STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEARNING BUSINESS ENGLISH

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Abstract: *The intrinsic link between the development of technology and the future of higher education is no longer a doubt. New possibilities along with new challenges both for teaching and for learning change the landscape of education and the possibilities of it. It is well-known that technology advancements, especially the appearance of the Artificial Intelligence has brought about huge changes in the trends of teaching English. This article explores the traditional trends and the future trends of Business English teaching, focusing on the pedagogical shifts imposed by the technological advancements in education, from the students' perspectives. More exactly, this research article explores the landscape of teaching Business English focusing both on current trends and on future approaches, the usefulness and the effectiveness of engaging new technology in classes. It is based on mixed-methods research including a systematic literature review and semi-structured interviews, in the qualitative phase, as an instrument for data collection, aiming to find out the students' perspective towards the use of modern technology-based methods in comparison with traditional methods of learning/teaching Business English. The sample of the study consists of 50 students at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea, first and second year of Bachelor's Degree. The students have been asked 5 sets made up of 3 questions on their opinions towards using technology in learning Business English. The study explores the following three main topics: background and experience with AI, perceptions and attitudes, usage and application, effectiveness and learning impact, challenges and concerns. The results show that a 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. 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. Thus, the results show that technology represents one of the most appreciated and appropriate learning tools for today's Generation Z, improving learning effectiveness and evaluation validity.*

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

Jel codes: *Z13; Q55; L81*

1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, proficiency in English, the lingua franca of the business world and of technology, is more important than ever before. As we can find uses of English everywhere, starting with engineering, medicine, law, agriculture and continuing with business and finance, the mastering of it is extremely important; in other words, business development, industrialization and globalization have led to conclusion that English has become the international means of communication. The present situation has led to an increased emphasis when it comes to teaching English in the recent years. Hence, acquiring an advanced level of English is absolutely necessary for all the students, along with the need for digital literacy. On the other hand, emerging technologies and the appearance of Artificial Intelligence are entering more and more different fields of education, including foreign language education. It refers to the use of different tools, enhancing the teaching and learning process. The challenge for the nowadays teachers of Business English is to have the appropriate technique to gain the students' attention along the entire teaching process. On the other hand, for the students, the necessity and the desire to improve their Business English skills in the era of globalization is quite challenging. It is worth mentioning that teaching Business English in today's face passed technological world is not an easy thing as teachers must be creative and up to date with the students' interests and goals when delivering their material. Technology is everywhere so education is somehow pushed to deal with technology and the teachers feel the necessity of embracing it and applying it in the class. Moreover, the present generation of students was born surrounded by technological environment, perceiving technology as part of their life, so technology integration in education would not be a problem that would overwhelm students.

Romania is situated on an increasing trend regarding technology and its use in the teaching and learning process. The extensive use of technology leads to the conclusion that there is a strong grasp of digital literacy. In fact, Romania has one of the most widespread ownerships of smartphone accounts in the world. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database tells us that between 2000 and 2025, there has been an increase in the number of smartphone accounts ownerships. Thus, mobile subscription accounts for 23.20 million individuals or 121% of the total population. The widespread ownership of smartphones indicates us a significant proportion of engaged social media users, ore exactly, 68,42% of the population or 13 million individuals are active users of social media platforms. The interest in technology is obvious, therefore, integrating technology into education can enhance student engagement, facilitating personalized learning and equipping them with essential knowledge for the modern world. The present trends in society and education represent a result of the technological development, pandemic and the globalized economy. Technology has rapidly changed the face of the language education landscape, providing it with a wide variety of tools and resources necessary to increase the outcome of this complex activity.

2. Literature review

In order to have a clear image of where we are today, regarding teaching Business English, it is important to have a look at its historical development. 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. There have been rich historical contexts having rich teaching contexts. Thus, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, the dominant teaching method was that of rote memorization of vocabulary, translation methods were in practice, emphasizing grammar rule. This method of translation was used for classical languages, developing writing skills and reading skills, being criticized for lacking the development of communication skills. It was a strategy which 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.

The development of the Direct Method at the beginning of the 20th century drew to attention 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 criticized 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 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'*. Thus, mastering English the following areas is absolutely essential:

• Effectiveness of communication: using oral, written and nonverbal communication skills; 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 analyzing own ideas.

• Information, technology and communication literacy: the use of technology as a tool for analyzing, organizing and evaluating information; understanding the ethical and legal issues regarding the information technology.

The above-mentioned historical developments 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 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 personalized 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, in our case Business English. The appearance of the Artificial Intelligence and the development of it, with virtual reality, augmented reality and natural language processes are revolutionizing language learning experiences. Bringing new ideas and new opportunities to all aspects of the teaching and learning process, it has revolutionized 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.

3. Research Methodology

For this study, the selected approach, is the qualitative type of study. According to Wikipedia *'The qualitative research is a type of research that aims to gather and analyze non-numerical (descriptive) data in order to gain an understanding of the individuals, social reality, including understanding their attitudes, beliefs, and motivation. This type of research typically involves in-depth interviews, focus groups and field of observation.'* Qualitative research uses methods including structured and semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, not only to help generate hypotheses which can be more rigorously tested with quantitative research but also to help researchers delve deeper into the quantitative research. A qualitative interview approaches to research can be stimulating and rewarding experiences for both researcher and participants.

Sample of the Study

This study has been conducted at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Oradea, the sample being 50 students from the first year of our faculty (32 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 judgmental 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.

4. Research Informants

In order to examine and get a clear image of the impact of Artificial Intelligence in learning foreign languages, having clear reference to Business 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.

Research Instruments

The instrument of this research is a semi-structured interview, containing five main topics, each being formed of three questions, regarding the students' experience and perspective about using Artificial Intelligence based platforms and applications in learning foreign languages. Thus, this study provided the students an opportunity to express their opinion in their own words.

Data Collection and Analysis

All interviews were conducted in English, being anonymous and written. The length was between 10 and 15 minutes, each interviewee 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 were the respondents to the five questions in the questionnaire. The total number of respondents was 54 students and the representation of each study program is seen in Figure 1.

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

Characteristics	
Age	18-21 years old
Female/Male	37 Female, 17 Male
Educational Status	College students
School	University of Oradea, Faculty of Economic Sciences
Specialization	International Business in English – 11 students; Accounting – 10 students; Marketing – 10 students; Tourism – 6 students; Finance-Banks – 10 students; Management – 7 students.

Source: Author
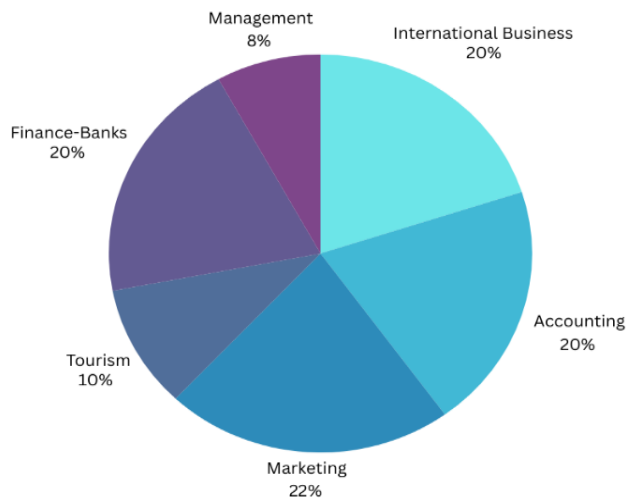
Figure 1: Students' specialization
Source: own design

The study explores the following three main topics:
1. Background and experience with AI;
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 background and experience with using AI based tools in learning Business English. The rate of frequency shows us the students' baseline and their level of familiarity with using AI based tools in learning Business English.

QUESTION 1 regarding attitude towards AI

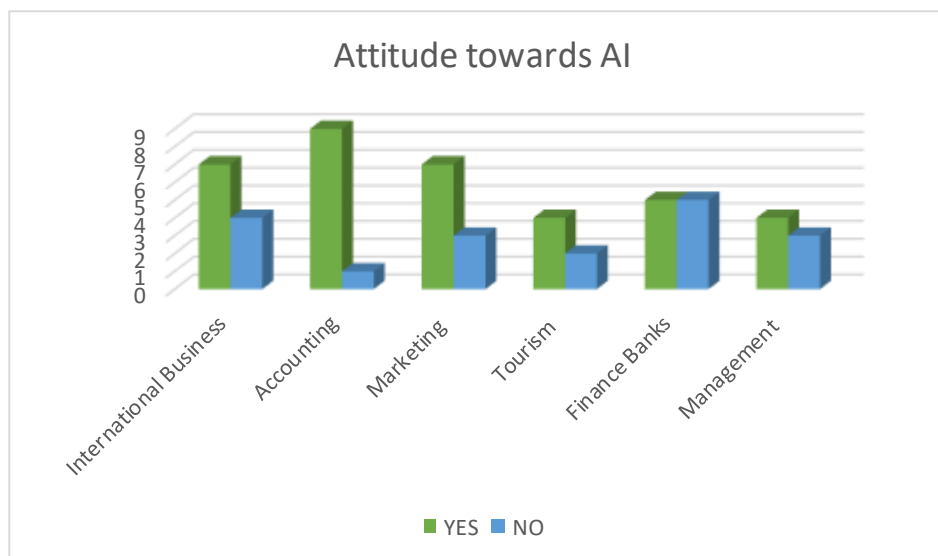| Do you feel motivated to try AI tools for learning Business English?		
Specialization	**YES**	**NO**
International Business 11	7	4
Accounting 10	9	1
Marketing 10	7	3
Tourism 6	4	2
Finance-Banks 10	5	5
Management 7	4	3

Figure 2: Students' attitude towards AI tool usage in learning Business English
Source: own design

RESEARCH TOPIC 2

In order to find out the attitude of students towards using AI based technology in learning Business English, we asked a question regarding background and experience, their attitude and belief regarding the use of AI based tools in learning Business English.

QUESTION 2 regarding perception of AI

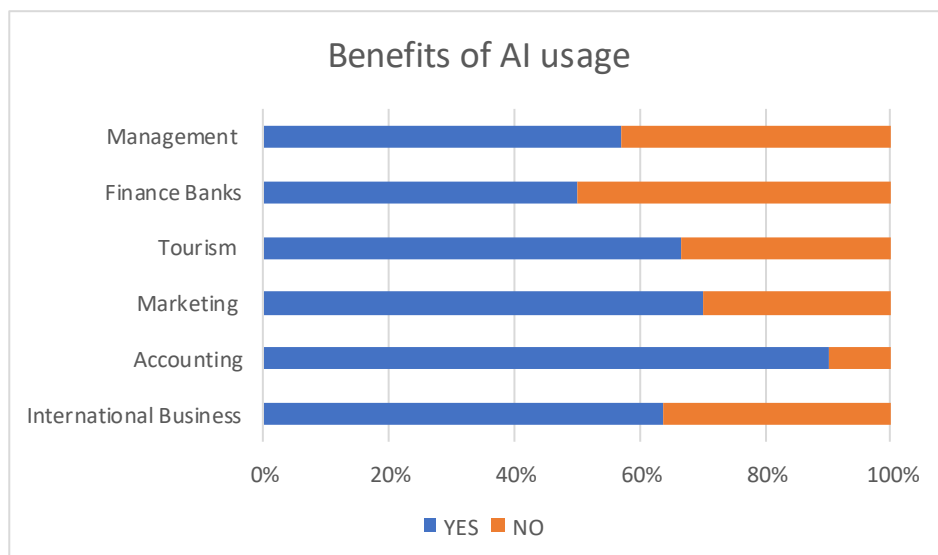| Do you perceive main benefits in using AI based tools in learning Business English?		
Specialization	**YES**	**NO**
International Business 11	7	4
Accounting 10	9	1
Marketing 10	7	3
Tourism 6	4	2
Finance-Banks 10	5	5
Management 7	4	3

Figure 3: Students' perception on the benefits of AI usage in learning Business English
Source: own design

RESEARCH TOPIC 3

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

QUESTION 3 regarding skill development and improvement in communication

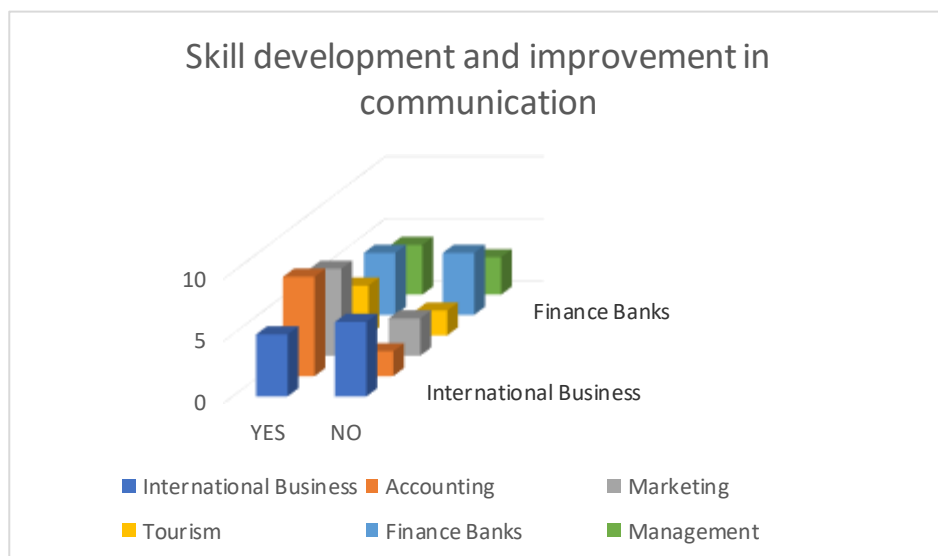| Do you think your skills have developed after using AI based tools in learning Business English?		
Specialization	**YES**	**NO**
International Business 11	5	6
Accounting 10	8	2
Marketing 10	7	3
Tourism 6	4	2
Finance-Banks 10	5	5
Management 7	4	3

Figure 4: Students' perception on skill development after AI usage in learning Business English
Source: own design

RESEARCH TOPIC 4

In order to find out the effectiveness and learning impact in learning Business English with AI based technology, we asked a question focused on results and outcomes.

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

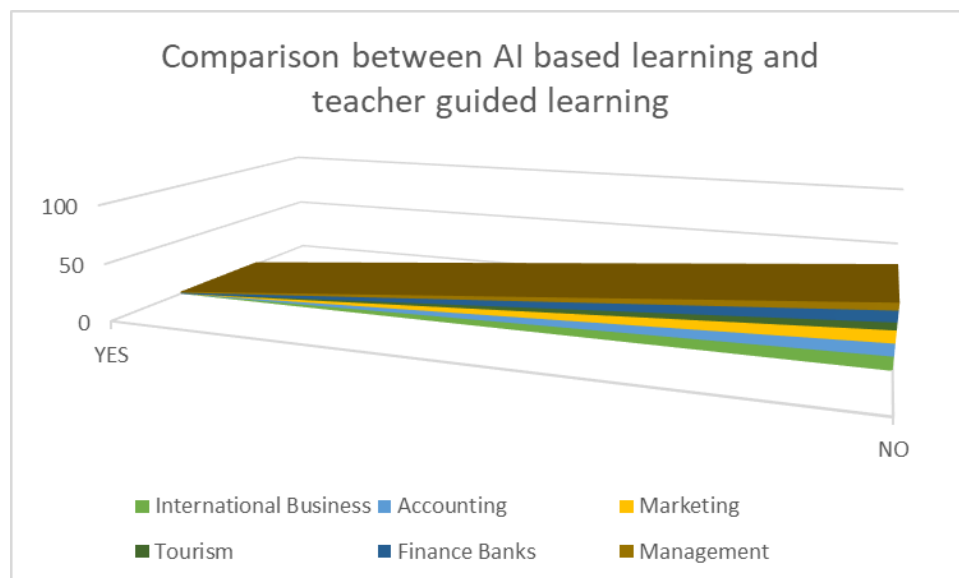| Do you think that using Ai tools in learning Business English is more efficient than learning with a teacher?		
Specialization	**YES**	**NO**
International Business 11	0	11
Accounting 10	0	10
Marketing 10	0	10
Tourism 6	0	6
Finance-Banks 10	1	9
Management 7	1	6

Figure 5: Students' perception on effectiveness of AI tools in comparison with teacher guided learning
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 challenges, perception and outcomes.

QUESTION 5 regarding resistance and difficulties

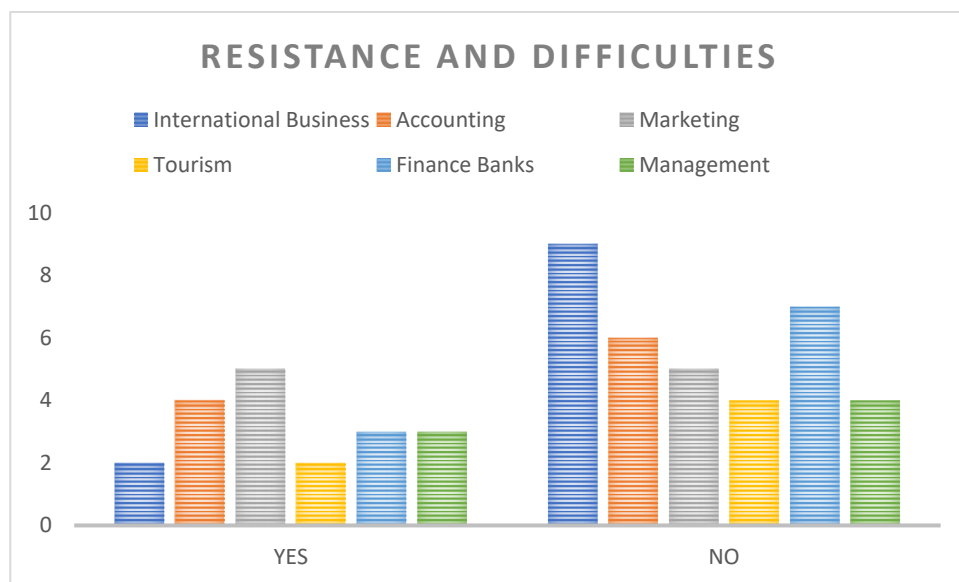| Have you faced any challenges while using AI tools to learn Business English?		
Specialization	**YES**	**NO**
International Business 11	2	9
Accounting 10	4	6
Marketing 10	5	5
Tourism 6	2	4
Finance-Banks 10	3	7
Management 7	3	4

Figure 6: Students' perception on challenges when using AI tools in learning Business English
Source: own design

5. Findings and Discussions

In this paper we tried to analyze our students' perception regarding the impact of Artificial Intelligence in learning Business 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 tools in learning Business English, 67% answered with 'yes', only 33% answered 'no' to this question. The second question regarding benefits using AI based tools in learning Business English, the same percentage has been received: 67% 'yes', 33% 'no'. The third question was related to the skills developed by the students after using AI based tools for learning Business English, receiving 61% 'yes' and 39% '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 98% 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 65% had no difficulties in approaching AI based tools for learning Business English.

6. Conclusions

We live in the digital age with a lot of technological innovations and achievements that unprecedently affect the education processes on the whole, including the strategies and approaches regarding foreign language teaching and learning. Our students belong to Generation Z; it is a well-known fact that this generation has grown up with digital tools, being digitally literate and technologically savvy. Therefore, today's teaching/learning environment cannot any longer solely be constricted to the traditional learning environment. 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. Our study shows that there is a clear bond between the steady development of technology and education, bringing in new challenges and new changes. 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.

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