Language Teaching Research Quarterly **EUROKD**

2025 (51), 184–202
https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2025.51.01

Considering Generative AI in Language Education in HE: The Perspectives of Learners, Teachers and the Language Centre

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Abstract
This contribution examines the risks and affordances of new technologies, such as generative artificial intelligence, for language learning, teaching and assessment, paying special attention to higher education. Based on a synthesis of recent literature, we argue in support of e.g., Gao (2024), González-Lloret (2024), Kern (2024), or Thorne (2024) that language learning and language use is at its core a deeply human endeavour, which cannot be outsourced to technology. Based on our central thesis that humans in language education cannot be replaced by technologies, we then summarize affordances and limitations posed by technology in language education, before we look at a strategic level from an institutional perspective. Based on these insights we synthesize the new roles, needs and demands that emerge for languages teachers and learners in the era of GenAI. We illustrate these theoretical deliberations with concrete examples from one large language centre in the North of Germany, covering the strategies developed at the institutional level, the supporting measures offered for and developed with teachers as well as the approaches taken to include students in the discussions about the role of technologies in language education.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received: 05 July 2024
Revised: 12 October 2025
Accepted: 02 November 2025

KEYWORDS
Generative Artificial Intelligence, Technologies in Language Learning, Teaching, and Assessment, Language Education in HE, Affordances and Risks of Technology

How to cite this article (APA 7th Edition):
Harsch, C., Müller-Karabil, A., & Buschmann-Göbels, A. (2025). Considering generative AI in language education in HE: The perspectives of learners, teachers and the language centre. *Language Teaching Research Quarterly*, *51*, 184–202. https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2025.51.01

[1]Introduction

The rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has brought fundamental changes to language education, offering new affordances while posing challenges and risks. In this paper, we will argue that GenAI and the wider realm of language processing technology cannot replace humans in language learning and teaching, as studying languages and expressing oneself via languaging are among those core cultural techniques that we should retain in our human repertoire.

Based on a synthesis of current literature in the field of technological affordances and risks in language education, we will concretize the literature insights for one specific context, i.e., a large language centre in German higher education. We will analyse the affordances and challenges from the perspective of learners, teachers and the institution, illustrating the approaches we have taken so far to embrace the new tech era.

Synthesis of Literature

In our literature synthesis, we start with developing the central thesis why humans in language education cannot be replaced by technologies. We then move on to summarize affordances and limitations posed by technology in language education, before we look at a strategic level from an institutional perspective. Based on these insights we synthesize the new roles, needs and demands that emerge for languages teachers and learners in the era of GenAI.

Thesis Statement

The use of language for expressing one's inner world and for communication with the outer world is at the core of humanity. González-Lloret (2024, p. 542) stresses "the pivotal role that language and culture play in a globalized society". Language learning, as Thorne (2024, p. 572) puts it, "is ultimately driven by the human relationships that it makes possible"; Gao (2024, p. 558) regards it as "a fundamentally humanistic endeavor"; and Kern (2024, p. 528) stresses the "humanistic value of studying languages".

If language educators do not want to outsource this fundamentally human endeavour to GenAI, then the current crisis around technology in language education offers the opportunity to rethink the value of language education and to (re-)position language education as e.g., Gao (2024) or Kern (2024) remark:

> … we urgently need to articulate and communicate the value of language study in a social context, identify what technology offers that is positive for language education, rethink how we organize our teaching in light of technology's affordances, and be clear about what technology cannot do. (Kern, 2024, p. 516)

[1] This paper is part of a special issue (2025, 50-51) entitled: In honour of Carol A. Chapelle's contributions to language assessment and learning (edited by Christine Coombe, Tony Clark, and Hassan Mohebbi).

Hence, language educators are well advised to reflect on the values of language education, and communicate what essential skills we as humankind do not want to outsource to existing and emergent technologies. In what follows, we synthesise the central aims of language education in the era of technology.

Creely (2024, p. 159) succinctly summarizes the main aims: "Language education is a human enterprise that should include analytical skills, the ability to think in novel ways and overt control of a language and its context of use". Given the socio-pragmatic and social-cultural context of language use, language education encompasses the goals of developing critical cultural awareness (Chapelle, 2024) along with intercultural and transcultural communicative competences (Gao, 2024). These competences serve to "interact with others and understand the world from a multicultural and multilingual perspective" (González-Lloret, 2024, p. 541), and to develop "critical cultural and human understanding", abilities that are paramount to globally communicate and cooperate to overcome current "existential crises" (Gao, 2024, p. 561). Beyond the core aims of developing linguistic, intercultural and interactional competences, Thorne (2024, p. 571) adds the dimensions of "developing, maintaining, and deepening social relationships of significance that foster experiences of intersubjective alignment, empathy, and emotional resonance."

In order to reach these deep aims of language education, human teachers are indispensable, as Thorne (2024, p. 571) argues:

> Human teachers are positioned to enhance and effectuate these goals through their abilities to encourage, motivate, provide corrective feedback, describe and model pragmatic and interactional norms, and situate the language-learning process among the relevant domains of culture, history, sociology, and literary expression. These abilities extend far beyond explanations of the "aboutness" of linguistic competence, which, while necessary, is a thin and ultimately not-satisfactory-enough intellectual enterprise to drive continued language study for most students.

Human teachers are also urgently needed in order to discuss the ethical implications around the use of GenAI and other technologies with their learners, particularly with regard to authorship and (academic) integrity, as e.g., Creely (2024) or Alkadi and Ali (2024) call for. Teachers are also asked to make use of critical discourse analyses of GenAI generated discourse, in order to bring the socio-pragmatic conditions of GenAI discourse into the classroom (e.g., Guichon, 2024). We will explore below in more depth what implications these demands have on teachers' roles. Needless to say that the ethical implications have to be discussed beyond the language learning classroom, to embrace the institution in which language learning is situated, as we will detail below.

Ultimately, we agree with Gao (2024, p. 558) that what is at stakes is that:

> (…) language makes us human, and language use is an essential characteristic of our humanity. If we rely on technological tools for human interaction, we will have fewer opportunities to develop critical skills, competence, and practices for cross-cultural communication and mutual understanding.

Affordances and Limitations of Technology in Language Education

Technology is nothing new in the human history; rather, we look back on a long co-evolution of humans and technology, as Thorne (2024) points out. As with all technological advances, we must embrace their affordances without ignoring the risks they may pose. Regarding affordances of technologies for language education, their strengths lie in providing conversational partners, self-assessment resources, virtual tutoring, assistants such as Siri for vocabulary and grammar learning, adaptive learning platforms with repetitive practice and individualized corrective feedback focusing on linguistic form, and general exposure to language use situations outside the classroom (e.g., Alkadi & Ali, 2024; Al-khreshehm, 2024; Gao, 2024; Handley, 2024; Kern, 2024; Thorne, 2024).

One of the main advantages of technology-supported language learning is the engaging, motivation and self-empowering effect it can have on learners (e.g., Alkadi & Ali, 2024; Al-khreshehm, 2024; Creely, 2024; Kohnke et al., 2023). Creely (2023) describes four key affordances in AI-driven language learning: (1) Personalized learning can promote confidence and motivation particularly among students whose learning styles are not appropriately catered for in traditional static classroom settings; it also promotes the "strong connection between person, technology, and culture" (p. 160) that students in the modern tech age need to embrace. (2) Tech-generated interactive content has the potential to transform the traditional teacher-centred linear learning arrangements into "dynamic, engaging experiences that are technology driven" (p. 160). (3) Technology provides individualized timely feedback, which can cultivate students' independence and empower them to self-direct their learning pathways (p. 161). (4) Tech-characteristics such as AI's "extensive linguistic analytical dexterity" (p. 161), if productively merged with human ingenuity and inventiveness, can expand human creativity.

The areas where tech tools offer affordances in language education are mainly found in teaching linguistic knowledge, offering (repetitive) practice opportunities and corrective feedback, and in providing individualised tutoring (e.g., Alkadi & Ali, 2024; Al-khreshehm, 2024; Gao, 2024; Thorne 2024). Outsourcing such areas in a responsible and meaningful way can free teachers' time for developing the aforementioned essential skills in global communication (e.g., Alkadi & Ali, 2024; Gao, 2024), so that teachers can "engage with knowledge and meaning, provide more creative opportunities to use language, and engage with the whole learner at a human level" (Handley, 2024, p. 553). When it comes

to outsourcing activities, students may need some guidance with regard to selecting the most meaningful activities that suit their learning styles and paces; this guidance feeds into developing learner autonomy.

Such affordances need to be set off by the limitations and risks that technology bears. First, tech tools and GenAI exist only for some languages, mainly those with a big corpus available online, as Alkadi and Ali (2024) or Throne (2024) point out. Many languages, particularly those whose presence on the internet is not wide-spread, are not covered by the aforementioned affordances. Second, tech tools lack affective and pedagogical dimensions and the ability to "counsel learners" (Handley, 2024, p. 553), fundamental dimensions in language education. Tools such as chatbots cannot engage in serious, critical dialogue; as Kern (2024) argues, they thus cannot contribute to deep learning. Thirdly and importantly, as indicated above, ethical implications on authorship and integrity cannot be underestimated and technology has to be harnessed in these essential areas, for example by critically discussing and practicing an ethical use of tech tools between teachers and learners.

Gao (2024) hence recommends to carefully differentiate between those essential skills that should remain in the hands of human teachers, the aspects that can be outsourced to technology, and the areas where tech tools can be a meaningful and responsible complementation. These important questions should be discussed strategically at the institutional level of language education.

Institutional Perspective

Such a deliberation and differentiation of Gao's (2024) three dimensions requires discussions at the institutional level where such strategic decisions are taken, be it the departmental or university level. As it is impossible to ban tech tools, since they are out there and are already influencing the ways we use language, Guichon (2024, p. 565) recommends to "ensur(e) that language courses do not become disconnected from the digital uses that are becoming widespread outside of them, but rather instil a healthy relationship with these tools." Such an integration of the tech world into language education should best take place as complementation, as e.g., Al-khreshehm (2024) or Thorne (2024) remark, which requires careful consideration to ensure a "responsible and effective use for enhancing equity and learning" (Thorne, 2024, p. 571). Here, inequities in access to digital tools also need ot be taken into consideration, and need to be backed up, for instance by financial support (cf., e.g., Alkadi & Ali, 2024 or Al-khreshehm, 2024).

This brings us back to the aforementioned ethical discussion of guiding principles for the implementation of GenAI in language education. Here, the possibility of collaboration between humans and technology has to be critically reflected. As Schmohl et al. (2023) point out, AI is superior in its capacities for and speed of data analysis and prognosis, while human strength lies in their capacity for empathy in ethical judgements. The

institutional consensus for the ethical use of AI has to be situated within this field of interplay, according to Schmohl et al. (2023), lying somewhere between exaggerated caution and incalculable risks.

At the institutional level, language educators are required to critically reflect and revise language pedagogies with a view to encompassing the aims outlined above. Language education has to develop suitable ways to employ technologies for these ends, and to raise awareness among all participants about how technology mediates media, communications and meaning. Hence, the socio-pragmatics of the digital world have to be integrated into language education (González-Lloret, 2024) and ultimately, learners have to be enabled to communicate in this digital world by using their own voice in their languages in an appropriate combination with tech tools. Hence, institutions need to develop "clear ethical frameworks for using AI tools in education" (Al-khreshehm, 2024, p. 75), which contain "concrete strategies for using AI as a tool to help learn about language and culture" (Chapelle, 2024, p. 539), as guiding rails for both teachers and learners.

Embracing the digital world in language education, harnessing the risks of tech tools while at the same time exploiting their affordances constitutes a fundamental transition in language education for which teachers need institutional support. In this new era, Kern (2024) states that teachers need to provide learning spaces in which learners can "reflect on meaning making practices" (Kern, 2024, p. 524) in the digital world and on the role of tech tools in these practices; they also have to enable students to develop the critical insight that "language is not just a normative system but also an adaptive practice that interacts with its cultural and technological mediations" (Kern, 2024, p. 524), and to critically reflect on the role of technology in these mediations. We now explore the new roles, competencies and demands on teachers in the age of technology.

Teachers' Perspective

New Roles and Responsibilities

Perhaps most importantly, teachers need to become mentors, counsellors and facilitators for their language students (e.g., Chapelle, 2024). Not only should teachers provide emotional support and foster a sense of community that maintains motivation (e.g., Gao, 2024; González-Lloret, 2024), they also have to provide guidance of a cognitive nature, particularly with regard to the usability and usage of tech tools (e.g., Chapelle, 2024; Gao, 2024; Guichon, 2024), which includes ethical discussions and critical reflections with students. The two main aspects that teachers need to teach are (1) "critical digital literacies" (González-Lloret, 2024, p. 545), focusing on aspects such as the critical reflection on how technology shapes and manipulates opinions, discourse and decisions, and how humans should harness the new tools; and (2) "digital citizenship" (González-Lloret, 2024, p. 544), which targets aspects such as digital etiquette and responsible online conduct.

These competences are best developed by cooperating with students. For example, teachers could conduct critical discourse analysis of digital discourses together with their students, thereby focusing on "the effort required to build genuine meaning, memorize, manipulate, and revise language" (Guichon, 2024, p. 565). In order to stress the importance of students' own engagement with language learning, teachers may want to evoke Kern's illustrative comparison of outsourcing tasks to technology with "an athlete hiring someone to do their workout" (2024, p. 525). This could help supporting students' personal development as reflected critical users of technology and as lifelong agents of their own language learning (Gao, 2024). Here, tech tools can facilitate discovering learner needs in cooperation between teachers and learners (González-Lloret, 2024).

In order to bring the digital world into the language classroom, teachers ought to design relevant opportunities for meaningful engagement in digital setting that resemble real-world scenarios, which require negotiation of meaning in order to overcome communication problems (e.g., Handley, 2024). These settings have to integrate the socio-pragmatics of the digital world, and include engagement and interaction with technology, for instance by employing virtual exchanges or task-based language learning (Guichon, 2024). The focus of these tasks should lie on the development of critical linguistic, metalinguistic and cultural awareness, and stimulate a dialogue about language and language use (Chapelle, 2024; Handley, 2024), as these are core areas that technology cannot address. Areas that technology can support, however, are task design and delivery; here, technology offers great affordances for teachers (e.g., Alkadi & Ali, 2024; Al-khreshehm, 2024; González-Lloret, 2024; Guichon, 2024); employing technology in these areas can free up valuable time to be dedicated to the aforementioned discussions around the essential values of language learning and use.

Yet another area that is affected by technology is assessment, an area in which teachers' roles and the demands on teachers are also shifting. A refocus from traditionally teacher-controlled assessment to one that is empowering learners is required (Guichon, 2024). With regard to learner focus, technology does offer affordances, such as the aforementioned timely and individualised formative feedback (e.g., Alkadi & Ali, 2024 or Al-khreshehm, 2024), with a focus on correctness and form. Outsourcing such formative assessment to tech and students, again with guidance, frees valuable teacher time to provide feedback on the aforementioned areas of critical linguistic, metalinguistic and cultural awareness. Kern (2024) reminds us that assessment criteria embody the pedagogical values of language education; hence, if language education is to embrace the use of technology, this has to be reflected in the assessment and its criteria. Kern (2024) suggest to conduct assessment without technological support in the classroom, so that students can show what competences they have acquired in the realm of (meta-)linguistic und (pluri-)cultural skills and awareness; the focus of this kind of assessment without technology should lie on products. Complementary to this approach, assessment at home

could be the place to demonstrate competences in integrating tech mediation into languaging with a focus on processes; thereby, students are asked to transparently document and critically reflect on tech usage. Combining these different aspects of language use has the potential to foster both, a focus on human languaging and a focus on complementing language learning and use by technology in a meaningful and responsible way.

Supporting Teachers in the Transition

These new roles and responsibilities require a whole new set of competences and skills from language teachers, for which many teachers feel unprepared; teachers may "lack[ed] the confidence and competence to address the implications of generative AI tools effectively" as Moorhouse and Kohnke (2024, p. 1) state, and they "need professional development and support" (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2024, p. 7; see also Alkadi & Ali, 2024; Al-khreshehm, 2024; Gao, 2024; Li et al., 2024).

First and foremost, teachers are required to develop a deeper level understanding of tech tools, including a critical awareness of their affordances and constraints, in other words, digital literacy (Gao, 2024). This is to be complemented by "techno-pedagogical" competences (Guichon 2024, p. 565), or "AI pedagogies", as Li et al. (2024) call them. Furthermore, teachers need to be prepared to shift their pedagogical priorities to foster critical cultural awareness, perseverance, adaptability, creativity, and growth of agency among their learners (e.g., Gao, 2024). Kern (2024, p. 522) summarizes this shift succinctly:

> What I believe we want to encourage is a genuine agency and autonomy that is born of an integration of language, culture, mind, and body. An integration that allows connection with other people, creative expression of new identities in multiple modalities, and critical remove from monolingual and monocultural perspectives.

Consequently, teacher education needs to react to the impact of technology on the following three areas, as a recent interview study by Moorehouse and Kohnke (2024) reveals: (1) At the curriculum level, critical AI and digital literacy need to be included; programme content needs to be updated, e.g., with regard to integrating AI into lesson planning, material preparation or assessment; learning outcomes need to be reviewed and updated to reflect the new aims and values of language education as well as the new roles of teachers. (2) At the level of instruction, teacher education must embrace preparing teachers for integrating tech tools into their teaching. (3) Regarding assessment, teachers have to be prepared to redesign assessment tasks to integrate technological affordances, and they need to be equipped with the abilities to communicate and react to the improper use of tech tools, which includes the ability to establish guidelines for sanctioned use of technology. Importantly, Moorhouse and

Kohnke (2024) point towards the need for further research, particularly with regard to "what constitutes critical GenAI literacy and how it can be developed in language teacher educators and pre-service teachers" (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2024, p. 9).

With regard to in-service teachers, Li et al. (2024, p. 815) state that "professional development, collaborative networks, and mentorship provide opportunities for teachers to enhance their AI integration skills. " As Li et al. (2024, p. 815) further remark, "(A)ction research projects and peer observations allow teachers to refine their approaches based on real-world experiences and feedback." The aforementioned critical discourse analysis is another window to integrate the digital world into the classroom. Teachers need training and support in these approaches to meaningfully integrate and adapt them into their teaching. "In this fast-changing digitally-rich world", as Li et al. (2024, p. 815) remind us, "it is crucial to be able to dynamically adapt teaching methods and approaches as technology evolves to effectively meet the increasing needs of diverse learners".

Students' Perspective

The usage of AI tools is part of students' reality; at the same time, students need more information, guidelines and support for the appropriate use of these tools (Gottschling et al., 2024). Mirroring the request for teachers' new digital literacies, students alike have to develop these literacies with regard to tech-supported language learning and language use in the digital era. As part of the digital literacies, Guichon (2024, p. 564) calls for developing "metatechnolinguistic competence" to foster the aforementioned "constructive dialogue around the affordances of digital interfaces" (Guichon 2024, p. 564, cited from Pellet & Myers 2022, p. 167). Guided by teachers, students are required to critically reflect and document tech usage in their language learning endeavours, with the goal to develop reflexivity, creativity and agency (Guichon, 2024).

Technology has the potential to instigate a shift towards self-regulated, autonomous language learning (e.g., Alkadi & Ali, 2024; Al-khreshehm, 2024; Guichon, 2024; Yang et al., 2024). Guichon, for instance, suggests a progression from using AI as "digital crutches" towards enabling learners to develop "speech that is truly their own" with the strategic aim that learners "knowingly speak with the machine when [they] need it" (Guichon, 2024, p. 565f). Thus, despite or rather with the support of AI, students can be empowered to develop their own voice in a new language, as well as their life-long language learning agency.

Two recent systematic literature reviews of the effects of LLMs respectively ChatGPT on EFL learners by Alkadi and Ali (2024) and by Al-khreshehm (2024) summarize the main benefits for language learners as follows: LLMs have positive effects on " self-regulated learning, personalized learning, informal learning, innovation, immediate feedback, and diverse learning materials." (Alkadi & Ali, 2024, p. 157), yet they warn that teachers are

of "paramount significance" when it comes to evaluating the quality of AI-generated feedback and to assessing students (p. 158). Al-Khreshem (2024) corroborates these insights and adds that ChatGPT has the potential to "improve[d] laguage skills (vocabulary, grammar, and writing)" (p. 66), "enhance[d] ethical awareness", "critical thinking", "student empowerment", "enhanced self-directed learning" (p. 67), amongst others. The main challenges with ChatGPT are listed as "risk of becoming too dependent", "over-reliance", "ethical questions", "superficial engagement", and "diminished critical thinking" (Al-kreshem, 2024, p. 69). Both reviews recommend that unequal access to technologies and ethical issues have to be acknowledged and addressed (Alkadi & Ali, 2024, p. 162; Al-khreshehm, 2024, p. 73).

Several recent studies point towards the range of language skills and communicative tasks for which the use of tech tools has been researched. For instance, for the area of student-produced EFL podcasts, Basakara et al.'s (2024) qualitative study showed that GenAI acted as a "creative collaborator" (p. 81), helping to improve idea generation and language quality. At the same time, the study revealed that the tools lacked sufficient cultural context and it raised ethical concerns about authorship and data use. Another study examinging AI-supported training to enhance speaking awareness by Yang et al. (2024) . showed an increase in students' metacognitive strategies and metacognitive awareness; learners were more likely to engage in planning, monitoring and evaluating their language use after training. The study also showed that AI can facilitate group discussion and peer feedback by providing prompts and guidance. With regard to writing skills, an exploratory study by Seo (2024) showed that ChatGPT was most often used by students for language help, revision, and information; she also found that ChatGPT-assisted narrative writing can significantly improve writing fluency and general performance, although gains in linguistic complexity were uneven. Finally, for the context of university-level intercultural communication education, a systematic review by Klimova et al. (2024) showed that AI tools (such as chatbots or virtual realities) can effectively support the development of intercultural competence. At the same time, these benefits are tempered by concerns about cultural sensitivity, unequal (technical) access, and the need for human oversight, thus corroborating the reviews by Alkadi and Ali, (2024) and Al-khreshehm (2024).

The Use of GenAI at the Language Centre of the Universities in the Land of Bremen

General Considerations

The literature review clearly shows that with the rapid progress of GenAI, new situations, issues, roles and approaches have arisen that need to be addressed at institutional, teacher and student level. In the following, we will provide insights into how we are addressing these challenges in Bremen and what concrete measures we have developed so far in our Language Centre to meet the demands of both teachers and students.

The Language Centre of the Universities in the Land of Bremen is a joint institution of the four public universities in the federal state of Bremen: The University of Bremen, the City University of Applied Sciences, the University of the Arts Bremen and the University of Applied Sciences at Bremerhaven.

We offer faculty-specific language courses that are integrated into the academic programmes of our four partner universities, as well as language courses and certificates that are open to all students for over 20 languages at CEFR levels A1 to C1. We promote plurilingualism, foster English as the academic Lingua Franca, promote autonomous learning and support the internationalisation of the universities and the mobility of students. Regarding quality development and assurance, we participate in the UNIcert® programme[2], we have an external Academic Advisory Board to provide advice and quality control, we conduct regular course evaluations, regular symposia, workshops and training, as well as research projects on teaching, learning and assessment.

GenAI at Institutional Level

In response to the above-described current development of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), at the Language Centre we have developed and implemented strategies and professional development opportunities to address the aforementioned challenges that GenAI and new technologies pose in the context of language education in HE. Our strategies are aligned with our partner Universities' recommendations on the use of GenAI in academic teaching and research.

At the core of our endeavours, we established a working group targeting GenAI in HE. The working group is tasked developing a strategic approach to address the possible implementation along withanticipated limitations of GenAI systems in language learning among all stakeholders involved – teachers, learners and curriculum developers. The two main outcomes of the working group so far encompass (1) a mission statement of the Language Center for the use of GenAI in our language classes (Appendix A), and (2) a transparent procedure for documenting the use of GenAI in examinations integrated into the so-called declaration of independent work[3] (Appendix B). We are currently working on curriculum development to account for the above discussed implications that digital language use has on language education, along with a collection of best-practice examples.

Although AI-based systems are considered to have great potential, we must carefully reflect whether and how they should be used. As discussed above, it is crucial that we identify and prevent any risks – ethical, data protection, security, environmental, or social

[2] UNIcert®is a quality assurance system for foreign language courses and certificates in German HE. (https://www.unicert-online.org/). UNIcert® certificates are accepted at all German universities.

[3] This is a form that students have to fill out when submitting an assignment to declare the originality of their work, together with a short documentation of their use of GenAI in the given examination (Appendix B).

– and develop appropriate strategies for ethical and transparent use. Our working group is closely connected to the Bremen University working group "GenAI in University Teaching", and our Language Centre is part of the University's focus group on using LLMs in Higher Education. On a national level, we are connected with the working group "Foreign Language Teaching in the Age of GenAI" of the national association of language centres in German HE (Arbeitskreis der Sprachenzentren an Hochschulen e.V.). We also seek cooperation and exchange at the international level. For instance, we cooperate with the EALTA[4] Special Interest Group on Artificial Intelligence for Language Assessment, and we recently conducted a project with the School of Modern Languages, University of Cardiff, UK, on the use of GenAI in language courses in HE.

Supporting Teachers

The call for teachers' digital literacy is omnipresent; at the same time, the question of what 'critical AI/digital literacy' actually entails is still under discussion, as outlined above. At the heart of AI literacy is critical reflection, which can be fostered by peer discussions, exchange of practices and feedback from critical friends. Our AI working group, besides working on the strategic level, offers a regular local forum for such reflections and exchange.

Furthermore, in order to widen dialogue and learning opportunities for our teachers, we regularly organise training sessions and workshops. So far, we have invited local university representatives, teacher trainers from other centres in Germany and researchers from abroad. The events addressed different areas of technology and ranged from general insights into GenAI in language teaching to more specific questions, such as the role of GenAI in language assessment. Another workshop gathered arguments for why language learning remains important for humans in the age of GenAI. We also offered hands-on training focusing on the use of specific AI tools.

Within our diverse professional development formats, the category of "best / shared practice" plays an important role. This format offers teachers and other members of the Language Centre the opportunity to share projects they are currently working on, whether it is trying something new in the classroom or just a topic they want to discuss. In these best-practice sessions, we discussed, for instance, the use of mega-prompts or examples of lesson planning or task development using GenAI. Other teachers shared concepts for awareness-raising lessons, particularly for English writing courses. On a more practical level, members of our Language Centre demonstrated tools such as Chat GPT's voice conversation feature.

[4] EALTA, the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment, is a "professional association for language testers in Europe. The purpose of EALTA is to promote the understanding of theoretical principles of language testing and assessment, and the improvement and sharing of testing and assessment practices throughout Europe" (https://ealta.eu/).

With regard to empowering teachers to reflect on and refine their pedagogical approaches, Li et al. (2024) emphasize the essential role of action research as a form of collective reflective inquiry. This approach fosters a clearer understanding of educational practices within specific social contexts. At our Language Centre, a collaborative tutor and coordinator team conducted such an action research project with the aim of establishing GenAI and peer feedback as an integral part of the formative assessment process in academic writing courses at C1.2 level. Insights were gathered using questionnaires and focus group interviews in iterative cycles of action and research. Findings from the interviews show that students perceive peer feedback as meaningful, trustworthy and memorable; it encourages collaboration and interaction and positively impacts the learning process. GenAI feedback, on the other hand, is perceived as helpful in the learning process if it is followed by active engagement by the learner(s) in clarifying why they should accept or reject a tool recommendation. The project also showed that learners understand the limitations of GenAI-produced feedback (see Behrens & Müller-Karabil, in press).

The ongoing individual approaches and projects by teachers to integrate GenAI into their teaching and to engage in critical discussions with students are accompanied by our professional development programme. In order to be able to offer tailored supportwe regularly ask teachers and members of the Centre for their professional development needs to identify relevant areas for further training.

Supporting Students

Knowing how students use GenAI in language learning is important for both institutions and teachers. On the one hand, the use of AI tools may mask learners' true language ability (Voss et al., 2023), which may also have implications for the construct of language proficiency in general. On the other hand, it is important to know why, when and how what kind of AI is being used in order to harmonize lesson planning, learning outcomes and assessment practices. Behrent and Wolfs' study (2025) sheds light on the use of translation tools, showing that almost all students use these tools regularly. This is not surprising - when humans have the opportunity to relieve cognitive load, they do so (Voss et al., 2023). At the same time, the results of the study show that students still need to improve their AI skills and their goal-oriented use of specific tools (e.g., the use of DeepL as an alternative to online dictionaries, despite the fact that translation tools need context in order provide accurate results); a majority of the student participants suggested to include the (correct) use of translation tools in language classes.

For our specific local context, apart from personal feedback, classroom conversations or focus groups within a specific action research project, we have yet too little insights into how students navigate through their language learning journey in the age of GenAI. We plan to fill this gap in the near future through a twofold approach: 1. We recently conducted a survey among our students, focusing on capturing areas of GenAI that

students would like to see integrated or discussed in their language classes. We are interested in their probably quite mixed ideas on what parts of language learning could or should be outsourced to an AI, what areas (synchronous) language teaching in the classroom should focus on, and what an ideal interplay between AI-assisted and human-led teaching and learning could look like. 2. We plan to introduce short self-learning modules that deal with different aspects of GenAI in language learning. Students will be able to work through these online modules individually; at the same time, teachers can integrate the modules into their syllabus and use them as prompts for reflective discussion in class. Our first module targets using ChatGPT voice conversations as a language buddy to improve spontaneous speaking (a skill for which classroom time is often insufficient); the module provides example prompts, advice on privacy, points out opportunities and limitations, and offers open-ended reflection questions. A second module addresses different approaches and strategies for deciding whether to accept or reject suggestions from GenAI feedback tools, e.g., when writing in a second language.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have argued that language learning and language use is at its core a deeply human endeavour, which cannot be outsourced to technology. Rather, the affordances as well as the risks of employing technology in language learning, teaching and assessment have to be carefully analysed and balanced. This serves to harness potential dangers and to meaningfully and critically employ technology in language use of future academics, to ensure ethical and integer tech usage. We also outlined the importance of developing institutional strategies and AI literacy among all participants of the language learning process, in order to prepare language teachers and learners for their new roles in the tech era.

We have exemplified the strategies developed at the institutional level, the supporting measures offered for and developed with teachers as well as the approaches taken to include students in the discussions about meaningful implementations of technologies in language learning for our Language Centre. It is our mission to address the potentials and limitations of tech tools in language education both in our courses and in autonomous learning settings, thus contributing to the development of AI literacy of our teachers, coordinators and students. We also aim to develop awareness among all our stakeholders of how the context in which our students will use their language skills in their later professional lives is changing because of GenAI, and we seek to take these changes into account when formulating learning goals, developing meaningful authentic tasks and designing examinations. Learner-centred approaches with real life learning scenarios, focusing on both the learning process and the learning product, will be more important than ever (Handley, 2024).

We would like to reiterate that the language learning process is socially and culturally situated, encompassing affective, motivational, interactional, intercultural and ethical

aspects (Handley, 2024). Ultimately, language learning and language use serves to develop, maintain and deepen social relationships among humans (Thorne, 2024). We cannot imagine a world in which languaging and the skills to acquire languages are outsourced to computers and digital tools. Hence, we would like to conclude with Kern (2024, p. 530) that

> It is precisely the dimensions of culture, values, and ethics that are lacking in computers. Because AI cannot engage with the world, it cannot be held accountable for what it says. The "meaning" side has been relegated entirely to humans. And that is why human teachers remain, and must remain, at the core of all educational endeavors.

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Publisher's Note
The claims, arguments, and counter-arguments made in this article are exclusively those of the contributing authors. Hence, they do not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the authors' affiliated institutions, or EUROKD as the publisher, the editors and the reviewers of the article.

Acknowledgements
Not applicable.

Funding
Not applicable.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement
Claudia Harsch: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Resources, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing
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Generative AI Use Disclosure Statement
We did not make use of AI when preparing and writing this manuscript.

Ethics Declarations

World Medical Association (WMA) Declaration of Helsinki–Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Participants

We did not involve human participants.

Competing Interests

No, there are no competing interests.

Data Availability

We did not collect any data for the literature synthesis reported here.

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Appendix A

Mission Statement of the Language Centre of the Universities in the Land of Bremen on the Use of GenAI-Based Systems for Teaching and Studying

General Considerations

GenAI-based systems are now widely used in language teaching and learning. We see them as an opportunity for the use in classroom and want to integrate them into everyday language learning in a meaningful and positive way. In doing so, we are guided by the current scientific and legal discourse, within which the transparent use of GenAI applications and questions of academic integrity are important aspects. Accordingly, it is crucial for us to continuously reflect and discuss the potential and the areas of application as well as the limitations and challenges in language learning and language teaching together with learners. In doing so, we consider and evaluate the application scenarios of GenAI in a differentiated manner regarding the level, format and objective of the language learning setting and context.

Focus: Language Course

- GenAI tools should be integrated into the classroom in a constructive and supportive way
- The possibilities and limitations of GenAI tools in language learning should be regularly reflected on with students in the language course
- Strategies for effective, ethical and transparent use should be developed and applied. Central questions of academic integrity should also be included in this discourse.

Focus: Autonomous Learning

GenAI tools offer numerous opportunities for self-learning, as they can be used individually, flexibly and independently of time and place.

- We support learners with professional language learning advice and, in this context, also provide advice on learning strategies and on how to use GenAI application in a supportive way
- We develop thematic workshops on a wide range of possible uses of GenAI tools in autonomous language learning.

Overall, we are working on adapting and aligning the intended learning objectives, taught skills and chosen forms of examination used with the integration of gen AI. In doing so, we are focusing on the social role of language in conveying culture as well as a contemporary examination culture, including the use of GenAI tools.

Appendix B
Declaration of Independent Work and the Use of AI

Declaration
about independent work and the use of AI-based aids in exams at the SZHB

_____, geb. am: _____
Name Date of birth:

Matrikelnummer _____, Sommer-/Wintersemester_____
Matriculation Number Summer/Winter Term

Kurstitel _____
Course Title

Art der Prüfungsleistung/Thema_____
Type of exam /Subject

I. Declaration of Independent Work[5]
I hereby declare that, for the above-mentioned (online) exam,

- I have completed it independently
- I have not used any aids other than those specified
- I have marked all verbatim or paraphrased text passages accordingly

II. Disclosures on the Use of AI-based Electronic Tools - Mandatory Documentation

If AI-based electronic aids were used when completing the examination, these must be documented in a separate appendix in a list as follows:

1. List of the steps in which AI-based aids were used in the present examination (e.g. "Generation of ideas", "Creation of the outline")
2. Documentation of the method of use to ensure traceability (including a list of the "prompts" entered, including the answers generated.
3. Specification of the chapters and sections of the present work in which AI-based tools were used.

The use of these aids, including the type, purpose and scope of use, was done in consultation with the relevant examiner.

Examiner: _____

III. Data Protection Notice for Students
Personal data originating from third parties may not be uploaded to AI-based systems without their consent. Personal data refers to any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person.

I am aware that plagiarism constitutes a disciplinary offense and, as with the attempt to use undocumented AI-based aids (see II), it is considered an attempt to cheat as per the examination regulations. In this case, the examination will be assessed as "insufficient" (5.0).

Ort, Datum _____ Unterschrift: _____
Place, Date **Signature**

[5]Based on
https://www.uniheidelberg.de/md/zegk/iek/studium/arbeiten/erklaerung_zur_hausarbeit.pdf
(19.12.2023)

Annex to the Declaration of Independent Work: Documentation of the used GenAI-tools

I have used the following AI-based systems[6] in the creation of the exam paper:

1. [e.g. ChatGPT (GPT-4.o)]
2. [e.g.. Deepl]
3. ….

I have used the AI systems mentioned above as shown below:

AI Systems Used	Work Step	Description
e.g.. ChatGPT	*Generation of ideas and conception of the examination performance*	*Collection or generation of relevant subtopics or argumentation structures*
e.g.. ChatGPT	*Structuring the text*	*Inspiration for the structure of the examination performance or individual chapters*
e.g. ChatGPT	*Wording of the text*	*Rephrasing of individual paragraphs*
e.g. Deepl	*Translation of text passages*	*First translation of ideas that I formulated in my first language*
z.B. Grammarly	*Revision of the text/text passages*	*Review suggestions for improvement in terms of grammar and vocabulary*
…	…	…

Place, Date, Signature

[6] If you are unsure whether you need to specify a certain AI system used, please contact your teacher.