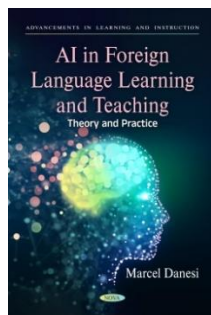


BOOK REVIEW: AI IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING: THEORY AND PRACTICE BY MARCEL DANESI



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Abstract

In *AI in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, Marcel Danesi underscores the ramifications of Artificial Intelligence (AI), including the use of tools like ChatGPT, on Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) and its critical components: language acquisition and teaching. Danesi covers several aspects of FLT to speak, write and assess, voicing their greatest concerns on the impact of AI. Danesi provides a balanced view, considering both the advantages and challenges of dependence on AI in language education. He articulates important ethical arguments on the impact of AI in education, particularly its failure to address students' emotional and contextual concerns, while highlighting the gap human instructors fill. In addition, the book provides synthesis of the frameworks on the use AI technologies and pedagogical tools to improve FLT while maintaining the human dimension of teaching.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, foreign language teaching, foreign language learning

Danesi's (2024) work starts with reflecting on the quaint historical milestones of technology integration in foreign language teaching (FLT). This includes the utilization of language laboratories as pointed out by González-Lloret (2023), and language computer-assisted learning as elaborated by Badem and Akbulut (2019). While these advances in technology were considered innovative for their time, they were limited to peripheral functions. The advent of Generative AI and chatbots signals the beginning of the third technology-driven transformation in FLT, and it brings to the forefront critical issues like if AI will take over the role of educators or will engage as an effective adjunct to educators by providing customized learning pathways for the students (Pila, 2023). This preliminary context sets the stage for a more thorough analysis of AI's role in transforming foreign language teaching today with special attention to teaching and learning processes.

In the first chapter, "Evolution of Technology in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT)," the author presents a timeline on the use of technology in FLT. It describes the initial use of language laboratories, then the computer assisted language learning (CALL) and ending the chapter with generative artificial intelligence (AI). The chapter reviews critically the possibility of AI either taking the place of educators or becoming, as it has been regarded, an adjunct to traditional teaching. Despite the emphasis on continues advancement of technology and teaching conveniences for students, staff and curriculum.

In the second chapter, titled "Enhancing Foreign Language Learning," Danesi presents the case for bilingual competence and shows the extent to which AI, through tools such as ChatGPT, excels at translation and provides linguistic and cultural commentary. While AI has the potential to adapt and personalize language learning to suit the needs of individual students, Danesi is of the opinion that human language teachers remain indispensable for addressing the emotional and contextual factors that relate to language learning.

The third chapter, "Developing Linguistic Competence," explores the application of AI technology to language teaching and learning, including its components of phonology, grammar, and vocabulary. Through ChatGPT, users benefit from instantaneous feedback, tailored learning opportunities, and assistance with common pronunciation problems. This reality illustrates the promise of AI as a language learning tool. But as much as Danesi accepts the many benefits AI offers, he emphasizes that its use does not eliminate the fundamental social engagement that human teachers provide.

In the fourth chapter of the book, "Promoting Communicative Competence," the author reviews the pedagogical uses of dialogues in teaching FL and explores AI's role in potentially transforming the teaching paradigms. Tools like ChatGPT are capable of producing contextual real-world dialogues and personalizing them to the student's level which helps in fostering communicative competences. The chapter emphasizes the fact that the impact AI can have in the practice of teaching and learning languages is very great, but the intricacies of the student to teacher and teacher to student interactions for communication cannot be automated.

In Chapter 5, "Enhancing Conceptual Competence," the author talks about the problem of the Japanese learners and the problem of direct translation from the mother tongue into English. In this chapter, he discusses the role of AI,

especially in dealing with conceptual gaps using the metaphorical framework, in resolving cognitive language gaps. AI can imitate metaphorical fluency, but it cannot replace the intellectual brunt a real teacher carries in trying to help learners untangle the complex tasks of the mind.

The final chapter, “Blended Foreign Language Teaching,” proposes that FLT should adopt a blended approach where instructors and AI tools work in tandem. Danesi focuses on the benefits and disadvantages of applying AI in the language classroom, noting that while AI provides adaptive and individualized experiences, the human element remains crucial. The chapter suggests a balanced middle ground, calling on instructors to embrace changes in the educational environment while respecting the need to facilitate deep learning.

The discussion on AI and FLT is insightful and thorough. Danesi skillfully defends AI’s position as a powerful tool that supports teaching by enhancing individualized instruction and offering immediate interactive feedback. However, his cautionary approach to the use of AI in teaching where empathy, intuition, or a deeper understanding of human experiences is vital, is equally as important. Emphasizing the need for a human touch in education, as pointed out Danesi, and supported by Nikitina and Ishchenko (2024) and Yasmar et al. (2023), highlights the concern that while AI is a capable assistant in language education, it falls short of fulfilling the human educator’s role particularly in the emotional and social aspects of learning.

This publication is especially important for language teachers and people trying to incorporate technology in educational contexts (Wulyani et al., 2024). It provides practical guidelines on the use of foreign language education AI tools, especially in teaching ChatGPT, while also raising ethical issues on the growing use of AI in education. Language teachers have much to gain from this book, especially in coming to terms and effectively dealing with the use of AI technology in foreign language teaching as its human face is preserved.

AI in Foreign Language Learning and Teaching: Theory and Practice offers a detailed study on the use of artificial intelligence in language education. The author, Danesi, also analyzes the role of AI in the development of the linguistic, communicative, and conceptual abilities, which human educators provide. This book is a must for anyone involved in foreign language teaching (FLT) as it calls for the appropriate use of AI technologies in teaching systems without subverting the function of human beings.

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