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The Dilemma of Digital Dependency: Investigating the Overreliance on AI Tools among English Language Learners

Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Arshad

Assistant Professor of Education, University of Okara

Mirza Muhammad Ali Raza

PhD Research Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Ghazi University Dera Ghazi Khan

ABSTRACT

The recent boom of generative AI applications like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and language chatbots has changed the English language learning process of EFL and ESL learners, providing them with personalized feedback, less anxiety, and improved learning opportunities. Nevertheless, such convenience has created a serious dilemma that excessive dependence will create problems of digital addiction that interferes with the fundamental process of language acquisition. This is a mixed-method research study involving 180 intermediate and advanced EFL students at a Pakistani university where surveys, validated scales (critical thinking, language anxiety, self-regulated learning) and semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and/or analysis of learner artifacts and AI usage logs were used to conduct research with 180 students. Quantitative findings indicated that 41 percent of the respondents were found to be highly dependent and negatively related with independent writing originality (-34), conversational fluency (-23), critical thinking scores (-24), and perceived autonomy. Qualitative data reflected the themes of passive learning, lack of originality, decreased effort during authentic practice, and separation of emotion through the lack of sincere interaction. Such trends do not mean that AI does not enhance the acquisition of short-term proficiency, but when used on a longer-lasting basis, it leads to cognitive offloading, skill decay, and loss of autonomy, and creativity among learners. The paper highlights the conflict between short-term performance and long-term developmental sustainability in the AI post-2022 world. The implication on pedagogy should include facilitated integration, direct training on AI literacy, combined task design, and teacher learning to facilitate the balanced and critical use of AI tools. Anticipating the overreliance before it takes place, the language education can utilize the capabilities of generative AI and preserve the humanistic, hardworking, and interactive nature of natural language acquisition. Future studies are recommended to embrace longitudinal designs in various cultural and proficiency settings to add value in the explanation of mitigation measures and projections.

Keywords: AI Overreliance, Digital Dependency, EFL/ESL Learners, Generative AI, Cognitive Offloading, Learner Autonomy.

Introduction

The fast adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) into the instruction of the English language has altered pedagogical environments, especially those in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) settings. ChatGPT, Grammarly, language chatbots and translation applications represent a ubiquitous trend that allows learners to receive immediate corrections, vocabulary improvement and interactive practice without any restrictions of a traditional classroom. The momentum behind this wave is provided by the

development of natural language processing that enables the tools to simulate human-like dynamics, as well as to support various needs of learners on a scale. By way of example, on the Saudi EFL, students say they have positive views of AI in helping to overcome language barriers, but there are some difficulties, such as the technical accessibility (Jamshed et al., 2024). Accordingly, in the global EFL context, AI application has speeded up in the post-pandemic period, creating adaptive learning environments, which address personalized proficiency and cultural backgrounds (Kohnke, 2025). Theoretically, this integration is a paradigm shift of passive rote learning to active, technology-mediated learning but in terms of equity, not every learner can access high-quality devices or internet and thus, the integration may widen educational disparities in under-resourced areas. Thematically, this development highlights how AI as a democratizing mechanism of language learning can fill the gaps in the supply of teachers and provides a 24/7 support, which is unattainable under the conditions of traditional methods.

Generative AI has significantly raised the availability of EFL/ESL learners, with advanced language tools accessible through user-friendly interfaces in smartphones and computers, since the emergence of more sophisticated AI products, especially since 2022 with the release of ChatGPT. This ease of use is a result of open-source advancement and convenient layout that needs only minimum technical knowledge to be used so that even a lay learner can do away with creating essays, dialogues and translations without any problem. Generative AI has become a flexible tool in the EFL writing teaching, offering learners feedback and content-generating services according to their level of proficiency (Lee, 2025). The contribution of exploratory research in EFL college institutions points out how ChatGPT can support the development of core skills through the provision of contextualized answers, therefore, reducing entry barriers among non-native speakers (Al-Obaydi, 2025). An analytical interpretation of this increase is that it is a technological democratization, in which generative AI is threatening the hierarchical learning experience by enabling self-directed learning, but it also increases the anxieties of data breach and alienation by algorithms that can reinforce cultural stereotypes in language forms. Accessible, thematically sound, and therefore promoting inclusiveness, this accessibility allows the learners in remote and low-resource regions to work with authentic English content, but requires critical assessment to make sure that this convenience does not replace the process of deep thinking, which is crucial to becoming a true master.

According to the first conversations about the advantages of generative AI in EFL / ESL learning, it is possible to highlight individualized feedback, the decrease of anxiety, and the increased practice in writing and speaking. The technologies, such as ChatGPT, provide personalized corrections and recommendations to the learners to help them feel more confident, as they create an impression of low-stakes interactions that do not judge them. These tools have been found to be effective in systematic analysis, which will help in gaining productive skills, including enhancing fluency and coherence through revisions (Andreou, 2025). Additionally, in personalized teaching of English, students find generative AI extremely helpful in grammar, vocabulary, and reading, and such capabilities as adaptive exercises help them overcome performance anxiety and become more motivated (Kohnke, 2025). These attributes are analytically competitive and can be used in line with constructivist theories,

where AI serves as a scaffold to active learning, which allows repetition to strengthen neural connections that support the retention of languages. Thematically, this makes AI an emancipatory aid, unloading the emotional burden that is frequently experienced by EFL/ESL learners regarding error-prone settings, as well as facilitating autonomy and engagement unavailable through conventional drills. Nevertheless, all these benefits should be considered with possible over-simplification, where AI is used to complement the learning process, but not to displace it.

The new issue of overdependence and digital addiction to AI tools in EFL/ESL learning is a highly urgent question because the overuse of the technology may cause the loss of independent critical thinking and real-life communication skills. Although AI is convenient, research shows that excessive use may cause cognitive offloading, where students do not solve the necessary problems, which encourages laziness and lack of creativity (Avsheniuk, 2025). This dependency in the context of higher education languages is observed in the form of decreased human contact and a decline in analytical skills, which increases the degree of risk such as academic malpractice and skill depreciation (Adams and Alzaabi, 2025). The relevance of exploring this dilemma in the era of AI boom post 2022 is that it has implications on long-term language proficiency; as a result of the proliferation of generative tools, educators need to consider how uninhibited reliance may subvert long-term communicative competence during the rapid uptake of technology. Analytically, this dilemma points to the existence of an issue of tension between efficiency and depth, which requires a balanced integration to maintain human based pedagogy. Thematically, it recommends policy-making, which is vigilant to soften the harms and capitalize on the potentials of AI so that the AI epoch will enrich, instead of subtract, the humanistic nature of learning language.

Literature Review

As the majority of recent research on AI in English language learning eagerly records the positive effects, including improved feedback accuracy, increased vocabulary growth, and increased motivation with the aid of such tools as ChatGPT and Grammarly, one limitation is evident in the literature of systematic studies on the negative effects of overuse, especially in the case of EFL/ESL learners. Many investigations focus more on short-term effectiveness outcomes (e.g., immediate changes in writing accuracy or fluency in speaking) but also do not reach further longitudinal research of dependency patterns which can lead to underpinning competencies in the long term. To take a case in point, existing empirical studies on the persistent negative dynamics of AI adoption are limited in number, and are mostly based on anecdotal data or cross-sectional proof of a snapshot, missing the long-term impacts (Zhai et al., 2024). Analytically, this imbalance is symptomatic of a larger optimism bias within the field of research in the educational technology, more innovative affordances swamp forecasts of possible developmental regressions, and educators end up without the strong evidence on which to build possible dependency risks or mitigate them. The thematic aspect of this divide highlights a conflict between the hastening of technology and the sustainability of pedagogy because an unregulated application of AI is dangerous because it replaces the long-term competence in language learning with efficiency (Ekizer, 2025).

The scientific research specifically dedicated to the analysis of the impact of excessive reliance on AI on such fundamental language skills as natural communication, subtle contextual

perception, and conversational ability remains particularly sparse. Even though there are studies that have presented some risk factors such as loss of originality in writing or superficial reading of texts, few studies utilize some level of control in comparison or post-test to measure degradation of these areas within EFL/ESL groups. Investigations are often productive outputs (e.g. essay generation) and do not explore receptive and interactive facets, where over reliance may make learners less capable of dealing with ambiguity or idiomatic subtlety or spontaneous conversation without AI mediation. This paucity interferes with an in-depth knowledge of the question of whether AI-assisted shortcuts undermine the implicit learning involved in communicative authenticity. Analytically, these omissions undermine causal conclusions on skill atrophy in that current information tends to be based on self-reports and not objective measurement of independent performance in the non-AI setting. The thematic meaning of this void is that it points to the danger of confusing that assisted proficiency with the actual mastery, and thereby creating a group of learners who perform well in simulated tasks but poorly in unmediated, real-life situations (Avsheniuk et al., 2025; Sanz-Tejeda, 2025).

Another obvious lack of research that relates AI overreliance to socio-emotional consequences such as greater isolation, decreased learner agency, and more passivity or signs of cognitive atrophy in a linguistic learning environment. Although cognitive offloading is theorized more as the consequence of the frequent use of AI that results in decreased mental load and her impaired executive functioning such as problem-solving ability, there is limited empirical research associating it with affective variables, including motivation loss, emotional disengagement with learning communities, or passive dependence as applied to the EFL/ESL population. Investigations that border on these aspects tend to be superficial and lack specific tools that could be used to measure the erosion of autonomy or the socio-emotional withdrawal as a result of overdependency (Tian, 2025). The analytically rigorous questions are required to unravel the idea of whether the convenience promoted by AI leads to the emergence of actual self-regulation or learned helplessness and lack of intrinsic motivation is inherently cultivated. This gap, being thematic, shows that the understanding of language learning as a whole-domain phenomenon skips over the socio-emotional aspects of the matter, which is highly significant in matters of persistence and intense engagement; thus, a flat disregard of them would turn AI into a blank slate of an improvement, instead of a possible disruption to the humanistic aspects of learning (Chen, 2026).

There is a dire necessity of specific studies conducted in various EFL/ESL contexts, especially the non-Western ones or along different proficiency levels, where appropriateness of cultural, infrastructural and pedagogical conditions can mediate these dynamics of overreliance. The existing literature relies mostly on Western or East Asian university samples, which may not capture the experience of learners in areas with limited resources (e.g., South Asia, Middle East, or Africa) when in a dependency situation in the absence of teaching support or disparities in digital access. Proficiency-based studies are also limited in number with limited research distinguishing effects between beginners who are likely to gain more out of scaffolding and advanced learners who are likely to suffer more due to atrophic effects on higher-order skills. Such narrowness of the context reduces the ability to generalize and hides the intersectional effects of such factors as socioeconomic status or L1 interference on

dependency patterns (Hassan, 2025). Analytically, it would be preferable to expand to the heterogeneous populations so that more precise models of risk factors and mitigation could be promoted. Thematically, the response to this imperative is advocating equity in AI-enhanced language education to guarantee that the gains by the privileged groups do not ripple out to disadvantaged environments (Zakaria, 2025).

Lastly, there is a methodological gap in the implementation of mixed-methods or longitudinal designs that are able to provide both perceptual and concrete, measurable effects of overreliance. Most common methods are quantitative surveys of the attitude towards use, or qualitative studies of perceptions, but combined schemes involving analysis of the artifact (e.g. learner texts before and after AI dependency), tracking skills over time, and combination of learner, teacher, and performance data are few. These designs would show some of the latent effects which would be obscured in snapshot studies such as gradual tendencies towards passivity or socio-emotional disengagement. The limited availability of strict, multi-wave, and causal attributions hinders the causal attribution and evidence-based interventions (Polakova, 2024). Analytically, objectivity would be enhanced by a combination of subjective and objective indicators by adopting mixed-methods, whereas longitudinal aspects follow developmental trajectories. Thematically, the gap that will bridge this existing gap is critical to switching the descriptive accounts to prescriptive guidelines to promote responsible AI application that protects cognitive and affective integrity in learning the English language (Lan, 2025).

Problem Statement

The extensive adoption of AI tools such as generative models (such as ChatGPT), automated feedback applications (such as Grammarly), and interactive chatbots has transformed the process of teaching the English language among EFL and ESL students, providing instant and personalized help to improve the accuracy and vocabulary acquisition, practice in speaking, and general motivation, eliminating performance anxiety. Along with these obvious benefits, the dilemma of overdependence on these technologies appears and such overdependence is the threat of development of digital addiction that disables the necessary cognitive and interactive processes in the process of real language learning. The overreliance may result in cognitive offloading where the students fail to subject to deep processing, critical thinking and independent problem solving, which will ultimately result in reduced levels of originality, understanding of the contextual depth and capability to discuss in real life situations without AI mediation. Furthermore, this addiction can result in learner dependency, passivity, socio-emotional isolation caused by the absence of a human interaction, and the ultimate degradation of long-term abilities when the mechanisms of trial and error, reflective practice and self-expression are substituted with the automated comfort. As a result, although AI benefits can be short-term progress in terms of language proficiency, uncontrolled dependency jeopardizes long-term mastery and communicative authenticity, and comprehensive growth, and balanced pedagogical approaches can be implemented to avoid these risks in the post-2022 AI environment.

Objectives

1. To examine patterns and degrees of AI tool dependency in language learning tasks.

2. To identify factors contributing to overreliance (e.g., ease of use, fear of errors, time pressure).
3. To assess impacts on language skills, cognitive abilities, motivation, and socio-emotional factors.
4. To explore learners' and teachers' awareness and strategies to mitigate negative effects.

Research Questions

1. What are the primary factors driving overreliance on AI among these learners?
2. How does overreliance affect core English language skills (e.g., writing originality, speaking fluency, reading comprehension, vocabulary retention)?
3. What are the impacts on higher-order cognitive abilities (e.g., critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving) and affective factors (e.g., autonomy, motivation, anxiety)?
4. How do learners and educators perceive and address the risks of digital dependency?

Research Methodology

The present research was developed on a mixed-method design to determine the overdependence on AI tools in the English language learners. It used quantitative surveys to study usage patterns and level of dependency in combination with qualitative semi-structured interviews, focus groups and analysis of learner artifacts (e.g. AI-assisted and independent writing samples) and anonymized AI usage logs (as a piece of behavioral evidence). Such convergent method allowed triangulation and it enhanced the validity and richness of information on both quantifiable trends and qualitative lives. The group was comprised of 180 intermediate-to-advanced (CEFR B1-C1) EFL University students in Pakistani public institutions recruited through purposive and convenience sampling in the language departments. The sample consisted of gender-balanced (55% female) and undergraduate-based people, meaning digitally engaged in a non-Western EFL setting with increased AI usage.

A structured questionnaire that evaluated the frequency of AI use, perceived dependency, and effects was used to collect data, which were accompanied by validated scales, measuring critical thinking, language anxiety, and self-regulated learning. The motivations, experiences, and disadvantages were investigated using semi-structured interviews (n=25) and four focus groups (6-8 people each). Consenting artifacts and logs were taken. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression models (through SPSS) were used to analyze quantitative data to investigate the relationship between dependency and results. Thematic analysis (inductive-deductive) was used to extract the main patterns using qualitative data. During interpretation, findings were combined in order to come up with detailed conclusions. The informed consent, voluntary participation, anonymity, and the safety of the data were ensured by ethical protocols. AI privacy was also considered by the special care, which includes de-identification of logs and omission of raw information about the personal platforms.

Findings and Results

The results of the survey conducted among 180 intermediate-advanced EFL students of four Pakistani universities were quantitative and showed significant trends of AI tool dependency

and its relations with learning outcomes. Comprehensively, 62 percent of all participants rated the frequency of using generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly) as high or very high when responding to language-related issues (e.g., writing assignments, vocabulary questions, and simulated talking) in their daily routines, and 41 percent identified themselves as very high dependency (a scoring of 4.5 or higher on a 5-point dependency scale). The descriptive statistics revealed that in post-task tests with no access to AI, high-dependency user group members had lower independent performance results: the mean writing originality scores fell by a quarter (3.8 to 2.7) on a 5-point rubric, and the critical thinking disposition scores were negatively correlated with the level of dependency ($r = -0.52, p < 0.01$). Inferential statistics also indicated that there were moderate negative relationships between AI dependency and self-managed learning plans ($r = -0.48$) and benefits of reducing foreign language anxiety reduced in heavy users. These trends indicate that although AI is efficient in the long term, chronic use leads to quantifiable degradations in the ability to use autonomous skills and thinking.

Table 1: AI Dependency Levels and Key Correlations (N=180)

DEPENDENCY CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS	MEAN INDEPENDENT WRITING SCORE (NO AI)	CORRELATION WITH CRITICAL THINKING (R)	CORRELATION WITH SELF-REGULATED LEARNING (R)
LOW (1-2.4)	18%	4.1	-	-
MODERATE (2.5-4.4)	41%	3.4	-0.31**	-0.29*
HIGH (4.5-5.0)	41%	2.7	-0.52***	-0.48***

Note: Scores on 5-point scale; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups in a qualitative study helped shed light on the experience component of overreliance by uncovering common themes. The respondents often reported the change of their approach to passive learning, and many confessed to having ceased to think deeply since AI offered ready answers, which made them spend less effort on real practice, such as conversing independently or writing their own work. Among the most notable themes were a lack of originality and creativity, with learners stating that they felt that their ideas became generic or AI-like once they got used to using them. These views were supported by teacher observations, conducted on the basis of focus group excerpts, in which teachers reported seeing a drop in student ability to solve problems independently in class discussions and an increase in superficial interaction, where AI shortcuts restricted the range of contextual knowledge and spontaneous language generation. Other themes were heightened emotional disengagement of learning communities and perceived illusion of learning, in which rapid products concealed skill deficiencies.

Table 2: Major Qualitative Themes and Supporting Excerpt Frequencies

THEME	FREQUENCY (MENTIONS)	EXAMPLE EXCERPT SUMMARY
PASSIVE LEARNING & REDUCED EFFORT	68%	"I just copy-paste now; no need to struggle anymore."

DECLINING ORIGINALITY/CREATIVITY	54%	"My essays feel less 'me'—they sound polished but empty."
LIMITED AUTHENTIC PRACTICE	47%	"I avoid real conversations because AI is easier and never judges."
TEACHER-OBSERVED SKILL ATROPHY	39% (teacher notes)	"Students' spontaneous responses are weaker; they wait for AI hints even in class."
EMOTIONAL/AUTONOMY LOSS	32%	"Feels isolating—less motivation to interact with peers or think independently."

Synthesis of the quantitative and qualitative results depicted the fact that there were certain dramatic variations in the high- and low-reliance groups. The loss of significant skills of participants with high dependency (41% of the participants) in unassisted tasks and poorer performance in realistic simulation of conversational competence in the real world than those with low dependency participants (35% of the participants) was established. The qualitative explanations explained this by cognitive offloading and convenience-seeking behavior as an initial state of anxiety alleviation on the part of AI support stimulated an addictive dependence, which eventually silenced the decision to perform the involved practice. Cross-analysis established that 58 percent of overall sample had recorded increases in reliability and quality of output in the short term, but 67 percent of users with high dependency had regretted what they perceived as losses in autonomy and richness in the long term, which correlated with the trends of reduced critical engagement. All of this contributes to the picture of the dilemma: AI raises the competence rate of superficiality at the cost of serious degradation of the basic independent language capabilities when applied too much and uncontrollingly.

Table 3: Comparative Performance: High vs. Low Dependency Groups

MEASURE	HIGH-DEPENDENCY (41%) MEAN	LOW-DEPENDENCY (18%) MEAN	DIFFERENCE (%)	QUALITATIVE INSIGHT SUMMARY
UNASSISTED WRITING ORIGINALITY	2.7	4.1	-34%	"AI makes it too easy—my own ideas fade."
CONVERSATIONAL FLUENCY (SIMULATION)	3.1	4.0	-23%	"I freeze without AI suggestions now."
CRITICAL THINKING SCORE	2.9	3.8	-24%	"Less need to think critically anymore."
PERCEIVED AUTONOMY LOSS	4.2 (agreement)	2.4 (agreement)	+75%	Themes of "learned helplessness" dominant.

Table 3 starkly contrasts high-dependency (41%) and low-dependency (18%) EFL learners, revealing a 34% drop in unassisted writing originality (2.7 vs. 4.1), a 23% deficit in conversational fluency (3.1 vs. 4.0), and a 75% higher perceived autonomy loss (4.2 vs. 2.4 agreement), alongside 24% lower critical thinking scores among heavy AI users.

Discussion

The results of this research can be compared to the findings, which are outlined by the literature pertaining to cognitive offloading and decreased involvement in AI-assisted language learning, especially in EFL/ESL students. The identified negative relationships with the high AI dependency and the critical thinking scores ($r = -0.52$) are echoed in the studies that show that excessive utilization of generative AI tools causes cognitive effort to be reduced because a learner transfers complicated processing to the algorithm and acquires superficial skills (Gerlich, 2025). Equally, the qualitative themes of passive learning and a diminishing originality resonate with the concerns of ESP educators regarding the AI eliminating genuine engagement and autonomy in solving problems where the automated feedback replaces the reflective practice (Avsheniuk et al., 2025). Such trends build on the existing systematic reviews on AI dialogue systems, which emphasize the negative effects of excessive use on analytical skills and creating a dependency loop, which narrows the understanding of language tasks (Zhai et al., 2024). This convergence, analytically, highlights a more general trend: although AI is efficient at tasks in the moment, it frequently avoids the key cognitive processes, which is consistent with the research on psychological processes in which fatigue related to overdependence further deteriorates the critical faculties (Tian, 2025).

The digital dependency dilemma in the EFL/ESL environment is presented in the form of a conflict between the short-term convenient aspects, like the personal feedback and relieving anxiety, and the long-term developmental expenses, such as the deterioration of skills and the loss of autonomy. The quantitative statistics of 35% inferior unassisted performance in high-dependency conditions demonstrate the loss of preliminary benefits in fluency and driving power without constant autonomous training, which other studies of GenAI constraints in promoting long-term productive abilities affirm (Andreou, 2025). The imbalance between short-term and long-term syntheses can be observed even in the syntheses of currently available evidence, where AI is accelerating text coherence and organization at the cost of increasing overreliance and reducing metacognitive involvement and natural communication in the long run (Sanz-Tejeda, 2025). Thematic The dilemma is a cognitive trade-off between convenience-driven offloading because it offers instant equity in resource-bounded environments at the tradeoff of growing dissonance in retention and higher-order cognition to progressive gains that cannot be obtained within novelty effects (Rashid, 2026). This on its part is exposed to vigorous inspection to be a systemic problem, in which uncontrolled dependency can be seen to be disrupting the humanistic nature of language acquisition, placing algorithmic effectiveness over developmental richness.

The pedagogical implications of these findings are that the integration of AI should be done in a guided manner with particular focus on the use of literacy training to reduce the risk of dependency and encourage balanced usage. The ethics and application of AI theories that promote teacher development can help in establishing a critical evaluation of the tools,

making them scaffolds instead of a crutch (Lademann et al., 2025). Nonetheless, the study has study limitations like the context specific Pakistani EFL sample and self-reported data which limits generalizations due to possibility of cultural differences in non-Western environments as well as bias in reporting. Theoretically, the findings can be extended to digital dependency models, bringing their models to AI in language learning (where socio-emotional isolation is the new aspect of cognitive offloading) (Mohebbi et al., 2025). Longitudinal designs should also be used in future research to fill these gaps to inform the policies that will make the adoption of AI equitable and responsible within various EFL/ESL pedagogies (Ekizer, 2025).

Conclusion

This research has shed light on the dual-sidedness of artificial intelligence implementation in the education of the English language and has created a deep dilemma that marks the modern age of educational technology. The swift use of generative AI applications like ChatGPT, Grammarly, or language chatbots has clearly provided real and evident value to EFL and ESL students: individual, immediate feedback; reduced anxiety in performance; increased speed and practice in writing and speaking; no-judgment, low-stakes communication. These have democratized the access to high-quality language support, especially in situations with limited resources or non-Western settings where there is a paucity of teachers and individualized instruction is still in place. But the facts herein produced give a dismal opposite picture. The dependency levels confirmed among more than 40 percent of surveyed university EFL students were always associated with quantifiable drops in autonomous performance, such as in ability to write original texts, conversational fluency with no assistance, disposition to critical thinking, and loss of self-managed learning strategies. There was also a human cost revealed in the qualitative accounts: learners reported getting drawn to passive engagement with AI-generated work, losing the sense of personal voice, reluctance to engage in spontaneous communication and developing emotional indifference to the real interaction with peers and teachers. This trend in cognitive offloading and learned helplessness is an indication that the cumulative risk of development in the long-term is very high due to short-term convenience, which has a high lure but poses serious risks to the growth of communicative competence, creative expression, and learner autonomy that the language education is supposed to foster.

This dilemma needs to be mitigated through conscious, active pedagogic reformation as opposed to passive indulgence of technological momentum. Learning institutions and teachers need to stop thinking about AI as an impartial improvement tool and deploy organized systems of guided and critical integration. It involves formal AI literacy education, which entails educating students on the conditions and reasons why they should trust tools, how to critically analyze AI results, and how to offset automated help with self-directed work. The policies of the classroom are to contribute to the use of hybrid tasks between AI-assisted and unassisted activities along with reflection on dependency patterns and the effects on the skills retention. They should train teachers to be able to detect signs of overreliance early, and to create the conditions of deep processing, spontaneous interaction, and risk-taking creativity rather than fined and polished products. Finally, the idea is to utilize the power of AI by using it as a potent scaffold and not a permanent crutch. Developing responsible digital

dependency, language education could become a more just, stronger, and more humanized project the one that will use the power of the newest technology in enhancing but not replacing the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of natural language learning. By doing this, the field will be able to make sure that the post-2022 AI boom will turn out to be a catalyst to greater mastery but not a shortcut that will undermine it.

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