**The Psychological Pressures of Teaching General English to Tech-Savvy Students:**

**Exploring Teacher and Learner Perceptions of AI in the EFL Classroom**

*Hua Tran Phuong Thao M.A., Hua Tran Thanh Truc M.A.*

**Abstract**

In the age of artificial intelligence, English language education is undergoing rapid change, particularly in the context of teaching non-English major students from technology disciplines. This study investigates the psychological pressures experienced by English instructors teaching general English courses to second-year Information Technology (IT) students, who often possess advanced familiarity with AI tools. It also examines student perceptions, as many believe AI applications such as chatbots, translation tools, and adaptive learning platforms can replace human teachers in language learning. Using a mixed-method design, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with five English instructors at a Vietnamese university and a focus group discussion with 105 second-year IT students. The research explores the nature of teachers' psychological stress, students' beliefs about AI-driven learning versus human instruction, and how these dynamics interact to shape classroom engagement and outcomes. Initial findings reveal that while teachers face anxiety over keeping pace with technological advances, they highlight the irreplaceable human aspects of teaching, such as emotional support and adaptive feedback. Meanwhile, students often display overconfidence in AI tools, underestimating the value of guided instruction, which can lead to disengagement and shallow learning. The study proposes pedagogical strategies that encourage co-learning between teachers and students, fostering mutual respect and balanced integration of technology in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. These insights contribute to the broader discussion on how AI reshapes language education by illuminating its psychological impacts on both instructors and learners.

***Keywords:*** artificial intelligence, EFL, teacher psychology, learner perceptions, technology integration

1. **Introduction**

As artificial intelligence (AI) continues to transform the landscape of higher education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms are increasingly characterised by the integration of digital platforms, generative AI tools, and data-driven instruction. While the potential of AI to support personalised, efficient, and autonomous learning is widely acknowledged, its adoption has also introduced critical psychological and pedagogical challenges, particularly in contexts where educators and students possess divergent levels of digital competence.

This tension is especially evident in General English classrooms serving students in technology-intensive disciplines such as Information Technology (IT), where learners often possess advanced digital literacy and exhibit a high degree of comfort with AI applications. These students routinely engage with AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, DeepL, and other AI-powered platforms to complete assignments, practice skills, and seek instant feedback. Their enthusiasm for AI, while empowering, may lead to overconfidence, reduced engagement in communicative tasks, and diminished reliance on human instruction.

Conversely, English instructors working with such learners face complex pressures. On one hand, they must deliver effective language instruction; on the other, they must adapt rapidly to evolving digital expectations. This dual burden contributes to psychological strain, including anxiety over technological obsolescence, diminished self-efficacy, and concerns over the erosion of classroom authority. Teachers often report difficulties in maintaining relevance, engaging students meaningfully, and navigating the pedagogical uncertainties introduced by AI integration. These challenges are further compounded by institutional constraints, limited time for professional development, and the absence of robust AI training frameworks.

At the same time, the gap between students' optimistic views of AI and the nuanced realities of language acquisition becomes increasingly visible. Although learners value the immediacy and convenience of AI tools, they may underestimate the role of teachers in facilitating critical thinking, contextual language use, and intercultural competence. Without proper guidance, this overreliance on AI can lead to surface-level learning strategies, reduced reflective engagement, and even anxiety when AI-generated output outperforms their own efforts.

This study aims to investigate the psychological and pedagogical implications of AI integration in the EFL classroom through a qualitative exploration of both teacher and student perspectives. Conducted at a university in Vietnam, the research focuses on two core questions: (1) How do English instructors navigate the psychological demands of teaching digitally fluent students in an AI-enhanced environment? and (2) How do second-year IT students perceive the role of AI in their language learning process?

By drawing on teacher interviews and a student focus group, the study seeks to illuminate the emotional, behavioural, and instructional dynamics at play. It contributes to emerging scholarship on AI in education by offering a context-sensitive account of how psychological well-being, learner autonomy, and pedagogical identities intersect in the digital age. In doing so, the study underscores the continuing importance of human educators, not only as content experts but as emotional guides, ethical mediators, and responsive facilitators of learning in increasingly automated academic spaces.

1. **Literature Review**

## ***2.1. Teacher Psychology in the AI Era***

The integration of artificial intelligence into education has been both a catalyst for innovation and a source of concern for educators. Teachers face increasing pressure to keep up with technological advancements, adapt instructional methods, and meet the expectations of digitally fluent students. According to Schleicher (2020), one of the most pressing issues for educators is the fear of becoming obsolete due to automation and AI-driven systems. This psychological burden often manifests as anxiety, diminished self-efficacy, and professional burnout (Lee & Jung, 2021).

AI-enhanced classrooms require teachers to not only possess content knowledge but also digital competence. Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) argue that effective technology integration is closely tied to teachers’ beliefs and confidence in using technology. If these beliefs are not positive, the pressure to incorporate unfamiliar AI tools can generate emotional fatigue. Furthermore, research suggests that teachers' resistance to AI often stems from a perceived loss of pedagogical agency, which threatens their professional identity (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

## ***2.2. Learner Perceptions of AI in Language Education***

Students, especially those in technology-related fields, often approach AI with high levels of optimism. Tools like chatbots, grammar correctors, and AI translators offer immediate assistance, autonomy, and personalized feedback, characteristics that appeal to digital-native learners (Warschauer & Liaw, 2010). However, this enthusiasm may lead to unrealistic expectations and misconceptions about AI’s capabilities. Research by Bock and Spector (2022) found that students using AI tools tend to overestimate their proficiency, often neglecting critical language skills such as discourse awareness, pragmatics, and intercultural communication.

Moreover, learners may underestimate the role of human instructors in facilitating deeper cognitive and emotional learning. As noted by Lai and Wang (2022), while AI tools can supplement instruction, they cannot replicate the nuanced, adaptive feedback and motivational scaffolding provided by teachers. This misalignment between student expectations and pedagogical reality can result in reduced engagement and surface-level learning strategies.

## ***2.3. Tech-Savvy Students in EFL Contexts***

Teaching General English to IT students presents unique challenges. These learners are proficient with technology but may not have intrinsic motivation for language learning (Dörnyei, 2005). Their reliance on digital tools can create a false sense of competence and reduce their willingness to engage in communicative tasks, which are essential in language acquisition (Ellis, 2003).

Several studies have explored the impact of learner autonomy in digitally mediated environments. Little (1995) posits that while autonomy is beneficial, it must be accompanied by metacognitive awareness and reflective practices, skills that may be underdeveloped in students who depend heavily on AI. Additionally, research by Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) emphasises the importance of teacher mediation in mobile and AI-enhanced learning environments, particularly in scaffolding interaction and promoting learner responsibility.

In summary, the literature highlights a dual tension: teachers' psychological burden to adapt to AI integration and students’ overconfidence in AI capabilities. Addressing this gap requires pedagogical models that promote co-learning, emotional support, and critical digital literacy.

## ***2.4. Research Gap***

While existing studies have explored the psychological stress experienced by teachers adapting to AI (Schleicher, 2020; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019) and the overreliance of learners on AI tools (Bock & Spector, 2022; Lai & Wang, 2022), few have investigated how these dynamics interact specifically in General English classrooms for students in technology-focused disciplines. Most literature tends to examine either teacher adaptation or learner autonomy in isolation, often within broader or Western contexts. There is limited empirical evidence from Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam, on how tech-savvy students’ high AI fluency influences classroom power dynamics, emotional well-being, and learning engagement from both teacher and student perspectives. Moreover, the psychological implications of these interactions remain underexplored in qualitative depth. This study addresses that gap by examining both sides of the pedagogical relationship, providing context-sensitive insights into the affective and instructional consequences of AI integration in Vietnamese tertiary EFL education.

1. **Methodology**

## ***3.1. Research Design***

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to gain a comprehensive understanding of the psychological challenges faced by English instructors and the perceptions of AI among second-year Information Technology students. The primary qualitative component comprised semi-structured interviews and a student focus group discussion, while the quantitative element involved descriptive and correlational analysis of student self-reported data. This design enabled the integration of narrative insights and statistical patterns, facilitating both depth and breadth in the findings. The study was informed by the interpretivist paradigm, emphasising subjective experiences and meaning-making in educational contexts (Creswell, 2013), while also incorporating post-positivist elements for analysing patterns in learner behaviour.

## ***3.2. Participants***

This study involved two distinct participant groups representing educators and learners within a technology-enhanced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context at a Vietnamese university.

The first group comprised five English language lecturers (three female, two male), all of whom were actively teaching General English to undergraduate students. Each participant had accumulated over five years of professional teaching experience and had prior exposure to instructing students majoring in Information Technology (IT). Their familiarity with both traditional pedagogy and the emerging challenges of AI integration provided critical insights into the psychological and instructional dynamics under investigation.

The second group consisted of 105 second-year undergraduate students enrolled in General English courses within the university’s IT program. The participants, aged between 19 and 21, represented a balanced mix of male and female learners. Notably, the majority demonstrated high levels of digital literacy and reported frequent use of AI-powered educational tools, both for academic tasks and personal enrichment. Their technological fluency and exposure to AI-driven learning environments positioned them as an ideal cohort for exploring learner perceptions and behavioral patterns related to artificial intelligence in language education.

## ***3.3. Data Collection Instruments***

To capture rich, multifaceted perspectives on the integration of AI in English language teaching and learning, two tailored data collection instruments were employed.

A bespoke interview guide was constructed for English lecturers, incorporating open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth narratives regarding their experiences with AI in the classroom. These questions explored psychological responses, pedagogical challenges, and perceptions of AI’s instructional role. Prompts included queries such as: “How do you feel when your students use AI tools during class activities?” and “What are your thoughts on the future role of human teachers in EFL classrooms?” The flexible format of the interviews allowed for spontaneous elaboration and contextualised reflections, offering deep insight into how teachers perceive and respond to evolving classroom dynamics influenced by AI.

In parallel, the student focus group discussion followed a structured discussion guide aimed at uncovering beliefs, behaviours, and emotional orientations toward AI use in English learning. Participants were invited to evaluate the frequency and purposes of their AI tool usage, reflect on the usefulness of teacher-led instruction, and express views on how AI may redefine the teacher’s role. Specific activities encouraged students to rate their reliance on AI, assess its accuracy, and discuss both empowering and stressful aspects of AI integration. This comprehensive protocol yielded a robust dataset encompassing both observable behavioural trends and nuanced personal reflections, essential for triangulating with teacher-reported experiences.

## ***3.4. Procedure***

Data collection was conducted over a two-month period during the second quarter of 2025 at a public university in Vietnam. All ethical protocols were observed, including informed consent, voluntary participation, and the assurance of participant anonymity. The study design was approved by the institutional research ethics committee prior to implementation.

Semi-structured interviews with the five English lecturers were scheduled at mutually convenient times and conducted face-to-face in quiet office settings to ensure privacy and focus. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes and was audio-recorded with prior permission from the participants. Interviewees were encouraged to speak freely about their personal experiences and perspectives, allowing the researcher to probe deeper into emergent themes as appropriate.

The student focus group session took place in a large classroom arranged to facilitate group interaction and comfort. A total of 105 second-year IT students participated. The discussions were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Field notes were taken during the sessions to document non-verbal cues and group dynamics.

In parallel with the qualitative discussions, students also completed a short demographic and behavioral self-report form, which included items on GPA, confidence in using AI tools, perceived learning progress, and frequency of AI use. This provided a foundational dataset for basic quantitative analysis.

The sequencing of data collection—beginning with teacher interviews, followed by student focus groups and surveys—allowed the research team to refine prompts and explore recurring issues across perspectives. This sequential strategy supported triangulation of data sources and enhanced the validity of the mixed-methods findings.

## ***3.5. Data Analysis***

Thematic analysis was employed to examine both the teacher interview transcripts and the student focus group data. This approach was chosen for its flexibility in identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All audio recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and preserve the richness of participant narratives. The research team followed Braun and Clarke’s six-phase process: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

NVivo software was used to support systematic coding and data organisation. Initial coding was conducted independently by two researchers to enhance inter-coder reliability. Emerging codes were then compared and refined through consensus meetings, resulting in the development of overarching themes. For the teacher data, themes related to emotional labor, authority dynamics, adaptation to AI, and perceptions of pedagogical identity were particularly salient. Student data revealed themes such as AI reliance, learner autonomy, perceived usefulness of teachers, and emotional responses to AI-based learning.

In addition to qualitative analysis, descriptive and correlational analyses were conducted using the quantitative data gathered from students’ self-reports. Variables such as GPA, confidence levels, and frequency of AI use were numerically coded to explore relationships. Preliminary correlational findings indicated weak associations between GPA and both engagement with AI-enhanced learning (r = –0.10) and AI-induced anxiety (r = –0.11). These patterns provided additional context for interpreting the qualitative themes and allowed for cross-validation of findings across data types.

Together, the qualitative and quantitative analyses provided a robust, triangulated perspective on the psychological and pedagogical impacts of AI in the EFL classroom. This mixed-methods approach enabled the researchers to contextualise numerical trends within lived experiences, thereby enriching the overall interpretation of findings and supporting more nuanced conclusions.

1. **Results**

## ***4.1. Teacher Interviews***

The qualitative interviews with five English lecturers revealed four central themes related to their psychological responses and professional experiences in AI-mediated classrooms.

**Theme 1: Anxiety Over Technological Obsolescence**

A prominent concern shared by all instructors was the fear of becoming outdated in the face of students’ growing proficiency with AI tools. This anxiety intensified as students increasingly relied on ChatGPT, Grammarly, or DeepL to complete assignments independently, reducing the perceived need for teacher guidance. Teacher D admitted, “I mostly focus on teaching and grading. I rarely have time to explore the wide range of AI tools available. For me, uploading exercises to the LMS and providing recorded lectures already felt like keeping up with technology. But now students seem to have tools to bypass even that, and I feel like I’m falling behind.”

Limited institutional support and time constraints hindered teachers’ ability to stay updated, contributing to an internal pressure to remain technologically relevant and fueling existential concerns about their roles in AI-integrated classrooms.

**Theme 2: Erosion of Classroom Authority**

Several instructors reported a perceived decline in their classroom authority as students increasingly relied on AI-generated responses. Teacher B noted, “I feel my authority in class is diminishing. When I suggest using a different phrase, students often show doubt or simply nod without engagement. It seems their trust in AI is overtaking their trust in me.”

Educators also described instances where students questioned feedback or used AI tools to double-check their corrections. Such behaviour disrupted traditional classroom hierarchies, eroded trust, and shifted the nature of engagement from collaborative learning to performative compliance.

**Theme 3: Emotional Strain and Motivation**

The emotional toll of adapting to an AI-driven learning environment was evident in teachers’ reflections on motivation and engagement. Several expressed frustration at the decreasing impact of their efforts to design meaningful classroom activities. Instructor C remarked, “I create speaking tasks that allow students to practice sentence structures and vocabulary from the textbook, but many of them simply input prompts into AI tools and read the generated responses out loud. There’s no creativity, no personal effort.”

This overreliance on AI undermined student curiosity and reduced authentic participation, leaving teachers to grapple with feelings of professional fatigue and a diminishing sense of purpose in their instructional role.

**Theme 4: Reasserting the Human Element**

Despite these challenges, all instructors reaffirmed the irreplaceable value of human interaction in language teaching. They emphasised the role of emotional connection, real-time feedback, and intuitive responsiveness, capacities beyond current AI capabilities. Teachers highlighted their ability to recognise confusion through facial expressions and adjust instruction accordingly, as well as to contextualise grammar rules, cultural nuances, and student emotions. These dimensions, they argued, sustain the relevance of the teacher even in AI-rich environments. As Teacher A expressed, “I can easily notice subtle expressions on my students’ faces. If they frown slightly or nod without confidence, I know I need to slow down, give more examples, or explain the point differently.” Such sensitivity, they argued, enables teachers to adapt instruction in ways that AI cannot replicate, reinforcing the need for a human presence in the language learning process.

## ***4.2. Student Focus Group Summary***

The focus group data collected from 105 second-year Information Technology students revealed significant insights into the behavioural patterns, preferences, and psychological orientations of tech-savvy learners regarding AI integration in English learning. Quantitative results indicate a high adoption rate of AI-powered tools, with approximately 80% of students reporting frequent use of translation applications such as Google Translate and DeepL. Other translation tools mentioned included ChatGPT, Blackbox AI, Gemini, NotebookLM, and Deepseek. Furthermore, 52.4% engaged with AI-integrated language learning apps like Duolingo and Cake, as well as newer platforms such as The Coach.

In terms of skill-specific practices, 49.5% utilised AI to practice pronunciation using tools such as Siri (iPhone), Praktika, Sesame AI, and TalkPal AI. Some students reported using ChatGPT models to simulate dialogues or receive pronunciation scores based on prewritten scripts. 40% practised speaking through AI interactions, while listening skills were enhanced through platforms such as VoiceTube, YouGlish, Grok, and even through English-language gaming.

A striking concern emerged in students' learning habits: 67.6% acknowledged a tendency to skim or rely heavily on AI support, especially when under time constraints or academic pressure. In reading practice, students confessed to scanning textbook passages or simply photographing long texts and using Google Translate or Gemini to generate summaries. This indicates a shift toward surface-level processing, with only a minority verifying AI-generated output.

For vocabulary and grammar development, many students relied on dictionaries such as TFlat, Cambridge, and Oxford, though they often skipped reading contextual examples or full definitions. Instead, they opted for AI-generated sentence translations. Notably, grammar explanation was rarely sought via AI due to perceived verbosity or lack of clarity. Students preferred teacher explanations when needing deeper insight into language structure.

Students widely used AI in preparing presentations and assignments. They first generated ideas via ChatGPT, Grammarly, or Poe, then selected appropriate content and refined it further. Several students reported combining these tools with Canva AI to design slides and rehearse based on the AI-prepared content. While some felt more confident thanks to AI’s quick and accessible support, others avoided classroom participation for fear that their answers, generated by AI, might be exposed or misaligned with teacher expectations.

Emotionally, students reported mixed outcomes. Many described AI as a timely assistant, enabling them to learn faster and reducing their dependence on dictionaries and delayed classroom clarification. However, they also noted that free versions of many AI platforms came with limitations, reinforcing their belief that AI support, though valuable, cannot fully replace teacher involvement.

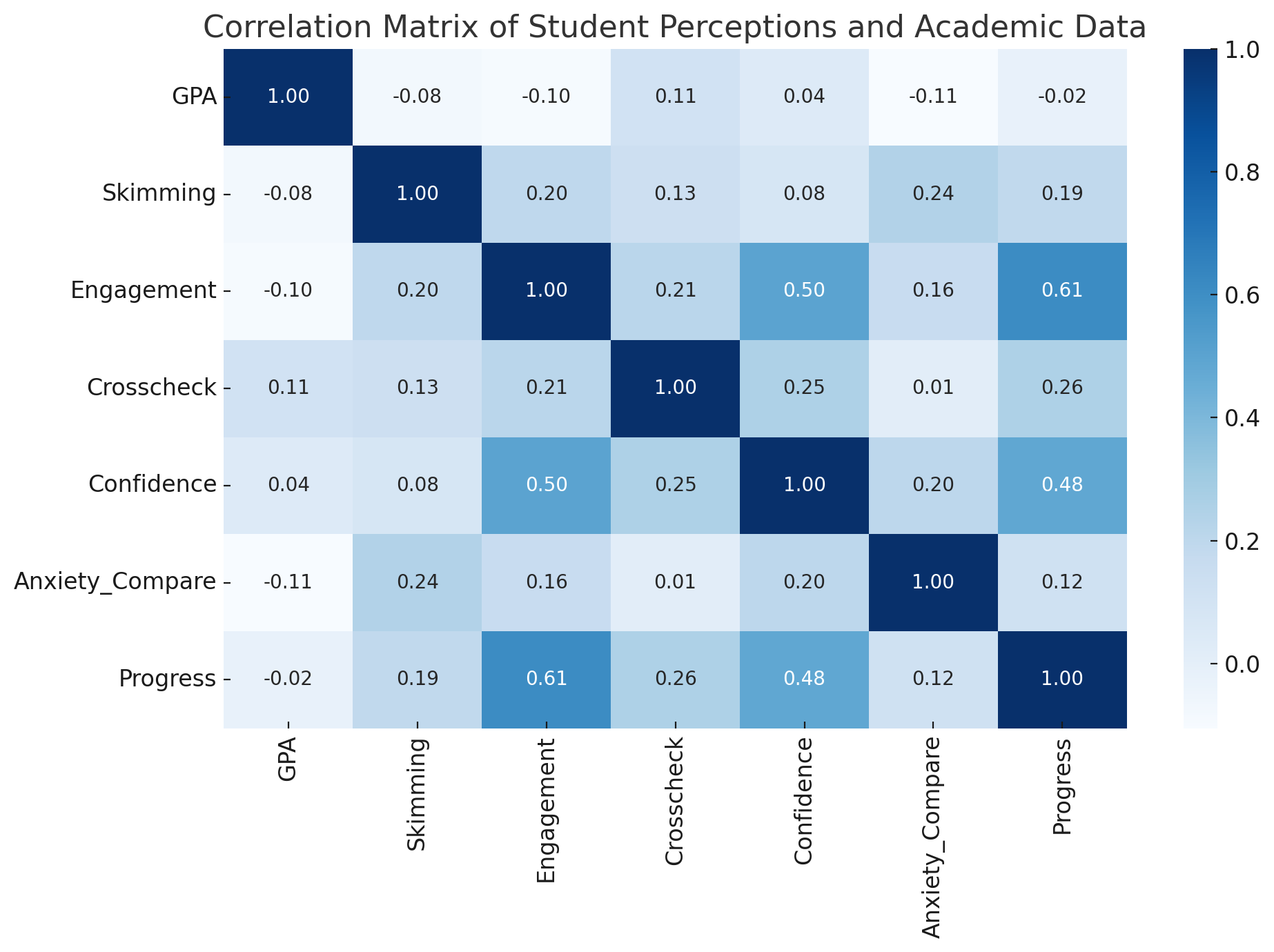
Additional insights from qualitative responses highlighted students’ nuanced views about the complementary role of teachers alongside AI tools. Many learners emphasised that AI serves primarily as a supporting mechanism rather than a replacement for instructors. They noted that only when a teacher is humorous, approachable, and engaging does the learning process become genuinely motivating, contrasting with the passive, command-response dynamic typical of AI systems. Students frequently reported that AI lacks the ability to address subtle linguistic issues or interpret context-specific errors during language learning.

In sum, the student focus group unveiled a complex relationship with AI: one marked by appreciation for autonomy and efficiency, yet tempered by recognition of its pedagogical limitations. These findings reveal not only the evolving identity of learners in digital spaces but also the necessity of guided human instruction to complement and critically mediate AI use in language education.

## ***4.3. Correlation Analysis of Student Data***

**Figure**

*Correlation Matrix of Student Perceptions and Academic Data*



To deepen the understanding of student experiences and perceptions, a correlation analysis was conducted using self-reported GPA and Likert-style responses to AI-related behaviours and emotions. The analysis revealed several noteworthy relationships:

First, GPA exhibited negligible to weak correlations with most AI-related behaviours, indicating that students’ academic performance was generally independent of their engagement with or perceptions of AI. A weak negative correlation was observed between GPA and both engagement with AI-enhanced learning (r = –0.10) and anxiety induced by comparing one’s language proficiency to AI-generated output (r = –0.11). Notably, students with a GPA of 3.2 or higher (on a 4.0 scale), considered in this study as higher-performing, tended to report slightly lower levels of AI engagement and anxiety. This trend may suggest that academically stronger students were more confident in their own language abilities and thus less reliant on AI for support or reassurance.

Interestingly, confidence in using AI correlated moderately with engagement (r = 0.50) and perceived progress (r = 0.48), suggesting that students who felt more comfortable with AI were more likely to perceive its integration as beneficial. Confidence also had a small positive correlation with cross-checking AI content (r = 0.25), which could reflect more responsible digital learning habits.

A moderate positive correlation was observed between engagement with AI and perceived learning progress (r = 0.61), reinforcing the perception that AI-supported environments may enhance motivation and perceived learning outcomes. However, a small positive correlation also emerged between skimming behaviour and AI-induced anxiety (r = 0.24), suggesting that students who rely on AI for shortcuts may also experience greater insecurity or stress when comparing their output to AI-generated content.

Lastly, skimming tendencies were weakly positively associated with both engagement (r = 0.20) and progress perception (r = 0.19), reflecting a complex behaviour where surface-level learning may still feel effective but possibly at the cost of deeper mastery.

To sum up, the correlation data reveal that while AI confidence and engagement are positively associated with perceived learning benefits, overreliance behaviours like shallow learning may be linked to increased anxiety and shallower processing. These findings emphasise the importance of fostering critical AI literacy and balanced learning strategies in EFL contexts.

1. **Discussion**

Students' commentary further reveals that the effectiveness of AI is highly contingent on the learner’s autonomy and reading comprehension abilities. Participants repeatedly stressed that AI tools are only truly helpful when used by students who possess strong self-study skills. Without critical evaluation or human confirmation, students may unknowingly absorb inaccurate information, underscoring the pedagogical risks of unchecked AI reliance. This sentiment aligns with broader concerns in digital learning research regarding the reliability of algorithmic outputs and the necessity for human mediation.

Crucially, students highlighted that teachers remain indispensable not only for content delivery but also for interpreting learner emotions and adapting instruction in real-time. Teachers, as human beings, are uniquely able to read facial expressions and sense confusion, thereby modifying the pace or depth of instruction accordingly. This emotional responsiveness was identified as a key differentiator between AI and human instruction, particularly in providing personalised feedback, explaining grammar nuances, and framing learning in cultural or situational contexts.

Some students voiced concern that teachers who ignore or reject AI as a pedagogical tool, especially those who react defensively when challenged by AI-verified knowledge, risk becoming obsolete. In contrast, teachers who embrace AI, integrate it dynamically into lessons, and co-explore its functions with students were viewed as future-ready and irreplaceable.

In addition, certain learners noted that AI can enhance class preparation by helping them pre-read texts, translate unfamiliar words, and formulate questions. As a result, their classroom engagement evolved from passive note-taking to active inquiry. However, the use of AI-generated answers also led a subset of students to avoid classroom participation out of fear their contributions might be identified as AI-generated or misaligned with teacher expectations. This dynamic adds complexity to the discourse on student agency and performance anxiety in AI-enhanced classrooms.

The findings of this study underscore a fundamental tension in AI-mediated language education: while technology can enhance access and engagement, it also introduces psychological and pedagogical challenges that demand critical attention.

From the teacher’s perspective, psychological stress was primarily rooted in the fear of professional obsolescence and the erosion of classroom authority. These anxieties resonate with prior literature (e.g., Schleicher, 2020; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019) that highlights how educators often struggle to assert their role in digitally dominant spaces. The emotional labor required to manage classrooms where students trust AI tools over teacher input exacerbates this stress, pointing to a need for institutional support and upskilling programs that help teachers navigate this paradigm shift.

Conversely, student overreliance on AI appears to be driven by convenience and novelty rather than critical awareness. While many students felt empowered by AI's immediacy and autonomy, their learning behaviors, such as skimming, limited reflection, and unchecked reliance on automated output, raise concerns about surface-level processing and reduced cognitive investment. These findings echo Dörnyei's (2005) concerns about motivation and Ellis’s (2003) emphasis on interaction for language acquisition.

Additional findings suggest that while AI tools such as ChatGPT, Google Translate, Blackbox AI, and Gemini are widely used, students rarely engage critically with these tools. They often copy AI-generated results without understanding the grammar used or verifying accuracy unless prompted by conflicting feedback from teachers. Grammar explanations by AI were often avoided due to perceived complexity or verbosity, reinforcing students' reliance on direct answers rather than reflective learning.

The emotional and behavioral responses to AI use also varied across students. Some reported increased confidence due to AI's immediacy and non-judgmental nature, but others avoided class participation out of fear that their AI-generated answers would be exposed or contradicted by teachers. This paradox illustrates how AI can both empower and inhibit learners, depending on their self-regulation skills and classroom dynamics.

Interestingly, many students admitted that meaningful learning still hinges on the presence of effective, emotionally attuned teachers. Learners valued teachers who were not only knowledgeable but also engaging, humorous, and responsive to classroom needs. Teachers were seen as more adaptable in clarifying contextual meanings and detecting nonverbal cues of confusion, roles that AI tools fail to fulfill.

Moreover, students acknowledged that AI's benefits are maximized only when paired with strong self-directed learning habits and reading comprehension skills. Some students noted that without human verification, AI-generated information could be misleading or incomplete. This reinforces the need for guided mediation, where instructors act not merely as content providers but as ethical and pedagogical facilitators.

The study also points to the risk of AI-induced demotivation. Learners with limited digital literacy or language competence expressed stress when comparing their work with AI outputs, especially when the AI-generated content appeared more polished. This comparative anxiety may result in reduced willingness to practice, highlighting the importance of teacher encouragement and validation.

Ultimately, successful technology integration in EFL classrooms depends on aligning three components: (1) teacher well-being and confidence, (2) student awareness of AI’s limitations, and (3) curricula that integrate AI critically, not uncritically. Addressing these interconnected factors can help mitigate psychological pressures, sustain motivation, and restore the value of human instruction in an increasingly automated age.

**Limitations of the study**

While the study offers valuable insights into the psychological and pedagogical dynamics of AI integration in EFL classrooms, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the qualitative nature of the research and the small sample size, limited to five lecturers and one cohort of IT students at a single Vietnamese university, may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts. Second, as participants were self-selected and volunteered for the interviews and focus group, their responses may reflect particularly strong opinions or heightened awareness of AI-related issues, potentially skewing the data.

Third, the reliance on self-reported data, especially regarding AI use and academic performance, introduces potential biases such as social desirability or recall inaccuracies. While efforts were made to triangulate perspectives across teacher and student data, the absence of observational or longitudinal data limits the ability to capture evolving behaviors or perceptions over time.

Finally, the rapid pace of technological advancement means that the tools and perceptions discussed may shift significantly in the near future. Future studies may consider incorporating a broader range of institutions, longitudinal tracking, and mixed-method designs to capture the evolving nature of AI integration in language education more comprehensively.

1. **Conclusion**

This study explored the psychological pressures English teachers face and the perceptions of tech-savvy students toward AI in General English classrooms. The findings highlight a critical disconnect: teachers struggle with maintaining authority and relevance, while students, though enthusiastic about AI, often overestimate its capabilities and underestimate the human role in education.

The integration of AI in EFL contexts offers great potential but also significant challenges. Teachers require institutional backing to build technological confidence and emotional resilience. Students need support in developing critical thinking and responsible AI use. By fostering a co-learning environment where both parties engage with technology collaboratively, educators can transform AI from a threat into a catalyst for pedagogical innovation.

Future research may expand this inquiry across disciplines or include longitudinal designs to observe evolving perceptions and teaching adaptations over time. Additionally, further exploration into culturally sensitive implementations of AI in EFL education would contribute to global understanding.

Ultimately, human educators remain essential, not only for knowledge delivery but also for emotional guidance, critical reflection, and ethical mediation in the age of intelligent machines.

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**Bionotes**

**Hua Tran Phuong Thao** is an experienced university lecturer specializing in English Linguistics and Translation and Interpretation Studies. She holds a Master’s degree in English Language Teaching Methodology and has extensive experience in teaching phonetics, syntax, and translation methodologies. Her research interests include discourse analysis, the application of information technology and AI in language education, and translation strategies in multilingual and interdisciplinary contexts. Passionate about language teaching, she actively engages in curriculum development and academic mentoring. Committed to enhancing students' linguistic proficiency and intercultural communication skills, she has significantly contributed to bridging the gap between linguistic theory and practical application.

**Hua Tran Thanh Truc** is a dedicated English lecturer specializing in language instruction, TOEIC preparation, and the integration of technology in language learning. She has taught at various higher education institutions and language centers in Vietnam, equipping students with essential communication skills for academic and professional settings. Her research interests focus on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and its impact on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. With a student-centered teaching approach, she fosters learner autonomy, enhances speaking proficiency, and encourages the application of digital tools in English language acquisition. Her work contributes to advancing innovative methodologies in English education.