

# GenAI in Language Education: Critical Perspectives and Critical Literacies

**Niall Curry (Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom)**

With the recent proliferation of user-friendly generative artificial intelligence tools (GenAI; e.g., ChatGPT), their use in education has become increasingly widespread. Those who advocate for the integration of GenAI into educational contexts note its potential to transform traditional learning paradigms, to offer personalised learning experiences and real-time feedback, and to support educators in and beyond the classroom. These potential affordances of GenAI tools notwithstanding, for each boon that is promised there appears to be a complementary bane. Ethical issues abound, with evidence of GenAI reinforcing and reconstructing biases in educational contexts. Likewise, the 'black box' nature of GenAI, the limited public knowledge of the data on which the large language models are trained, the growing understanding of the negative impacts of GenAI on the environment, and the issues of access to and availability of GenAI tools across languages each raise questions about the relevance and utility of such tools for language learners. While such debates surrounding GenAI continue to unfold in academic spaces, many learners across the world are already engaging with these tools to conduct their studies. Recent evidence has shown that students use GenAI as a search engine, idea generator, and writing support. However, it remains unclear as to whether students truly understand what the tools are doing and what their outputs represent.

In this talk, I respond to this reality by arguing for the importance of ensuring the development of critical GenAI literacies among language learners. In so doing, I propose a need to move past initial reactions to the affordances of GenAI (or lack thereof) for language teaching and learning, and to engage, instead, critically and comprehensively with their relevance and use in education now. To support such an aim, I discuss a collection of research papers that draw on conceptual reflections on GenAI as well as empirical studies of GenAI use among language learners. Through a reflection on learners' understandings of GenAI, the ways in which they use GenAI, their perceptions of GenAI, and their engagement with the ethics of GenAI use, I unpack learners' working GenAI literacies and identify potential gaps in their knowledge. With this information in hand, I share a number of considerations that can be used to guide the development of situated and discipline-specific critical GenAI literacies for language learners.