

Chapter 21

Reimagining English Language Teaching: Humanizing Learning in the AI Era

Siti Mafulah

Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang

siti_mafulah@unikama.ac.id

A. THE CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGE

Recently, the landscape of English Language Teaching (ELT) has been transformed in terms of how the language is taught, learned, assessed, and practiced, through the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). New opportunities for personalized feedback, automated language support, content generation, and interactive communication practice are provided by some tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, and other AI-powered language applications (Williyan et al., 2026). Access to language resources is now available through technology that allows students to receive immediate assistance without being constrained by the limitations of the traditional classroom. Despite this, the rapidly expanding use of AI in ELT has also brought about new pedagogical challenges, particularly in the effort to balance technological efficiency with meaningful human learning experiences. A recent study emphasizes that while GenAI can enhance the language learning process, its effectiveness depends on how teachers and learners critically integrate these tools into pedagogically meaningful contexts rather than treating AI as an autonomous solution for language development (Oladele et al., 2025).

The reliance on AI in language learning is one of the greatest challenges of the modern era, and it continues to increase. Currently, many students rely on AI based tools to generate ideas, complete writing assignments, translate texts, correct grammar, and draft academic responses (Sani et al., 2025; Waziana et al., 2024). This kind of reliance can limit their opportunities for independent thinking, problem-solving, and authentic language practice. When used strategically, AI-based learning can actually foster greater learner autonomy (Hasbi, 2026). However, when AI is overused, learners' cognitive engagement may actually weaken, as may their ability to construct knowledge independently (Elzerman, 2025). Furthermore, AI-generated language output may not always reflect contextual, cultural, or communicative appropriateness, requiring learners and teachers to critically evaluate and negotiate the information generated by AI (Hastomo et al., 2025; Jones, 2024). Therefore, the challenge for ELT educators is not merely how to introduce AI into the classroom, but how to develop critical AI literacy that enables learners to use the technology responsibly while maintaining their intellectual and linguistic agency (Innaci & Thiyagaraj, 2024).

Beyond the issue of AI dependency, teachers' roles and autonomy are also affected by the growing integration of AI in the classroom. Tasks once carried out mainly by teachers such as giving feedback, producing materials, and supporting language practice are now increasingly handled by AI. As a result, teachers risk losing a measure of professional autonomy, or worse, becoming passive operators of automated systems (Tripathi, 2025). Meaningful English language instruction should not focus only on linguistic input or feedback. Empathy, emotional support, interaction, encouragement, and a genuine teacher-student relationship remain the most important factors. The vital role of teacher autonomy in AI-mediated classrooms is also underscored by various recent studies. This is because learning experiences are designed by teachers, students' needs are interpreted by them, and the affective dimensions of language learning such as motivation, self-confidence, a sense of belonging, and engagement are also nurtured by them (Rahimi & Keng Wee Ong, 2023). Therefore, the teacher's role in English language instruction should not be taken over by AI. Instead, human interaction must remain at the core of

language education in pedagogical practice, while AI should be positioned merely as a supporting partner.

B. THE PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Repositioning Teachers as Learning Designers and Mentors

The redefinition of the teacher's role is driven by the increasing use of AI in English language instruction not by the replacement of the teacher's functions themselves. In AI-supported classrooms, the teacher's role must go beyond that of a mere conveyor of linguistic knowledge. Teachers are called upon to transform into learning designers, mentors, and pedagogical decision-makers who coordinate meaningful interactions among students, learning materials, and technology. Lesson planning, material development, and automated feedback can indeed be supported by AI. However, students' emotional needs, cultural backgrounds, learning difficulties, and classroom dynamics cannot be fully understood by AI. Therefore, teachers continue to play a central role in designing contextual learning experiences, while also determining how AI can be used to achieve pedagogical goals. Recent studies highlight the active role of teachers as a key factor in the successful integration of GenAI. This is because AI-generated resources need to be evaluated, adapted, and modified by teachers to align with students' needs and the educational context (Zhai, 2025).

To play their role as instructional designers once again, teachers also need to strengthen their professional knowledge of AI-based pedagogy. There are several skills that need to be developed here such as critically selecting AI tools, formulating effective prompts, evaluating the results provided by AI, and reworking these AI-based activities into truly meaningful learning experiences in the classroom. From this perspective, teachers are not simply passive users of technology. They are active agents who help shape how AI is used in language education. Therefore, professional development programs for teachers should not only focus on technical skills in using AI, but also integrate these with pedagogical knowledge, ethical awareness, and reflective teaching practices (Huynh et al., 2025).

Designing Human-Centered Learning Experiences

AI has opened up opportunities for more personalized and efficient language learning. However, effective English instruction must still prioritize a human-centered learning experience. At its foundation, language learning is a social process that involves communication, the negotiation of meaning, collaboration, and emotional bonds between individuals (Thorsten Huth, 2020). Therefore, activities that emphasize human interaction need to be designed by teachers, rather than simply allowing students to rely on responses from AI. Various classroom practices such as collaborative projects, group discussions, peer feedback, debates, role-playing, storytelling, and reflective assignments can create a learning environment that not only hones students' language competencies but also develops their interpersonal skills and higher-order thinking skills.

A human-centered approach does not reject technological innovation. Rather, technology is positioned as a supportive resource that strengthens the human learning process. AI can generate authentic content, provide additional practice opportunities, and support learning tailored to individual needs (Fajaria et al., 2026). Nevertheless, the responsibility for creating meaningful communicative experiences remains with the teacher. This emphasis aligns with the recently developed human-centered AI framework for English language learning. According to this framework, the application of AI must remain goal-oriented, inclusive, ethical, and focused on the needs of learners. The crucial role in pedagogical decision-making, on the other hand, remains with educators (Muthumaniraja, 2026).

Developing Critical and Ethical AI Literacy

The urgency of developing critical and ethical AI literacy is highlighted by the rapidly increasing use of Generative AI among English language learners. AI literacy itself should not be understood merely as the ability to operate AI tools. Beyond that, students must

also understand the abilities, limitations, biases, and ethical implications of AI, as well as its proper application in academic and professional contexts (Zhang et al., 2023). Without critical AI literacy, AI-generated answers have the potential to make students overly reliant on the technology. Inaccurate information may be accepted at face value, or AI may be used in ways that actually undermine students' academic integrity and independent learning.

In the context of ELT, students should be guided by teachers to become critical users of AI. This can be achieved by integrating AI evaluation activities into language learning tasks. For example, students can compare AI-generated text with authentic sources, identify linguistic or cultural inaccuracies, revise the AI's output, and reflect on the role of AI in their learning process. Through such activities, AI ceases to be merely a shortcut for completing assignments and instead becomes a tool for developing students' critical thinking and learning autonomy. Research on AI literacy development among pre-service language teachers demonstrates that structured learning interventions can improve teachers' ability to critically and pedagogically integrate GenAI into language education. Furthermore, emerging educational discussions emphasize that AI literacy must include awareness of ethical issues such as privacy, bias, transparency, and responsible use (Huang et al., 2025).

Cultivating Empathy, Reflection, and Meaningful Human Interaction

One of the most important strategies for making ELT more human-centered in the age of AI is to preserve the affective dimension of language learning. AI can indeed provide instant responses and personalized feedback. However, the emotional support, encouragement, empathy, and interpersonal relationships fostered through interactions between teachers and students cannot be fully replaced by AI. Psychological factors such as self-confidence, motivation, the willingness to communicate, and a sense of belonging also play a role in English language learning (Lizaria Khafshoh et al., 2023). It is these factors that significantly influence student engagement and persistence.

Therefore, emotionally supportive classrooms need to be intentionally created by teachers, allowing learners to feel valued, understood, and encouraged to take risks in using English. Students' emotional engagement can be strengthened through reflective activities, individual feedback conversations, collaborative learning, and classroom dialogue. At the same time, these practices help prevent learning from becoming overly dependent on automated systems. Recent research suggests that AI integration in EFL should be understood as a collaborative relationship among teachers, students, and AI one in which human interaction is enhanced rather than replaced by technology (Guan et al., 2025) . By keeping empathy and reflection at the core of ELT, educators can ensure that meaningful, in-depth language learning experiences remain the outcome of technological advancement, not its casualty.

C. THE FUTURE DIRECTION

The future of English Language Teaching in the AI era will not be shaped by technology's capacity to replace human teachers. Rather, it will be shaped by how effectively AI is integrated by educators while the essential human dimensions of learning are preserved. As Generative AI continues to evolve, a model of human AI collaboration will increasingly be adopted by ELT, in which technology serves as a pedagogical partner rather than a substitute for teachers (Kannadhasan, 2025) . A balanced approach will be required in future language classrooms, where personalization, accessibility, and efficiency are supported by AI, while meaningful communication, emotional connection, critical thinking, and learner identity remain developed by teachers. In this emerging landscape, the role of teachers will become even more significant. As designers of transformative learning experiences, teachers will be the ones combining technological innovation with human-centered pedagogy (Blessing Ifeakandu et al., 2025).

A broader reconceptualization of teacher education and professional development is also required by future directions in ELT. Technical skills alone should not be the focus when teachers are prepared for the AI era; rather, integrated competencies involving AI

literacy, pedagogical reasoning, ethical awareness, and reflective practice need to be developed (Firdian, 2026). English teachers should be equipped not merely to use AI tools effectively, but also to make informed decisions about when, why, and how AI ought to be incorporated into learning activities. Beyond this, sustainable models of AI-enhanced ELT need to be investigated by future research models that take into account diverse educational contexts, learner differences, cultural perspectives, and issues of digital equity. Such research is essential to ensure that inclusive and meaningful language education is contributed to by AI adoption, rather than new forms of educational inequality being created (Weng & Fu, 2025).

Ultimately, technology being reimaged as a means of strengthening human potential is where the future of ELT lies. Increased efficiency or productivity alone should not be used to measure the success of AI integration; rather, deeper engagement, greater learner autonomy, stronger interpersonal relationships, and more ethical learning environments should be considered its true contribution (Zing et al., 2025). Language learning is recognized by a humanized approach to AI in ELT as more than the mere acquisition of linguistic knowledge; communication, empathy, cultural understanding, and human connection are also developed through it. For this reason, AI innovation should be embraced by the next generation of English language education, while humanity is ensured to remain at the heart of teaching and learning (Ciocan, 2025). The future of English language teaching will not be determined by how advanced artificial intelligence becomes. Instead, it will be determined by how effectively empathy, dialogue, creativity, and meaningful human relationships are preserved by educators, while AI is leveraged as a pedagogical partner rather than a pedagogical replacement.

Author



Dr. Siti Mafulah, S.Pd., M.Pd has been teaching for Universitas PGRI Kanjuruhan Malang since 2014. She does not only dedicates her whole life to teaching but she also actively writes articles (Scopus indexes and SINTA accredited as well) and books. She is interested in innovation in ELT and TEYL. Besides, she wrote some books such as *Shortcut for Mastering English Grammar* and many children books. She also edited a book written by her students entitled “A Touch of Imagination: A Collection of Short Stories”. She can be contacted at e-mail: siti_mafulah@unikama.ac.id and Instagram [@kak_ulfa_n_gerry](#).

Reference

- Blessing Ifeakandu, U., Midjochedo Anthony, H., & Amalachukwu Nwafor, C. (2025). Multiverse Journal A Conceptual Review of How Emerging Technologies Are Transforming Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century. *Multiverse Journal*, 2(2), 1–19.
- Ciocan, M. (2025). Integrating AI without Losing the Human Element in the English Language Classroom. *DIALOGO JOURNAL*, 11(2), 71–80. <https://doi.org/10.51917/dialogo.2025.11.2.4>
- Elzerman, G. H. (2025). When AI Does the Thinking: The Risks of Over-Reliance on Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education Language Learning. *2025 5th International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Education (ICAIE)*, 773–778. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICAIE64856.2025.11158185>
- Fajaria, N. H., Maknun, L., Hasbi, M., Islamiah, N., Male, H., Harida, E. S., Kusmaningrum, M. (2026). *AI in English Language Teaching and Research*. Rizquna.
- Firdian, F. (2026). Preparing Educators for the Artificial Intelligence Era: Digital Competencies, Pedagogical Readiness, and Ethical Challenges in Education. *International Journal of Education*

and Vocational Studies, 1(1), 33–39.
<https://doi.org/10.62712/ijevs.v1i1.5>

- Godwin Jones, R. (2024). Generative AI, Pragmatics, and Authenticity in Second Language Learning. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2410.14395>
- Guan, L., Lee, J. C.-K., Zhang, Y., & Gu, M. M. (2025). Investigating the tripartite interaction among teachers, students, and generative AI in EFL education: A mixed-methods study. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 8, 100384. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2025.100384>
- Hasbi, M. (2026). AI-based educational video production projects for pre-service EFL teachers. In *AI in English Language Teaching and Research* (pp. 25-37). Rizquna.
- Hastomo, T., Widiati, U., Ivone, F. M., Zen, E. L., Hasbi, M., & Khulel, B. (2025). AI-powered conversational agents and intercultural learning: Insights from Indonesian EFL students. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 8(1), 103217-103217.
- Huang, T., Wu, C., & Wu, M. (2025). Developing pre-service language teachers' GenAI literacy: an interventional study in an English language teacher education course. *Discover Artificial Intelligence*, 5(1), 163. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44163-025-00435-1>
- Huynh, L., Le, T. H., Dang, B., An, B. T., Vu, C. T., & Nguyen, A. (2025). Mindset matters: Fostering teachers' responsible AI use through professional development. *Journal of New Approaches in Educational Research*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44322-025-00043-y>
- Kannadhasan, M. (2025). International Journal of Teaching, Learning and Education (IJTLE) Next-Gen Language Pedagogy: Leveraging Generative AI to Support Inclusive English Language Learning. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijtle>
- Lizaria Khafshoh, A., Nadhifah, S., & Widiati, U. (2023). A Systematic Review of Psychological Factors Contributing to Successful English Learning. *Jurnal Pendidikan Humaniora*, 11(04), 278–292. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um011v11i42023p278-292>

- Loyola Innaci, & Bastin Thiyagaraj. (2024). Artificial Intelligence Literacy Among English Language Teachers: Challenges and Opportunities. *International Journal of English and Education*. <https://doi.org/10.67050/IJEE/V13I3/IJEE243010>
- Muthumaniraja, S. (2026). Rethinking English Language Education In The Age Of Artificial Intelligence: From Language Proficiency To Human Competencies. *ShodhAI: Journal of Artificial Intelligence*, 3(2), 15–29. <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhai.v3.i2.2026.97>
- Oladele, S., Fagbemi, A. M., & Erhuen, O. L. (2025). Integrating Generative AI in Linguistics Pedagogy: Implications for Language Analysis, Assessment, and Ethical Literacy Isaiah Oluwasegun Owolabi 2. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.63084/cognexus.v1i04.212>
- Puja Tripathi, D. S. F. A. B. R. T. (2025). Ai In Classrooms: ImDr. Puja Tripathi, Digar Singh Farswan, Anjana Basera, Rakhi Tiwaripact On Teacher Identity And Autonomy. *I-Manager's Journal on School Educational Technology*, 20(4).
- Rahimi, M., & Keng Wee Ong, K. (2023). Exploring expert teachers' cognitions and practices of teaching English speaking and their students' experiences and engagement. *System*, 115, 103064. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103064>
- Sani, F. R. A., Md Tahir, N., Jahaya, N. M., & Morat, B. N. (2025). Navigating Ai-Assisted Academic Writing: University Students' Perspectives And Challenges. *International Journal of Modern Education*, 7(26), 1051–1065. <https://doi.org/10.35631/ijmoe.726069>
- Thorsten Huth. (2020). Interaction, Language Use, and Second Language Teaching (1st Edition). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Waziana, W., Andewi, W., Hastomo, T., & Hasbi, M. (2024). Students' perceptions about the impact of AI chatbots on their vocabulary and grammar in EFL writing. *Register Journal*, 17(2), 352-382.
- Weng, Z., & Fu, Y. (2025). Generative AI in Language Education: Bridging Divide and Fostering Inclusivity. *International*

- Journal of Technology in Education*, 8(2), 395–420.
<https://doi.org/10.46328/ijte.1056>
- Williyan, A., Aulia Taufiqi, M., Ningsih, I. R., Ilyas, M., & Pujiastuti, E. (2026). Comparative Analysis Of Llm-Based Ai Assistants For Efl Writing Instruction: Chatgpt, Claude, Gemini, And Deepseek. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31851/wdz59c93>
- Zhai, X. (2025). Transforming Teachers' Roles and Agencies in the Era of Generative AI: Perceptions, Acceptance, Knowledge, and Practices. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*, 34(6), 1323–1333. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-024-10174-0>
- Zhang, H., Lee, I., Ali, S., DiPaola, D., Cheng, Y., & Breazeal, C. (2023). Integrating Ethics and Career Futures with Technical Learning to Promote AI Literacy for Middle School Students: An Exploratory Study. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education*, 33(2), 290–324. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40593-022-00293-3>
- Zing, K., Min, A., Soe, T., & Thet, M. (2025). Harnessing Artificial Intelligence to Enhance Personalized Learning in Educational Environments. *Educia Journal*, 1(3), 79–89. <https://doi.org/10.71435/610404>