

Building an Academic English Teachers' Community of Practice: Collaboration and Innovation in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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Against the backdrop of the continuous advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technology and its increasing integration into the field of education, academic English teachers are facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges. This paper aims to explore the construction of an academic English teachers' community of practice supported by AI, in order to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among teachers, and to enhance teaching effectiveness. Firstly, it analyzes the current application of AI technology in academic English teaching and its impact on teachers' professional development. Subsequently, through case studies, it explores the role of the community of practice in promoting teacher collaboration, resource sharing, and teaching innovation. The study found that the community of practice can provide a platform for teachers to exchange ideas, solve teaching problems through collective wisdom, jointly develop teaching resources, and use AI technology to optimize teaching strategies. The article proposes strategies for building an open, collaborative, and shared community of practice for academic English teachers, including establishing open communication mechanisms, promoting deep integration of technology and teaching, encouraging teacher participation in community activities, etc., to achieve professional growth of teachers and enhancement of teaching quality. This paper concludes by proposing an evaluation strategy system for the community of practice among academic English teachers in the era of AI.

Keywords: artificial intelligence (AI), academic English teachers, community of practice, collaborative teaching, knowledge sharing

Introduction

In today's educational landscape, the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has brought revolutionary changes to the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). As an integral part of higher education, EAP not only imparts knowledge of the English language, but also bears the significant responsibility of fostering students' critical thinking, academic communication, and writing skills (Zhang, 2023). With the deepening of globalization, the role of EAP teachers has become increasingly prominent; they are tasked with not only teaching language skills, but also guiding students to adapt to the international academic environment.

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However, the rise of AI technology has brought unprecedented opportunities and challenges to the field of EAP teaching. AI technology can provide personalized learning experiences, analyze students' learning behaviors and outcomes through intelligent means, and offer customized learning resources and strategies (Yu & Wang, 2019). Additionally, AI technology can assist teachers in classroom management, assessment, and feedback, thereby freeing up teachers' time to focus more on the innovation of teaching content and the cultivation of students' abilities. At the same time, the challenges posed by AI technology cannot be ignored. It may alter the traditional role of EAP teachers, requiring them to update their knowledge structures and master new skills for collaborating with AI (Song & Xu, 2018). Moreover, ensuring the reasonable use of AI technology and avoiding over-reliance on technology while neglecting the humanistic care and personalized needs of students in teaching are also a challenge that EAP teachers need to address.

In this context, the construction of a community of practice for EAP teachers is particularly important. Such communities not only provide a platform for teachers to exchange and share experiences, but also promote the enhancement of their professional abilities and the innovation of teaching methods (Qiu & Li, 2023). Through collaboration within the community, teachers can jointly explore the optimal application of AI technology, achieving the sharing of teaching resources and the collaborative development of teaching strategies.

The impact of AI on EAP teaching is multifaceted; it offers the potential to improve teaching quality and learning experiences while also presenting challenges to teachers' professional development and teaching practices. This article will explore how AI affects the professional development of EAP teachers and analyze the role and significance of communities of practice in this process.

The Current State of EAP Teaching in the Age of AI

In the context of globalization and informatization, the rapid development of AI technology has had a profound impact on the field of education, particularly in the teaching of EAP, where the application of AI is reshaping traditional teaching models and the role of teachers (Warschauer, 2020).

The Integration of AI and EAP Teaching

The application of AI technology in EAP teaching is mainly reflected in the design and implementation of personalized learning paths, the development of intelligent tutoring systems, and the construction of adaptive learning platforms. These technologies can provide customized learning resources and strategies based on students' learning behaviors and outcomes, thereby improving learning efficiency and quality (Dillenbourg, 2018). For instance, Zheng et al. (2024) pointed out that AI technology can promote educational evaluation from empirical to digital, from singular to comprehensive, from outcome-based to process-based, and from diagnostic to feedback-oriented evaluation.

The Transformation and Challenges of EAP Teachers' Roles

With the introduction of AI technology, the role of EAP teachers is also undergoing a transformation. Teachers are no longer just knowledge transmitters but are becoming learning facilitators, instructional designers, and technology integrators (Wang et al., 2024). However, this also brings challenges as teachers need to update their knowledge structures and master new skills for collaborating with AI (Kennedy et al., 2017). Su and Zhang (2024) emphasized that in the intelligent era, the emergence of a crisis in educational subjectivity requires teachers to uphold educational value orientation in the interplay between technology and humanity.

The Role of Communities of Practice in Teachers' Professional Development

Communities of practice for EAP teachers provide a platform for teachers to communicate and share experiences, promoting the enhancement of their professional abilities and the innovation of teaching methods (Lave & Wenger, 1991). He et al. (2023) believed that in the process of human-machine collaborative learning, characteristics, such as the integrative nature of learning objectives, the contextual nature of learning content, and the complementary nature of learning subjects all require further exploration and realization within communities of practice.

Domestic and foreign scholars have conducted extensive research on the application of AI in EAP teaching. Foreign researchers, such as Warschauer (2020) have emphasized the potential of AI in education, while domestic scholars like Zheng et al. (2024) focused more on the application and challenges of AI technology in educational evaluation. Qin and Zhang (2020) explored issues related to teachers' professional development in the AI era and propose the necessity of reconstructing the role of teachers.

Although existing literature provides insights into the application of AI in EAP teaching, there are still research gaps. Firstly, most studies focus on the teaching applications of AI technology, while there is relatively less research on how teachers adapt to these changes, their professional development needs, and how communities of practice support this process. Secondly, there is a lack of research on the effectiveness and acceptability of AI technology applications in different educational settings and among various student groups. Additionally, there is a relative scarcity of research on how to balance the application of technology with maintaining the humanistic care in EAP teaching.

The impact of AI on academic English teachers and their communities of practice is multifaceted. It offers the potential to improve teaching quality and learning experiences while also presenting challenges to teachers' professional development and teaching practices. Future research needs to pay more attention to teachers' professional development needs, the effectiveness of AI technology applications in different educational environments, and how to maintain humanistic care in teaching within the application of technology.

Case Studies of Communities of Practice for EAP Teachers in the Age of AI

With the increasing integration of AI technology into EAP teaching, EAP teachers are facing a shift in their roles and new demands for professional development. Communities of practice, serving as vital platforms for teacher collaboration, resource sharing, and pedagogical innovation, play an indispensable role in this process. This article will explore how communities of practice facilitate collaboration, resource sharing, and innovation among teachers, as well as support the professional development of EAP teachers in the AI era, with reference to relevant case studies.

The Composition and Function of Communities of Practice

A community of practice is a social network composed of individuals with common interests and goals, who form a shared knowledge base and practice strategies through ongoing interaction and communication (Wenger, 1998). In the field of EAP teaching, communities of practice typically consist of teachers, scholars, educational technology experts, etc., who share teaching experiences, discuss teaching issues, and collaborate on developing teaching resources through online and offline meetings, seminars, workshops, and other forms.

Case Studies

Case Study One: Teacher collaboration and resource sharing. In a university's project to improve EAP teaching, teachers formed a community of practice aimed at enhancing teaching quality and student learning

outcomes through collaboration. Members of the community regularly held meetings to discuss teaching methods, student feedback, and course content. Through this platform, teachers shared teaching resources, such as syllabi, reading materials, and assignment designs, effectively avoiding duplication of effort and improving the efficiency of resource utilization. Additionally, the community facilitated collaboration among teachers, such as jointly developing new courses and guiding student research projects (He et al., 2023).

Case Study Two: Facilitating teaching innovation. Another example is the development of an online EAP teaching platform. This platform was collaboratively designed by a group of teachers passionate about educational technology, utilizing AI to provide personalized learning paths and real-time feedback. During the development process, teachers engaged in in-depth discussions and testing within their community of practice, continuously refining teaching designs and user experiences. This innovative project not only enhanced students' motivation and learning outcomes, but also provided teachers with new teaching tools and methods (Wang et al., 2024).

Teacher Professional Development in the AI Era

The advancement of AI technology has brought new opportunities for the professional development of EAP teachers. Within communities of practice, teachers can enhance their technical application skills by participating in training, seminars, and projects related to AI technology. At the same time, the community also provides a platform for teachers to experiment with and reflect on the impact of new technologies, helping them understand the role and limitations of AI technology in teaching, as well as how to balance the application of technology with the humanistic care in education (Qin & Zhang, 2020).

Communities of practice play an important role in promoting collaboration, resource sharing, and teaching innovation among EAP teachers. Through case studies, we can see that whether in the sharing of teaching resources or the innovation of teaching methods, the community provides valuable support for teachers. In the AI era, communities of practice have become an essential platform for teachers' professional development, helping them adapt to technological changes and enhance teaching quality.

Strategies for Building Communities of Practice for EAP Teachers in the Age of AI

In today's era of rapidly advancing AI technology, EAP teachers are facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. To address these changes, building an open, collaborative, and sharing community of practice for EAP teachers is particularly crucial.

Establish an Open Communication Mechanism

An open communication mechanism is key to the success of a community of practice. By establishing online forums, social media groups, and regular online and offline meetings, teachers can share teaching experiences, discuss teaching issues, and explore innovative teaching methods (B. Wenger-Trayner & E. Wenger-Trayner, 2015). In addition, an open communication mechanism should also encourage interdisciplinary and cross-cultural exchanges to foster mutual learning and inspiration among teachers from different backgrounds.

Promote the Deep Integration of Technology With Teaching

The deep integration of technology requires not only that teachers master emerging technologies, such as AI, but also that they understand how to effectively combine these technologies with teaching content and methods. To this end, technology training workshops can be conducted to help teachers understand the latest educational technologies and provide practical opportunities for teachers to try and apply these technologies in

their teaching (Kennedy et al., 2017). At the same time, we can encourage teachers to participate in the research and development process of educational technology to ensure that technological solutions can meet the actual needs of teaching.

Encourage Teachers to Participate in Community Activities

Active participation from teachers is the source of vitality for a community of practice. By organizing activities, such as teaching seminars, teaching observations, and teaching competitions, the enthusiasm for participation can be stimulated, and mutual learning and cooperation among teachers can be promoted. Furthermore, by establishing reward mechanisms, such as awards for excellent teaching cases and teaching innovation, teachers can be further encouraged to engage in community activities and teaching innovation (Knox, 2017).

Establish a Continuous Professional Development Support System

To support the professional growth of teachers, a community of practice should establish a continuous professional development support system. This includes providing regular professional training, teaching consultation, and career development guidance. At the same time, the community should also provide teachers with opportunities to research and publish their teaching achievements, in order to promote academic exchange and knowledge dissemination among teachers (Huang & Yang, 2019).

Promote the Co-creation and Sharing of Teaching Resources

The co-creation and sharing of teaching resources is an important way to improve the quality of teaching. By establishing a teaching resource library to collect and organize teachers' teaching materials, case studies, and teaching videos, etc., a rich source of teaching references and inspiration can be provided for teachers. In addition, encouraging teachers to contribute their own teaching resources and participate in the construction and maintenance of the resource library can further promote the enrichment and updating of resources (Chen & Zhao, 2018).

Establish an Assessment and Feedback Mechanism

An effective assessment and feedback mechanism is crucial for ensuring the quality of teaching activities. By establishing a diversified assessment approach that includes peer review, student feedback, and self-assessment, teachers can understand the effectiveness of their teaching and have a basis for improvement. At the same time, through regular feedback sessions and reports, community members can share teaching experiences, learn from each other, and inspire one another (Tseng, 2018).

Building an open, collaborative, and sharing community of practice for EAP teachers requires a comprehensive consideration of establishing communication mechanisms, integrating technology with teaching, enhancing teacher participation, supporting professional development, co-creating and sharing teaching resources, and improving assessment and feedback mechanisms. Through the implementation of these strategies, effective professional growth of teachers can be promoted, teaching quality can be improved, and the challenges brought by the AI era can be addressed.

Comprehensive Assessment Strategy System for Communities of Practice of EAP Teachers in the Age of AI

In the era of AI, building communities of practice for EAP teachers is not only a supplement to traditional teaching models, but also an important way to enhance teaching quality. To fully assess the role of communities

of practice in improving the quality of EAP teaching, this paper proposes the following multi-dimensional and multi-method comprehensive assessment strategy system.

Quantitative and Qualitative Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness

First, the assessment strategy should combine quantitative and qualitative methods to measure teaching effectiveness. Quantitative assessment can be implemented through objective data, such as students' language proficiency test scores, course pass rates, and academic English competition results. Qualitative assessment, on the other hand, focuses on collecting student feedback, teachers' self-reflection reports, and peer evaluations to gain an in-depth understanding of the intrinsic effects and potential issues of teaching practices (Biggs, 2003).

Tracking Assessment of Teacher Professional Development

The assessment strategy should focus on the process and outcomes of teacher professional development. By tracking teachers' involvement in community of practice activities, such as participation in seminars, sharing of teaching resources, and cases of teaching innovation practices, the degree of teacher professional growth can be assessed. In addition, teachers should be encouraged to conduct self-assessments and peer reviews to promote self-improvement and a culture of mutual assistance within the community (Huang & Yang, 2019).

Assessment of Teaching Innovation and Student Engagement

The assessment strategy should pay special attention to the implementation of teaching innovation and the level of student engagement. Teaching innovation can be measured by evaluating the effectiveness of new teaching methods, the frequency of teaching material updates, and the degree of integration of technological tools. Student engagement can be assessed through indicators, such as classroom interaction, the activity level of online discussions, and participation in assignments and projects (Chen & Zhao, 2018).

The establishment of a comprehensive assessment strategy system aims to provide a full and objective feedback mechanism for the teaching activities of the EAP teachers' community of practice. By combining quantitative and qualitative teaching effectiveness assessments, tracking assessments of teacher professional development, and assessments of teaching innovation and student engagement, the community can ensure that it plays the greatest role in enhancing the quality of EAP teaching.

Conclusion

With the continuous advancement of AI technology, EAP teaching is standing at a new crossroads of development. This paper explores the impact of AI on EAP teachers and communities of practice, revealing the broad prospects and potential challenges of the combination of technology and education. As an important platform for teacher professional development and teaching innovation, communities of practice play an irreplaceable role in promoting knowledge sharing, collaborative communication, and the co-creation of teaching resources.

Faced with the opportunities and challenges brought by the age of AI, EAP teachers should actively embrace technological changes while maintaining a deep understanding and commitment to the essence of education. Through continuous practical exploration and professional development, teachers can better utilize AI technology to enhance teaching effectiveness and cultivate EAP talents who are adaptable to the future society. Future research should continue to focus on the deep integration of AI and educational practices, as well as the role of communities of practice within this context, contributing wisdom and strength to building an open, collaborative, and sharing educational future.

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