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TEACHING AND LEARNING LEGAL ENGLISH WITH AI: A CASE STUDY ON STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN AN ESAP COURSE

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ABSTRACT. ***Teaching and Learning Legal English with AI: A Case Study on Student Engagement in an ESAP Course.*** Educators recognize that 2020 was a pivotal year for the advancement of digital teaching methods. A significant aspect of this development is the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) platforms grounded in large language models (LLMs), which are viewed by many as potentially transformative for education. Concerns have arisen regarding how these tools could affect academic integrity and the originality of student writing. Many people question the assumption that such technologies could support student learning. This study aims to explore this topic further by investigating the following question: How can the incorporation of AI improve student engagement in English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) classes? The answer is provided through small-scale research conducted on a group of first-year Law students who took part in a Legal English ESAP course. Quantitative and qualitative data provided by two questionnaires, an interview and a class observation protocol are analyzed to show students' learning engagement with AI tools. The research highlights the benefits offered by AI to Legal English instruction.

Keywords: *ESAP, AI, Legal English, higher education, student engagement, digitalization*

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REZUMAT. ***Predarea și învățarea limbii engleze pentru domeniul juridic cu ajutorul inteligenței artificiale: studiu de caz asupra gradului de implicare al studenților care urmează un curs de engleză specializată la nivel universitar.*** Specialiștii în educație admit că anul 2020 a marcat o cotitură in învățământ datorită adoptării pedagogiei digitale. Un subiect la fel de recent și actual este cel al folosirii platformelor dedicate inteligenței artificiale bazată pe modele lingvistice pre-definite în educație. Acest fapt a fost perceput ca îngrijorător mai ales din punct de vedere al integrității academice în ceea ce privește autenticitatea produsului final. S-a pus chiar problema utilității acestui tip de instrument în predare-învățare. Studiul de față dorește să discute acest din urmă aspect răspunzând la următoarea întrebare: cum ar putea fi utilizată inteligența artificială pentru a impulsiona implicarea studenților în cadrul unui curs de limbaj de specialitate? Articolul de față își propune să răspundă întrebării instrumentând un studiu de caz de mici dimensiuni, bazat pe un eșantion format din studenți din anul întâi de la Facultatea de Drept. Colectarea de date s-a făcut prin utilizarea de chestionare, interviuri și un protocol de observare la clasă. Studiul dorește să evidențieze avantajele oferite de utilizarea inteligenței artificiale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *ESAP, AI, engleză juridică, învățământ superior, motivare, digitalizare*

Introduction

The year 2020 was a pivotal year for the advancement of digital teaching. The sudden shift to online education provided the essential environment and, arguably, the ideal opportunity to evaluate and implement the pedagogy of online teaching and learning.

The employment of e-learning, digital technology, and online courses in further and higher education had been an area of focus for many years before the pandemic. Studies conducted in that period researched the potential and the outcome of using digitalization in teaching.

Among the fields that were under scrutiny, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) had a place of its own. ESP is the product of the economic boom that marked the 1950s. English has begun to be used in various professional contexts to connect people from different countries in an expanding global market. The aim of ESP courses is "to teach the language and communication skills that specific groups of language learners need or will need to function effectively in their disciplines of study, professions, or workplaces" (Basturkmen 2010, 17). The typical audience for this kind of course consists of adults who have an

interest in a particular field of specialized language and who work in similar professional environments. No matter their specialized language focus, all ESP courses share some essential elements: professional goals of learners, use of needs analysis, and a learning-centered approach. As teaching ESP is concerned with a functionalist approach to education it must emphasize the acquisition of soft skills. Soft skills are the "ability to go beyond the subject specialism and be able to communicate well in professional (and by extension ESP) contexts" (Day and Krzanowski 2011, 23). From this perspective, the situation is quite different from a decade ago. At that time digital technology was an optional tool in many occupational sectors and the acquisition of this type of skill was regarded as a kind of specialism. The 2020 pandemic changed the paradigm and placed digital competency among the most valued requirements in any job application process.

Therefore, teaching, especially when connected to the field of specific purposes, needs to pursue this trend, and offer a fair level of knowledge necessary in students' future careers.

The two years of pandemic were effervescent in finding adequate solutions to the challenges faced by teachers and learners and researching about the future steps to take. Very soon, the rapidly evolving landscape of education acknowledged the presence of AI based on large language models (LLMs). The most popular example is the ChatGPT tool created by the company OpenAI which released its most recent version in 2023.

This new arrival posed new questions related to the ethics of using artificial intelligence and opened a general debate on using AI tools in the field of education.

The purpose of the current article is to share with other researchers interested in the topic the results of a small-scale study that investigates the advantages of using AI tools in English for Specific Academic Purposes conducted at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.

Literature review

The pre-pandemic research on integration of technology in ESP instruction focused on the digital tools, other than AI, that could have enhanced the learning of specialized languages. In 2022, the European Commission published a reflection document on digital learning in higher education. "Future of Digital and Online Learning in Higher Education handbook 362"offers a systematic overview of the current debate on how the impact of the pandemic has been valued for digital and online learning practices and adaptations" (Humpl and Andersen 2022, 5).

In parallel, the launching of ChatGPT turned the interest towards the possible use of this type of tool in learning. The E.U. founded an Erasmus+ Forward Looking project called AI Pioneers aiming "at promoting the use and teaching of artificial intelligence (AI) in adult education and vocational training VET (Vocational Education and Training)."[2] The interface with the targeted community of teachers, stakeholders, educational planners, and policymakers is provided by a site that gives relevant information on the topic serving as a hub in promoting teaching with AI.

An event that is worth mentioning in this context took place shortly after the launch of ChatGPT. Scholars from Open AI, Khan Academy, the Berkman Klein Centre for Internet & Society at Harvard University, along with various specialists, convened at a workshop to explore the effects of generative AI on the future of education and learning. Two key themes were discussed then: possible disruptive effects of AI on teaching and the need for policy interventions "to enable safe uses of the technology and mitigate harms, the allocation of duties and responsibilities across stakeholders, and mechanisms for cross-sectorial tech policymaking."[3] The workshop is relevant as it gives a larger picture of how the use of AI in teaching should be approached by educators, teachers, university professors, policy makers and experts in computer science.

Given the novelty of the topic, literature is limited to some of the uses of current existing AI tools in reference to ESP. A particular challenge faced by researchers is related to the rapid pace of AI evolution: newer tools replace old ones within a matter of months. Therefore, the articles referenced in this section may become outdated within a year. As technology develops amazingly fast, the criterion applied in the choice of articles was the year of publication. To rely on sources as updated as possible, references include articles written after ChatGPT 3.5 model was launched (November 2022).

Michel-Villareal et al. interviewed ChatGPT to describe the challenges and opportunities of generative AI in Higher Education. The passage in which the chatbot describes how language and communication skills can be assisted by AI is relevant for us: "ChatGPT can stimulate conversational exchanges, provide language correction, and offer vocabulary and grammar assistance." (Michel-Villareal et al. 2023, 5).

Qasem et al. (2023) examined the effect of using a chatbot in learning ESP vocabulary. The participants were students on an ESP course at a university in Saudi Arabia. The dialog chatbot was designed to engage students in conversations

[2] https://aipioneers.org/about-us/

[3] Exploring the Impacts of Generative AI on the Future of Teaching and Learning | Berkman Klein Center (harvard.edu)

about different topics relevant to their studies. The research was conducted using an experimental design with a control group and an experimental group. The control group received traditional vocabulary instruction, while the experimental group used the chatbot in addition to traditional instruction. The study results show that the dialog chatbot significantly improved students' vocabulary learning outcomes. The findings suggest that dialog chatbots can be effective tools for enhancing vocabulary learning in ESP contexts.

Kovacic and Bubas (2023) conducted research on the potential of using conversational artificial intelligence (Bing Chat) for online learning in ESP. According to the results, most students positively evaluated the use of Bing Chat in conversations and had an open attitude towards the use of this types of AI tools in their learning and practice of English.

Mezei (2023) described how paraphrasing activities in a biology ESAP class could be performed by employing AI-assisted paraphrasing tools.

Kovacevic (2023, 42) studied the use of ChatGPT in teaching ESP and came to the conclusion that it could be used as an "effective and timesaving tool for various aspects of preparation and implementation of teaching units and evaluation of students' written assignments."

Shestakova (2023) noticed three teaching outcomes of using ChatGPT in writing tasks: higher student engagement, more student and subject oriented learning and increased text-student interaction. Her study focused on the practice of formal letter writing which is a topic related to the present research project; what differs is the practiced genre.

Ningsih (2023) experimented with Classtime.com, an AI-based online testing platform, in teaching ESP to Economic Sharia Law. Classtime.com was created from the necessity to have a reliable and user-friendly assessment tool. According to the results of the study, students' feedback was very encouraging, showing that this type of platform had educational potential.

What the corpus of literature described above illustrates is the interest and openness that teachers have for the idea of employing AI in education and making clever use of what it currently offers: technology combined with use of language models.

Research method

The current article is based on the results of small-scale research conducted as a case study. The following is a description of its method and design.

1. Research question: How can the integration of AI enhance student engagement in ESAP classes?

2. Case choice: The focus of the case is a group of first-year students in the Faculty of Law at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. In the year 2020, the University displayed a pro-active attitude towards digitalization by adopting a strategy that aimed to make a step-by-step transition to a digital future.[4] In October 2022, BBU obtained funding from the EU as part of the Recovery and Resilience Facility program aimed at enhancing broadband and high-speed internet connectivity for educational institutions across EU Member States. The project is going to be implemented between September 2022 and December 2025. Additionally, a special interest has been given to an industry-oriented project that focuses on AI, *Artificial Intelligence for Connected Industries (AI4CI)*.

3. Type of case study: It is designed as an exploratory case study, trying to investigate the influence of AI on student engagement in ESAP classes. The employment of AI in education is a yet-uncharted territory that triggers many uncertainties: Can it foster collaboration? How can teachers be sure that it is not affecting authentic learning experiences and language production? What are the limits of using AI in teaching? There is no classical approach to the use of this new tool in education and the current case study aims to understand and describe its implications.

4. Scope and boundaries: The scope is to focus on approaches to implement AI in a specific ESAP class. More precisely, it researches if some activities and language skills will benefit from its use. The boundaries are related to the size of the group, the specific course they take, and the time span.

5. Data collection methods: there are three methods employed, an interview with students to gather their opinion on the topic, two questionnaires that aimed to gather quantitative data on student engagement metrics before and after AI implementation and classroom observations to understand the impact of AI tools.

6. Data collection plan: The case study covered two months from the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year (from October 16 to December 15). The teacher conducted classroom observations regularly. The first questionnaire was given in the first week of the study in a pen-and-paper format and the second one on the last day of the study using the same format. The interview took place in the first two weeks of October 2023. All students that took part in the study agreed to do so voluntarily.

[4] Strategie de transformare digitală a UBB 2020-2027, aprobată prin Hotărârea Senatului UBB nr. 9469/13.07.2020

7. Rigor of the study is achieved by triangulation, i.e., using multiple data sources (survey, interview, classroom observation)

8. Data analysis approach combines qualitative analysis of the interview with quantitative analysis of surveys and classroom observations.

The research involved a total of thirty-seven participants, all of whom were first-year undergraduate students enrolled in the Faculty of Law at Babeş-Bolyai University. Among these participants, 25 were female and 12 were male. The study has two main limitations related to the characteristics of the sample population. Firstly, all respondents were pursuing a major in Law, which may influence their perspectives. Secondly, the relatively small size of the respondent group—thirty-seven students—compared to the overall population of undergraduate Law students limits the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the results cannot be applied broadly.

The AI apps that were used to enhance students' engagement in learning were ChatGPT 3.5 (free version), Slides AI.io, and GPT for Docs™, Sheets™, Forms™, and Slides™.

ChatGPT 3.5 was used to find information on specific topics. Students were asked to explain phrases (e.g. stare decisis), legal concepts (e.g. delegated legislation) or find general information on legal facts (e.g. what is conveyancing?). They reported the findings to the class.

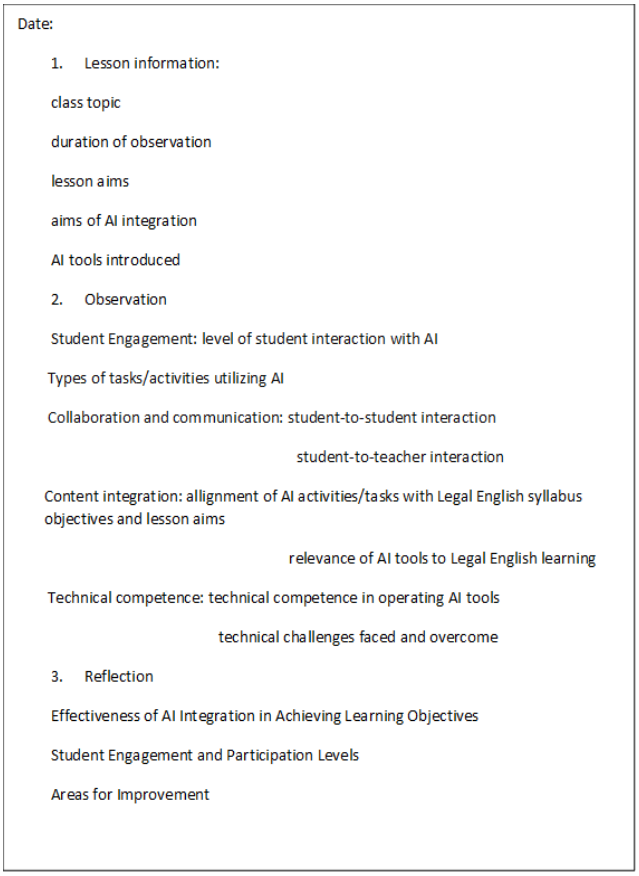
Slides AI.io can be used as an extension to Google Docs to create topic-based presentations (e.g. The history of Common Law). Students were asked to work in pairs and agree on both the layout and the content provided by the app.

GPT for Docs™ was used as an extension to Google Docs to perform a writing activity in which they had to focus on a specific legal genre (e.g. letter threatening legal action). Legal letters are highly formal and have a pre-defined pattern that leaves little space for creativity. Taking this into account, GPT for Docs™ provides unexpected help for legal professionals by offering a diversity of templates.

The two surveys administered at the start and conclusion of the research were composed in Romanian, respecting the respondents' native language to prevent any potential issues with limited English proficiency. Participation was anonymous, allowing each student to submit their responses only once. Prior to filling out the surveys, students received comprehensive information regarding the study's purpose and consented to participate willingly. All questions were required, and no criteria for exclusion were established.

The design of the two questionnaires is the following: the first one (given in the first week of the research) is made up of five questions requiring yes or no/multiple choice answers while the second one (given in the last day of the study) needed yes or no answers to two questions.

Classroom observation was performed by the teacher throughout the research and was based on a protocol designed to have two components: an observation sheet for teacher usage and a Likert scale form for student use. The aim for designing this research instrument was to assess the influence of AI on student engagement. The initial section concentrated on evaluating the usability of AI tools, on student collaboration and interaction while using AI tools, and on the relevance of using AI tools in Legal English (Figure 1).



Date:

1. Lesson information:

class topic

duration of observation

lesson aims

aims of AI integration

AI tools introduced

2. Observation

Student Engagement: level of student interaction with AI

Types of tasks/activities utilizing AI

Collaboration and communication: student-to-student interaction

student-to-teacher interaction

Content integration: allignment of AI activities/tasks with Legal English syllabus objectives and lesson aims

relevance of AI tools to Legal English learning

Technical competence: technical competence in operating AI tools

technical challenges faced and overcome

3. Reflection

Effectiveness of AI Integration in Achieving Learning Objectives

Student Engagement and Participation Levels

Areas for Improvement

Figure 1. The structure of the class observation protocol

The teacher collected the data provided by the observation sheet. Throughout the period of the study there were three types of activities performed in the classroom that were observed by the teacher using the protocol:

a) Presentation. Students were asked to work in pairs and use an AI app (Slides AI.io) to create presentations on different Legal English topics (the history of Common Law, the Court system in the U.K, the journey of a Bill into law in the British Parliament). Some of the results were then shared with the class.

b) Vocabulary task. Students were asked to do individual research using ChatGPT and look up some Legal English words, phrases or concepts that had been used in the lesson (e.g. to construe, constructive dismissal, tribunal). To check the reliability of the results the students were asked to look up the same words from a different source (an online Legal English dictionary[5], and a paperback Oxford Dictionary of Law[6] provided by the teacher). Their answers were then reported to the class.

c) Legal writing task. Students were asked to work in pairs and use GPT for Docs™ as an extension to Google Docs to perform a writing activity in which they had to focus on a specific legal genre (e.g. solicitor seeking to avoid constructive dismissal of client). They were given a model letter and a scenario that describes a particular situation related to employment law and asked to act on behalf of a hypothetical client by writing a letter. They collaborated on writing the letter, used GPT for Docs™ to correct and reformulate phrases and agreed on the definitive version. Some students shared their work with the class.

The teacher offered feedback on task achievement at the end of each activity. As part of the feedback, students were asked to fill in a short form with one question (Figure 2). The third stage of the lesson observation protocol is the teacher's reflection on the effectiveness of AI integration in achieving learning aims and enhancing student participation.

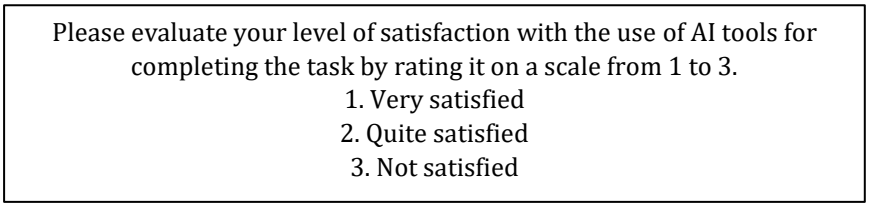


Figure 2. Respondents' level of satisfaction in using AI tools for task completion

[5] https://dictionary.law.com/

[6] The same dictionary was used throughout the study: Martin, E.A., ed. 1997. *A Dictionary of Law.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The interview conducted in the first two weeks of October 2023 consisted of asking all the subjects in the study the same three questions and recording their answers. As in the case of the questionnaires the language of communication was Romanian. All the students were informed that their answers were recorded, and they agreed beforehand.

Research results

This section describes the results provided by the research tools beforementioned.

The initial questionnaire consists of five questions that can be categorized based on their intended purpose as follows:

- One group includes three questions designed to assess the respondents' familiarity with AI, to find out their opinion on using AI in education, and to reveal their experience (if any) in using AI for learning (Tables 1, 2, and 3);
- One question aimed to reveal respondents' source of gathering general information on AI (Table 4);
- One multiple-choice question aimed to provide a short inventory of the best-known AI apps respondents have heard of or used (Table 5).

The pre-coded answers (yes or no, multiple choice) were examined quantitatively using Google Forms functions.

Table 1. Rating of respondents' familiarity with the concept of AI as an educational tool

Are you familiar with the concept of using AI in education?	n (%)
Yes	23 (62%)
No	14 (38%)

Table 2. Rating of respondents' approval of using AI in education

How would you rate the idea of employing AI in education?	n (%)
Particularly good	3 (8%)
Quite good	20 (54%)
Not good at all	14 (38%)

Table 3. The rating of respondents' experience with using AI in learning

Have you used AI for learning?	n (%)
Yes	22 (59%)
No	15 (41%)

The results from this set of questions show that 23 participants, corresponding to a majority of 62%, were already familiarized with the use of AI in education whereas 14 (38%) of them were not. These figures are logically correlated with the results in Table 2. The number of participants in the study that consider AI as *not good at all* for learning is the same as the number of participants that are not accustomed to the concept itself. Consequently, the number of respondents that consider the employment of AI in education as *particularly good* and *quite good* reflects the number of respondents that are familiarized with AI. The results in Table 3 go a step forward by providing an indication of the number of subjects in the study that employed AI in their learning: twenty-two (59%) is the rate of AI users vs. 15 (41%) of non-users. Again, the figures in Tables 1, 2 and 3 are aligned.

One question was aimed to indicate respondents' source of general information on AI (Table 4). As the results show, most respondents (57%) used social media as the main source of information. Next, 19% surfed the Internet to find out about this topic, 17% got the information from teachers and 7% from peers.

Table 4. Indication of respondents' source of information about AI

What sources have you used to find out information about AI?	n (%)
Internet	8 (19%)
Social media	24 (57%)
Teachers	7 (17%)
Peers	3 (7%)

One question aimed to reveal respondents' knowledge (if any) of apps that could be used for learning (Table 5). Participants were required to select the apps they know from a list with the most popular ones. The large majority (92%) ticked ChatGPT whereas some of them (8%) also included Bing Copilot.

Table 5. Indication of respondents' awareness of different AI apps

What apps from the following list do you know?	n (%)
ChatGPT	34 (92%)
Beautiful AI	-
GPT for Docs™, Sheets™, Forms™, and Slides™	-
Bing Copilot associated with Edge browsers	3 (8%)

The second questionnaire was designed as a short and summative tool meant to measure a change in respondents' perception of using AI in education after a series of classes where they employed it in doing different tasks. The two questions aimed to find out if there was a difference in respondents' attitude towards the use of AI for learning and if they were willing to use it further on (Table 6 and 7).

Table 6. Respondents' current opinion towards learning with AI

Define your current opinion towards learning with AI	n (%)
Positive	34 (92%)
Negative	3 (8%)

Table 7. Respondents' willingness to use AI tools for learning ELP

Would you consider AI assisted ELP learning in the future?	n (%)
Yes	33 (89%)
No	4 (11%)

The results clearly show that the number of students who felt positive towards using AI in learning increased from 23 in Table 2 to 34 in Table 6. Moreover, 89% of the subjects were willing to further employ AI in their learning (see Table 7).

The purpose of the interview was to collect additional information about the results revealed in the first questionnaire. Each interviewee answered three open-ended questions in Romanian in a ten-minute session. One question was intended to find respondents' doubts about the use of AI in education as resulted from the first questionnaire. The second question was related to respondents' opinion on the type of influence that using AI for educational purposes could have on learning. The third question was aimed at finding out the learning outcome of using AI. The most common concern was that AI may limit students' ability to develop critical thinking, research skills and creativity. The fact that the result of a chatbot inquiry is presented in one answer (in contrast with, for example, a Google search which offers multiple options) was perceived as a limitation resulting in a diminished need to compare, contrast, and decide on a result. They also questioned the reliability of the results given by AI and the fact that the information provided by this source has not been updated since 2021. Therefore, all students that displayed doubts about the use of AI in learning shared the opinion that this tool had a negative influence on learning. The other group of interviewees that had a more positive attitude towards AI expressed their trust that AI offered a range of opportunities, from timesaving to organizing information and simplifying texts.

The classroom observation protocol was designed to record valuable information on students' ease of use of AI tools while doing different tasks, on student collaboration and interaction while using AI tools, and on the relevance of using AI tools in teaching and learning Legal English. The information provided by the teacher's observation sheet throughout the study points towards a gradual familiarization and ease in employing AI tools in performing different tasks. Pair work encouraged collaboration offering support for those

students who were hesitant or unsure about how to use it. The feedback stage at the end of a task helped the students to understand better the way an AI tool works, its limitations but also its benefits. The short feedback forms filled in at the end of every activity that embedded AI offered the ranking of the three types of tasks included in the study: preparing a presentation in pairs came as the first choice, vocabulary search the second, and letter writing took the last place in their preferences.

Discussion of results

Study Aim and Context

The purpose of this research is to address the following question: In what ways can the incorporation of AI improve student involvement in ESAP classes? To fulfil this objective, the study examines a particular case at the Faculty of Law at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. As outlined in the university's language policy, students enrolled in legal studies are required to participate in an ESAP course, specifically English for Legal Purposes, to facilitate their research in their specialized fields and to effectively communicate with international peers in the same professional community.[7] To achieve this, the course focuses on both carrier content and real content by providing law-related context to equip students with relevant knowledge and understanding of the law in the English legal system and, at the same time, developing language skills. Therefore, in this case legal English is the carrier content whereas the four language skills are the real content.

The information for the study was gathered from three sources that completed one another to offer a reliable picture. The discussion of the results should begin with revealing the strategy behind data collection. The first questionnaire and the interview provided information on the students' initial perceptions and opinions on using AI in learning in general. The results of the questionnaires show that most respondents were familiarized with the use of AI tools in education (62%). Their sources of information included social media at the top of the list, followed by the Internet. A few of them discussed the topic in an educational setting with teachers (17%) or peers (7%). The next step was to link their familiarity with the topic and the type of information they possessed about AI with the degree of trust they invested in it. The percentage of the respondents that would not employ AI in learning is 38%. The reason for their

[7] https://senat.ubbcluj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Politica-lingvistica-UBB.pdf

attitude is explained by the answers to one of the questions in the interview: lack of reliability, a negative impact on the use of critical thinking skills and lack of authenticity of student-written productions. By contrast, 62% of the students were open to the idea of using AI in learning. From their point of view AI helped them to save time in solving tasks, to find basic information on a topic, to look for images that could be integrated in texts they wrote.

Another point of interest for the study was to find out the kind of AI apps they knew/used in learning and the types of tasks they did with their help. The answers (from the questionnaire combined with the interview) show that most students (92%) used Chat GPT to research information or to help them with their writing tasks. Summarizing these results, one might conclude that most students had an idea of using AI in education and some of them had tried it. The novelty for all the students was the use of AI tools in an organized way during a lesson, having in mind specific objectives for each stage.

The second questionnaire was designed to elicit information on the respondents' attitude towards AI use in learning ESP after two months experience of working with it. The shift in focus was from learning with AI to learning ELP (English for Legal Purposes) with AI. There was no reference to learning ELP in the first questionnaire because first-year students had no previous experience of the kind. The results showed an encouraging rise in their attitude pro employing AI in education, 92% being open towards it.

The information from the class observation protocol helped to understand how effective AI integration was in achieving learning objectives. It also revealed the level of student participation and engagement in performing class tasks using AI tools. The observation sheets recorded the gradual progress students made in using different apps and cooperating on different tasks. Collaboration and AI tools helped students to finish the task in time, talk in the target language while working and apply peer correction where necessary.

To sum up, the answer to the initial research question is the following: teaching ELP could be enhanced by incorporating AI tools if the activity aim is matched with the proper app and the students are instructed how to use it. If this is the case, AI works as a language booster for students to speak in the target language and do the task, while negotiating the content and practicing problem-solving. The benefits include:

1. AI provides immediate access to information and resources. Students nowadays belong to a generation that is immersed in technology use every day. Linking their usual information gathering routine with learning in an institutional environment is something natural for them. The outcome is that students become more interested and motivated to learn.

2. AI can act as an additional learning tool that complements traditional teaching resources. Educators should encourage students to delve deeper into subjects for enhanced understanding, encouraging them to become autonomous learners.

3. AI enhances student participation in classroom activities. The use of AI apps can stimulate conversation and can increase student confidence during writing activities by offering vocabulary and grammar assistance.

Conclusion

The use of AI in learning in general and in ESAP in particular is a new and uncharted territory. Despite its reduced scale the current research attempts to add a piece of information to this broad topic by providing relevant data for the local student population at the Faculty of Law, Babeș-Bolyai University. Its limitations are the size of the group and its homogeneity.

Nevertheless, the study gives some pertinent answers to the question: *How can the integration of AI enhance student engagement in ESAP classes*? We can say that AI tools are not a recipe for success *per se* if not accompanied by stimulating and motivational tasks that are logically integrated in the larger ESP lesson design. The aim of each activity that incorporates AI should be matched with a specific ESP aim. Consider a lesson focused on contract law. The primary aim is to instruct and practice the writing sub-skill of composing contracts. Chat GPT serves as the initial reference, offering a template. Then, students engage in drafting their own contracts using Google Docs™ for assistance. In this case, students are encouraged to interact and collaborate for solving the tasks and help each other to use the required digital tool. The result is students taking responsibility for their own learning: they ask questions on Chat GPT, look up words, write and rewrite paragraphs, discuss to agree on the best result. The goal of the ESP teacher should be to make the most of the potential of AI apps and guide students to complement classical instruction with the digital one. In this respect, we can speak about teacher AI literacy that could be defined as the teacher's ability to use the right AI tools to achieve the learning objectives of an ESAP lesson and of the ESAP syllabus in general.

The information revealed by the study mentioned here shows that students are ready to accept education that incorporates artificial intelligence if they are trained by the teacher and by doing so, they are encouraged to use it as a resourceful learning partner.

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