



Student Knowledge, Perceptions and Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) Tools in Language Learning

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Abstract

With the rapid development of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) and the availability of tools for use, language educators in higher education are beginning to explore how Gen AI can be used as pedagogical tools. To maximize the potential and address the challenges such tools may bring, this study investigates university students' knowledge, perception and use of Gen AI tools in language learning. Adopting a mixed-method approach, this study surveyed undergraduate and postgraduate students across disciplines and enrolled in language courses at a Hong Kong university. Overall, despite limited familiarity, knowledge of and confidence in using Gen AI tools in language learning, students were highly interested in using them. Yet, many students did not use these tools often for language learning citing a preference for learning language using traditional methods and lack of access, sufficient knowledge and trust in the quality of results produced, as primary reasons. Those who used Gen AI tools for language learning cited efficiency, efficacy, access and a preference to learn languages using new methods as their main motivation. This study calls for language educators, course and curriculum designers to consider integrating the use of Gen AI tools in language learning in ways that would be appropriate to assist students in achieving the learning outcomes, taking into account student readiness and willingness to use such tools. This study suggests a focus on student decision-making of when and how best to use Gen AI tools in language learning in Gen AI literacy instruction, support and training.

Keywords: Gen AI literacy, language pedagogy, materials design, student agency, student decision-making