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THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: OPPORTUNITIES, RISKS, AND PEDAGOGICAL CONDITIONS

Abstract: *this article reviews recent evidence on how artificial intelligence (AI) affects English language learning among university students. Based on systematic reviews, meta-analyses, empirical studies, and UNESCO guidance, the paper shows that AI can support vocabulary, writing, reading, speaking practice, and self-regulated learning. At the same time, it can weaken learning when students rely on it uncritically or use it without ethical boundaries. The article argues that AI is most effective as a supplementary tool within teacher-guided instruction and proposes conditions for responsible classroom integration.*

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, English language learning, university students, generative AI, self-regulated learning.*

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ВЛИЯНИЕ ИСКУССТВЕННОГО ИНТЕЛЛЕКТА НА ИЗУЧЕНИЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА СТУДЕНТАМИ: ВОЗМОЖНОСТИ, РИСКИ И ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКИЕ УСЛОВИЯ

Аннотация: *в статье рассматривается влияние искусственного интеллекта (ИИ) на изучение английского языка студентами вузов. На основе современных обзоров, мета-анализов, эмпирических работ и рекомендаций ЮНЕСКО показано, что ИИ помогает в развитии словаря, письма, чтения, устной речи и саморегуляции. Одновременно подчеркиваются риски некритического использования, чрезмерной зависимости и нарушения академической честности. Обосновывается вывод о том, что ИИ наиболее эффективен как вспомогательный инструмент в обучении под руководством преподавателя.*

Ключевые слова: *искусственный интеллект, изучение английского языка, студенты, генеративный ИИ, саморегуляция обучения.*

Introduction.

Artificial intelligence has quickly become part of English learning, especially through chatbots, adaptive platforms, and writing assistants. Recent reviews show rapid growth in research after the release of generative AI tools, with English as a foreign language contexts and higher education dominating the literature [1; 2]. This makes the topic especially relevant for university students, who often use AI both inside and outside the classroom.

The central issue is not whether AI should be used, but how it should be used. UNESCO recommends a human-centered approach that protects data privacy, supports teacher competence, and prepares students for responsible AI use [8; 9]. In language

education, this means that AI should strengthen practice and feedback without replacing pedagogical guidance.

Main educational effects.

The strongest evidence concerns writing and feedback. Guo and colleagues found that an AI-supported peer feedback system improved feedback quality and student writing ability [6]. Teng also reported that EFL learners viewed ChatGPT as useful for structuring content, receiving feedback, and increasing confidence during writing [7]. These findings suggest that AI can help learners move through drafting and revision more efficiently.

AI is also useful for vocabulary and reading. A meta-analysis found significant effects of GenAI on English proficiency and self-regulation, while vocabulary showed the strongest effects in a broader language-learning synthesis [3; 4]. In practice, students can ask AI for definitions, examples, paraphrases, and comprehension checks, which makes input easier to understand and reuse.

Speaking practice is another important area. Although speaking has received less attention than writing in the literature [2], conversational AI can provide low-stakes rehearsal, immediate responses, and repeated practice without fear of public mistakes. For hesitant students, this can reduce anxiety and increase the amount of language they produce.

Self-regulation and responsibility.

AI can also support self-regulated learning. Chang and Sun's systematic review shows that researchers increasingly treat AI as a tool for planning, monitoring, and reflection in language study [5]. This is important for university students, because much English learning happens independently between classes. AI can help them set goals, check progress, and compare different versions of the same task.

At the same time, the literature identifies clear risks. Students may over-rely on machine output, accept incorrect answers, or submit AI-generated text without real understanding. There are also privacy and equity concerns, because not all learners have the same access to devices, subscriptions, or digital literacy [8]. AI therefore needs explicit rules, not casual use.

Pedagogical conditions.

Responsible integration depends on task design. Students should be asked not only to use AI, but also to explain what they changed, why they accepted or rejected a suggestion, and how the tool affected their learning. This keeps attention on process rather than only on the final product.

UNESCO's teacher and student frameworks are helpful here because they emphasize human-centered judgment, ethics, and practical AI literacy [9; 10]. In English courses, this can be translated into short revision logs, source checks, and reflections on AI assistance. When students must show their thinking, AI becomes a scaffold rather than a shortcut.

Discussion and conclusion.

The literature suggests that AI works best as a supplement, not a replacement. A broad meta-analysis reported positive effects across major language skills, with vocabulary, reading, and writing benefiting more consistently than motivation alone [3; 4]. This means that AI can support learning outcomes, but only when the teacher keeps control over objectives, assessment, and acceptable use.

In conclusion, AI has real potential to improve English learning for university students, especially in writing, vocabulary development, and self-regulated practice [4; 6; 7]. However, its value depends on ethical, critical, and teacher-guided use. The most effective model is one in which AI supports language practice while human instruction remains responsible for interpretation, feedback, and academic integrity.

Table 1

AI effects and classroom responses

Area	Main benefit	Classroom response
Writing	Revision and feedback support [6; 7]	Use drafts, comments, and reflection logs
Vocabulary and reading	Definitions and simplified input [3; 4]	Check AI answers against source texts
Speaking	Extra low-stakes practice	Combine rehearsal with live interaction
Self-regulation	Planning and monitoring support [5]	Require goal-setting and progress notes

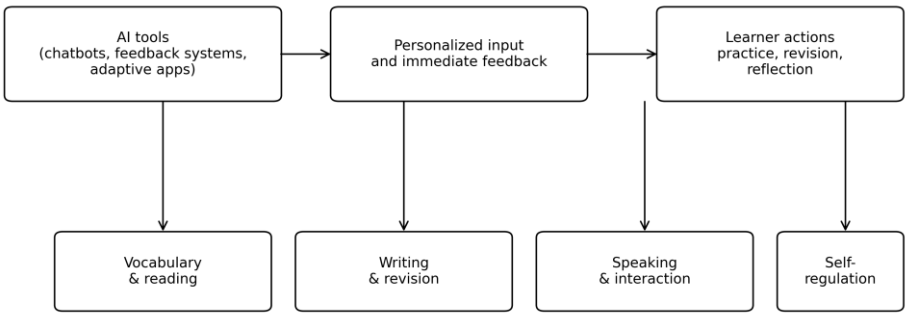

Figure 1. Conceptual model of AI-mediated English learning for university students

Fig. 1. Conceptual model of AI-mediated English learning for university students

Implications for assessment and curriculum.

One practical consequence is that assessment must move beyond a final product. If a student can ask an AI system to generate an essay, then a simple submission of the final text says very little about actual learning. For that reason, teachers need assessment formats that capture process: a first draft, an AI-assisted revision log, short oral questions about the topic, and a brief reflection on what was changed and why. Such tasks make it harder to hide dependence on machine output and easier to evaluate whether the student can explain language choices in their own words.

Curriculum design should also become more selective. AI is not equally useful for every skill or level. Beginners may benefit most from vocabulary explanation, controlled practice, and pronunciation rehearsal. Intermediate students can use AI for paragraph development, cohesion, and error analysis. Advanced students may profit from using AI to compare arguments, improve register, and test the strength of ideas before writing academic texts. This staged use matters because the literature shows that writing and vocabulary are the most consistently supported areas, while motivation and deeper independent habits do not improve automatically [3; 4; 6].

Finally, institutions need shared rules. Teachers should know which tools are acceptable, whether students must disclose AI use, and how privacy is protected. Students should be taught to verify answers, compare sources, and detect fluent but misleading output. UNESCO's guidance is useful here because it frames AI as a

governance issue as well as a classroom tool [8; 9]. When a university combines clear policy, teacher training, and reflective assignments, AI use becomes more transparent and pedagogically meaningful.

Limitations of this review.

This article is a narrative synthesis, not a new classroom experiment. It therefore does not claim that one AI tool is better than another, and it does not measure learning outcomes directly in a local student sample. The purpose is narrower: to organize the current evidence into a coherent pedagogical argument. A further limitation is that the empirical literature still overrepresents higher education and English as a foreign language settings, while fewer studies examine long-term development, lower-level learners, or multilingual contexts [2].

Future research should therefore move toward longitudinal designs, clearer comparisons between tools, and more transparent reporting of how AI is actually used by students. Studies should also distinguish between simple answer generation and deeper learning support, because the educational value of AI depends on use patterns, not just access. Such work would help teachers understand when AI genuinely improves English learning and when it only makes tasks faster.

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