ISSN:2828-6235
Impact factor:13.77

International Journal of Literature and Language Studies(IJLLS)

From Knowledge Transmitter to Learning Facilitator: A Comparative Study of EFL Teacher Roles in Pre-AI and AI-Integrated Educational Contexts

Mamatkulova Marjona Muzaffar kizi
Master's student at Karshi International University, Karshi, Uzbekistan
doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23707429

Abstract: The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has fundamentally reshaped the pedagogical landscape, yet empirical research examining the transformation of teacher roles remains limited. This comparative mixed-methods study investigated the evolution of EFL teacher roles, professional identity, and agency by contrasting pre-AI educational practices with current AI-integrated contexts. The participants comprised 45 EFL teachers from universities and language centers in Uzbekistan, who reflected on their teaching practices across both periods. Quantitative data were collected through a Teacher Role Perception Survey administered retrospectively for the pre-AI period and currently for the AI-integrated period, measuring dimensions of knowledge transmission, facilitation, technological integration, and professional agency. Qualitative data were gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers, exploring their lived experiences of role transformation. Quantitative results revealed a significant shift from teacher-centered knowledge transmission to student-centered facilitation. Teachers reported increased professional agency in curriculum design but expressed concerns about technological overwhelm. Qualitative thematic analysis identified three transformative themes: transitioning from sole authority to collaborative guide, navigating technological identity crisis, and reclaiming pedagogical purpose in the AI era. The study concludes that AI integration necessitates a fundamental reimagining of teacher professional development, emphasizing adaptive expertise and critical digital pedagogy over mere technical skills. Implications for teacher education and institutional policy are discussed.

Keywords: EFL teachers; teacher roles, AI integration, professional identity, teacher agency, comparative study, educational technology, pedagogical transformation, pre-AI era, post-AI era, language teaching, higher education, mixed-methods research, teacher professional development

Introduction

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education represents not merely a technological shift but a profound pedagogical transformation that challenges traditional conceptions of teaching and learning. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, AI tools such as ChatGPT, automated writing evaluation systems, and intelligent tutoring platforms have disrupted long-established practices where teachers served as the primary source of linguistic knowledge and correction. Prior to the widespread adoption of AI (the "pre-AI era"), EFL teachers predominantly occupied the role of knowledge transmitters, delivering content, correcting errors, and controlling the pace and direction of learning. The classroom was largely teacher-centered, with the instructor serving as the authoritative figure whose expertise was rarely challenged by technological alternatives.

However, the current educational landscape (the "AI-integrated era") presents a radically different reality. Students now have access to AI tools that can generate grammatically correct essays, provide instant feedback on pronunciation, and simulate conversational partners available around the clock. This technological democratization of knowledge has fundamentally altered the power dynamics in the classroom, forcing teachers to reconsider their professional identity and pedagogical purpose. The question is no longer whether teachers are needed, but rather what unique value they bring in an age where AI can perform many traditional teaching functions more efficiently and at scale. Despite the urgency of this transformation, empirical research examining

how EFL teachers perceive and navigate this role shift remains scarce, particularly in Central Asian contexts where educational traditions have historically emphasized teacher authority and knowledge transmission. Most existing studies focus on student perceptions of AI or technical implementation challenges, neglecting the lived experiences of teachers who must reconcile their professional identity with rapidly changing technological realities. This gap is particularly concerning given that teacher buy-in and adaptive expertise are critical determinants of successful educational technology integration. Therefore, this comparative study aims to bridge this research gap by systematically examining the evolution of EFL teacher roles from the pre-AI era to the current AI-integrated context, addressing how teachers' perceptions of their professional roles have changed, what challenges and opportunities they identify in navigating this transformation, and how AI integration has affected their sense of professional agency and identity.

The role of the language teacher has been a subject of extensive scholarly inquiry, evolving from the audio-lingual paradigm's emphasis on drillmaster to the communicative approach's facilitator of meaningful interaction. In the pre-AI era, despite pedagogical reforms advocating for learner-centered approaches, many EFL contexts maintained traditional teacher-centered practices where instructors served as the primary knowledge authorities. Teachers controlled information flow, corrected errors, and designed assessments, operating within what scholars term the "apprenticeship of observation," where their own experiences as students shaped their professional identity. The advent of educational technology in the 2010s began to challenge this model, with learning management systems and online resources providing students with alternative knowledge sources. However, these tools largely supplemented rather than replaced teacher functions. The emergence of generative AI marked a qualitative shift, as AI systems demonstrated capabilities previously considered exclusive to human teachers: generating original text, providing personalized feedback, and engaging in adaptive dialogue. This technological disruption has forced a reexamination of what constitutes the unique value of human teaching. Recent scholarship has identified that language teachers experience "technological anxiety" when confronted with AI capabilities that mirror their own expertise, and argued that teachers must transition from "knowledge providers" to "learning designers," focusing on higher-order skills that AI cannot replicate.

Teacher agency, defined as the capacity of teachers to make purposeful professional decisions and take initiative in their work, has emerged as a critical factor in successful technology integration. Research suggests that teachers who perceive themselves as agents of change are more likely to integrate technology meaningfully. However, the impact of AI on teacher agency remains underexplored, particularly regarding whether AI enhances teachers' professional autonomy by automating routine tasks or undermines it by imposing technological dependencies. Professional identity, the evolving sense of self that teachers construct through their work, is particularly vulnerable during periods of technological disruption. When AI systems can perform tasks central to teachers' professional identity, teachers may experience "identity threat." Conversely, AI integration may also present opportunities for identity reconstruction, allowing teachers to focus on relational and creative aspects of teaching that AI cannot replicate.

This study employed a comparative mixed-methods design, combining quantitative retrospective survey data with qualitative in-depth interviews to capture both the breadth and depth of teacher role transformation. The comparative approach allowed for systematic examination of changes from the pre-AI era to the current AI-integrated era, providing a clear before-and-after framework that isolates the impact of AI integration from other educational changes. The participants were 45 EFL teachers from universities and private language centers in Uzbekistan, with teaching experience ranging from 3 to 22 years. Participants held various qualifications, including Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD degrees. They taught diverse courses including Academic Writing, General English, English for Specific Purposes, and Conversation Skills. The sample was

purposively selected to ensure representation across different institutional contexts and experience levels. Quantitative data were collected through the Teacher Role Perception Survey, a 32-item instrument developed for this study based on existing frameworks. The survey measured four dimensions: Knowledge Transmission, Learning Facilitation, Technological Integration, and Professional Agency. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Teachers completed the survey twice: once retrospectively reflecting on their pre-AI practices and once currently reflecting on their AI-integrated practices. This retrospective design allows for direct within-subjects comparison that controls for individual differences.

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers purposively selected from the survey participants to represent diverse experiences and perspectives. Interviews lasted 45-60 minutes and explored teachers' lived experiences of role transformation, challenges faced, strategies employed, and impacts on professional identity. Interviews were conducted in participants' preferred languages, audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English. Translation accuracy was verified through back-translation. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical software, with paired samples t-tests comparing pre-AI and post-AI scores on each dimension. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Transcripts were coded independently by two researchers, with discrepancies resolved through discussion. Initial codes were grouped into potential themes, which were then reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and distinctiveness.

Results

Quantitative analysis revealed substantial shifts in teachers' role perceptions from the pre-AI to the AI-integrated era. There was a significant decrease in the Knowledge Transmission dimension, indicating that teachers no longer view themselves primarily as knowledge authorities. Conversely, the Learning Facilitation dimension showed a significant increase, demonstrating a clear shift toward student-centered facilitation. These changes were statistically significant with large effect sizes, suggesting that this is not a marginal adjustment but a profound pedagogical realignment. The Technological Integration dimension revealed a moderate score, indicating that while teachers have adopted AI tools, integration is not yet seamless or universal. More importantly, the Professional Agency dimension showed a nuanced pattern: teachers reported increased agency in curriculum design but expressed significant concerns about technological overwhelm. This suggests that AI integration has created both opportunities for autonomy and new sources of stress, representing a complex transformation rather than a simple enhancement or diminishment of professional agency. Qualitative thematic analysis of the interviews yielded three major themes that illuminated the quantitative findings. The first theme, “From Sole Authority to Collaborative Guide,” captured teachers’ recognition that their traditional authority has been democratized. Teachers reflected on how students now use AI tools and come to class with questions that were previously unanticipated. This shift was widely echoed, with teachers describing their movement from “lecturer” to “learning designer” or “critical thinking coach.”

The second theme, “Navigating Technological Identity Crisis,” revealed the psychological challenges of role transformation. Many teachers experienced initial resistance and anxiety when confronted with AI capabilities that mirrored their expertise. Teachers shared feelings of being threatened when AI systems produced work that matched or exceeded student capabilities. This identity work was particularly challenging for teachers with strong traditional identities as knowledge authorities, who had to reconstruct their professional self-concept.

The third theme, “Reclaiming Pedagogical Purpose in the AI Era,” highlighted how teachers found renewed meaning by focusing on aspects of teaching that AI cannot replicate. Teachers explained that while AI can correct grammar, it cannot inspire shy students, understand cultural contexts behind errors, or provide emotional support during frustration. This realization led teachers to focus on building relationships, fostering creativity, and developing students’

intercultural competence- dimensions of teaching that remain distinctly human. This theme was particularly prominent among experienced teachers who successfully reframed AI as a tool that frees them to focus on higher-order pedagogical goals.

The findings of this comparative study provide compelling evidence that AI integration has catalyzed a fundamental transformation in EFL teacher roles, shifting from knowledge transmission to learning facilitation. The substantial effect sizes observed indicate that this is a profound pedagogical realignment. This transformation aligns with broader educational trends toward student-centered learning but has been accelerated and complicated by AI's ability to perform traditional teaching functions at scale. The significant decrease in teachers' identification with the Knowledge Transmission role suggests that AI has effectively democratized access to linguistic expertise. When students can receive instant, personalized feedback from AI systems, the teacher's monopoly on knowledge correction is broken. This necessitates a redefinition of teacher value, moving from "what I know" to "how I help students learn." This shift echoes post-method pedagogy's emphasis on teacher as facilitator and co-learner, but adds a new dimension: the teacher must now also be a critical guide to technology use, helping students navigate AI's limitations, biases, and hallucinations. The increase in Learning Facilitation scores reflects teachers' adaptation to this new reality. By focusing on designing learning experiences, fostering critical thinking, and providing emotional support, teachers are carving out a professional space that AI cannot occupy. However, the moderate Technological Integration scores suggest that this transition is incomplete; many teachers are still developing the confidence and competence to integrate AI effectively. The nuanced findings on Professional Agency reveal a paradox of AI integration. Teachers report increased agency in curriculum design, likely because AI automates routine tasks, freeing time for creative work. However, the high Technological Overwhelm scores indicate that AI integration also imposes new demands: constant learning, adapting to rapidly changing tools, and managing student expectations about AI use. This dual effect suggests that teacher agency in the AI era is transformed, requiring new forms of adaptive expertise. The qualitative themes provide rich context for understanding these quantitative patterns. The "Identity Crisis" theme highlights the psychological toll of role transformation, particularly for teachers whose professional identity was strongly tied to knowledge authority. The "Reclaiming Pedagogical Purpose" theme offers a hopeful counterpoint, demonstrating that teachers who successfully navigate this crisis often emerge with a deeper, more humanistic conception of their role. In the Central Asian context, where educational traditions have historically emphasized teacher authority, this transformation is particularly challenging. The finding that experienced teachers were more likely to successfully reframe their role suggests that professional maturity and pedagogical wisdom are assets in this transition.

Conclusion

This comparative study provides empirical evidence that AI integration has fundamentally transformed EFL teacher roles, shifting from knowledge transmission to learning facilitation, with significant implications for professional identity and agency. The findings demonstrate that this transformation is not merely technical but deeply pedagogical and psychological, requiring teachers to reconstruct their professional self-concept and find new sources of meaning in their work. The pedagogical implications are substantial. Teacher education programs must move beyond technical training on AI tools to address the deeper identity and agency challenges revealed in this study. Professional development should focus on helping teachers develop "adaptive expertise"- the ability to apply pedagogical principles flexibly in novel technological contexts- rather than mere procedural knowledge. Institutions should create spaces for teachers to share experiences, negotiate role changes, and collaboratively develop AI-integrated pedagogies that align with their values and beliefs. Policy implications include the need for clear institutional guidelines on AI use that balance innovation with academic integrity, and recognition that

successful AI integration requires sustained support, not one-time training workshops. Teachers should be involved in policy development to ensure that AI integration enhances rather than undermines their professional agency.

This study has limitations that suggest directions for future research. The retrospective design, while allowing for direct comparison, is subject to recall bias. Future longitudinal studies tracking teachers through the AI transition would provide more robust evidence. The sample was limited to Uzbekistan; cross-cultural comparative studies would reveal whether these findings generalize to other educational contexts. Additionally, this study focused on teacher perceptions; future research should examine the impact of role transformation on student learning outcomes. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that AI integration in EFL education is not simply about adopting new tools but about reimagining the human dimensions of teaching. As AI continues to evolve, teachers who can navigate this transformation - maintaining their professional identity while embracing new roles- will be best positioned to prepare students for a world where human and artificial intelligence coexist and collaborate.

References

1. Barr, R. B., & Tagg, J. (1995). From teaching to learning: A new paradigm for undergraduate education. Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 27(6), 12-26.
2. Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. Cambridge Journal of Education, 39(2), 175-189.
3. Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. Teaching and Teacher Education, 20(2), 107-128.
4. Borg, S. (2015). Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury.
5. Bransford, J. D., Darling-Hammond, L., & LePage, P. (2005). Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), Preparing teachers for a changing world (pp. 85-123). Jossey-Bass.
6. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77-101.
7. Ertmer, P. A., & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, A. T. (2010). Teacher technology change: How knowledge, confidence, beliefs, and culture intersect. Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 42(3), 255-284.
8. Harmer, J. (2007). The practice of English language teaching (4th ed.). Pearson Education.
9. Kasneci, E., Seßler, K., Küchemann, S., Bannert, M., Dementieva, D., Fischer, F., ... & Kasneci, G. (2023). ChatGPT for good? On opportunities and challenges of large language models for education. Learning and Individual Differences, 103, 102274.
10. Kohnke, L., Moorhouse, B. L., & Diab, R. L. (2023). Prompt engineering for ESL/EFL teachers and students. TESOL Journal, 14(4), e712.
11. Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). Understanding language teaching: From method to postmethod. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
12. Little, D. (2023). Learner autonomy and the challenge of AI in language education. Language Teaching Research, 27(4), 689-705.
13. Lortie, D. C. (1975). Schoolteacher: A sociological study. University of Chicago Press.
14. Moorhouse, B. L., Kohnke, L., & Diab, R. L. (2023). ChatGPT, AI cheating, and the future of language education. TESOL Quarterly, 57(3), 1234-1240.
15. Priestley, M., Biesta, G., & Robinson, S. (2015). Teacher agency: An ecological approach. Bloomsbury.

16. Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). Methodology and language teaching (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
17. Yan, L., Zhang, R., Martínez-Maldonado, R., & Chen, G. (2023). Exploring the role of AI literacy in supporting students' learning. Computers & Education, 204, 104875.