Paper: Language didactics in the age of generative AI: the case of French

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Abstract

Following and adapting to the high-paced development and dissemination of artificial intelligence (AI) has become a significant activity for teachers, researchers and policymakers alike, as generative AIs have made their entry into children's lives and classrooms. Thus, AIs have captured the imagination of educators as well as initiated concerns about the future of education, specifically with regard to assessment, writing and critical reflection (Peters et al 2023). Language education has been particularly involved in these considerations, as children's interaction with AIs based on large language models underlines the significance of linguistic and communicative competence in shifted, collaborative human-machine relationships (Godwin-Jones 2024). However, though AIs are already entering, forming and affecting schooling, little is still known about the emergent practices in which they are used and how this affects subject didactics.

In this paper we investigate ways in which generative AIs become part of the dynamic of teaching French to 6th formers, following a research and development project in which teacher students were introduced to generative AIs and experimented with ways in which they could be used in classrooms as part of placements in schools[1]. The paper draws on classroom observations and interviews with teacher students in order to understand how prospective language teachers reflect on and use generative AIs and how classroom didactics are formed by theses uses. Our analysis draws on sociomaterial perspectives to understand how language didactics are (re)configured by the inclusion of generative AIs (Suchman 2023). In the case investigated, two AI functionalities became part of working with French vocabulary, ie SkoleGPT, a curated, data-safe GPT, designed by a Danish teacher college, and the Padlet function "I can't draw", an AI-generated image creator. Our analysis contributes with empirical knowledge to the question of how generative AIs affect language didactics.

References

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[1] *Kritisk brug af kunstig intelligens i sprogfagene: kompetenceudvikling af nye lærere og didaktisk udvikling i et elevperspektiv* (Reflective uses of artifical intelligence in language education: teacher students' competence and didactic development in a student perspective) financed by The Danish National Centre for Foreign Languages (NCFF) www.ncff.dk 2024-2025.