

TIRF-British Council Research Mentoring Awards 2026

Researcher

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Title of Project

Developing, Validating, and Evaluating an Artificial Intelligence-Supported Extensive Reading Framework for Enhancing Reading Engagement and Reading Comprehension Among EFL Learners



Research Supervisor

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TIRF Research Topics Investigated

- (1) Artificial Intelligence
- (2) Individual Learner Difference and Effective Language Education
- (3) Teaching Second and Foreign Language to Young Learners

Bio

Ahmed Mekete Ali is an Ethiopian English language educator, university lecturer, and Ph.D. researcher in TEFL at Wollo University. His research focuses on AI in language education, particularly the development, validation, and evaluation of a pedagogically grounded AI-Supported Extensive Reading Framework (AI-SERF) to enhance EFL learners' reading engagement and comprehension in resource-constrained contexts.

Project Summary

Despite extensive research demonstrating the benefits of extensive reading (ER) for second language reading proficiency, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and learner motivation (Day & Bamford, 2002; Grabe & Stoller, 2020), its implementation in EFL contexts – such as Ethiopia – remains challenging due to limited level-appropriate materials, low engagement, and insufficient pedagogical support (Brierley & Ross, 2025; Maryansyah et al., 2025). Although generative AI offers unprecedented potential to personalize reading content, current studies focus primarily on isolated applications rather than validated pedagogical frameworks integrating AI with established ER principles (Brierley & Ross, 2025; Maryansyah et al., 2025; Willy A. Renandya, 2025).

To address this gap, this study aims to develop and evaluate an Artificial Intelligence-Supported Extensive Reading Framework (AI-SERF) through an iterative Design-Based Research (DBR) process. It addresses five central research questions:

1. What pedagogical and contextual needs should inform the design of AI-SERF?

2. How can AI-SERF be developed and validated through iterative DBR cycles?
3. To what extent does AI-SERF enhance EFL learners' reading engagement and reading comprehension?
4. To what extent do learner agency and foreign language enjoyment mediate the relationship between AI-SERF implementation and these learning outcomes?
5. How do learners and teachers evaluate the usability, effectiveness, and sustainability of AI-SERF?

The study will follow five iterative DBR phases – needs analysis, framework development, pilot implementation and refinement, quasi-experimental implementation, and comprehensive evaluation – to iteratively refine AI-SERF based on design principles emerging from each phase. A mixed-methods approach will be used to collect pertinent data throughout the process. Structural equation modeling (SEM) will be employed to evaluate the framework's effectiveness and examine the mediating roles of learner agency and foreign language enjoyment, while qualitative findings will inform subsequent refinements.

By positioning AI as a pedagogical enabler rather than the object of investigation, this research advances theory-informed and evidence-based integration of AI into English language education. The resulting AI-SERF model will provide a validated, scalable framework for enhancing EFL learners' reading engagement and comprehension while offering practical guidance for teachers in resource-constrained contexts.
