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# Enhancing English Language Learning in the Digital Era through Artificial Intelligence: A Humanities and Buddhist Educational Approach

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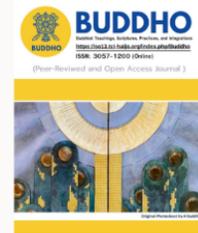


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# Enhancing English Language Learning in the Digital Era through Artificial Intelligence: A Humanities and Buddhist Educational Approach

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& Somsack Phetsamai<sup>3</sup>

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## Abstract

This article examines the development of English language learning in the digital age through Artificial Intelligence (AI)–assisted educational practices from a humanities and Buddhist educational perspective. While contemporary discussions of AI in language education frequently emphasize technological efficiency, automation, and performance optimization, this study foregrounds human-centered values, ethical awareness, mindfulness, and holistic learner development. In contemporary higher education, English functions not only as a tool for academic and professional communication but also as a medium for intercultural dialogue and ethical engagement within global knowledge communities. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives from applied linguistics, humanities education, educational technology, and Buddhist philosophy, the study conceptualizes AI not as a neutral or autonomous technology but as an assistive pedagogical tool embedded within social, cultural, and ethical contexts. From this perspective, AI-assisted English learning is understood as both shaping and being shaped by educational values, institutional assumptions, and pedagogical practices. The analysis indicates that AI-based learning environments can effectively support the development of core language competencies—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—through personalized feedback, interactive learning opportunities, and expanded access to linguistic resources. However, the findings also suggest that uncritical reliance on AI risks reducing language education to instrumental efficiency, algorithmic assessment, and automated performance measurement, thereby overlooking the broader educational goals of critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and ethical communication.

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The study contributes to the body of knowledge by proposing a “middle-path model” of AI-assisted English learning, informed by Buddhist educational principles and humanistic pedagogy. This model positions AI as a supportive learning condition rather than a replacement for human teaching and reflective learning. By integrating technological affordances with ethical awareness, mindfulness, and learner-centered pedagogy, the model offers a conceptual framework for balancing technological innovation with the cultivation of responsible, reflective, and globally engaged language learners in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Artificial Intelligence; English Language Learning; Digital Age; Buddhist Education; Humanities; Ethical Pedagogy; AI-Based Learning

## **Introduction**

English language education has undergone significant transformation in the digital age, particularly with the increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence into teaching and learning environments. The rapid expansion of digital technologies, combined with globalisation and international academic mobility, has intensified the role of English as a central medium of knowledge exchange. English functions not only as a core academic subject within formal curricula but also as a global lingua franca that enables scholarly communication, professional interaction, and intercultural dialogue across diverse disciplinary and cultural contexts. As a result, higher education institutions worldwide increasingly prioritise the systematic development of English language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—as foundational competencies for academic success and global participation (Crystal, 2012).

In this evolving educational landscape, Artificial Intelligence–based learning technologies have reshaped both the processes and conditions of English language teaching and learning. AI-supported tools are widely recognised for their capacity to facilitate personalised instruction, adaptive feedback mechanisms, and flexible learning pathways that respond to individual learner needs. Research in educational technology suggests that such systems can enhance learner autonomy by allowing students to engage with language learning materials at their own pace, independent of temporal and spatial classroom constraints (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Automated writing evaluation systems, for instance, have demonstrated potential in improving grammatical accuracy, lexical precision, and revision quality through immediate and consistent corrective feedback (Ranalli, 2018). Similarly, speech recognition technologies and AI-driven pronunciation tools support oral fluency and phonological awareness by enabling repeated practice and real-time feedback, particularly for learners who experience anxiety or limited exposure to spoken English (McCrocklin, 2016).

Despite these pedagogical affordances, a growing body of scholarship has raised critical concerns regarding the uncritical and large-scale adoption of Artificial Intelligence in educational contexts. When technological efficiency, data analytics, and measurable performance outcomes become dominant drivers of pedagogical decision-making, education risks being reduced to a process of technical optimisation rather than a human-centred practice of intellectual and personal development (Biesta, 2015). Selwyn (2019) further argues that the increasing reliance

on algorithmic systems in education may obscure normative questions concerning purpose, value, and responsibility, thereby shifting attention away from the ethical and relational dimensions of teaching and learning.

These concerns are particularly salient within humanities-oriented and Buddhist educational contexts, where education has historically been understood as a moral, reflective, and transformative practice. In such traditions, learning is not confined to the acquisition of technical skills or cognitive knowledge alone but is oriented toward the cultivation of wisdom, ethical conduct, and mindful awareness. English language education within these settings therefore carries broader pedagogical and ethical significance, as language is viewed as a medium through which values, intentions, and social responsibilities are communicated and negotiated. The integration of AI-based learning into such contexts raises important questions about how technological innovation can be aligned with human dignity, ethical responsibility, and holistic learner development.

In response to these challenges, this article seeks to conceptually examine AI-based English language learning in the digital age through a humanities and Buddhist educational lens. Rather than assessing technological effectiveness in isolation, the article foregrounds ethical framing, pedagogical guidance, and institutional governance as critical factors shaping the educational value of AI-assisted learning. It argues that while Artificial Intelligence can enhance linguistic accuracy, access to learning resources, and learner engagement, its contribution to English education ultimately depends on how it is situated within human-centred educational philosophies. By positioning AI as an assistive tool rather than a determining force, the article aims to contribute to ongoing scholarly discussions on the responsible and reflective integration of AI in English language education.

## **Conceptual and Scholarly Foundations**

### **1. AI in English Language Learning**

In recent years, research in applied linguistics and educational technology has increasingly explored the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in supporting English language learning. Empirical studies suggest that AI-based technologies provide significant pedagogical benefits, particularly in improving linguistic accuracy, increasing opportunities for practice, and enhancing learner engagement. One of the key advantages of AI systems lies in their ability to deliver immediate, consistent, and data-driven feedback, which can support language development in ways that are difficult to achieve through traditional instructional methods alone (Ranalli, 2018; Stevenson & Phakiti, 2014). Through automated analysis of learner input, AI-supported tools can assist students in identifying grammatical errors, expanding vocabulary use, and refining revision strategies.

Automated writing evaluation systems illustrate how AI can support language learning through iterative feedback mechanisms. Such systems allow learners to receive instant feedback on grammatical structures, lexical choices, and sentence organisation. By engaging in repeated cycles of drafting and revision, learners are encouraged to reflect on their language use and

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gradually develop greater written accuracy and metalinguistic awareness. Over time, this process can foster a deeper understanding of linguistic patterns and promote self-regulated learning behaviours.

Beyond writing support, intelligent tutoring systems and adaptive learning platforms offer further pedagogical advantages by enabling personalised learning experiences. These systems can dynamically adjust task difficulty, content sequencing, and feedback intensity based on individual learner performance and progress (Li et al., 2015). As a result, learners are able to practise language skills at their own pace while receiving targeted guidance that addresses their specific learning needs. Such adaptability not only supports individualised learning pathways but also contributes to increased learner autonomy and sustained engagement with learning materials.

From a pedagogical perspective, these technological affordances are particularly valuable in contexts where classroom time is limited or where learners may experience anxiety when practising a foreign language in front of peers. AI-supported learning environments can provide a relatively low-pressure space for experimentation and repeated practice, thereby reducing affective barriers such as fear of making mistakes or negative evaluation.

However, while AI technologies can effectively support the development of linguistic accuracy and structural competence, scholars have long emphasised that communicative competence involves more than mastery of grammatical rules. Foundational models of communicative competence highlight the importance of pragmatic awareness, sociocultural appropriateness, and contextual sensitivity in effective language use (Canale & Swain, 1980). Language learning therefore requires not only the ability to construct grammatically correct sentences but also the capacity to interpret meaning, respond appropriately in social contexts, and communicate with ethical awareness.

These interpretive and relational dimensions of language use remain difficult for AI systems to evaluate comprehensively. Most algorithmic feedback mechanisms focus primarily on quantifiable linguistic features such as grammar, vocabulary frequency, and syntactic structure. As a result, aspects of communication that involve intention, cultural nuance, and interpersonal sensitivity are often beyond the analytical scope of current AI-based systems.

Consequently, scholars have raised concerns about the potential overreliance on AI in language education. When automated feedback becomes the dominant mode of evaluation, there is a risk that learners may prioritise surface-level correctness over deeper communicative understanding. Such an emphasis may inadvertently reduce language learning to a technical exercise focused on form and accuracy, rather than recognising language as a socially embedded and ethically meaningful practice.

For this reason, many researchers argue that AI should be understood not as a replacement for teachers but as a complementary educational resource. Effective integration of AI in English language learning requires careful pedagogical design and critical engagement with AI-generated feedback. Teachers continue to play a crucial role in interpreting automated feedback, guiding learners toward contextual and culturally appropriate language use, and fostering reflective awareness of communication processes.

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Within a human-centred educational framework, AI technologies can therefore function as supportive tools that extend opportunities for practice and feedback while preserving the interpretive, ethical, and relational dimensions of language learning. When combined with thoughtful pedagogical mediation, AI has the potential to contribute meaningfully to English language education without undermining the broader communicative competencies that language learning seeks to develop.

## **2. English Learning in Humanities and Buddhist Education**

Within humanities-oriented and Buddhist educational traditions, English language learning serves pedagogical and ethical purposes that extend well beyond the attainment of technical proficiency or communicative fluency. English functions as a critical medium through which learners gain access to global bodies of knowledge, engage with international scholarship, and participate in intercultural dialogue across diverse academic, cultural, and philosophical contexts. In this sense, English learning is closely linked to the broader humanistic goal of fostering understanding, dialogue, and mutual respect among individuals and communities situated within an increasingly interconnected world.

Buddhist education, in particular, conceptualises learning as an integrated and transformative process that encompasses intellectual, ethical, and contemplative dimensions. Central to this educational philosophy is the cultivation of wisdom (*paññā*), ethical conduct (*sīla*), and mental discipline (*samādhi*), which together form the foundation for holistic human development (Harvey, 2013). From this perspective, language learning is not treated as a neutral or purely instrumental activity but as a practice through which intentions, values, and ethical responsibilities are expressed and negotiated. English education within Buddhist contexts therefore carries moral significance, as learners are encouraged to use language mindfully and responsibly in ways that promote understanding rather than harm.

Consequently, language education in humanities and Buddhist educational settings is inherently value-laden. Ethical speech, mindful communication, and responsibility toward others are central pedagogical concerns that shape curriculum design, classroom interaction, and assessment practices. The emphasis is placed not only on what learners say or write but also on how and why language is used in particular social and cultural contexts. From this standpoint, English learning is not merely about achieving fluency or communicative efficiency; rather, it involves developing awareness of how language influences thought, shapes interpersonal relationships, and contributes to broader patterns of social responsibility and ethical engagement.

The increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence–based learning technologies into English education introduces both opportunities and challenges for these educational traditions. On the one hand, AI-based tools may support access to learning resources, personalised practice, and flexible learning pathways. On the other hand, without careful ethical framing, such technologies risk privileging efficiency, standardisation, and performance metrics at the expense of reflective learning and moral development. The integration of AI-based learning into humanities and Buddhist educational environments must therefore be guided by sustained ethical reflection and

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human-centred values to ensure alignment with broader educational aims. Rather than displacing human judgment and pedagogical care, AI should be positioned as a supportive resource that enhances reflective engagement, ethical communication, and holistic learner development within these traditions.

### **3. Humanities and Ethical Perspectives on AI**

From a humanities-based perspective, education is fundamentally concerned with meaning-making, ethical formation, and the cultivation of human judgment rather than the mere transmission of information or optimisation of measurable outcomes. Educational theorists have long argued that learning involves normative dimensions that cannot be reduced to technical efficiency or performance indicators alone. Biesta (2015), for instance, emphasises that good education encompasses not only qualification and socialisation but also subjectification—the development of individuals as responsible, reflective, and ethical subjects capable of judgment and moral agency. These dimensions are particularly relevant in discussions of Artificial Intelligence in education, as AI-based systems tend to prioritise what can be quantified, standardised, and automated.

Critical scholarship in the humanities further highlights that Artificial Intelligence technologies are not neutral tools operating independently of social values. Rather, AI systems are embedded within broader cultural, institutional, and political frameworks that shape how educational goals are defined and pursued (Williamson & Eynon, 2020). Decisions about data collection, algorithmic design, and learning analytics implicitly encode assumptions about what counts as knowledge, progress, and success. From this perspective, the adoption of AI in education inevitably reflects particular value orientations, often privileging efficiency, scalability, and predictive control over relational, ethical, and interpretive dimensions of learning.

Ethical concerns related to AI-based learning have therefore become central to contemporary debates in educational philosophy. Floridi (2014) argues that digital technologies require a framework of ethical governance grounded in responsibility, transparency, and respect for human dignity. In educational contexts, this includes issues such as data privacy, surveillance, informed consent, and algorithmic bias. AI-driven systems that rely on extensive data collection and monitoring of learner behaviour raise important questions about autonomy and trust, particularly when learners have limited awareness of how their data are used or interpreted. Without clear ethical guidelines, such practices risk undermining learner agency and reinforcing asymmetries of power between institutions and individuals.

These ethical concerns are closely aligned with humanities-based critiques of instrumentalism in education. Selwyn (2019) cautions that the growing emphasis on technological solutions may obscure fundamental questions about the purposes of education itself. When educational success is increasingly defined in terms of efficiency, optimisation, and data-driven performance, there is a risk that values such as empathy, moral reasoning, and reflective judgment become marginalised. From a humanities perspective, education must remain attentive to these qualitative dimensions, which resist algorithmic measurement but are essential to human flourishing.

Within Buddhist educational traditions, these ethical considerations resonate strongly with longstanding philosophical principles. The emphasis on mindfulness, ethical conduct, and compassion foregrounds the moral implications of action, including the use of language and technology. From this standpoint, AI-based educational tools must be evaluated not only in terms of effectiveness but also in relation to their impact on mental discipline, ethical awareness, and relational responsibility. Technologies that encourage unreflective consumption, constant monitoring, or performance anxiety may conflict with educational aims centred on balance, awareness, and moral cultivation.

Taken together, humanities and Buddhist ethical perspectives converge in their insistence that Artificial Intelligence in education should remain subordinate to human values and pedagogical responsibility. AI-based systems can support learning processes, but they cannot replace ethical judgment, contextual understanding, or the relational dimensions of teaching and learning. A human-centred and ethically grounded approach therefore requires educators and institutions to critically examine not only how AI is used but also why it is used and to what ends. Such an approach provides a necessary theoretical foundation for the conceptual analysis that follows, in which AI-assisted English language learning is examined as a practice shaped by ethical choice, pedagogical intention, and institutional values.

## **Conceptual Analysis and Synthesis**

### **Human-Centered Functions of AI**

Synthesizing the existing body of research, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-supported English language learning can be understood as pedagogically valuable when it is aligned with human-centered educational functions, rather than being framed solely in terms of technological efficiency or automation. Within contemporary educational discourse, AI is increasingly viewed not as a replacement for human teaching but as a tool that can augment learning processes by supporting practice, feedback, and learner engagement (Holmes, Bialik, & Fadel, 2019).

Empirical studies suggest that AI-supported learning systems can reduce learners' cognitive load by automating routine instructional processes such as corrective feedback, vocabulary practice, and grammar checking. By handling repetitive tasks, AI technologies enable learners to allocate greater attentional resources to higher-level meaning-making processes and skill development (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). This function is particularly relevant in language learning contexts where learners must engage in sustained practice across multiple skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Through structured and incremental learning activities, AI-based platforms can provide manageable learning segments that support gradual language acquisition and skill consolidation.

One of the most frequently discussed affordances of AI-assisted learning environments is their capacity to offer individualized practice and feedback at scale. Adaptive learning systems can analyze patterns in learner performance and dynamically adjust task difficulty, pacing, and feedback intensity. This responsiveness enables AI-based systems to accommodate diverse learner profiles and proficiency levels while supporting personalized learning trajectories (Luckin

et al., 2016). Such individualization is particularly valuable in educational contexts where learners have limited exposure to English outside the classroom or face constraints related to instructional time, teacher availability, or learning confidence.

In addition to supporting cognitive processes, AI-based learning tools may also contribute to reducing affective barriers in language learning. Language learners often experience anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and reluctance to participate in communicative activities. AI-mediated practice environments allow learners to engage in repeated practice privately and at their own pace, thereby reducing social pressure and encouraging experimentation with language use (Godwin-Jones, 2020). This form of affective support can promote sustained engagement and risk-taking, which are essential conditions for language development, particularly during the early stages of proficiency.

Despite these functional advantages, conceptual analyses emphasize that AI technologies remain limited in their capacity to engage with the full complexity of language learning as a human, cultural, and ethical practice. AI systems primarily operate through pattern recognition and probabilistic inference rather than interpretive understanding. Consequently, while AI-generated feedback may effectively identify grammatical errors or deviations from normative usage, it cannot fully account for communicative intent, sociocultural nuance, or the ethical dimensions of language use (Selwyn, 2019). An exclusive reliance on AI systems therefore risks reducing language learning to technical accuracy and performance metrics rather than fostering meaningful communication and intercultural understanding.

Within a human-centered educational framework, the role of the teacher remains indispensable. Human educators play a critical role in interpreting AI-generated feedback, contextualizing linguistic forms within authentic communicative situations, and guiding learners toward reflective understanding of their language use. Teachers also facilitate dialogic interaction, ethical awareness, and interpersonal meaning-making—dimensions of language learning that cannot be automated or replicated by algorithmic systems. As Luckin et al. (2016) argue, AI should be understood as intelligence augmentation, supporting human decision-making and pedagogical practice rather than replacing it.

Taken together, the literature suggests that the educational value of AI-based English language learning lies not in its capacity to substitute human teaching but in its ability to support human-centered educational functions that promote access, confidence, and sustained practice. When integrated thoughtfully into pedagogical contexts, AI technologies can contribute to the development of foundational language skills while preserving the ethical, interpretive, and relational dimensions that characterize meaningful language education. This human-centered perspective provides an important conceptual foundation for examining issues of learner autonomy, mindfulness, and the potential risks of instrumentalism in AI-assisted English learning.

## **2. Mindfulness, Autonomy, and Ethical Language Learning**

Mindfulness and learner autonomy constitute central dimensions of ethical language learning within humanities-oriented and Buddhist educational frameworks. From these perspectives, learning is not understood merely as the accumulation of skills or knowledge but

as a reflective process through which learners become aware of their intentions, actions, and responsibilities. Mindfulness, in particular, emphasises attentive awareness of cognitive and affective processes, encouraging learners to observe how language use shapes thought, emotion, and interpersonal relations. In language education, this awareness extends to recognising the ethical implications of communication, including clarity, honesty, and respect for others.

AI-based learning environments have the potential to support learner autonomy by enabling self-paced study, personalised practice, and flexible engagement with language tasks. Adaptive platforms and intelligent feedback systems allow learners to take greater responsibility for managing their learning processes, selecting resources, and monitoring their progress. Such autonomy can be pedagogically valuable, as it encourages learners to develop self-regulation, persistence, and confidence in language use. In this sense, AI-based tools may function as enabling conditions for autonomy by reducing dependency on constant teacher intervention and expanding opportunities for independent practice.

However, autonomy within humanities and Buddhist educational traditions is not understood as unrestricted independence or self-directed efficiency alone. Rather, it is closely linked to ethical self-awareness and reflective judgment. Autonomy is meaningful only when learners remain attentive to the purposes and consequences of their actions. Without mindfulness and ethical guidance, AI-supported autonomy risks becoming superficial, encouraging learners to focus narrowly on task completion, performance scores, or algorithmic optimisation rather than understanding and responsible communication. This concern reflects broader critiques of educational technologies that prioritise productivity and self-management while neglecting moral and relational dimensions of learning.

From an ethical standpoint, language learning involves more than mastering linguistic forms; it entails cultivating sensitivity to context, intention, and impact. Mindful language use requires learners to consider not only what is grammatically correct but also what is appropriate, compassionate, and responsible in specific communicative situations. While AI systems may provide feedback on accuracy and fluency, they cannot fully engage with the ethical dimensions of language use, such as tone, intention, or cultural sensitivity. These aspects require human interpretation, dialogue, and moral reasoning, which remain beyond the capacity of algorithmic systems.

Within this conceptual framework, the role of educators is to mediate the relationship between AI-based learning and ethical language development. Teachers are essential in framing autonomous learning activities within reflective and ethical contexts, guiding learners to interpret AI-generated feedback critically rather than unreflectively accepting it. Through pedagogical dialogue, educators can help learners connect linguistic practice with broader questions of meaning, responsibility, and social impact. This human mediation ensures that autonomy is cultivated alongside mindfulness, rather than at its expense.

Synthesising these insights, AI-assisted English language learning can support ethical development when it is embedded within a pedagogical culture that values mindfulness, reflective autonomy, and responsible communication. AI-based tools should be designed and implemented not merely to increase efficiency or independence but to encourage learners to engage thoughtfully with their language use and learning processes. When guided by human-

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centred and ethical educational principles, AI can contribute to the development of autonomous learners who are not only linguistically competent but also ethically aware and socially responsible. This synthesis underscores the necessity of examining the potential risks of instrumentalism and over-automation, which are addressed in the following section.

### **3. Risks of Instrumentalism and Over-Automation**

A recurring concern in contemporary scholarship on Artificial Intelligence in education is the risk of instrumentalism, whereby language learning becomes narrowly oriented toward efficiency, speed, and measurable correctness. In such approaches, educational value is increasingly defined in terms of quantifiable indicators, such as error reduction, task completion rates, and algorithmically generated performance scores. Selwyn (2019) cautions that this emphasis on technological solutions and data-driven optimisation may obscure fundamental questions about the purposes of education, shifting attention away from ethical, relational, and interpretive dimensions that are central to meaningful learning.

Within the context of AI-assisted English language learning, instrumentalism manifests in practices that prioritise grammatical accuracy and standardised output over communicative intent, contextual sensitivity, and ethical awareness. While automated feedback systems may effectively identify linguistic errors, they often encourage learners to focus on surface-level correctness rather than deeper understanding of language use as a socially situated and value-laden practice. Over time, such emphasis may shape learners' perceptions of language learning as a technical exercise aimed at satisfying algorithmic criteria rather than engaging in meaningful communication.

The risks associated with instrumentalism are intensified by tendencies toward over-automation in educational design. When AI-based systems increasingly assume functions traditionally performed by human educators—such as evaluation, guidance, and feedback—there is a danger that pedagogical judgment and relational engagement become marginalised. Over-automation may reduce opportunities for dialogue, interpretation, and ethical reflection, which are essential for developing communicative competence and moral awareness. Moreover, reliance on automated systems may create an illusion of objectivity and neutrality, masking the value-laden assumptions embedded in algorithmic decision-making.

In humanities and Buddhist educational contexts, these risks are particularly problematic. Education within these traditions is oriented toward the cultivation of wisdom, compassion, and mindful awareness rather than the optimisation of performance alone. From a Buddhist pedagogical perspective, excessive focus on efficiency and measurable outcomes may reinforce attachment to results and external validation, undermining reflective practice and ethical intention. Similarly, humanities-based education emphasises critical thinking, interpretive judgment, and moral responsibility—qualities that resist reduction to automated metrics.

Addressing the risks of instrumentalism and over-automation therefore requires deliberate pedagogical and institutional strategies. Educators and institutions must remain critically attentive to how AI-based systems define success, shape learning behaviours, and influence educational values. Rather than allowing technology to dictate pedagogical priorities, human

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judgment and ethical deliberation should guide decisions about when, how, and to what extent AI is integrated into English language education. By maintaining a reflective balance between technological affordances and human-centred values, educational practices can avoid the reduction of language learning to instrumental efficiency and instead preserve its role as a meaningful, ethical, and transformative practice.

### **Discussion: Toward a Middle Path Model of AI-Based English Learning**

Integrating the conceptual and scholarly insights presented in the preceding sections, this article proposes a middle-path approach to Artificial Intelligence–assisted English language learning that seeks to balance technological affordances with humanistic and ethical considerations. Rather than positioning AI as either a deterministic solution that guarantees educational improvement or a disruptive force that threatens pedagogical values, the middle-path model conceptualises AI as a supportive condition for learning whose educational effectiveness depends on how it is framed, governed, and pedagogically mediated. Such a perspective reflects both humanities-based educational theory and ethical traditions that emphasise balance, intentionality, and reflective awareness in human action (Selwyn, 2019; Holmes et al., 2022). From this standpoint, AI should not replace human judgement in education but rather function as a complementary resource that enhances the conditions for meaningful learning.

At the core of the middle-path model is the principle of pedagogical intentionality. AI-based tools are not educationally neutral; they shape learning experiences by privileging particular forms of knowledge, interaction, and evaluation. Scholars in educational technology have noted that digital systems embed implicit pedagogical assumptions that influence how learners engage with knowledge and assessment (Luckin et al., 2016; Selwyn, 2019). Consequently, educators must make deliberate decisions regarding how AI technologies are integrated into learning activities related to listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Within this framework, AI tools may be used to increase opportunities for practice, deliver timely formative feedback, and enhance learner confidence, while teachers maintain responsibility for guiding interpretation, facilitating communicative interaction, and fostering critical awareness. Pedagogical intentionality therefore ensures that AI supports clearly articulated educational objectives rather than shaping instruction according to technological convenience alone.

A second foundational dimension of the middle-path approach concerns ethical governance. As discussed in the literature on artificial intelligence in education, AI-based learning environments raise important ethical concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic transparency, bias, and learner autonomy (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2021). Educational institutions therefore play a crucial role in establishing governance frameworks that ensure responsible and accountable uses of AI technologies. Ethical governance involves implementing policies that protect learners' personal data, ensuring transparency in algorithmic processes, and limiting intrusive forms of data surveillance. Moreover, educators must remain accountable for interpreting AI-generated recommendations rather than delegating pedagogical decisions entirely to automated systems. Such ethical oversight aligns with humanistic educational

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principles that recognise learners as individuals with dignity, agency, and social context, rather than as mere data points within algorithmic systems (Williamson, 2017).

The third key element of the middle-path model is reflective practice. Within language education—particularly in traditions informed by humanities and contemplative educational philosophy—learning is understood as a reflective process through which individuals develop awareness of their linguistic choices, communicative intentions, and ethical responsibilities in interaction. Research in AI-assisted language learning suggests that digital tools can facilitate reflection by providing learners with detailed feedback on grammar, vocabulary usage, and discourse patterns (Godwin-Jones, 2021; Li, 2023). However, the pedagogical value of such feedback depends on how learners engage with it. Reflection must therefore be actively cultivated through instructional design and guided dialogue. Teachers play a crucial role in encouraging learners to critically interpret AI-generated feedback, question its assumptions, and connect linguistic practice with broader cultural and ethical considerations.

Importantly, the middle-path model resists the tendencies toward instrumentalism and over-automation frequently identified in the literature on educational technology. Although AI systems offer clear advantages in terms of efficiency, scalability, and data analysis, many scholars caution that excessive reliance on automated evaluation risks narrowing the educational experience to measurable outputs and performance metrics (Selwyn, 2019; Holmes et al., 2022). In contrast, the proposed framework affirms the continuing importance of human judgement, relational engagement, and ethical reasoning in language education. Language learning is not merely the acquisition of grammatical competence but also a social and interpretive practice through which learners develop empathy, intercultural awareness, and communicative responsibility.

From a practical perspective, the middle-path approach encourages a reconfiguration of roles and responsibilities within AI-assisted English language learning environments. AI technologies function as instructional supports that expand opportunities for practice and feedback, while educators act as ethical guides, reflective facilitators, and interpretive authorities. Learners, in turn, are positioned as active participants who engage with AI systems critically and mindfully rather than passively accepting automated suggestions. Such a relational configuration reflects broader perspectives within humanistic pedagogy that emphasise dialogue, interpretation, and ethical awareness as central elements of meaningful learning.

Taken together, the middle-path model offers a conceptual framework for integrating Artificial Intelligence into English language education in ways that strengthen, rather than diminish, its humanistic and ethical dimensions. By foregrounding pedagogical intentionality, ethical governance, and reflective practice, the framework provides a basis for responsible innovation that respects the complexity of language learning as a human, social, and moral endeavour. This perspective invites educators and researchers to reconsider the role of AI not simply as a technological tool, but as part of a broader pedagogical ecology in which human values, ethical awareness, and reflective understanding remain central to educational practice.

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**Conclusion**

This conceptual analysis has demonstrated that Artificial Intelligence can meaningfully support the development of English language skills in the digital age when it is integrated within a human-centered and ethically grounded educational framework. Drawing on insights from applied linguistics, humanities education, and Buddhist educational philosophy, the article has argued that AI-based learning technologies offer significant potential to enhance linguistic accuracy, broaden access to learning opportunities, and support learner engagement across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, these benefits do not arise automatically from technological adoption alone but depend fundamentally on how AI is pedagogically framed, ethically governed, and interpretively guided.

The analysis has further highlighted that English language learning within humanities and Buddhist educational contexts entails purposes that extend beyond technical proficiency. Language education in these traditions is closely linked to the cultivation of mindfulness, ethical communication, and holistic learner development. From this perspective, Artificial Intelligence should not be positioned as a determining force that shapes educational priorities through efficiency and automation. Instead, AI should function as an assistive educational tool that supports reflective learning, ethical awareness, and responsible language use while remaining subordinate to human judgment and pedagogical care.

By proposing a middle-path model of AI-based English learning, this article has sought to synthesise technological affordances with humanistic and ethical considerations. This model emphasises pedagogical intentionality, ethical governance, and reflective practice as essential conditions for responsible integration. When educators maintain active roles in interpreting AI-generated feedback, guiding learner reflection, and fostering meaningful communication, AI-based tools can complement rather than displace human teaching. Such balance is particularly crucial in educational environments that prioritise wisdom-oriented and compassionate learning.

The implications of this conceptual analysis suggest that institutions and educators should approach AI integration with critical awareness and ethical responsibility. Rather than adopting AI technologies solely for their efficiency or scalability, educational stakeholders are encouraged to evaluate how these tools align with broader educational aims and values. Thoughtful integration of AI can contribute to more inclusive, reflective, and ethically informed English language education, while uncritical reliance risks reducing learning to instrumental performance and data-driven optimisation.

In conclusion, Artificial Intelligence holds considerable promise for supporting English language learning in the digital age, but its educational value ultimately depends on human choice and ethical orientation. When aligned with human-centered values and guided by pedagogical responsibility, AI-based English learning can enhance educational practice while preserving the dignity, agency, and moral development of learners. This conclusion reinforces the view that technological innovation in education should serve human wisdom and understanding, ensuring that progress in digital learning remains grounded in ethical and educational purpose.

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## Recommendations

### Body of Knowledge and Future Directions

from this study emphasize that the successful integration of AI in English language education does not depend solely on technological sophistication but on the ethical, pedagogical, and philosophical frameworks that guide its use. By adopting a balanced “middle-path” approach that integrates technological affordances with mindfulness, ethical awareness, and human-centered pedagogy, educators can support the development of language learners who are not only linguistically competent but also reflective, responsible, and globally engaged participants in contemporary knowledge communities.

### For future research

Should move beyond viewing AI solely as a technological innovation and instead explore its broader educational implications. By examining the interaction between technology, pedagogy, and ethical reflection, scholars can contribute to the development of AI-supported language learning models that promote both linguistic proficiency and the cultivation of thoughtful, responsible, and globally engaged learners in the digital age.

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