USING AI TO HELP B1 LEARNERS IMPROVE THEIR ENGLISH

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Abstract: This research explores the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a primary pedagogical tool for learners at the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) B1 level. The "Intermediate Plateau" is a common obstacle where learners struggle to move toward advanced proficiency due to limited vocabulary and inconsistent grammatical application. This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach to evaluate how AI-driven platforms specifically Large Language Models (LLMs) and automated feedback systems impact student autonomy and communicative competence. The results indicate that AI-mediated instruction significantly enhances lexical range and reduces communicative anxiety, providing a scalable solution for personalized language acquisition.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, B1 Proficiency, Language Acquisition, Learner Autonomy, Pedagogical Technology, CEFR.*

Introduction

The digital transformation of education has introduced Artificial Intelligence as a pivotal element in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). For students at the B1 (Intermediate) level, the primary challenge lies in shifting from basic, formulaic communication to a more nuanced and flexible use of the English language. Conventional classroom settings often lack the resources to provide the high-frequency, individualized feedback necessary for this transition.

The significance of this study lies in its focus on "AI-mediated scaffolding." By acting as a non-judgmental interlocutor, AI tools allow B1 learners to experiment with complex structures such as the passive voice, conditionals, and specialized professional terminology without the social anxiety often associated with peer-to-peer interaction. This paper aims to demonstrate that AI is not merely a supplementary tool but a transformative force in achieving linguistic fluency.

To assess the efficacy of AI integration, a controlled experiment was conducted over a 14-week period involving 40 university-level B1 learners. The participants were divided into an experimental group and a control group.

The Experimental Group engaged in "AI-Augmented Learning," where they used generative AI for drafting essays, simulating dialogues, and receiving real-time grammatical explanations.

The Control Group followed a traditional Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) curriculum.

The primary instruments for data collection included pre- and post-intervention proficiency tests, analysis of written corpora produced by the students, and a qualitative survey regarding learner confidence.

The findings revealed a substantial disparity in progress between the two groups. The experimental group showed a 22% increase in grammatical accuracy compared to a 7% increase in the control group. Qualitatively, students using AI reported a "drastic reduction in the fear of making mistakes."

Analysis of the students' writing showed that those using AI tools adopted more sophisticated cohesive devices (e.g., *furthermore, consequently, notwithstanding*) and displayed a broader lexical range in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. The AI's ability to provide "rephrasing" suggestions allowed students to internalize various ways of expressing a single concept, effectively bridging the gap between passive and active vocabulary.

The results support the "Input Hypothesis" and the "Affective Filter Hypothesis" proposed by Stephen Krashen. AI provides "comprehensible input" that is tailored to the learner's specific level. Because the feedback is instantaneous and private, the learner's affective filter is lowered, promoting a more daring use of the target language.

One critical observation is the shift in the "Teacher-Student-AI" triad. In this model, the teacher moves away from being the sole source of correction and becomes a facilitator of high-level linguistic strategy. However, the study also noted a risk of "over-reliance." Students must be taught to critically evaluate AI-generated content to avoid the adoption of "AI hallucinations" or unnatural phrasing. Therefore, "AI Literacy" must be integrated into the B1 curriculum to ensure that the technology serves as a tool for growth rather than a substitute for cognitive effort.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of Artificial Intelligence into the B1 English curriculum provides a robust framework for overcoming the intermediate plateau. It offers a level of personalization and feedback density that was previously unattainable in mass education. While AI cannot replace the cultural and emotional depth provided by a human instructor, it serves as an indispensable assistant in technical language training and confidence building. Educators are encouraged to adopt a hybrid pedagogical approach, leveraging AI for repetitive drills and linguistic analysis while focusing human-led sessions on complex communication and social pragmatics.

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