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AI ADOPTION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Abstract:

This article explores the growing role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education, focusing on how different AI technologies are reshaping teaching, learning, and administrative tasks for foreign language instructors. It highlights ways these technologies can be integrated into educators' practices. Using a mixed-methods approach, combining a comprehensive literature review with a survey of 22 university educators, the study examines the impact of AI tools and participants' preferences. The findings demonstrate that AI significantly improves foreign language education by providing personalized learning experiences and supporting academic preparation for university educators. However, the study also discusses challenges, including ethical concerns about data privacy, potential algorithmic biases, and the need for faculty training. Overall, the research underscores the importance of carefully implementing AI in higher education to harness its benefits while maintaining a balance between innovation and human-centric teaching methods.

Keywords:

AI, Ethics, Preferences, Higher education, Foreign language teaching

JEL Classification: I23

Introduction

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has gained significant popularity across various sectors, including higher education. With technological advancements, university educators have an array of AI tools to enhance engagement in learning, and improve the overall educational experience. This article digs into how foreign language instructors at universities incorporate AI in the preparatory stages of their work, categorizing its applications and examining their potential to transform teaching and learning practices. AI's role in education is extensive, covering intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive learning platforms, natural language processing tools, predictive analytics for student success, and automated grading systems. Recognizing its benefits, many institutions have adopted AI-driven platforms to refine teaching strategies, elevate learning outcomes, and create more personalized, inclusive educational environments. However, as AI becomes integrated into higher education, debates continue about its advantages and drawbacks. Advocates emphasize its capacity to complement traditional teaching methods by delivering more efficient, accessible, and engaging learning experiences. On the other hand, critics are cautious against overdependence on AI, stressing the importance of preserving the human touch in education—particularly in mentoring and fostering critical thinking. Ethical issues, including concerns about data privacy, further complicate discussions about AI adoption. Thus, this article examines the multifaceted role of AI as a tool for foreign language teaching in higher education and identifies the educators preferences of certain AI-driven tools. It offers a review of its applications, impacts, challenges, and future directions.

Methodology

This research employs a mixed-method approach to collect both quantitative and qualitative data about the use of AI-powered tools by foreign language instructors in higher education. This helped explore how extensively university educators utilize AI technologies and evaluate their impact on student learning outcomes, teaching practices, and administrative efficiency. The methods include a survey among educators and a literature review. A survey was conducted with 22 (twenty-two) participants, all educators teaching various languages at European higher education institutions in Latvia (2 participants), Romania (6), the Czech Republic (2), Bulgaria (6), Sweden (1), Greece (4), and Cyprus (1). Of these, 20 were female and 2 were male. Regarding teaching experience, 7 participants had been teaching for 3 to 6 years, 4 from 7 to 11 years, while 9 had 12 to 18 years of experience. The survey took place during an international forum in Paris in November 2024, which focused on the effective integration of AI into university teaching practices. It examined educators' experiences with AI tools in their work, such as adaptive learning platforms and automated grading systems. The questionnaire included both quantitative items (scored on a scale from 1, "Not at all," to 5, "Mostly yes") and open-ended questions, allowing participants to share detailed feedback about their experiences and requirements related to AI applications. The survey explored educators' preferences for current and prospective AI tools, focusing on their functionalities and purposes in teaching practices. On the other hand, a literature review was conducted utilizing academic databases such as the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). Studies were selected based on their relevance, publication date (2016 onward), and focus on AI-powered applications in higher education, particularly in the context of foreign language teaching and learning.

Findings

The survey findings have been organized based on sections related to the functionalities of AI-driven tools, uncovering several key trends in university educators' preferences for utilizing these tools in language teaching in higher education. Eight types of study materials were

examined and discussed. Respondents shared their preferences for the AI tools they found most effective during the preparatory phase prior to engaging with university students in the classroom.

Lesson Planning Tools. The survey showed that all educators used to prepare lesson plans spending hours on searching and clustering study materials. So they almost unanimously (94%) voted for MagicSchool.AI which is an advanced AI lesson planning tool that revolutionizes the way educators create and customize lesson plans. It offers Personalized Plans, tailoring lessons to meet the unique learning needs of each student, ensuring that every lesson is relevant and effective. With its rich database, MagicSchool.AI provides a vast array of activities, assessments, and multimedia content, offering teachers a comprehensive resource to enhance their lessons. Additionally, the tool's Easy Adaptation feature allows plans to be seamlessly adjusted to accommodate different learning styles, ensuring that every student has an opportunity to thrive. MagicSchool.AI empowers teachers to create dynamic, engaging lessons with ease, making it an indispensable tool for any classroom.

Grammar Exercise Tools. Nearly 55% of respondents favor platforms like Grammarly, which use AI to enhance learning through personalized exercises. Grammarly customizes language activities to align with individual proficiency levels, addressing users' specific strengths and weaknesses. By incorporating gamified elements, it motivates consistent daily practice and promotes continuous learning. Additionally, Grammarly provides writing suggestions that adapt to user input, enabling students to refine their skills with real-time feedback. These tools encourage active learning by helping students correct mistakes and deepen their understanding, significantly improving their writing proficiency and confidence. Another popular format for grammar exercises, highly appreciated by the respondents, includes AI applications for worksheets due to their ability to provide instant feedback. This customization ensures that educators can address diverse student needs while saving valuable time. Diffit emerged as a favorite (72%) for several reasons: teachers can upload various types of content, from articles to PDFs, and Diffit analyzes this material to create versions suited to different reading levels, typically indicated by grade. The platform also identifies and explains complex vocabulary, generates comprehension questions to assess understanding, provides concise summaries, and offers translation capabilities in over 60 languages, fostering inclusivity in diverse classrooms.

AI Tools for Image Editing. Half of the respondents rely on AI tools such as Remove.bg, as this tool simplifies image editing by automating complex processes like background removal and photo enhancement. Remove.bg enables users to remove image backgrounds within seconds, making it easier to create polished visuals for presentations and instructional materials. While these tools offer significant time savings, caution is necessary to avoid over-editing, which can detract from the authenticity of images. Additionally, educators must remain mindful of copyright and licensing considerations when using AI-generated visuals or modifying existing content. Upholding intellectual property laws is crucial for maintaining ethical standards in education. Furthermore, university educators can utilize these AI editing tools to design diverse visual materials that cater to various learning styles. By integrating visuals that complement textual information, instructors can enhance the learning experience and foster deeper understanding among students.

AI Tools for Video Editing. Only 15% of respondents use video editing software in their teaching practices. They favor applications such as CapCut and Canva. Capcut is a powerful video editing tool that enables users to create dynamic multimedia content with ease. With its user-friendly interface and a wide array of features, including video trimming, effects, transitions, and music, CapCut allows creators to produce engaging videos for social media or other platforms. Canva, on the other hand, focuses on integrating authentic language usage

into its design tools. It offers a variety of templates for creating visually appealing graphics, presentations, and marketing materials, while ensuring that the language used is clear, professional, and tailored to the target audience. Both CapCut and Canva are essential tools for content creators looking to enhance their digital projects with high-quality visuals and compelling messaging.

AI Tools for Improving Reading and Writing Skills. The tool that was most favoured by the respondents was Twee (65%). This is an innovative tool designed to enhance both writing and reading skills, fostering creativity and collaboration. One of its standout features is Collaborative Writing, which allows users to co-create stories in real time, promoting engagement and creativity among participants. The tool also supports group projects, enabling both individual and group-based tasks that encourage critical thinking and teamwork. For reading improvement, Twee offers reading analysis, transforming video content into interactive discussions or post-reading quizzes to deepen comprehension. Moreover, Twee is excellent in question creation, allowing users to quickly generate questions for any YouTube video in seconds, making it an excellent resource for studying and review. It also features text generation, which can produce dialogues, stories, letters, or articles on any subject and for any skill level, offering flexibility for various educational needs. Additionally, Twee enables the rapid creation of multiple-choice, open-ended, and TRUE/FALSE tests. To enhance engagement, Twee proposes discussion questions and intriguing facts that spark thoughtful conversations, making it a powerful tool for boosting both writing and reading skills. The second most favoured tool was QuillBot (46%). The latter offers paraphrasing, grammar checking, and summarizing. It is beneficial as it helps learners improve their writing skills and overall fluency. It can also be used as an English teacher's assistant, correcting grammar and sentence structure.

Text to Presentation Tools. Most respondents quickly identified three AI-driven presentation tools – Genially (75%), Prezi (72%) and Gamma (70%). Genially is a versatile platform designed to help users create interactive presentations, infographics, and other engaging visual content. It allows for the integration of multimedia elements, such as videos, animations, and interactive features, making it ideal for creating dynamic, attention-grabbing presentations. Prezi, on the other hand, offers a unique, scalable canvas that supports nonlinear storytelling, allowing users to zoom in and out on various points of their presentation for a more immersive experience. Gamma takes a different approach by simplifying the presentation creation process, so that slides are directly generated from text, making it easier and faster for users to create professional-looking presentations without the need for extensive design skills. Together, these tools provide diverse solutions for creating engaging, interactive presentations.

Interactive Assignment Creation Tools. In the last two years interactive assignments have become more popular among university students and educators are obliged to respond to the latter's needs. The teachers in the survey chose TeacherMade tool (62%) as an innovative interactive assignment creation tool that simplifies the process of developing engaging educational content. It provides a wide range of templates, allowing teachers to easily design assignments suited to their classroom needs and students' levels of language acquisition. With the ability to integrate Multimedia elements like images, videos, and audio, TeacherMade enhances the learning experience, making assignments more dynamic and interactive. The tool also offers customization, enabling educators to effortlessly adapt and modify existing learning resources, ensuring that each assignment is personalized to meet the specific needs of their students. TeacherMade empowers teachers to create interactive, engaging assignments that foster a deeper understanding of the material.

Grading Tools. The respondents did not seem to make use of grading applications. Only 5% of them were familiar with such tools and they preferred CoGrader designed to streamline the

grading process for educators. With its remarkable efficiency, it can save hours or even days of time by grading multiple assignments simultaneously, allowing teachers to focus more on teaching. This tool ensures objectivity by maintaining fairness and consistency across all assessments, eliminating any potential human biases that may influence grading. Additionally, CoGrader seamlessly integrates with various Learning Management Systems, making it incredibly easy for educators to adopt without disrupting existing workflows. Its user-friendly interface and compatibility with popular platforms make it a valuable asset for teachers looking to enhance the grading process while ensuring accuracy and impartiality.

Most Popular AI Tools for Foreign Language Educators. The survey highlights a strong interest among university educators in integrating AI into their academic activities. A noticeable trend indicates that educators frequently use AI applications that assist in teaching, content creation, research, and administrative tasks, relying on familiar tools as they become more accustomed to their features and functionalities. **DIFFIT** is an intuitive, easy-to-use platform designed specifically for educators, streamlining the process of creating teaching materials. With its user-friendly interface, it allows teachers to quickly design and customize resources, saving valuable time. DIFFIT's focus on efficiency ensures that educators can spend less time on preparation and more time engaging with their students. **MagicSchool.AI** simplifies lesson planning by providing personalized resources that align with educational standards. It allows educators to effortlessly create tailored lesson plans that meet the specific needs of their students, ensuring that each lesson is both engaging and effective. With its focus on personalized learning, MagicSchool.AI helps teachers save time while delivering high-quality, standards-based content that supports student success. It's an invaluable tool for educators looking to enhance their teaching while staying aligned with curriculum goals**. LingoTeach.ai** is an excellent resource for enhancing skills in reading comprehension, listening comprehension, understanding parts of speech, and text analysis. The platform offers a variety of tools and exercises designed to improve language proficiency by focusing on key aspects of language learning. Whether instructors are working on interpreting texts, analyzing spoken content, or grasping grammar fundamentals, LingoTeach.ai provides tailored resources to help learners develop a deeper understanding of the language.

Discussion

Impact of AI tools on teaching and research. Educators of foreign languages in higher education institutions find AI tools indispensable not only for routine tasks but also for advancing innovative pedagogies. The survey results show a strong preference for tools that enhance productivity, simplify complex tasks, and engage students more effectively. While these tools have limitations, particularly regarding nuanced human insight and creative instruction, educators generally find them valuable in reducing the workload associated with content creation, research, and administrative tasks. The other tendency which stands out of all is the desire of university educators to spend more time exploring the functionalities of AI tools for their professional purposes.

Ethical Considerations. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into higher education, concerns regarding data privacy, bias, and accountability have taken center stage. AI systems require vast amounts of personal data to operate effectively, raising questions about how this data is collected, stored, and utilized. Additionally, there is a risk that AI algorithms may reinforce existing biases in education, particularly if the training data reflects societal inequalities. To address these issues, institutions must establish clear policies and guidelines to ensure responsible and transparent AI use. This includes granting educators and students greater control over their data and designing AI systems to promote fairness and equity.

Faculty Training and Professional Development. One major challenge identified in this study is the lack of adequate faculty training on AI tools. While AI has the potential to significantly enhance teaching and learning, its effectiveness depends on how well it is implemented in the classroom. University educators, especially those teaching foreign languages, require proper training and support to use AI tools effectively and to develop teaching strategies that make use of AI's strengths. Approximately 85% of respondents indicated they had received minimal training on integrating AI tools into their teaching practices, and 15% reported receiving no training at all. Institutions should prioritize professional development programs to equip faculty with the knowledge and skills needed to incorporate AI into their teaching. This includes not only technical training on using AI tools but also guidance on course design and assessment strategies that maximize AI's potential. Nearly all respondents, with only two exceptions, expressed a strong reliance on university-provided training and highlighted the need for support in their feedback. Common suggestions included "I definitely need training at my university", "I feel helpless with AI, so I would appreciate an introductory course", "Training courses will be valuable for us university educators", "There should be an expert at the university to consult whenever needed", "Regular short seminars at the university, for example two per semester, would help", "Local webinars or seminars focused on AI functions suitable for my faculty will be ideal." Respondents frequently mentioned areas such as improving skills in preparing grammar exercises and tests. This feedback underscores the importance of in-service training and should serve as motivation for university authorities to initiate professional development opportunities for their staff.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence has demonstrated its immense value in higher education, offering significant improvements in personalized learning, teaching effectiveness, and administrative efficiency. With thoughtful planning and mindful implementation, AI has the potential to revolutionize foreign language education in higher learning, fostering more engaging, personalized, and effective environments for both students and educators alike. Through intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive learning platforms, and real-time feedback mechanisms, AI can cater to individual learning needs, helping students progress at their own tempo. It can also support language instructors by automating grading tasks, providing data-driven insights into student performance, and suggesting resources tailored to specific learning styles. However, several challenges must be addressed to ensure the successful integration of AI in higher education. Ethical concerns such as bias in algorithms and privacy issues, must be carefully considered. Additionally, faculty training is crucial to ensure educators are equipped to use these tools effectively while maintaining a critical awareness of their limitations. Institutions should strive to balance the efficiency of AI with the preservation of the human element in education. While AI can enhance learning, it is essential that it complements, rather than replaces, the role of educators, who bring essential human qualities like empathy, creativity, and critical thinking to the learning process. Future research should focus on long-term studies to measure AI's impact on learning outcomes, while also exploring strategies for smooth integration into educational systems that uphold principles of equity, inclusivity, and ethical standards.

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