# Revolutionising ELT in India: Contextualising the Problems and Possibilities with AI

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**Abstract**

This narrative is an attempt to answer how converging AI with ELT can help solve issues of English Language Teaching (ELT) in India. In the context of ELT, challenges like language diversity, stagnant pedagogy, lack of resources, etc., can be addressed to create engaging pedagogies and personalised learning. The latter section discusses the potential problems in this process. Finally, the narrative concludes by inviting educators, learners and policymakers to embark on a collective endeavour to reshape India's future of education.

**Keywords:** English language teaching, ELT in India, ELT in difficult circumstances, artificial intelligence (AI), technology in teaching.

## Introduction

The advancement of the Internet significantly impacts the discourse of Language Teaching and Learning. It has also ushered in a new kind of necessity for English. Artificial Intelligence (AI) platforms like ChatGPT and Bard (now Gemini) are currently the most accessible and dynamic platforms for students and teachers. These platforms hold a significant position in the teaching field nowadays. In this study, my focus will be to analyse the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and how these platforms can influence the field.

This paper tries to dissect the problems that Indian students face while learning a new language and how much of it can be remedied with the advancement of new AI tools.

Graddol (2010) identifies three main drivers for English learning in India. These are "education (increasing demand for English-medium schools, widening access to higher education, incorporation of English training in vocational education); employment (many jobs in the organised sector now require good English skills); social mobility (English is seen as an access route to the middle classes and geographical mobility within India and beyond)" (p. 16). Considering these platforms' gradual increase in the number of users around the world, this study is relevant for the present. By analysing the multi-faceted roles of these platforms in teaching and learning, this study seeks to contribute to this vast discourse of English Language Teaching within the Indian context.

**Problems of ELT in India**

First, we will address a few problems regarding ELT in India, and then we will discuss the role of AI in tackling these situations. India has many cultures and background with hurdles in effective learning. Understanding and addressing these issues are important for a holistic approach towards solving the potential challenges.

***Diverse Languages***

India, with hundreds of recognised and non-recognised languages with their variations and a set of learners who speak different dialects. Educators in this landscape must support learner coming with their regional dialects and individual learning styles; this support is crucial for the overall development of learners.

***Stagnant Pedagogy***

Reliance on rote learning and memorisation as a pedagogical approach sabotages the dynamic nature of language acquisition. With the advancement of new methods, there is a growing necessity for embracing practical and application-based teaching methods to develop language skills.

***One Dimensional Exams***

The exams also focus on a limited view of language proficiency, which often misjudges practical language skills. A more comprehensive and diversified assessment should be encouraged to better understand students' learning.

***Lack of Resources***

The availability of resources across various educational institutes is

unequal. According to Chadha (2020),

> The key problem surrounding remote learning and online classes in the country is the issue of equitable access. Along with adequate penetration of internet and technology services, accessibility in this context also includes access to electronic devices such as computers and smartphones (Digital Divide, para 1).

A few educational institutes have access to language labs, but some struggle with the basics. Addressing and mending the gap is necessary regardless of the students' social and economic status.

**Possibilities with AI**

***Linguistic Diversity***

As discussed earlier, India has a wide range of learners from different backgrounds, linguistic styles, and dialects. So, the traditional teaching method sometimes cannot meet every student's needs. To address this issue, AI can be a powerful tool for personalised learning. For example, ChatGPT offers a voice assistant to interact with and practise speaking 50+ supported languages, including Indian languages such as Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, etc. ChatGPT does not negate the traditional method of peer interactions which is important for practising and learning. The AI tools, however, work as a facilitator to make the learning process more engaging, especially for students from rural areas who do not have much foreign language interaction at home.

In the traditional method, teaching has a procrustean stance. AI can change dynamically according to students' needs while also assisting throughout the process of learning. Bajaj and Bose note,

> Many people know English language and grammar very well; however, pronunciation of the language may not be perfect. In this situation, a personal tutor is time taking and may not be affordable too. Here technology can help us in providing a solution of the problem and act as tutor for the competency of better language and pronunciation (Bajaj & Bose, 2020, p. 129).

Personalised feedback is an important aspect in learning. With the help of AI, students can measure their accuracy, pronunciation and grammatical structures in real-time. This continuous feedback and reinforcement system motivates the student in an interactive way.

Fitria (2021) explains, "It (AI) is the intelligence that is predicted by the machine through the natural intelligence displayed by humans. In other words, AI is about adding human intelligence to the machine for task execution" (Fitria, 2021, p. 213). Natural Language Processing (NLP) algorithms can incorporate regional and local linguistic nuances and subtleties. Jing discusses that "In Japanese teaching, natural language processing technology has realised functions such as machine translation, voice navigation, intelligent robot chat, composition correction, allowing Japanese learners to exchange voices with computers and perform some Japanese proficiency tests and practices" (Jing, 2020, p. 1). These algorithms help students learn and ensure a smooth transition to a new language study. They also assist in identifying the similarities between the target language and the speaker's language, creating a harmonious balance and encouraging the students to adapt to a new language. These platforms support India's cultural diversity by acknowledging and preserving the diverse languages through multilingual translations, voice assistance in regional languages, content preservation through archived texts, and reducing digital divide. Students become confident and begin to see their native language as a valuable part of their identity. Thus, AI serves as a bridge between languages, facilitating smooth interaction and overcoming linguistic and cultural boundaries.

***Creating an Engaging Pedagogy***

The Indian curriculum mainly uses rote learning and memorisation which hinders practical language skills. So, ELT needs to keep up with students' requirements.

With the modern-day technology of AI, a practical solution can be integrated into the learning process. Traditional methods often fail to create an immersive effect; AI, however, can be used in this situation in the form of Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR). AR, with the help of AI, can digitally give students information about their surroundings in their target language. VR, on the other hand, transports the learners to a simulated environment where they learn language in various scenarios like meetings and presentations. These platforms provide interactive opportunities that make complex ideas easier to understand. For example, platforms like Mondly VR simulate scenarios such as ordering at a restaurant or booking a hotel, enabling learners to develop practical communication skills. Using these technologies, the emerging concept of Metaverse will bring a new evolution in teaching

pedagogy where students learn, communicate and collaborate.

The Gamification of the learning materials will also be beneficial in creating an engaging environment. It helps motivate the students and encourages active participation, offering them a competitive, entertaining and effective approach. The use of AI in creating a new learning method will focus more on direct engagement with the language, creating a friendly environment throughout the process.

***Restructuring the Examination***

Traditional evaluation methods often cannot measure the multidimensional skills of learners, prioritising memorisation over practical skills. Integration of AI and the creation of a new type of evaluation can be considered. Let us take an example of the popular language learning application Duolingo. At first, the app gives some basic questions to the learners, and then, gradually, the difficulty increases. Throughout the process, the algorithms analyse each response to determine accuracy and confidence through the time taken and the number of errors to assign the learners a knowledge level. According to this level, random questions are chosen from the database, where correct answers lead to more difficult questions and incorrect answers to easier ones. At the end of the evaluation, a final score is prepared, and feedback is given for improvement. Through this process, the app efficiently and precisely evaluates and engages the learners to make their learning journey easy.

One of the key hindrances in language learning is prompt feedback. AI, through its advanced algorithms, can instantly analyse written or spoken responses, giving suggestions, corrections and explanations. This accelerates the learning process and enhances vocabulary. These evaluation systems are adaptive and based on individual students' ability, and can level up or down these assessments based on their proficiency.

An AI-based scoring system is also encouraged for an objective performance report. These advanced algorithms provide a performance report about the strengths and weaknesses. These detailed reports help learners continuously measure and rectify their mistakes and enhance their skills. These evaluation practices, supported by machines and AI, are free from bias and objective in nature. Adhering to a particular criterion promotes a fair and impartial evaluation of all students.

*Lack of Resources*

India, as a vast region with unequal access to quality education, has difficulty dispersing resources. AI can solve this by providing standardised and equal content to all learners irrespective of their geographic and economic locations.

Well-funded urban schools have access to a plethora of different materials and high-class multimedia activities, but other schools in rural areas might only get a traditional textbook. The quality of learning is compromised because of a lack of materials, where one learner learns through different multimedia platforms and others might use a textbook. A standardised system, ensures quality education regardless of students' social, economic and geographic backgrounds. AI provides learners with a vast repository of materials and different ways to consume them as per their requirements; it provides learners with interactive modules, ensuring that the lack of resources does not limit their learning experience. AI becomes a vehicle in the decentralisation of education by curtailing the distance and eliminating the constraints of resource availability through the Internet and based on proficiency.

**Limitations in Integrating AI and ELT**

While introducing AI in ELT holds great promises, it has a few limiting factors too.

- Learners from regions with limited access to digital mediums may find it difficult at first to adapt to a new system of learning. This digital illiteracy among learners can hinder the process of learning. National Education Policy 2020 is aimed at "carefully designed and appropriately scaled pilot studies to determine how the benefits of online/digital education can be reaped while addressing or mitigating the downsides" (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020, p. 58). However, this gap still poses a significant challenge and needs a collaborative approach between the government and teachers.
- Several applications are free to use, but charge money for specific features, their premium version, or after a particular time. Learners from lower income backgrounds may find it challenging to access all these features and applications; this process may exclude many students, creating a digital divide. This highlights the constant need for affordable AI solutions.

- Concerns about data security and privacy may arise, creating hesitancy among learners. Ensuring the security of this data and its guidelines are a critical step in this endeavour. These data tools primarily use user data to give feedback. So concerns about data security and privacy may arise creating a hesitancy among learners. Ensuring this data's security and guidelines is a very critical step in this endeavour.
- Lastly, the major concern is the financial challenges. Developing AI tools suitable for Indian learners requires a significant investment. Government schools, which serve a large proportion of students, often lack funding for such advanced technologies.

The government and private institutions have to collaborate to address these limitations. By investing in digital infrastructure and developing cost-effective AI platforms. With the government's policies and funding, learners in India will welcome a new future of learning powered by AI.

**Conclusion**

Schimdt and Strasser (2022) envisage the future of foreign language classrooms as,

> In 2040, the foreign language classroom will be an evidence-based blended learning environment with bring-your-own device solutions in all classrooms and subjects and high-speed Internet connections, as well as standardized content management systems and hybrid course books and learning materials that form the infrastructural backbone. (p. 179)

The modern-age teacher should be equipped with new-age learning materials for effective classroom teaching. Continuous professional development is crucial to meet the complex nature of ELT. This writing highlights that intermixing AI with this dynamic field of ELT holds a significant promise and can be used in reshaping the teaching of English.

However, we also discussed some significant problems that can obstruct this process. Still, through significant attempts by our teachers and policymakers, these obstructions can become new opportunities, democratising the field of learning.

Gouda and Sab note, "While digital or online education cannot replace classroom learning, it has some advantages. It allows flexible and personalized learning at the speed of the learner and one can continuously

augment and expand content through digital means"(Gouda & Sab, 2021, p. 67). In the grand space of English Language Teaching in India, where challenges and opportunities meet, AI offers a way for educators and learners. In conclusion, this narrative extends beyond the written words; it encourages educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to venture on a collective journey. A journey where the problems of ELT are not barriers but stepping stones towards a future where every learner's linguistic journey is enriched and empowered through the seamless integration of AI in the diverse landscape of India's future of learning.

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