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Empowering Language Teachers: Professional Development and Pedagogical Integration of Generative AI

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Article Info

Abstract
This study addresses the critical need for Professional Development (PD) interventions to overcome teachers' insufficient familiarity with AI and enhance their readiness for integration. Research emphasizes that effective PD must cultivate transformative agency—the capacity to initiate pedagogical change and integrate GenAI skills with various types of general and context-specific professional knowledge. Formative interventions involving collaborative tasks, such as output evaluation and prompt revision, offer a crucial framework for this learning. The expected findings show that through targeted support, teachers move from initial fears of replacement to actively redefining their roles as evaluators, collaborators, and experts who use GenAI to augment teaching, personalize learning, and save time on tasks like lesson planning and content creation. Ultimately, empowering language teachers requires developing their AI readiness (including cognition, ability, vision, and ethics), ensuring that the pedagogical integration of GenAI is responsible, critical, and strategically supported by institutional resources and policy.

1. Introduction

The educational landscape has undergone a profound shift with the emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), exemplified by widely accessible tools like ChatGPT. Unlike traditional AI that operates on pre-defined tasks, GenAI employs deep learning models to generate adaptive, human-like content across diverse media forms, including text, images, sound, and video (Lim *et al*., 2023) [5]. This technological advancement has sparked intensive global discussion regarding its potential and its profound impact on teachers and their professional work (Kasneci *et al*., 2023) [4]. The ubiquity of GenAI is undeniable, reflected by the staggering speed of its uptake, even among students in higher education. This seismic change necessitates a critical and urgent response from the educational community, particularly in specialized fields such as English Language Teaching (ELT) (Al-khresheh, 2024) [1].

The integration of GenAI presents language teachers with a dual reality of immense opportunity and significant challenge. On the one hand, GenAI offers the potential to revolutionize teaching practices by supporting the generation of content, personalizing learning, and increasing efficiency in tasks like lesson planning (Batane & Ngwako, 2016). Teachers who embrace GenAI often report recognizing its value (valuing) and making efforts to integrate it into their work. However, the advanced capabilities of these tools have simultaneously raised acute professional and ethical concerns. Worries center around the potential for widespread academic integrity violations such as plagiarism, the risk of students developing overreliance on the technology, and the suppression of critical thinking and creativity (Moylan & O'Brien, 2025) [8]. Furthermore, many educators, particularly those newer to the profession, lack the confidence and knowledge required for effective technology integration in this rapidly evolving environment. This challenging context requires educators to engage in continuous sensemaking—the dynamic process of interpreting changing circumstances to orient their actions—as they strive to reconcile traditional teaching identities with the necessities of the post digital age.

Given these dynamics, there is a pressing need for comprehensive Professional Development (PD) interventions specifically designed to equip language teachers—from pre-service to in-service educators—with the competencies needed to teach effectively in the GenAI age. Research indicates that accessibility and supportive institutional contexts, such as the integration of GenAI into Learning Management Systems (LMSs), can facilitate initial uptake. However, successful integration demands more than just technical familiarity; it requires the development of deep conceptual understanding and pedagogical dexterity (Yang & Markauskaite, 2025) [12].

The goal of this empowering professional process is to foster transformative agency. Agency, defined as an individual's capacity to decide, plan, and act to influence their situation, is essential for overcoming demanding situations or conflicts of motives brought on by new technologies. The formation of transformative agency encompasses integrating GenAI skills with general and context-specific professional knowledge. Effective PD models, such as formative interventions that utilize structured, collaborative tasks like output evaluation and prompt revision, offer a mechanism for achieving this expansive learning. Ultimately, empowering language teachers necessitates that institutions focus holistically on developing AI readiness, encompassing the requisite cognition, ability, vision, and ethical understanding required to ensure GenAI is integrated responsibly, critically, and ethically into pedagogical practice (Guan & Gu, 2025) [3].

This article explores how strategic professional development efforts can enhance language teachers' capacity and agency, thereby facilitating the thoughtful and effective pedagogical integration of Generative AI across diverse learning environment.

2. Opportunities and Challenges of Generative AI

The public introduction of GenAI tools like ChatGPT in late 2022 generated widespread interest regarding their potential impact on teaching and learning. GenAI possesses powerful capabilities for summarizing, synthesizing, and generating human-like content across various media, including text (Smith *et al*, 2025) [10]. For language teaching, this technology offers immense potential for personalizing learning, creating adaptive instruction, and increasing teacher efficiency in tasks such as lesson planning and assessment optimization. GenAI can assist with both micro-level writing tasks (e.g., grammar and syntax revision) and macro-level elements (e.g., content development and tone) (Strobl *et al*, 2019) [11]. However, the perceived capacities of GenAI also raise substantial ethical and pedagogical concerns. Worries include potential academic integrity violations and plagiarism, the suppression of critical thinking and creativity, and the possibility of students developing an overreliance on the technology. Furthermore, studies focusing on school-based English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts or other foreign languages (FL) show that these specific teaching environments are often overlooked in favor of general AI studies or those focused on higher education, highlighting a research gap. Addressing these challenges requires teachers to engage in continuous sensemaking to interpret changing circumstances and navigate the integration of this new technology (Al-khresheh, 2024; Moylan & O'Brien, 2025) [1, 8]

3. Teacher Readiness, Agency, and Professional Identity

Effective integration of GenAI demands more than mere technical skill; it requires a deep conceptual understanding and proactive professional engagement. This engagement is often measured through AI readiness, a construct defined by factors such as cognition, ability, vision, and ethics (Smakman *et al*., 2021) [9]. Comprehensive frameworks view AI readiness across three dimensions: personal assets (AI-TPACK, innovativeness), value-cost beliefs, and contextual resource evaluations (institutional/peer support). While some recent graduates show readiness, particularly first-year teachers experienced with tools like ChatGPT, beginning teachers often report insufficient knowledge and lack of preparation for the GenAI age (Moorhouse, 2024) [7].

The shift to AI-enhanced education is intrinsically linked to teacher agency—the capacity to initiate necessary changes for digital transformation. Teachers' roles are expected to evolve from passive recipients to active users and eventually to constructive partners in the educational process (Martínez-Moreno & Petko, 2024) [6]. Failure to develop the requisite competencies may leave teachers feeling constrained by technology, threatening their professional identity and confidence. GenAI is a potent force in the reconstruction of Language Teacher Identity (LTI), prompting educators to redefine their professional roles, practices, and technological awareness in response to the digital context (Ghiasvand & Seyri 2025) [2].

4. Professional Development Models for Agency Enhancement

Given the urgent need to support teachers in navigating these complexities, current literature calls for ongoing professional learning interventions. The key goal of such PD is the cultivation of transformative agency—the capacity and commitment to challenge current practices and initiate change through expansive learning (Yang & Markauskaite, 2025) [12].

Highly specified interventions include the use of formative interventions, often structured using principles from Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). These interventions use "double stimulation," presenting a conflict of motives (such as the gap between initial expectation and GenAI output) alongside structured tools (task instructions, prompt revision) to guide agents toward solutions. Structured group tasks—including output evaluation and prompt revision focused on authentic professional tasks—provide a framework for integrating GenAI skills with professional knowledge, thereby developing teachers' agency (Yang & Markauskaite, 2025) [12]. Furthermore, engaging in collaborative inquiry and participating in professional learning communities is identified as crucial for enhancing professional recognition, efficacy beliefs, and fostering collective agency in the face of educational change. Such collaborative efforts facilitate the critical and novel integration of GenAI into teaching (Mahajan *et al*., 2023).

5. Conclusion

The interplay of digital connectivity, AI, and global language networks presents a complex, often paradoxical, scenario for the preservation and revitalization of linguistic diversity in language and literature education. While global language networks highlight the dominance of certain languages,

potentially sidelining others, digital platforms also offer new avenues for exposing and connecting diverse languages. AI tools like ChatGPT, despite concerns about originality, can streamline documentation and information access for language studies. However, the same connectivity that facilitates global interaction can, through increased road density and educational policies prioritizing dominant languages, accelerate the loss of indigenous languages. The research underscores the urgent need for a strategic, multi-faceted approach within language and literature education to leverage the opportunities of the digital age while mitigating its risks. This includes: prioritizing investment in documenting endangered languages before their L1 speakers are lost; implementing genuine, culturally responsive bilingual education programs; fostering digital literacy and critical thinking to navigate AI-generated content; and developing inclusive pedagogies that celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity within technologically enhanced learning environments. Addressing the digital divide and adapting teaching methods to local cultural contexts are also crucial for ensuring equitable access and effective implementation of connectivity in education globally. Continued innovation, research into long-term impacts, and robust policy support are essential to shape an educational future where technology empowers the preservation and vitality of the world's linguistic heritage rather than contributing to its decline.

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