

Redefining, Revitalizing or Revolutionizing Language Education? That Is the Question

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ABSTRACT

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are transforming language education in university settings. Unlike previous technologies that primarily supported teaching or enriched learning environments, generative AI introduces a qualitative leap that challenges long-standing pedagogical methods, epistemological assumptions, educator perspectives and institutional structures. This article outlines the evolution of technology use in Italian university language centres, highlighting how AI demands a rethinking of educational objectives, teaching roles, and assessment practices. It explores AI's pedagogical potential—including personalization, automated feedback, and cultural-linguistic inclusivity—while emphasizing the ethical and institutional challenges posed by a foreseeable rapid adoption of the new tools. Drawing on frameworks from UNESCO and international initiatives, the article argues for a human-centred, collaborative approach where AI supports but does not replace educators. Finally, it shares practical examples from the author's teaching practice that illustrate how AI can foster critical thinking and learner autonomy within a new triangular paradigm involving teachers, students, and AI systems.

KEYWORDS

Generative Artificial Intelligence, University Language Centres, Pedagogical Innovation, AI and Language Learning, Ethical AI Integration

1. TECHNOLOGIES, AI AND ITALIAN LANGUAGE CENTRES

University language centres have always been at the forefront of research and pedagogical practices involving new technologies. Historically, this has happened with technologies such as pictures in textbooks, audio recordings on tape or cassette, comparative active audio labs, the use of audio on CD-ROM or DVD, audiovisual support on cassette or digital media, and computerized labs. This was largely due to the need to introduce contexts and authentic language experiences into the classroom. Twenty-three years ago, I wrote my first article on the use of the Internet for sharing experiences among Language Centres and thirteen years ago, in my paper at the 2012 AICLU conference at the University of Calabria, I spoke about new technologies and the possibilities offered by online teaching. Many other contributions explored this emerging technological domain. Since then, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have incrementally reshaped how we teach and learn languages. However, the advent of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) is generally not felt as just another technological advancement but as a qualitative leap with the potential to fundamentally redefine the epistemological foundations, pedagogical practices, and institutional structures of language education. Is this just an evolution that, once more, introduces a new technology? Does AI redefine parameters and revitalize language teaching or—as suggested by different voices—a true revolution? This perspective sparks intriguing possibilities, but it is also associated with a sense of unease. Unlike previous technologies that augmented the teacher's role or enriched the learning environment, generative AI challenges conventional roles, disrupts existing curricula, and introduces ethical, cognitive, and institutional tensions that demand urgent reflection. In this article, we explore how this ongoing revolution compels us to rethink our methodologies and educational objectives within language centres, particularly in university settings. Drawing from examples, analogies, institutional initiatives, and critical literature, we aim to chart key features of an evolving educational narrative that could become part of our professional landscape ahead of its governing frameworks.

This paper is not meant to be a complete survey of AI's pedagogical potential. Instead, its main objective is to explore what language teachers and centres can do with AI—a topic we will delve into in the next sections. Moreover, the pedagogical potential of AI is also rapidly evolving, with its parameters likely to change significantly and very quickly.

Nevertheless, in outlining the topic, it is worth mentioning some of the main areas of research and emerging themes on the use of AI in language learning (Tian & Wang 2025; Wan Yee & Ju Seong 2024). The following non-exhaustive list is intended as a general framework for further exploration.

Key Areas of AI in Language Learning:

- *Studies on personalization and adaptive learning* show how AI platforms can analyze learner data in real time to tailor exercises, provide immediate feedback, and adjust content difficulty or scheduling to individual proficiency and pace (Peng & Spector 2019; Tumaini et al. 2021; Malik & Jangir 2025; Sangkala & Mardonovna 2024; Strielkowski 2025; Feng 2025).
- *Studies on automated assessment and real-time feedback* explore AI based continuous monitoring of language skills like writing, pronunciation, and comprehension, aiding learner autonomy and timely instructional adjustments (Lee & Lee 2024; Alharbi 2023; Feng 2025).
- Studies on how the integration of *immersion and multimodal learning* through augmented and virtual reality can enhance memorization and cultural engagement by activating multiple language skills simultaneously via text, audio, video, and interactivity (Parmaxi 2020; Namaziandost et al. 2024; Crompton 2024).
- Studies on *microlearning and flexibility* show how AI-powered apps deliver short, focused lessons that accommodate learners' limited time and encourage consistent study habits (Hug 2022; Buchem & Hamelmann 2010; Kohnke 2023; Zanca & Staggini 2025).
- Studies on *AI-based gamification and adaptive challenges* show how these tools maintain motivation through rewards and personalized difficulty levels aligned with individual performance (Yie & Sanmugam 2025).
- Studies on the growing emphasis on *transversal skills and AI literacy* encourage learners not only to acquire a language but also to critically understand AI tools' functions and limitations (Zawacki et al. 2019; Ng et al. 2021).
- Studies on *inclusivity, diversity, and global collaboration* highlight how AI systems can be designed to address special needs and cultural-lin-

guistic diversity while promoting equitable access through international partnerships (Navas-Bonilla et al. 2025).

Finally, other studies based on *specific instructional practices* stress some of the above-mentioned capabilities of AI in advanced areas of linguistic awareness and learning which we will discuss in more detail later in this paper. These include, for example:

- *Prompt-based writing activities* can encourage students to develop genre awareness by modifying AI-generated prompts to produce texts in different styles, fostering versatility in writing skills.
- *AI-mediated peer review*, where learners can critically assess AI-generated outputs and suggest improvements, enhancing their evaluative and metacognitive skills (Guo et al. 2024; Topping et al. 2025).
- AI-based exploration of *intercultural pragmatics* by simulating responses across different registers and helping students understand context-appropriate language use.
- *Translation critique exercises* based on the comparison of AI-generated translations with human versions, enabling learners to identify cultural nuances and errors, which deepens their intercultural competence.

Most research papers also include considerations about *ethical issues*, such as algorithmic bias, privacy, sustainability, and the necessity of maintaining human oversight to ensure pedagogical quality (Reich & Mehta 2020; Macinska & Vinkler 2024; Pava 2025). These issues include biased and inaccurate outputs, plagiarism, copyright infringement, unequal distribution, the power of AI tool owners, manipulation, and the loss of the human/social dimension. On the other hand, there seems to be a vast consensus on AI's potential not only to enrich language learning but also to promote critical thinking and active learner engagement (Macinska & Vinkler 2024; Moorhouse & Wong 2025).

Given that AI will be used in a variety of settings, I would like to return to our initial questions: *What can we do with AI?* and *How is our work going to change in the AI era?* I believe the significant impact AI is destined to have on our work, in terms of both identity and deontological implications, requires deep reflection. This leads us to question the motivations behind our work, the narrative we tell ourselves and others about it, and the future we envision. Fundamental questions in this narrative are:

- What is the story we tell ourselves about ourselves?
- How is this story going to change because of artificial intelligence?

- Are our students learning (from us) what they will need in the twenty-first century?

Questions of this type have likely touched the mind of anyone engaged in teaching, especially in language teaching. This is probably because generative artificial intelligence interfaces with us using language—a language that appears spontaneous, natural, and human, not merely a technological reproduction of human models. In our imagination, this represents something very different from the technological challenges we have faced in the past. This time, it's not about redefining or revitalizing teaching, but perhaps a true revolution.

2. A NEW NARRATIVE: MASLOW'S HAMMER

All widely used technologies have a dimension of *prescriptivity*. They tend to quickly shift from being useful tools to becoming indispensable, eventually limiting the possibility of considering other ways of seeing reality. We are all aware of how difficult our daily lives would be without smartphones. Similarly, artificial intelligence will likely become a new and powerful *linguistic calculator* for every need related to foreign language use and probably even for our native language. We might become AI addicts and not be able to conceive language learning without it. Abraham Maslow described a similar psychological process with a revealing expression, later often referred to as *The Law of the Hammer* or *The Law of the Instrument*:

I remember seeing an elaborate and complicated automatic washing machine for automobiles that did a beautiful job of washing them. But it could do only that, and everything else that got into its clutches was treated as if it were an automobile to be washed. I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail (Maslow 1966: 15)

The obvious risk with AI is that we use it for everything and are caught unprepared and become lost when linguistic problems do not correspond to the 'nails' that this new hammer can handle. It will be the educators' task to help learners understand that not all linguistic problems can be solved by artificial intelligence. Therefore, it is crucial in the new narrative of our work—which we are exploring—to be aware of how *this new linguistic calculator* might be perceived by the teachers, students and stakeholders involved.

To this end, the SAMR Model (Puentedura 2013) offers a useful framework, identifying four ways to integrate new technological *hammers* into teaching: Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition. Unlike

previous technology, in most cases, AI will be perceived—and this will be the first time it happens so effectively—as a tool that can substitute or augment our linguistic abilities or shortcomings and not just modify or redefine learning. We already know that AI can be used to interact in languages we do not know or to translate and write texts in linguistic varieties or at proficiency levels we do not possess. Currently, this can be done via smartphones, computers, or tablets, but in the future, it might happen through a chip implanted somewhere in our body. In these modes, the new linguistic calculator replaces the need to learn a language or improve one's linguistic skills. The new narrative could thus claim—and is already sometimes claiming—that learning or teaching a foreign language is no longer so important and can be substituted. Some advertisements for products already available online seem aligned with this narrative, offering AI-based apps that do not foresee human teacher involvement (e.g. Teacher AI¹, CallTeacher² and Talkpal³, advertised as “The Most Efficient Way to Learn a Language”). Another possible mode of the new narrative is to integrate AI into more traditional learning pathways. This perspective, which I find much more interesting in the triangular collaboration outlined later in this paper, sees AI as a buddy, a personal assistant available 24/7 to help improve our language learning journeys. In this view, we will use the new hammer, but we will decide which nails to work with. An interesting example is the Khanmigo⁴ project, an AI-powered teaching assistant, unfortunately not yet available in Italy. This new narrative impacts not only the users of the new hammer—that is, learners and teachers—but also the stakeholders involved. Employers, universities, ministries, companies, and institutions might be led to think that the best way to acquire a language is through tutorials and apps like those described earlier, rather than through traditional courses. Traditional learning, and perhaps even all academic learning, risk being perceived as obsolete and time-consuming.

With a perhaps bold but suggestive parallel, we can refer to what Sherry Turkle wrote about the spread of social media, which simulate real social interaction. She describes a process by which even our social life risks being perceived as an obsolete and time-consuming activity. The virtual dimension risks no longer being narrated as a form of support or integration – better than isolation- but as simply better or better than any other possible social life:

1 <https://yourteacher.ai/>;

2 <https://genai.works/applications/callteacher>

3 <https://talkpal.ai/>

4 <https://www.khanmigo.ai/>

In talking about sociable robots, I described an arc that went from seeing simulation as better than nothing to simply better, as offering companions that could meet one's exact emotional requirements. Something similar is happening online. (Sherry Turkle 2011: 160)

Here, in the domain of connectivity, we meet the narrative of better than nothing becoming simply better. You might have begun your online life in a spirit of compensation. If you were lonely and isolated, it seemed better than nothing. But online, you're slim, rich, and buffed up, and you feel you have more opportunities than in the real world. So, here, too, better than nothing can become better than something—or better than anything. (Sherry Turkle 2011: 12)

Similarly, the new hammer, the new linguistic calculator, can be perceived as better than any other way of learning and an alternative to traditional learning paths, which inevitably involves phases of imperfection and inadequacy. This perception stems from several undeniable factors. First, AI-powered language tools provide immediate responses, non-judgmental feedback, and constant availability, creating a learning environment that may feel less intimidating and more supportive than traditional face-to-face interactions. Learners can practice speaking, writing, or listening skills without fear of embarrassment or social pressure, which can significantly boost confidence and motivation. Furthermore, AI systems can tailor interactions to individual learner profiles, adapting difficulty, style, and content to suit personal preferences and needs. This high degree of personalization often surpasses what is feasible in conventional classroom settings, where one teacher must manage multiple students with diverse abilities and learning styles. The “safe space” created by AI interaction allows learners to experiment, make mistakes, and receive corrective feedback instantly, fostering a sense of progress and mastery. While these advantages are real and promising, it is crucial to maintain a critical perspective. The human dimension of language learning—including cultural nuances, emotional intelligence, physical contact and spontaneous social interaction—remains difficult to replicate fully with AI and is still the main motivator for language learning. Educators and learners alike must be aware that AI is a powerful tool, but not a wholesale substitute for human guidance, nuanced feedback, and the rich interpersonal experiences that shape communicative competence.

In conclusion, the perception of AI as “better than anything” and the marketing that promotes this idea reflect a transformative moment in language education. The challenge ahead lies in integrating AI's strengths with human pedagogical insight to modify, redefine and augment our teaching and learning processes and create balanced, effective, and ethical learning experiences. In this perspective, institutional support is fundamental.

3. ENVISIONING THE FUTURE OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION: LESSONS FROM THE POCKET CALCULATOR

The term *language calculator* used above is not random: it stems from reading an article by Urlaub and Dessein (2022) that can help us understand what impact AI will have by drawing an analogy with the introduction of the pocket electronic calculator—a much less complex technology but one that profoundly changed teaching perspectives. In their article, focusing not on AI but on Google Translate, they argue that the gradual and intentional integration of the pocket calculator into education coincided with a rethinking of educational objectives. This shift moved away from emphasizing basic arithmetic skills toward teaching students to solve problems through a combination of mathematical thinking and human-machine collaboration. This analogy is instructive: calculators did not eliminate arithmetic instruction but gradually redefined curricula, educational policies, and numeracy goals, enabling higher-level teaching objectives through an innovative machine-human *collaboration*. Although such a gradual transition may be difficult to replicate with AI—whose *disruption* of educational systems is expected to be rapid and widespread—the other elements highlighted by Urlaub and Dessein provide valuable guidance for shaping the new educational narrative. In particular, there is a critical need to rethink educational goals, supported strongly by institutions, allowing some basic skills to be deemphasized while promoting more complex learning objectives through a synergy of critical thinking and human-AI collaboration.

Most likely, as echoed by many experts, AI will enable the creation of more ambitious curricula and facilitate learners' linguistic awareness and knowledge by personalizing, optimizing, and accelerating learning paths and modalities. However, it is essential to remain mindful of the potentially pervasive nature of this new tool. Focusing on problem-solving through a combination of linguistic thinking and human-machine collaboration, with an orientation toward advanced and higher-level goals, represents a promising opportunity to enhance learning outcomes, learner agency, and metacognitive awareness.

3.1 INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO AI IN EDUCATION: GLOBAL INITIATIVES AND EMERGING FRAMEWORKS

As mentioned in the above work by Urlaub and Dessein, institutional support is fundamental in helping with the change that awaits us and the creation of new narratives and is something we all should be investigating and solicit-

ing. Indeed, the accelerating integration of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational contexts has already prompted a range of institutional and supranational responses. These initiatives reflect not only the opportunities AI presents but also the urgent need to address its ethical, pedagogical, and societal implications. From universities to global organisations, emerging frameworks and pilot projects are beginning to define how education systems can adapt to AI in ways that uphold core educational values while embracing innovation. A prominent example comes from the Russell Group⁵, which has issued a set of principles on the use of generative AI tools in higher education, an initiative felt both as urgent and necessary also in Italian universities. The main headings of these principles highlight a clear institutional commitment to responsible and inclusive AI integration:

- Universities will support students and staff to become AI-literate.
- Staff should be equipped to support students to use generative AI tools effectively and appropriately in their learning experience.
- Universities will adapt teaching and assessment to incorporate the ethical use of generative AI and support equal access.
- Universities will ensure academic rigour and integrity is upheld.
- Universities will work collaboratively to share best practice as the technology and its application in education evolves.

This framework recognizes that policymakers need to rethink teaching and assessment methods while ensuring equitable access and maintaining academic integrity. The emphasis on sharing best practices reflects the evolving nature of AI and its applications in education. However, these principles must be translated into specific procedures, rules, and practices tailored to educational contexts, with university language centres being among those involved. At the European level, specific projects have begun to translate these frameworks into practical training. One notable initiative is AI4T (AI for Teachers)⁶, a Key Action 3 Erasmus+ project developed by France, Slovenia, Italy, Ireland, and Luxembourg “to contribute to training on AI in education for and by teachers and school leaders on a perimeter voluntarily restricted to mathematics, science, and modern English language in high school (pupils aged 15–16)”. The collaboration and exchange of information among teachers and Language Centres is never stressed enough. Another interesting European

5 <https://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/policy/policy-briefings/principles-use-generative-ai-tools-education>

6 <https://www.ai4t.eu>

tool in this respect is represented by the European Digital Education Hub⁷ which has been established as a collaborative platform to facilitate exchange across stakeholders. The Hub promotes innovation, research, and best practice sharing, contributing to a broader European strategy for digital transformation in education, with AI as a central element. At the global level the issue is largely discussed. The United Nations and UNESCO, for instance, are very active in this respect and have included AI and digital transformation within the broader framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)⁸, which aims to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The corresponding Thematic Action Tracks⁹ identified by the UN Education Summit reinforce the multifaceted nature of the challenge and explicitly include AI and digital learning in one of the tracks:

Action Track 1: Inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools

Action Track 2: Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development

Action Track 3: Teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession

Action Track 4: Digital learning and transformation

Action Track 5: Financing of education

The equal representation of other relevant issues, such as inclusivity and equality, sustainable development and lifelong learning, the support to teachers and education and education financing underlines the importance of a systemic approach, where other elements are equally or more important than AI itself for the future of education and education systems. The emphasis on financing education and supporting the teachers and the teaching profession is worth noting. Very sensibly, in Action track 3 below teachers are defined as essential for achieving learning outcomes, SDG 4 goals, and the transformation of education, but they need professional development opportunities and face a progressively reduced status, harder working conditions, and a lack of both autonomy and opportunities for leadership:

Action Track 3: Teachers, teaching, and the teaching profession

Teachers are essential for achieving learning outcomes, and for achieving SDG 4 and the transformation of education. But teachers and education personnel are

7 <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan/european-digital-education-hub>

8 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>

9 <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/action-tracks>

confronted by four major challenges: teacher shortages; lack of professional development opportunities; low status and working conditions; and lack of capacity to develop teacher leadership, autonomy and innovation.

Accelerating progress toward SDG 4 and transforming education require that there is an adequate number of teachers to meet learners' needs, and all education personnel are trained, motivated, and supported. This can only be possible when education is adequately funded, and policies recognize and support the teaching profession, to improve their status and working conditions.¹⁰

Action Track 5 emphasises the importance of properly financing education around the world, an issue that requires no further comment and deserves to be shared and supported:

Action Track 5: Financing of education

While global education spending has grown overall, it has been thwarted by high population growth, the surmounting costs of managing education during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the diversion of aid to other emergencies, leaving a massive global education financial gap. In this context, the first step toward transformation is to urge funders to redirect resources back to education to close the funding gap. Following that, countries must have significantly increased and sustainable financing for achieving SDG 4 and that these resources must be equitably and effectively allocated and monitored. Addressing the gaps in education financing requires policy actions in three key areas: (1) mobilizing more resources, especially domestic, (2) increasing efficiency and equity of allocations and expenditures, and (3) improving education financing data. Finally, determining which areas needs to be financed, and how, will be informed by recommendations from each of the other four tracks.¹¹

Action Track 4 specifically addresses the importance of technologies, including AI for the future of education, while stressing the importance of using ICTs and AI to improve equality and inclusion in a world where a large number of learners cannot yet have access to internet at home:

Action Track 4: Digital learning and transformation

The COVID-19 crisis drove unprecedented innovations in remote learning through harnessing digital technologies. At the same time, digital divides excluded many from learning, with more than two-thirds of school-age learners (1.3 billion children) without internet access at home. These inequities in access

10 <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/action-tracks>

11 <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/action-tracks>

meant some groups, such as young women and girls, were left out of learning opportunities.

Digital transformation requires harnessing technology as part of larger systemic efforts to transform education, making it more inclusive, equitable, effective, relevant, and sustainable. Investments and action in digital learning should be guided by the three core principles outlined in the 2021 Rewired Global Declaration on Connectivity in Education:

- Centre the most marginalized;
- Free, high-quality digital education content;
- Pedagogical innovation and change.¹²

Obviously, if we envision a world in which teaching relies significantly on the integration of artificial intelligence tools, the fact that a large portion of the global population does not have access to the internet or adequate AI tools represents a major obstacle to the sustainability and inclusivity of any project.

Building on these global objectives and grounded in the conviction that Education is expected to face a global crisis in the coming years and requires urgent action by policy makers,¹³ UNESCO has taken a more specific and very interesting stance on AI in education by addressing it as different and distinct from other digital technologies. Introducing its activities in this area, UNESCO makes an interesting claim on the difference between AI and previous ICTs:

AI is distinct from other digital technologies due to its potential to profoundly reshape societies, economies and education systems. Unlike conventional information and communication technologies (ICTs), AI poses unique ethical and social challenges, such as issues of fairness, transparency, privacy and accountability. Additionally, AI's unique ability to mimic human behaviour directly impacts human agency. These challenges require dedicated competencies beyond the scope of traditional digital literacy¹⁴.

AI can reshape identities, societies, economies, education, and personal lives. It challenges our sense of agency, our ability to judge events and information, our privacy and ability to act socially and autonomously. This position while probably controversial, is largely shareable. AI is certainly different from previous ICTs, poses unique ethical and social challenges and requires

12 <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/action-tracks>

13 <https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/transforming-education-un-country-teams-leading-charge>

14 <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/what-you-need-know-about-unescos-new-ai-competency-frameworks-students-and-teachers>

dedicated complex competencies and awareness. From this perspective, it is worthwhile to take some time to describe the UNESCO Competency Frameworks, which are specifically designed to address the challenges and risks posed by AI and are intended to guide teachers and learners. UNESCO has developed an AI Competency Framework for Students¹⁵ (AI CFS) and one for Teachers¹⁶ (AI CFT). Both frameworks are grounded in a humanistic and ethical approach aimed at promoting critical thinking, ethical considerations, and a responsible use of AI technologies. The frameworks are graded for levels of competence and kind of skill/content and resemble the highly successful Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning (Council of Europe 2001, 2020).

Table 1. The AI competency framework high-level structure: aspects and progression levels

Aspects	Progression		
	Acquire	Deepen	Create
1. Human-centred mindset	Human agency	Human accountability	Social responsibility
2. Ethics of AI	Ethical principles	Safe and responsible use	Co-creating ethical rules
3. AI foundations and applications	Basic AI techniques and applications	Application skills	Creating with AI
4. AI pedagogy	AI-assisted teaching	AI-pedagogy integration	AI-enhanced pedagogical transformation
5. AI for professional development	AI enabling lifelong professional learning	AI to enhance organizational learning	AI to support professional transformation

Table 1. An example of the AI CFT description of levels of competence: higher level aspects of progression.

The AI CFT is far-reaching. It probably should be further detailed to address specific competences, and its advanced goals seem challenging to achieve. But it is “designed to nurture the students’ and teachers’ human-centred awareness of the social impacts of AI, as well as their capacity to adapt to and accommodate the evolving nature of AI in education.” (p.14) and represents a valuable indication of the general competences needed. Besides the effort to preserve the essential human dimension of education it stresses the importance of the already mentioned *human-machine collaboration* and the fact

15 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391105>

16 <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391104>

that *AI should not be framed as a substitute for human educators* who cannot be considered as replaceable in the era of the new *hammer*.

To uphold social values and accountability in the AI era, it is also essential to recognize the indispensability of interaction and collaboration between teachers and learners as being at the core of education. AI tools should never be designed to replace the legitimate accountability of teachers in education. (p.18)

Again, this calls for something we outlined as an inevitable challenge of the current AI revolution: a reconsideration of the roles and skills required of educators and the involvement of policy-makers in the process:

Given the potential AI holds to transform teaching and learning, policy-makers should urgently review and iteratively (re)define teachers' roles and required competencies. Appropriate capacity-building programmes are needed to prepare teachers to work in increasingly AI-rich settings. (p.18)

Remarkably, UNESCO also frames the interaction between AI, teachers, and students as *a new triangular paradigm*, a suggestive idea embraced and used in several parts of this paper:

The interaction between teachers and students is arguably becoming triangular, as AI systems are increasingly mediating preparation, teaching, learning and assessment. (p.18)

AI will not simply support the teacher-student interaction and learning process: it will be a constantly present and indispensable third party in the game. This reconceptualization of the learning process further underlines the need for a reflective and critical approach to AI integration. Teachers, in this view, are not passive recipients of technology but active agents in shaping its educational use:

Teachers therefore need to be empowered to act as collaborative knowledge producers and as guides to citizenship in the era of AI.

Together, these initiatives reflect a growing recognition that AI must be addressed not as a purely technological shift, but as a complex pedagogical, ethical, and institutional transformation. The shared emphasis on human-centred design, teacher empowerment, and systemic inclusion underscores a vital principle: AI in education must not erode but rather reaffirm the human foundations of teaching and learning. I believe that this paradigm of collaborative and triangular interaction is an important component of the new narrative that

we can outline for the future of our professional lives, and that in this area both greater awareness on our part and the support of relevant institutions and organizations are fundamental. Rather than studying the wonders that AI can do for us, it is essential to try to outline our role in a world where AI will be a routine partner.

4. REFLECTIONS ON THE AI REVOLUTION: RESHAPING OUR TEACHING PRACTICE WITHIN THE NEW TRIANGULAR PARADIGM

4.1 FROM THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS TO PERSONAL CONFRONTATION

The questions posed in the introduction regarding transformation of our work in the AI era—the narrative we tell ourselves and the future we envision—have moved from theoretical considerations to an established and recognized urgent need to rethink our daily teaching practices. The revolution seems to be inevitable and looming and only if aware of this key element can we avoid being caught unprepared. The risk is that in the absence of supportive policies and procedures, adequate time, and an approach that starts from our needs and experiences, change will be imposed from above or by external factors and will not develop, as hoped, from collaboration between teachers, students, and reference institutions. A thorough reflection is therefore put forward as a key step toward addressing change. Personally, I see it as indispensable and inevitable in my professional path. Accordingly, in the next part, I will convey my thoughts and experiences in a relaxed, non-scholarly tone, providing examples of a possible new narrative intended to inspire thoughtful consideration among my readers.

4.2 REFRAMING MY PROFESSIONAL NARRATIVE: BUILDING ON ESTABLISHED PRACTICES

I teach, and research several topics, including Linguistics, Corpus Linguistics, Translation Studies, Academic Writing, and ICT for Language Learning and Assessment and I have come to believe that AI integration should be considered not as a threat to my teaching practice but as a fantastic opportunity to engage my students in new ways through AI interaction and linguistic tasks. What I find particularly compelling about this transformation is how it builds upon practices I have already established in my teaching. The triangular approach bears remarkable similarities to what my students already do with linguistic corpora and pre-AI online resources. My use of Data-Driven Learning

(DDL; Johns 1991) problem-solving activities to enhance foreign language learners' awareness and autonomy represents a form of human-machine interaction and collaboration that I have long monitored and guided.

This insight is deeply inspiring, and I hope others can resonate with it: I am not discarding established pedagogical principles but rather adapting and expanding them. Incorporating AI as a new tool for language exploration is a natural evolution of my current practice, not a radical break from it. AI can act as a collaborative partner within human-centred learning environments, while I continue to fulfil my role as educator and facilitator in a future where working alongside AI becomes the norm rather than the exception.

4.3 PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS IN MY TEACHING

In my current practice, I have begun integrating AI into writing and collaborative activities based on the evaluation of discourse in context. My students are invited to consider the potential of AI and to engage with AI tools in reading comprehension exercises, discourse analysis, and academic writing activities. I have explored ways to use AI to evaluate written and translated texts by means of revision and editing processes, while simultaneously developing critical thinking skills through the evaluation of AI responses using computational linguistics tools. I have found this approach particularly valuable in my translation classes, where I can guide students in using AI to investigate higher-level linguistic features of source texts. Students can interact with Chatbots such as ChatGPT¹⁷, Gemini¹⁸, Perplexity¹⁹, or Claude²⁰ to explore considerations related to specific audience targeting, thus examining how source text and target text requirements differ based on contextual factors. Through AI interaction, my students can observe and discuss in an interactive and effective way features such as modality, cultural issues, text type features, pragmatics, purpose, politeness, ambiguity, accuracy, fluency, hedging, idiomatic expressions, evaluative language, transitivity patterns, and gender issues—all crucial elements in developing sophisticated linguistic competence.

17 <https://openai.com/>

18 <https://gemini.google.com/>

19 <https://www.perplexity.ai/>

20 <https://claude.ai/>

4.3.1 THE LEARNER AS LANGUAGE EXPLORER: A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

In my academic pre-translation and discourse analysis course activities, I already position my students as language explorers asking them to extract information from linguistic corpora. They can now use AI as a sophisticated and complementary analytical tool. For instance, I might guide them through queries such as:

Can you please outline hedging (or modality, or politeness and the like) features in the following academic text, create a list of hedging elements and suggest possible issues in translating them into Italian?

Other possible activities could involve the exploration of lexis, phraseology, collocations, discourse, and other linguistic features:

Please give me a list of 10 words or expressions at C1 level of English proficiency commonly used in academic writing to criticize previous theories or authors and give me a short example for each word.

Can you provide a glossary of Italian English terms of dentistry?

Can you add something related to dental pain?

Can you place “*accesso dentale*” in context presenting some concordances?

Can you also provide the ten most frequent collocates of “*accesso dentale*”?

Can you edit the following text considering the final version should be written by a B2 level learner of English?

The readers of this article are encouraged to test these questions and observe the results across different AI tools. As can be seen, the prompts range from simple questions to more complex one-to-one interactions with the machine. This type of interaction is assumed to develop both linguistic awareness and critical thinking skills, and the teacher can maintain the guide and facilitator role. As such, we can observe how students engage with AI responses, helping them evaluate the accuracy and completeness of AI-generated analyses. Through this process, they develop metalinguistic awareness while simultaneously learning to critically assess AI output—a crucial skill I believe will be essential in their future professional lives.

The above activities represent examples of the higher-level pedagogical objectives I have tried to achieve with my language discovery-based courses in the past few years. I suggest this kind of approach might be enhanced and prioritized in the AI era, moving more effectively beyond simple information transfer in the classroom towards student engagement in complex analytical and dialogical processes in the triangular paradigm. In this perspective, AI

assumes the role of a sophisticated analytical partner, but the critical evaluation, contextual understanding, and creative application remain distinctly human: a consideration that we should help students shape and develop. In the specific context of my courses, students are invited to use linguistic corpora to confirm or deny interpretative hypotheses and the outcomes from AI. I believe that a similar critical attitude and human based exploratory approach should be implemented in other areas of education as well.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The future lies in thoughtful, critical engagement with AI as a partner in language exploration and lifelong learning. I started and ended this paper from a personal perspective. Trying to outline the story I tell myself about myself as an educator is indeed changing, but this change can represent a significant growth based on existing experience rather than loss. I hope we can all become more sophisticated facilitators of learning, better equipped to prepare our students for an AI-integrated future while maintaining the human-centred focus that defines effective education. In this evolving narrative, we serve as architects of learning experiences that prepare students not merely for academic success but for meaningful participation in an increasingly complex technological landscape. We can do this in the context of our Language Centres: Language Centres have a long history of working with information and communication technologies and their activities are based on linguistic interaction, mediation, and language-based identity building. Since AI tools based on large language models operate mainly through language and communication, Language Centres can play an important role in helping learners use these new tools thoughtfully. By emphasizing the human and social nature of language, critical thinking, and an awareness of linguistic processes, language centres might support learners as they explore the potential and challenges of AI in education.

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