2023 ACS Summer Virtual Working Group Report

Zhengbin "Richard" Lu, Spelman College
Pilar Valencia, Spelman College
Gustavo Segura, Spelman College
Rosalba Esparragoza, Davidson College
Noelia Cigarroz-Cooke, Southwestern Univeristy
Yanbing Tan, University of the South-Sewanee

Introduction

In one of his blogs, Bill Gates (2023) claims that AI "is most important tech advance in decades," and that it will change the way people work, learn, travel, get health care, and communicate with each other. As stated on the *Chronicle of Higher Education* website, "the rise of artificial intelligence is one of the buzziest trends in higher education today, and one of the most prominent puzzles colleges will need to solve in the future." The sudden release of ChatGPT to the public in November 2022 has caught many college professors off guard. Many of them scrambled to react to it in the spring and started planning for the fall. Thanks to the great support by the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS), six professors from 4 ACS institutions have formed a Working Group to explore how ChatGPT – An AI powered tool, might affect the profession of foreign language education, and how foreign language educators can take advantage of ChatGPT in their teaching, and how college professors and students should prepare themselves for the challenges imposed by AI. The six professors include 4 Spanish instructors and 2 Mandarin Chinese instructors.

Prior to the project commencement, none of group members had expertise on AI or ChatGPT. So the first step each member took was to conduct extensive internet search of relevant materials, including news reports on AI and ChatGPT, blog posts, and YouTube videos. The group has discovered numerous invaluable materials and shared them with each other. After having gotten familiar with the subject, group members started exchanging ideas and reflections through synchronous Zoom meetings and asynchronous email discussions. Group members have also managed to personally tested ChatGPT with a variety activities. For example, one activity was cross-language communication via ChatGPT. In order to test how ChatGPT works in translation, each member was required to write a self-introduction in the language she/he teaches, and to respond to the self-introductions written in a language different than her/his own. In other word, Spanish instructors had to respond to messages posted in Chinese, and Chinese instructors to messages posted in Spanish. When sharing their experiences with this activity, all members were amazed by the accuracy and efficiency of ChatGPT in language translation and generating responses.

Through personal experiments and reading and viewing of text and video materials, the group members have identified many ways that ChatGPT can be integrated into foreign language pedagogy; meanwhile, the group members have also become aware of the risks that ChatGPT may cause for both faculty and students. Interestingly, a few days prior to the conclusion of the Working Group project, the Modern Language Association (MLA) and Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) have published their task force report titled *MAL-*

CCCC Joint Task Force on Writing and AI Working Paper: Overview of the Issues, Statement of Principles, and Recommendations. The working paper provides in-depth and insightful analysis of the implications of artificial intelligence has brought to the writing, language, and literature instruction.

Although there are widespread views toward artificial intelligence among college educators, one thing that the Working Group members firmly believe is that AI literacy for both faculty and students is critical and urgent. To contribute to this endeavor, the Working Group has created an annotated bibliography that has included many recent news reports and articles. The annotated bibliography, together with this report, as well as a resource folder to be shared through Google Drive, form the three deliverables by the Working Group.

Based on the first-hand experiences of group members with ChatGPT, as well as their review of relevant materials, the Working Group offers the following concise summaries regarding the advantages and potential drawbacks of Generative AI tools in the realm of teaching and learning foreign languages. Additionally, the document presents several instances illustrating how ChatGPT can be effectively employed within foreign language education, along with recommendations for educators and students to adequately equip themselves for the hurdles posed by AI technology.

Benefits of Generative AI Tools for World/Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

Students, instructors, and teaching assistants can generate materials instantly. ChatGPT could be a valuable tool for creating content-related materials if proper attribution is given. Depending on the platform (in this case, CHATGPT), the instructor/student account saves all inquiries and can offer different outputs using slightly different questions or requests. This provides more depth for specific requests without the need for repetitive prompts.

Instructors can guide students to use AI during class based on their own interests and search context according to their foreign language level. AI is highly capable of producing appropriate grammar and vocabulary contextualizations, combining them for specific topics.

Examples of how ChatGPT Can be Applied in World Language Teaching and Learning

ChatGPT can be utilized in various ways within the context of foreign language teaching and learning. The following examples highlight its potential applications:

- Generating syllabi.
- Creating course materials, including vocabulary lists.
- Generating quizzes and questions for reading comprehension.
- Creating reading materials.
- Designing classroom activities.
- Providing personalized feedback to students.
- Acting as a personalized tutor.
- Generating images and short videos (in collaboration with Midjourney).
- Proofreading essays.

- Creating outlines.
- Conducting dialogues (role-play).
- Assisting in the study of grammar (explaining complex grammar concepts and providing examples).
- Facilitating translation exercises.

Pitfalls of Generative AI Tools for World Language Teaching and Learning

The working group has acknowledged that ChatGPT presents several limitations when applied to foreign language teaching and learning. Therefore, the group advises both instructors and students to exercise caution while using it. The following are some pitfalls identified by the group:

- Cultural nuances and diversity might be compromised due to the bias towards "English culture and values."
- Plagiarism could be an issue as AI responses do not include the sources used.
- Content generated by ChatGPT may lack accuracy or become outdated.
- Absence of human interaction hinders the establishment of empathy and rapport.
- Creativity may be stifled, impeding the growth of critical thinking abilities.
- Overreliance on AI might lead to a decline in students' analytical, writing, and critical thinking skills.
- Excessive dependence on ChatGPT could adversely affect students' cognitive skills.
- The interconnectedness of language and culture means that using ChatGPT may impact students' comprehension of diverse global cultures.
- Students' perceptions of foreign languages and language learning could undergo changes, potentially resulting in an undervaluation of language education.

Challenges Posed by Generative AI Tools in Foreign Language Education

- Educators frequently face a knowledge gap concerning AI, specifically ChatGPT, which hampers their adept utilization of these tools.
- Institutions necessitate well-defined directives and policies to aid instructors in embracing AI application.
- A profusion of blogs, webinars, and articles addressing AI can inundate instructors and students, inducing a sense of urgency to stay abreast of swiftly evolving technology.
- Instructors shoulder an additional load as they strive to cultivate AI literacy.
- Staying abreast of the swift progress in AI technology can prove to be demanding.

Preparing World Language Education Practitioners for the Challenges Arising from AI Literacy for Educators and Students

To meet the challenges posed by Generative AI for foreign language instructors and learners, the working group provide the following recommendations:

- Cultivating proficiency in AI literacy is imperative. Practitioners should delve into and comprehend the capabilities and constraints of AI.

- Instead of outright forbidding the use of AI tools, establishing guidelines and best practices for responsible and effective utilization is advisable.

- Maintaining transparency with students is paramount. In cases where there is no institutional policy regarding the appropriate use of chatGPT, instructors should formulate their own classroom policies. Various options, such as prohibition, regulated utilization, or presuming that all student work originates from chatGPT, should be taken into account.

Recommendations for Formulating Guidance and Policies for Generative AI Tools within ACS Institutions:

- Lance Eaton's resource, "Classroom Policies for AI Generative Tools," presents a range of policies from diverse educators, which can aid in developing institution-specific guidelines for AI-Generative Tools like ChatGPT, MidJourney, Dall-E, and others.

- Institutions should allocate resources to support faculty members in fostering AI literacy.

- Organizing workshops, seminars, and discussions for faculty members to exchange knowledge, expertise, concerns, and perspectives on AI technology is of great significance.

- Stakeholders should thoroughly assess the implications of AI on higher education and take proactive measures to address potential risks.

- Utilize the wealth of specific information available on social media and the internet, such as rubrics for integrating AI into syllabi, to facilitate seamless incorporation. Exploring and adapting existing resources with proper permissions can prove to be advantageous.

Disclaimer: after finished the first draft, the writer of this report has used ChatGPT for proofreading.