

# TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND READINESS TOWARDS AI-INTEGRATED ESL CLASSROOMS

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READINESS TOWARDS AI-INTEGRATED ESL CLASSROOMS

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## ABSTRACT

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the education sector has garnered significant attention from educators, policymakers, researchers and learners. AI tools have the potential to enhance the teaching and learning process. The successful integration of AI in classrooms heavily depends on the teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Despite AI's potential and benefits, there is still a significant gap in the studies on ESL teachers' perceptions and readiness for AI, particularly in the Malaysian context. This study examines the perceptions and readiness of Malaysian English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in integrating AI tools in their classrooms. Using a correlational quantitative research design, data were collected through an online survey to 80 English teachers teaching in the Hulu Selangor district. The sample of this study was chosen using purposive sampling. The questionnaire was adapted from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and AI Readiness. The data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 29.0. The findings were then reported in the form of frequencies and percentages. The findings reveal that ESL teachers generally hold positive perceptions of AI perceived usefulness, ease of use and AI's impact. Furthermore, the teachers have moderate to high levels of readiness towards AI and demonstrated high knowledge and awareness, confidence in using AI and willingness to adopt AI. Spearman's Rho correlation was used to measure the correlation between teachers' perceptions and readiness. The result of this study showed that there was a high correlation between teachers' perceptions and readiness, with 0.627. Future research should explore mixed methods research using similar variables and expand the sample size. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on AI in education and offers valuable insights for Malaysia's policymakers, educators and curriculum developers to enhance teaching and learning method through AI.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence (AI), English as a Second Language (ESL), readiness, perceptions, teachers





## PERSEPSI DAN KESEDIAAN GURU TERHADAP INTEGRASI AI DALAM BILIK DARJAH ESL

### ABSTRAK

Integrasi Kecerdasan Buatan (AI) dalam sektor pendidikan telah mendapat perhatian yang signifikan daripada pendidik, pembuat dasar, penyelidik, dan pelajar. Alat AI berpotensi untuk meningkatkan proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran. Kejayaan integrasi AI dalam bilik darjah bergantung kepada kepercayaan dan sikap guru. Walaupun AI mempunyai potensi dan manfaat, masih terdapat jurang yang ketara dalam kajian mengenai persepsi dan kesediaan guru Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua (ESL) terhadap AI, terutamanya dalam konteks Malaysia. Kajian ini meneliti persepsi dan kesediaan guru ESL Malaysia dalam mengintegrasikan alat AI di bilik darjah mereka. Dengan menggunakan reka bentuk kajian kuantitatif korelasi, data dikumpulkan melalui tinjauan dalam talian melibatkan 80 guru Bahasa Inggeris yang mengajar di daerah Hulu Selangor. Sampel kajian ini dipilih menggunakan persampelan bertujuan. Soal selidik kajian ini diadaptasi daripada Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) dan Kesediaan AI. Data dianalisis menggunakan IBM SPSS Statistics versi 29.0 dan dilaporkan dalam bentuk kekerapan dan peratusan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa guru ESL secara umumnya mempunyai persepsi positif terhadap kegunaan AI, kemudahan penggunaan, dan impak AI. Tambahan pula, guru menunjukkan tahap kesediaan yang sederhana hingga tinggi terhadap AI, dengan pengetahuan dan kesedaran yang tinggi, keyakinan menggunakan AI, serta kesediaan untuk menerima AI. Korelasi Spearman's Rho digunakan untuk mengukur hubungan antara persepsi dan kesediaan guru. Hasil kajian menunjukkan terdapat korelasi tinggi antara persepsi dan kesediaan guru, iaitu 0.627. Kajian masa depan dicadangkan untuk meneroka kaedah campuran menggunakan pembolehubah yang sama serta memperluas saiz sampel. Kajian ini menyumbang kepada peningkatan literatur mengenai AI dalam pendidikan dan memberikan pandangan berharga kepada pembuat dasar, pendidik, dan penggubal kurikulum di Malaysia untuk mempertingkatkan kaedah pengajaran dan pembelajaran melalui AI.

**Kata kunci:** Kecerdasan Buatan (AI), Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Kedua (ESL), kesediaan, persepsi, guru





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## LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AI	Artificial Intelligence
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
PEOU	Perceived Ease of Use
PU	Perceived Usefulness
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this study begins with a general introduction to the present study.

This chapter will discuss the background of the study and problem statement, followed by research objectives, research questions, and research hypothesis. The theoretical framework, which serves as the underpinning theory of the study, is presented, followed by the definition of terms, the limitations of the study, and the significance of the study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study and the operational terms used in this study.

#### 1.2 Background of the Study

In the revolving world of education, integrating technology in classrooms has transformed education from the old teaching practice, exploring new educational frontiers (Ahmad Shazli et al., 2023; Hidayat, 2019). Teachers who utilise technology to improve their teaching in their classrooms can help students in achieving academic





success and fully utilise their full potential (Limna et al., 2023). While technology is known to offer many advantages, relying solely on technology for information could result in learning on the surface level, which may hinder the development of student's critical thinking and analytical skills (Zarei & Fabregas, 2024). For instance, both students and teachers could benefit from AI, as the use of AI offers various new things that could transform the classroom (Toar et al., 2022).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a machine that can mimic human ability. Its advancement is widespread and thriving in all fields, especially in education. Moreover, AI technology can be used to assist teachers in teaching language skills (Zulkarnain & Md Yunus, 2023). Many schools have adopted AI technology to improve students' and teachers' learning experiences. This is because AI offers personalised learning and adaptive feedback and assists teachers in grading and managing the classroom, lesson plans, and administrative tasks (Toar et al., 2022). Hence, the advancement of AI technology could be used in various ways. However, a teacher's role is crucial to effectively implement technology (Alakrash et al., 2022; Zulkarnain & Md Yunus, 2023).

In Malaysia, learning a second language has always been challenging for learners (Zulkarnain & Md Yunus, 2023). The Malaysian ESL classroom usually comprises students with different levels of proficiency. Therefore, it is a challenge for teachers to design a lesson that meets the needs of students. The emergence of AI software and applications could provide abundant benefits for ESL learning and teaching. Integrating AI technology into ESL/EFL could improve the quality and efficiency of foreign language teaching (Sharifuddin & Hashim, 2024). However, the





effectiveness and success of AI integration in the classroom heavily depend on the teacher's beliefs and attitudes.

Despite the growing interest in AI studies in education, there is a significant gap in the limited number of studies on teachers' perspectives on AI have been done, particularly in the Malaysian context (Zulkarnain & Md Yunus, 2023). The majority of the studies were conducted in higher education settings, which calls for further research to be conducted in school settings (Crompton, 2023). Hence, this study sets out to investigate teachers' perceptions and readiness for AI-integrated ESL classrooms in Malaysia.

### 1.3 Problem Statement



With the education field constantly evolving, the integration of Artificial Intelligence technology can enhance teaching and learning methods. Recent studies have highlighted the benefits of AI, which include optimising face-to-face, blended and online instruction (Kexin et al., 2020; Kohnke et al., 2023), reducing workload by automating tasks (Weng & Chiu, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023), and enhancing the data analysis process ((European Commission, 2025; Kohnke et al., 2023). Moreover, AI-powered tools can aid instructors in researching effective teaching methods based on student learning data, generating assessments, and automatically issuing grades and feedback (Chaudhry, 2021; Kohnke et al., 2023). Hence, teachers may leverage using AI tools to design, support and enrich learning experiences (Kohnke et al., 2023).





Although teachers know the myriad opportunities and benefits AI technology offers in education, many still need to be ready for AI-enhanced education (Chounta et al., 2022). The lack of teachers' readiness towards AI may stem from several challenges, such as limited number of teachers who are qualified to design and deliver AI curricula (Huang, 2021; Kim & Kwon, 2023), teachers' lack of rich knowledge about AI, including its features and proper utilisation, has resulted in hesitance to incorporate AI in the classroom (Huang, 2021; Lin & Brummelen, 2021; Williams et al., 2021; Kim & Kwon, 2023). The resistance and hesitancy of teachers might impact and complicate the effectiveness of AI-integrated classrooms.

In Malaysia, English is considered a second language by many students. Hence, the classroom consists of students with different proficiency levels and needs. As a result, designing a lesson that meets all the students' language needs is challenging (Sharifuddin & Hashim, 2024). Although AI technology can solve problems posed in classrooms, the effectiveness of technology in English classrooms depends on the teacher's role (Abdul Razak et al., 2018; Zulkarnain & Md Yunus, 2023).

To date, few studies have been conducted on the impact of AI in English as a Second Language (ESL), particularly in secondary school education (Crompton, 2023). Most research has focused on the impact of students' perspectives, with less attention paid to how teachers' perspectives influence AI usage in the classroom (Zulkarnain & Md Yunus, 2023). The lack of studies on ESL teachers' perceptions and readiness towards AI creates a significant gap in understanding how technologies can effectively integrate into classrooms. This gap may hinder professional development, teacher training, and policies that are pivotal to the successful adoption of AI in





teaching. Moreover, investigating the perceptions and readiness of teachers may offer valuable insights into the needs and challenges faced by teachers in adopting AI in classrooms. Thus, this study seeks to investigate the perceptions and readiness of Malaysian ESL teachers of the use of AI tools in their classrooms to fill the critical gap in research.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

The study addresses the following research questions :

1. What are the ESL teachers' perceptions and readiness of using artificial intelligence (AI) tools in their classrooms?
2. Is there a relationship between ESL teachers' readiness and their perceptions of AI usage in the classroom context?

#### 1.5 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To investigate ESL teachers' perceptions and readiness regarding using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in their classrooms.
2. To examine the relationship between ESL teachers' readiness and their perceptions of AI usage in the classroom context.





## 1.6 Significance of Study

This current study has several significance and will provide invaluable insights to teachers, students and future researchers who are interested in conducting similar studies.

First, this study may benefit teachers as it provides a better understanding of the current state of Malaysian teachers' perceptions and readiness towards integrating AI into their classrooms. By identifying the readiness and perceptions of the teachers, the study can help teachers to make better preparation in implementing AI in the classroom. Additionally, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia has proposed that the teachers must be well-equipped in AI as students must be taught using AI by 2027 (Harun & Sallehuddin, 2024).



Secondly, this study may be beneficial for the students as teachers will become more prepared and equipped with AI tools, students can experience more personalised and efficient language learning experience through AI-based applications.

Next, the study may provide policymakers into making informed decision on improving teacher training programmes. By understanding the perceptions and readiness of teachers towards AI, it can help policymakers to design policies that ensure the successfulness of the implementation of AI in classrooms.

Lastly, the study may provide insights for future researchers who are interested in doing future investigation of AI in the context of ESL. Future research can utilise the





findings of this study explore deeper and more specific aspects of AI integration in education.

### 1.7 Scope and Limitation of Study

This study investigated the perceptions and readiness of ESL teachers towards integrating AI in the classroom. The study will be conducted in the Hulu Selangor district and will involve 80 secondary school English teachers who currently teach in the district. The focus will be on understanding their perceptions and readiness for integrating AI into their teaching practice.

The study will limit its investigation to teachers' perceptions without extending to AI outcomes in the classroom and the implementation of AI in classrooms. Data will be gathered through an online survey and the samples were chosen using purposive sampling technique.

There are several limitations associated to this study. Firstly, one of the study's limitations is that the study's population is limited to only English teachers in Malaysia particularly in Hulu Selangor district. Hence, the findings may not be applicable to teachers of different countries or contexts. Secondly, the sample size is insufficient to generalise the Malaysian English teachers' perceptions and readiness of AI-integrated ESL classrooms. A larger and diverse sample may be needed to draw conclusions. Next, this study used self-reported data through a survey to report on the teachers' perceptions and readiness of AI-integrated ESL classrooms. This reliance on self-reported data may introduce bias and not fully capture the full picture of teachers' attitudes towards AI in





education. Lastly, this study uses a cross-sectional design as it was done at a single time and did not observe the changes in teachers' perceptions and readiness over time. Therefore, a longitudinal study is more appropriate to track the changes in teachers' perceptions and readiness for a long period of time.

## 1.8 Theoretical Framework

Two closely related theoretical frameworks provide a lens with which to examine teachers' readiness and perceptions regarding the use of AI. The first, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Constructivist theory.

### 1.8.1 Technology Acceptance Model

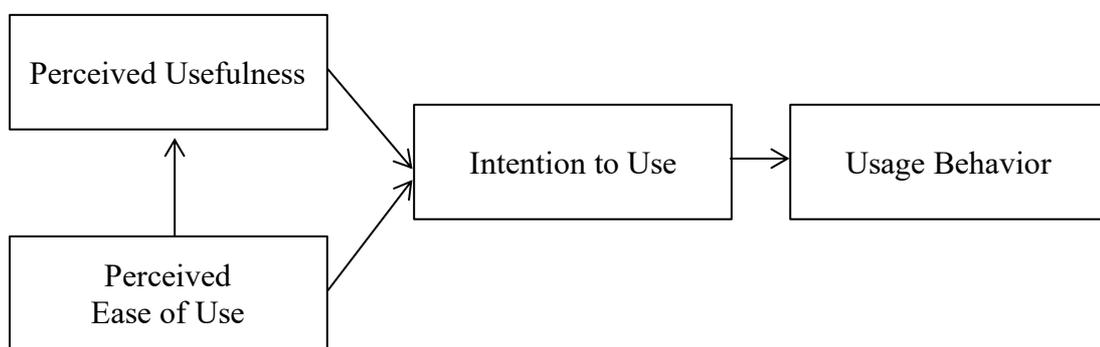
This study draws on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), a theoretical framework that was developed by Fred Davis in 1989. TAM is typically utilised to describe the process through which users accept and adopt new information technologies (Albayati et al., 2020). The original Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) comprises four key variables: perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. These variables shape the attitude towards usage (AT), subsequently impacting the behavioral intention (BI) to use the technology (Davis, 1989). Afterwards, Davis (1989) posited that two central factors, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, primarily influence the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which is illustrated in Figure 1.



Perceived usefulness refers to the degree to which a user believes that technology can improve their job performance or productivity, while perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which a user believes that the technology is easy to comprehend and use Davis (1989).

**Figure 1.1**

*Technology Acceptance Model*



### 1.8.2 Constructivist theory

The constructivist theory claims that learning involves an active, constructive process in which learners acquire understanding and knowledge by engaging with their environment and integrating new information with existing knowledge (Vygotsky, 1980). The Constructivist Learning Theory highlights the significant role of learners in building their own comprehension and insight into the world. This indicates that it underscores the importance of focusing on the learner and using compelling content to create valuable learning opportunities (Aljasir, 2023; Qiu, 2019).



## 1.9 Research Hypothesis

This correlational study tests two research hypotheses based on the formulated research question. The research hypotheses are as follows :

Null Hypothesis : There is no relationship between ESL teachers' readiness and their perceptions of AI usage in the classroom context.

Alternative Hypothesis : There is a relationship between ESL teachers' readiness and their perceptions of AI usage in the classroom context.

## 1.10 Definition of terms

To facilitate the understanding of this study, the following terms are defined:



### 1.10.1 Perceptions

Perceptions may be described as an individual's subjective opinion of specific characteristics of a technology, which ultimately impacts how they use the technology (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). In this context of the study, the teachers' perceptions are crucial to understanding the teachers' acceptance in terms of usefulness and ease of use towards using AI in ESL classrooms.





### 1.10.2 Readiness

According to Parasuraman (2000, p. 308), technology readiness is “people's propensity to embrace and use new technologies for accomplishing goals in home life and at work”. In this study, technology readiness refers to how ready teachers are to adopt and integrate AI technology into their classrooms.

### 1.10.3 Artificial Intelligence

The term Artificial Intelligence (AI) was first coined in 1955 by John McCarthy, who defined it as “making a machine behave in ways that would be called intelligent if a human were so behaving” (Ahmad et al., 2021). In the context of this study, AI refers to one of the supplementary teaching aids that provides support for teachers in conducting an ESL classroom.

### 1.10.4 English as a Second Language (ESL)

The term “ESL” is used to describe English is spoken and used as a second language (L2) in countries that were previously colonised by the United Kingdom or the United States, such as Malaysia (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2012; Baharudin & Razali, 2021). In the context of this study, ESL refers to the study of English language in a national secondary school.





## 1.11 Summary

In brief, this chapter aims to provide an outline of research by pinpointing the background of the study, problem statement, the research objectives, the research questions, significance of the study and the definition of terms. In the following chapter, the researcher will discuss the literature review pertaining to this study.

