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Rethinking English Language Teaching in the Age of AI

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming English language teaching (ELT) by providing new opportunities for personalised learning, immediate feedback, and the development of language skills. However, its growing presence also raises concerns about academic integrity, learner independence, data privacy, and the changing role of teachers. This article examines the opportunities and challenges associated with integrating AI into English language education. Drawing on recent research and international educational guidance, it argues that AI should complement rather than replace teachers. Effective integration requires pedagogically informed use, critical AI literacy, ethical safeguards, and a continued emphasis on meaningful communication. The article concludes that the future of English language teaching depends not on the amount of technology used, but on how effectively technology supports human learning.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, English language teaching, personalised learning, teacher development, digital literacy*

Introduction

Artificial intelligence has become an increasingly important influence on education, challenging traditional approaches to teaching and learning. In English language teaching, tools such as conversational chatbots, automated writing assistants, and speech-recognition applications enable learners to practise English beyond the classroom. These developments create opportunities to reconsider teaching methods and classroom practices. However, technological innovation alone does not guarantee educational improvement. UNESCO (2023) emphasises the importance of a human-centred approach that protects learners' rights and supports meaningful educational outcomes. Therefore, English language teachers must reconsider how AI can be integrated without compromising critical thinking, communication, and independent learning. One significant advantage of AI is its potential to personalise learning. Learners have different proficiency levels, learning speeds, and educational needs, making individualised support difficult in large classes. AI tools can generate level-appropriate reading texts, vocabulary exercises, grammar explanations, and speaking prompts. They can also provide immediate feedback, allowing students to identify errors and practise independently. Research by Crompton et al. (2024) identifies opportunities for AI in speaking, writing, reading, pedagogy, and self-regulated learning. For example, students who feel anxious about speaking English may use conversational AI to rehearse dialogues before participating in classroom discussions. Similarly, writing assistants can help learners identify

grammatical problems and explore alternative expressions. AI can also support teachers by generating lesson materials, adapting activities, and suggesting assessment tasks. According to Edmett et al. (2024), teachers already use AI for several instructional and administrative purposes. These applications may reduce preparation time and allow teachers to devote more attention to student interaction and individual support. Despite these advantages, the integration of AI presents important challenges. First, excessive dependence on AI may reduce learners' opportunities to develop independent problem-solving skills. When students use AI to produce complete essays or answer questions without analysing the information, they may achieve satisfactory results without developing the underlying language abilities.

Second, AI-generated information is not always accurate or appropriate. Tools may provide misleading explanations, overlook cultural context, or favour particular varieties of English. Crompton et al. (2024) identify limited technological capabilities and the standardisation of language as significant concerns. Teachers must therefore evaluate AI-generated materials before using them in educational settings.

Privacy and academic integrity are equally important. Students may share personal information or submit AI-generated work as their own. UNESCO (2023) recommends safeguards that protect data privacy and ensure responsible use. Educational institutions should establish transparent policies explaining when AI assistance is permitted and how students should acknowledge it. Furthermore, unequal access to reliable internet connections and digital devices may widen existing educational inequalities. Consequently, AI integration must consider not only technological possibilities but also accessibility and fairness. The emergence of AI does not eliminate the need for English teachers; rather, it changes the skills and responsibilities required of them. Teachers increasingly need to act as learning facilitators, critical evaluators, and guides who help students use technology responsibly. Felice et al. (2025) advocate a human-centred approach to AI in English learning and assessment, emphasising teacher involvement, inclusion, and AI literacy. In practice, teachers can ask students to compare AI-generated essays with their own writing, identify inaccurate information, and explain which suggested corrections they accept or reject. Such activities develop language awareness and critical thinking simultaneously.

Teacher training is also essential. Professional development should help educators select appropriate tools, design meaningful activities, assess learning outcomes, and protect student information. AI should serve clearly defined learning objectives rather than be introduced simply because it is available.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence offers valuable opportunities to improve English language teaching through personalised practice, immediate feedback, and more efficient lesson preparation. Nevertheless, its effectiveness depends on responsible implementation and sound pedagogical decisions. Overdependence, inaccurate information, privacy concerns, and unequal access must be addressed through appropriate guidance and teacher training. Ultimately, AI should strengthen rather than replace the human relationships at the centre of education. By

combining technological innovation with professional judgement, ethical awareness, and communicative teaching, educators can create learning environments that prepare students for an increasingly digital world.

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