Artificial Intelligence in Education: A Systematic Review of ChatGPT Applications in English as a Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

The rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI), especially generative technologies such as ChatGPT, has instigated significant transformations in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. This systematic review examines empirical research published from 2019 to early 2025, concentrating on ChatGPT applications in EFL teaching and learning. In accordance with the PRISMA criteria, pertinent studies were located via databases including ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, ... Prominent motifs identified in the literature encompass augmented writing fluency, heightened student autonomy, and enhanced speaking confidence. ChatGPT functions as an invaluable resource for educators in class preparation and providing tailored feedback. Nonetheless, apprehensions persist over excessive dependence on AI, possible plagiarism, diminished critical thinking abilities, and the lack of institutional regulations. Numerous educators have difficulties stemming from insufficient AI literacy and an absence of organized training. This study emphasizes the significance of ethical and substantiated AI integration, advocating for longitudinal research and the establishment of formal training programs to guarantee the sustainable application of ChatGPT in EFL instruction.

1. Introduction

Rapid AI application in education has changed teaching and learning. Massive language models like ChatGPT can simulate conversations, write like humans, and deliver rapid, context-aware replies, making them popular in education [1, 2]. ChatGPT gives students and instructors additional possibilities for EFL education, which emphasizes communication, critical thinking, and creativity. Academics and practitioners like ChatGPT's personalized feedback, excellent materials, and interactive learning experiences [3, 4].

ChatGPT's EFL education and acquisition contributions are objectively evaluated. Numerous studies suggest that ChatGPT enhances students' writing fluency, accuracy, and organization [1, 5]. ChatGPT boosts student confidence, decreases anxiety, and promotes verbal communication [3, 6].

Interactive activities in ChatGPT may promote self-regulated strategy application, engagement, and intercultural awareness, according to reading and cultural education studies [7, 5]. ChatGPT may assist teachers plan courses, offer feedback, and encourage reflective practice in addition to student-centered use [8, 9].

Despite these encouraging results, generative AI in language training raises issues. Researchers caution that unregulated AI-generated content may impede students' critical thinking and language development [10, 11]. Academic dishonesty, particularly AI-enabled plagiarism, undermines education [12]. Poor training, low AI literacy, and no institutional AI regulations restrict AI tool use, according to educators [9, 13]. These concerns demonstrate the necessity for evidence-based, ethical, and robust AI in EFL instruction.

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The function of ChatGPT in EFL instruction is being studied, but no full synthesis has been done to comprehend current methodologies, outcomes, and problems. This systematic review of 2019–2025 papers addresses this gap. The following research questions guide review:

1. How has ChatGPT been utilised to enhance specific language skills and learner engagement in EFL contexts?

2. What advantages have been documented about ChatGPT's contribution to improving EFL learners' writing fluency, speaking confidence, and motivation?

3. What obstacles have arisen concerning academic integrity, critical thinking, and teacher preparedness in the incorporation of ChatGPT into EFL education? This study seeks to inform educators, researchers, and policymakers on the present state of ChatGPT integration in EFL instruction by synthesising evidence from various contexts. It aims to provide guidelines for the sustainable, ethical, and pedagogically sound application of generative AI in language instruction.

2. Literature Review

Background on AI and Generative Technologies in Education

From a computer science discipline to a global education force, AI has revolutionized information delivery, accessibility, and assessment. Rule-based systems, intelligent tutoring, and computer-assisted training were early AI education applications that personalized information [9]. In adaptive learning settings, narrow AI systems automated grading, quizzes, and student progress monitoring [2]. As digital platforms and learning management systems merge, AI is required to increase efficiency, personalize learning paths, and allow data-driven decision-making in educational institutions [8]. Generative AI technologies, notably LLMs like ChatGPT, changed AI in education. On vast text corpora, generative AI systems develop coherent, contextually appropriate, and often indistinguishable from human writing [1]. Traditional AI uses predetermined datasets and programmed responses. These models create articles, discussions, summaries, and creative writing on demand using advanced machine learning algorithms, offering excellent engagement [6]. This technique lets OpenAI's

ChatGPT hold extended conversations, provide feedback, and solve complex issues [4].

Genuine dialog, genuine language patterns, and interaction make generative AI a viable language learning tool for EFL [3]. ChatGPT, writing assistance, and cultural informants provide EFL learners immediate feedback, specific examples, and more practice than textbook tasks [7, 5]. In complicated educational situations, generative AI helps instructors produce lesson materials, assessments, and tailored instruction to meet students' needs [8, 9].

However, generative AI in education raises important challenges. Too much AI-generated information may hamper students' writing, critical thinking, and problem-solving [11]. These tools may quickly produce polished compositions that students may submit as their own, hiding authorship and originality [12]. Even while generative AI technologies are easy to use, some educators lack the confidence and knowledge to utilize them responsibly [13]. Responsibility is impossible without institutional standards and procedures, leaving instructors and pupils confused [10].

To comprehend the use of generative AI, such as ChatGPT, in EFL teaching in the changing educational environment, case studies and anecdotes must be replaced with evidence. Critically reviewing empirical research helps explain present uses, evaluate stated advantages and difficulties, and identify knowledge gaps that need future study. Thus, educators, policymakers, and researchers may make educated judgments on how to best use generative AI while retaining pedagogical integrity and supporting sustainable language teaching innovation.

The Rise of ChatGPT and Its Relevance in EFL Teaching and Learning

ChatGPT uses generative AI to teach language. The OpenAI ChatGPT employs LLMs trained on several textual datasets. This training allows the model to mimic human behaviors, recreate conversation, and engage in complex interactions across numerous themes and domains [1]. ChatGPT output is distinctive, culturally relevant, and grammatically correct, making it ideal for EFL teaching and learning [6].

ChatGPT is popular in EFL training because to its accessibility, variety, and real-time involvement. This

dynamic linguistic companion gives EFL learners actual interaction, writing prompts, rapid feedback, and scaffolding for different language levels [3, 4]. ChatGPT improves students' grammar, word choice, and writing coherence [1, 5]. ChatGPT improves foreign language fluency and confidence via low-stress, simulated conversation [3, 6].

ChatGPT helps EFL teachers plan, improve, and provide feedback to students. To reduce time and improve class quality, teachers propose utilizing ChatGPT to tailor reading materials, comprehension questions, and writing models or rubrics [8, 9]. Teachers must adapt courses to diverse classes. ChatGPT improves creativity and critical thinking via ideation, reflection, and intercultural awareness [7, 11].

However, ChatGPT in EFL teaching and acquisition has difficulties. Since text refining is easy, plagiarism and AI-generated student work endanger academic integrity [12]. Critics worry about the tool's overreliance on AI-generated content and impact on critical thinking and language development [10, 11]. Several educators complain inadequate ChatGPT training and institutional support for ethical and effective usage in education [9, 13].

3. Methods

This study employed a systematic literature review methodology to consolidate existing research on the pedagogical applications and challenges of GenAI in EFL instruction. In accordance with the PRISMA 2020 standards [24], the methodology guaranteed transparency and replicability in the discovery, selection, and analysis of pertinent studies.

Data Sources and Search Methodology

From 2019 to March 2025, Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect were searched using "ChatGPT" and "EFL" or "ChatGPT" and "English as Foreign Language".

Only English-language peer-reviewed journal publications, conference proceedings, and open-access academic papers from 2019 to 2025 were included.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were chosen according to the subsequent inclusion criteria:

The research concentrated on the application of ChatGPT in EFL learning, teaching

The setting was formal education, such as schools and universities.

The document included empirical data, conceptual analysis, or systematic reviews pertinent to pedagogy and learning.

Criteria for Exclusion

Articles not composed in English.

Research concentrated exclusively on generic AI devoid of instructional significance.

Editorials, opinion articles, or strictly technical/ machine learning research devoid of an educational emphasis.

Selection Process for Studies

The preliminary search produced 55 papers, which were further evaluated based on their titles and abstracts. Following the elimination of duplicates and extraneous works, 50 papers were preserved for comprehensive assessment. According to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 23 studies were chosen for final synthesis. The selection procedure is depicted in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1).

Figure 1. A Flowchart Summarizing the Selection Process for Sources of Evidence.
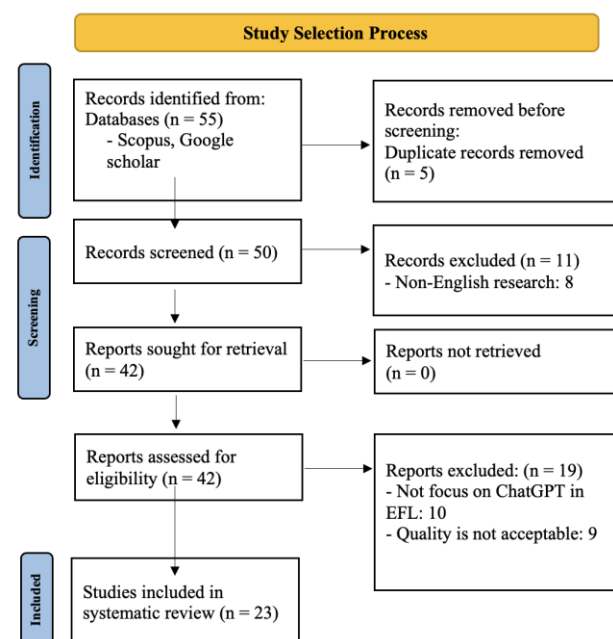
4. Results

Table 1. Summary of Selected Studies

No.	Author(s)	Published Year	Research Type	Region	Participants	Instrument	Methodology
[1]	Teng	2024	Qualitative	Hong Kong	EFL learners	Interviews	Qualitative
[2]	Han & Li	2024	Mixed methods	China	EFL students	Writing tasks, surveys	Mixed methods
[3]	Zhang et al.	2024	Quantitative	China	EFL students	Speaking tasks, surveys	Quantitative
[4]	Meniado et al.	2024	Mixed methods	Thailand, Vietnam	EFL students	Surveys, interviews	Mixed methods
[5]	Yasmin et al.	2025	Quasi-experimental	Pakistan	EFL students	Argumentative writing tasks	Quantitative
[6]	Rezai et al.	2024	Phenomenological	Iran	University EFL students	In-depth interviews	Qualitative
[7]	Zheng & Stewart	2024	Mixed methods	China	EFL students	Story tasks, reflective writing	Mixed methods
[8]	Korucu-Kış	2024	Qualitative	Türkiye	EFL teachers	Interviews	Qualitative
[9]	Gao et al.	2024	Qualitative	China	University EFL teachers	Interviews	Qualitative
[10]	Dergaa et al.	2023	Conceptual/ Review	Qatar	Not applicable	Literature sources, analysis of AI-generated text examples	Conceptual analysis
[11]	Liang & Wu	2024	Mixed methods	China	EFL students	Critical thinking tasks, interviews	Mixed methods
[12]	Mizumoto et al.	2024	Corpus analysis	Japan	EFL students	Writing samples	Quantitative (corpus analysis)
[13]	Azap	2025	Qualitative	Türkiye	EFL learners	Metaphor elicitation	Qualitative
[14]	Alkamel & Alwagieh	2024	Quantitative	Yemen	University EFL students	Pre/post writing tests	Quantitative
[15]	Pan et al.	2025	Quasi-experimental	China	University EFL students	Reading tasks, self-regulation scale	Mixed methods
[16]	Tram et al.	2024	Mixed methods	Vietnam	EFL learners	Questionnaires, interviews	Mixed methods
[17]	Khoso et al.	2025	Mixed methods	China	EFL students	Questionnaires, interviews	Mixed methods
[18]	Asadi et al.	2025	Quasi-experimental	Iran	EFL students	Writing tasks, feedback forms	Quantitative
[19]	Guo et al.	2024	Quasi-experimental	China	University EFL students	Writing tasks, feedback rubric	Quantitative
[20]	Alenizi et al.	2023	Case study	Saudi Arabia	EFL special education teachers	Observations, interviews	Qualitative
[21]	Algaraady & Mahyoob	2023	Quantitative	Saudi Arabia	EFL learners	Writing error analysis	Quantitative
[22]	Shaikh et al.	2023	Survey study	Europe (varied)	EFL learners	Usability questionnaires	Quantitative
[23]	Rahma & Fithriani	2024	Mixed methods	Indonesia	EFL teachers	Surveys, interviews	Mixed methods

How Has ChatGPT Been Utilised to Enhance Specific Language Skills and Learner Engagement in EFL Contexts?

An examination of 23 empirical studies showed that ChatGPT improves different language abilities and student involvement in EFL education. Research shows that it's mostly used to improve students' writing. ChatGPT-facilitated writing assignments improved grammatical correctness, coherence, lexical variety, and argumentation structure [1, 5], and [18]. AI-generated advice helped students write and revise their papers, reducing writing anxiety and increasing student engagement. ChatGPT's instant feedback and guidance helped students identify faults and improve their work independently, boosting self-confidence [4, 2]. Using a customizable ChatGPT-derived AI tool, EFL university students improved their academic writing [14].

AI-mediated speaking activities increased pleasure, reduced fear, and increased oral discourse [3, 6]. For students who were nervous about speaking in class, the AI's ability to replicate pronunciation and have realistic conversations made speaking practice easy.

ChatGPT encouraged learner autonomy and self-regulation. ChatGPT allowed students to study at their own pace and explore subjects that fit their needs and interests by providing flexible and customizable feedback. ChatGPT as a tailored learning aid boosted student engagement and motivation [15, 16]. Critical thinking and creativity were part of this autonomy, since certain research showed how learners assessed, altered, and expanded AI ideas [7, 11]. This utilization encouraged cognitive engagement and thinking beyond AI-generated suggestions.

Teachers praised ChatGPT's help with lesson planning, rubric creation, and instructional material design. ChatGPT let teachers create sample essays, comprehension questions, and tailored exercises for various students [8, 9]. This application reduced preparation time and encouraged the creation of more engaging educational content. AI increased classroom creativity and active involvement [17, 5].

Many studies have explored ChatGPT's impact on cultural learning and intercultural awareness. For example, Rahma and Fithriani [23] found that reframing moral dilemmas using ChatGPT helped students reflect on cultural values and opinions, improving EFL classroom intercultural interaction. From a post-humanist perspective, Liang and Wu [11] examined how ChatGPT may improve critical engagement with cultural artifacts.

What Advantages Have Been Documented about ChatGPT's Contribution to Improving EFL Learners' Writing Fluency, Speaking Confidence, and Motivation?

Research consistently shows that ChatGPT improves EFL learners' written fluency, speaking confidence, and motivation. ChatGPT improved students' writing by making it more cohesive, flowing, and grammatically correct. Previous studies [1, 5, 18] found that ChatGPT users wrote more complex sentences, improved their vocabulary, and organized their ideas. The tool's immediate, context-aware comments and alternative phrasings helped students reflect on and improve their writing efforts.

ChatGPT reduced writing anxiety and boosted students' writing confidence in addition to linguistic gains. Studies [4, 2] found that AI feedback created a non-judgmental environment that encouraged multiple modifications and linguistic experimentation without criticism. According to [14], the AI's accessible and positive comments helped students become more confident in challenging academic writing.

ChatGPT's role as a virtual conversation partner or pronunciation model helped students practice oral communication in a relaxed setting. Experimental studies [3, 6] found that ChatGPT users were more likely to participate in class discussions, had less mistake anxiety, and had better fluency and pronunciation.

The effectiveness of ChatGPT on student motivation was also highlighted. ChatGPT's personalized, on-demand assistance let students actively participate in their learning, choose their own pace, and undertake activities that fit their interests and ability levels. The tool's interactivity and quick response kept students focused and encouraged persistence on challenging tasks. Several studies [5, 11, 17] highlighted ChatGPT's role in encouraging creativity and critical thinking, which increased intrinsic motivation and learning enjoyment.

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ChatGPT in teacher feedback systems indirectly boosted student enthusiasm and self-confidence. ChatGPT suggestions and instructor insights gave students more detailed feedback that improved their writing and speaking [8, 9].

What Obstacles Have Arisen Concerning Academic Integrity, Critical Thinking and Teacher Preparedness in The Incorporation of ChatGPT into EFL Education?

ChatGPT in EFL classrooms faces various problems, including academic integrity, critical thinking, and teacher preparedness, according to 23 studies. The study found that students may steal AI-generated material, which raises plagiarism and ownership problems. Studies [10, 12, 21] found that ChatGPT made sophisticated writing effortless for students, blurring the line between original authoring and AI help. These studies showed that recognizing AI-generated literature, especially when students incorporate AI suggestions into their work, is challenging for educators and organizations seeking academic integrity.

Several studies questioned ChatGPT's impact on critical thinking and self-directed problem-solving, along with plagiarism. While ChatGPT may help create ideas, overreliance on its suggestions may limit cognitive engagement [11] and [2].

Research showed that teacher preparedness was a major obstacle. Many teachers worried about ethically integrating ChatGPT into their teaching methods. Researchers [9, 13] stressed that instructors often lack AI literacy knowledge, making it difficult to teach students how to responsibly utilize ChatGPT or construct projects that balance AI help with human judgment. Lack of institutional standards and professional development limited instructors' ability to harness ChatGPT's potential while limiting its risks as reported in studies [5, 8, 17]. Unequal practices exposed educators to classroom ethics difficulties.

5. Discussion

This systematic review included data from 23 empirical studies using ChatGPT in EFL education and learning. The study showed that ChatGPT has been used in different ways to increase language instruction and student engagement. ChatGPT was mostly used in writing instruction to improve grammatical correctness, coherence, lexical variety, and fluency. Research showed that quick, adaptive feedback helped students revise, reduce writing anxiety, and increase confidence in writing long texts [14], [4], [1], [2], [18], [5], [22].

ChatGPT improved fluency and confidence in speaking. AI-facilitated conversation activities reduced communication anxiety and boosted classroom discussion preparation [3, 6]. The AI's ability to mimic real conversation and provide unbiased practice made spoken language improvement low-stress.

Several studies found ChatGPT improved student autonomy and motivation. The tool's interactive, on-demand help let students tailor learning to their needs, pace, and interests, increasing engagement and perseverance [15, 17, 16, 5, 20]. When asked to critically evaluate, amend, or expand on AI-generated thoughts, ChatGPT has been shown to boost creativity and critical thinking [7, 11]. It helped instructors with lesson planning, material creation, and rubric creation, reducing preparation time and encouraging instructional design originality [8, 9]. Technology helped teachers meet student needs and provide customized activities.

However, the evaluation found issues. Research on plagiarism and AI-generated material raised concerns about academic integrity [12, 21, 10, 19]. The notion that overreliance on AI suggestions may hinder deep cognitive participation and creative ideation raised critical thinking concerns [2, 11]. Teacher preparation was another obstacle, as educators often lack AI literacy and institutional support to adequately integrate ChatGPT into their teaching methods [9, 13].

Limitations

Despite its limitations, this systematic evaluation sheds light on ChatGPT in EFL instruction. Only 2019–2025 articles were evaluated. This covers the latest and most relevant research, although it may omit earlier AI-related studies that provide a more complete history. Second, the majority of the studies were conducted in Asian and Middle Eastern contexts (e.g., China, Iran, Pakistan, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia),

which may limit their applicability to other regions with different educational systems, technological infrastructures, and cultural views on AI integration. Third, the studies had different study strategies, sample sizes, and tools, which may affect the synthesised results. Dissertations and internal institutional reports were excluded from the examination since it relied on empirical research from significant databases.

6. Conclusion

A total of 23 empirical research on ChatGPT in EFL education and acquisition were reviewed. The study shows that ChatGPT, a prominent generative AI, is transforming language education. It's extensively utilized to boost student motivation, autonomy, engagement, writing fluency, and speaking confidence. ChatGPT gives language learners new opportunities to practice with fast, tailored feedback and a non-judgmental conversational partner. These abilities lowered language anxiety, boosted risk-taking, and enhanced language engagement.

ChatGPT assists teachers with lesson planning, content development, and assessment. Many teachers felt the technology reduced their burden and stimulated creativity, allowing them to create more varied and learner-centered activities. These findings show ChatGPT's potential to enhance language education methodology and innovation as a learning tool and professional resource.

Despite optimistic predictions, the investigation reveals several major difficulties. Academic legitimacy is threatened by plagiarism and the difficulties of identifying AI-generated from student-generated work. The results show that overusing AI-generated content may impede critical thinking and autonomous problem-solving. Without supervision, students may accept AI results without question. According to the report, many instructors feel unprepared to use AI technology ethically and effectively in their classrooms. Without institutional rules or guidelines, instructors and students struggle to govern AI-enhanced learning environments.

Finally, ChatGPT's adaptive, personalized, and engaging assistance may alter EFL instruction. Tech adoption alone won't deliver this promise. Careful ethical, educational, and institutional evaluation is needed. Creating comprehensive standards for AI use in education, professional development programs to promote educator AI literacy, and assessment techniques that balance AI's advantages with student uniqueness and critical engagement should be future priorities. Educators and governments may guarantee ChatGPT and comparable technologies enhance language acquisition by anticipating these challenges.

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Trí tuệ nhân tạo trong giáo dục: nghiên cứu đánh giá hệ thống về ứng dụng ChatGPT trong dạy và học tiếng Anh như là một ngoại ngữ

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Tóm Tắt

Sự phát triển nhanh chóng của Trí tuệ nhân tạo, đặc biệt là các công nghệ tạo sinh như ChatGPT tạo ra những chuyển biến đáng kể trong việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ. Bài tổng quan có hệ thống này xem xét các công trình nghiên cứu thực nghiệm được công bố từ năm 2019 đến đầu 2025, khảo sát ứng dụng của ChatGPT trong dạy và học EFL. Trên tiêu chí PRISMA, các nghiên cứu liên quan được tìm kiếm trên các cơ sở dữ liệu như ScienceDirect, Google Scholar và nguồn học thuật khác. Chủ đề nổi bật bao gồm việc cải thiện độ trôi chảy trong kỹ năng viết, nâng cao tính tự chủ của người học và tăng sự tự tin khi nói. ChatGPT được xem như một công cụ hỗ trợ cho giảng viên trong chuẩn bị bài giảng và cung cấp phản hồi cá nhân hóa. Tuy nhiên, vẫn tồn tại những lo ngại về sự phụ thuộc vào trí tuệ nhân tạo, đạo văn, giảm tư duy phản biện và thiếu các quy định rõ ràng từ phía nhà trường. Nhiều giảng viên gặp khó khăn về trí tuệ nhân tạo vì chưa được đào tạo bài bản. Nghiên cứu này nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của việc tích hợp trí tuệ nhân tạo một cách có đạo đức, kêu gọi triển khai các Nghiên cứu dài hạn, xây dựng chương trình đào tạo đảm bảo việc ứng dụng ChatGPT trong EFL được bền vững và hiệu quả.

Từ khóa Trí tuệ nhân tạo trong giáo dục, học tập hỗ trợ bởi AI, giảng dạy hỗ trợ bởi AI, EFL, tổng quan hệ thống.