



6th CELTI

Conference in English Language Teaching

AN INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

Decolonize English at the Age of
Artificial Intelligence: Rethinking
Language, Literature, and Pedagogy

Measuring the Impact of AI-Literacy on the Communicative Agency of EFL Students

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DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.24090/8x1pk789>

Pages:

104-112

Abstract: This study examines the impact of AI-literacy on the communicative agency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The research addresses the growing need to integrate artificial intelligence awareness into language learning to support students' active participation and confidence in communication. The objective of this study is to investigate how structured AI-literacy support influences students' ability to express ideas, make decisions, and engage in meaningful interaction. A quantitative approach is employed using a questionnaire as the primary instrument to collect data on students' perceptions and experiences after participating in AI-supported learning activities. The findings indicate that AI-literacy contributes positively to students' communicative agency by enhancing their confidence, autonomy, and strategic use of language in various contexts. Students demonstrate improved engagement and a greater willingness to participate in communicative activities. These results suggest that integrating AI-literacy into EFL instruction can be an effective strategy to foster more active and independent language learners.

Keywords: AI literacy; communicative agency; EFL students

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Introduction

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has significantly transformed the landscape of English language teaching and learning. AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and other generative language models are increasingly used by students to assist in writing, translation, idea generation, and academic communication (Wang, 2024). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, these technologies provide learners with immediate linguistic support and broader access to English resources (Song & Song, 2023). However, the increasing dependence on AI in academic tasks also raises pedagogical concerns regarding students' communicative independence, critical awareness, and ownership of language use (Cong-Lem et al., 2025; Tlili et al., 2023). Rather than functioning solely as supportive learning tools, AI systems may unintentionally position learners as passive recipients of machine-generated language, particularly when students rely heavily on AI outputs without reflective engagement (Liu et al., 2025; Moybeka et al., 2023).

Within the broader discourse of decolonizing English language education, this issue becomes increasingly significant. Decolonial perspectives in language pedagogy emphasize the importance of learner voice, agency, and the right of students to actively negotiate meaning rather than merely reproducing dominant linguistic norms (Canagarajah, 2022; Pennycook, 2021). Since many AI systems are predominantly trained on data reflecting Western-centric language conventions and communicative practices, excessive dependence on AI-generated language may reinforce linguistic dominance and

reduce opportunities for learners to develop authentic communicative identities (Aljović, 2025). Consequently, English language pedagogy in the AI era requires not only technological adaptation but also critical engagement that empowers students to maintain agency over their language production (Xiao & Zhi, 2023).

One concept that has gained increasing relevance in addressing this issue is AI literacy. AI literacy refers to learners' ability to understand, evaluate, and critically interact with AI technologies in meaningful and ethical ways (Long & Magerko, 2020). In educational contexts, AI literacy extends beyond technical ability and includes learners' awareness of algorithmic limitations, critical evaluation of AI-generated information, and strategic use of AI tools to support learning goals (Kasneci et al., 2023). Students with higher levels of AI literacy are expected to engage more consciously with AI systems rather than relying on them passively (Kong et al., 2023). Such learners may be better equipped to maintain control over their linguistic choices, critically assess AI-generated language, and use AI as a collaborative tool rather than a substitute for communication.

Closely related to AI literacy is the concept of communicative agency. Agency generally refers to an individual's capacity to act intentionally and make meaningful choices within social contexts (Ahearn, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2019). In language learning, communicative agency involves learners' confidence, initiative, self-expression, and sense of ownership in communication processes. Mercer (2012) further explains that learner agency is strongly associated with students' active participation and self-regulation in language learning environments. In AI-mediated communication, communicative agency becomes particularly important because learners are continuously negotiating between their own voice and machine-generated suggestions (Zhang et al., 2025). Students who lack communicative agency may become dependent on AI-generated responses, while those with stronger agency are more likely to critically adapt, personalize, and control the language they produce (Hossain et al., 2025).

Several previous studies have examined the integration of AI in English language learning, particularly focusing on learning outcomes, writing assistance, and technological acceptance (Xiao & Zhi, 2023). Research has shown that AI tools can improve language accuracy, efficiency, and learning accessibility (Song & Song, 2023; Wei, 2023). However, many existing studies primarily emphasize the functional benefits of AI while paying limited attention to students' psychological and communicative positioning within AI-mediated learning environments. Studies investigating learner agency in AI-assisted language learning remain relatively limited, especially in Indonesian EFL contexts. Furthermore, little attention has been given to how students' AI literacy may influence their communicative agency as future English educators. This gap is important because communicative agency can serve as a foundation for more authentic and performance-oriented language practices in the AI era.

Preliminary observations among students in the English Education Study Program at Ahmad Dahlan Islamic University indicate a growing tendency among students to rely heavily on AI tools when completing academic assignments. While these technologies provide practical assistance, students frequently demonstrate communication dependency, particularly in generating ideas, organizing arguments, and constructing English responses. In some cases, learners appear more confident in reproducing AI-generated language than expressing their own communicative intentions. This phenomenon suggests the need to investigate whether students' level of AI literacy influences their communicative agency in AI-mediated academic contexts.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the relationship between AI literacy and communicative agency among EFL students in the English Education Study Program at UIAD Sinjai. Employing a quantitative correlational design, the study investigates whether students with higher levels of AI literacy also demonstrate stronger communicative agency in English language use. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to current discussions on AI-integrated pedagogy, learner empowerment, and the development of more critical and agentive English language learning practices in the age of artificial intelligence.

Literature Review

AI Literacy in English Language Learning

The growing integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into education has transformed how students access, process, and produce knowledge. In English language learning, AI-powered tools such as

ChatGPT, Grammarly, and machine translation systems are increasingly used to support writing, communication, and idea development. Consequently, AI literacy has emerged as an essential competency for contemporary learners. Long and Magerko (2020) define AI literacy as a set of competencies that enables individuals to understand, evaluate, and interact critically with AI systems. Beyond technical skills, AI literacy includes awareness of AI capabilities, limitations, ethical concerns, and potential biases.

In EFL contexts, AI literacy enables learners to use AI strategically rather than passively relying on generated outputs. Students with stronger AI literacy are more likely to evaluate AI-generated information critically, modify responses when necessary, and align AI-assisted language production with their communicative goals. According to Ng et al. (2021), AI literacy encompasses cognitive, technical, and socio-emotional competencies that support responsible engagement with AI technologies. In this study, AI literacy refers to students' ability to use, evaluate, and interact critically with AI tools in English language learning.

Communicative Agency in EFL Contexts

Agency refers to an individual's capacity to act intentionally within social contexts (Ahearn, 2001). In language learning, communicative agency describes learners' ability to actively participate in communication, express personal meanings, and make autonomous linguistic choices. Mercer (2012) argues that agency is closely related to learners' confidence, self-regulation, and active involvement in learning processes.

In AI-mediated learning environments, communicative agency becomes increasingly important because students interact with technologies capable of generating language automatically (Hastomo et al., 2025). While AI can support communication, excessive dependence on AI-generated responses may reduce learners' confidence and ownership of language use. Conversely, students with stronger communicative agency are more likely to use AI critically while maintaining control over their communication. Therefore, communicative agency in this study refers to learners' perceived ability to communicate intentionally, maintain ownership of their ideas, and confidently express themselves in AI-assisted contexts.

AI, Decolonization, and Language Pedagogy

The increasing use of AI in English language education also raises questions regarding language ownership and learner empowerment. Decolonial perspectives challenge the dominance of native-speaker norms and emphasize learners' rights to construct their own voices and identities through English (Pennycook, 2021). However, AI systems are often trained on datasets that predominantly reflect Western linguistic and cultural norms, potentially reproducing particular communicative styles and assumptions.

From this perspective, AI literacy can be viewed as a means of empowering learners to engage critically with AI-generated language rather than merely reproducing dominant forms of English. As argued by Canagarajah (2022), language users should be positioned as active negotiators of meaning. Therefore, fostering AI literacy may support learners in maintaining ownership of their communication while using AI-assisted technologies.

Previous Related Studies

Previous studies have reported positive effects of AI technologies on language learning, particularly in improving writing quality, linguistic accuracy, and learning efficiency. Research has also examined learners' perceptions of AI-assisted learning and their acceptance of AI tools in educational settings. Nevertheless, relatively few studies have explored the relationship between AI literacy and communicative agency in EFL contexts. Existing research tends to focus on technological effectiveness rather than learners' ownership, intentionality, and autonomy in AI-mediated communication. Furthermore, studies addressing these issues within Indonesian higher education settings remain limited. Therefore, this study investigates the relationship between AI literacy and communicative agency among EFL students at UIAD Sinjai, contributing to current discussions on AI-integrated pedagogy, learner empowerment, and decolonial approaches to English language education.

Research Method

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between AI literacy and communicative agency among EFL students. A correlational design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to investigate the degree of association between two variables without manipulating or controlling the research setting. The study focused on identifying whether students with higher levels of AI literacy also demonstrated stronger communicative agency in AI-mediated language learning contexts.

Research Participants

The participants of this study were students of the English Education Study Program at Universitas Islam Ahmad Dahlan (UIAD) Sinjai. The study specifically involved fourth- and fifth-semester students because they were considered to have sufficient experience in academic English learning and regular exposure to AI-assisted learning tools in completing academic assignments. A total of 15 students participated in the research.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling. This sampling technique was chosen because the participants met specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the study, particularly their familiarity with AI tools such as ChatGPT and other AI-assisted platforms used in academic activities. The selection of participants was also based on preliminary observations indicating a growing tendency among students to rely on AI technologies for generating ideas, constructing written responses, and assisting communication tasks.

Research Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire designed to measure students' AI literacy and communicative agency in AI-mediated English language learning contexts. The questionnaire was developed by the researchers based on relevant theories of AI literacy, learner agency, and communicative self-efficacy. All items employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The questionnaire consisted of two sections representing the research variables. The first section measured AI literacy as the independent variable. AI literacy was operationalized through two dimensions: Technical and Procedural Competence and Critical AI Evaluation. The Technical and Procedural Competence dimension assessed students' confidence and ability to effectively use AI tools, formulate prompts, and interact with AI systems for English language learning purposes. Meanwhile, the Critical AI Evaluation dimension measured students' ability to identify inaccuracies, evaluate the appropriateness of AI-generated content, and recognize the limitations and biases of AI systems. This section consisted of eight items.

The second section measured communicative agency as the dependent variable. Communicative agency was conceptualized as students' perceived ability to act intentionally, maintain ownership of their communication, and express themselves authentically while using AI-assisted technologies. This variable was measured through two dimensions: Intentionality and Linguistic Ownership and Identity. The Intentionality dimension assessed students' ability to use AI tools purposefully to achieve specific communicative goals. The Linguistic Ownership and Identity dimension measured the extent to which students perceived AI-assisted language production as reflecting their personal voice, ideas, and cultural identity. This section also consisted of eight items.

The instrument was distributed online to facilitate efficient data collection from the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process was conducted by distributing the questionnaires to the selected participants through an online platform. Before completing the questionnaires, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses. They were also informed that participation in the study was voluntary.

The participants were asked to respond to all statements honestly based on their personal experiences in using AI tools for English language learning and academic communication. The collected responses were then compiled and organized for statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed quantitatively using IBM SPSS Statistics. The analysis began with descriptive statistics to summarize the participants' responses and identify general trends in both AI literacy and communicative agency. Measures such as mean scores, frequencies, percentages, and standard deviations were calculated for each variable and dimension.

Prior to conducting Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, the data were tested for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test and for linearity using the Test for Linearity. These assumption tests were conducted to ensure the appropriateness of Pearson correlation analysis.

To examine the relationship between AI literacy and communicative agency, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed. This statistical analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of the correlation between the two variables. The analysis aimed to identify whether higher levels of AI literacy were associated with stronger communicative agency among EFL students. The results of the statistical analysis were interpreted based on the significance level of 0.05 and were used to address the objectives of the study and to contribute to discussions regarding AI-integrated language pedagogy in the age of artificial intelligence.

Findings

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics were conducted to identify the general levels of AI literacy and communicative agency among EFL students. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the research variables.

Variable	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
AI Literacy	3.775	3.7500	0.837	2.00	5.00
Communicative Agency	3.708	3.7500	0.713	2.125	5.00

As shown in Table 1, the mean score of AI Literacy was 3,775 (SD = 0,837), indicating a relatively high level of AI literacy among the participants. Meanwhile, Communicative Agency obtained a mean score of 3,708 (SD = 0,713), which also falls within the high category. These findings suggest that the participants generally demonstrated strong capabilities in using and evaluating AI tools while maintaining a relatively high sense of agency in AI-mediated communication.

Normality Test

Before conducting the correlation analysis, the normality of the data was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Table 2. Normality Test Results.

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk Sig.
AI Literacy	.209
Communicative Agency	.669

The results indicate that both variables met the assumption of normality. The significance value for AI Literacy was 0,209, while the significance value for Communicative Agency was 0,669. Since both values exceeded the .05 significance level, the data were considered normally distributed.

Linearity Test

A linearity test was conducted to determine whether the relationship between AI Literacy and Communicative Agency was linear.

Table 3. Linearity Test Results.

Test	Sig.
Linearity	.007
Deviation from Linearity	.868

The linearity test revealed a significant linear relationship between AI Literacy and Communicative Agency ($p = 0,007$). Furthermore, the significance value for deviation from linearity was 0,868, which exceeded the 0,05 threshold. These results indicate that the relationship between the two variables was linear and suitable for Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis.

Corelation Analysis

To examine the relationship between AI Literacy and Communicative Agency, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation between AI Literacy and Communicative Agency.

Variables	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
AI Literacy and Communicative Agency	.800	.000

The correlation analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between AI Literacy and Communicative Agency ($r = 0.800$, $p = 0,000$). Since the significance value was lower than the alpha level of 0,05, the null hypothesis was rejected.

The correlation coefficient of 0,800 indicates a very strong positive relationship between the two variables. This finding suggests that students who demonstrated higher levels of AI literacy also tended to exhibit stronger communicative agency in AI-mediated English language learning contexts. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0,64$) indicates that approximately 64% of the variation in communicative agency was associated with variation in AI literacy among the participants.

Discussion

AI Literacy as a Foundation for Communicative Agency

The findings revealed a statistically significant and very strong positive relationship between AI literacy and communicative agency among EFL students ($r = 0,800$, $p < 0,05$). This result suggests that students who possess higher levels of AI literacy tend to demonstrate stronger communicative agency when engaging with AI-assisted language learning tools. In other words, the ability to understand, evaluate, and strategically use artificial intelligence appears to be closely associated with students' capacity to communicate intentionally, maintain ownership of their linguistic choices, and express their ideas confidently in English.

This finding aligns with the concept of AI literacy proposed by Long and Magerko (2020), who argue that AI literacy encompasses not only technical understanding but also the ability to critically evaluate and interact effectively with AI systems. Students who understand how AI tools function are more likely to use them strategically rather than passively accepting generated outputs (Kong et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2025). Such competence enables learners to exercise greater control over their communication processes, thereby strengthening their communicative agency (Ng et al., 2021).

Communicative Agency in AI-Mediated Language Learning

The strong relationship identified in this study also supports theoretical perspectives on learner agency. According to Ahearn (2001), agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act. Similarly, Mercer (2012) emphasizes that learner agency involves intentional decision-making and active participation in the learning process. The dimensions of communicative agency examined in this study, that is intentionality and linguistic ownership and identity, reflect these characteristics.

Students with higher AI literacy demonstrated greater confidence in directing AI tools according to their communicative goals and were more likely to perceive AI-generated texts as extensions of their own ideas rather than replacements for them. This suggests that AI literacy may help learners maintain an active role in communication, allowing them to negotiate meaning and make informed linguistic decisions even when working alongside intelligent technologies.

Implications for Performance-Based Language Assessment in the AI Era

The findings have important implications for performance-based language assessment. Traditionally, language assessment has focused primarily on evaluating learners' final products, such as

essays, presentations, or written examinations (Xiao & Zhi, 2023). However, the increasing integration of AI into language learning necessitates a broader understanding of communicative competence. In AI-mediated contexts, effective communication depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on the ability to interact critically and strategically with AI tools (Zhang et al., 2025).

The strong association between AI literacy and communicative agency suggests that assessment practices should recognize learners' capacity to manage, evaluate, and adapt AI-generated language. Therefore, performance-based assessment in the AI era should move beyond measuring linguistic accuracy alone and incorporate indicators such as intentional AI use, critical evaluation of outputs, and maintenance of communicative ownership. Such an approach may provide a more authentic representation of learners' communicative abilities in contemporary digital environments.

Decolonizing English through AI Literacy and Agency

The findings can also be interpreted through the lens of Decolonizing English in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. One concern frequently raised in discussions of AI-assisted language learning is that learners may become overly dependent on AI-generated forms of English that often reflect dominant linguistic and cultural norms (Aljović, 2025). Without sufficient AI literacy, students may uncritically reproduce these norms and gradually lose ownership of their linguistic identities (Cong-Lem et al., 2025; Tlili et al., 2023).

However, the present findings suggest a different possibility. Students who demonstrate higher levels of AI literacy also exhibit stronger communicative agency. This indicates that AI literacy may function as a form of empowerment that enables learners to critically engage with AI-generated language rather than simply accepting it. By evaluating outputs, modifying responses, and maintaining control over their communicative intentions, learners can preserve their own voices, perspectives, and cultural identities while using AI tools.

From a decolonial perspective, this finding supports the idea that AI should not merely be viewed as a technology that disseminates standardized forms of English. Instead, when accompanied by adequate AI literacy, it can become a tool that enables learners to negotiate meaning, assert linguistic ownership, and participate more actively in the production of English on their own terms. Thus, fostering AI literacy may contribute to more equitable and learner-centred forms of English language education in the age of artificial intelligence.

Conclusion

This study findings revealed that both AI literacy and communicative agency were generally at a high level among the participants. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis demonstrated a statistically significant and very strong positive relationship between the two variables ($r = 0,800$, $p < 0,001$). These results indicate that students with higher levels of AI literacy tend to exhibit stronger communicative agency in AI-mediated language learning contexts.

The findings suggest that AI literacy extends beyond technical competence in using artificial intelligence tools. Students who are capable of understanding, evaluating, and strategically utilizing AI technologies are more likely to communicate with clear intentions, maintain ownership of their ideas, and express their identities confidently in English. In this regard, AI literacy appears to support learners' ability to remain active agents rather than passive consumers of AI-generated language.

From the perspective of performance-based language assessment, the findings highlight the need to reconsider how communicative competence is evaluated in the age of artificial intelligence. Assessment practices should not only focus on the accuracy of linguistic products but also consider learners' ability to use AI critically, purposefully, and responsibly while maintaining control over their communication. Moreover, the study supports the broader goal of decolonizing English language education by demonstrating that AI literacy can empower learners to preserve their voices and identities when engaging with AI-assisted technologies.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The sample consisted of only fifteen participants from a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the study relied exclusively on self-reported questionnaire data, which may not fully capture students' actual AI literacy practices and communicative behaviors.

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