THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN TEACHING ENGLISH: PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence has become one of the most influential technologies of the 21st century significantly changing our lives, in different fields, such as business, education, and healthcare. The link between the technological development and education is obvious. The appearance of new technological changes has brought along also new challenges leading to a transformation of the teaching and learning process. Probably the most significant from all is the change from teacher-based education to student-centred education. New trends have appeared in the teaching and learning process of English due to the appearance of the Artificial Intelligence-based tools.

The present study approaches the perspectives and challenges of teaching and learning English, focusing more on the students' opinions regarding the introduction of AI-based tools in the teaching process. It is about the introduction of new technology as an everyday tool in the educational process. Do students consider AI-based tools effective in the learning process? Do they consider it useful? The study begins with a systematic literature review. Semi-structures interviews in the qualitative phase represent the instrument for data collection.

The respondents have been 40 students, at different profiles, International Business in English – 10students; Accounting – 5 students; Marketing – 5 students; Tourism – 5 students; Finance-Banks – 10 students; Management – 5 students, at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea, being in the first and second year of bachelor studies. The results show that the intelligent content enhances the learning experience of the students, fostering interactivity and having a student-centred approach. The students perceive the integration of

AI-based tools in the learning process have resulted in better outcomes due to its interactive and engaging character. The personalized experiences have also contributed to better results in the productive skills (speaking and writing) but also receptive skills (reading and listening).

The significant integration of technology in what is known as blended learning has resulted in a boost in learning Business English, being more interactive, engaging and effective; it also contributes to the creation of personalized experiences that lead to an improved tailor-content based learning experience. The students feel that their skills (productive skills: speaking and writing and the receptive skills: reading and listening) have improved after a period of using technology- based tools in the teaching and learning process. The significant benefits come along with undeniable limitations.

The challenges include: infrastructure requirements, aspects regarding inclusion and equity, the preparation and the readiness of the teacher, ethical aspects, data privacy and unequal accessibility. In the realm of education, the maximizing of the benefits of AI cannot be done without addressing these limitations. This research study can be continued with the teachers' approach to the subject, the challenges and perspectives of teaching in the AI era.

Key words: *Artificial Intelligence; educational technology; teaching and learning methods; blended learning.*

INTRODUCTION

In today's fast paced world, the connection between technology and all fields of our lives is more than obvious. The future of English language teaching and learning is closely connected to the developments of technology and computing capacities of the intelligent machines. The educational landscape is rapidly evolving. Digital technology has been used in language teaching for many years, at different levels, in different forms. Although, it has undergone important transformations from the traditional methods to the present ones, teaching English requires a balanced approach that integrates both conventional and innovative methods.

AI has shown a great potential in the field of teaching and learning English, enhancing the learning process and improving the outcomes of it. Before exploring the current scene, it is important to have a look at the interesting and vivid journey of English Language Teaching. Traditional teaching and learning methods, such as textbook-based learning, grammar drills and lectures have long been regarded as the foundation of student-centred learning. The historical evolution goes back to the traditional methods like the grammar-translation approach, memorization and translation of texts, failing to motivate students.

The traditional methods have presented a great deal of problems and shortcomings, being considered monotonous and behind the times of the 4.0. and

5.0. era. However, as time passed, other methods that involved listening, speaking and other communicative methods started to gain prominence, emphasizing the oral proficiency, pattern practice and meaningful communication.

The shift from grammar rules approach to a more communicative and learner-centred approach has been done. Along with the advancement of technology, innovative approaches such as interactive learning, e-learning, case-based methods have gained more and more attention and praise.

The contemporary English Language Teaching landscape has different prominent trends, offering interactive platforms, digital resources, personalized learning experiences – all these having in common the communicative approach, focusing on fluency, real-world tasks and cultural competence.

The use of Artificial Intelligence has an undeniable impact on our lives. It has appeared 50 years ago and since then it has been developing continuously. It has become a buzzword in a world that relies more and more on information technology. It enables machines to perform tasks that require perception, reason, interaction and learning. Moreover, a huge change has been brought about by the appearance of recent advancements in generative AI, especially that of Chat GPT that has definitely underlined the transformative potential in the field of various industries. It has entered many industries, including the field of education with smart content that integrate multimedia, interactive tools, AI-related devices, information technologies, all these leading to the diversity of learning ways that are more and more appealing to students.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

The much-debated topic of the use of Artificial Intelligence in education has become a major focus of the recent academic research. While the educational institutions search for innovative ways to increase learning efficiency, personalization and accessibility, AI-based tools are more and more developed to support adaptive learning platforms, automated grading and predictive academic performance modelling.

However, in order to have a clear image of where we are today, regarding the process of teaching and learning, it is important to have a look at its historical path, the journey that has been undertaken. English Language Teaching has evolved over time, the historical development of it providing us a varied context for understanding how teaching Business English has developed.

The rich historical contexts having rich teaching contexts, have provided valuable experiences. Thus, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, the prominent teaching method was that of pure memorization of vocabulary, translation methods were used a lot, emphasizing the need for knowing grammar rules and putting them into practice.

The translation method was used for classical languages, developing writing skills and reading skills, being criticised for lacking the development of communication skills. It was a method that eliminated the need of speaking; thus,

the students were extremely teacher-dependent as the teacher was the only one who was talking during the activities. Thus, the teacher-centred method was used. The beginning of the 20th century was marked by the development of the Direct Method, drawing attention to the need to develop oral communication and avoidance of translation.

Natural language use, conversational fluency and listening comprehension were the main three goals of introducing this teaching method. Keo and Lan (2024, p.3) stated that *'Through Direct Method approach may not sufficiently handle structured written assignments and reading exercises, it may impede the development of comprehensive language skills by ignoring reading and writing abilities.'*

The mid-20th century brought about a focus on repetition, audio-visual materials and pattern drills, being dominated by the Audio-Lingual method. Mart A. (2013, p. 1) states that *'Language items are presented to students in spoken form without reference to the mother tongue so that they can learn language skills effectively. The goal of the Audio-Lingual method is, via teaching vocabulary and grammatical patterns through dialogues, to enable students to respond quickly and accurately in spoken language.'* The approach was meant to increase automaticity, accuracy in language use and mastery of language structures, however, it was criticised for focusing only on rote learning, lack of meaningful communication and a high probability of monotony in class.

After this period, dominated by the above-mentioned methods, English Language Teaching started to become 'more active', meaning that it started approaching language teaching by using real-life tasks. Interactive activities and meaningful communication. The era of Communicative Approach has started. As Savignon (2002, p.5) states *'Central to Communicative Language Teaching is the understanding of language learning as both an educational and a political issue. Language teaching is inextricably linked with language policy. Viewed from a multicultural intranational as well as international perspective, diverse set of language-learning goals but a diverse set of teaching strategies.'* The Communicative Approach has as a main purpose the development of the pragmatic skills, cultural awareness and communicative competence. However, this approach has its limitations, among which we mention: adapting to learner backgrounds, balancing accuracy and fluency and effective technology integration.

The 1950s marked the appearance of AI, when scholars in the United State began, as Cordeschi noticed (2007) *'the creation of machines that could carry out complex tasks, such as playing chess or deciding what to buy on a shopping tour'.* Thus, the second half of the 20th century has been marked by a shift from the industrial and technical field into all spheres of life including education. The late 20th century English Language Teaching was marked by Task-Based Learning strategy, which is a method used even nowadays, the main characteristics of it

being real-life language use, learning through tasks and activities based on problem solving. Ha Loc and Tuyen (2002, p.3) observe that *'unlike the traditional methods of assessment which focus on paper-based tests, the task-based approach is used to evaluate learners' competence and ability to solve different kinds of tasks. In addition, the assessment of learning tasks is not only the reenactment of actual activities through lectures, but also the assessment of learners' reflective capacity in each problem.'* The intention of this method was to promote independent learning, individual language acquisition and critical thinking skills. Hence, the teachers using this method had to face challenges such as the difficulty in designing tasks, the assessment of the task performance and the authenticity of the tasks.

The beginning of the 21st century faced the introduction of technology in English Language Teaching, by incorporating in the language courses digital tools, online platforms, multimedia resources and adaptive learning systems. As Rintaningrum (2023, p.2) states, *'The advancement of technological tools causes a shift in some language learning activities. When dependency on textbook is not enough to address the advancement of modern education.'* The teaching/learning strategy of the 21st century is student based, students being conditioned in an environment where communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking as well as problem-solving are key components. Marysia (2023, p.7) claims that: '*The capacity for change adaptation, initiative and self-direction, social and intercultural competence, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility are other traits that can be cultivated through scientific learning'*.

The following areas are essential in this respect:
- effectiveness of communication: active listening having as an outcome the comprehended meaning; media and technology use.
- communication and collaboration: in order to reach creative pursuits, the development of creative thinking entails the following steps: applying development approaches of broad concepts, new idea production and analysing own ideas.
- information, technology and communication literacy: the use of technology as a tool for analysing, organizing and evaluating information; understanding the ethical and legal issues regarding the information technology.

The historical developments mentioned above show us the evolution of the English language teaching methodologies, from the traditional approaches being based on grammar and translation, to a more communicative approach, being based on communication, collaboration, task-based strategy and technology-integrated practices. Current trends in teaching/learning Business English focus on a more dynamic shift towards students, innovation, technology integration and cultural competence, being learner-centred. As Kiwan and Rod (2012, p.3) notice *'In the era of fast technology and social networking, one can transact ideas and information not only through face-to-face interaction but also through technology,*

which allows for the instant formation and dismantling of (hyper) real communities based on temporary desire and politics.'

The language learning experiences are enhanced by technology integration, by using digital tools, online platforms, and multimedia resources. Many researchers in the field have concluded that the implementation of new technology, with VR headsets and the other accessories, has led to a close-to-life experience in the whole process of language learning. Interactive language learning experiences, exercises through games and personalised feedback are just a few results of new technology use in Business English teaching. Compared to printed books, technology-based materials have the advantage of dynamic functions and various modalities to support students' meaning-making. Being tailored to the individual learning needs, preferences and progress levels, these materials go beyond the traditional model, which is no longer accepted by the students. The main focus is to develop communicative competence, real-world language skills and interaction which makes sense. The practice of the language in authentic contexts is reached by using simulations, dialogues and role-play activities. As Kholstinina et al (2021) state, *'It has shown that all these methods and techniques promote students' learning and academic achievement, increase students' retention, enhance students' satisfaction with their learning experience, help students develop skills in oral communication, develop students' social skills, promote student self-esteem, help to promote positive intercultural relations, and the problem of using effective methods of teaching English is extremely important.'*

Today's world is a digital world with its emerging technologies among which the latest achievement, that of the Artificial Intelligence and big data processing have a strong impact on the education processes, more exactly on the strategies adopted for learning/teaching foreign languages. The appearance of the Artificial Intelligence and the development of it, with virtual reality, augmented reality and natural language processes are revolutionising language learning experiences. Bringing new ideas and new opportunities to all aspects of the teaching and learning process, it has revolutionised not only the students above mentioned traditional methods but also the teacher's role in the teaching process. We are facing a complex and promising tool in the field of language acquisition. On the other hand, teachers face an unprecedented challenge in integrating technology in their class in order to satisfy the learning needs of the young generation. Virtual reality and chatbots are the tools that need to be used by teachers in order to keep up with the digitally literate students and keep a high level of involvement in their classes. Technology comes along with a wide range of benefits and these benefits must be taken into consideration when thinking of strategies in teaching Business English.

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II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this study, the selected approach is the qualitative type of study. Creswell J.W. (2024) in his book entitle *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches,* argues that *'the qualitative research is a type of research that explores and understands the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems'*. This type of research typically involves in-depth interviews, focus groups and field of observation. The method used in this type of research includes structured, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation. They can lead to hypothesis and can help the researcher to continue the quantitative research at another level. It can be a stimulating and rewarding experience both for the researcher and for the participant.

II.1. Sample of study

This study has been conducted at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea, the sample being 40 students from the first year of our faculty (22 females and 18 males), all specializations of the faculty, meaning International Business in English, Finance and Banks, Marketing, Management, Accounting. The students' level in English ranges from upper-intermediate to advanced. The technique used in choosing the participant was the purposive sampling technique with non-probability sampling approach. Purposive sampling is a non-randomized sampling technique that selects sampling units (persons, cases or events) based on the criteria that would suit the objectives of the study. It is also called judgemental sampling as it relies on the researcher's judgement when selecting the samples that can provide the best information in order to achieve the study's objectives. Non-probability sampling is a technique by which not all the elements to be selected for the study are provided equal opportunities.

II.2. Research informants

The study's informants have been chosen with a view to a clear image of the Artificial Intelligence's impact on learning foreign languages, having clear reference to English, we have chosen key informants that could provide relevant information, being chosen following the inclusion criteria: 1. Economics students who have English selection exam scores above 80 points; 2. Economics students who have taken Introduction to Business English Course during the first semester.

II.3. Research Instruments

The instrument of the study is a semi-structured interview, containing five main topics, each being formed of three questions, regarding the students' challenges and perspective about using Artificial Intelligence based platforms and applications in learning foreign languages, more exactly English.

II.4. Data Collection and Analysis

All interviews have been anonymous and written. They were conducted in English. The interviews lasted between 10 and 15 minutes, each student being asked to describe their personal experience regarding the use of Artificial

Intelligence apps and platforms in developing their Business English knowledge. The first-year students at the University of Oradea, Faculty of Economic Sciences, the study programs of International Business, Finance-Banks, Accounting, Management, Marketing, and Economy of Commerce, Tourism and Services have been the respondents to the five questions in the questionnaire. The total number of respondents was 40 students and the representation of each study program is seen in Table 1.

Table 1 (showing the characteristics of all the participants in the study)

	Characteristics
Age	18-21 years old
Female/Male	22 Female, 18 Male
Educational Status	College students
School	University of Oradea, Faculty of Economic Sciences
Specialization	International Business in English – 10students; Accounting – 5 students; Marketing – 5 students; Tourism – 5 students; Finance-Banks – 10 students; Management – 5 students.
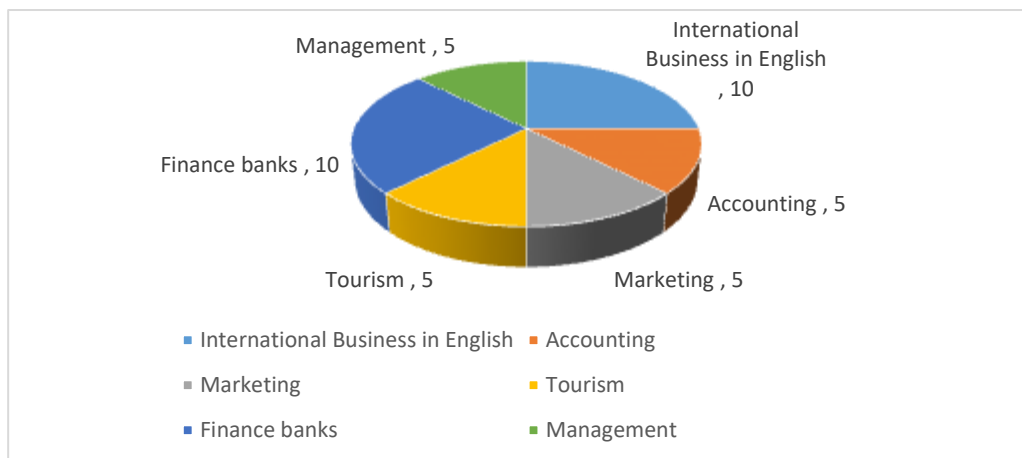
Figure 1: Students' specialisation
Source: own design

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The study explores the following three main topics:

1. Motivation to try AI-based tools for learning English;
2. Perceptions and attitudes;
3. Usage and application;
4. Effectiveness and learning impact;
5. Challenges and concerns.

Research topic 1

In order to find out the attitude of students towards using AI-based technology in learning Business English, we asked questions regarding the students' motivation in using AI-based tools in learning English. The rate of frequency shows us the students' baseline and their level of familiarity with using AI-based tools in learning English.

QUESTION 1 regarding students' attitude towards AI

| Are AI-based tools needed for learning English?		
Specialisation	**YES**	**NO**
International Business in English	7	3
Accounting	4	1
Marketing	3	2
Tourism	4	1
Finance-Banks	5	5
Management	4	1
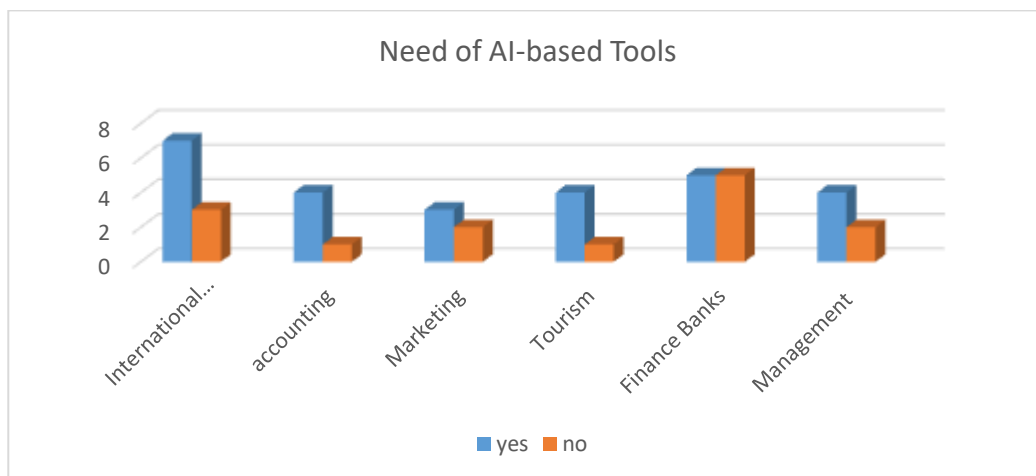
Figure 2: Students' motivation in using AI-based tools
Source: own design

Research topic 2

In order to find out the attitude of students towards using AI-based technology in learning English, we asked a question regarding the positive impact, of AI-based tools in learning English.

QUESTION 2 regarding benefits of using AI-based tools

Do AI-based tools have a positive impact on learning English?		
Specialisation	**YES**	**NO**
International Business in English	5	5
Accounting	3	2
Marketing	3	2
Tourism	4	1
Finance-Banks	5	5
Management	4	1
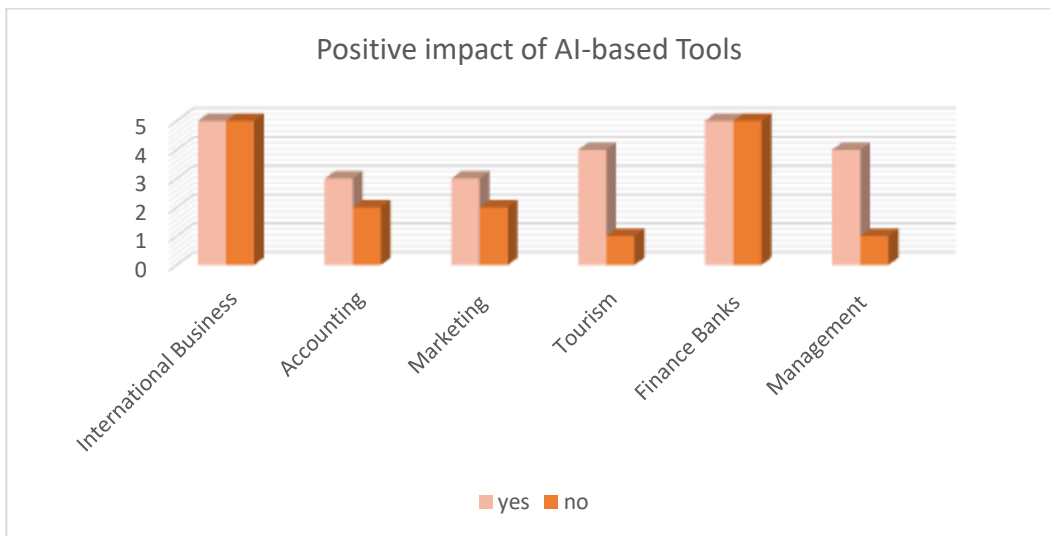
**Figure 3:** Students' benefits in using AI-based tools
Source: own design

Research topic 3

In order to find out the method students use in learning English with AI-based technology, we asked a question regarding skills development, communication and improvement.

QUESTION 3 regarding communicative skill development

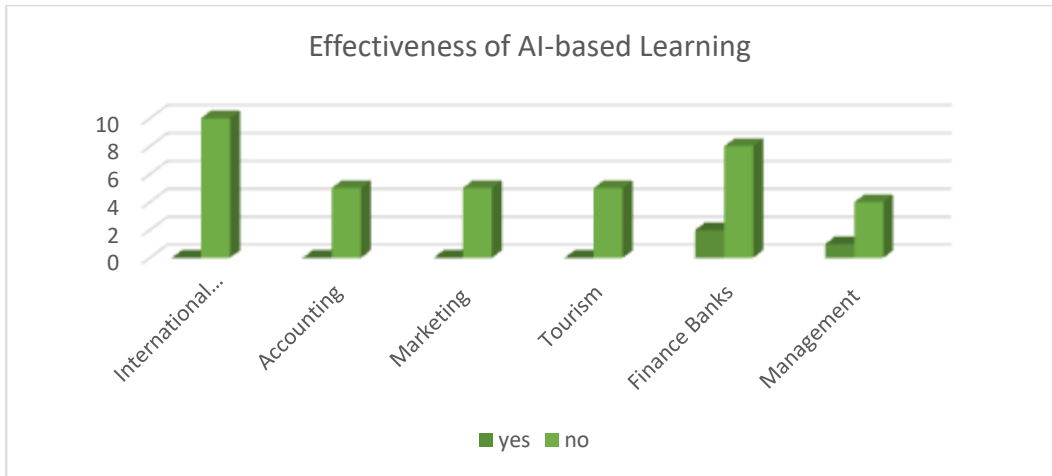| Do you think your communication skills have developed after using AI-based tools in learning English?		
Specialisation	**YES**	**NO**
International Business in English	7	3
Accounting	3	2
Marketing	2	3
Tourism	3	2
Finance-Banks	5	5
Management	3	2
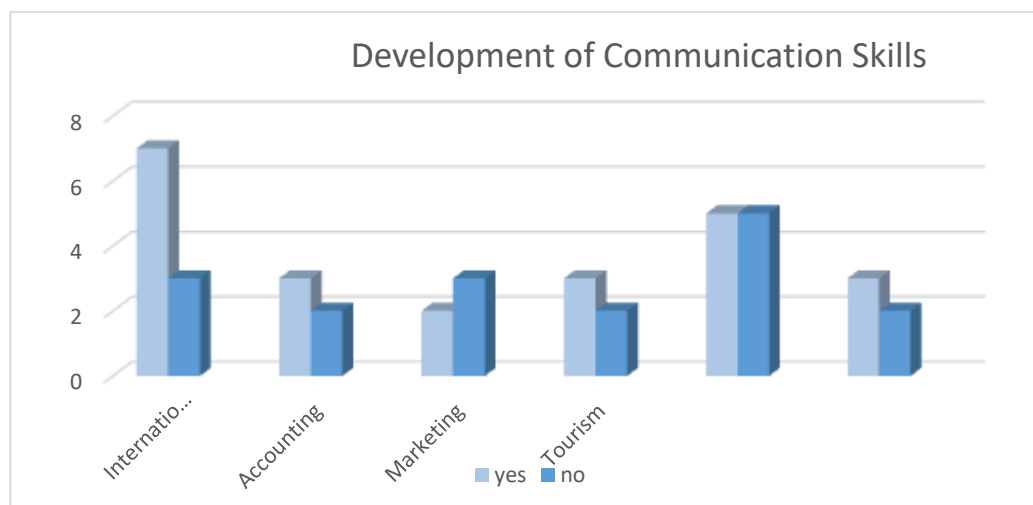
Figure 4: Students' development of communication skills
Source: own design

QUESTION 4 regarding effectiveness of AI-based learning in comparison with teacher guided learning

Do you think that using AI-based tools in learning English is more efficient than learning with a teacher?		
Specialisation	**YES**	**NO**
International Business in English	0	10
Accounting	0	5
Marketing	0	5
Tourism	0	5
Finance-Banks	2	8
Management	1	4

Figure 5: Students' perception on effectiveness of using AI-based tools
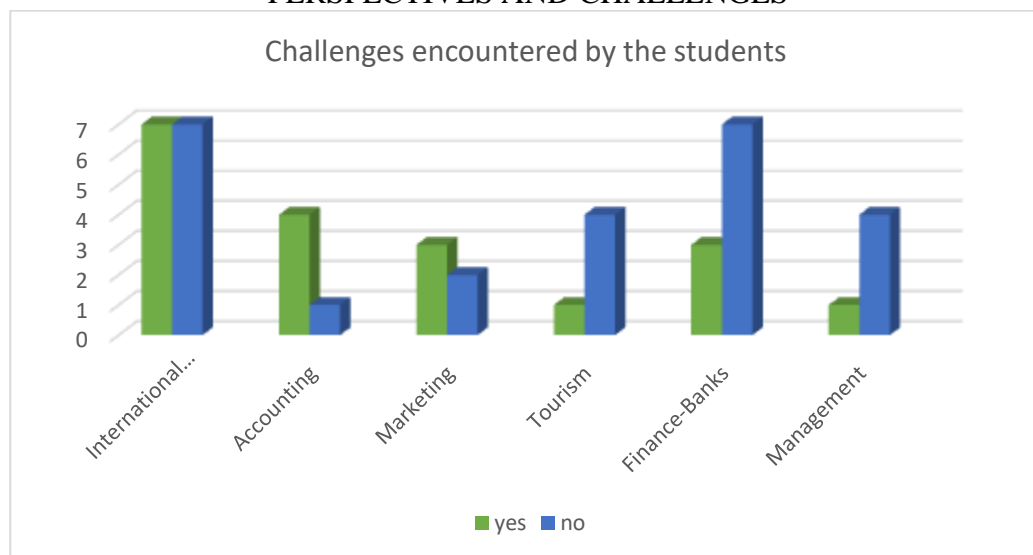Source: own design

RESEARCH TOPIC 5

In order to find out the difficulties in learning Business English with AI-based technology, we asked a question focused on the challenges that have been faced by the students.

QUESTION 5 regarding the challenges faced by the students

Have you faced challenges while using AI-based tools in learning Business English?		
Specialisation	**YES**	**NO**
International Business in English	7	3
Accounting	4	1
Marketing	3	2
Tourism	1	4
Finance-Banks	3	7
Management	1	4

Figure 6: Students' challenges
Source: own design

Findings and Discussions

In this paper we tried to analyse the perspectives and challenges regarding the impact of Artificial Intelligence in the process of teaching and learning English. Starting from the concepts and analyses that we found in the literature review, we grouped our questions into five main categories. At the first question, regarding the students' attitude towards using AI-based tools in learning Business English, 67,5% answered with 'yes', only 33,5% answered 'no' to this question. The second question regarding the positive impact of using AI-based tools in learning Business English, the same percentage has been received: 60% 'yes', 40% 'no'. The third question was related to the skills developed by the students after using AI-based tools for learning Business English, receiving 57,5% 'yes and 42,5% 'no'. The fourth question related to the efficiency of learning with AI based tools in comparison with teacher guided learning process, the results show that 93% of the students prefer to have a teacher-based learning strategy. The fifth question referring to the challenges that the students faced when learning with AI based tools, the results show that 53% had no difficulties in approaching AI based tools for learning Business English. The findings of the study reveal that the majority of the respondents (40 students with upper-intermediate and advanced level of English) feel at ease using AI-based tools in learning English, feeling motivated, sensing benefits of this approach and facing challenges which can be overcome easily. Thus, the results indicate an awareness of the challenges of this approach along with the undeniable efficiency and effectiveness of the teaching and learning process undergone together with a teacher.

CONCLUSION

The process of teaching and learning English has become more interesting and more varied due to the technological

The appearance of AI has reshaped today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, shifting towards student-centred learning, innovative approaches, enhancing thus the students with engagement, fostering at the same time critical thinking and practical applications. AI has brought about new trends and the pedagogical shifts imposed by the technological advancement should be embraced and continued by the teachers with all the effort that they deserve.

The findings and discussions mentioned in the previous lines lead to the conclusion that AI-based tools are needed in the process of learning English, being perceived by the students as engaging, developing communicational skills, thus being a useful and important tool for our students. Our study reveals a clear increasing tendency in using AI-based tools in the process of English teaching and learning. Nevertheless, the findings point to the more integration of AI in the educational process are the following: increased students' motivation, undeniable positive impact increased communicational skills, teacher guided learning process is more appealing, challenges exist but they can be overcome, attention must be paid to integrating AI techniques with other teaching and learning methods, more empirical studies are needed in order to assess this emerging exciting field.

Overall, the findings suggest that AI-based tools are appealing to students, being effective aids in the endeavour of teaching and learning English, offering appropriate, student-tailored and engaging learning experience. By analysing the benefits brought out in this study, teachers can exploit the potential of AI-based technology to boost the effectiveness of the teaching process and promote the students' outcome. However, it is important to mention that by deliberately using these tools teachers imply a significant role of these tools, whose effectiveness may vary depending on the educational context.

English courses are taught by teachers who have the ultimate role and authority to determine the extent, the conditions, the dynamics, and the timing of using AI-based tools in the complex process of learning and teaching English. Consequently, we can conclude the fact that, in order to support this complex process, different educational scenarios may require different levels of technological input. Therefore, future studies may consider including a larger sampling instrument, for example, academic staff who teach students in the main study areas..

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