

Trends and Gaps in AI Research for Language Education: A Focus on the Vietnamese Context

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ABSTRACT: This article provides a comprehensive review of recent research on the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English language education within the Vietnamese context. Drawing from both international and Vietnamese studies, including empirical investigations on tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and AI-based writing assistants, the article examines how AI is reshaping language instruction, learning outcomes, and teacher roles. Findings reveal that AI applications—particularly in writing and speaking—enhance learner autonomy, engagement, and performance through immediate feedback, language scaffolding, and personalized support. However, challenges persist, including limited infrastructure, unequal access, insufficient teacher training, ethical ambiguities, and cultural mismatches in AI-generated content. The review also identifies notable research gaps, such as a lack of longitudinal studies, underexplored skill domains (e.g., listening and reading), and weak policy frameworks guiding AI use in formal education. Based on these insights, the article calls for more culturally responsive AI design, targeted teacher professional development, and integrated national strategies to ensure equitable and sustainable adoption of AI in Vietnamese classrooms. The findings contribute to a growing body of work on inclusive and context-sensitive AI implementation in nonWestern educational systems.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, language education, ChatGPT, academic writing, AI literacy, teacher training

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force across global educational systems, offering promising innovations in pedagogy, assessment, and learner engagement. This shift is most clearly visible in the area of language instruction, where AI-powered tools such as chatbots, automated writing assistants, voice recognition applications, and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) platforms are increasingly used to enhance student outcomes, personalize instruction, and reduce instructional workload. As artificial intelligence tools grow more advanced and obtainable, researchers are increasingly investigating their teaching potential across different educational contexts. Yet, much of this research remains concentrated in Western, high-resource contexts. The adoption, adaptation, and impact of AI in non-Western education systems—particularly in Southeast Asia—remain underexamined.

Vietnam represents a particularly compelling context for examining the role of AI in language education. As a developing country with a national emphasis on English proficiency, Vietnam is witnessing rapid digitalization in education and a growing interest in integrating AI into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Studies have begun to explore the impact of tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Quillbot, and Reading Progress on Vietnamese learners' speaking, writing, and pronunciation skills (Duong & Suppasetseree, 2024; Vo & Nguyen, 2024; Pham, 2024; Nguyen & Tran, 2023; Nguyen & Trinh, 2024). Students across secondary and tertiary levels report increased engagement and a sense of learning autonomy when utilizing AI, particularly in writing tasks that demand organization, vocabulary expansion, and revision. These tools are also seen as valuable for lowering language anxiety and supporting self-paced practice.

However, findings from several recent Vietnamese studies warn against adopting AI tools without careful consideration of their limitations. Nguyen, Nguyen, and Phan (2025) found that over-reliance on ChatGPT by postgraduate EFL students contributed to reduced critical thinking and originality in academic writing. This study confirmed the findings by Pham and Le (2024)'s study on the impact of AI on undergraduate student's creativity in a university in Vietnam. Similarly, students using AI tools for essay support reported challenges in interpreting generalized feedback and difficulties with adapting AI-generated text to Vietnamese academic standards. Additional research has observed that although AI tools help enhance basic language quality, they typically overlook the cultural sensitivities, persuasive techniques, and writing conventions required in Vietnamese scholarly work.

Trends and Gaps in AI Research for Language Education: A Focus on the Vietnamese Context

The role of AI in teacher development is also receiving growing attention. Tran, Le, and Tran (2025) explored how MA students perceived AI's value in enhancing their academic writing and teaching readiness. While many viewed tools like Grammarly and Turnitin as beneficial for polishing linguistic expression, they also expressed concerns about decreased language ownership and increased dependence. These perspectives highlight the need for critical AI literacy among both learners and instructors—a topic still lacking in formal teacher training curricula. Meanwhile, Nguyen et al. (2025) studied the use of CALL tools to improve interpretation skills among English majors at Hanoi Open University. Their findings reinforce the idea that AI-assisted learning environments can enhance oral fluency and self-regulation but are only effective when supported by adequate infrastructure and educator guidance.

Despite growing awareness of AI's potential, institutional challenges remain prevalent throughout many educational establishments in Vietnam. Studies consistently point to issues such as limited internet access, lack of AI-compatible devices, insufficient institutional policies, and minimal teacher preparation (Giam, Nam, & Giang, 2022; Chu & Nguyen, 2024). These challenges contribute to a digital divide between urban and rural schools, private and public institutions, and high- and low-income learners. Moreover, ethical considerations—such as plagiarism, data privacy, and the authenticity of AI-generated student work—remain underexplored in Vietnamese research and policy discussions.

This article seeks to synthesize current findings from both published literature and recent empirical studies to identify emerging trends in AI applications for Vietnamese language education. Specifically, it aims to:

1. Examine how AI tools are currently being used to support Vietnamese students and educators across formal and informal educational contexts;
2. Identify key pedagogical, infrastructural, and ethical challenges surrounding AI adoption; and 3. Highlight under-researched areas that warrant further scholarly and policy attention.

By focusing on the Vietnamese context, this article contributes to a more inclusive and culturally responsive understanding of AI's educational impact. It responds to the current imbalance in the literature, which predominantly reflects Western perspectives, and offers targeted recommendations to inform the strategic and ethical implementation of AI in Vietnam's language education system.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Rise of AI in Language Education

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming educational systems worldwide, and language instruction is among the most actively affected domains. AI's ability to deliver personalized learning, real-time feedback, and adaptive instruction has enabled learners to move beyond the limitations of traditional classroom models. In the Vietnamese context, where large class sizes, resource constraints, and examination-oriented pedagogy still dominate, AI tools like ChatGPT, Reading Progress, and Andy English Bot are increasingly used to offer more learner-centered approaches (Nguyen & Pham, 2024; Duong & Suppasetseree, 2024; Pham, 2024).

AI chatbots in particular have become increasingly popular for their ability to create non-threatening, interactive speaking environments. These tools allow students to rehearse real-life conversations, refine pronunciation, and receive instant corrective feedback—an essential feature in contexts where speaking opportunities are often scarce. Such tools align well with the educational needs of Vietnamese learners, who frequently lack exposure to naturalistic communication in English (Tran et al., 2019).

Recent studies go further in emphasizing the use of AI writing assistants like Grammarly, Quillbot, and Turnitin among university and postgraduate students. Tran, Le, and Tran (2025) found that English-major MA students used AI tools not just for grammar and vocabulary, but for brainstorming, organizing content, and refining the coherence of academic texts. These findings highlight a shift in the perception of AI—from a supplementary tool to a central part of students' writing workflow, particularly in academic contexts.

Meanwhile, Nguyen et al. (2025) explore how computer-assisted language learning (CALL) can aid the development of interpretation skills among fourth-year English majors at Hanoi Open University. Their study extends the concept of AI in education beyond chatbots and writing tools to include multimedia resources, digital simulations, and speech recognition software, suggesting that AI-enhanced CALL environments can improve listening comprehension and oral fluency—two fundamental competencies required for interpretation.

2. Student Outcomes and Perceptions

Across the reviewed studies, AI is generally perceived by students as a helpful, engaging, and time-saving support system for language learning. Duong and Suppasetseree (2024) documented statistically significant improvements in speaking fluency and grammatical accuracy after eight weeks of chatbot-assisted practice. Likewise, Nguyen & Dieu (2024) and Vo & Nguyen (2024) report that students using ChatGPT appreciated its role in lowering anxiety, providing real-time correction, and encouraging self-regulated learning.

In writing contexts, the benefits are similarly compelling. Tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quillbot have been praised for enabling quicker drafting, polishing vocabulary, and improving sentence clarity. Most notably, MA and postgraduate students

Trends and Gaps in AI Research for Language Education: A Focus on the Vietnamese Context

in Tran et al. (2025) and Nguyen, Nguyen, and Phan (2025) described AI tools as “mentors” that helped them meet academic standards and manage workload pressures. Such findings illustrate how AI meets both linguistic and emotional needs—providing cognitive support while relieving standard challenges and stress factors of writing in a second language.

However, the literature also emphasizes a set of recurring concerns. Students in multiple studies noted the dangers of overreliance, especially when AI tools were used as shortcuts rather than scaffolds. Nguyen, Nguyen, and Phan (2025) found that some postgraduate students began to lose confidence in their independent writing abilities and struggled to develop original arguments when depending too heavily on AI-generated ideas. Additionally, while AI tools offer real-time feedback, students often reported difficulty interpreting or applying that feedback without human support—especially when it lacked cultural nuance or was too generic for advanced-level writing.

The study by Nguyen et al. (2025) on CALL further illustrates that while students appreciated digital tools for interpretation practice, they also struggled with motivation, information overload, and inadequate oral feedback. These insights reflect a common thread: the value of AI tools depends not just on technological capability, but also on pedagogical integration and user training.

3. Teacher Roles and Professional Development AI’s impact on language education also extends to educators, whose roles are being redefined in response to increasingly autonomous learners. Tran, Pham, and Le (2024) found that novice teachers were more willing to adopt AI tools in their professional development, often using ChatGPT for lesson planning, theory clarification, and reflective practice. Teachers across experience levels acknowledged AI’s ability to reduce administrative workload and provide immediate instructional feedback.

Yet, structural and systemic challenges remain. Giam, Nam, and Giang (2022) and Bui (2024) report that many teachers lack the technical training needed to effectively incorporate AI into their classrooms. The absence of coherent institutional policies and clear curriculum guidelines further complicates integration efforts. Several educators expressed concern about losing control over classroom discourse and the potential depersonalization of instruction.

Theoretical frameworks like the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Constructivist Learning Theory (CLT) are often used to analyze these shifts. Pham and Le (2024), for instance, show that teacher perceptions of AI’s usefulness and ease of use significantly affect adoption levels. Educators who see AI as a pedagogical partner—not a replacement—are more likely to experiment with hybrid teaching models that leverage AI without undermining human interaction.

4. Cultural and Contextual Considerations

Cultural context remains a central concern in the adaptation of AI tools in Vietnam. As several studies note, most AI systems are developed in Western contexts, which can limit their responsiveness to local names, idiomatic expressions, or culturally sensitive content (Duong & Suppasetsee, 2024; Chaisuk & Nguyen, 2024). In Nguyen et al. (2025), interpretation students at Hanoi Open University experienced mismatches between AI-generated translations and Vietnamese sociocultural norms—highlighting the limitations of AI’s transferability across linguistic contexts.

Likewise, whereas Vietnamese learners prefer organized, test-focused teaching methods, numerous AI systems prioritize exploratory questioning and creative problem-solving. This mismatch in pedagogical orientation can cause conflict when integrating AI into formal educational systems. Vo and Nguyen (2024) emphasize that students struggled to apply AI-generated feedback in exam scenarios where concise, formulaic writing was expected.

5. Infrastructure and Equity Issues

Despite growing AI adoption, disparities in access and infrastructure continue to hinder equitable implementation. Chu and Nguyen (2024) found that only a small fraction of students used AI tools during school hours—most engagement occurred at home or in supplementary classes. This uneven access results from inadequate school facilities, unreliable internet, and limited availability of compatible devices.

Furthermore, Nguyen et al. (2025) highlight how the lack of specialized labs and updated CALL software at Hanoi Open University limited the scope and depth of interpretation training. Teachers also reported feeling unsupported by administrators in adopting and maintaining AI technologies in their teaching environments.

Such challenges are compounded by socioeconomic disparities. Students in rural or underfunded schools often lack exposure to advanced AI tools entirely, further widening the digital divide. As Doan, Nguyen, and Vu (2024) argue, AI’s promise can only be fulfilled if it is accompanied by policy frameworks that prioritize infrastructure development and teacher training in underserved regions.

6. Emerging Trends and Research Gaps

While the Vietnamese research landscape on AI in language education is growing, several critical gaps remain. First, the focus remains disproportionately on speaking and writing skills. There is limited research on how AI can support listening, reading, and integrated tasks that reflect real-world communication. Additionally, limited research examines multiple AI tools using identical groups of learners or similar tasks, thereby overlooking chances to discover how tools work together or what users typically prefer. Third, long-term outcomes remain under-researched. Most studies span a few weeks or months, which limits understanding of how

Trends and Gaps in AI Research for Language Education: A Focus on the Vietnamese Context

AI affects learning retention, learner autonomy, and sustained critical thinking. Fourth, ethical and academic integrity concerns—such as plagiarism, authorship, and data privacy—are acknowledged but rarely analyzed in depth within the Vietnamese educational context. Finally, pedagogical integration remains a major blind spot. Although teachers and students are experimenting with AI tools, few studies explore how these tools can be systematically embedded into curriculum design, classroom activities, or assessment frameworks.

III. DISCUSSION

The synthesis of recent studies on AI integration in Vietnamese language education reveals an encouraging yet complex landscape. While AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT offer considerable promise in enhancing language learning—especially writing proficiency—their application remains laden with pedagogical, infrastructural, and ethical concerns. This discussion unpacks key trends from the reviewed literature and proposes recommendations for educators, institutions, and researchers.

1. Benefits and Opportunities of AI in Academic Writing

Research strongly confirms that AI tools provide meaningful benefits to Vietnamese EFL students, especially in academic writing. ChatGPT is praised for assisting with grammar correction, idea generation, and organization of content. Students at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH) and University of Danang reported improved confidence, writing fluency, and academic performance when using tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quillbot.

ChatGPT's utility in early stages of writing—such as understanding prompts and planning outlines—is widely acknowledged. Students found it particularly helpful for brainstorming, paraphrasing, and improving vocabulary use. These tools effectively support the development of writing fluency and structure, key challenges in Vietnamese academic writing.

From a theoretical perspective, the constructivist underpinnings of AI-supported learning are evident. ChatGPT aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), offering personalized, scaffolded feedback that helps learners self-regulate and grow in autonomy. The digital interaction with AI mirrors peer learning and teacher coaching, enhancing metacognitive skills and reflective thinking.

2. Equity and Infrastructure Remain Critical Barriers Despite its perceived benefits, AI integration is still fragmented across Vietnam's education system. Studies conducted at IUH highlight persistent infrastructural barriers: poor internet connectivity, difficulty accessing accounts, and unaffordable subscription costs for premium AI services. These technological hurdles disproportionately affect students in public institutions or rural areas, reinforcing the existing digital divide.

Additionally, most AI applications remain limited to individual usage rather than being embedded in formal curricula. There is a lack of national-level integration or comprehensive policy guidance. Without a coherent infrastructure and institutional support, AI's transformative potential will remain out of reach for many Vietnamese learners.

3. Ethical Tensions and the Risk of Over-Reliance

Among the studies, ethical considerations emerge as a shared concern. While many students value AI for its writing assistance, they also express awareness of the risk of plagiarism and the challenge of maintaining academic integrity. The IUH study revealed that students often had to create their own citation strategies due to a lack of clear guidelines, leading to inconsistent practices and ethical ambiguities.

More importantly, the tendency to "accept AI gifts without questioning" reflects a deeper cognitive concern: AI tools may limit students' critical thinking and originality. Although 91.3% of respondents said ChatGPT helped them "rethink ideas," researchers questioned whether this rethinking stemmed from genuine cognitive struggle or passive acceptance.

This over-reliance also contributes to the "ghostwriting dilemma," where students begin substituting AI outputs for their original thinking. While students recognize this risk, the lack of teacher-led instruction on ethical AI use exacerbates the problem. Educators must reinforce academic honesty by embedding AI literacy into writing instruction and promoting AI as a tool for reflection—not substitution.

4. Pedagogical Impacts and Teacher Identity

The introduction of AI into academic writing practices also reshapes pedagogical roles. Teachers are no longer the sole source of feedback and correction. Instead, they need to serve as facilitators of AI-supported education, helping students learn to use digital technologies thoughtfully and responsibly.

However, studies show that many Vietnamese teachers—especially at the postgraduate level—lack formal training in AI use. They report challenges in integrating ChatGPT into writing pedagogy, expressing discomfort with the AI's limited cultural nuance, its "black box" nature, and concerns over job displacement.

To foster AI-enhanced instruction, teachers must be provided with professional development programs that build technological confidence and pedagogical innovation. Empowering teachers to become critical mediators of AI—not passive facilitators—will be essential for long-term success.

Trends and Gaps in AI Research for Language Education: A Focus on the Vietnamese Context

5. Cultural and Linguistic Mismatch

The linguistic and cultural mismatch between AI-generated content and Vietnamese academic expectations presents another layer of complexity. Students and teachers report that ChatGPT often fails to understand local idioms, context-specific prompts, or cultural references, which leads to confusion or irrelevant responses.

This mismatch limits the tool's usability and highlights the need for AI systems that are locally trained or adapted to Vietnamese educational norms. Without contextual relevance, AI risks becoming a superficial aid rather than a transformative learning partner.

6. Areas for Further Research

The current body of literature—though rapidly growing—remains narrow in scope. Most studies are short-term, cross-sectional, and centered on writing skills. Longitudinal research is needed to assess how prolonged AI use affects students' writing development, motivation, and critical thinking.

Moreover, there is limited exploration of AI's role in reading, listening, or integrated tasks. This skill-specific focus misses the holistic potential of AI in supporting comprehensive language development. Finally, studies must examine classroom dynamics, including how AI changes teacher-student interaction, collaborative learning, and feedback loops.

7. Recommendations for Practice and Policy

Based on the reviewed studies, several recommendations emerge:

- Promote AI literacy through workshops and curriculum modules that emphasize ethical use, critical evaluation, and academic integrity.
- Institutionalize teacher training on AI tools, helping educators use them confidently and effectively in writing pedagogy.
- Bridge infrastructure gaps by investing in internet access, device compatibility, and software licenses—particularly in underfunded schools.
- Integrate AI into formal curricula so that writing support becomes part of the structured learning experience, not an extracurricular practice.
- Encourage locally trained AI models that are sensitive to Vietnamese language, culture, and academic conventions.

IV. CONCLUSION

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into language education presents a transformative opportunity for Vietnam—a country where English proficiency is increasingly seen as essential for academic success, professional advancement, and global participation. Drawing from a wide range of recent studies, including those focused on Vietnamese undergraduate and postgraduate learners, this review has highlighted both the promise and the complexity of incorporating AI into language education.

AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Quillbot, and Reading Progress have demonstrated clear value in improving students' writing fluency, organizing ideas, enhancing grammar and vocabulary use, and lowering the affective barriers often associated with language learning. As shown in the studies by Tran, Le, and Tran (2025) and Nguyen, Nguyen, and Phan (2025), these tools are particularly appreciated for their ability to scaffold the writing process—supporting idea generation, paraphrasing, and citation formatting in academic contexts. For many Vietnamese EFL students, especially those unfamiliar with academic discourse conventions, AI provides an accessible entry point into structured writing practices and self-regulated learning.

However, this growing reliance on AI also introduces significant pedagogical, ethical, and cognitive concerns. One of the most salient findings across the reviewed literature is the risk of over-reliance on AI-generated content. Students often defer to AI suggestions without critically evaluating their appropriateness, leading to diminished creativity and weakened argumentation skills. Nguyen et al. (2025) and Vo and Nguyen (2024) emphasize that although students feel more confident with AI support, they may inadvertently compromise their development of higher-order thinking skills and personal voice in writing. This trend reflects a broader need for critical AI literacy—not just technical proficiency, but the ability to use AI as a reflective partner rather than a solution provider.

Moreover, ethical challenges remain. Several studies (e.g., Nguyen, Nguyen, & Phan, 2025; Pham & Le, 2024) report that students struggle with understanding academic integrity boundaries when using AI tools. Ambiguity in citation norms, limited institutional guidance, and a lack of formal instruction in responsible AI use all contribute to inconsistent practices that can border on academic dishonesty. The potential for “AI ghostwriting” underscores the urgent need for universities to establish clearer policies on AI use, develop awareness campaigns, and integrate digital ethics into language and writing curricula.

From an infrastructural perspective, AI usage in Vietnam remains uneven. Most implementation occurs in informal, extracurricular settings rather than as part of structured, national-level curriculum integration. Studies by Giam, Nam, and Giang (2022) and Chu and Nguyen (2024) confirm that access to AI tools is often constrained by technical issues such as poor internet connectivity, limited device availability, and lack of institutional investment. These barriers disproportionately affect students in public schools, rural areas, and lower-income groups, exacerbating the digital divide and limiting equitable participation in AI-enhanced learning.

Trends and Gaps in AI Research for Language Education: A Focus on the Vietnamese Context

Teacher readiness also remains a major concern. While some novice educators are enthusiastic adopters of AI tools, many mid-career and senior teachers express uncertainty or resistance due to a lack of training, confidence, or pedagogical frameworks. As Tran, Pham, and Le (2024) suggest, teachers need targeted professional development that addresses both the technical and instructional aspects of AI. Crucially, teachers must be empowered not only as users of AI but as critical mediators who can guide students in interpreting AI feedback, applying it meaningfully, and reflecting on its limitations.

In light of these findings, Vietnam's future approach should shift from scattered implementation to systematic incorporation. This requires systemic efforts across several dimensions:

- **Policy Development:** Clear, actionable national guidelines on the ethical use of AI in education must be established.
- **Curricular Integration:** AI tools should be embedded into formal language education frameworks to ensure consistency and scalability.
- **Teacher Training:** Investment in educator training and digital pedagogy is essential to maximize the value of AI while safeguarding academic integrity.
- **Equity and Access:** Government and institutional stakeholders must address infrastructural inequalities to prevent the deepening of digital disparities.
- **Ongoing Research:** Longitudinal, context-specific studies are needed to track the developmental impact of AI on language proficiency, critical thinking, and learner autonomy.

Ultimately, AI should not be viewed as a replacement for teachers or a shortcut to academic achievement. Rather, it should be seen as a dynamic, flexible tool—one that, when thoughtfully integrated, can support student-centered learning, enhance communicative competence, and foster deeper engagement with language. By prioritizing ethical implementation, cultural relevance, and pedagogical coherence, Vietnam can harness AI not merely as a technological trend, but as a meaningful driver of educational equity and innovation in the 21st century.

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Trends and Gaps in AI Research for Language Education: A Focus on the Vietnamese Context

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