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USING AI IN THE AFFECTIVE TEACHING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE: A DESK-RESEARCH AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BEST PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES

Abstract

This article examines the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the affective teaching of English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL). Drawing on qualitative desk research and comparative thematic analysis of international studies, policy documents, and institutional reports, the study explores how AI-based tools influence learners' emotional engagement, motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and psychological well-being in language learning contexts. The analysis highlights effective practices such as adaptive feedback, emotion-sensitive tutoring, personalized learning pathways, and AI-mediated communication, while also addressing key challenges, including emotional misinterpretation by AI systems, learner demotivation linked to automated feedback, ethical concerns, teacher identity tensions, and risks of learner over-dependence on technology. The article concludes by outlining pedagogical and policy implications for educators, institutional leaders, and policymakers seeking to integrate AI into affective language pedagogy in a balanced and ethically responsible manner.

The study is particularly relevant to the Georgian educational context, where institutions are increasingly exploring AI-supported teaching strategies to enhance the effectiveness and emotional sustainability of English language education.

Keywords: AI-empowered, English Language, teaching, acquisition, pedagogical practices.

Introduction

Affective teaching plays a crucial role in successful language acquisition. Emotional variables such as motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, learner attitudes, and sense of belonging strongly influence language performance, classroom participation, and long-term learning outcomes. In English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL) contexts, affective factors are especially significant, as learners often experience heightened anxiety and reduced willingness to communicate.

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI)—particularly generative AI, adaptive learning systems, learning analytics, and conversational agents—has created new opportunities to address affective dimensions of language learning. AI-driven tools can provide personalized feedback, flexible pacing, and low-pressure environments that may support learners' emotional needs alongside cognitive development.

Although AI in language education has been extensively examined from cognitive, linguistic, and technological perspectives, its role in shaping learners' affective experiences remains comparatively underexplored and fragmented across disciplines. Existing studies often focus on isolated affective variables or single technologies without offering a comparative synthesis of pedagogical practices, emotional

outcomes, and associated risks. This article addresses this gap by conducting a desk-based comparative analysis of international research and policy documents to identify patterns of success, limitations, and emerging best practices in AI-supported affective English language teaching.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative desk-research methodology, drawing on international scholarly literature, institutional reports, and policy documents to examine the affective dimensions of AI use in English language education. Desk research is particularly suitable for emerging and rapidly evolving fields such as AI-enhanced pedagogy, where technological innovation often outpaces large-scale empirical experimentation.

The analysis is based on peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2018 and 2025 in the fields of applied linguistics, educational technology, artificial intelligence in education, and educational psychology. In addition, reports and policy papers issued by international organizations, including UNESCO and the OECD, were reviewed. Case studies from universities, language centers, and educational technology providers implementing AI in EFL/ESL contexts were also included.

Sources were identified through academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar using keywords including AI in EFL, affective language learning, AI chatbots, motivation and anxiety in language learning, and AI-mediated feedback. Only sources explicitly addressing affective outcomes or emotional dimensions of language learning were included.

A comparative thematic analysis was conducted, focusing on three core dimensions: Affective outcomes, including motivation, engagement, anxiety reduction, emotional resilience, self-confidence, and willingness to communicate.

Pedagogical practices, such as AI-generated feedback, adaptive learning pathways, AI-mediated communication, and teacher–AI interaction models.

Challenges and risks, including emotional misinterpretation by AI systems, ethical and privacy concerns, teacher identity issues, learner over-reliance on technology, and technological limitations.

Each source was examined for evidence of how AI tools influenced learners' affective experiences in EFL/ESL settings. As a desk-research study, the findings are necessarily dependent on the scope and quality of existing literature and do not include primary data collection. Nevertheless, the breadth and diversity of sources provide a robust foundation for identifying global trends and transferable insights.

Analysis

This analysis synthesizes empirical evidence and international policy insights on the affective impacts and pedagogical roles of AI in English language learning. It draws on peer-reviewed research on AI tools in EFL/ESL contexts and global education policies from UNESCO and the OECD. Recent empirical research shows that AI applications in language classrooms can influence learners' motivation, engagement, anxiety, and confidence.

Motivation and Engagement:

In a quasi-experimental study of Saudi EFL learners, the use of ChatGPT significantly increased student **motivation and engagement** compared to conventional instruction, as measured through both quantitative data and thematic analysis of interviews: "students in the AI group demonstrated a higher level

of motivation and engagement compared to those who relied on conventional methods of instruction" (Allehyani et al., 2025).

Similarly, research involving AI-chatbot environments for Iranian students found that learners reported **increased engagement and enjoyment**; the chatbots provided a safe space for language experimentation and immediate feedback, which learners described as contributing to a more **interactive and stimulating learning experience** (Mushaddiq et al., 2024).

A large quasi-experimental study involving 350 Chinese EFL students demonstrated significantly **higher affective, cognitive, and behavioural engagement** in classes using AI-empowered applications (e.g., ChatGPT, Duolingo) compared to control groups, indicating that AI can positively transform emotional investment in learning tasks (Ma, Y., Chen, 2024).

Anxiety and Willingness to Communicate:

In research published in *System*, conversational generative AI chatbots were shown to **reduce foreign language speaking anxiety and increase willingness to communicate (WTC)** and self-perceived communicative competence among EFL learners. The authors concluded that "GenAI chatbots … fostered a stronger sense of presence and emotional support, which was linked to increased WTC" (Wang et.al. 2024).

Another study found that interaction with an AI chatbot significantly increased learners' oral proficiency and WTC, with participants reporting that the chatbot environment was perceived as **more comfortable and less intimidating** than traditional peer interactions — a factor closely tied to affective gains (Zhang, 2025).

Self-Efficacy and Emotional Resilience:

Investigations into AI literacy and EFL learning indicate that **AI learning self-efficacy (ALSE)** is strongly linked to affective outcomes: higher self-efficacy leads to reduced classroom anxiety and, indirectly, enhanced communicative willingness. The study notes that "even with enhanced AI literacy, learners' foreign language classroom anxiety … significantly influences their willingness to interact," underscoring the importance of psychological factors in AI-enhanced learning environments (Liu & Xiao, 2025).

Pedagogical Practices

The literature highlights several pedagogical practices in AI-mediated language learning that affect emotional engagement.

Chatbots as Low-Pressure Practice Tools:

AI chatbots provide interactive, non-judgmental contexts for learners to practice language skills, which can alleviate performance anxiety. For example, students using chatbots often report that the tools help them feel more **comfortable experimenting with language**, improving both engagement and confidence (Hosseini & Amirkhani, 2025).

Mixed Attitudes and Contradictions:

Activity-theory research reveals that learners often express *mixed attitudes* towards machine-in-the-loop

writing tasks; while many students appreciate the support, some struggle with balancing enthusiasm for AI suggestions with a desire for language autonomy. This highlights a pedagogical tension between AI assistance and learner agency (Woo et al., 2023).

Integration and Usability:

Chatbot research also shows that ease of use and interactive features contribute to learners' engagement and perceived effectiveness of AI tools, though limitations in addressing cultural nuances and higher-order skills are noted (Hosseini & Amirkhani, 2025).

Challenges and Risks

Empirical and policy research identifies several risks that can temper affective benefits if not addressed.

Emotional Misinterpretation and AI Limitations:

While chatbots and AI tools can reduce anxiety, their limited ability to interpret complex emotional cues or provide nuanced support may restrict their effectiveness in affective teaching. The need for careful instructional design and human scaffolding is emphasized by multiple studies (Woo et al., 2023).

Ethical and Policy Concerns:

UNESCO emphasizes the necessity of a **human-centred approach** to AI integration in education, warning that the rapid expansion of AI "*inevitably brings multiple risks and challenges*" and stressing that implementation must adhere to principles of inclusion, equity, and ethics (UNESCO, 2025, p. 12). A global survey conducted by UNESCO among higher education institutions further revealed that, despite the widespread adoption of AI tools, many educators and administrators express **concerns regarding pedagogical and ethical practices**, particularly in relation to understanding AI's broader implications and ensuring equitable access for all learners: *"educators frequently reported unease about pedagogical and ethical applications of AI, highlighting the need for structured guidance and support"* (UNESCO, 2025, p. 18).

Complementing this, the OECD notes that while AI has the potential to significantly **expand educational opportunities**, policymakers must carefully consider how AI capabilities interact with human learning and skill development. The organization advocates for **cautious integration**, emphasizing that AI should enhance rather than replace human strengths and that potential skill shifts must be anticipated and addressed: *"Education systems should integrate AI in ways that complement human capacities and support learners' socio-emotional development, while monitoring and mitigating potential inequities"* (OECD, 2021, p. 34).

Emerging Best Practices

The evidence points to pedagogical models that combine AI with teacher support, foster learner autonomy, and integrate AI literacy training to maximize affective benefits.

- **Hybrid human–AI teaching approaches** leverage AI for adaptive practice while preserving teacher oversight and emotional support, enhancing learner confidence and reducing anxiety.

- **AI literacy development** is critical, as learners' emotional outcomes are mediated by self-efficacy and anxiety — suggesting that training in AI use should address both technical and emotional dimensions (Liu & Xiao, 2025).
- **Careful integration and policy support** guided by UNESCO's principles of human-centred AI can ensure that ethical, inclusive practices underpin pedagogical uses of AI.

Discussion

The findings of this desk-research and comparative analysis highlight the multifaceted potential of AI in enhancing the affective dimensions of English language teaching. Across international contexts, AI tools have demonstrated the capacity to boost motivation, engagement, self-confidence, and learner autonomy, while reducing anxiety in EFL/ESL learners (AlTwijri & Alghizzi, 2024; MDPI, 2025; BMC Psychology, 2024). Adaptive feedback, multimodal learning environments, and AI-mediated communication appear particularly effective when combined with human guidance, reinforcing the importance of hybrid co-teaching models that preserve the teacher's emotional and pedagogical presence (Ahmed et al., 2025).

The analysis also underscores persistent risks and challenges. Emotional misinterpretation by AI, over-reliance on technology, and ethical concerns regarding data privacy and learner consent are recurrent issues that require careful attention (UNESCO, 2025; OECD, 2021; Yan, Li, & Lowell, 2025). These findings align with broader research indicating that AI is most effective when deployed as a supportive tool rather than a replacement for human interaction, emphasizing the critical role of teachers in shaping learners' emotional experiences (AlTwijri & Alghizzi, 2024).

In the Georgian context, the integration of AI in English language education remains in its early stages. Many institutions have started exploring AI-enhanced platforms for adaptive learning, automated feedback, and online language practice. However, widespread adoption faces challenges such as limited teacher training, infrastructural constraints, and uneven access to technology. The findings from international best practices provide a roadmap for Georgian educators and policymakers to implement AI-supported affective teaching strategies that are contextually appropriate, pedagogically sound, and ethically responsible.

Modern **Pearson eTextbooks** already incorporate **AI-Powered Study Tools**, including generative AI chatbots that enable users to receive immediate assistance with content summaries, explanations, or practice questions directly within the learning material. These tools support personalized learning, enhance learner self-confidence, and promote sustained study habits. Local examples indicate that Pearson platforms (such as **MyEnglishLab** and **English Connect**) have already been implemented in several Georgian universities, including **Akaki Tsereteli State University, Shota Meskhia Zugdidi State University, Caucasus University, University of Georgia, Ilia State University (in selected programs), New Higher Education Institute-NEWUNI**, among others. This demonstrates that international best practices can be successfully integrated, although effective implementation requires **teacher training and infrastructural support**. Moreover, no academic studies have yet investigated the impact of Pearson's AI Study Tools on EFL learning in the Georgian context, highlighting a potential avenue for **future research**.

Conclusion

AI presents a transformative opportunity for the affective teaching of English, offering tools to enhance emotional engagement, motivation, and learner autonomy. Successful integration requires a balanced approach, combining technological innovation with human pedagogical expertise, ethical oversight, and context-sensitive adaptation. In Georgia, adopting AI in English language education offers potential to

accelerate learning, foster self-confidence, and create more emotionally supportive classrooms. Future research should explore empirical studies in Georgian EFL/ESL settings, examining how AI affects learners' affective experiences and identifying scalable models for sustainable implementation.

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