

Rising Against the Machine: Appeasing the Educators' Fears of Artificial Intelligence Taking Over Foreign Language Education.

Javier E. Alvarez-Jaimes & Sharrah Lane

Abstract

This presentation explores humanity's interaction with advanced technology, particularly the pros and cons of using artificial intelligence in language learning. It discusses the impact of AI on foreign language education, tracing historical use and the emergence of AI-powered tools like Google Translate and ChatGPT. The presentation highlights the growing importance of bilingual skills in an interconnected world and the role of language education in cross-cultural understanding, addressing concerns about AI advancements as potentially replacing foreign language teachers. Moreover, the authors discuss AI integration in language education, recognizing opportunities like personalized learning and automated translation and acknowledging challenges, such as reduced cultural understanding and unequal access. The authors provide examples of ways to use generative AI, like ChatGPT, in language instruction, emphasizing advantages in customized listening practice but caution against overreliance and potential errors. Overall, they advocate embracing AI in language education while maintaining a balanced approach, combining it with traditional methods. Responsible implementation and research, as they conclude, can maximize AI's benefits without threatening conventional learning.

Presentation

Fictional accounts of humanity's interactions with artificial intelligence abound, with disastrous results ensuing for the humans who become entangled in these encounters and foretelling one possibility of future events should humans invent artificial intelligence. A prime example is George Orwell's dystopian novella *1984* which anticipated the grim reality of pervasive government surveillance over the lives of ordinary citizens, symbolized by the imposing figure of Big Brother and the use of technology to contact authorities regarding people's acts of rebellion. Paradoxically, the release of the film *Terminator* in the same year as Orwell's fictional account takes place, portrayed a military-developed network of computers attaining self-awareness, triggering widespread alarm and a desperate human endeavor to disable it. This form of artificial intelligence (AI) swiftly recognized humanity as an existential threat, which led to an apocalyptic nuclear assault on humanity, targeting all major urban centers, as the AI concluded that they were more fit to be stewards of the Earth than humanity.

Fifteen years later, a new fictional narrative, *The Matrix*, depicted a realm where human beings lived in complete ignorance, living in a dream world in which they are unaware that their bodies are being used as an energy source to power intelligent machines with those same machines creating the dream world in which they live. Now, in 2023, the global domination of ChatGPT and the possibility of more advanced artificial intelligence

just around the corner has become a stark reality, prompting various institutions to scramble in order to safeguard academic integrity, while AI experts sound the alarms as to the profound danger these technological advancements pose to humanity. The fictional accounts presented in 1984, *Terminator*, *The Matrix*, and countless other imaginative works were, in fact, prophetic warnings about the dangers of advanced technology.

An historical approach to technology tells us that technology has long supported human advancement with the relatively recent acceleration of computer-based technology simply being the most recent development in this historical process. However, in his analysis of technology in “The Question Concerning Technology,” Martin Heidegger brought to the fore some concerns he had regarding technology: (1) technology is “not an instrument”, it is a way of understanding the world; (2) technology is “not a human activity,” but develops beyond human control; and (3) technology is “the highest danger”, presenting the risk that we only see the world through technological thinking. (1954) A point which Heidegger makes in his essay, and which is made apparent in our everyday lives, is how technology is a mode of revealing truths; he observes that, at his time, much of the modern technology available was, in fact, a mode of “setting upon” nature, with extraction of natural resources and their use for a variety of purposes revealing something of the inherent qualities of these resources while also revealing truths about the humans using them. In much the same way, technology is a two-fold revealing, on the one hand revealing the creativity and limitations of the human mind, while also transforming technology via its multitude of uses by humans. Therefore, one might ask, how has the more recent development of generative AI impacted humans and technology?

Currently, our society is based around technology, as we use smart phones and computers in our communications, smart cars to get to and from work and even for the most mundane of tasks, such as making coffee or staying cool on a hot summer day. This use of technology has permeated our everyday lives and has changed how we go about everyday tasks; most importantly for this presentation, the use of technology has affected the ways in which we communicate. While Heidegger was concerned with pervasive technological thought, Jaron Lanier considers our use of technology a feedback loop, in which our development of new technologies impacts our way of understanding and interacting with the world around us while at the same time impacting the ways in which new technologies are developed. One of his primary concerns outlined in his book *You Are Not a Gadget*, is the anonymity by which people communicate online and how this creates a form of dehumanization due to the alienation from other humans experienced by technology users.

Therefore, one of the problems with social media and online forums, such as Reddit and 4Chan, is the ability to remain anonymous and therefore use online trolling as a form of self-aggrandizement and tending to one's wounded ego in an economy that, much to the dismay of those of us who need to work to survive, continues to replace humans with computers as a form of cost cutting measures. (Lanier, 2010)

What does this have to do with foreign language education and use of AI in the foreign language classroom? Heidegger's concern, that we understand the world through technology, coupled with Lanier's timely critique of the forms in which technology has impacted the ways in which we communicate, has reached a pinnacle; in other words, it is our view of technology as an instrument and way of interacting with the world around us that forms our current reality. His other two predictions have been alluded to by a plethora of cultural figures, including physicist Stephen Hawking, tech guru Elon Musk, and scholar Yuval Noah Harari, amongst others, who have called for and continue to support regulation of AI before its developments extend beyond what humans are able to comprehend and/or control.

In considering foreign language acquisition, technology has been a tool of the instructor for centuries. The Gutenberg Printing Press was most likely the first technological tool, pre-19th century, which greatly impacted language learning as, due to the distribution of reading material in different languages, it became in vogue for those of noble status to learn foreign languages, with the most common languages of the period being Latin, French and Italian. With the development of technologies such as the magic lantern - a predecessor to today's projector - and sandbox – followed by individual slates and eventually notebooks - in the 19th century, students were able to show their ability to interact in the foreign language via writing and viewing images of the lands which they were learning about. (Webster, 2023) More recently, advances in audio technology, including headphones, made instruction in the foreign language more fluid as students were able to listen to and eventually speak with others using advanced technology. With the advent of the Internet, language sharing became ever easier as students of languages were able to connect with people all over the globe and popular music, films and other audio in foreign languages was now available at the touch of a button. While many of these technological advances made an important impact on the foreign language classroom, with students and teachers alike adapting their use for the purposes of bettering their ability to communicate in foreign languages, what are the implication of Artificial Intelligence, and specifically generative AI, in the foreign language classroom?

Google Translate, Deepl, and other online translation tools are no stranger to the contemporary foreign language teacher. As a matter of fact, instructors have been aware of and implementing policies regarding online translators for years, with most opting for not accepting work which has been completed with the aid of translation software. One reason for this is that, in the 21st century, the need for bilingual and multilingual individuals has become increasingly crucial. As the world becomes more interconnected, the ability to communicate and collaborate across language barriers has become a vital skill. Bilingual and multilingual individuals are not only better equipped to navigate the global job market but also play a vital role in fostering cross-cultural understanding, driving international business, and promoting diplomatic relations. They bring unique perspectives, cultural awareness, and enhanced problem-solving abilities to address the complex challenges of our interconnected world. With demands for global competence on the rise, foreign language education serves as a gateway to developing the linguistic and cultural competencies necessary to thrive in the 21st century.

Learning a language entail not only recognition and usage of various linguistic or cultural codes but also requires empathy for your fellow humans to the point of wanting to understand and communicate with them in their own language. Perhaps that is the reason there are so many platforms on the internet today that make it easier. Prior to the internet, interpretation and translation required specialists who underwent extensive formal training and language immersion to fulfil this mission. Today, with the aid of platforms like Google Translate, Deepl and more recently ChatGPT one can obtain a good enough result, which comes close to or exceeds that of a human translator. However, one of the downsides of the most recent advances in technology is the use of neural networks in current AI which means that these technologies may equate and even surpass human capabilities in learning languages and communicating between them in the near future.

The emerging threat of AI to foreign language education

The emergence of AI presents both opportunities and potential challenges to foreign language education. While AI technologies have the potential to enhance language learning through tools such as automated translation, speech recognition, and language tutoring systems, they also pose certain challenges to the foreign language educator. One concern is the reliance on AI for language translation, which may diminish the incentive for individuals to learn foreign languages themselves. The convenience of AI translation tools could lead to a

decrease in language proficiency and a lack of cultural understanding. Additionally, the integration of AI in language education might disrupt the traditional teacher-student interaction, which plays a crucial role in fostering communication skills and cultural competence. There is also the risk of an unequal distribution of AI resources, as not all students may have access to the necessary technologies and resources required for effective language learning. Therefore, while AI has the potential to revolutionize language education, it is essential to carefully address the challenges it poses and find ways to leverage these technologies while maintaining the importance of human engagement and language acquisition skills.

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in foreign language education brings numerous benefits. Firstly, AI-powered language learning platforms and applications offer personalized and adaptive learning experiences tailored to individual students' needs, pace, and proficiency levels. These intelligent systems can analyse students' performance, provide real-time feedback, and suggest targeted practice activities, thus optimizing the learning process. AI can also enhance language assessment by automating grading and providing detailed feedback, allowing for more efficient and objective evaluation. Additionally, AI-powered translation tools can assist learners in overcoming language barriers, facilitating communication and comprehension in multilingual environments. AI technologies enable the creation of immersive language learning environments through virtual reality and augmented reality, offering engaging and interactive experiences. Furthermore, AI chatbots and language tutoring systems provide opportunities for students to practice conversational skills and receive language support outside the classroom. Overall, the integration of AI in foreign language education has the potential to enhance learning outcomes, promote individualized instruction, and create more immersive and interactive language learning experiences.

Online language learning platforms have become widely available, offering flexible and accessible options for language learners. Numerous platforms, such as Duolingo, Babbel, Rosetta Stone, and Memrise, provide comprehensive language courses across various proficiency levels and a wide range of languages. These platforms offer interactive lessons, exercises, quizzes, and gamified learning experiences to engage learners. Many platforms incorporate AI and machine learning algorithms to personalize the learning journey, adapting to individual learners' needs and progress. Moreover, online language learning platforms often provide a variety of learning resources, including audio recordings, video lessons, vocabulary lists, and interactive forums for language practice and cultural exchange. With the convenience of anytime, anywhere access and the ability to track progress and set learning

goals, online language learning platforms have become a popular choice for individuals seeking to learn languages at their own pace and convenience. It sounds great, right? Or maybe not. How about human interaction and communication skills? How about cultural understanding and context? Or empathy and social intelligence that's built by interacting with people? How about the interpretation of human emotions?

Virtual language tutors and chatbots seem to be the future of language instruction which puts us at a crossroads and obliges the question, are we doomed as language teachers? But a more burning question is, will students see the need for learning languages? Because, who needs to learn a language when technology solves the need for communication in a language that's not ours? And let's say that people are going to remain interested in learning other languages beyond their mother tongue, will foreign language teachers be able to compete with bots? What about automatic language translation, will interpreters have a chance against AI? Similar questions were posed at the emergence of tools like the calculator in math classes. At the moment it was introduced, there was a lot of resistance among the mathematics community. But as we now know, it didn't replace math teachers and instead, teachers adapted and came to terms with it and even incorporated it into the classroom. Today nobody can say that the calculator is a threat to the math classroom.

Who of you has not struggled with Google Translate? You assign a composition and your student turns in this obviously mechanical translation that has been typed in English and the Google bot does the job. You can tell it's not the student's production because you noted some imperfect subjunctive or conditional form he wouldn't have used because this has not been previously covered in your class. In other words, the work doesn't match the student's proficiency. Sometimes, the composition looks almost too good to be theirs, right? Some details in the composition may be too revealing of the truth.

Using online translators may be a practical solution to a specific need. However, as is the case with every technological advance, there is a detrimental side to the use and the abuse of it. What may be an immediate solution to a need also poses a problem for language education, as it can discourage the process of memorization and retention of vocabulary necessary for linguistic competence. For that reason, we propose a change in perception regarding the incorporation of AI technologies such as ChatGPT by language educators.

When the calculator was introduced, it operated similarly to how online translation applications function today; they did not replace math teachers, but rather became a useful tool in math education. A change in perception created the conditions for the implementation of new technological tools in the classroom that were no longer seen as deterrents to learning;

in fact, calculators became useful tools for students to use to confirm if their answers were correct and have aided in the advancement of students in both math and science related fields. A holistic approach to language teaching and acquisition is necessary within foreign language programs, one that not only incorporates online translation applications and generative AI but also establishes clear rules for guided use in the classroom.

While the use of online translation tools is increasingly embraced by users of technology, given that worldwide access to the internet is increasing, it is undeniable that it poses a problem for language educators in institutional programs where curriculum requirements demand proficiency in a foreign language. In certain university programs in the United States, students are required to fulfill a foreign language requirement in order to obtain a degree. In many of these institutions, foreign language instructors must grapple with the problem of online translation, which is often used as a quick solution to the challenge of producing complex language structures. Instead of delving into hours of complex grammatical, syntactic, or spelling explanations, the easy solution is to turn to a translator. Faced with this problem, instructors resort to clauses on “academic dishonesty” to combat it, categorizing its use as plagiarism (Clifford et al., 2013). This has contributed to the demonization of technology among educators. A case study on teachers' beliefs conducted by Hellmich (2019) revealed widespread skepticism among language instructors towards technology in the United States.

A thorough debate on this situation is necessary. "To Google or not to Google?" That is the question. Should we, as language instructors, incorporate online translation into the learning process and follow the example of other disciplines that introduced typewriters, calculators, and computers into the classroom? Is the machine - in a literal sense - the enemy to be defeated, or is it apathy, underfunding of humanities programs, the crisis in the educational system, and the values of current society the real issues we are continuously combatting? Are we facing a juncture that demands adaptability from us? The truth is that we are going through extraordinary times that require equally extraordinary solutions. Our survival depends on our adaptability, and it will not be the machine that adapts to us.

The introduction of the calculator into basic math education required educators' creativity at that time, as they had to resort to meaningful learning strategies without compromising the development of basic arithmetic skills. The solution lay in a change of focus that prioritized problem-solving and mathematical thinking beyond mere operation results. The incorporation of the pocket calculator inspired a rethinking of objectives in mathematics education, which accelerated the shift in classroom teaching methods

(Pendleton, 1977). By 1994, after 20 years of tension, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) allowed the use of calculators, marking its triumphant entry into the classroom in the U.S.

What lesson can language educators learn from this? As an innovation that breaks with traditional and exclusive methods of access to interpretation and translation, Google Translate approaches the ideal of linguistic democratization. In other words, it makes communication accessible to the majority that would otherwise only be possible among individuals who master both codes. Traditional methods of language immersion and education may need to reinvent themselves, and new ways of generating meaning in the classroom that incorporate the presence of new technological tools will have to be devised. The traditional language learning method requires mobilizing a series of increasingly scarce resources, which makes language learning almost an occupation of privileged individuals.

Although the majority of Americans hold bilingualism in high regard, according to the Language Learning Commission, in 2017 only 20% reported speaking a second language, and a very small fraction of them admitted to learning it in a classroom setting. The obstacle posed by the mobilization of both individual and social resources for language acquisition creates ideal conditions for the emergence of new tools referred to as "disruptive innovations" that, despite not offering better solutions than traditional tools, do offer immediate solutions at a lower cost and on a mass scale. However, it is problematic to reduce linguistic competence to a purely communicative matter solvable through a tool. As Urlaub and Dessein point out, "our complex use of language and variations not only reflects our complex identities; our selves are also constructed, refined, and negotiated as we use language" (48). There is a sociocultural dimension in language use that cannot be ignored in the attempt to keep pace with technological innovations.

Innovations in the field of computational linguistics are not recent developments as their development took decades. According to Poibeau (2017), efforts to automate translation date back to the mid-20th century. The first machine translation service was offered by AltaVista in December 1997, nine months before Google's inception. The service was called Babel Fish. Google Translate was launched in 2006 using the same algorithm as Babel Fish. However, the translation accuracy offered by Google Translate was so poor at the time that it hardly posed a challenge to language instructors. Nevertheless, advances in the field of artificial intelligence and the rapid development of mobile devices in the second decade of this century would change everything. So much so that recent research refuting the accuracy

of Google Translate translations becomes obsolete due to the algorithm's updates with each search.

Covid-19 accelerated the digitization of daily life, and created conditions which accelerated the process of mobile devices becoming an extension of our bodies. Applications and clicks have replaced cognitive skills since it is no longer necessary to memorize information that previously was necessary for everyday communication, such as phone numbers, email addresses, and physical addresses. Google Translate (or DeepL) is part of that universe of efficient solutions to specific needs, and despite the resistance it still generates among us, its increasing effectiveness and popularity are undeniable. According to Turovsky (2016), in 2016 Google Translate had over 500 million users translating 100 trillion words per day, and despite the semantic inaccuracies it may still present, it is clear that users prefer to deal with these minor inconveniences rather than investing hundreds of hours in language learning and acquisition.

Paradoxically, the greatest obstacle to language learning today is not the lack of resources but the abundance of them, as a tool that could be used for pedagogical purposes has become an enemy for many educators. At a time when humanities education in the U.S. faces significant challenges in terms of state investment, it is possible that in the future, the validity of teaching languages in the public system may be delegitimized because some may argue that this skill is obsolete and can be easily replaced by opening an application on a mobile phone. Duke University conducted a survey among 900 students in 2013 and found that the majority used online translators and favored their inclusion in the classroom. Most articles published on the subject focus on the implementation of online translation in learning situations, especially in writing. However, the question of whether the use of online translators interferes with the ability to produce language in individuals who have become accustomed to their use when they do not have access to a translator remains unanswered. There is also the problem that, given the constant evolution of these platforms, research dating back more than five years deals with products that differ significantly from the current ones.

One compelling argument in favor of incorporating AI technology in the foreign language classroom is that it can help to facilitate personalized and adaptive learning experiences for students. Like calculators and other learning technologies, AI can help to streamline certain aspects of language learning, such as vocabulary acquisition and grammar practice. However, AI can also analyze student data and adjust learning materials to meet

individual needs and preferences. This can help to improve student engagement, motivation, and ultimately, language proficiency.

Additionally, AI technology can provide opportunities for more authentic and immersive language learning experiences. For example, AI-powered chatbots or language learning apps can simulate real-life conversations and provide instant feedback to students. This can help to develop both speaking and listening skills, which can be difficult to practice in a traditional classroom setting. Another argument in favor of incorporating AI technology in the foreign language classroom is that it can help to reduce teacher workload and improve efficiency. By automating certain tasks, such as grading assignments or providing feedback, teachers can spend more time on more complex aspects of language instruction, such as facilitating classroom discussions or developing lesson plans.

How to Incorporate AI into the Foreign Language Classroom

There are many ways to incorporate the use of generative AI into the classroom, both for beginning and advanced learners. We can think of multiple problems this may tackle, including the use of archaisms, mistranslation of proverbs and grammatical structures, and misuse of certain words that belong to regional variations of the language at hand. In the Spanish classroom, which is the one referred to in this study, there are many different activities that teachers can participate in that will provide a substantial benefit to students, while underlining the importance of generating content based upon the students' language acquisition rather than relying simply on online translators and generative AI to assist in assignments.

One activity for beginning students that is particularly useful is to compare English with the translated Spanish using Google Translate as a method of comparing the intended meaning with results from the online translation. One case that stands out is the use of the imperfect in Spanish – which is the equivalent of “used to” or “would” in English. As an example, have students simply put “I would eat” into Google Translate, with English as the language of origin and Spanish as the target language. What occurs when you have a stand-alone expression such as this is that Google Translate understands the utterance as conditional rather than the imperfect – which is the targeted structure. By adding some additional information, such as “I would eat every Sunday when I was a kid” the translation software is able to understand that the original utterance is intended to be in the imperfect

rather than the conditional and therefore accurately translates the utterance into Spanish. Examining other expressions such as these provides students with an understanding of how to effectively use Google Translate when attempting to produce language and/or for the purposes of checking their own language for errors. For advanced learners, one can use proverbs and put these into online translators such as Google Translate, DeepL, Reverso, and Linguee. Unlike Google Translate and DeepL, both Reverso and Linguee not only provide a translation, but have also cross-referenced their translations with human translations and provide a list of these translations with the text in both the source and target languages.

One instance in which this proves useful is in looking up idiomatic expressions. In looking up the proverb “With age comes wisdom” in Spanish, Google Translate and DeepL both provide literal translations, with Google Translate providing “con la edad viene la sabiduría” and DeepL “con la edad llega la sabiduría” and “la sabiduría llega con la edad.” Reverso provides similar responses, but in addition provides a list of translations in context. However, Linguee, rather than providing a translation, breaks down the English into its component parts in Spanish and provides different comparison phrases with different phrases similar to the English – however, not necessarily word for word nor bearing the same meaning – and equivalent expressions in Spanish. The first quoted translation is the English, “There just might be truth in the old adage, ‘with age comes wisdom,’” which was translated into Spanish as, “Tal vez haya mucho de verdad en el viejo adagio de que, ‘más sabe el diablo por viejo que por diablo,’” provides a comparably idiomatic expression in Spanish, which far exceeds the online translators. This is just one example of how online translators may understand the words in an expression but do not necessarily understand culturally bound phrases and terminology which would not be literally translated into the target language.

However, when used in such a way, this also keeps students from acquiring the skills and knowledge that the foreign language teacher wishes to instill in the student. While many resist the temptation to use memorization in the foreign language classroom, it would be naïve to believe that this doesn’t form part of the language learning process. One way in which technology has been helpful with this is the invention of platforms such as Quizlet, which help students make online flash cards to review vocabulary, grammar, verb conjugations and other information regarding acquisition of the language. Considering the use of technology in the classroom in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this has served as a useful tool for students to review vocabulary and provides a quick warm-up exercise for the days’ activities. However, one set-back to this is that the Quizlet live platform does not

necessarily use all vocabulary students should be studying and therefore one should follow-up a quick vocabulary review with contextual practice. Exercises such as short interviews or readings with targeted questions in which students use the vocabulary in context are helpful and provide students with more practical experience using the vocabulary in context.

Regarding the use of online translators and generative AI, the possibilities for them to aid students in acquiring languages is boundless. However, this also presents us with the problem that students will rely on them as more than a useful tool to help with homework. In his video “AI Just KILLED Traditional Language Learning [ChapGPT],” Jerry Registre – a Harvard Graduate and Product Manager at Meta – explains how to use ChatGPT and other language tools, such as Speechify, to generate content in the foreign language and even record a dialogue in said language. Registre is clearly a motivated learner of Spanish, which is evidenced by a multitude of videos he has published on the topic of AI and foreign language acquisition targeted at acquiring Spanish. Many of his tips in the aforementioned video are helpful, however, many of them also overlap with information already available to language learners who taking more traditional classes. Two bits of information that Registre provide may prove helpful in the foreign language.

One tip that he has is to use specific language with ChatGPT software to create a dialogue. In following his instructions, I have used ChatGPT and the prompt, “Write a dialogue in beginning Spanish (A1) about sports,” following the example provided by Registre. This is the initial dialogue that ChatGPT wrote:

Pedro: ¡Hola! ¿Cómo te llamas?

Sofía: ¡Hola! Soy Sofía. ¿Y tú?

Pedro: Soy Pedro. ¡Mucho gusto, Sofía!

Sofía: Igualmente, Pedro. ¿Te gusta el deporte?

Pedro: Sí, me encanta el deporte. ¿Y a ti?

Sofía: A mí también. Mi deporte favorito es el fútbol.

Pedro: ¡Qué coincidencia! A mí también me gusta mucho el fútbol. ¿Juegas en un equipo?

Sofía: No, todavía no. Pero juego con mis amigos en el parque los fines de semana. ¿Y tú?

Pedro: Sí, juego en un equipo de fútbol local. Es muy divertido.

Sofía: ¡Qué bien! Debes ser muy bueno entonces.

Pedro: No tanto, pero me esfuerzo. ¿Qué otros deportes te gustan?

Sofía: Me gusta el baloncesto y el tenis. A veces juego en la escuela con mis compañeros.

Pedro: El baloncesto es divertido, también lo juego en la escuela. Y el tenis, ¡nunca lo he probado!

Sofía: Deberías intentarlo, es muy emocionante. ¿Has practicado algún otro deporte?

Pedro: Sí, he probado el béisbol y el voleibol, pero no me gustaron tanto.

Sofía: Es normal, cada persona tiene sus preferencias. Lo importante es divertirse haciendo deporte.

Pedro: Tienes toda la razón, Sofía. ¿Te gustaría jugar al fútbol juntos algún día?

Sofía: ¡Claro! Sería genial. Podemos organizar un partido con nuestros amigos.

Pedro: ¡Eso suena muy divertido! ¿Qué te parece el próximo sábado?

Sofía: ¡Perfecto! El sábado estaré libre. ¡Será genial jugar contigo!

Pedro: Estoy emocionado. Seguro que será un partido increíble.

Sofía: ¡Seguro que sí! Bueno, me tengo que ir ahora, pero nos vemos el sábado.

Pedro: Está bien. ¡Hasta el sábado, Sofía!

Sofía: ¡Hasta entonces, Pedro! ¡Que tengas una buena semana!

As one can see, this dialogue is within the reach of a beginning student, with minimal use of verb tenses normally taught at more advanced levels of Spanish language acquisition. For an A1 level student, what we would expect them to be able to reproduce is quite different from what we might expect them to understand. This dialogue provides an entry point for students to read a dialogue and understand the use of sports related vocabulary in said dialogue, which they can then apply to their own communication. There is also the possibility that this is a good dialogue to use for instructors but in asking ChatGPT to create dialogues on the same subject at higher levels, I noticed that there is not much variation in language use, the rhythm of the conversation and the elements used to speak about sports. This indicates that, while ChatGPT may be able to produce dialogues, it lacks creativity when doing so. An activity based upon this dialogue may be for students to read the dialogue in pairs, marking where certain vocabulary and grammatical structures are used. Follow this up with students creating their own dialogue between two sports aficionados and have them perform their dialogue for the class.

Another tip that Registre provides is to take the dialogue produced by ChatGPT and feed it into a text-to-voice service to help with pronunciation. He recommends Speechify, which he states is free, but in fact, you can only get a free trial for a short period of time before being charged \$139 for a one-year subscription to the service. The app provides different options for voices and accents from various parts of the Spanish speaking world. As a foreign language instructor, this comes in handy when one would like to craft a dialogue with specific vocabulary and grammar points for students to practice listening skills. Rather than a recording of your own voice – especially if you are a non-native speaker of the language – or possibly spending hours attempting to find the best YouTube video, this is a great tool that allows you to create a dialogue and employ voices from different dialects for students to better acquire heightened listening skills. For an individual student, as Registre

suggests, one can read the part of one person while listening to the chatbot perform the part of the other person. One downside to this method, however, is that, as many have noted (Marr, 2023; Weise and Metz, 2023; Schardt, 2023) generative AI, such as ChatGPT, may produce errors when asked questions; these errors are known as hallucinations in the tech world and can come in many forms, such as falsified information, making up stories, etc. One thing that I noticed was, when I gave ChatGPT the following command, “Write a dialogue in advanced Spanish (C2) using slang from Colombia to talk about soccer,” it used the term “pichangón” which, after consulting the Real Academia Española and other online sources, is a made-up word in Spanish. Therefore, one must be extremely careful when using ChatGPT for the purposes of creating content for one’s classes as it’s entirely possible that it will provide incorrect translations of material or possibly use words that don’t exist.

While using ChatGPT to emphasize certain vocabulary and grammar points by creating dialogues and material is convenient, using them exclusively comes with other setbacks. For one, there are cultural and linguistic variations used in a variety of other media available to foreign language instructors that ChatGPT simply may not be able to emulate accurately. Music videos— many of which are available on YouTube – as well as TV shows in Spanish, available on streaming platforms and YouTube, will be helpful for beginning and intermediate students of the language to understand how to use language in everyday situations. Another problem is the lack of correction of errors both in speech and written communication. While ChatGPT does work on command and will correct errors and provide explanations for errors in chatting with it, it’s also important to remember that language learning is based upon comprehensive input and output, Speechify doesn’t offer a comparative service. Language learning software such as Rosetta Stone and Duolingo integrate pronunciation into their platforms, but it is still important to have feedback from a native speaker and interact with others. As this user has experienced, at times the automated detection of correct pronunciation and inflection may not always work. Therefore, while generative AI may be helpful in some cases – especially considering the neural networks used which help the AI to tailor its content to its user – it is far from replacing the interactions that the foreign language classroom provides to students.

For more advanced students, generative AI is certainly a useful tool, but should be accompanied with other online tools, such as Reverso, WordReference, and the Real Academia Española to truly be effective. In addition, recommending that students use an advanced grammar workbook or reference for upper division courses, which goes over more minute details for those students who are writing for academic purposes, may be helpful in

ensuring students are not relying on online translators and generative AI as their only source of feedback.

Overall, incorporating AI technology in the foreign language classroom can provide a range of benefits, from personalized and adaptive learning experiences to more authentic language practice and improved teacher efficiency. While it's important to ensure that technology is used appropriately and in a way that supports student learning, the potential benefits are significant and worth exploring.

Prohibiting these tools and their use in the foreign language classroom is an ineffective strategy to manage generative AI, as it will not stop their proliferation. Denying their benefits will not halt the use of online translators either, since, as previously mentioned, they are constantly evolving. A change in attitude towards technology in the classroom is needed as Urlaub and Dessein suggest, along with modifications to school curricula, investment in research on how these innovations can accelerate language acquisition, and, above all, a thorough debate involving professional organizations such as ACTFL, AATSP, and others as we should not ignore the role of professional organizations in widespread implementation of technology, such as the case with the SAT and the use of the TI-83 on their exams.

Whether AI is the demise of humanity or not, it is completely normal to feel apprehension when faced with changes that may have consequences we are only beginning to appreciate and understand. We interact with technology in the classroom, at the grocery store, and a variety of many other places; suffice it to say, AI is here to stay. Regarding learning languages, AI is no different than any previous advancement; the fact that students are using it means that we, as educators, should position ourselves to integrate AI into our curriculum in productive ways that, rather than impeding student learning, enhance it. In many ways, already existing technology used in foreign language acquisition provides a pathway to help us understand the ways in which generative AI may be incorporated into the classroom.

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