

Article

A Love-Hate Relationship: Exploring Faculty Attitudes Towards GenAI and Its Integration into Teaching

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Abstract

Advances in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) call for English language instructors to understand its impact on teaching and learning. While these advancements open new avenues for innovation, they also exacerbate many existing challenges and create new ones. Providing instructors with guidance and support is a critical first step in ensuring they have the knowledge and skills needed to effectively and ethically integrate GenAI into instruction. However, empirical research that explores classroom applications of GenAI is limited. To address this gap, we describe a narrative inquiry study of post-secondary English language faculty at two universities in the United States. The researchers employ experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) to examine how they both learn about and integrate GenAI technologies and how these applications impact their understanding of teaching and learning. Participants include a range of first-time AI users and experienced early adopters, all of whom illuminate opportunities and challenges with teaching, managing change, and reshaping the future of higher education. Data include field notes from classroom observations and transcripts from post-observation interviews and a participant focus group interview. Findings show a range of perspectives regarding instructor attitudes and uses of GenAI. The authors discuss key implications for English language teacher development and highlight areas for future research.

Keywords

GenAI, ELT, faculty development, innovation

1 Introduction

In the two years since ChatGPT was made publicly available in late 2022, discussions of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) have dominated nearly all disciplines and industries. In the educational sector, it “has revolutionized traditional learning” (Teng, 2024, p. 37). In English language teaching today, it is difficult to engage in a conversation without hearing about GenAI and without hearing a

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range of opinions regarding its role in education. For instance, we have attended presentations about how instructors leverage cutting-edge GenAI tools to innovate their practice, prepare for class, and enhance student learning. We have also heard, “I’ve been ChatGPT’d,” an increasingly common phrase that refers to an encounter with students’ inappropriate use of GenAI. At the same time, we have seen unwavering resistance to change and to any consideration of GenAI for either educator or student use. These differing perspectives align with what D’Agostino (2023) refers to as an “AI divide” among faculty” (para. 6). Educators seem to be either enthusiastic advocates, resisters, or realists in their approach to GenAI (Darby, 2023).

Despite one’s own feelings about GenAI, it is safe to say that “we are at a critical juncture in considering the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in language learning” (Warschauer & Xu, 2024, p. 1). As AI continues to proliferate, English language instructors need to collectively understand how these tools function, how they impact student learning both in and outside the classroom, and how they can address students’ use of GenAI. They also need to understand how to mitigate its risks to ensure that any pedagogical uses of GenAI are ethical and responsible. Empirical research is crucial for guiding this work. However, studies that explore how educators incorporate GenAI into their practice are scarce. This is likely due to GenAI’s relatively recent focus within education and its rapid and ongoing evolution. Nevertheless, examining instructors’ attitudes and perspectives about GenAI, as well as their use of GenAI in the classroom, can shed light on how their beliefs impact their integration of GenAI. In this article, we describe a narrative inquiry study that aims to fill this gap. Using experiential learning theory as a theoretical lens, we explore instructors’ perspectives of GenAI and their integration of GenAI tools into instruction in post-secondary English language programs.

2 Literature Review

Because of the speed, ubiquity, and relative ease of access to GenAI tools, a growing body of literature has examined how GenAI tools can increase efficiency in instructional planning and preparation. For example, Crompton and Burke (2024) reviewed 44 peer-reviewed papers to uncover how educators use ChatGPT to support teaching, how students use ChatGPT to enhance their learning, and what ChatGPT’s limitations are. The authors’ findings show that English instructors used ChatGPT in three main ways: to support teaching (e.g., lesson planning, providing feedback on student work, and creating assessments), automate tasks (e.g., generating communications), and enhance their professional learning (i.e., obtaining up-to-date information about technology). These findings align with others who have found that educators use GenAI to access information related to teaching (Farrokhnia et al., 2023) and develop or adapt materials for their language classes (Moorhouse, 2024).

Though instructors are integrating GenAI into teaching, many of them have mixed emotions. Alm and Ohashi (2023) captured language educators’ initial responses to ChatGPT in 48 countries right after it was released to the public. The authors found that 90% of participants had heard of ChatGPT soon after its release. They had interest in using AI to improve their efficiency though expressed concerns about AI use in education (e.g., academic integrity). Other empirical research has found that educators have both positive and negative views of using ChatGPT to support teaching. For instance, Ulla et al. (2023) conducted a study of 17 English language instructors at a university in Thailand; they shared excitement about using ChatGPT to create lessons and activities yet had concerns about its technical limitations and students’ overreliance on it. In another study, Al-khresheh (2024) found that English language instructors from 39 different countries recognized the opportunities that ChatGPT offers for enhancing teaching and providing personalized learning and immediate feedback, but they worried about challenges (e.g., the ability of ChatGPT to notice cultural nuances, inaccurate output). This scholarship suggests that when exploring how instructors use GenAI tools, it is worth considering how their perspectives may in turn influence their integration and curricular choices.

While integrating GenAI into teaching may be promising, it is also important to consider how GenAI can create extra work for educators. According to a report published in 2023 by the Modern Language Association-Conference on College Composition and Communication (MLA-CCCC) Working Group, AI developments may require educators to “make significant changes to their practice without adequate time, training, or compensation for their labor” (p.7). Furthermore, educators are under pressure to adapt quickly as they “must evolve and grow while showing discernment for the integration of new technologies” (Strawser et al., 2023, p. 13), which can lead to a feeling of inevitability about GenAI and its influence on education (Lim et al., 2023). Moorhouse et al. (2024) also point to the challenge of this integration because the “development of GenAI has dramatically changed the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective teacher” (p. 11). What is currently known about education has also changed, as GenAI “might feel like an unwelcome incursion into the hallowed realm of the personal, human-centric field of education” (Lo, 2023, para. 8). All of these concerns can impact both teaching and teacher development and necessitate further exploration to inform professional learning.

Lastly, academic integrity remains one of educators’ top concerns as GenAI evolves (e.g., Crompton & Burke, 2024; Robert, 2024; Ulla et al., 2023). Moorhouse et al. (2024) examined how guidelines and policies have been developed to address AI use at 23 top-ranking higher education institutions across the globe. The authors found that while policies varied, all institutions provided some guidance about academic integrity and AI use in assessments. Other scholarship has further illuminated the range of issues that language instructors are concerned about, such as students’ overdependence on AI (e.g., Al-kresheh, 2024; Ulla et al., 2023) and the lack of quality and originality of ChatGPT output (Kohnke et al., 2024). To complicate this issue, institutional policies about academic integrity are either inconsistent or lacking (Robert, 2024). For these reasons, examining instructors’ practice, as well as their means of guiding students in using AI, can shed light on how they address and respond to AI use.

Given the myriad issues that should be considered regarding GenAI, it is worth exploring how they manifest in practice. Thus, we employed a qualitative narrative inquiry approach to address the following questions:

1. How do English language instructors integrate generative AI into their teaching?
2. What are their attitudes towards generative AI?
3. How do these attitudes towards generative AI affect their perceptions of teaching and learning?

3 Methodology

3.1 Narrative inquiry

While Connelly and Clandinin (1990) are recognized as key scholars of narrative inquiry in educational research, this method builds upon a long history of the human practice of storytelling since stories “are at the heart of how we make meaning of our experiences in the world” (Huber et al., 2013, p. 214). Narrative inquiry “explore[s] the complexity of human experience” (Ghanbar et al., 2024, p. 4), and it is rooted in the belief that “humans lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) as meaning is constructed through the telling and retelling of lived experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In narrative inquiry, meaning is understood as temporal and situational, as stories of experience are intrinsically tied to time and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016). Consequently, narrative researchers provide context and “backstories” of participants (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. xi) to enable readers to better evaluate an inquiry’s significance. As narrative researchers, we explore the lived experiences of participants in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2018) but also “[study] our experiences in relation with the experiences of participants” (Clandinin et al., 2018, p. 16). Thus, narrative researchers become “intimately implicated in their research activities” (Barkhuizen, 2011, p. 393) and in their own identities into the collective narrative, which is woven from individual experiences.

Ghanbar et al. (2024) conducted a methodological synthesis of 291 narrative inquiry research studies and found that they often “focused on participants’ perspectives toward particular phenomena they experienced” (p.7), and the story of their experiences formulated the data set. Caine et al. (2013) noted that “[s]tories or narratives are also used as data in other qualitative methodologies, such as phenomenology, ethnography, and case study” (p. 576), but narrative inquiry highlights the interactive relationship between participants and researchers in the interpretation of stories of experience. We anticipated that constructing a narrative of participants’ experiences would mirror our own experiences of managing disruption to teaching and learning, which would in turn inform our professional learning and ability to share this learning with other professionals. We also chose a narrative inquiry approach for this study because it allowed us to capture a moment of change in its nascent state as educators step into new terrain. For instance, many participants in this study were experimenting with GenAI for the first time, and some lessons we observed were the first ones in which participants used GenAI for in-class activities. Lastly, narrative inquiry's emphasis on time, place, and context aligns with our position of learning alongside our peers to manage this tremendous shift in education.

3.2 Theoretical framework

This study was guided by experiential learning theory, which posits that creating new knowledge stems from a dynamic and recursive cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Accordingly, learning is considered a fluid process (Kolb & Kolb, 2009), and knowledge derives from critical reflections on experience to make meaning (Morris, 2019). Rodriguez et al. (2024) offer a succinct definition of the experiential learning process and state that “the learner has an experience; reflects on that experience; transforms or generalizes that experience into meaning; and then has subsequent experiences to apply their new meaning” (p. 2). In experiential learning theory, experience thus plays a central role (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb, 2009) in the process of “learning by doing” (Morris, 2019, p. 1067) and offers relevant insights. An experiential theoretical framework aligns well with this study as English language instructors themselves have been thrust into learning about AI by using AI. Since GenAI has entered public consciousness, educators are increasingly called to learn about and respond to the demands of rapid changes to teaching and learning with GenAI, resulting in anxiety (Kohnke et al., 2024; Paiz, 2024) and an additional burden on instructors (MLA-CCCC, 2023). Examining the ways in which they experiment with and use GenAI can shed light on how they create new knowledge through their experiences using GenAI at multiple levels.

3.3 Researcher positionality

In narrative inquiry, researchers and participants form a relationship to co-construct meaning (Caine et al., 2013; Kim, 2016). In this study, we acknowledge our position as both researchers and faculty who teach alongside our participants in the same language programs. Because of this working relationship, we sought to prevent any sense of obligation that our colleagues might have felt during the recruitment and data collection processes. For instance, we emphasized that participation was voluntary and confidential, and we designed the study to minimize extra work beyond regular course preparation. Additionally, De Costa et al. (2021) discuss the importance of establishing rapport with participants to position researchers and participants as equals. One advantage we had in this study is that we already knew our participants after working together for several years and we had built a rapport with them. Nevertheless, we emphasized that our classroom visits were not evaluative to judge their teaching effectiveness, and we also stressed that they could withdraw at any time without any hard feelings or repercussions. Instead of focusing on teaching performance, we explained that we were curious about how our peers were integrating GenAI so we could better understand their attitudes and concerns.

In many ways, engaging in research to understand how other faculty integrate and understand GenAI parallels our own process of managing the change and adaptation required at this moment. As early adopters and active experimenters, we continue to advocate for a curious yet critical and balanced approach to GenAI use in which instructors carefully consider both opportunities and risks (Kostka & Toncelli, 2023). Thus, we believe we were well-positioned to both understand and empathize with participants and objectively analyze data. Nonetheless, we were careful to avoid sharing our personal views during class visits, interviews, and focus group interviews, as we did not want to influence participants' responses. Instead, we aimed to communicate respect and appreciation for all attitudes and efforts at exploring the GenAI disruption to our collective professional endeavor.

3.4 Participants and setting

Participants were recruited from a pool of faculty in pathways programs at two urban universities in the northeastern United States. Pathways programs offer conditional admission to international multilingual students who build their English language skills while earning transferable course credit before entering their degree programs (Elturki et al., 2019). In this study, one pathways program offered advanced English language and content courses, while the other provided English language courses at various proficiency levels. Participants included English language instructors; however, we also recruited content-area faculty to gain additional perspectives on using GenAI with multilingual students. Only one content instructor taught a primarily multilingual student population who was not enrolled in a pathways program.

Collecting data from participants at two different institutions also allowed us to recruit faculty who serve a wide range of students and have diverse experiences integrating GenAI into teaching. While six to twelve participants are often considered the standard in narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016), the appropriate number is flexible and determined by saturation, or the collection of “a sufficient depth of information from various types of data as a way of fully describing the phenomenon being studied” (Kim, 2016, p. 161). We collaborated with seven participants as we aimed to closely capture their attitudes and experiences toward GenAI at a specific moment of change.

3.5 Data collection and analysis

Ghanbar et al. (2024) noted that narrative inquiry permits researchers the flexibility to explore participant stories and a “versatility of data source usage” (p. 16). The data collection process aligned with elements of an experiential learning cycle with a focus on experience (i.e., participants teaching with GenAI), thinking/reflecting (i.e., the observation debrief and focus group), acting/applying new knowledge (i.e., discussion of participants' intentions to continue experimenting with GenAI). Data were collected throughout this process over a 14-week semester. As participants consented to participate in the study, they completed an initial survey to share their attitudes, experiences with GenAI integration, levels of confidence in using GenAI, and approaches to professional learning. We then observed them teaching a lesson of their choice in which they either utilized GenAI for planning and materials development or used it in class with students. Immediately following each of these observations, we conducted a semi-structured debriefing interview to gather information about instructors' planning and teaching with GenAI, as well as their immediate impressions of the lesson. Our data included researcher observation notes and transcripts from recorded debriefing interviews after class visits. At the end of the semester, participants were gathered for one 60-minute semi-structured focus group meeting to collectively explore broader questions about AI and the future of education. Transcripts from this recorded interview were

also included in the data set. Following Caine et al. (2013), the data set itself is considered a story or narrative (p. 583).

Our analysis of this data set was informed by Jackson and Mazzei's notion of thinking with theory (2012), which suggests that theoretical framing can be used to ask questions about the data. In this study, experiential learning theory served as our guide as we aimed to construct meaning from the data (Kim, 2016). Paradigmatic mode of analysis (or analysis of narratives) was employed to "examine the narrative data to focus on the discovery of common themes or salient constructs in storied data, and organize them under several categories" (Kim, 2016, p. 196). The findings of this study are thus organized according to the themes identified during our analysis of narratives. As Caine et al. (2013) recognized, "narrative inquiry is both the phenomenon under study and the methodology for its study" (p. 584). Accordingly, we offer a written narrative of the common threads of participant experiences organized into five main categories.

3.6 Ethics and validity

We use pseudonyms to protect participants' privacy and ensure confidentiality. We also took every measure to conduct this study ethically. For instance, we obtained permission from the Institutional Review Board at each institution. In addition, De Costa et al. (2021) suggest that "participant stories inevitably get (re)shaped by narrative researchers who therefore have to wrestle with the ethical tension of how to (re)present these stories" (p. 6). By centering participants' lived experiences not as absolute truth but as valuable perspectives, we aimed to appropriately and ethically capture their attitudes surrounding GenAI in English language teaching. We also approach these experiences as "discursively constructed" (De Costa et al., 2021, p. 6), representing the truth as understood by each participant at that moment. We provide detailed context to support an evaluation of the findings and the consideration of their relevance to other contexts. This research was conducted without external funding.

4 The Narrative

4.1 Participants' experiences

Seven instructors from two postsecondary institutions participated in this study. Six teach in pathway programs housed at these universities, while one teaches content-area courses to multilingual international students. Among the pathway program faculty, three (Charlie, Rose, and Annie) teach beginner to advanced English language students, and three (Sadie, Yvonne, and Steve) teach advanced learners. However, their roles vary. For instance, Sadie and Yvonne teach English language courses, but Steve teaches philosophy and sociology. Oscar, the seventh participant who draws from significant industry experience, teaches project management courses outside of the pathway program, but his students are mainly international multilingual students.

As noted in Table 1, all participants have extensive teaching experience, ranging from 6-10 years to over 20 years. However, they represent various stages of AI integration in their teaching practices. Oscar, an early and enthusiastic adopter, had been using GenAI tools for more than three semesters at the time of data collection and was "always trying to use this technology to improve [his] teaching." Steve, Yvonne, and Sadie were active experimenters who had been using GenAI for two semesters.

Table 1

Participants' settings, courses, and teaching experience

Setting & Courses	Participant Name	Teaching Experience
Institution 1		
Mixed-Level English Language Courses	Charlie	11-15 years
	Rose	16-20 years
	Annie	16-20 years
Institution 2		
Advanced-Level English Language Courses	Sadie	11-15 years
	Yvonne	20+ years
Content-Area Courses	Steve	11-15 years
	Oscar	6-10 years

In contrast, Charlie, Rose, and Annie were in the early stages of GenAI experimentation; however, participation in the study served as a catalyst to continuing exploration of GenAI tools. For example, Rose had been using AI for lesson planning and materials development for one semester but noted it wasn't yet a "go-to" tool for her. Furthermore, she indicated that "there was a little added pressure on [her] to find some way to use AI" in preparation for the study's observation. Annie, who had been using GenAI for some behind-the-scenes planning but did not "consider [herself] an AI person," noted "feeling like [AI] is somewhat unethical...like it's Pandora's box and [she] should stay away from it;" she used it with students in class for the first time during this study. For her, participation in the study also served as further impetus to experiment with GenAI. Similarly, Charlie told us that the assignment he created for his teaching observation was his "first assignment using AI ever" even though he had previously begun using it to develop assessments.

Although Charlie, Rose, and Annie were all essentially new to using GenAI with their students, we observed them, along with the other participants, taking bold and creative steps into new territory. Appendix A lists a summary of the range of activities we observed, with some participants using GenAI to support materials development and others engaging students in using GenAI as part of assignments and class activities. Participants' willingness to experiment with novel approaches and materials was inspiring to us. Even for those who expressed some uncertainty about the impact of GenAI, we were impressed by their courage to take new steps and felt there was much we could learn simply by watching experienced educators experiment in their classrooms.

Despite the range of GenAI experience, the initial survey revealed a consistent lack of confidence and a somewhat negative attitude about GenAI tools among participants. On a scale of 1, not confident, to 4, very confident about using GenAI tools, Oscar was the only participant to report feeling very confident about using GenAI. Rose represented the other extreme, noting that she was not confident, and all other participants noted some lack of confidence. When asked about their attitudes towards using GenAI in class with students, Oscar and Steve both indicated having a very positive attitude. All other participants, however, revealed a more negative attitude.

4.2 Navigating a "love-hate relationship"

It would be inaccurate to say that the more negative attitudes regarding GenAI in the initial survey captured the full range of participants' feelings. As we interviewed participants after their observations and then gathered for a focus group, much more complex reactions became evident to us. Annie's description of her feelings towards AI captures this complexity perfectly:

And I can honestly say that I believe that I definitely have a love-hate relationship with this whole thing with AI in general. And I almost think it's more hate right now than love. I really can say that. And I think it's a bridge that I need to get. I'm really feel myself counseling myself that it's something that I need to get over because I really believe this is an incredible tool that can save us a lot of time and a lot of frustration and we can learn to integrate our creativity to it.

We also found much enthusiasm about enhancing teaching and learning. For instance, Oscar reported that use of GenAI “allows [him] to slow down [his] lecturing and it allows students to become actively research-centered in the class.” Steve shares this enthusiasm and referred to his first experiments with GenAI with his students as “exciting” and “groundbreaking,” all of which has motivated him because in “every lesson [he and his students] made a breakthrough.” He describes using GenAI with students to “generate argument[s] and counterarguments, which strengthens critical selves.” Steve noted that using GenAI has been leading to a shift in his classroom practice and enhancing the “fun factor” of class:

[I]n terms of my teaching, ... it leads to me not passing on as much information as if I was just lecturing for 50, 60 minutes, then I would just go through material really quickly. The students wouldn't know. They'd be smiling and nodding, but nothing would go in. So you slow down the information, you get them to practice with the words, get them to produce.

Enthusiasm for GenAI also extended to time savings and customization, which provided an entry point into experimenting with GenAI for Sadie. She noted:

First of all, I started thinking about how I can make my life a little bit easier in terms of time, especially when I have to create quizzes and quiz questions, different sentences. So in the past I would go into the dictionaries and look for different examples, but now it's just a little bit easier. And then I also can adjust the level of proficiency I can ask to add more details or make those sentences a little bit easier depending on the level.

The potential for time savings was mentioned by all participants who described using GenAI to generate new lesson ideas, teaching scenarios, rubrics, assessments, and clear instructions. Rose recounted how GenAI has reduced “that creating-materials-from-scratch burden or trying to find materials and [now] being able to customize things more.” She also looked forward to using GenAI to help her update outdated texts, and she considered that GenAI might be able to help her reinvigorate existing materials. She admitted feeling “kind of excited about that.” Oscar suggested that “outsourcing mundane tasks” to GenAI helps him “focus on a classroom experience and not so much the pre-work of facilitating a classroom experience,” so he can “be more present with [his] students.” These uses of GenAI seemed to not only free up time for instructors but to also create more mental energy for them to focus on their students.

Though GenAI had already proven quite useful, using these tools was also complicated for participants. Yvonne reported using them as a last resort “after [she has] exhausted all of [her] ideas, especially for discussion questions, [she has] used ChatGPT to find some more discussion questions.” Annie further noted that “there's a general feeling amongst everybody about guilt using it. You don't proudly say, ‘I use AI.’” This feeling of guilt was shared by Charlie who worried that using GenAI is akin to “avoiding some of the teaching” and compared it to a microwave oven, noting “You can use it to cook everything or a lot of things, but it doesn't mean that that's always good for you to do.” We saw instructors, like their students, grappling with the appropriateness of using GenAI. Yvonne was explicit about her worries when she stated:

I have a lot of concerns that despite having classes where I think [AI use] has been at least addressed a little bit about where the appropriate uses and the inappropriate uses are, not all of them of course, but many, many students are not using it in a way that I'm comfortable with because it creates a nonsense output. And so I think that's where there's work for our program

to do is just to keep hammering home what assignments it's fine for, but where they are circumventing the learning process by overlying on it.

This worry was shared by Rose who recalled her first exposure to GenAI capabilities as follows:

I was kind of shocked and horrified with what AI could come up with. And then it was just, this is going to be problematic. So my initial thoughts about AI were not so much how can I use it, but how can I prevent my students from relying on this too much.

Sadie confided that she was “getting frustrated” as she realized that existing assignments “didn’t make sense anymore.” Steve also described feeling frustrated as he was repeatedly reworking rubrics each time students found a new way to use GenAI to avoid engaging in assignments.

Mixed in with these complex emotions was participants’ frustration about feeling behind. Steve, who was very enthusiastic about the possibilities of AI integration into teaching, noted that he still lacks confidence with GenAI because he “feel[s] intimidated by it because there's always new things and there's always people smarter than [him] doing fun or cooler things.” Despite his efforts to stay current, he reported feeling consistently behind. Even Oscar, who was the only participant to report feeling confident in his GenAI use, admitted that it is hard to keep up. Sadie felt she was “trying to catch up all the time,” describing her process as “one step forward...two steps back.”

In addition to frustration with the speed of GenAI developments, participants realized that students too are moving quickly. As Steve aptly said, faculty are not “moving as fast as the students.” When asked if they would continue exploring GenAI in teaching and learning, participants agreed that it was essential to do so. Sadie noted that faculty “either embrace [GenAI] or change careers.” Similarly, Yvonne replied, “I have to. Even if I don’t want to, I have to.” She further explained:

I feel like it's responsible for me to stay abreast of what's happening and it would be irresponsible for me no matter how I feel about AI to just pretend it doesn't exist. And so I want to stay up to date to the extent that I can. And like [Sadie] was saying earlier, everything's moving so quickly. So it is a lot of work.

Thus, amidst their complex reactions to GenAI, participants were motivated by a sense of obligation to stay current in changing times and to think innovatively about ensuring that students are still learning.

4.3. Ensuring critical thinking and learning

Participants voiced concerns that students did not currently have the skills they needed to critically evaluate AI-generated materials. This challenge seemed more worrisome when participants considered younger students. For example, Yvonne [didn’t] think that novice college students...[were] always using it very critically.” Oscar shared that he was “afraid for youth who are not being taught how to use [GenAI] and are using it on their own,” particularly because students could be easily influenced by extremists. In addition to needing critical thinking skills, participants identified new challenges in establishing foundational subject matter knowledge before using GenAI. Learning requires engagement and effort, yet participants worried that students who lacked intrinsic motivation would be more likely to use AI inappropriately. Charlie also worried about AI overuse preventing students from learning the skills they needed and stated:

If we're teaching international students and they don't have the basics of writing a paragraph or an essay..., then I don't think it's right for them to use AI because yeah, they might get a good essay out of the AI that one time, but they still don't know how to write an essay themselves, which is the point of why they're in the class. So not to get, maybe this is an old saying, but it's that give a man a fish, he'll eat for a day, teach him to fish, he'll eat for a lifetime. So if you

don't know the skill yourself and you use AI, it's just like somebody giving you a fish every time you use the AI.

Yvonne shared Charlie's concerns, noting that she was still "somewhat leaning towards pessimistic in that [she] think[s] a lot of our students, the students who are using it inappropriately, lack the skills to critically evaluate the quality of their output." She further explained the particular challenge of teaching writing:

Writing is a learning activity. To write something, you are reflect[ing], critically reflecting on a topic and engaging with it deeply. And if we think that ChatGPT or other AI tools can just replace that because what comes out looks like writing, I think we're just sort of ignoring all of the learning that takes place.

In addition to these concerns, participants recognized that many existing assignments were no longer useful; however, they did not have ideas for addressing this issue. Steve made this point clearly and asked, "how do we know how students are learning?" Participants also voiced concerns about students circumventing learning, violating academic integrity guidelines, and keeping up with new technology and educational innovations. While these were not entirely new problems, GenAI necessitates new ways of addressing them. For instance, Steve described how students used AI to produce an entire assignment, which required him to address AI use in the rubric as a result. He stated:

Some of them went to this website to create these fake videos that they didn't even [make], you can type in, please make me a two-minute, five-minute video on some topic and the video will generate it. So that was frustrating. And then I had to just rework the rubric.

Even as some participants were striving to redesign assignments to encourage student engagement, advancements in GenAI seemed to be working against them. Participants reported that they needed to be steps ahead of students in order to design assignments that would accurately demonstrate learning.

4.4 Chasing a moving target

The speed at which GenAI tools develop has been daunting to all participants. They reported feeling constantly behind while needing to reinvent teaching practices to adapt. Even for those who shared the most optimism, this was hard. Steve recognized that he felt good about his new practices even though he felt unsure about how long they would be effective. Despite this doubt, there was a general sense that relying on their expertise was crucial. Rose echoed this statement and noted that designing an activity was a process "between [her], ChatGPT, the book, and [her] own ideas." In describing his use of GenAI and decisions about his teaching, Charlie told us he relied on his intuition. As Oscar imagined that GenAI tools would significantly automate assessment design, but he also believed that "human eyes" would remain necessary.

In some ways, advancements in GenAI also seemed to offer new perspectives on the value of teaching itself. For instance, Oscar believed that we are "headed towards a place where the value add of universities is teaching. It's not going to be original research. It's not going to be grant-funded research. It's going to be how good are we at teaching." They also asked big questions about the future and what we should be teaching. Rose asked:

What are we supposed to be preparing our students for? That's such a good question. If their business classes are focused on how to use AI in business, then maybe we should be teaching them how to use AI for these things.

Participants collectively thought about the variety of skills students practice from existing assignments that may be lost with GenAI overuse. To highlight this struggle, Rose shared this story:

I did an in-class writing and one of my students almost everywhere, 90% of the words were spelled incorrectly. And some of them, it was hard to know what word she meant, but the essay she turned in is great. Which skill should we be grading? And I'm still not sure what the answer is. In their degree programs, in their departments, they will probably have opportunities to do multiple drafts, revise them, get help, but they might still have essay exams. So I think both skills are valuable. Which one should I be grading to determine whether they progress or not?

These sentiments were echoed by other participants who recognized that instructors need to think differently about assignments. Thinking differently, however, was complicated by unknown factors. For instance, they wondered what new skills will be important and what the future of higher education will be. Charlie was clear that he prefers not to use anything if it will not give the students “the skills they need,” yet what these skills remain unclear. Yvonne suggested that “if the workplace benefits from increased knowledge of AI skills, it is our responsibility to prepare our students for that.” Charlie imagined that perhaps in the future “the teacher can focus more on what they want to get across in the class, but the tasks are up to the students to use AI effectively, not cheating per se.” Rose also noted that flexible thinking about adapting will be necessary, but she stated that we need to know more about the university and workplace we prepare students for. She described how she is waiting to see how to move forward:

So it's kind of like how AI changes the workplace is going to determine how AI changes the university, which in turn is going to determine how AI changes university preparation programs like ours, like pathway programs. And so I think there's a trickle-down effect that's going to happen, but we're not there yet because it's still so new. So I'm waiting to see how it changes the workplace and then trickles down to us.

These questions about the future led Oscar to imagine classrooms that mix modalities in order to maximize human interaction. Steve suggested that the future could in some ways be a return to the past with classrooms that utilize “Aristotelian ways of how to teach rhetoric” or “returning to pen and paper to ensure students engage with output as a scaffold” to their learning. All of this innovation, however, is not so simple. Yvonne reminded us that “it's a lot of work to transform every assignment to account for AI. So I hope that's something at the administrative level universities are thinking of, and they're not just going to replace us all with AI.” Steve also mused about the “new place of teachers in the classroom” and suggested that “the dynamic of keeping up, the different strategies of teaching, how we can make the learning experience better for the students” were all on his mind and what he most enjoyed talking about during the focus group. Even though participants were chasing a moving target, their central focus remained fixed on supporting student learning.

4.5 Learning by doing and collaborating

Oscar was honest about how difficult professional development is and stated, “It's hard to, yeah, I don't have, I wish I can say I go and read this journal every two weeks. I don't do that.” Oscar, like others, learned about GenAI by experimenting with it both inside and outside the classroom. Sadie, too, had a similar story as she described teaching herself to use new GenAI platforms, noting the need for “time and practice.” Steve advised “continuous engagement at different levels.” This has been a somewhat effective strategy, but participants who had engaged in more formal training (e.g., webinars, workshops, conferences) seemed to have a better sense of the strengths and weaknesses of GenAI, which served them well in the development of their own AI literacy skills. We see this range of experiences most clearly when we consider the divergent experiences of Annie and Oscar. Annie, before participating in this study, did not feel she had clear institutional guidance and was fearful about utilizing GenAI. She told us:

I just saw more and more of it in my classroom from my students. For me, it was a taboo. I was waiting for direction from my university and my schools on how I should go about it. Of course, the direction was basically let's run and hide and I'm just feeling that there's not a clear enough stance.

Annie did not have formal training and had not yet experimented much with GenAI, which was reflected in something we noticed during her observation. Though she had great skill in managing her classroom and building relationships with her students, she did not repurpose the AI-generated materials before using them with her students. In the post-classroom observation interview, she described that she was happy with the materials, but she had not considered adapting them or editing the output. We wondered if more open discussions with colleagues or training about the importance of critical review of all output and a reminder of the value of teacher expertise would have helped her maintain her central role in her classroom. As Annie herself indicated, “universal training” for educators would be necessary. In contrast, Oscar benefitted from collaboration with colleagues to proactively explore GenAI. He described his process of early adoption as follows:

I surrounded myself with folks talking about it. And we met as a group, I think, and we started to think, okay, what is happening here? And I think that was helpful too, to have that, to start thinking about it as a group of early adopters and not ignore it.

Throughout the study, we noted that all participants benefited from simply engaging in open conversations about the changing educational landscape. In fact, at the end of the focus group, Yvonne stated that she appreciated the chance to “gather like this and exchange ideas,” and that “the most useful strategy for [her] is just to see what other people are doing and candidly exchange ideas for implementation.” Similarly, Rose noted during the focus group that she appreciated the ideas that were shared in the discussion and had already begun brainstorming about how they could be adapted to her students. In addition to collaboration with colleagues, participants advocated for professional development in this area to help establish a clear vision for faculty. Sadie best summarized this need for broader collaboration regarding GenAI when she stated:

I'm just interested to learn what other teachers are doing because we're in the same boat... And sometimes I feel like I don't know anything. But then you see that other teachers are also sometimes struggling and it's just in the ambulance of all the information coming at you. And sometimes I see other educators who say, who are very against AI and they believed that.

Despite the range of attitudes towards GenAI, there was consensus among participants that addressing GenAI together was better. Exchanging ideas within the context of a focus group interview was valuable to some participants, and many were eager to have the time and space to simply talk about and process the many changes to teaching that they were experiencing.

5 Discussion

Taking all findings into consideration, we see three major implications for English language instructors. First, participants' experiences highlight the importance of dealing with change and managing unprecedented disruption to teaching and learning. In referring to organizational change, Cummings and Worley (2015) state that “at a personal level, change can arouse considerable anxiety about letting go of the known and moving to an uncertain future” (p. 183). Though the authors' sentiment was not written with AI in mind, it resonates with our participants' feelings about managing significant changes to teaching, engaging students in class with new tools, and assessing learning in different ways. This finding aligns with other authors in the field of English language teaching who recognize that there is considerable anxiety due to AI disruptions (Kohnke et al., 2024; Paiz, 2024). Thus, being sensitive to the emotional impact of change should undergird all professional development efforts.

It is worth noting that participants were fortunate to teach in programs where experimentation and research were valued, which likely made it easier for them to manage the disruption caused by GenAI. For instance, they reported feeling encouraged to try classroom activities, exchange ideas with others, and explore ways to experiment. More research is needed, however, to uncover approaches to change management in institutions that do not provide this same level of support and may even be resistant to AI integration. More work is also needed to examine how faculty manage the challenges of AI (Crompton et al., 2024) while developing their foundational understanding of what AI. By ensuring that instructors themselves understand the risks and benefits of AI, it may become easier to support responsible use (Ulla et al., 2023) and “mitigate certain initial apprehensions” they may have (Kaplan-Rakowski et al., 2023, p. 331).

Another implication is that experiential learning can play a valuable role in teaching and faculty development centered on GenAI. As we observed in the classes we visited, participants were actively shaping their perspectives of GenAI as they engaged in their trial-and-error experimentation. This finding aligns with experiential learning theory which values reflection on first-hand experiences as essential to the process of learning (Kolb, 1984). This view also aligns with others who suggest that instructors who engage in hands-on learning about AI by taking gradual steps in a supportive atmosphere can increase their confidence (e.g., Kohnke et al., 2024). Similarly, hands-on learning about GenAI should also involve students. As Lim et al. (2023) note, “Raising awareness of these tools, using them together in class, and leading discussions with students about their pros and cons offer a more sustainable way forward than either banning these tools or making them central to entire curriculums” (p. 9). Participants demonstrated how it is possible to bring GenAI tools into class and use them openly and critically with students to engage them in hands-on learning even if they are unsure about how activities would work. Their in-class conversations about AI’s possibilities and limitations provided a valuable learning opportunity for both instructors and students, which we see as a critical component of future professional development about GenAI.

Finally, the main goal of this study was to capture instructors’ attitudes toward GenAI. We aimed to create a supportive atmosphere during data collection, yet we were careful to not offer advice or share our own views about AI because we wanted to collect objective and unbiased data. Nonetheless, findings from debrief interviews and the focus group highlight the importance of instructor support at multiple different levels, one of which is professional learning. Although each participant was engaged in a process of learning, reflecting, and planning new AI-based classroom activities, we sense that formal collaboration and training would have helped them address their questions and concerns about GenAI. This finding echoes Robert and McCormack (2024) who wrote that “one of the most valuable resources departments or units have at their disposal is one another” (para. 15). This finding also aligns with others who have stated that instructors are more likely to feel comfortable with using AI if they have training and exposure to it (Kaplan-Rakowski et al., 2024). Future research is needed to shed more light on the correlation between instructors’ confidence in using GenAI and professional development.

Another layer of support involves institutional guidance and formal training. Participants who were early adopters and had more information about AI from their institution seemed to have a better understanding of how AI works. In turn, they reported feeling more confident in using GenAI. Participants working with less institutional guidance or fewer professional learning opportunities were more hesitant to explore GenAI. Additionally, we acknowledge that participants in this study had the resources necessary to incorporate AI-based activities in their classrooms, such as high-speed internet, classroom computers and projectors, and access to AI platforms. Not every institution has the resources to support AI use; however, there are cost-effective ways to develop a community of practice around AI use such as exchanging ideas about lessons, meeting to discuss the latest scholarship, and visiting each other’s classrooms. Institutional support may also involve creating time to use and experiment with AI tools and share positive and negative experiences among colleagues (Lo, 2023). Because both educators and students will have an ongoing need to develop AI literacy skills for ethical AI use (Crompton et al.,

2024), institutional efforts that encourage a “culture of experimentation” can minimize skepticism and resistance and pave the way for educational transformation (Lo, 2023, para.19).

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine English language instructors’ attitudes toward GenAI and how their attitudes influence teaching and learning with multilingual students. Participants painted a nuanced and rich picture of their experiences by warmly welcoming us into their classrooms, speaking candidly in interviews, and sharing their hopes and fears for education. Their perspectives towards GenAI included optimism, excitement, and curiosity. However, their sense of loss for teaching and learning practices as they have traditionally known them and their reluctance to accept change were also evident. As one participant expressed her “love-hate relationship” for AI, Ohashi (2023) reminds us that “love it or hate it, ChatGPT cannot be ignored because we are in a new age of AI” (para 1). We argue that providing support through formal training and collegial collaboration can assist instructors as they strive toward meeting this new educational moment. Although they acknowledged the tremendous change that GenAI has brought to education, their pedagogical activities also showed what is possible for innovating teaching and using GenAI to foster student-centered learning.

Participants also raised important questions such as: What do teaching and learning look like in an increasingly AI-enhanced world? How do we assess student learning? How do we respond and adapt to students’ uses of AI? How can we ensure that we integrate AI in ethical, transparent, and equitable ways? These are open questions that need to be collectively addressed as we continue teaching while GenAI rapidly develops. Moving forward, collaboration among educators can help us answer these questions and ensure that instructors have the resources and knowledge they need to understand and integrate AI into teaching (Kostka & Toncelli, 2023). Involving educators in discussions about AI implementation is also crucial for innovating teaching and learning while centering the experience of educators and students (United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2023). In sum, building a community of supportive practitioners is more important than ever as we teach in unknown territory and prepare students for an AI-driven future that is still uncertain.

Appendix

Observed Uses of GenAI in the Classroom

Participant	Type of GenAI Use	Uses of GenAI
Charlie	Students use AI to generate output in class	<p>Course focus: Career preparation</p> <p>Student population: Advanced proficiency; graduate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students utilized a series of customizable prompts for ChatGPT to solicit feedback on their cover letters, analyze job descriptions, write or proofread resumes or LinkedIn headlines, or provide brainstorming assistance with interview questions and elevator pitches. • Students presented a summary of the AI output and an analysis of its pros and cons.

Rose	Instructor generates materials for use in class	<p>Course focus: Reading and writing</p> <p>Student population: Intermediate proficiency; undergraduate & graduate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity 1: Students analyzed texts adapted from ChatGPT output. to review techniques for identifying bias and presented their findings to the class. • Activity 2: Students reviewed sentence structure and word order for cause and effect AI-generated using sentence stem strips.
Annie	Instructor generates materials for use in class; students use AI to generate output for critical analysis	<p>Course focus: Listening and speaking</p> <p>Student population: Intermediate proficiency; undergraduate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students analyzed a ChatGPT-generated presentation introduction to identify features of an organizational structure previously studied in class. • Students worked in groups to create their own presentation introductions with the option of using ChatGPT. • Students presented their new presentation introductions and explained their process for creating them.
Sadie	Instructor generates materials for use in class; students used AI in class to engage in discussion	<p>Course: Reading</p> <p>Student population: Advanced proficiency; graduate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor projected questions in Curipod to foster group discussion about a business text. Students answered comprehension and critical thinking questions anonymously in Curipod. • Students collaborated to develop solutions to a business case, which was generated by AI, and described their reasoning and decision-making process.
Yvonne	Students use AI to generate output as homework before class	<p>Course focus: Career preparation</p> <p>Student population: Advanced proficiency; undergraduate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students prompt ChatGPT or Copilot in class about (1) differences in interviewing practices in the United States and their home countries, (2) common interview questions for specific jobs and job descriptions, and (3) possible answers to those questions. • Students evaluate the output and determine best practices for using GenAI to support interview preparation.
Steve	Students use AI to generate material in class	<p>Course focus: Philosophy</p> <p>Student population: Advanced proficiency; undergraduate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students use ChatGPT to generate responses to questions from the professor related to course concepts; they then handwrite these responses on paper and discuss the answers. • Note: In the debrief, the professor shared that students who needed additional scaffolding wrote the output word for word while others paraphrased. Students were also allowed to flexibly use ChatGPT for follow explanations as they needed them.

Oscar	Instructor uses AI to generate materials for use in class	Course focus: Project management Student population: Advanced proficiency; graduate • Students used a variety of tools (e.g., their choice of an AI platform, whiteboards and markers, Excel) to develop a critical path for a simulated real-life project. They needed to develop the path while ensuring that the project would be completed in the allotted time.
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