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Introduction to the Special Issue on “Generative AI in Language Education: Pedagogical Innovations and Empirical Insights”

Maria Perifanou and Athanasios Karasimos
Guest editors

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is rapidly transforming the landscape of language education by opening up new possibilities for personalized instruction, learner engagement, and the automation of selected instructional tasks. With the rise of tools such as ChatGPT, AI-powered chatbots, and adaptive learning platforms, educators are increasingly able to design more dynamic, learner-centred environments that respond to students' needs in real time. These technologies are reshaping how students develop language skills by offering real-time feedback, automated support, authentic conversational practice, and collaborative learning opportunities, while in some cases also reducing anxiety through non-judgmental interaction with AI partners (Crompton et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2022; Kohnke et al., 2023). Among the most promising applications are tools that support speech recognition and pronunciation training, helping learners refine fluency, intonation, and accuracy through immediate, individualized feedback (Belda-Medina & Calvo-Ferrer, 2022). As such tools become more accessible, educators are challenged not only to explore their affordances but also to reflect critically on how AI can be integrated meaningfully into language curricula with attention to inclusion, purpose, and ethics.

GenAI is also playing a growing role in language assessment, with applications that support automated scoring, adaptive testing, and intelligent analysis of learner performance. While these developments may enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of evaluation, they also raise important questions about fairness, transparency, and validity. At the same time, AI-supported learning environments can generate large amounts of learner data and offer new possibilities for timely, individualized feedback and insight into student progress, learning behaviours, and pedagogical effectiveness (Banihashem et al., 2024; Belda-Medina & Calvo-Ferrer, 2022; Crompton et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2023). The potential of AI to boost both formative and summative assessment is considerable, but its implementation requires careful pedagogical judgment, digital literacy among educators, and a strong commitment to learner privacy, autonomy, and trust.

Beyond questions of efficiency, personalization, and assessment, the growing presence of GenAI also invites a broader reconsideration of the relationship between learners, teachers,

and technology. Recent research has moved beyond treating digital tools merely as supportive instruments and now draws on relational perspectives that highlight the distributed and emergent character of agency in language learning environments (Godwin-Jones, 2024; Guerrettaz et al., 2021; Lan & Chen, 2024). From this perspective, learning develops through the interaction of human and technological actors, and AI does not merely assist classroom activity but may also reshape how communication, participation, and knowledge-building take place (Kern, 2018; Lan & Chen, 2024; Godwin-Jones, 2024). Such a shift encourages educators to think more carefully about the pedagogical assumptions embedded in AI use and about the kinds of learning relationships these tools help to create.

From a pedagogical point of view, GenAI can function not only as a feedback mechanism but also as a brainstorming partner, language-learning support, and interactional resource. Recent studies suggest that it can assist learners in drafting, idea generation, revision, and language practice, particularly when its use is guided by clear pedagogical aims and supported by teacher mediation (Boudouaia et al., 2024; Crompton et al., 2024; Guo et al., 2022; Kohnke et al., 2023; Tseng & Warschauer, 2023). It may also contribute to reduced anxiety, greater engagement, and stronger teacher-student rapport in some learning contexts (Ghafouri, 2024; Banihashem et al., 2024). What matters, therefore, is not simply the presence of AI in the language classroom, but the quality of the pedagogical framing that shapes how it is introduced and used.

At the same time, the rapid spread of GenAI makes the development of critical AI literacy increasingly urgent. These tools may produce inaccurate content, reproduce cultural and linguistic bias, and promote standardized language and cultural norms at the expense of more diverse voices, which means that their educational use must be approached with caution, reflection, and a clear sense of social responsibility (Crompton *et al.*, 2024; Lan & Chen, 2024). In this evolving landscape, teachers remain central: not only as facilitators of learning, but also as ethical guides who help students engage critically with AI and use it in ways that support meaningful participation, creativity, and human connection (Lan & Chen, 2024). The challenge for language education, then, is not whether AI should be used, but how it can be integrated in ways that remain pedagogically grounded, ethically informed, and responsive to diverse learners and contexts.

This special issue of *Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning* presents a focused collection of studies united by a timely and urgent theme: the integration of Artificial Intelligence in language education. As AI tools become increasingly embedded in academic and professional contexts, this volume interrogates how they can be adopted critically, ethically, and pedagogically within language teaching and learning. By bringing together theoretical frameworks, empirical research, and classroom-based practice, the contributions collectively map the emerging landscape of AI-mediated language education, its promises, its limitations, and the responsibilities it places on teachers, learners, and institutions.

The volume opens with an investigation into how higher education students in Greece reflected on their use of ChatGPT for critical reading and source evaluation within a digital literacy course. **Panagiota Samioti** draws on thematic analysis of student reflections, forum discussions, collaborative tasks, and questionnaires to identify four interconnected themes: prompting as a metacognitive practice, developing evaluative judgment of AI outputs, recognizing the tool's conditional usefulness, and addressing language-related challenges. Students demonstrated awareness of how prompt formulation influenced response quality and maintained a cautious stance toward AI reliability, highlighting the need for verification and human mediation. The findings position structured and reflective prompting as a means

of fostering metacognitive regulation and critical reading skills, framing ChatGPT not as a substitute for human reasoning but as a catalyst for inquiry and ethical awareness.

The intersection of AI and writing feedback is examined in a theoretical paper by **Ioanna Nifli**, which critiques the dominant “red-pen” feedback paradigm in EFL writing classrooms and advocates for dialogic, co-constructed feedback cultures mediated by both human and algorithmic actors. Drawing on sociocultural theory, feedback literacy, and affect-informed pedagogy, the paper introduces the concept of the Affective-Epistemic Feedback Habitus, a dispositional framework shaped by repeated exposure to authoritative correction and high-stakes evaluation. While LLM-powered tools offer non-judgmental, real-time support capable of scaffolding autonomy and metacognitive engagement, the paper cautions that their use within correction-oriented cultures risks reproducing epistemic dependency. This contribution repositions LLMs as pedagogical interlocutors within culturally responsive, ethically mediated writing instruction.

Questions of AI literacy extend into higher education through an action research study by **Sonia Carmen Munteanu**, which examines how engineering students at a Romanian university engaged with GenAI tools, primarily ChatGPT, for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) homework, in a context without institutional guidance, formal training, or clear curricular provisions. Students predominantly used AI to refine language, clarify ideas, and enhance coherence, reporting positive perceptions of its contribution to efficiency and professional preparedness. However, evidence of more advanced practices such as critical evaluation or iterative prompting remained limited. The study argues for the systematic embedding of AI literacy within EAP curricula to ensure equitable access, ethical use, and pedagogical alignment with an evolving technological landscape.

Complementing these perspectives, **Sophia Kouzouli** presents a values-oriented pedagogical approach to the creative and critical integration of AI in EFL teaching, illustrated through the design and classroom implementation of a lesson entitled “Odyssey 2.0: Values Recharged.” Grounded in constructivist, experiential, and inquiry-based learning theories, the lesson design incorporates multimodal activities, digital storytelling, collaborative inquiry, role-play, debate, and creative production, within a learner-centered, values-based educational framework. The paper addresses ethical challenges related to bias, dependency, and data protection, suggesting that meaningful AI integration, when guided by clear pedagogical principles, can enrich EFL learning and contribute to the development of critically aware and socially responsible learners.

The pedagogical value of GenAI-driven storytelling in secondary education is explored by **Sezer Kizilates** through a mixed-methods study conducted in Hong Kong with 76 students randomly assigned to control and experimental groups. While the control group received traditional writing instruction, the experimental group engaged in a five-week GenAI-driven storytelling intervention. The study assessed four dimensions of AI literacy; affective, behavioral, cognitive, and ethical; alongside key writing skills including word usage, narrative structure, creativity, and writing anxiety. Quantitative results demonstrated significant gains in AI literacy and writing performance in the experimental group, alongside reduced writing anxiety. Thematic analysis further revealed heightened motivation, stronger confidence, and greater ethical awareness, positioning GenAI-driven storytelling as a productive pedagogical strategy for developing both language competence and responsible digital literacy in younger learners.

The ethical dimensions of Generative Artificial Intelligence in language education are the focus of a critical theoretical contribution by **Eirini Ioanna Delmadorou**. Drawing on sociocultural theory, Second Language Acquisition, and Constructivism, the paper positions GenAI as a powerful yet non-neutral cultural tool, foregrounding concerns around algorithmic bias, Anglocentric dominance, and digital inequities. In response to these challenges, it proposes the Equitable AI in Language Education Model (EALeM), a conceptual framework built on four guiding principles: inclusivity, transparency, human-in-the-loop mediation, and participatory design. By articulating this framework, the paper contributes to debates on AI in education, providing theoretical and practical guidelines for responsible, equitable, and reflective use of Generative AI in language learning contexts.

A further contribution, by **Athanasios Karasimos, Evangelia-Antonia Efstratiadou, Christos Papatzalas, and Ilias Papathanasiou**, explores the integration of LLMs into corpus-based teaching within specialist programs in Speech-Language Pathology, Computational Linguistics, and Clinical Neurolinguistics. Recognizing the time-intensive nature and technical demands of traditional corpus analysis, particularly with atypical language data such as aphasic speech, the study proposes a systematic educational framework exemplified through the Greek CACLA corpus. Central to this approach is the repositioning of LLMs as “cognitive partners” that handle routine annotation tasks, freeing students to engage in higher-order analysis and critical evaluation of AI outputs. This framework contributes to ongoing efforts to democratize sophisticated linguistic analysis while fostering technological literacy and critical thinking in future practitioners.

The volume closes with a study by **Alexandra Fiotaki**, which examines the use of LLMs to generate Greek banking dialogues for pedagogical purposes. The paper outlines the rationale for selecting banking interactions as a case study and evaluates the output of different LLMs with respect to morphosyntactic accuracy, register appropriateness, pragmatic naturalness, and handling of specialized financial vocabulary. Findings reveal variation across models: some generate fluent but overly generic exchanges, while others handle technical vocabulary well but show inconsistencies in morphological agreement and politeness conventions. Building on these findings, the study proposes morphology-aware dialogue materials for classroom use, including role-plays, error-spotting tasks, and vocabulary development activities, illustrating how AI-generated content can enrich language teaching when subjected to rigorous critical evaluation and purposeful pedagogical design.

Taken together, the contributions to this volume reflect a growing scholarly consensus: the integration of AI in language education is neither straightforward nor inevitable, but requires deliberate pedagogical framing, ethical awareness, and a sustained commitment to learner empowerment. As AI tools continue to evolve and proliferate, this volume offers a timely and rigorous resource for language educators, researchers, teacher trainers, and policymakers seeking to navigate the opportunities and challenges of AI-mediated language learning in an increasingly complex educational landscape.

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Guest Editors:

Dr. Maria Perifanou, SMILE Lab, University of Macedonia and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Dr. Athanasios Karasimos, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

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