


REVIEW

Responsible and Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in Language Education: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

A plethora of publications have shed light, particularly on the affordances of artificial intelligence (AI) in language education, garnering significant attention, promising transformative impacts on teaching and learning practices. However, the rapid adoption of AI tools has raised ethical concerns regarding data privacy, bias and academic integrity. In response to these concerns, this systematic review aims to explore the responsible and ethical use of AI in language education (REALE) by examining recent literature from 2020 to 2024. The structure of this research revolves around two key questions: What are the emerging patterns and practices in REALE? and What research methodologies have been utilized in studies examining REALE? The researchers selected 9 studies from 65 publications in the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus databases, following a rigorous screening process based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. These selected studies were analyzed using thematic codes: the objective of the study, methodologies applied, sample, country and the

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key outcomes reported. The findings reveal a growing trend towards implementing AI in language education, with an emphasis on ethical training and awareness. The review suggests the necessity for educators and policymakers to develop comprehensive guidelines for the responsible and ethical use of AI in language education. It also recommends further research into inclusive and ethical AI practices across different educational levels to foster a more equitable and responsible use of technology in language education.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Systematic Review; Language Education; Responsible; Ethics

1. Introduction

Prior to the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) had significantly contributed to enhancing learning settings through various advancements and transformations. According to Papadakis, the integration of IoT, AI and ICT has further amplified these transformations, enabling more accessible and inclusive education^[1]. Subsequently, AI has garnered the attention of education experts in several ways, particularly in its influence on the methods and practices of teaching and learning^[2-4]. AI technology is becoming more and more interwoven into several elements of life in this era characterised by increased mobility and technology. Aravantinos et al. highlight the growing presence of AI in primary school settings, underscoring the importance of understanding its educational impact through systematic reviews of existing literature^[5]. Prior research has observed that AI technology has been extensively incorporated into education through the utilisation of natural language processing in machine learning, data mining and learning analytics^[2, 4, 6].

The application of AI in education is growing significantly^[7-9]. AI is an educational tool that allows educators to provide content with greater efficiency and significance. AI is not solely a learning tool; rather, it possesses the capability to comprehend and address the unique requirements of students, fostering a more engaging and immersive learning atmosphere. Lavidas et al. further emphasize that AI's role extends beyond the classroom, influencing students' intentions to use AI applications for academic purposes, particularly in the humanities and social sciences^[10]. AI has numerous applications that advance education in a more progressive manner. These include the utilisation of an Intelligent Tutoring System, Voice Assistant, Personalised Learning, Virtual Mentor, Smart Content, Automatic Assessment and Educational Games. Education integrates humans with technology

through the utilisation of various technologies, resulting in a flexible and participatory learning method^[11].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Artificial Intelligence in Language Education

The use of AI in language education has many benefits, including the ability to tailor lessons to the needs of different students, giving students immediate, personalized feedback on their work, creating effective tests and forecasting student performance in the classroom^[12-15]. AI in language education guarantees optimal support for students throughout their studies^[16, 17]. Students may progress through their coursework at their own pace, receive immediate feedback on their development and be guided without the necessity for direct teacher intervention^[18]. It can provide students with learning experiences tailored to their individual needs, provide revision suggestions and measure their progress^[19, 20]. AI provides a new foundation for educators to construct an adaptive and individualized language classroom^[21]. AI-based solutions can ease educators' burdens in several ways, including the use of facial recognition for attendance, automatic evaluation of students, correction of pronunciation, monitoring and recording of student emotions and behaviors, collecting resources, marking homework and answering student questions^[22-25].

Regarding language teaching, a few studies have highlighted the efficacy of AI in assisting students with vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation and the development of all four language abilities. Attention was focused on many learner-related matters, including their level of attentiveness, level of engagement, level of interest and attitude, as well as the assessment of their competency and level of achievement. The results encompassed enhanced writing proficiency, pre-

cision, constructive discourse, diminished speech-related worries and a heightened level of involvement^[26–29].

Recent studies have also highlighted how AI-driven chatbots significantly enhance academic engagement among EFL students by fostering deeper learning interactions and promoting more active participation^[30]. Wu et al. have explored the determinants influencing EFL learners’ intentions to use AI in distributed learning environments, emphasizing the importance of understanding learners’ perceptions and the contextual factors that drive AI adoption^[31]. Moreover, the engagement of Chinese EFL learners with large language models has been investigated, revealing the critical role of autonomy, competence and relatedness in fostering effective learning outcomes^[32]. Research into vocabulary learning using large language models shows that AI tools offer unique advantages in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and retention, beyond traditional learning methods^[33].

Most studies utilizing artificial intelligence in language education predominantly focus on outlining the AI tools employed for language teaching, yet they often overlook the exploration of ethical and responsible utilization methods of these AI tools. To get insight into how to effectively tackle these concerns and establish a framework that is both responsible and sustainable, we may explore the use of AI as an independent entity for language instruction and evaluate the possible ethical hazards it may entail.

Considering the widespread use of AI in language education, including its various applications and benefits, it becomes crucial to emphasize the responsible and ethical use of AI in this field. The researchers continuously investigate the literature to identify the types and tendencies of recent studies, ensuring the responsible and ethical use of AI in language education. This will aid in comprehending current practices and guiding future research in the field, focusing on two key research questions:

1. What are the emerging patterns and practices in REALE?
2. What research methodologies have been utilized in studies examining REALE?

Therefore, this study comprehensively examines REALE from various perspectives, including the distribution of research themes and the methodological features of

the REALE investigations. It also provides comprehensive summaries and annotated references on the subject. By meticulously examining the range of study subjects, the objective and the methodological features, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of REALE.

3. Methodology

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework was used to guide this study. It has four main steps: identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion (see **Figure 1**). The extensive scope and adaptability of PRISMA have rendered it a preferred instrument among researchers. This research aims to determine the purpose of this study and outline the methodology for conducting a systematic review.

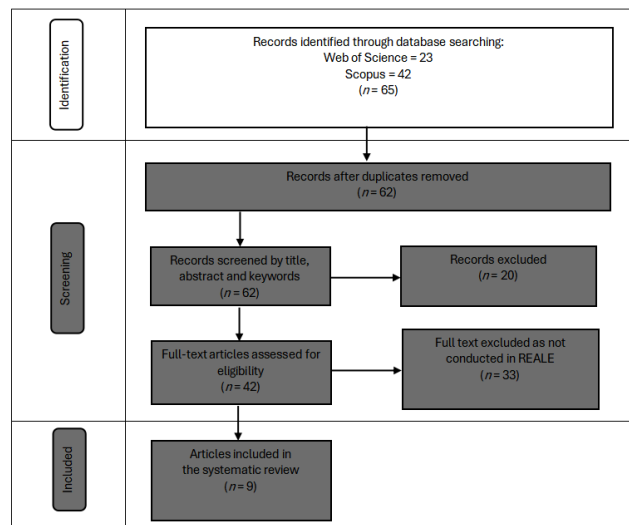


Figure 1. The PRISMA systematic review^[34].

3.1. Identification

The PRISMA guidelines offer a structured approach for the initial identification phase of any systematic review. The researchers selected the databases Web of Science and Scopus as the primary sources of data for this study. The key search phrases were meticulously crafted to ensure they accurately reflected the concepts under investigation, incorporating a range of terms relevant to REALE. The specific search queries used in this study are detailed in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Search string used in this study.

| Database | Search String |
|----------------------|--|
| Web of Science (WoS) | TS = (("artificial intelligence" OR "AI") AND ("responsible" OR "ethical" OR "ethics") AND ("adoption" OR "implementation" OR "use") AND ("language education" OR "language learning" OR "language teaching" OR "language pedagogy" OR "language instruction")) |
| Scopus | TITLE-ABS-KEY (("artificial intelligence" OR "AI") AND ("responsible" OR "ethical" OR "ethics") AND ("adoption" OR "implementation" OR "use") AND ("language education" OR "language learning" OR "language teaching" OR "language pedagogy" OR "language instruction")) |

3.2. Screening

Once 65 articles are identified, they undergo screening, starting with the removal of duplicates that appear in more than one database. The preliminary evaluation eliminated 3 redundant articles, leaving a total of 62 articles. The researchers examined the titles, abstracts and keywords of

these 62 articles in order to ascertain their pertinence to the topic of "Responsible and Ethical Artificial Intelligence in Language Education". Through the screening process, 20 publications were excluded as they were considered irrelevant to the study's objectives. **Table 2** presents the outcomes of the inclusion/exclusion screening process that was carried out on the remaining 42 articles.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

| Inclusion Criteria | Exclusion Criteria |
|---|---|
| Studies conducted between 2020 and 2024 | Studies conducted before 2020 |
| Articles from open access journals | Articles that are not published in open access journals |
| Articles from journals | Conference proceedings, review articles and books |
| The text was written in English | Text not written in English |
| Related to REALE | Not related to REALE |

The inclusion of publications in this systematic review was based on the assessment of 9 articles. These articles were first examined to determine if they met specific criteria for inclusion or exclusion. The researchers conducted a review, excluding book chapters and conference proceedings due to their relative lack of comprehensiveness^[35].

3.3. Included

This literature study focused on REALE and were chosen from Scopus and WoS, as shown in **Table 3**. The databases were chosen based on the exceptional calibre of the instructional content they contain. This study dedicated each investigation to examining a specific facet of the REALE, with the majority occurring in higher education environments.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedure

The selected publications were imported into Mendeley, a citation management tool and subsequently arranged, annotated and categorised according to their relevance to the research enquiries. This study employed thematic analyses

to address the subsequent research problems.

Table 3. Summary of the selected studies.

| Study | Database |
|--|-------------|
| Yang et al. (2024) ^[36] | Scopus, WoS |
| Ružić & Balaban (2024) ^[37] | Scopus, WoS |
| Ross & Baines (2024) ^[38] | Scopus, WoS |
| Cong-Lem et al. (2024) ^[39] | Scopus |
| Hieu & Thao (2024) ^[40] | Scopus |
| Ivanytska, et al. (2024) ^[41] | WoS |
| Avsheniuk et al. (2024) ^[42] | WoS |
| Noroozi et al. (2024) ^[43] | WoS |
| Joseph (2023) ^[44] | WoS |

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. The Emerging Patterns and Practices in REALE

The escalating quantity of publications published between 2020–2024 provides evidence of the rising interest in REALE over the past 5 years, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. These selected studies were analyzed using thematic codes: the objective of the study, methodologies applied, sample, country and the key outcomes as shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Patterns and Practices of REALE.

| Study | Objective | Methodology | Sample | Country | Outcome |
|--|--|--------------|---|----------------|---|
| Yang et al. (2024) ^[36] | To examine the ethical considerations and emotional reactions linked to the utilisation of AI chatbots in educational environments | Mixed Method | Articles from Web of Science and SpringerLink | China | The transformative potential of ChatGPT in education and the need for careful consideration of ethical implications and the emotional impact on students |
| Ružić & Balaban (2024) ^[37] | To examine the utilisation of AI in primary and secondary education, focussing on the theoretical underpinnings, areas of application and ethical concerns | Qualitative | Articles from Web of Science and Scopus | Croatia | A need for extensive studies to integrate AI into education and establish clear guidelines to harness the ethical considerations and data privacy concerns |
| Ross & Baines (2024) ^[38] | To discuss the benefits, drawbacks and ethical considerations of generative AI | Mixed method | Staff and students from the Department of Classics, University of Reading | United Kingdom | By imparting the ethical issues of generative AI to staff and students, they can make well-informed assessments regarding the utilisation of AI in their work, devoid of unwarranted trust or undue apprehension |
| Cong-Lem et al. (2024) ^[39] | To explore EFL teachers' views on what they consider academic dishonesty involving AI and examines the strategies they use or plan to use in response | Mixed Method | 31 EFL teachers from various institutions | Vietnam | The teachers predominantly viewed plagiarism, absence of innovative concepts and use of AI-generated content without appropriate acknowledgement as manifestations of academic dishonesty |
| Hieu & Thao (2024) ^[40] | To examine the difficulties and potential advantages of incorporating ChatGPT into language instruction methods | Qualitative | 9 EFL teachers from 2 educational institutions | Vietnam | The study identified the challenges and opportunities in integrating ChatGPT into language teaching including cultural and contextual misalignments, language accuracy issues and ethical considerations |
| Ivanytska, et al. (2024) ^[41] | To emphasize the significance of teachers' proficiency in negotiating the ethical ramifications of integrating AI into education | Quantitative | 86 EFL students from various Ukrainian universities | Ukraine | A need for a method of integrating AI into foreign language instruction that effectively combines the advantages of teaching with the necessary precautions to maintain the standard and authenticity of the educational experience |
| Avsheniuk et al. (2024) ^[42] | To examine the impact of ChatGPT on critical thinking skills and proficiency in the English language | Mixed Method | 31 students and 3 language instructors from English departments | Ukraine | Various perspectives on the effectiveness of ChatGPT, its influence on critical thinking, the enhancement of English language abilities and ethical concerns |
| Noroozi et al. (2024) ^[43] | To address ethical concerns associated with the utilisation of Generative AI in the field of education | Qualitative | 17 articles from SSCI-indexed journals | Netherlands | A need for an ethical guideline, to ensure responsible integration in diverse educational contexts |
| Joseph (2023) ^[44] | To develop a framework for integrating LLM-based tools like ChatGPT into language teaching | Qualitative | 17 articles from Google Scholar and ScienceDirect | India | To address ethical considerations related to the use of Large Language Model-based tools in education |

Studies from **Table 4** reveal a growing trend towards the ethical and responsible use of AI in education, with a particular focus on addressing the challenges and ethical considerations associated with AI tools such as chatbots and large language models. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated interest in these technologies, as educators seek innovative ways to engage students in remote and distributed learning environments. Methodologically, there has been a noticeable prevalence of mixed methods and qualitative studies, with only one quantitative study present, allowing researchers to explore both the quantitative outcomes and the qualitative experiences of students and educators with AI tools. This trend reflects a broader recognition of the need to balance technological innovation with ethical responsibility in education.

The practices identified in the literature highlight the diverse applications of AI in educational settings. These include using AI-driven chatbots to enhance student engagement, applying large language models for personalized learning experiences and addressing academic dishonesty through AI monitoring tools. These studies highlight the significance of formulating unambiguous guidelines and frameworks to ensure the ethical integration of AI into education while protecting student data privacy. The field is increasingly emphasizing not only the technological capabilities of AI, but also its ethical implications and the need for educators to receive adequate training to effectively navigate these challenges.

4.2. The Research Methodologies Utilized in Studies Examining the REALE

The systematic review included 9 studies, all of which employed three distinct study methodologies: mixed methods, qualitative, and quantitative. Overall, most studies on REALE patterns and practices favoured a qualitative and mixed-methods approaches, which is reflected in the equal proportion of qualitative and mixed-methods studies in the reviewed literature. Quantitative methods were the least common, with only one study employing this approach.

Qualitative and mixed-methods approaches were the most frequently employed in the reviewed studies. These approaches focused on gathering rich, in-depth insights into the experiences and perspectives of educators and students using AI in language education. Four studies used qualitative meth-

ods, such as case studies, to explore the nuances of ethical AI implementation in classrooms, while four studies utilized mixed methods to gain a comprehensive understanding by integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. These studies highlighted the challenges and ethical concerns associated with AI use, as well as the perceived impacts on teaching and learning. Despite the potential for in-depth understanding, qualitative research in REALE has faced criticism due to issues like small sample sizes and challenges in establishing reliability and validity^[45-47]. However, these studies provided essential contextual information that quantitative methods might overlook. Examining qualitative data can be challenging, iterative, intricate, perplexing, and time-intensive, despite its ability to offer substantiated, elaborate, and extensive accounts of individuals' experiences and reasoning regarding the relevant issues^[48-50].

Only one study employed a quantitative approach, which focused on statistical analysis to assess the impact and effectiveness of AI tools in language education. This study utilized experimental designs, coupled with surveys and questionnaires to collect data. The use of these methodologies allowed the researcher to generate reliable, objective, and statistically significant results, which are crucial for evaluating the ethical and responsible use of AI in educational contexts. Agarwal et al. and Allen et al. have highlighted the preference for quantitative methods due to their reliability and objectivity^[51, 52]. These methods offered clear metrics and quantifiable data for evaluating the outcomes of AI implementation in educational settings. The findings of this review corroborate the claims put out by other previous researches that quantitative methods are less common among educational scholars^[53-55].

Mixed-methods studies integrated questionnaires with open-ended inquiries or semi-structured interviews to offer a comprehensive perspective on the use and perception of AI tools in language education. There are researchers argue that mixed-method designs are particularly effective in education research because they allow for triangulation of data, which enhances the validity and reliability of the findings^[56-59]. The use of mixed methods in REALE studies, while equally prevalent as qualitative methods, is commendable for its ability to address complex research questions from various perspectives. Researchers praise the mixed-method approach for its ability to obtain triangulated data, thereby enhancing

the validity and comprehensiveness of evidence supporting the application of REALE approaches in language teaching and learning^[60, 61].

5. Conclusions

The present study conducted a systematic literature analysis, examining 9 publications released from 2020 to 2024 to address the research issue regarding the current state of research patterns and practices in REALE. The conclusions of this review have consolidated the current knowledge in REALE research, covering key aspects such as the objectives, methodologies, samples, countries of study and outcomes. The investigation revealed that while REALE research is still in its nascent stages, there is significant growth and potential in this field. The findings highlight the importance of continued exploration and development to effectively implement REALE at all educational levels.

This study, like several others, has inherent limitations that present opportunities for further investigation. The scope of this review was limited to the journals included in the analysis, primarily those listed in WoS and Scopus. The increasing volume of articles in REALE made it challenging to conduct a comprehensive and exhaustive search. The criteria formulated for selecting publications, though rigorous, may have excluded relevant studies published in other reputable sources. Additionally, the review focused predominantly on studies related to English as a foreign Language (EFL), which may not fully represent the diversity of REALE research across different languages and educational contexts.

Given the limitations identified, future research should broaden the scope of REALE studies to include additional sources such as conference proceedings, project reports and academic dissertations that involve languages other than English, such as Arabic, Mandarin, French, Korean or Japanese. Expanding the timeframe and including a wider range of research emphases could reveal more extensive patterns and shifts in the evolution of REALE over time. Future studies should investigate whether people utilize REALE as an independent modality or as part of established courses or programs with robust pedagogical frameworks. These investigations would provide valuable insights into the most effective ways to integrate REALE into diverse educational settings.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, N.Z. and N.A.S.; methodology, N.Z.; software, M.S.S.; validation, N.M.N.; formal analysis, N.A.S.; investigation, M.N.J.; resources, W.A.A.W.D. and M.T.A.G.; data curation, N.A.S.; writing—original draft preparation, M.N.J.; writing—review and editing, N.M.N.; visualization, W.A.A.W.D.; supervision, N.Z.; project administration, M.T.A.G.; funding acquisition, N.Z. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript. Authorship must be limited to those who have contributed substantially to the work reported.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in the references section of this article and can be accessed through the links in this section. All relevant data and materials used in this study are included in these sources and are accessible through the provided links. There are no restrictions on access to these data.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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