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Strategic Prompt Engineering for Enhancing AI-Generated Content in English Language Teaching Empowering EFL Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Strategic prompt engineering has emerged as a crucial factor in maximizing the academic potential of AI-generated content in empowering English as a foreign language (EFL) context. This study explored the effectiveness of artificial intelligence (AI) tools guided by prompt design in enhancing language teaching. Data for the quantitative analysis was gathered from 77 EFL teachers across institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia using a structured questionnaire. The responses were analyzed using IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants using NVivo 15 to obtain qualitative insights. Findings indicated that AI-generated content is viewed as a valuable tool; its efficacy is largely dependent on the teacher's ability to craft and refine prompts that align with specific learning aims. Participants reported an increased engagement, particularly in lesson customization and content variety, and emphasized the need for targeted training in prompt engineering. The research highlighted the need for professional development in prompt design and presented practical implications for integrating AI prompt engineering into EFL instruction.

KEYWORDS

AI-Generated Content, Prompt Engineering, English Language, EFL Classrooms, Teacher Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in education has significantly impacted instructional design in English language teaching (ELT), particularly through the use of tools that support content generation, formative feedback, and personalized learning (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). AI-powered tools, such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, and Grammarly, are increasingly being used to assist language instructors in developing lesson plans, generating exercises, and providing instant feedback to students. These tools offer immense potential to enhance both teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes, particularly for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL).

A central aspect of leveraging AI in language education is prompt engineering, which involves crafting precise and contextually appropriate inputs to optimize AI-generated responses. A key component in maximizing the effectiveness of these tools is prompt engineering, the practice of

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designing precise, contextually relevant inputs to elicit high-quality responses from AI models (Bansal, 2024; Ortolan, 2023; Reynolds & McDonell, 2021). However, the effectiveness of AI-generated content largely depends on the quality of the prompts provided by users, highlighting the need for strategic prompt engineering in EFL classrooms. This process, known as prompt-based learning, enables large language models to function more effectively within instructional settings by embedding the task directly into the input. This skill is essential because the quality of AI-generated content is directly influenced by how clearly and strategically the user formulates their query. In pedagogical settings, prompt-based learning refers to embedding instructional tasks directly into prompts, enabling language models to produce more targeted and educationally useful outputs (Gero et al., 2022). For instance, a vague prompt, such as "Explain the past tense," may yield a generic explanation, whereas a well-crafted prompt, like "Provide five examples of past tense verbs in different sentence structures with explanations," would result in a more comprehensive and sound output for teaching purposes.

AI applications in ELT have introduced a range of benefits, including the ability to customize learning experiences to meet diverse student needs (Dugošija, 2024). AI-driven platforms offer a range of instructional benefits. These platforms also enable adaptive learning, where tailored content can improve student proficiency levels, learning styles, and pacing (Aggarwal, 2023; Dutta et al., 2024). Additionally, AI tools support writing enhancement by suggesting grammatical corrections, improving sentence structures, and providing stylistic recommendations, which are particularly useful for non-native English speakers (Wang & Kabilan, 2024). Chatbots offer conversational practice in a low-pressure environment, while well-crafted prompts enhance the relevance, clarity, and coherence of generated content (Belda-Medina & Calvo-Ferrer, 2022; Rosario, 2022; Xiao et al., 2024). Moreover, a recent critical book review by Parviz (2025) on integrating generative AI into English writing classrooms highlighted how AI tools can serve as influential collaborators in enhancing writing processes through adaptable, classroom-ready techniques. The book offers practical frameworks for educators to effectively utilize AI and acknowledge its limitations in addressing significant ethical concerns and issues of fairness. Additionally, this review examined the varied requirements of multilingual learners. The work contributes as an AI facilitator to current disputes on how to support both teachers and learners.

Despite its potential benefits, current challenges in prompt engineering hinder its widespread and practical application in English language classrooms. Many educators lack formal training in AI technologies, including prompt optimization, which can lead to difficulties in generating high-quality teaching content (De la Vall & Araya, 2023; Yang, 2024). Additional concerns include the contextual accuracy of AI-generated responses, alignment with curricular standards, and the depth of pedagogical content (Caines et al., 2023; Warschauer et al., 2023). These challenges highlight an urgent need for teacher competence in strategic prompt design to ensure the responsible and effective integration of AI into ELT.

Although previous studies have explored the general use of AI in education, they have not sufficiently addressed how English language teachers apply prompt engineering in classroom practice. This study aimed to fill that gap by examining how English language teachers perceive and utilize AI-generated content, with a focus on the role of strategic prompt engineering in enhancing the quality of instructional materials. Through a mixed-methods approach involving interviews and questionnaires, the research aimed to identify effective strategies, common challenges, and best practices in prompt design. Ultimately, this study contributes to the evolving field of AI in education by providing a framework for best practices in prompt engineering tailored to ELT.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies highlight the critical role of prompt engineering, as the strategic formulation of inputs to guide AI-generated responses effectively has emerged as a key factor in enhancing the quality of AI-assisted ELT, particularly in terms of content relevance, learner engagement, and instructional

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