



From Rote to Reasoning: AI Mediated Learning as the Latest Turn in English Language Pedagogy in Higher Education

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Abstract

English language teaching (ELT) in higher education has undergone a series of pedagogical transformations, evolving from rote memorisation to task-based and communicative approaches, later integrating computer-assisted language learning (CALL), and now entering an era of artificial intelligence (AI)-mediated learning. This paper examines the implementation and impact of AI tools in language classrooms, arguing that their adoption should not be viewed as a pedagogical rupture but rather as a continuation of a long-standing shift toward learner-centred, meaning-focused, and interaction-driven models of language education. By situating AI within the historical trajectory of ELT, the paper contends that successful AI integration relies not on technological novelty, but on research-informed pedagogy, ethical awareness, and evidence-based practice. A practical action research project on incorporating AI for vocabulary learning in an elective course at a research-focused liberal arts university will be presented to illustrate both the implementation process and the pedagogical impact of AI-mediated vocabulary learning.

Keywords: AI-mediated language classrooms; TESOL; innovative pedagogies; curriculum design; action research