Bodhi International Journal of
Research in Humanities, Arts and Science

Vol. 10 No. 1 October 2025
E-ISSN: 2456-5571

Artificial Intelligence: A Review on the Use of AI in English Language Learning

Dr. B. Priyadarsini

Associate Professor, PG & Research Department of English, Ethiraj College for Women, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Open Access

Manuscript ID: BIJ-2025-OCT-028

Subject: English

Received : 10.09.2025
Accepted : 16.10.2025
Published : 31.10.2025

DOI:10.64938/bijri.v10n1.25.Oct028

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to revolutionize English Language Teaching (ELT) by addressing long-standing challenges in traditional methodologies, such as a lack of real-world context and interactivity in grammar-translation approaches. This paper explores the integration of AI-driven tools, including advanced neural machine translation systems, gamified learning platforms, and adaptive language technologies, to enhance vocabulary acquisition, writing proficiency, and comprehension. AI tools like DeepAL, Duolingo, and Grammarly provide personalized feedback, nuanced translations, and interactive exercises that cater to diverse learner needs. The paper also examines AI's role in supporting educators by automating progress tracking and offering data-driven insights for lesson customization. Challenges such as accessibility, cultural localization, and ethical concerns are discussed alongside practical strategies to ensure inclusive and effective adoption. By addressing these gaps, AI can transform ELT into a more dynamic, learner-centered, and equitable process, equipping students with the linguistic skills needed for practical and conversational fluency.

Keywords: AI tools, Language Learning, English Language Teaching, Integrated Learning, Educator Support

AI in Modern ELT

English Language Teaching (ELT) has traditionally been taught through methods such as grammar translation, where students are taught to translate texts from English to their native language to understand content. While this approach offers foundational support, it often lacks the interactive, real-world applicability necessary for achieving fluency. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significant potential to reshape and enhance ELT by introducing dynamic, context-aware tools that cater to learners' diverse needs (Healey, 2016).

The Potential of AI in ELT

AI-driven translation tools like Google Translate, Deep L, and Microsoft Translator have progressed far beyond traditional machine translation. These tools leverage advanced Neural Machine Translation (NMT) models that focus not only on literal translations but also on context, tone, and idiomatic expressions. For example, Deep L's translation engine has been shown to outperform Google Translate in terms of preserving the meaning and nuance of sentences (Vaswani et al., 2017). AI tools now enable learners to analyse and understand English texts at a deeper level, offering contextual

explanations and cultural nuances that are seldom found in traditional translation methods.

By integrating AI tools into classrooms, educators can facilitate multiple language learning methods that include:

- Text translation with contextual support: AI-powered translators not only help students translate but also offer context-specific translations, enhancing the student's understanding of the nuances of a language.
- Reverse translation: Students can practice translating phrases back into English, which helps them refine their understanding of vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar rules (Degani et al., 2011).
- Nuance identification: AI tools assist learners in grasping idiomatic expressions and phrases that are essential for fluency, addressing common barriers that traditional translation methods are limited by.

Moreover, AI's ability to provide personalised feedback and to adjust exercises based on individual learning needs, enhances its effectiveness. For instance, platforms like Duolingo use gamified learning techniques, that is, applying typical elements of game playing (points, competing with others, etc.), and adaptive algorithms that adjust the difficulty level according to student performance, offering a personalised learning experience (Wariyati, 2023). These interactive tools, which combine visual aids, speech recognition, and gamification, offer a multi-dimensional approach to language learning, helping students gain both practical and conversational fluency.

Educator Support through AI

AI's potential in the classroom extends beyond students. Educators can leverage AI's analytical capabilities to track students' progress, identify areas for improvement, and generate targeted lessons. For example, AI can identify patterns in student performance, such as difficulty with grammatical structures, and suggest tailored exercises that address these gaps. By saving time on repetitive tasks and providing data-driven insights, AI allows educators to focus more on personalised interaction with students (Woolf, 2009).

Vocabulary Building Through AI-Driven Practice

Building a strong vocabulary is critical to mastering English. However, traditional vocabulary learning often involves rote memorisation, which can be banal for students. AI tools offer an innovative, interactive alternative to this approach by customising exercises to each student's progress and needs. Studies have shown that interactive vocabulary learning, when personalised and context-driven, results in better retention and understanding (Niu & Niu, 2015).

Practical Applications for Vocabulary Learning

- Word Definitions and Synonyms: AI tools can generate vocabulary exercises that require students to match words with their meanings or synonyms. For example, a word like 'resilient' can be paired with synonyms such as 'persistent' or 'flexible'. Additionally, students could be prompted to form sentences using new vocabulary, reinforcing their understanding through context (Foshay et al., 2014).
- Contextual Learning: AI can generate fill-in-the-blank exercises or sentence rearrangement tasks to help students understand how words function within specific contexts. For instance, 'The weather was ___, so we decided to stay indoors' can test the correct use of adjectives like 'dreary' or 'sunny', giving students the opportunity to apply their vocabulary knowledge in context.
- Dynamic Quizzing: Adaptive quizzing allows AI to adjust the difficulty of tasks as students improve. AI can generate quizzes on phrasal verbs, prefixes, or suffixes that grow more complex as learners master the material, ensuring continuous engagement and learning progression.
- Pronunciation Practice: AI-driven speech recognition tools such as those integrated into platforms like Rosetta Stone or Google's speech-to-text technology enable students to practice pronunciation. These systems assess pronunciation accuracy and provide immediate feedback, helping students improve both their speaking and listening skills.
- Gamified Vocabulary Challenges: To make learning more enjoyable, AI tools can incorporate gamification elements, such as

earning points or badges for correct answers, fostering a competitive and fun atmosphere while practising vocabulary.

These AI-driven exercises not only enhance vocabulary knowledge but also promote critical thinking. By analysing and applying words in real-world contexts, students improve their ability to communicate effectively. AI systems can track and analyse how well students retain and apply vocabulary, providing valuable insights for both learners and educators.

AI-Assisted Writing for Self-Guided Improvement

Writing in English, particularly in non-immersive environments, can be one of the most challenging aspects of language learning. AI offers students immediate feedback on grammar, syntax, and writing style, helping them refine their writing skills autonomously while still receiving structured guidance (Fountoulakis, 2024).

Key Features of AI Writing Tools

- Grammar and Syntax Feedback: AI writing tools, such as Grammarly or the Hemingway Editor, provide real-time corrections on articles, prepositions, tenses, and sentence structure. For example, 'She go to school' is flagged, with the suggestion 'She goes to school' to correct the subject-verb agreement.
- Writing Prompts: AI platforms can generate writing prompts tailored to students' proficiency levels. A beginner might write about their daily routine, while an advanced learner could be tasked with composing a persuasive essay on a current topic, helping to develop both foundational and higher-order writing skills.
- Recurrent Error Tracking: AI can track common mistakes made by students and suggest targeted exercises to address recurring issues, such as misuse of verb tenses. This personalized error-tracking feature enables focused improvement.
- Style and Tone Analysis: AI writing assistants can suggest improvements for clarity and adjust the tone based on the writing's context. For example, they might suggest making writing more formal or informal depending on the situation.
- Plagiarism Detection: AI systems like Turnitin and Copyscape can help students understand plagiarism and originality, flagging copied content and suggesting paraphrasing options.

Additionally, AI tools often incorporate gamified elements, such as rewarding students with points or badges for submitting error-free essays, making writing exercises more enjoyable. Advanced systems analyse complex writing features such as sentence diversity, vocabulary usage, and coherence, providing learners with valuable insights to refine their writing further (Lee & Lee, 2024).

Storytelling for Comprehension Improvement

Storytelling is a valuable tool in ELT for enhancing reading comprehension, critical thinking, and vocabulary development. AI-based storytelling platforms can revolutionize how stories are told, making them personalized, interactive, and aligned with learners' proficiency levels.

How AI Storytelling Works

- Personalized Content: AI systems can create stories that gradually introduce new vocabulary, tailored to a student's language level. These stories might incorporate familiar themes or cultural references, enhancing engagement and understanding (Wu & Chen, 2020).
- Interactive Narratives: AI can generate interactive stories where students influence the plot by answering comprehension questions or solving puzzles. This approach not only engages learners but also tests their inference and critical thinking skills.
- Feedback Integration: As students engage with stories, AI can provide real-time feedback on their understanding. Misunderstood sections are flagged, prompting students to reread or review difficult passages.
- Visual and Auditory Aids: Stories can incorporate animations, images, and voiceovers, making them more accessible to young learners and those with varying learning styles.
- Progressive Difficulty: AI can adjust the complexity of stories over time, gradually introducing more sophisticated grammar, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions as learners improve.

For example, a student reading a story about a trip to the zoo might be asked to identify animals and their behaviours, gradually advancing to deeper comprehension questions as their proficiency increases. Interactive storytelling fosters a love for reading while building critical thinking and language skills.

Challenges and Future Directions

While AI holds immense potential to enhance ELT, several challenges must be addressed to maximize its effectiveness. As AI tools continue to evolve, it is crucial to ensure their inclusivity, cultural relevance, and ethical use.

Key Challenges in AI-Enhanced ELT

- Accessibility: AI tools must be designed to work on low-bandwidth devices, ensuring students in underserved regions can benefit from them. Lightweight applications that provide offline capabilities are crucial for regions with limited internet access (Foshay et al., 2014).
- Localization: AI tools must account for cultural nuances and regional language variations. For example, AI-based language tools should adapt idiomatic expressions or culturally specific scenarios to better resonate with learners, improving both engagement and learning outcomes (Lee & Lee, 2024).
- Teacher Training: Effective integration of AI into teaching requires proper training for educators. Teachers should be trained in how to use AI tools for progress tracking and lesson personalization. Continuous professional development workshops are necessary to help teachers adapt to new technologies.
- Privacy and Ethics: AI systems must prioritize data privacy and ethical use. Transparent data usage policies and robust security measures are essential to safeguard student data and ensure the integrity of AI tools. Regular audits and updates are crucial to prevent bias in content and evaluations (Roy, 2017).
- Encouraging Collaboration: AI tools should complement traditional teaching methods rather than replace them. Collaborative platforms, where teachers can share AI-generated resources and best practices, can enhance the learning experience for students.

By addressing these challenges, AI has the potential to transform ELT, making learning more accessible, engaging, and effective for students worldwide. The future of ELT lies in the seamless integration of AI and pedagogy, creating a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment that empowers learners at every stage of their language journey.

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