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The Future of English Language Teaching in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities, Challenges, and Emerging Directions

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Abstract— *Artificial Intelligence or "AI", as the boffins call it, is rapidly changing the face of English Language Teaching. And the remarkable developments in generative AI, natural language processing, and intelligent tutoring systems, has opened a whole new world of possibilities for teachers and pupils alike.This systematic review takes stock of the scholarly literature on AI's growing role in ELT, drawing upon peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2026, gathered from such sources as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar, and conducted according to the PRISMA guidelines.The evidence shows that AI brings with it a great many advantages such as personalized learning, adaptive instruction, prompt feedback, and improved assessment across the four key skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking. All the same, certain difficulties remain to be ironed out, namely questions of academic honesty, data privacy, bias built into the machines themselves, inequality in access to technology, and whether teachers are properly equipped to make use of it.The review's conclusion is a reassuring one: AI is most unlikely to do away with the English teacher altogether. Rather, it shall change the nature of the job, as teachers and machines come to work hand in hand. The future of English teaching, then, will be one of cooperation between man and machine, of cleverer methods of assessment, and of a growing need for both teachers and pupils to become well-versed in AI. This review offers critical insights for teachers, policymakers, curriculum designers, and researchers alike.*

Keywords— ***Artificial Intelligence, English Language Teaching, Generative AI, Language Learning, Educational Technology, Personalized Learning***

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative technologies of the twenty-first century, profoundly influencing multiple sectors, including education. Recent advances in machine learning, natural language processing (NLP), and large language models (LLMs) have expanded AI capabilities, enabling systems to support teaching, learning, assessment, and educational administration. As Lo (2023) observes, these developments have accelerated "the transition from traditional technology-enhanced learning environments to more intelligent, adaptive, and personalized educational systems," making AI an increasingly central component of global educational innovation.

A particularly significant milestone was the public release of ChatGPT by OpenAI in late 2022, which marked what many scholars describe as "a turning point in educational technology" (Lo, 2023). Since then, AI-powered tools ; including intelligent tutoring systems, automated writing evaluation platforms, and adaptive learning applications have become progressively embedded in educational

settings. According to Wang et al. (2024), these tools provide learners with "immediate feedback, personalized learning experiences, and interactive support," thereby enhancing both the efficiency and accessibility of learning.

The impact of AI has been particularly notable in English Language Teaching (ELT), a field naturally aligned with AI capabilities given its emphasis on continuous practice, individualized feedback, and skill development. AI technologies support learners across reading, writing, listening, and speaking through personalized instruction, automated assessment, and conversational practice. Hassan (2025) affirms that "AI-powered tools have improved learner engagement, increased learning autonomy, and enhanced language proficiency across various educational contexts," with generative AI further enabling the delivery of customized feedback tailored to individual proficiency levels.

Nevertheless, the growing adoption of AI in ELT raises serious pedagogical, ethical, and practical concerns. Crompton et al. (2024) caution that challenges related to "academic integrity, overreliance on AI-generated content, data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential erosion of critical thinking skills" remain inadequately addressed. Simultaneously, educators face mounting pressure to develop the AI literacy necessary for effective classroom integration (Uygun & Demir, 2026).

Looking ahead, AI is expected to reshape traditional educational paradigms rather than replace educators entirely. Deng and Jamaludin (2026) argue that AI should be understood as "a complementary tool that can support personalized learning, intelligent assessment, and enhanced instructional practices." Understanding these developments is therefore essential for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers seeking to maximize AI's benefits while mitigating its associated risks.

1.2 Rationale

The rapid advancement of generative AI and machine learning has transformed English Language Teaching (ELT) by enabling personalized, adaptive learning. However, existing research primarily focuses on the short-term effectiveness of specific applications (like ChatGPT or chatbots). There is a critical gap in understanding the long-term implications of AI on curriculum design, ethical governance, academic integrity, and the changing role of educators. As educational institutions face pressure to integrate these technologies responsibly, a comprehensive review of the future of ELT in the age of AI is essential to guide policy, teacher preparation, and sustainable practices.

1.3 Purpose of the Article

This article examines the transformative impact of AI on ELT and explores how these technologies reshape contemporary language education. Specifically, it synthesizes current research, identifies key opportunities and challenges, and evaluates the implications for teaching, learning, and assessment. Ultimately, this review highlights emerging trends to provide a roadmap for the responsible and sustainable adoption of AI in future language learning environments.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives of this review, the following research questions are addressed:

1. How is Artificial Intelligence transforming English Language Teaching?
2. What opportunities does AI offer for enhancing teaching and learning in ELT contexts?
3. What challenges, limitations, and ethical concerns arise from the integration of AI into language education?
4. What future trends and developments are likely to shape English Language Teaching in the age of Artificial Intelligence?

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study adopts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the evolving role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English Language Teaching (ELT). The SLR method was selected because, as Uygun and Demir (2026) note, it enables "a transparent, replicable, and comprehensive synthesis of existing scholarly work," particularly in rapidly developing fields such as AI in education. Unlike narrative reviews, which tend to be descriptive and structurally inconsistent, the systematic approach ensures methodological rigor through clearly defined search strategies, inclusion criteria, and analytical procedures. Crompton et al. (2024) affirm that this approach is "widely used in educational technology research to map trends, identify gaps, and synthesize evidence on emerging phenomena," making it especially appropriate for the present inquiry.

2.2 Data Sources

To ensure comprehensive and reliable coverage of the relevant literature, data were retrieved from four major academic databases:

- **Scopus**
- **Web of Science**
- **ERIC** (Education Resources Information Center)

- **Google Scholar**

These databases were selected due to their extensive indexing of peer-reviewed journals and high-impact publications across applied linguistics, educational technology, and language education. As Hassan (2025) observes, combining multiple databases "allows for a broad yet reliable retrieval of studies related to AI applications in ELT and EFL contexts," minimizing the risk of publication bias and ensuring greater representativeness of the available evidence. Wang et al. (2024) similarly underscore the importance of multi-database searches in scoping and systematic reviews to capture the full landscape of a rapidly evolving field.

2.3 Inclusion Criteria

The selection of studies was guided by predefined inclusion criteria designed to safeguard the relevance, currency, and academic quality of the reviewed literature. Specifically:

- Only **peer-reviewed journal articles** were included to ensure academic rigor and scholarly reliability.
- Publications were restricted to the period **2020–2026**, capturing what Lo (2023) describes as "the most significant and recent developments in AI-enhanced language education."
- Studies were required to address **AI in ELT, EFL, or ESL contexts** explicitly, focusing on tools such as generative AI, intelligent tutoring systems, automated writing evaluation, or AI-driven language learning platforms.

Syuhra et al. (2025) argue that applying such structured eligibility criteria is essential in systematic reviews, as it ensures that "only studies reflecting current technological and pedagogical developments are incorporated," thereby enhancing the overall validity of the findings.

2.4 Data Analysis

The selected studies were analyzed through **thematic analysis**, a qualitative method used to identify, organize, and interpret recurring patterns across data sources. This process involved systematic reading, coding, and categorization of the literature to extract key ideas related to AI integration in ELT. The analysis focused on four principal areas:

- Recurring themes in AI applications in language teaching and learning
- Pedagogical opportunities offered by AI technologies
- Challenges and ethical concerns associated with AI use
- Emerging trends and future directions in AI-enhanced ELT

Ginting et al. (2025) describe thematic synthesis as particularly valuable in educational technology reviews because it enables "the integration of findings across diverse studies, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of complex and evolving phenomena." Similarly, Yan et al. (2023) highlight its "flexibility and interpretive depth" as key strengths that make it well suited to systematic reviews in applied linguistics, where study designs, contexts, and findings vary considerably across the literature.

2.5 Selected Studies Included in the Review

After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, ten studies were selected for detailed analysis. These studies constituted the primary sources of evidence for examining the opportunities, challenges, and future directions of Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching (ELT).

No.	Author(s)	Year	Title
1	Al-Khresheh	2024	The Future of Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching: Pros and Cons of ChatGPT Implementation through a Systematic Review
2	Crompton, Edmett, Ichaporia, & Burke	2024	AI and English Language Teaching: Affordances and Challenges
3	Deng & Jamaludin	2026	Roles of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Instruction: A Systematic Literature Review
4	Ginting, Hartono, & Iskandar	2025	Navigating Artificial Intelligence (AI) Integration in English Language Teaching: Challenges, Opportunities and Future Directions
5	Hassan	2025	The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing English Language Teaching (ELT): A Review of Tools, Trends, and Pedagogical Impacts
6	Lo	2023	What Is the Impact of ChatGPT on Education? A Rapid Review of the Literature

7	Syuhra, Chandra, & Rosalina	2025	Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching: A Systematic Literature Review of Tools, Impact, and Challenges
8	Uygun & Demir	2026	A PRISMA-Based Systematic Review of Artificial Intelligence in English as a Foreign and Second Language Education (2023–2025)
9	Wang et al.	2024	Application of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in Language Teaching and Learning: A Scoping Literature Review
10	Yan et al.	2023	Practical and Ethical Challenges of Large Language Models in Education: A Systematic Scoping Review

III. AI TECHNOLOGIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

3.1 Evolution of AI in Language Education

The integration of technology into language education has evolved significantly over the past few decades, progressing from Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to more advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enhanced learning environments. Early CALL systems primarily focused on drill-and-practice exercises, grammar instruction, and vocabulary development with limited interactivity and adaptability. While these systems contributed to language learning support, they lacked the capacity to respond dynamically to individual learner needs.

With the advancement of machine learning and natural language processing, language learning technologies have transitioned into more intelligent systems capable of adapting to learners' proficiency levels and learning behaviors. This shift has led to the development of **adaptive learning systems**, which use learner data to personalize instruction, provide targeted feedback, and adjust task difficulty in real time. Such systems represent a major advancement in language education, as they move beyond static instructional models toward more responsive and learner-centered approaches. (Wang et al., 2024; Hassan, 2025)

3.2 Major AI Tools in ELT

Recent developments in Artificial Intelligence have introduced a wide range of tools that are transforming English Language Teaching (ELT) by enhancing instruction, assessment, and learner engagement.

ChatGPT and Large Language Models (LLMs)

Large Language Models such as ChatGPT have become highly influential in language education due to their ability to generate human-like text, engage in conversational interaction, and support writing development. These tools assist learners in idea generation, grammar correction, paraphrasing, and interactive dialogue practice, making them valuable resources for both autonomous and classroom-based learning. (Lo, 2023; Deng & Jamaludin, 2026)

Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) Tools

AWE systems such as Grammarly and Criterion provide automated feedback on grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and writing structure. These tools enhance writing instruction by offering immediate corrective feedback and enabling iterative improvement, thereby supporting learners' writing development and reducing teacher workload. (Crompton et al., 2024)

Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS)

Intelligent Tutoring Systems are AI-driven platforms designed to simulate one-on-one tutoring by providing personalized instruction, adaptive feedback, and performance tracking. In ELT contexts, ITS help learners develop language skills through guided practice and individualized learning pathways based on their performance data.

Speech Recognition Applications

Speech recognition technologies support the development of speaking and pronunciation skills by analyzing learners' spoken input and providing feedback on accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation. These tools allow learners to practice oral communication in a low-anxiety environment while receiving real-time corrective feedback.

Personalized Learning Platforms

AI-powered personalized learning platforms use learner analytics to tailor content, pacing, and instructional strategies to individual needs. These platforms enhance learner autonomy and engagement by providing customized learning experiences that align with students' proficiency levels and learning goals. (Syuhra et al., 2025; Ginting et al., 2025)

Collectively, these AI tools represent a shift toward more interactive, adaptive, and learner-centered approaches in English Language Teaching, fundamentally reshaping traditional pedagogical practices.

IV. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has created substantial opportunities for transforming English Language Teaching (ELT) by enhancing instruction, improving learner outcomes, and supporting more efficient assessment practices. As Wang et al. (2024) observe, AI technologies have introduced "unprecedented possibilities for personalizing language instruction, automating assessment, and expanding learner access to educational support," making them increasingly central to contemporary ELT practice.

4.1 Personalized Learning

One of the most significant contributions of AI in ELT is the promotion of personalized learning. AI-driven systems enable adaptive instruction by continuously analyzing learners' performance, preferences, and progress, then adjusting content and difficulty levels accordingly. Hassan (2025) argues that this adaptive capacity ensures learners receive instruction "tailored to their individual needs and proficiency levels, moving beyond the limitations of one-size-fits-all pedagogical approaches." Rather than following a fixed curriculum, learners benefit from dynamically responsive learning pathways that reflect their evolving linguistic competencies.

Equally important is AI's capacity to deliver individualized, immediate feedback. Syuhra et al. (2025) confirm that "AI-powered feedback mechanisms allow learners to receive targeted corrections in grammar, vocabulary usage, and sentence structure in real time," significantly enhancing learning efficiency and supporting continuous improvement in language proficiency.

4.2 Enhancement of Language Skills

AI technologies contribute meaningfully to the development of all four core language skills.

Writing

AI-powered tools support writing development through grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, coherence improvement, and content structuring. Crompton et al. (2024) note that "automated writing evaluation systems and generative AI tools assist learners in refining their written output and developing academic writing competence," providing scaffolded support that would be difficult to replicate at scale through traditional instruction alone.

Speaking

In speaking skill development, AI provides pronunciation feedback through speech recognition systems that analyze accuracy, fluency, and intonation. Conversational AI tools further enable learners to engage in interactive dialogue practice, fostering what Lo (2023) describes as "greater speaking confidence and communicative competence" in low-anxiety, self-paced environments where learners feel free to practice without fear of judgment.

Reading and Listening

AI also enhances reading and listening comprehension through adaptive texts, interactive activities, and multimedia resources calibrated to appropriate difficulty levels. Wang et al. (2024) affirm that such tools "allow learners to engage with authentic content while progressively developing their comprehension and critical engagement with language." Across all four skills, research consistently indicates that AI-supported language learning positively influences learner motivation, engagement, and overall language performance.

4.3 Automated Assessment and Feedback

AI has significantly transformed assessment practices in ELT through the development of automated evaluation systems capable of providing real-time, actionable feedback on learner performance. Crompton et al. (2024) highlight that these systems "ensure consistency, speed, and scalability in evaluating large numbers of student assignments," particularly in writing and grammar-focused tasks, thereby reducing the assessment burden on educators considerably.

Beyond efficiency, automated assessment enables immediate correction and reflection, enhancing the formative value of feedback. As a result, teachers can redirect their professional energy toward higher-order responsibilities such as instructional design, differentiated support, and meaningful learner engagement, rather than routine manual grading.

4.4 Increased Learner Autonomy

AI technologies play a pivotal role in fostering learner autonomy by enabling self-directed, flexible, and continuous language practice. Learners can access AI-powered platforms and resources at any time and from any location, extending language learning well beyond the physical classroom. Ginting et al. (2025) emphasize that "the availability of 24/7 learning support through chatbots, virtual tutors, and AI-driven platforms fundamentally changes the learner's relationship with their own educational process," encouraging greater responsibility for personal learning outcomes.

Syuhra et al. (2025) further argue that consistent engagement with AI tools "cultivates independent learning habits, promotes self-monitoring, and strengthens lifelong learning dispositions," qualities that are increasingly valued in twenty-first-century language education. In this sense, AI does not merely supplement instruction — it actively repositions the learner as a more empowered and autonomous agent in their own language development.

V. CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

Despite the significant opportunities AI offers in English Language Teaching, its integration raises serious pedagogical, ethical, and institutional challenges. As Crompton et al. (2024) caution, "the rapid adoption of AI in educational settings has outpaced the development of frameworks needed to govern its responsible and effective use," making critical engagement with these challenges an urgent scholarly and institutional priority.

5.1 Academic Integrity

Among the most widely discussed challenges is the threat AI poses to academic integrity. The growing accessibility of generative AI tools has made it increasingly easy for learners to produce essays, assignments, and other academic work with minimal cognitive effort. Lo (2023) warns that this development has "fundamentally complicated traditional assessment practices, as educators struggle to distinguish between learner-produced and machine-generated content," thereby undermining the validity of conventional writing evaluations.

Yan et al. (2023) further argue that AI-generated submissions risk "eroding the authenticity of student work and compromising the integrity of academic credentialing systems," a concern that extends well beyond individual classrooms to broader institutional and policy levels. Addressing this challenge necessitates the urgent development of updated assessment strategies, AI-detection frameworks, and clear institutional policies governing AI-assisted academic work.

5.2 Overdependence on AI

A closely related concern is the risk of learner overdependence on AI tools. While AI can enhance learning efficiency, Ginting et al. (2025) caution that "excessive reliance on automated systems may gradually diminish learners' capacity for independent thinking, problem-solving, and deeper cognitive engagement with language tasks." Rather than functioning as active participants in the learning process, learners risk becoming passive consumers of AI-generated outputs.

This dependency is particularly concerning in language education, where the development of critical thinking, creative expression, and authentic communicative competence requires sustained mental effort and genuine linguistic risk-taking. If AI tools consistently perform cognitive tasks on behalf of learners, the long-term consequences for language proficiency and intellectual development may be significant.

5.3 Ethical and Privacy Issues

The integration of AI in ELT raises pressing ethical and data privacy concerns. AI systems typically require large volumes of learner data to operate effectively, creating considerable risks related to data security, confidentiality, and potential misuse. Syuhra et al. (2025) stress that "unauthorized access to or misappropriation of personal learner data can have serious consequences for both individuals and institutions," particularly given the sensitive nature of educational records.

Beyond privacy, Crompton et al. (2024) highlight the problem of algorithmic bias, noting that "AI systems trained on non-representative datasets may produce outputs that are systematically unfair or inaccurate, especially in multilingual and multicultural learning environments." Such bias can manifest in skewed feedback, culturally insensitive content, or inequitable assessment outcomes, reinforcing existing educational disparities rather than alleviating them. Ensuring transparency, fairness, and robust ethical governance of AI systems is therefore not optional but essential.

5.4 Digital Divide

The digital divide represents a structural barrier to equitable AI integration in ELT. Access to advanced technologies, reliable high-speed internet, and AI-powered learning platforms remains deeply uneven across and within countries. As Uygun and Demir (2026) observe, "disparities in technological infrastructure risk widening the gap between well-resourced and under-resourced educational settings," potentially transforming AI from an equalizing force into one that compounds existing inequalities.

This concern is particularly acute in developing regions and rural communities, where limited connectivity and inadequate device access may effectively exclude learners from the benefits of AI-enhanced language education. Without deliberate policy interventions to address infrastructural inequalities, the promise of AI in ELT risks remaining accessible only to the already privileged.

5.5 Teacher Preparedness

The effective integration of AI in ELT ultimately depends on the preparedness of educators to use these technologies critically and responsibly. Hassan (2025) notes that "many teachers currently lack sufficient AI literacy, pedagogical training, and professional development opportunities to evaluate and implement AI tools effectively in their classrooms." This gap is not merely technical, it reflects a broader need for educators to develop informed, critical perspectives on AI's affordances and limitations.

Ginting et al. (2025) emphasize that teachers must be equipped not only to operate AI tools but to "critically assess their pedagogical value, recognize their limitations,

and adapt them meaningfully to specific learning contexts and student needs." Achieving this requires sustained investment in continuous professional development programs that integrate AI literacy as a core competency for twenty-first-century language educators.

VI. THE CHANGING ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

The integration of AI into ELT is fundamentally reshaping rather than replacing the professional role of educators. As Crompton et al. (2024) observe, AI is "redefining teacher responsibilities, shifting the focus from traditional knowledge transmission toward facilitation, mediation, and human AI collaboration."

6.1 From Knowledge Provider to Learning Facilitator

Traditionally, teachers served primarily as knowledge providers delivering linguistic input and correcting errors. In AI-enhanced classrooms, however, this role is evolving toward learning facilitation. Hassan (2025) notes that teachers increasingly guide students in "navigating digital tools, interpreting AI-generated outputs, and engaging in meaningful language use," prioritizing learner-centered design and higher-order thinking over direct instruction.

6.2 AI Literacy and Teacher Competencies

Effective AI integration demands that teachers develop robust AI literacy — encompassing not only technical familiarity but also critical awareness of algorithmic bias, data privacy, and academic integrity. Ginting et al. (2025) argue that teachers must be competent in "selecting appropriate AI tools, interpreting learner analytics, and integrating AI responsibly into lesson planning and assessment." This makes AI-focused training an increasingly essential component of teacher education programs.

6.3 Human–AI Collaboration

A prominent emerging model in ELT is human–AI collaboration, where AI manages data-driven tasks such as grammar correction and automated assessment while teachers focus on pedagogical decision-making and learner engagement. Wang et al. (2024) describe this as a complementary relationship in which "AI extends rather than replaces human expertise," enabling more efficient instruction and greater attention to individualized learner support.

6.4 Why Teachers Remain Essential

Despite AI's expanding capabilities, teachers remain indispensable for contributions that machines cannot replicate. Lo (2023) emphasizes that educators provide "emotional support, meaningful human interaction, and cultural mediation" — qualities essential for communicative competence development. Syuhra et al. (2025) further highlight teachers' irreplaceable role in developing learners' critical thinking and helping them evaluate and contextualize AI-generated content responsibly.

Overall, the teacher's role in AI-augmented ELT is not diminishing but evolving — becoming more strategic, interpretive, and distinctly human in nature.

VII. FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF ELT IN THE AI ERA

The rapid advancement of AI is expected to fundamentally reshape ELT across classroom practice, assessment, curriculum design, and teacher development. As Wang et al. (2024) note, emerging technologies are moving "beyond supportive tools toward fully integrated systems that redefine how language teaching and learning are conceived and delivered."

7.1 AI-Augmented Classrooms

Future ELT classrooms are expected to become AI-augmented learning environments where intelligent systems are embedded into everyday instruction. Hassan (2025) envisions these settings as spaces where "AI functions as a continuous support system, providing real-time feedback, adaptive learning pathways, and interactive language practice" alongside — rather than instead of — the human teacher.

7.2 Hybrid Human–AI Teaching Models

A prominent future trend is the emergence of hybrid human–AI teaching models in which instructional responsibilities are strategically distributed. Crompton et al. (2024) argue that this balance where "AI manages repetitive, data-intensive tasks while teachers focus on facilitation, creativity, and critical thinking development" is essential for preserving the irreplaceable human dimensions of language education while maximizing technological efficiency.

7.3 Intelligent Assessment Systems

AI-driven assessment is expected to move well beyond traditional grading toward continuous, formative, and adaptive evaluation. Such systems will enable more accurate tracking of learner progress and deliver immediate, personalized feedback at scale, substantially reducing teacher workload while improving the consistency and responsiveness of assessment practices.

7.4 AI-Supported Curriculum Design

AI is poised to play a growing role in curriculum development by analyzing large datasets on learner

performance and preferences. Syuhra et al. (2025) suggest that AI-supported design will enable "dynamic, responsive curricula that adapt continuously to learners' evolving needs and proficiency levels," ensuring that instructional content remains both relevant and personalized.

7.5 Development of AI Literacy

As AI becomes more deeply embedded in educational contexts, AI literacy will emerge as a core competency for both teachers and learners. Ginting et al. (2025) stress that future ELT programs must incorporate structured AI literacy training to ensure educators and students can "engage responsibly, critically, and effectively with AI technologies in academic and professional settings."

7.6 Ethical AI Policies in Education

Sustainable AI integration in ELT will require clear ethical governance frameworks addressing data privacy, algorithmic transparency, fairness, and academic integrity. Al-Khresheh (2024) emphasizes that institutions and policymakers must ensure "AI is adopted equitably and responsibly, with learner rights and educational values remaining central to all implementation decisions."

7.7 Emerging Research Areas

Several research directions will shape the future scholarly landscape of AI in ELT, including the pedagogical effectiveness of generative AI tools, AI's influence on critical thinking development, adaptive personalized curricula, and AI-assisted teacher education. Lo (2023) and Wang et al. (2024) collectively underscore that these areas "highlight the ongoing evolution of AI in language education and the urgent need for sustained empirical and theoretical investigation."

VIII. DISCUSSION

8.1 Synthesis of Findings

The findings of this review confirm that AI is fundamentally transforming ELT through enhanced personalization, automated feedback, intelligent assessment, and increased learner autonomy. Across the reviewed literature, generative AI, intelligent tutoring systems, and automated writing evaluation tools consistently demonstrate the capacity to improve both learning efficiency and learner engagement. Crompton et al. (2024) summarize this trajectory well, noting that AI is "not replacing traditional ELT practices but reshaping them into more adaptive, data-driven, and learner-centered models."

Nevertheless, the synthesis equally reveals persistent challenges — academic integrity risks, overdependence on AI, ethical concerns, and unequal access that temper these gains. Syuhra et al. (2025) caution that "the rapid evolution of AI has introduced significant uncertainty regarding its long-term pedagogical impact," particularly concerning teacher roles and the depth of genuine learner development. Taken together, the evidence suggests that realizing AI's full potential in ELT requires as much attention to its risks as to its possibilities.

8.2 Implications for ELT Theory

From a theoretical standpoint, AI integration challenges and extends existing frameworks for language learning. Constructivist and sociocultural theories remain foundational, but must now account for the mediating role of intelligent systems in language acquisition. Hassan (2025) argues that AI "introduces new dimensions to second language acquisition theory by enabling continuous interaction, adaptive feedback, and data-driven personalization at a scale previously unachievable through human instruction alone."

This shift points toward the emergence of technology-mediated learning theories in which human cognition interacts dynamically with AI systems. Traditional teacher-centered models are consequently being reinterpreted within frameworks of human–AI collaborative learning, demanding theoretical innovation that keeps pace with rapidly evolving classroom realities.

8.3 Implications for Practice

Practically, ELT practitioners must integrate AI tools strategically rather than indiscriminately. Teachers are required to transition from sole knowledge providers to facilitators who guide learners in using AI responsibly, critically, and effectively. Ginting et al. (2025) stress that "instructional practices must incorporate AI-supported tools while simultaneously preserving a clear focus on critical thinking, communicative competence, and independent language skill development" — ensuring technology serves pedagogy, not the reverse.

Crompton et al. (2024) further emphasize that teachers must develop the capacity to critically evaluate AI-generated outputs, recognizing their limitations and preventing learner overreliance. Achieving this in practice demands sustained, structured professional development programs that build AI literacy as a genuine pedagogical competency rather than a superficial technical skill.

8.4 Implications for Policy

At the policy level, the growing embedding of AI in language education requires clear regulatory frameworks and robust institutional guidelines. Yan et al. (2023) argue that policymakers must urgently address "data privacy, ethical AI use, academic integrity, and equitable access," establishing transparent standards for AI-assisted

assessment and responsible implementation across diverse educational contexts.

Al-Khresheh (2024) further highlights that targeted investment in digital infrastructure and teacher training is essential to narrow the digital divide and ensure that AI-enhanced learning opportunities are distributed equitably rather than reinforcing existing privilege. Without such policy commitment, the transformative potential of AI in ELT risks benefiting only those already advantaged, deepening rather than reducing educational inequality.

IX. CONCLUSION

9.1 Summary of Major Findings

This review has examined the evolving role of AI in ELT, revealing its transformative impact across pedagogy, assessment, curriculum design, and learner engagement. The evidence consistently demonstrates that AI enhances language learning through personalized instruction, automated feedback, and adaptive systems. Crompton et al. (2024) affirm that tools such as generative AI, intelligent tutoring systems, and automated writing evaluation platforms have shown "strong and consistent potential in supporting the development of learners' linguistic competencies across all four language skills."

Equally, the review surfaces critical challenges — academic integrity risks, overdependence, ethical and privacy concerns, digital inequality, and inadequate teacher preparedness — that cannot be overlooked in the pursuit of innovation. Syuhra et al. (2025) capture the central conclusion well: AI is "not replacing English language teachers but fundamentally redefining their roles toward facilitation, mediation, and collaborative human–AI practice." The trajectory of ELT is clearly moving toward more adaptive, technology-enhanced, and learner-centered environments, but arriving there responsibly demands deliberate and critically informed action.

9.2 Recommendations

For Teachers

Teachers should actively develop AI literacy and integrate AI tools strategically into classroom practice — for lesson planning, feedback, and skill development — while safeguarding learners' critical thinking and independent learning capacities. As Ginting et al. (2025) stress, effective AI integration is not merely technical but "fundamentally pedagogical, requiring teachers to remain thoughtful architects of the learning experience rather than passive adopters of technology."

For Institutions

Educational institutions should invest systematically in AI infrastructure and provide structured professional development programs for both teachers and students. Clear institutional guidelines for ethical AI use in teaching and assessment are essential to protect academic integrity and data privacy. Crompton et al. (2024) emphasize that institutions must ensure AI is embedded in ways that "enhance rather than erode the quality and authenticity of human instruction."

For Policymakers

Policymakers must establish comprehensive regulatory frameworks governing the ethical, transparent, and equitable use of AI in education. Yan et al. (2023) argue that such frameworks must address "data protection, algorithmic accountability, and fairness in AI-driven decision-making" as non-negotiable foundations. Al-Khresheh (2024) further underscores the urgent need for policies that actively reduce the digital divide, ensuring that AI-enhanced learning opportunities are accessible equitably across all educational contexts and communities.

In sum, the responsible integration of AI in ELT demands coordinated commitment from teachers, institutions, and policymakers alike — maximizing the technology's considerable educational benefits while remaining rigorously attentive to its pedagogical, ethical, and social risks.

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