

**EFFORTLESS LEARNING, MAXIMUM OUTCOMES:  
THE POWER OF PROMPTING IN CONTEMPORARY  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

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**Abstract**

In the age of artificial intelligence, the quality of learning is no longer determined solely by technology but by the quality of human inquiry that activates it. This paper exhausts prompting as a transformative pedagogical practice in contemporary English language learning, where effortless learning and maximum outcomes emerge from the art of asking meaningful questions. Prompting, in this context, is understood not merely as a technical instruction but as a cognitive, linguistic, and creative act that mediates interaction between learners and intelligent systems. Well-designed prompts enable learners to engage deeply with language while minimizing cognitive overload. Through strategic prompting, learners receive immediate, contextualized feedback on grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and discourse, allowing learning to unfold naturally and intuitively. English learning thus becomes dialogic rather than directive, exploratory rather than prescriptive. AI responds, but it is the learner's prompt that sets the direction, depth, and intention of learning. This conceptual study argues that prompting empowers learners with agency, metacognitive awareness, and communicative confidence. Teachers, therefore, shift roles—from content transmitters to prompt designers, facilitators, and ethical curators of learning experiences. When embedded within human-centered pedagogy, prompting supports inclusive, adaptive, and creative English learning environments across diverse contexts. Nevertheless, the power of a prompt lies in its simplicity and depth: small questions can generate large learning outcomes. Effortless learning is achieved not by removing challenge, but by aligning curiosity, language, and technology in purposeful dialogue. The paper calls for integrating prompt literacy into English pedagogy to ensure that AI-enhanced learning remains intentional, meaningful, and profoundly human.

**Keywords:** Effortless Learning; Maximum Outcomes; Prompting

**INTRODUCTION**

In the age of artificial intelligence, contemporary English language education is increasingly shaped not by the availability of technological tools but by the quality of human interaction that activates them, as long-established research in second language acquisition has consistently demonstrated that learning does not occur through exposure alone but through interaction, negotiation of meaning, and the learner's active cognitive engagement with linguistic input (Saville-Troike, 2012).

From an interactionist perspective, language input contributes to acquisition only when it is processed as intake, requiring learners' selective attention, interpretation, and response during interaction (Saville-Troike, 2012), and studies of computer-mediated communication further indicate that digital interaction can support self-correction and heightened attention to form when learners are meaningfully engaged rather than passively receiving information (Saville-Troike, 2012). Within this theoretical landscape, prompting emerges as a central pedagogical mechanism that mediates learners' engagement with language and technology, functioning not merely as a technical instruction but as a cognitive and reflective tool that

shapes inquiry, attention, and learning trajectories, as demonstrated in research on narrative questioning, where carefully sequenced prompts guide learners to articulate learning gains, identify evidence, and reflect on learning processes over time (Zacharias, 2019). Such findings highlight that reflection does not occur automatically; rather, it must be scaffolded through deliberate pedagogical design, since providing prompts without guidance often results in superficial or descriptive responses rather than meaningful reflection (Zacharias, 2019). From a cognitive perspective, this aligns with research on language learning strategies and instructional design, which emphasizes that learners benefit from structured guidance that narrows attention, clarifies goals, and reduces unnecessary cognitive load, enabling more efficient and intuitive processing of complex language tasks (Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 2023).

In AI-mediated English learning environments, the significance of English language teaching shows that the effectiveness and pedagogical value of AI-generated context are largely determined by the quality, clarity, and intentionality of the prompts provided by users (Bhatti, 2026), reinforcing the notion that while AI systems generate responses, it is the human prompt that sets the direction, depth, and educational purpose of the interaction. Empirical evidence from EFL contexts further supports this claim, as research on students' prompting behavior in AI-assisted writing classes reveals that learners frequently use prompts to address higher-order concerns such as content development, organization, and academic tone, merely correcting surface-level errors, indicating strategic engagement and learner agency rather than shortcut learning (Basith & Hartono, 2025).

Beyond the cognitive dimension, prompting also intersects with affective aspects of language learning, as studies on students' language preferences and attitudes demonstrate that confidence, anxiety, and emotional comfort significantly influence learners' willingness to engage with English, particularly in contexts where exposure outside the classroom is limited (Irawan et al., 2026), and computer-mediated environments can provide low-pressure spaces that encourage participation and experimentation (Saville-Troike, 2012). When viewed through an interactionist lens, AI-mediated prompting constitutes a form of dialogic engagement that mirrors core SLA processes such as negotiation of meaning and corrective feedback, which are essential for acquisition (Saville-Troike, 2012). Reflective pedagogical practices further suggest that dialogic learning fosters metacognitive awareness and deeper understanding (Zacharias, 2019).

Consequently, effortless learning, as conceptualized in this study, should not be understood as learning without purposeful prompting that reduces extraneous cognitive strain while maintaining intellectual engagement (Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 2023). These dynamics carry important pedagogical implications, particularly for teachers, whose roles in AI-enhanced English language education are increasingly shifting from content transmitters to designers of prompts, facilitators of interaction, and ethical curators of learning preparedness (Bhatti, 2026).

However, reflective pedagogy cautions that prompt literacy cannot be assumed, as learners require explicit instruction, modeling, and feedback to develop the ability to formulate meaningful questions and engage productively with prompts (Zacharias, 2019), a principle that aligns with broader research on strategic language learning. At an institutional level, integrating prompt literacy into English pedagogy supports responsible and human-centered uses of AI, ensuring that technological mediation enhances rather than diminishes

the social and interactive nature of language learning, which remains a foundational principle of SLA theory (Saville-Troike, 2012). In summary, this conceptual analysis argues that the power of prompting learning outcomes by aligning cognitive processes, linguistic development, and technological affordance in purposeful dialogue, thereby enabling effortless learning and maximum outcomes in contemporary English language education (Saville-Troike, 2012; Zacharias, 2019; Bhatti, 2026).

Building on this understanding, the role of prompting in contemporary English language education can be further examined through its capacity to mediate not only linguistic development but also learners' metacognitive regulation and strategic awareness, as research in second language acquisition has long emphasized that effective learning requires learners to notice gaps, monitor progress, and adjust strategies during interaction (Saville-Troike, 2012). In AI-mediated contexts, prompting functions as the primary mechanism through which such regulatory processes are reactivated, because learners must articulate intentions, specify learning goals, and evaluate learning cycles described in narrative questioning research (Zacharias, 2019). When prompts encourage learners to justify answers, request explanations, or compare alternatives, they foster deeper cognitive engagement and support the transformation of input into intake, which remains a central condition for acquisition (Saville-Troike, 2012). This perspective reinforces the argument that prompting is not an auxiliary skill but a core pedagogical practice that shapes how learners think with language rather than merely about language.

## **METHOD**

From a methodological standpoint, the conceptual synthesis presented in this study aligns with existing research that situates prompting within broader instructional and strategic learning frameworks. Studies published in *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* emphasize that strategic questioning and guided reflection help learners manage complex tasks by directing attention, organizing information, and reducing extraneous cognitive load, particularly in language learning contexts that demand simultaneous processing of form, meaning, and use (*Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2023). When applied to AI-assisted English learning, these principles suggest that prompting can serve as a bridge between being overwhelmed by the abundance of information provided by the AI system. Instead, prompts function as filters that help learners focus on what matters most for their developmental stage and learning objectives.

Empirical findings from EFL settings further illustrate how prompting shapes learner behavior and outcomes in practice. Research examining students' interactions with generative AI tools reveals that learners who engage in purposeful prompting tend to demonstrate greater agency, autonomy, and strategic awareness, particularly when revising written texts or refining ideas (Basith & Hartono, 2025). Rather than relying on AI for quick corrections, these learners use prompts to explore alternative expressions, clarify meaning, and improve coherence, indicating a shift from surface-level assistance to deeper cognitive collaboration. Such findings resonate with reflective pedagogy research, which argues that learners develop higher-order thinking skills when they are encouraged to question, evaluate, and refine their own learning process through guided inquiry (Zacharias, 2019).



## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The affective dimension of prompting also deserves sustained attention, particularly in contexts where learners experience anxiety, low confidence, or limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Studies on students' language preferences and attitudes demonstrate that emotional comfort and perceived safety play a significant role in shaping learners' willingness to participate and take risks in English learning (Irawan et al., 2026). AI-mediated prompting can contribute positively to this affective environment by offering learners a nonjudgmental space to experiment with language, ask questions, and receive feedback at their own pace. Saville-Troike (2012) said that computer-mediated interaction often encourages greater participation and self-correction, particularly among learners who may be reluctant to speak in face-to-face settings. In this sense, prompting not only supports cognitive engagement but also fosters emotional readiness for learning.

At the pedagogical level, these insights reinforce the necessity of redefining teachers' roles in AI-enhanced English language education. Research on strategic prompt engineering highlights that teachers' expertise in designing, modeling, and refining prompts significantly influences the quality of AI-mediated learning experiences (Bhatti, 2026). Teachers act as mediators who align technological tools with curricular goals, ethical considerations, and learners' needs, rather than as passive adopters of AI systems. However, reflective pedagogy cautions that learners cannot be expected to develop prompt literacy independently; explicit instruction, modeling, and feedback are required to help learners formulate meaningful prompts and interpret AI responses critically (Zacharias, 2019). Without such guidance, the pedagogical potential of prompting risks being reduced to procedural use rather than transformative practice.

Ultimately, grounding AI-enhanced prompting practices in established SLA theory ensures that innovation remains anchored in human-centered principles. Saville-Troike (2012) emphasizes that language acquisition is fundamentally social and interactional, shaped by participation, feedback, and shared meaning-making. Prompting preserves this orientation by positioning AI as a conversational partner that responds to learner inquiry rather than as an authoritative source of knowledge. When learners engage with AI through purposeful prompts, they participate in dialogic learning processes that reflect core SLA mechanisms, including negotiation of meaning, noticing, and metacognitive reflection (Zacharias, 2019). Taken together, these perspective support the central claim of this paper that effortless learning and maximum outcomes are achieved not by minimizing cognitive challenge, but by aligning curiosity, language, and technology through intentional, reflective, and well-designed prompting practices (Saville-Troike, 2012; Bhatti, 2026).

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

In conclusion, this study affirms that the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in contemporary English language education lies not in the sophistication of the technology itself, but in the intentional quality of human prompting that activates it. This paper states that prompting functions as a cognitive, metacognitive, and affective bridge between learners and intelligent systems. Purposeful prompting reduces extraneous cognitive load while sustaining meaningful intellectual engagement, enabling learners to transform input into intake through dialogic interaction. Rather than encouraging shortcut learning,



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strategic prompting fosters learner agency, autonomy, and higher-order thinking, particularly in writing and revision processes.

Moreover, prompting contributes positively to learners' emotional readiness by providing a low-pressure, nonjudgmental environment that supports experimentation and self-correction. In this sense, effortless learning does not imply the absence of challenge; rather, it reflects the alignment of curiosity, clarity, and technological affordance in purposeful dialogue. The teacher's role correspondingly evolves—from content transmitter to prompt designer, facilitator, and ethical mediator—ensuring that AI-enhanced learning remains human-centered and pedagogically grounded.

Therefore, this paper recommends the systematic integration of prompt literacy into English language curricula. Learners require explicit modeling, guided practice, and critical reflection to develop the capacity to design meaningful prompts and evaluate AI responses responsibly. Future research may further explore empirical classroom implementations of prompt-based pedagogy to measure its long-term impact on linguistic development, metacognitive awareness, and communicative confidence across diverse educational contexts.

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