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Generative AI in English Language Teaching: A Systematic Review of Its Impact on Teaching Practices and Learning Outcomes

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ABSTRACT: Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools are now common in English classrooms, but the research on them is spread thinly across different tools, settings and skills, and most of it records what people think rather than what learners actually gained. This review looks at how GenAI is changing the way English is taught and what learners gain from it. Using the PRISMA procedure, the review drew on Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect and Springer, selecting peer-reviewed journal papers from 2024 to 2026; 28 studies were analysed in full. In most studies GenAI served as a helper for teachers in lesson planning, materials, feedback and classroom activities, but how far it was taken up varied with teachers' own attitudes, self-assurance and preparation. Assessment was the area most challenged, prompting teachers to rethink task design and academic integrity. In terms of learning, GenAI is associated with perceived improvements in writing, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, motivation, confidence, and autonomy, but most evidence is perception-based rather than measured. The review concludes that GenAI is best used as a supplement to teacher-guided instruction, with teachers checking its output and guiding learners towards critical use. Future research should adopt longitudinal and controlled designs that measure language outcomes directly.

KEYWORDS: Generative AI; English language teaching; Teaching practices; Learning outcomes; Systematic review

I. INTRODUCTION

Within a few years, GenAI has stopped being a novelty and become a routine part of English classrooms, shaping how teachers plan lessons, prepare materials and engage learners. Research on this shift has expanded quickly, yet it remains scattered across tools, contexts, and language skills (Rejeb et al., 2026). Practical frameworks now classify GenAI tools by their pedagogical functions, namely planning, content creation, teaching assistance, and evaluation, while stressing that teachers must validate generated output before classroom use (Moundridou et al., 2024).

The technology has also been viewed as a means of widening access to quality English education, particularly where teachers work with limited resources (Tafazoli, 2024). Together, these perspectives position GenAI as a potentially transformative, though still unevenly understood, resource in English Language Teaching (ELT). Despite this promise, the classroom reality is considerably more complex. Teachers find it difficult to distinguish AI-assisted writing from independent student work, and their scoring decisions vary with their beliefs and AI knowledge, which raises concerns about assessment validity and fairness (Chen & Pi, 2026).

Evidence from teachers across 39 countries similarly indicates that effective integration requires pedagogical change rather than simple tool adoption (Al-khresheh, 2024), while whether novice teachers are prepared to use GenAI themselves and to teach students to use it with a critical eye remains a pressing concern (Moorhouse, 2024). Moreover, much of the available evidence reflects perceptions rather than measured language gains, leaving the overall impact of GenAI on teaching and learning insufficiently synthesised. So, this review asks two things: in what ways teachers bring GenAI into their English lessons, and what learner outcomes are linked to it.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies of GenAI in ELT fall broadly into two linked areas: the ways teachers come to use these tools, and the ways learners respond to them. On the teaching side, professional learning appears central to meaningful integration. Prospective teachers who designed AI-supported digital storybooks reported growing self-efficacy, built through prompt refinement, problem-solving, and peer support

(Wu et al., 2025). Narrative evidence from Nepal similarly shows that GenAI can reshape English educators' professional development and classroom practice when examined through the TPACK lens (Lakhe Shrestha et al., 2025).

Collaboration seems equally influential, since Iranian EFL teachers used ChatGPT within a community of practice to reflect on their teaching and test alternative strategies (Arefian et al., 2024). Beyond efficiency, GenAI has also been linked to inclusive pedagogy, with university teachers in the Philippines viewing it as a means of widening participation and personalising language learning (Bedoya Ulla et al., 2024). As for learners, the studies point out that what GenAI offers is shaped more by how students read and use its responses than by the technology alone. EFL students describe using ChatGPT for linguistic refinement, idea generation, and proofreading, yet they actively try to protect the authenticity of their own writing voice (Werdiningsih, Marzuki, & Rusdin, 2024b). Pre-service teachers also did not evaluate ChatGPT in the same way: those whose own writing scores were weaker were generally more positive about it, whereas stronger writers doubted whether its output was deep and coherent enough (Butler & Jiang, 2025).

Cognitive demands likewise differ across tasks, with students' thinking processes varying between traditional essay writing and GenAI-assisted multimodal composing (Liu et al., 2024). Teacher guidance can further shift learners from dependence on AI towards more critical and independent use (Xodabande et al., 2026). Even so, these insights come largely from small, context-specific, perception-based studies, which leaves the broader pattern of teaching practices and learning outcomes in need of systematic synthesis.

III.RESEARCH GAP

Research on GenAI in ELT has grown fast, yet the findings remain scattered. Many focus on a single tool, one skill, or a small group of participants. For example, one study examined how students used generative AI to produce English podcasts, and its findings rest mainly on learners' own reported experiences (Baskara et al., 2024). Others describe the views of students and teachers within one university, which show what participants think but not what learning outcomes follow (Webb & Şenaydın, 2025).

As a result, we still lack a clear, combined picture of how generative AI changes teaching practices such as planning, materials, feedback, and assessment. It is also unclear which learning outcomes are supported by evidence rather than perception. This gap shows the need for a systematic review that brings these scattered findings together to see how GenAI affects both teaching and learning in English classrooms.

IV.RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Four research questions shaped this review. RQ1: In what ways is GenAI built into teaching practice? RQ2: How has it changed instructional planning, materials development, feedback and assessment? RQ3: Which learner outcomes have been linked to GenAI use? RQ4: What effect does it have on learners' English skills and engagement?

V. METHODOLOGY

A. Data Collection

To keep the process open and repeatable, the study selection (identification, screening and inclusion) was done according to PRISMA. The literature search covered Web of Science, Scopus, ScienceDirect and Springer and was limited to publications from 2024 to 2026. Keywords were selected to match the aim of the review and were combined in three groups, beginning with GenAI terms ("generative AI" OR "generative artificial intelligence" OR "GenAI" OR "ChatGPT" OR "large language model" OR "Gemini" OR "Copilot") joined with ELT terms ("English language teaching" OR "ELT" OR "English language learning" OR "English teachers"). Teaching and outcome terms ("teaching practices" OR "learning outcomes" OR "assessment" OR "feedback") were then added to narrow the results towards the research questions.

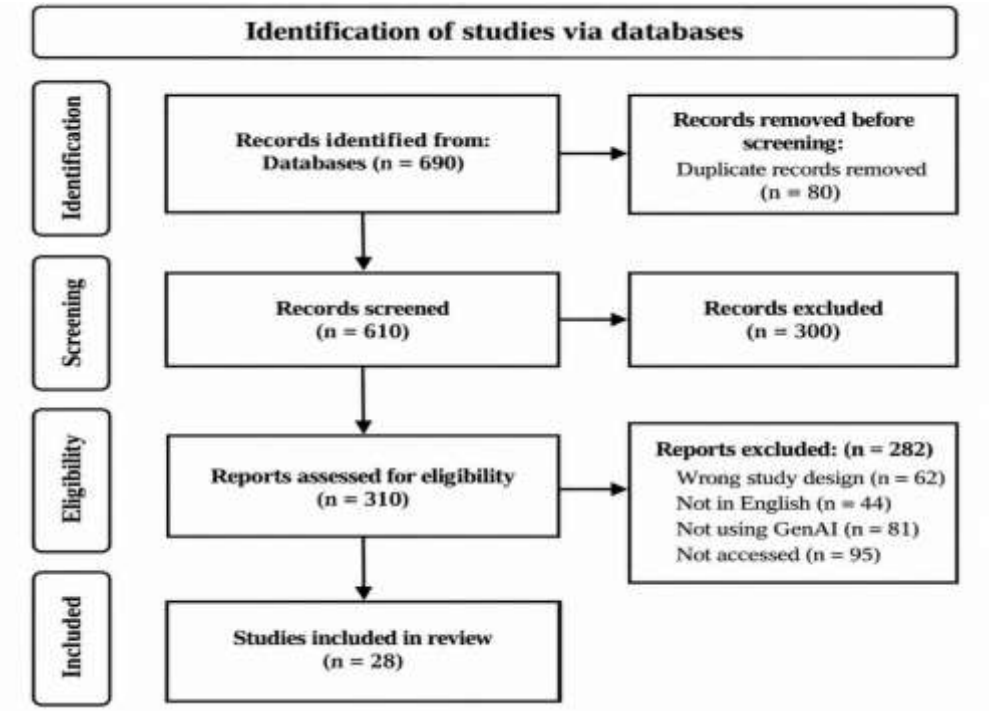


Figure 1 Study selection process, following the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Page et al., 2021)

B. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The rules for keeping or leaving out studies are given in the table below.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication period	Studies published between 2024 and 2026	Studies published before 2024
Publication type	Journal papers that were peer reviewed	Books, chapters, dissertations and conference proceedings
Language	English-language papers	Written in any other languages
Research focus	Teaching practices, materials, feedback, assessment, learning outcomes, or learner engagement	Studies focused only on technical development of AI tools
Accessibility	Full text available	Full text not accessible

C. Data Analysis

The 28 selected articles were read in full, and key information was extracted from each one, including authors, year, context, participants, research design, AI tools used, teaching applications, learning outcomes, benefits, and challenges. The extracted data were organised in tables so that the studies could be compared clearly. The analysis was then carried out in line with the four research questions, grouping the findings under teaching practices, instructional planning and assessment, learning outcomes, and learner engagement. Particular attention was given to separating findings based on perceptions from those based on measured learning gains.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. RQ1. How teachers use GenAI in practice

GenAI makes its biggest difference in teaching when it acts as an assistant to the teacher, helping with planning, preparing resources and managing classroom interaction. In writing instruction, postgraduate EFL students used ChatGPT for grammar checking, vocabulary improvement, brainstorming, essay structuring, and immediate feedback, which suggests that teachers can bring AI-assisted activities into drafting, revising, and editing alongside teacher and peer feedback (Werdiningsih et al., 2024a).

At university level, teachers brought AI tools into their classrooms to encourage participation and to build activities that suited their own teaching context (Zaimoğlu & Dağtaş, 2025). However, the impact is not uniform across teachers. In secondary schools, Corral Robles et al. (2026) described four ways of using AI: focusing on materials, adapting and differentiating tasks, centring on feedback, and using it only marginally. These patterns show that teachers' beliefs, confidence and training decide how much AI

enters their classrooms. Overall, the evidence suggests that generative AI changes teaching practices by making them more resource-rich and interactive, while how far teaching changes is decided more by the teacher's approach than by the technology.

B. RQ2. GenAI in lesson planning, materials, feedback and assessment

Generative AI has reshaped instructional planning, materials development, feedback, and assessment by making them faster and more flexible, but its impact does not remove the need for teacher judgement. Teachers used AI to prepare lessons, create personalised resources, give writing feedback, and support assessment tasks, and they stressed that its output must be checked for accuracy and suitability (Tran et al., 2025). Assessment, however, has been affected most sharply.

AI challenges traditional assessment practices, which has led teachers to rethink assessment design and academic integrity and to rely more on in-class writing and oral tasks (Vafadar et al., 2025). A similar pattern appears in materials development, where teachers created and modified materials with AI, but this worked well only when supported by careful prompt writing, contextual adaptation and professional judgement (Chen et al., 2026). Overall, the clearest change in teaching is that preparation became more efficient and assessment had to be rethought, although the quality of feedback and assessment still relied on teachers' supervision.

C. RQ3. Learner outcomes linked to GenAI use

Most of the learning gains linked to GenAI are ones that learners themselves perceived, such as better writing, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, understanding of concepts, and more independent study. Very few of these gains were actually measured. For instance, students on an English phonetics course found ChatGPT useful for grasping concepts and staying involved in learning tasks, but the study did not test their real learning progress or pronunciation performance (Aldamen et al., 2026).

Similar views came from India, where EFL learners saw ChatGPT as helping with their writing, saving time, and keeping them motivated, though they also worried about relying on it too much (Khan et al., 2025). Students at an Iranian university similarly felt the tool could help with vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, practice and learning matched to their own needs (Rezai et al., 2024). These accounts suggest GenAI could support language growth, but its real effect stays uncertain until learners' own reports are separated from gains confirmed by tests or controlled experiments.

D. RQ4. GenAI and learners' language skills and engagement

Generative AI influences learners by giving them more chances to practise English, receive immediate support, and take part in interactive learning, and it appears to raise motivation, confidence, and autonomy. AI-supported karaoke, adapted lyrics, transcripts, and vocabulary activities encouraged participation and gave learners opportunities to practise listening, speaking, pronunciation, and vocabulary, although these gains were observed by teachers rather than tested (Yeh, 2024).

Learners also reported greater motivation, confidence, and engagement, along with a more comfortable emotional experience when practising English with AI (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2025). In a Malaysian university, students described ChatGPT as supporting their learning, while also pointing to challenges such as unreliable answers (Annamalai et al., 2026). Even so, the impact on engagement and confidence is clearer than the impact on language proficiency, since perceived engagement does not necessarily mean measurable gains, and these effects vary with context and learner.

E. Pedagogical Implications

Based on these results, GenAI is better seen as an extra support that works alongside teacher-guided instruction rather than replacing the teacher. Since AI output can be inaccurate, teachers need to check generated lesson plans, materials, and feedback for accuracy and suitability before using them in class. Because AI challenges traditional assessment, teachers should redesign tasks to rely more on in-class writing and oral performance, which also helps protect academic integrity. Teacher education programmes and institutions should provide ongoing training so that teachers can write good prompts, judge whether AI output is reliable, and use it responsibly, as the depth of integration depends largely on teachers' confidence and preparation. Finally, teachers should guide learners to use AI critically, so that its support for practice and motivation does not turn into overdependence.

VII. CONCLUSION

Across the 28 reviewed studies, one pattern stands out: how GenAI is used in English classrooms has been described in far more detail than what learners actually gain from it. Most of the available evidence rests on interviews, surveys and self-reports from small groups, usually within a single institution or country, so the claims about improved skills remain tentative. The review itself has boundaries that readers should keep in mind. Only English-language journal papers that had passed peer review and appeared in 2024-2026 were included, and the search was confined to four databases. Books, theses, conference papers and work in other languages were left out, which means some classroom practices, especially from under-researched regions, may not be represented here.

Several directions follow for future work. First, studies that track the same learners over a full term or academic year, and that compare GenAI-supported classes with conventional ones using pre- and post-tests, would show whether the reported gains in writing, vocabulary and pronunciation are real and lasting. Second, little is known about speaking and listening, or about how

learners of different ages and proficiency levels respond to the same tool. Third, researchers could test whether structured teacher training changes the way teachers use AI, instead of only recording their beliefs. Fourth, more work is needed on learner overdependence and on assessment formats that stay fair when AI is available. Finally, wider coverage of contexts such as Indian classrooms, together with grey literature and non-English studies, would give a more balanced picture of the field.

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