

INVESTIGATING THE PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS ACADEMIC INTEGRITY OF INSTRUCTORS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

All stakeholders who are invested in the welfare of higher educational institutions, namely academia as the key actors, are all to have a crystal-clear picture of what defines academic integrity (AI) in education and have a definite understanding of their roles individually and collectively. Yet, to have a common understanding of AI policies and procedures, a preliminary exploration of stakeholders' awareness and perceptions of AI and their roles in AI-related issues is of the utmost importance. Morris and Carroll (2016) in the same vein underline the crucial importance of meeting on the common framework of AI in equal strands. Bretag et al. (2014) correspondingly emphasize the involvement of all entities in higher education in integrating AI policies and practices into their knowledge, practices, attitudes, and skills. Therefore, considerable research has been carried out in the literature to investigate students' and faculty's, in multiple disciplines and at varying levels, perceptions of AI and their understanding of AI elements in a territorial manner globally.

The extant literature has focused more on comparatively investigating students' views or students' and faculty's views. Limited attention has been paid to merely instructors' perspectives, who are the first-hand practitioners of AI and its classroom misconduct. Despite being conducted in different contexts and cultures, common points in the findings pointed out that (1) the more knowledgeable and aware instructors are of AI, the more progressive and proactive measures they can take while dealing with academically dishonest behaviors, (2) instructors from institutions with

honor code faculties better identify AI components and develop an in-depth understanding of AI-related issues, and (3) instructors have important roles in promoting and cultivating AI by designing courses accordingly "to build firm yet compassionate systems for promoting honesty in coursework" (Brunelle & Hott, 2020, p. 1402). Albeit the key role of instructors in promoting AI and preventing academic misconduct, even little attention has been devoted to exploring instructors' perceptions and practices of AI in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Therefore, this study aimed to reveal the EFL instructors' perceptions of, perceived challenges to, and suggested solutions for AI relating to the following research questions:

1. What are the perspectives of EFL instructors on academic integrity?
2. What are their perceived challenges and suggested solutions for academic integrity?

In this respect, this study addressed a timely and widespread issue of AI intending to gather preliminary data on the EFL instructors' perspectives to contribute to the holistic approach to AI, which involves promoting AI thoroughly from top to bottom in academia. Besides, this study is of representative significance for being a pioneering investigation into EFL instructors' perceptions of AI in Turkey, and the findings of this study may establish a foundation for the development of systematic institutional approaches and contribute to the development of common AI policies and honor codes within the universities.

A sequential explanatory mixed methods research design was employed in this study for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. First, as for the quantitative step of the study, an online quantitative survey ($\alpha=.80$) was carried out through an adapted version of the ENAI's Academic Integrity Self-Evaluation Tool for Teachers (AISETT) with 25 Turkish EFL instructors to reveal their perceptions of AI. Apart from the demographic information part, the questionnaire consisted of 39 items under 5 categories including: (1) approach to teaching and student motivation, (2) interaction with students and guidance about integrity, (3) awareness of institutional policies, (4) dealing with student dishonesty, and (5) knowledge and skills about plagiarism and academic writing. The collected data were descriptively analyzed. Then, the qualitative data were collected through a semi-structured individual interview protocol involving the phases of introduction, review of consent, biographic questions, and 15 open-ended questions prepared in line with the content of the questionnaire to find out extensive, thick, and in-depth interpretations of their perceptions of, perceived challenges to, and suggested solutions for academic integrity. The qualitative data were analyzed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for doing a thematic analysis.

The results shared similar conclusions with the existing literature (i.e., Brunelle & Hott, 2020; Lancaster, 2018; McCabe et al., 2003) and revealed that (1) the introduction of the syllabus, including detailed information on course content, course requirements, learning objectives, assessment methods at the beginning of a new term positively contributed towards the growth of AI, (2) introducing students to the principles of AI and broaching

issues of AI with students from the beginning helped to prevent academic misconduct, (3) instructors' awareness, knowledge, and skills related to AI contributed to the promotion of academic integrity by understanding their roles and influence in academia and taking proactive measures to prevent academic misconduct, (4) providing guidance to students on avoiding plagiarism and proper referencing through feed-forward and feedback deter them from potential academic misbehaviors, (5) common tendency to follow disciplinary regulations and reporting it to a superior in case of academic misconduct indicated a fair consensus among instructors as to AI matters, (6) however, lack of a visible presence of concise academic integrity policies, straightforward procedures, and guidelines led to disunity among instructors and resulted in students' academic misbehaviors, and (7) the development of institutional policy, procedures, guidelines on AI was suggested as a solution to help instructors educate students on the standards of AI by referring to the institutional policy on AI and sanctions for academic misconduct and thereof contribute to the promotion of AI.

The findings of this study showed that the EFL instructors as knowledgeable and competent practitioners of academic integrity in their classrooms had a cohesive understanding of what makes up academic integrity and how to contribute toward its promotion through teaching practices by being a model, providing feedback, introducing the principles of AI, and broaching issues of AI with students. The results of the study could serve as an impetus for the adoption or development of AI policies, procedures, and guidelines at higher education institutions, especially in the EFL departments in Turkey.

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