacities in language learning?

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The significance of this investigation lies in the intersection of two critical educational components – the burgeoning influence of AI in teaching methodologies and the vital role of creativity in language acquisition and proficiency. Creativity in language learning extends beyond mere linguistic competence; it encapsulates the ability to innovate, express original ideas, and think critically in a new language (Tin, 2012; Jones & Richards, 2015). The rapid incorporation of AI tools in EFL classrooms, characterized by algorithmic learning processes, brings forth concerns about their potential to restrict or reshape this creative landscape (Marzuki et al., 2023; Moybeka et al., 2023).

As AI continues to transform educational paradigms, understanding educators' perspectives on its implications for student creativity becomes paramount. This study aims to delve deep into the insights and apprehensions of Vietnamese EFL teachers, uncovering how they perceive AI's role in either fostering or hindering the creative use of the English language among their students. Such perceptions are crucial, as they not only influence teaching practices but also inform broader educational policies and the future direction of AI integration in language education (Saint et al., 2021; Winke, 2011).

This research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on AI's role in education, with a specific focus on the unique educational setting of Vietnam. By exploring the nuanced views of EFL educators on AI's impact on creativity, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the potential and challenges AI presents in the context of language learning and pedagogy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of AI in language education has evolved significantly. Early applications were limited to basic language processing tools and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) systems (Bax, 2003; Warschauer & Healey, 1998). This transition from foundational tools to more complex systems mirrors the broader technological evolution in educational settings (Subiyantoro et al., 2023). Recent advancements, however, have led to more sophisticated applications, including adaptive learning platforms (Muñoz et al., 2022), automated essay-scoring systems (Ramesh & Sanamoudi, 2022), and conversational agents (Coniam, 2014). These innovations leverage cutting-edge AI technologies such as natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning (ML) to enhance the language learning experience. These tools are designed to provide personalized learning experiences and immediate feedback, which are seen as beneficial for language acquisition (Tapalova & Zhiyenbayeva, 2022). Such tailored approaches underscore the importance of adapting technological advancements to meet individual learner needs, fostering a more effective and engaging learning environment.

Teacher Perceptions and Challenges

While AI's potential in language education is acknowledged, its reception among educators varies. Studies indicate mixed responses, with teachers expressing both optimism for its pedagogical possibilities and concerns regarding its implementation and effectiveness (Kukulka-Hulme, 2021). This dichotomy reflects the broader debate on the integration of technology in education, balancing between innovation and traditional teaching methods. A significant concern is the potential for AI to overshadow the teacher's role, raising questions about the future of language teaching (Schiff, 2022). Such apprehensions highlight the need for a synergistic approach that amplifies the teacher's impact through AI support rather than replacement.

Creativity in language learning is increasingly recognized as crucial. It involves the ability to think critically, solve problems, and express ideas innovatively in a second language (Maley & Kiss, 2017). The development of creative skills in language learning is linked to higher student engagement and deeper linguistic understanding (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Suparya,

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2024). Engaging learners in creative tasks not only enhances their linguistic capabilities but also cultivates essential life skills such as adaptability and inventive thinking.

There is an ongoing debate about AI's impact on creativity in language learning. Some argue that AI can foster creativity by providing resources for innovative language use and freeing teachers to focus on more creative aspects of teaching (Sharples, 2019). Others contend that the prescriptive nature of AI-driven tools may limit creative expression and critical thinking (George, 2023). This tension underscores the complexity of integrating AI in a manner that enriches rather than restricts the educational experience. The concern is that AI, with its algorithmic approach, may promote a one-size-fits-all model of language learning, hindering individual creative development (Pokrivcakova, 2019). Exploring the balance between structured learning and creative freedom becomes essential in maximizing the benefits of AI in education.

In Vietnam, the integration of AI in EFL education is relatively new and understudied. Vietnamese educators face unique challenges due to varying levels of technological infrastructure and pedagogical traditions (Maheshwari, 2021; Thao et al., 2024). Acknowledging these challenges is crucial for developing effective strategies that leverage AI to enhance language learning while respecting local contexts. The perspective of Vietnamese EFL teachers on AI's impact on creativity is thus both contextually and academically significant. Their insights can contribute to a broader understanding of how AI can be tailored to support diverse educational landscapes and cultural nuances.

In summary, the literature reveals an intricate picture of AI's role in language education and its potential effects on creativity. While AI offers innovative tools for language learning, its impact on creativity remains a contested topic, with significant implications for teaching practices and pedagogical approaches, especially in the unique context of Vietnamese tertiary education. This study aims to contribute to this dialogue by specifically examining Vietnamese EFL teachers' perceptions of AI's influence on student creativity in language learning.

METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, leveraging semi-structured interviews to gain in-depth insights into Vietnamese tertiary EFL teachers' perceptions of AI's impact on student creativity in language learning. This approach is chosen for its flexibility and effectiveness in exploring complex, subjective experiences and attitudes, allowing for a nuanced exploration of teachers' concerns and perceptions (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The theoretical foundations of this study are anchored in two principal frameworks: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Creativity in Language Learning Framework (CLLF). TAM, as conceptualized by Davis (1985), plays a crucial role in understanding how technology is accepted and utilized. Central to this model are two key factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. These factors are believed to significantly influence an individual's decision to adopt and use new technology. In the context of this study, TAM offers a valuable perspective for examining Vietnamese EFL teachers' attitudes toward AI in language education. It aids in evaluating how teachers perceive the benefits and challenges posed by AI tools, especially concerning enhancing or impeding students' creative abilities in language learning.

Complementing TAM, the CLLF provides a holistic view of creativity within the domain of language learning. Pioneered by Richards (2013), this framework shifts the focus of creativity from being a mere product to a process and a personal attribute that can be cultivated. It underscores the pivotal role of the educational environment and instructional practices in either fostering or inhibiting creativity. To further aid in the visualization and clearer understanding of these theoretical frameworks, Figure 1 is included in the manuscript. This

figure succinctly summarizes the key components of TAM and CLLF, highlighting how they interrelate and underpin the study’s analysis of AI’s role in creative language learning.

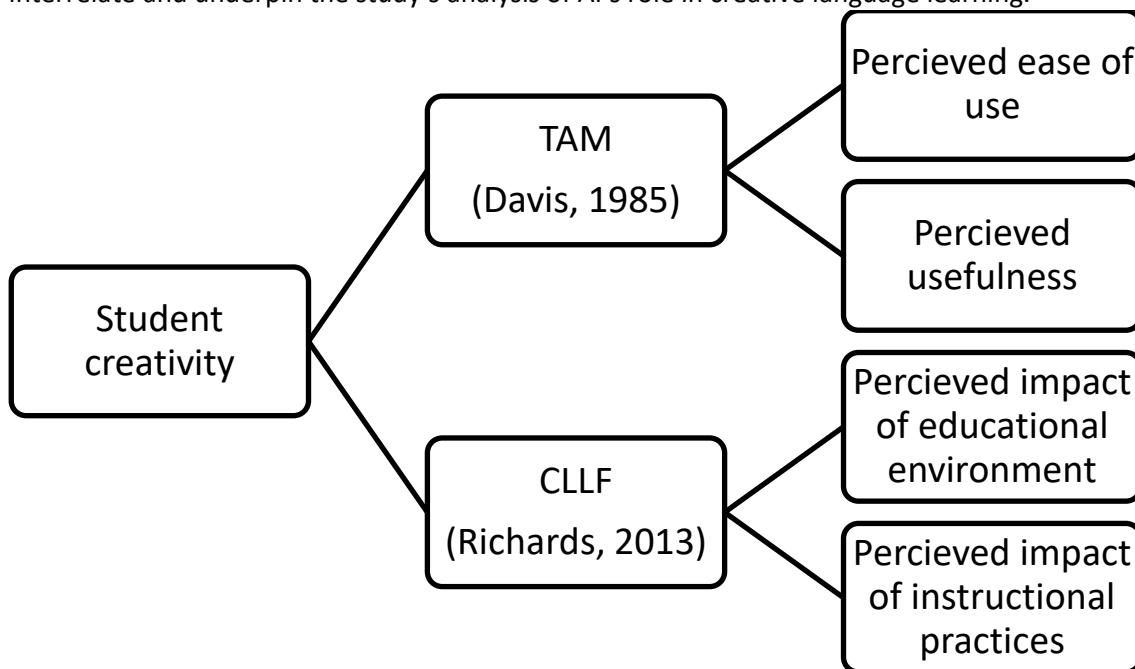


Figure 1. Student creativity under the theoretical frameworks: TAM and CLLF

By applying CLLF, the study seeks to explore how AI tools are perceived in terms of their compatibility with the educational setting and their alignment with pedagogical practices. This includes an assessment of whether these tools are seen as enhancers or barriers to the development of creativity in the language learning process. Together, TAM and CLLF provide a comprehensive theoretical base for investigating the nuanced dynamics between AI integration in EFL teaching and the cultivation of student creativity.

Participants

The participants in this study consist of nine Vietnamese EFL teachers, selected from two different educational institutions in Vietnam. This diverse group is strategically composed of three distinct career stages: three novice teachers, three mid-career teachers, and three near-end career teachers. Such a composition ensures a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives regarding the use of AI in language education and its impact on student creativity.

The novice teachers, being relatively new to the profession, may offer fresh perspectives and possibly greater familiarity with emerging technologies like AI. Mid-career teachers, with their mix of experience and openness to new methodologies, might provide a balanced view on the integration of AI in teaching practices. Near-end career teachers are expected to bring in a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of traditional teaching methodologies, potentially contrasting with the AI-driven approaches.

Regarding participant recruitment and their experience of AI in EFL, it is important to note that participants were recruited through a purposive sampling method. This approach was chosen to specifically target EFL teachers with varying levels of engagement and experience with AI technologies in their teaching practice. Recruitment channels included professional networks, educational forums, and social media platforms dedicated to EFL teaching in Vietnam.

The choice of selecting only nine participants from two institutions was driven by the need for a manageable yet comprehensive exploration of diverse perspectives within a limited

scope, typical of exploratory qualitative research. The two institutions were selected based on their distinct educational settings—one being a public university and the other a private one—providing varied educational environments and approaches to technology use in teaching. This methodological choice aims to capture a rich, detailed understanding of the phenomena under study rather than to generalize findings across all possible educational settings.

Participants were selected based on their expressed interest in or experience with integrating AI tools in language education. Before their selection, to ensure the validity of the interview questions, a panel of three experienced qualitative researchers reviewed the questions. This panel included experts in EFL and AI applications in education. They provided feedback on the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions, leading to several revisions to enhance their pertinence to the study's aims and the experiences of the participants. A preliminary survey was conducted to gauge their level of familiarity and practical engagement with AI applications in the EFL context. This ensured a representation of a wide range of experiences—from teachers who are actively experimenting with AI technologies in their classrooms to those who are more skeptical of its benefits and implications.

In recruiting these participants, ethical considerations are paramount. All participants are informed of the study's purpose, the nature of their involvement, and the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. They are assured that their participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw from the study at any point without any consequences. Consent forms are provided, detailing the study's scope and the use of interview data. Special attention is given to ensuring that the participants do not feel coerced to participate or to respond in a particular manner.

Furthermore, ethical considerations extend to the treatment of the data collected. All interviews are conducted with the utmost respect for the participants' privacy. The data is securely stored and is only accessible to the research team. In reporting the findings, care is taken to ensure that no participant is identifiable, and all information is presented in a way that respects the dignity and professional integrity of the participants.

Data Collection

The primary method of data collection in this study was through semi-structured interviews, which provided a flexible yet focused means of exploring the perceptions of Vietnamese EFL teachers regarding the impact of AI on student creativity. To ensure the reliability and validity of these interviews, several measures were undertaken. Before the main data collection phase, a pilot study was conducted. This preliminary step involved conducting trial interviews with a small group of EFL teachers not included in the main study. The aim was to test the effectiveness of the interview questions and the overall flow of the conversation. The feedback from the pilot study was critically analyzed to adjust and refine the questions, thus enhancing their ability to evoke detailed and meaningful responses while maintaining consistency across interviews. Based on the feedback and observations from this pilot phase, necessary revisions were made to the interview questions to ensure clarity, relevance, and the ability to elicit in-depth responses. Additionally, to further ensure validity, an expert in qualitative research methods was consulted to review and approve the revised interview protocol. This expert assessment helped to align the questions more closely with the research objectives and ensured that they were constructed in a way to minimize bias and lead questions.

Some of the refined interview questions included: "How do you perceive the role of AI in facilitating creative language learning?", "Can you share any experiences where you felt AI tools either enhanced or hindered creativity in your classroom?", and "What challenges do you foresee in balancing AI usage with the development of creative skills in language learning?".

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These questions were designed to probe the teachers' personal experiences and perceptions, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The interviews were conducted at locations convenient for the participants, either at their respective institutions or at a neutral location like a quiet café, to ensure a comfortable environment for open discussion. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes, allowing sufficient time for participants to express their views without feeling rushed. The participants needed to communicate in a language in which they felt most comfortable. Therefore, while Vietnamese was primarily used, the option to use English or a combination of both languages was available, depending on the participant's preference. This approach ensured that language barriers did not impede the expression of nuanced perspectives.

To further enhance reliability, all interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants, allowing for accurate transcription and analysis. The data collection phase was meticulously planned and executed, with an emphasis on creating a respectful and comfortable environment for the participants. The use of semi-structured interviews facilitated a deep exploration of the teachers' views on AI and creativity in language learning, while the pilot study and subsequent revisions to the interview questions ensured that these discussions were as productive and insightful as possible.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews was conducted using thematic analysis, a method well-suited for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. This approach is particularly effective in qualitative research where the aim is to decipher and interpret various aspects of a research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Braun et al., 2023). In this study, thematic analysis was employed to extract meaningful insights from the narratives of Vietnamese EFL teachers regarding their perceptions of the impact of AI on student creativity in language learning.

The process began with a careful and thorough transcription of all the interviews. Each transcript was read multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the content and to immerse in the details of the participants' experiences and viewpoints. Initial codes were generated by identifying and highlighting significant or interesting features in the data. This coding was done systematically across the entire data set, thus ensuring a comprehensive approach to data examination.

Following the initial coding, these codes were sorted into potential themes. This involved collating all the relevant coded data extracts and organizing them under overarching thematic labels. These emerging themes were then reviewed and refined. This stage was crucial as it involved a back-and-forth process between the coded data extracts and the developing themes, ensuring that the themes accurately represented the dataset.

Once the themes were defined and refined, the next step was to analyze them concerning the research questions and the theoretical framework underpinning the study. This analysis was not just about summarizing the data but also involved a critical examination of how the themes developed and what they revealed about the perceptions of teachers concerning AI and creativity in language learning.

To address the trustworthiness of thematic analysis in this study, several strategies were employed to enhance reliability and validity. These included triangulation, member checking, and an audit trail. Triangulation was achieved by comparing the findings from the thematic analysis with existing literature on AI and creativity in education, thereby validating the themes through multiple sources of evidence. Member checking involved returning the developed themes to some of the participants to confirm whether these themes accurately reflected their views and experiences. An audit trail was maintained by documenting the decision-making

process throughout the analysis, providing transparency and allowing for verification of the findings by independent reviewers.

Finally, the findings were written up, weaving together the analytic narrative with appropriate quotes from the participants. The aim was to present a coherent and persuasive account of the data that aligns with the research objectives. The thematic analysis, therefore, provided a structured yet flexible approach to uncovering the nuanced perspectives of the participants, allowing for a rich and in-depth understanding of the research topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceived Impact of AI on Creative Language Practice

This theme encapsulates the participants' views on how AI tools influence the creative aspects of language learning in their classrooms. Overall, six out of nine participants, including two novice teachers, two mid-career teachers, and two near-end teachers, discussed this theme at length, providing rich insights into their experiences and perceptions.

One novice teacher illustrated a positive view of AI's impact, stating, "AI tools like language apps bring new, interactive ways for students to engage with the language creatively." This perspective aligns with TAM, which suggests that perceived usefulness plays a critical role in the acceptance of technology. For this teacher, the utility of AI in fostering creative language engagement seems to be a significant factor in its acceptance and use. From the CLLF standpoint, this statement also reflects the belief that AI can create an environment conducive to developing creativity, offering novel and engaging methods for creative language practice.

A mid-career teacher shared a more cautious view: "While AI can offer innovative approaches, I worry that over-reliance might limit students' ability to think outside the algorithmic box." This concern touches on the aspect of TAM related to perceived ease of use, suggesting that while AI tools are accessible, their structured nature might impede creative thinking. The CLLF perspective here is critical, highlighting the teacher's apprehension that AI might limit the natural, creative flow of language learning, suggesting a potential mismatch between AI tools and pedagogical practices aimed at fostering creativity.

A near-end career teacher offered a critical perspective, noting, "Traditional methods encouraged more spontaneous, creative language use, which I find lacking in AI-driven classrooms." This statement reflects a concern with the TAM's perceived ease of use, indicating a preference for traditional methods over AI due to the perceived limitations of the latter in fostering creativity. From the CLLF viewpoint, this reflects a belief in the importance of an unstructured, free-form learning environment for cultivating creativity, which the teacher feels AI tools may not adequately provide.

Challenges in Integrating AI with Creative Pedagogy

This theme reflects the teachers' concerns and difficulties in incorporating AI tools into teaching practices that support and enhance creativity in language learning. Seven of the nine participants discussed this theme, including all three novice teachers, two mid-career teachers, and two near-end teachers.

A novice teacher expressed, "Integrating AI tools in a way that complements rather than dictates the creative aspects of language learning is challenging." According to TAM, this reflects a struggle with the perceived ease of use, where the teacher finds it challenging to seamlessly integrate AI tools into existing pedagogical frameworks. From the CLLF perspective, this concern highlights the difficulty in ensuring that AI tools do not override the creative elements of language learning, but rather, support and enhance them.

A mid-career teacher shared, "Finding the right balance between using AI for language practice and encouraging creative, independent thinking is not straightforward." This

statement underscores the challenges as perceived through TAM, particularly in terms of the practical application of AI in a manner that is both user-friendly and effective in fostering creativity. The CLLF viewpoint is evident here, as the teacher grapples with maintaining a learning environment that cultivates creativity while integrating technology.

From a near-end career teacher's perspective, "AI sometimes feels like a square peg in a round hole when it comes to fostering genuine creative expression in language." This comment resonates with TAM's concept of perceived usefulness, where the teacher questions the utility of AI in enhancing creative language skills. Under the CLLF lens, this statement reflects a concern that AI tools may not be well-suited to the organic, creative nature of language learning and expression.

Varied Perceptions of AI's Role in Developing Student Autonomy

This theme emerged from discussions regarding how AI tools influence the independent learning and creative thinking skills of students. The theme was highlighted by five participants: one novice teacher, two mid-career teachers, and two near-end teachers.

The novice teacher observed, "AI tools empower students to learn independently, which is crucial for creative thinking." This viewpoint aligns with TAM, where the perceived usefulness of AI in fostering student autonomy is evident. According to CLLF, this perspective also suggests that AI can create an environment that encourages students to explore language creatively and independently, thereby enhancing their creative capacities.

One of the mid-career teachers commented, "While AI provides great resources, it sometimes makes students overly reliant, hindering their ability to think creatively on their own." This statement reflects a concern within the TAM framework regarding the perceived ease of use of AI, suggesting that ease might lead to dependence, which could stifle creative thinking. From the CLLF perspective, this viewpoint raises an important question about the balance between using AI as a tool for learning and ensuring it does not limit students' creative and independent language exploration.

A near-end career teacher offered a critical perspective: "AI tools often guide students too much, leaving little room for them to make mistakes and learn creatively from them." This insight touches upon the TAM aspect of perceived ease of use, indicating a concern that AI might oversimplify the learning process. According to CLLF, this remark underscores the importance of experiential learning and the role of mistakes in fostering creativity, which the teacher feels may be compromised in an AI-driven learning environment.

Impact of AI on Traditional Teaching Methods and Teacher Roles

This theme encompasses the teachers' perspectives on how the introduction of AI in EFL classrooms influences conventional teaching practices and their roles as educators. This theme was reflected in the responses of eight out of nine participants, encompassing all three novice teachers, three mid-career teachers, and two near-end teachers.

A novice teacher stated, "AI is reshaping the traditional classroom dynamics and my role as a teacher, pushing me more towards a facilitator." According to TAM, this reflects an adaptation to the perceived usefulness of AI in modern teaching. From the perspective of CLLF, it suggests a shift in pedagogical approaches where the teacher's role in fostering creativity becomes more about guiding and less about direct instruction, influenced by AI integration.

One mid-career teacher shared, "The reliance on AI tools requires us to rethink our traditional methods and how we inspire creativity in our students." This comment aligns with the TAM framework in terms of teachers reassessing the utility and application of AI in their teaching practices. From the CLLF viewpoint, this signifies a critical reflection on how to maintain and encourage creative language learning within an AI-augmented educational environment.

A near-end career teacher offered a reflective insight: “Integrating AI challenges me to balance technology with the human elements of teaching that nurture student creativity.” This perspective resonates with TAM’s focus on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, as it highlights the challenge of integrating new technology while preserving the essence of traditional teaching. From the CLLF perspective, it underscores the importance of retaining human-centric educational practices that are crucial for creative development, amidst the growing presence of AI.

Discussion

The findings of this study, particularly around the perceived impact of AI on creative language practice, resonate with existing literature while also offering unique insights specific to the Vietnamese EFL context. Previous studies have often highlighted the potential of AI to enhance language learning through personalized and interactive experiences (Chen et al., 2021; Rusmiyanto et al., 2023). Similar to the positive outlook expressed by one of the novice teachers in this study, existing research suggests that AI can be a catalyst for creative language engagement (Sharples, 2019). However, this study contributes to the field by revealing a nuanced spectrum of perceptions, ranging from optimism to skepticism, highlighting the diversity in teachers’ attitudes toward AI in language education.

The cautious and critical views expressed by the mid-career and near-end teachers, respectively, align with concerns raised in other studies about the over-reliance on technology potentially limiting creative thinking and authentic language use (George, 2023). This study extends these findings by demonstrating that such concerns are prevalent even among educators in Vietnam, a context where AI in education is relatively new. The emphasis on maintaining a balance between AI use and creative, independent language practice, as discussed by the participants, underscores a critical challenge identified in the literature – integrating technology in a way that enriches rather than diminishes creativity in language learning (Blake, 2013; Lau & Lee, 2015).

Regarding the challenges in integrating AI with creative pedagogy, the study’s findings are in line with previous research that has highlighted the difficulties educators face in incorporating technology into their teaching practices (Emre, 2019). The insights from Vietnamese EFL teachers add a new dimension to this discourse by contextualizing these challenges within a specific educational and cultural setting. This study, therefore, extends the existing knowledge by illustrating how these challenges manifest in a Vietnamese EFL context, thereby contributing to a more global understanding of the impact of AI on language education.

The varied perceptions of AI’s role in developing student autonomy echo findings from other contexts where AI’s role in fostering independent learning has been both praised and critiqued (Coniam, 2014). The diverse views of Vietnamese teachers, from seeing AI as an empowering tool to regarding it as a potential hindrance to creative thinking, align with the broader discourse on AI in education. This study contributes to this discourse by highlighting the complexity of integrating AI tools in a way that supports autonomy and creativity, a concern that is especially pertinent in settings where traditional pedagogical approaches are deeply rooted (Talok et al., 2023).

Finally, the impact of AI on traditional teaching methods and teacher roles aligns with the global trend of technology reshaping educational landscapes and teaching roles (Collins & Halverson, 2018; Facer, 2011; Oakes et al., 2018). The findings from this study add to this understanding by providing specific examples of how Vietnamese EFL teachers are adapting to these changes. The shift towards a facilitator role, as mentioned by a novice teacher, and the need to balance technology with human-centric teaching practices, as reflected in the near-

end teacher's insight, underscore the transformative impact of AI on teaching methodologies and roles.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the perceptions of Vietnamese tertiary EFL teachers regarding the impact of AI on students' creativity in language learning. Situated within the burgeoning context of AI integration in education, particularly in a Vietnamese setting, the study aimed to uncover the nuanced views and experiences of teachers at various stages in their careers. The conclusions drawn from this research focus on the principal findings concerning the research objectives. First, the results indicate that AI technologies are seen by teachers as having a potentially transformative impact on creative language practices. Teachers noted that AI could provide unique opportunities for students to engage in more personalized and innovative learning activities that foster creativity. However, there were also significant concerns about the challenges of integrating AI tools effectively with existing creative pedagogies. Teachers expressed worries that without careful implementation, AI might simplify creative tasks rather than enrich them. Furthermore, the study identified a divergence in perceptions of AI's role in promoting student autonomy. Some educators felt that AI could empower students by offering them more control over their learning processes, thereby enhancing their creative capacities. In contrast, others feared that an overreliance on AI could diminish students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are crucial for creativity. Additionally, the impact of AI on traditional teaching methods and teacher roles was a recurrent theme. Some teachers viewed AI as a supportive tool that could enhance their teaching efficiency and effectiveness, allowing them to focus more on fostering student creativity. Others, however, were apprehensive about the potential of AI to replace traditional educational roles, suggesting a need for a balanced approach that integrates AI without undermining the value of teacher-led instruction. These themes highlighted a spectrum of perceptions, ranging from optimistic to cautious and critical, reflecting the complexities involved in integrating AI into language learning and its influence on creativity and pedagogical practices.

The detailed implications drawn from this study shed light on the multifaceted impact of AI on language education, particularly focusing on creativity, teaching methodologies, and the evolving role of educators. Firstly, the research emphasizes the critical need for a harmonized approach when incorporating AI into language learning environments. It calls for a method that positively augments the creative dimensions of language education, ensuring that AI serves as a catalyst for innovation rather than a constraint on imaginative expression. This nuanced perspective suggests that while AI technologies offer novel avenues for language practice and engagement, there is a significant risk of these tools becoming overly prescriptive. Such dominance could potentially stifle learners' creative thought processes and limit their ability to explore language in divergent and innovative ways. Consequently, educators are encouraged to critically evaluate and judiciously integrate AI tools, ensuring they complement rather than dominate the pedagogical landscape.

Secondly, the findings accentuate the essential role of professional development and support for educators as they incorporate AI into their instructional strategies. This aspect is particularly salient in regions like Vietnam, where the integration of AI in educational settings is at a nascent stage. Teachers face the dual challenge of mastering novel technologies and redesigning their pedagogical approaches to incorporate AI effectively. Professional development opportunities tailored to these needs can empower teachers, equipping them with the skills and knowledge required to seamlessly blend AI with creative language teaching methods. Such support not only enhances educators' technological proficiency but also fosters a pedagogical shift towards more dynamic and interactive learning experiences.

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Lastly, the study points to a consequential shift in traditional teaching paradigms and the roles of educators precipitated by the advent of AI in language education. As AI begins to alter the educational landscape, it necessitates a reevaluation of conventional teaching methods and the teacher-student dynamic. Educators may find themselves transitioning from being the sole arbiters of knowledge to facilitators of learning, where their primary role is to guide, inspire, and nurture creativity and autonomy among students. This shift demands a reimagining of teaching practices, with a greater emphasis on creating learning environments that leverage AI to foster a culture of innovation, critical thinking, and creative exploration.

In conclusion, this study contributes valuable insights into the evolving landscape of AI in language education, particularly from the perspective of Vietnamese EFL teachers. It emphasizes the need for thoughtful and informed integration of AI tools in language learning, ensuring that these advancements serve to enhance, rather than impede, the creative development of students. The findings from this study can inform educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by AI in the realm of language education.

The study, while offering insightful findings, is not without its limitations. One significant limitation is the relatively small sample size of nine Vietnamese EFL teachers, which may not comprehensively represent the diversity of perspectives across the broader population of EFL educators in Vietnam. Additionally, the study was conducted in only two educational institutions, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or regions within the country. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the study, focusing on semi-structured interviews, provides in-depth insights but may lack the breadth and statistical power of quantitative methods. These limitations suggest that the findings should be interpreted with a degree of caution and as indicative rather than definitive.

Given these limitations, there are several recommendations for future research. Future studies could expand the sample size and include a wider range of educational institutions from different regions in Vietnam to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Employing a mixed-methods approach could also provide a more comprehensive view, combining the depth of qualitative data with the breadth and rigor of quantitative analysis. Additionally, comparative studies examining the perceptions of EFL teachers in different countries regarding AI's impact on creativity could provide valuable cross-cultural insights. Research could also delve deeper into the specific types of AI tools being used in EFL classrooms and their direct impact on student learning outcomes, particularly about creativity. Lastly, longitudinal studies would be beneficial to understand the long-term effects of AI integration in language education, offering a dynamic perspective on how teachers' perceptions and pedagogical approaches evolve.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared that they have no conflicts of interest.

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