DEVELOPING CRITICAL EVALUATION COMPETENCE OF PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS THROUGH GENERATIVE AI

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ABSTRACT

The integration of generative artificial intelligence into foreign language education is changing the ways in which teaching materials are created, adapted, and evaluated. AI-based applications can provide prospective English language teachers with a wide range of resources, including texts, exercises, lesson plans, assessment tasks, and explanations. However, the speed and convenience of AI-generated content may also encourage users to accept information without sufficient verification. This study addresses the development of critical evaluation competence among prospective English language teachers and proposes a methodological framework for using generative AI as an instrument for professional analysis rather than merely as a source of ready-made materials. The framework combines content generation, critical analysis, source verification, pedagogical evaluation, and reflection. The theoretical and methodological findings indicate that appropriately designed AI-based activities can create opportunities for developing future teachers' ability to assess the suitability of teaching materials, and justify their professional decisions.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence, prospective English language teachers, critical evaluation competence, English language teaching, AI literacy, teacher education, digital competence.

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of artificial intelligence has introduced new possibilities for foreign language education. In particular, generative AI can produce educational content in response to natural-language instructions. Teachers and students can use such systems to create reading passages, vocabulary activities, grammar exercises, dialogues, lesson plans, and assessment materials.

For English language teacher education, these possibilities are particularly significant. Prospective teachers can use AI to explore alternative teaching activities, adapt materials to different language levels, and receive suggestions for classroom tasks. At the same time, the growing accessibility of AI creates an important pedagogical challenge: generated content may appear convincing even when it contains errors or does not meet the needs of a particular group of learners.

AI-generated material can be problematic in several ways. A text may contain inappropriate vocabulary for the target proficiency level; a grammar explanation may be incomplete; or a lesson plan may contain activities that do not correspond to its stated objectives. Consequently, the ability to use AI effectively cannot be reduced to knowing how to formulate prompts.

Future English language teachers need to develop the professional ability to question, examine, verify, and evaluate AI-generated content. This requirement corresponds to the broader development of digital and critical competencies in contemporary teacher education.

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The purpose of this study is to develop a methodological framework for enhancing the critical evaluation competence of prospective English language teachers through the purposeful integration of generative AI.

2. METHODS

The study is based on theoretical analysis, comparison, generalization, and methodological modelling. Relevant research on artificial intelligence in education, large language models, and digital competence was examined to identify principles that could be applied to English language teacher education.

On this basis, **a five-stage** methodological framework was developed.

The first stage is content generation. Prospective English teachers are given a teaching-related task and use a generative AI application to produce a response. Depending on the lesson objective, the generated product may be a reading text, vocabulary exercise, grammar explanation, speaking activity, assessment activity, or lesson plan.

The second stage is critical examination. Students independently examine the output before accepting it. They identify possible grammatical, lexical, factual, structural, cultural, or methodological problems.

The third stage is verification. Students check questionable information against independent and reliable sources. Dictionaries, textbooks, academic publications, and authoritative educational resources can be used to establish whether an AI-generated statement or language example is accurate.

The fourth stage is pedagogical evaluation. Students examine the material from the perspective of actual classroom use. They consider learners’ age and proficiency, lesson objectives, cultural context, expected learning outcomes, level of difficulty, and classroom practicality.

The fifth stage is reflection and revision. Students explain which parts of the generated material they would retain, modify, or remove. They then revise the material and reflect on the role of AI in completing the task.

The framework therefore places human judgment at the centre of AI-supported teacher preparation.

3. RESULTS

The methodological analysis resulted in the identification of several ways in which generative AI can be incorporated into activities aimed at developing critical evaluation competence.

First, AI-generated content can be used to create error-detection tasks. Prospective teachers may analyze a generated text and classify the problems they identify as grammatical, lexical, factual, or pedagogical. This activity requires students to apply their existing knowledge rather than simply reproduce an AI response.

Second, source-verification activities can encourage students to develop the habit of checking information independently. For example, when an AI system provides an explanation of a linguistic phenomenon or a cultural fact, students can compare the response with dictionaries, textbooks, or academic sources.

Third, AI can be incorporated into lesson-plan evaluation. Students may ask an AI tool to produce a lesson plan for a specific CEFR level and subsequently assess whether the objectives, activities, interaction patterns, and assessment procedures are appropriate. The students then revise the plan according to their own methodological judgment.

Fourth, comparative evaluation tasks can be used. Students may request two different AI-generated versions of the same teaching material and establish which one is more appropriate for a particular learning context. Importantly, their choice should be supported by clearly stated criteria rather than personal preference alone.

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The analysis also suggests that critical evaluation competence consists of several interconnected abilities. These include understanding the capabilities and limitations of AI, analyzing generated content, verifying information through external sources, assessing pedagogical suitability, and reflecting on the decisions made during the evaluation process.

4. DISCUSSION

The proposed framework indicates that generative AI can serve a dual function in English language teacher education. On the one hand, it can provide prospective teachers with rapidly generated teaching materials. On the other hand, these materials can become objects of professional analysis.

This second function is particularly important. If students use AI exclusively to obtain ready-made answers, there is a risk that they may become dependent on generated content and pay insufficient attention to its quality. In contrast, activities requiring students to identify errors, verify information, and justify pedagogical decisions encourage a more active form of AI use.

The approach also connects AI literacy with the professional knowledge required of English language teachers. For instance, evaluating an AI-generated grammar activity requires not only technological awareness but also knowledge of language pedagogy, learner needs, assessment principles, and classroom methodology.

This perspective is consistent with the human-centred approach to AI in education emphasized by UNESCO (2023). Generative AI can support teachers and learners, but its outputs should remain subject to human evaluation. Research by Kasneci et al. (2023) likewise points to both the opportunities and limitations associated with the use of large language models in educational contexts.

However, the proposed framework is methodological in nature and requires further empirical investigation. Future research should involve prospective English language teachers and examine whether systematic AI-based evaluation activities can produce measurable changes in their critical evaluation competence.

5. CONCLUSION

Generative artificial intelligence is becoming an increasingly relevant component of contemporary English language education. Its ability to generate educational materials can provide valuable support for prospective teachers, but effective use of this technology requires more than technical knowledge.

The present study proposes a five-stage framework based on generation, critical examination, verification, pedagogical evaluation, and reflection. This framework allows prospective English language teachers to engage with AI-generated content actively and critically.

The central principle of the proposed approach is that AI-generated material should be regarded as content to be evaluated rather than information to be accepted automatically. By incorporating error detection, source verification, lesson-plan analysis, comparative evaluation, and reflective activities into teacher education, institutions can create conditions for developing future teachers' critical and responsible use of generative AI.

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