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A PRACTICAL GUIDE OF USING AI MODELS IN THE ESL/EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly changing how languages are taught and learned. Recognizing this, this paper explores practical and research-based ways AI can support English language learners (and teachers!) in developing key skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the paper draws on recent studies (2022–2025) and classroom experiences to show how AI tools can make learning more personalized and engaging for ESL and EFL learners of all levels. Examples include AI-assisted conversations, grammar games, and writing partners that help students practice and improve in real time. While challenges such as overreliance and ethical concerns remain, the activities suggested show AI's strong potential to enhance motivation, fluency, and confidence when used as a partner to teachers rather than a replacement.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, EFL, ESL, TESOL, AI in Education*

1. Introduction

A growing body of research shows that artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming education. And AI's influence in language education, in particular, has become even more pronounced as cutting-edge models and tools are integrated into both ESL and EFL classrooms. By 2025, the most effective applications combine advanced speech recognition, personalized learning pathways, and interactive practice environments, offering educators new ways to support diverse learners while automating routine assessment and feedback tasks. Recognizing this, this paper aims to describe some practical ways in which AI models can be used in the language classroom to improve students key language acquiring skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as to improve their vocabulary and grammar skills.

2. Literature review

The relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) and education has been explored for decades (Beck et al., 1996; Salem, 2000). Yet, with the rapid advancement of AI and language processing models such as ChatGPT, scholarly interest in this area has grown markedly (Anders, 2023). As a result, AI-generated texts with their unique characteristics and their implications for education and test-takiing have become an increasingly significant and intriguing area of research (Baker & Smith, 2019; Tahiru, 2021; Shalevska, 2023).

Since 2023, institutions globally have witnessed unprecedented adoption rates of AI-based systems for teaching, learning, and administration. Surveys reveal that over 90% of faculty and administrators plan to expand their use of AI technologies in education within the next two years, citing efficiency gains, easier integration, and improved learning outcomes as key drivers (Ellucian survey, as cited in AWS, 2025; Lee et al., 2024). Generative AI course enrollment is rising sharply, suggesting both demand for AI literacy and the normalization of these tools in curricula

2.1. AI in Second or Foreign Language Teaching

The incorporation of AI in ESL and EFL learning environments spans adaptive learning systems, chatbots, automated assessment, pronunciation apps, and intelligent feedback tools. Systematic reviews (e.g., Ponniah & Zakaria, 2024; Alhusaiyan, 2025) document that AI enhances learning outcomes, especially through personalized instruction adaptable to individual strengths and weaknesses. For instance, AI-powered platforms provide tailored feedback and practice tasks, raising proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills (Garcia et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2020 in). Innovations

such as Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning are highlighted as central to these advances. However, successful integration depends on both technological infrastructure and the professional development of teachers (Shalevska, 2024; Hockly, 2023).

AI applications have demonstrated effectiveness in improving specific language skills, notably speaking and writing. For example, Torkhani (2025) found that EFL students using the Talkpal.AI app in Kuwait significantly improved their fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. In writing instruction, large language models like ChatGPT support feedback and evaluation, but best practices suggest blended approaches: incorporating analog tasks to maintain academic integrity and a growth mindset (Babanoğlu, 2025; SSRN, 2024; Wang & Liu, 2023 in). Interactive AI elements such as gamified tasks and chatbots are linked to higher engagement and motivation (Fryer & Carpenter, 2020 in), and broader access to authentic language material.

Speaking outcomes improve with AI; for example, one study noted pronunciation test scores rising from 46.03 to 76.46 and another reported ELSA Speak scores moving from 77.20 to 83.49 (Marjun & Sintang, 2022). Writing performance gains can also occur when AI tools offer detailed, adaptive feedback (Wu-Yuin et al. 2023)

Other potential benefits include enhanced learner engagement and motivation due to the use of personalized content (Abdelhadi, 2025). AI models can also play a valuable role in promoting contextualized learning, as they are capable of presenting vocabulary within meaningful discourse rather than in isolation. As noted by Meurers et al. (2020), the ability of AI systems to simulate authentic language use provides learners with interactive and immersive opportunities to enhance their vocabulary development.

Yet, emotional outcomes vary: while some studies observe improvements in emotional regulation and reduced anxiety, one study documents increased foreign language anxiety (Shazly (2021). Listening and receptive skill benefits also appear less consistent (Almehmadi, 2024) and ethical concerns are often noted (Shalevska, 2025; Trachtenberg, 2023; Shalevska & Kostadinovska-Stojchevska, 2024).

3. Methods

This study utilizes a descriptive qualitative approach to synthesize literature and professional experiences regarding the use of AI in language classrooms. The methodology aligns with systematic literature review best practices, as outlined by Page et al. (2021), and includes the following elements:

a. Literature Review Protocol: The review draws upon recent systematic and empirical studies of AI integration in language teaching, focusing on research published from 2022 to 2025 (Li, 2025; Lee, 2025).

b. Experience-Based Synthesis: Insights are combined with the researcher's own observations of various AI platforms, such as generative language models, and automated assessment platforms implemented in real classroom settings (Sanako, 2025; Lee, 2025).

4. Results and discussion

Below are research-informed activities for each of the six essential language skill areas. Each activity makes use of current AI models or platforms, and is illustrated with strategies or examples that teachers can use directly in the classroom.

4.1. AI-based activities that focus on students' listening skills

4.1.1. Activity: AI-Generated Listening Comprehension

- **How AI is used:** Students ask an AI (e.g., ChatGPT or Gemini) to generate a short audio story or dialogue on a chosen topic. The teacher or AI then reads it aloud using built-in text-to-speech features or external voice tools.

- **Procedure:**

1. Students choose a topic (e.g., “at the airport,” “ordering food”).
2. The AI creates a short dialogue with comprehension questions.
3. Students listen twice, then discuss answers in pairs.

- **Learning Outcome:** Students improve comprehension of authentic dialogues and learn to identify key details and gist.

4.1.2. Activity: “Guess the Speaker’s Mood”

- **How AI is used:** AI generates short dialogues or monologues with emotional tone indicators (e.g., frustration, excitement, sadness etc.)
- **Procedure:**
    1. The AI produces short scripts with mood cues removed.
    2. Teacher or AI voice reads them aloud.
    3. Students guess the mood, justify their reasoning, and check AI’s explanation.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students learn to detect emotions and implied meaning through listening.

4.1.3. Activity: Interactive Listening Quests

- **How AI is used:** Students engage in an AI-guided listening “quest” (e.g., ChatGPT narrates a mystery story and gives audio clues).
- **Procedure:**
    1. AI narrates part of a story and gives students a choice of actions (“Do you go left or right?”).
    2. Students listen, choose an option, and the AI continues the story accordingly.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students develop active listening skills and inference through narrative interaction.

4.2. AI-based Activities that Focus on Reading and Comprehension

4.2.1. Activity: AI Reading Buddy

- **How AI is used:**

  Students read a short AI-generated story or article at their level and interact with the AI to clarify meaning, ask vocabulary questions, or summarize key ideas.

- **Procedure:**
  The teacher prompts an AI (e.g., ChatGPT or Gemini) to “Write a short story about friendship for English learners.”
    1. Students read the text individually or in pairs.
    2. They ask the AI comprehension questions (“What does this word mean?” or “Why did the character feel sad?”).
    3. Students then summarize the story in their own words and compare their summary with the AI’s version.
- **Learning Outcome:**

  Students develop comprehension strategies (skimming, scanning, inferring) and learn to use AI as a reading support tool to clarify meaning and structure.

4.2.2. Activity: AI-Generated Reading Quiz

- **How AI is used:**

  AI creates a short reading passage and automatically generates comprehension questions of different types (true/false, multiple choice, open-ended).

- **Procedure:**

  1. The teacher prompts AI: "Create a 200-word article about climate change and 5 comprehension quiz questions."
  2. Students read and answer the questions as they are displayed on a smartboard/ projector.
  3. The model explains the answers.

- **Learning Outcome:**

  Students practice reading for comprehension and receive immediate AI feedback with explanations.

4.2.3. Activity: AI Role-Play Reading Circles

- **How AI is used:**

  Prompted by the teacher, AI provides a short story or article and assigns reading roles to students (e.g., Summarizer, Questioner, Vocabulary Finder, Predictor).

- **Procedure:**

  1. AI generates a short reading text suited to the class's level and topic.
  2. Each student (or group) receives a "role" generated by the AI (e.g., "You find difficult words and ask others to define them").
  3. After reading, students share findings.

- **Learning Outcome:**

  Students strengthen comprehension and collaborative discussion skills by engaging with the text from multiple analytical perspectives.

4.2.4. Activity: AI-Powered Reading Simplifier

- **How AI is used:**

  AI rewrites or summarizes authentic English texts (e.g., news articles) at an appropriate reading level for students.

- **Procedure:**

  1. Teacher or students paste a short authentic article into AI.
  2. Ask AI: "Simplify this article for English learners at A2/B1 level."
  3. Students read both versions and identify what changed (vocabulary, sentence structure).

- **Learning Outcome:**

  Students improve reading comprehension by comparing authentic and simplified texts, building awareness of how language complexity affects understanding.

4.2.5. Activity: "Level-Up Reading Challenge"

- **How AI is used:** AI adapts a single text into multiple difficulty levels (A2 → B1 → B2), creating a tiered reading challenge.

- **Procedure:**

1. The teacher copies a short authentic article (e.g., BBC Learning English or a short story). Ask AI: *"Simplify this article into three levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced."*
2. Divide students into teams. Each team starts at Level 1 and "levels up" after answering comprehension questions correctly.
3. The first team to reach Level 3 wins.

- **Learning Outcome:** Students develop reading fluency, vocabulary awareness, and confidence through scaffolded, gamified progression.

4.3. AI-based Activities that Focus on Speaking Skills

4.3.1. Activity: AI Conversation Partner

- **How AI is used:** Students practice real-time conversation with AI on a chosen topic using voice input (available in ChatGPT or Gemini apps).
- **Procedure:**
    1. Students select a topic (e.g., "daily routines").
    2. They converse with AI using voice mode for a set amount of time.
    3. AI provides gentle corrections or vocabulary suggestions.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students improve oral fluency and pronunciation through guided AI conversation.

4.3.2. Activity: Pronunciation Challenge

- **How AI is used:** AI provides example sentences that challenge students' pronunciation and provides pronunciation feedback using speech recognition features.
- **Procedure:**
    1. The teacher chooses a pronunciation aim. They prompt the model to create sentences.
    2. AI models the sentence (text + audio).
    3. Students repeat and AI evaluates accuracy.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students improve pronunciation through repetition and instant AI feedback.

4.4. AI-based Activities that Focus on Writing Skills

4.4.1. Activity: AI Writing Partner

- **How AI is used:** Students write paragraphs or emails and ask AI (e.g., ChatGPT or Claude) for suggestions on improving coherence and tone.
- **Procedure:**
    1. Students draft a paragraph.
    2. They paste it into AI and ask, "How can I make this clearer and more natural?"
    3. Students review and revise, guided by the teacher.

- **Learning Outcome:** Students learn to self-edit and refine written communication.

4.4.2. Activity: Collaborative Story Building

- **How AI is used:** AI co-writes a story with students, alternating paragraphs.

- **Procedure:**
    1. Prompted by the teacher, AI begins a short story ("Once upon a time…").
    2. Students continue, then AI adds the next part.
    3. At the end, students summarize the full story.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students practice sequencing, cohesion, and creative writing.

4.5. AI-based Activities that Focus on Vocabulary Building

4.5.1. Activity: AI Word Explorer

- **How AI is used:** Students ask AI for explanations, collocations, and example sentences for new words.
- **Procedure:**
    1. Students input new words from a text – usually a list of key words provided by the teacher.
    2. AI provides definitions, synonyms, and usage examples.
    3. Students create their own sentences and compare with AI's.
- Learning Outcome: Students deepen understanding of word meaning and context.

4.5.2. Activity: AI Context Game

- **How AI is used:** Prompted by the teacher, AI generates sentences with missing words. Students guess the correct vocabulary.
- **Procedure:**
    1. AI generates open-cloze sentences (e.g., "She was very ___ when she heard the news.").
    2. Students guess, discuss in groups, then check with AI.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students learn to infer word meaning from context.

4.5.3. Activity: AI Lexical Challenge

- **How AI is used:** AI runs a vocabulary quiz or "word ladder" game (e.g., transform *cold* by changing one letter → *cool* → *fool* → *food*).
- **Procedure:**
    1. Students play vocabulary games generated by AI.
    2. AI provides hints or challenges.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students expand vocabulary through active, playful engagement.

4.5.4. Activity: "Decode the Message!"

- **How AI is used:**

  AI creates encrypted or scrambled reading texts that students must "decode" by understanding meaning and context.
- **Procedure:**

1. The teacher asks AI:

   "Write a short article (around 120 words) about recycling for B1-level learners, but replace 10 key words with emojis or blanks."

2. Students read and guess the missing words.
3. Once they finish, they ask AI to reveal the original text and compare.
4. Award points for correct guesses and best context-based reasoning.

- **Learning Outcome:** Students strengthen contextual reading and vocabulary inference skills in a game-like puzzle format.

4.6. AI-based Activities that Focus on Grammar

4.6.1. Activity: Grammar Detective

- **How AI is used:** Prompted by the teacher, AI produces sentences with intentional grammatical errors. Students identify and correct them.
- **Procedure:**
  1. The teacher prompts AI: "Give me 5 sentences with (Present Simple) that include common grammar mistakes."
  2. Students correct them and check answers with AI and the teacher.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students improve awareness of common grammar issues.

4.6.2. Activity 2: Grammar Transformation Race

- **How AI is used:** AI prompts students to transform sentences (e.g., active → passive, direct → indirect).
- **Procedure:**
  1. AI provides example sentences.
  2. Students transform them and get instant AI feedback.
  3. AI times or scores performance for fun competition.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students master grammatical transformations through interactive drills.

4.6.3. Activity: "Grammar Story Builder"

- **How AI is used:** AI helps students co-create a story while enforcing specific grammar targets (e.g., past simple, conditionals, reported speech).
- **Procedure:**
  1. The teacher prompts AI: *"Let's write a story together using only past tense verbs for A2 learners. Prompt students with story sentences one by one."*
  2. They divide students into teams. Each team adds one sentence to the story following the grammar rule.
  3. After each round, AI is prompted to check if the grammar rule was followed.
  4. AI gives points or praise for correct usage and funny creativity.
  5. Students continue until the story is complete and share the final AI-edited story as a class text.
- **Learning Outcome:** Students apply target grammar forms in creative, contextualized writing.

5. Conclusion

AI has become a powerful ally in the language classroom, offering new ways to engage learners and personalize instruction. The examples and studies reviewed in this paper show that, when used thoughtfully, AI can strengthen all areas of language learning, thus helping students build confidence, accuracy, and motivation. However, its success depends on balance: teachers remain essential in guiding, contextualizing, and humanizing the learning process. As AI continues to evolve, teachers should focus on integrating it ethically and creatively, and future research should focus on personalized AI models that aid EFL and ESL instruction for students of all ages.

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