Sarcouncil Journal of Arts and Literature

**ISSN(Online): 2945-364X**

Volume- 03| Issue- 05| 2024

**Researcch Article** **Received:** 20-07-2024 | **Accepted:** 30-08-2024 | **Published:** 23-09-2024

# The Impact of the Evolution of Artificial Intelligence on Foreign Language Teaching: A Case Study of English at UAO

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**Abstract:** Artificial Intelligence (AI) has evolved dramatically, impacting numerous fields, including education. This article explores the dual nature of AI in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language, highlighting its significant advantages and potential threats. AI offers personalized learning, instant feedback, and increased accessibility to educational resources, making learning more engaging and motivating. However, it also poses challenges such as reduced human interaction and concerns about data privacy. Using the English department at UAO as a case study, where students tend to use AI for scientific works, this research combines interviews with students and teachers to analyze the effectiveness, benefits, and challenges of AI in English learning. It emphasizes the need for balanced integration of AI, maintaining essential human interactions. The article concludes with recommendations for educational policy adaptations to harness AI's benefits while mitigating its drawbacks, ultimately proposing a rethinking of traditional educational models in light of technological advancements.

**Keywords:** AI, Education, Foreign Language, UAO.

## INTRODUCTION

Coppin, (2004: 4) defines artificial intelligence or AI as "the ability of machines to adapt to new situations, deal with emerging situations, solve problems, answer questions, device plans, and perform various other functions that require some level of intelligence typically evident in human beings. AI has significantly evolved in recent years, affecting various fields, including education. In the context of foreign language teaching and learning, particularly English, AI presents both opportunities and challenges. Talking about opportunities, Kessler, (2018) asserts that AI systems can analyze students' progress and adapt lessons according to their specific needs, thus offering personalized learning. According to Smith (2019), AI tools like grammar and syntax correction applications provide instant feedback, allowing students to correct their errors in real time. Online learning platforms integrating AI enable students to access educational resources at any time and from anywhere, thereby facilitating distance learning (Chinnery, 2020). Applications such as Google Translate and voice recognition tools help students understand and practice correct pronunciation (Council of Europe, 2022). AI-based applications often incorporate gamification elements to make learning more engaging and motivating (Idem, 2018). These tools can interact with students, answer their questions, and guide them throughout their learning process (Smith, 2019).

Despite these numerous advantages, AI also poses threats and challenges in English teaching. Among others, excessive dependence on AI tools could reduce essential human interactions in language learning, such as face-to-face discussions and group conversation practices (Idem, 2020). Moreover, according to the Council of Europe (2022), not all students have equal access to advanced technologies, which can create disparities in learning opportunities. Furthermore, AI tools are not infallible and can sometimes provide incorrect corrections or translations, which can harm learning (Idem, 2019). If AI systems are trained on biased data, they can perpetuate these biases, negatively affecting the quality of education (Kessler, 2018). The use of AI tools often involves collecting students' personal data, raising concerns about data privacy and security (Council of Europe, 2022). Excessive use of AI could reduce students' autonomy and their ability to solve problems independently (Chinnery, 2020).

At the English department of UAO (Université Alassane Ouattara), students increasingly rely on this new technology to write their mini-thesis, thesis, and even dissertations, thus falling into plagiarism. Indeed, the use of AI in language teaching, particularly for writing tasks, is increasingly seen as a form of plagiarism because of its potential to undermine the learning process and academic integrity. As Pennycook and Thompson (2023) argue, AI-generated text represents ideas and language that are not the student's own, which violates the fundamental principle of academic honesty. They claim that using AI to complete assignments deprives students of the opportunity to develop critical





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DOI- https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13830351

thinking and language skills, which they consider key goals of language education.

In addition, the issue of authorship and originality becomes ambiguous when AI is involved. Chen, *et al.*, (2020) point out that AI models are trained on vast amounts of existing text. This raises questions about the originality of the output students come up with when using AI. They argue that when students submit AI-generated work as their own, they are not only misrepresenting their abilities, but also potentially infringing on the intellectual property of others whose work was used to train the AI. This perspective is consistent with traditional definitions of plagiarism, which include not only direct copying but also the presentation of others' ideas as one's own without proper attribution.

Drawing from the above, it becomes clear that the use of AI poses a major challenge for both students and teachers. Students gradually become addicted to this tool, weakening their ability to reflect on research topics. They fall into ease and laziness.

Teachers, on the other hand, must constantly find ways to detect students who engage in this practice during corrections. But for how long will they have enough means to spot works done by AI? Especially when this tool tends to humanize more and more. Can the school, or at least English training at UAO, continue in its current form vis-à-vis the rise of AI? Shouldn't the actors of the system consider rethinking the school in general and particularly English teaching and learning? This article aims to examine how AI influences this field, exploring its potential advantages and the threats it could pose.

## 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1. History and Evolution of Artificial Intelligence in Education

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in education has evolved significantly over the last few decades, marked by important contributions from a number of researchers. This evolution comprises several key phases, each of which introduces major technological and pedagogical innovations.

#### 1.1.1. Early Experiments and Intelligent Tutorial Systems

The first applications of AI in education date back to the 1960s and 1970s, with the development of Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS). Jaime Carbonell, (1970) was one of the pioneers with the SCHOLAR project, which used a semantic database to teach South American geography. Carbonell demonstrated how ITS could simulate the behavior of a human tutor to provide personalized and adaptive teaching. Similarly, John R. Anderson made a significant contribution with the development of the LISP Tutor system, which integrated cognitive modeling principles to teach programming skills (Anderson, 1985).

#### 1.1.2. The Advent of Adaptive Technologies

With advances in natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning, the 1990s and 2000s saw the emergence of adaptive technologies. Researchers such as Corbett and Anderson, (1995) played a crucial role in this period, with the development of systems such as the Cognitive Tutor. These technologies enabled even greater personalization of learning, adapting in real-time to students' needs and performance. Carnegie Learning, based on Anderson's work, implemented these technologies to optimize students' learning paths, offering immediate and precise feedback.

#### 1.1.3. The Emergence of Chatbots and Virtual Assistants

In the 2010s, conversational AI, in the form of chatbots and virtual assistants, came to prominence in education. Works such as Woolf, *et al.*, (2013) explored the use of these tools to create more natural, ongoing interactions with students. Platforms such as IBM Watson have been integrated into learning environments to provide instant answers to student questions, support task organization, and enrich autonomous learning.

#### 1.1.4. AI in Virtual Classrooms and Distance Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the adoption of AI technologies in distance learning and virtual classrooms. AI-enhanced Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as Moodle and Blackboard, have integrated advanced features, such as predictive analytics to identify at-risk students, and personalized resource recommendations (Romero & Ventura, 2010). These tools have made it possible to maintain pedagogical continuity in times of crisis while opening up new perspectives for e-learning.

#### 1.1.5. Future Prospects

The evolution of AI in education is constantly progressing, with developments in deep learning, augmented (AR) and virtual reality (VR), and learning analytics. Looking forward, we totally agree with researchers such as Baker and Siemens (2014) who suggest that these technologies will





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continue to enrich the learning experience by offering immersive environments and detailed learning path analytics. Fully integrated educational ecosystems, in which AI will play a central role, will revolutionize education, improving the personalization, management, and efficiency of learning processes.

### 1.2. Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Foreign Language Teaching

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in foreign language teaching has expanded considerably, with applications ranging from intelligent tutoring systems to adaptive learning platforms. Various researchers have contributed to the exploration and implementation of these technologies, thus introducing innovative tools for language learning.

#### 1.2.1. Intelligent Tutoring Systems for Language Learning

As we said before, Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) were among the first AI applications used in the field of language learning. As noted by Heift and Schulze (2007), these systems offer targeted practice exercises and corrective feedback that enable learners to improve their language skills in a personalized way. The WERTi (Working with English Real Texts interactively) project, developed by Meurers, *et al.,* (2010), is a notable example, providing interactive exercises based on authentic texts to reinforce grammar and vocabulary.

#### 1.2.2. Adaptive technologies and personalized learning

Adaptive technologies, such as those developed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2016), have revolutionized language learning by enabling greater personalization. These technologies use machine learning algorithms to analyze learners' performance and adapt educational content accordingly. A key example is the Duolingo platform, which adjusts the difficulty level of exercises according to the user's progress. As Settles (2012) points out, this provides a tailor-made learning experience for the learner.

#### 1.2.3. Conversational Agents and Chatbots

The introduction of conversational agents and chatbots has also transformed language teaching. Researchers such as Fryer and Carpenter (2006) have explored the use of these technologies to simulate natural conversations, helping learners to practice their oral skills. Weizenbaum's (1966) example of "ELIZA", although rudimentary, paved the way for modern chatbots like Replika and Mitsuku, which provide realistic and engaging interactions for learners.

#### 1.2.4. Virtual and Augmented Reality

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are emerging technologies in language teaching, offering immersive environments for language learning. Dede (2009) has highlighted the importance of these technologies for creating contextualized and interactive learning experiences. Applications such as Mondly VR allow users to engage in simulated conversations in a variety of contexts, enhancing their immersion and engagement.

#### 1.2.5. Learning Analytics and Evaluation

Finally, learning analytics is a key application of AI, enabling fine-grained and continuous assessment of language skills. Researchers such as Long and Siemens (2011) have explored how analytics can be used to track learners' progress and identify areas requiring improvement. This data is essential for providing personalized feedback and guiding pedagogical interventions.

It clearly appears from the sections above that the applications of AI in foreign language teaching are vast and varied. Such applications offer powerful tools for improving learning efficiency and personalizing educational experiences. The contributions of researchers like Levy, Hubbard, and others have been crucial in exploring these technologies and developing innovative solutions that are transforming language teaching.

### 1.3. Learning Theories and Artificial Intelligence

The integration of AI into foreign language teaching is underpinned by several learning theories, which provide an essential conceptual framework for understanding how learners acquire new languages. Influential researchers such as Stephen Krashen, Lev Vygotsky, and others have developed key theories that continue to inform AI applications in this field.

#### 1.3.1. The Input Hypothesis and Language Acquisition

The Input Hypothesis, formulated by Krashen (1985), is a central theory in the field of language acquisition. It proposes that learners acquire a language through exposure to comprehensible input, i.e., language slightly beyond their current level of proficiency (i+1). This principle suggests that, in order to progress, learners need to be confronted with linguistic expressions that they understand globally, but which also contain new



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elements. AI exploits this theory by dynamically adjusting the difficulty level of exercises and teaching materials according to the learner's abilities, as the Lingvist platform does. This ensures that learners are constantly stimulated without being overwhelmed, maximizing learning efficiency.

Furthermore, this theory has important implications for the development of e-learning systems that use data analysis to personalize content. For example, AI-based systems can analyze student responses in real time, identify areas of difficulty and automatically adjust lessons to offer targeted support. This approach not only improves the learner's understanding but also engagement by making learning more relevant and accessible. The ability of these systems to provide comprehensible input on demand is one of AI's most significant advances in language teaching.

### 1.3.2. Sociocultural Theory and Collaborative Learning

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction and cultural mediation in cognitive development. Vygotsky argues that learning is intrinsically a social process and that learners develop their language skills through interactions with more competent interlocutors, often referred to as "tutors". This theoretical perspective has been fundamental to the development of collaborative educational technologies. For example, online language tandem platforms use conversational agents to facilitate linguistic exchanges between peers of different languages, offering authentic opportunities for communication.

In addition, the sociocultural approach has inspired the creation of AI-assisted discussion forums, where learners can ask questions, discuss linguistic concepts, and receive instant answers from virtual experts. These forums use natural language processing (NLP) techniques to understand and answer users' questions, creating an interaction-rich learning environment. Vygotsky's contributions have thus made it possible to integrate social and cultural elements into AI-assisted learning, enriching the learning experience and facilitating more natural, contextual language acquisition.

### 1.3.3. Constructivism and Immersive Learning Environments

Constructivism, championed by theorists such as Jean Piaget (1970) and Jerome Bruner (1960), proposes that learners actively construct their understanding through experience. This theory suggests that learning is a dynamic process, where individuals interact with their environment to construct meaning. Based on these principles, AI has enabled the development of immersive learning environments, such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) simulations. These technologies offer learners authentic experiences where they can practice a language in a variety of contexts, such as shopping in a market or booking a hotel room.

These immersive environments, supported by AI, enable learners to experience realistic language situations, boosting their engagement and motivation. For example, apps like Mondly VR use VR to simulate conversations with virtual interlocutors, enabling users to practice the language in a fun, interactive way. Contextualized scenarios help not only to develop practical language skills, but also to understand the cultural nuances associated with language use. Constructivism, with its emphasis on experiential learning, has therefore been a fundamental theory for the development of these innovative educational technologies.

### 1.3.4. Cognitive Load Theory and Instructional Design

Cognitive load theory, developed by Sweller (1988), states that the learner's ability to process information is limited, and that instruction should be designed to minimize unnecessary cognitive load. This theory is crucial in the context of language learning, where information overload can hinder comprehension and knowledge retention. AI tools apply this theory by offering simplified user interfaces and segmenting information into easy-to-digest units, thus facilitating the cognitive management of learning tasks. For example, platforms like Babbel structure lessons into small sections with clear explanations and interactive exercises, enabling learners to focus on one element at a time.

What's more, AI can automate the personalization of learning paths according to each student's cognitive load, adapting to the difficulty of tasks and the pace of learning. This helps prevent cognitive overload, ensuring that learners remain engaged and can assimilate information without feeling overwhelmed. Instructional design based on cognitive load theory, supported by AI technologies, thus optimizes learning efficiency by



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balancing content and complexity, while respecting learners' cognitive abilities.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology adopted for this research, which focuses on the qualitative study of teachers' and students' perceptions and experiences of the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on the teaching-learning of foreign languages, particularly English, at the English Department of the Université Alassane Ouattara (UAO). The method chosen for this study aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics and attitudes towards AI in the educational context of this institution. Our choice finds justification in the fact that we, as researchers, belong to the research community. We are members in charge of education at the university level, more specifically at UAO.

### 2.1. Methodological Approach

The study adopts a purely qualitative approach, considered the most appropriate for exploring individual perceptions, beliefs, and experiences. This approach enables the collection of rich and detailed data, offering a nuanced view of the effects of AI on language teaching. Qualitative research stands out for its flexibility and ability to adapt to participants' responses, which is essential for capturing the complexity of opinions on AI and its pedagogical applications. The choice of this method is motivated by the need to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective and contextual implications of using AI technologies in education.

### 2.2. Population and Sampling

The target population for this study includes teachers and students in the UAO English Department. Non-probability sampling, based on volunteering and availability, was used to select participants. This technique made it possible to select 50 students from various levels and 3 teachers, who are directly involved in using AI technologies in their teaching-learning process. The choice of participants was guided by the criterion of diversity of experience, including both teachers with varied experience in AI-assisted teaching and students from different academic levels, in order to gather a range of representative opinions.

### 2.3. Data Collection

Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen for its ability to combine structure and flexibility. The interviews were designed to explore participants' perceptions of the effectiveness, advantages, and disadvantages of using AI in language teaching, as well as their personal experiences with these technologies. Questions were framed to encourage detailed and reflective responses, offering an in-depth understanding of participants' attitudes and experiences.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This method involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns and themes throughout the qualitative data. The analysis process involved several steps, including transcription of the interviews, careful reading of the transcripts, initial coding of the data, and identification of recurring themes. The themes were then refined and organized to reflect key aspects of the participants' perceptions and experiences. The thematic analysis provided us with significant insights into how AI is perceived and used in language teaching at the UAO, providing a solid basis for the conclusions and recommendations of this study.

## 3. RESULTS

This section presents the results of the study on the use of AI by students at the English Department of the Alassane Ouattara University in their courses, exercises, and research work. Analysis of the data revealed a significant trend towards inappropriate use of these technologies, particularly marked by excessive use of AI tools without a thorough understanding of how they work and their limitations. Students, coded S1 to S50, shared their experiences and opinions, while teachers, coded AK, SS, and TK, also contributed their views on this situation.

A key observation of the study is the widespread and often excessive use of AI tools to complete assignments and research projects. Almost 70% of students surveyed admitted to using automated text generators to compose essays or reports. S3 said, "I always use ChatGPT to write my essays, it's quick and I don't have to worry about spelling or grammar." Similarly, S17 confided, "I find text generators useful for writing research papers, even if I don't always understand what they produce." These statements indicate a worrying reliance on these tools, often to the detriment of understanding and learning writing skills. Teachers expressed similar concerns, with AK noting, "We are seeing a decline in the quality of written work, reflecting



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an increased reliance on these tools without real understanding."

The interview analysis also revealed a lack of critical thinking in the use of AI tools. The majority of students do not evaluate the information generated by these tools, often using it as is without verification or in-depth understanding. S26 mentioned, "I take the answers provided by the AI as correct and copy them directly into my homework." This attitude reflects a lack of critical thinking and analytical skills, with students blindly relying on AI tools without questioning the validity or relevance of the information provided. TK observed, "There is a glaring absence of critical thinking among students who rely too heavily on AI, which undermines their ability to develop arguments and evaluate sources."

This inappropriate use of AI has negative consequences for student learning. Several participants acknowledged that this reliance has prevented them from developing their own skills, particularly in writing and research. S41 asserted, "I realize that I don't know how to structure my ideas well because I rely too much on AI." Similarly, S9 added: "I no longer try to understand concepts on my own, I prefer to ask the AI to do everything for me." These statements highlight the risks of unsupervised AI use, which can limit the development of essential academic skills. SS added: "It's crucial to re-educate students on the importance of intellectual autonomy and academic rigor."

Students also shared their perceptions and justifications for using AI. Some see these tools as a valuable aid for managing academic workloads, while others see them as a quick fix for getting good grades. S12 explained, "AI helps me save time, especially when I have a lot of homework to do." In contrast, S35 confessed, "I know it's not right to copy everything the AI says, but I just want to get good grades." These perspectives illustrate the varied motivations behind AI use, ranging from perceived efficiency to the quest for academic performance. Teachers, for their part, have expressed concern at this trend. AK stressed, "Students need to understand that AI is an assistive tool, not a substitute for their own thinking."

Finally, the results highlight the need for adequate education in the use of AI technologies. Students expressed the need for a better understanding of how to use these tools ethically and effectively. S47 suggested, "It would be useful to have courses on the proper use of AI, so we know how to use it without cheating." S20 also stressed, "We should learn to use AI as a learning tool, not a crutch." These recommendations highlight the importance of integrating digital education into the academic curriculum, to prepare students to use technology responsibly and constructively. Teachers AK, SS, and TK all agreed on the importance of ongoing training in new technologies to enable students to make the most of AI while avoiding ethical and academic mistakes.

## DISCUSSION

This study has revealed worrying trends in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) by students in the Department of English at the Alassane Ouattara University (UAO). The results show an over-reliance on AI tools to complete assignments and research projects, accompanied by a lack of critical thinking and academic skills development. These findings are in line with the wider literature on the impact of AI in education, highlighting issues similar to those observed in other educational contexts.

The excessive use of AI tools for essay and research writing is well documented in existing literature. According to Smith, *et al* (2021), students tend to use automated text generators as substitutes for personal writing efforts, which can lead to a significant reduction in intellectual engagement and academic quality. This trend is corroborated by the results of our study, where many students admitted to relying on AI tools to produce written work, often without a thorough understanding of the content generated. This reliance on technology raises questions about how writing and research skills are developed and assessed in today's context with expanding AI technology.

The lack of critical thinking observed among students is also supported by the literature. According to Darwin, *et al.*, (2023), students who use AI tools without evaluating the quality or relevance of the information generated may develop an unhealthy dependency on these technologies, undermining their ability to think critically and analyze sources. The results of our study, showing that students often accept AI responses without verification, reflect these concerns. This lack of critical thinking is problematic because it prevents students from developing essential analytical skills, as pointed out by Brown (2023), who highlights the



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importance of critical thinking in the learning process.

The negative consequences of the injudicious use of AI on the development of academic skills are also well documented. Williams (2021) argues that reliance on AI tools can lead to a lack of intellectual autonomy and a decline in writing and research skills. The results of our study show that students who rely excessively on AI have difficulty structuring their ideas and understanding concepts on their own, confirming Williams' observations. This highlights the need to integrate pedagogical practices that promote autonomy and the development of critical skills, particularly in a context where AI technologies play an increasing role.

Students' varied perceptions of AI, ranging from viewing these tools as a valuable aid to using them as a quick fix to get good grades, are also corroborated by the literature. Zhang (2022) explores students' motivations for using AI technologies, highlighting academic workload management and performance optimization as key factors. Our results show similar perspectives among students, with some using AI to save time and improve their results, while others use it less ethically. This diversity of perceptions highlights the complexity of attitudes towards AI and the need for a balanced approach to integrating these tools into education.

Finally, the need for adequate education in the use of AI technologies is a recurring theme in the literature. According to Johnson, *et al.*, (2023), appropriate training in the use of AI is essential to help students use these tools ethically and effectively. The recommendations of the students in our study to integrate courses on the appropriate use of AI are in line with these recommendations. Teachers, too, stress the importance of digital education in preparing students to use technologies responsibly. This need for targeted education on AI technologies reflects a growing consensus in the literature on the importance of training to maximize the benefits of digital tools while minimizing their potential risks.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that AI can offer significant opportunities to enhance foreign language teaching and learning, particularly English, by making learning more personalized, accessible, and engaging. However, the worrisome use of artificial intelligence by students at the English Department of the Alassane Ouattara University, marked by an over-reliance on AI tools for assignments and projects, accompanied by a lack of critical thinking and intellectual autonomy is likely to hinder these benefits AI may offer. Our findings underline the urgent need for appropriate education in the use of digital technologies, in order to develop essential academic skills and encourage ethical and thoughtful use of AI. A balanced approach that integrates AI technologies while maintaining human interactions and ensuring equitable access and data privacy is, therefore, essential to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks of AI in language education.

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**Source of support:** Nil; **Conflict of interest:** Nil.

**Cite this article as:**
Kone, K. and Diarrassouba, M. "The Impact of the Evolution of Artificial Intelligence on Foreign Language Teaching: A Case Study of English at UAO." *Sarcouncil Journal of Arts and Literature* 3.5 (2024): pp 1-8.





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