

Generative AI as conversational partner:

Developing Critical Interactional Competence in language and culture learning

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Making the case

Why do we need an intercultural outlook in language learning?

An intercultural outlook

Redefines language learning as a transformative process that equips individuals to navigate and connect across cultural and linguistic divides and develops new intercultural perspectives and understanding.

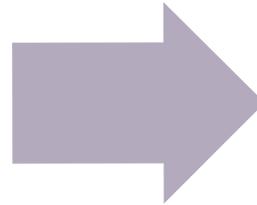
The goal of (language) learning: Wider debates

- A vision of education centrally concerned with the cultivation of human powers (understanding, capabilities, dispositions) (Deng, 2022)
- Learning through a subject: subject learning offers transferable, subject-independent perspectives that enrich personal development and support functional roles in social, economic and political life. (Vollmer & Rothgangel, 2024)

So what do these mean in terms of goal of language learning?

Pass as native speakers

- Accumulate knowledge about the target culture
- Familiarise with the cultural codes embedded in language use



Intercultural speakers

- Intercultural outlook
- Mediate or move between different cultural and linguistic systems and perspectives
- New knowledge and understanding through seeing language learning as intercultural encounters

Key considerations:

- Not to replace one's Languaculture (LC1) with LC2, but mediating between these and developing something new
- De-centre 'norms'
- Learner-oriented approaches (taking account of diverse backgrounds of our learners, their experiences and subjectivities)
- The appeal of third culture (Kramsch, 2009): symbolic space where one's own and the target culture interact with each other
- Symbolic Competence (Kramsch, 2008): the ability 'not only to approximate or appropriate for oneself someone else's language, but to shape the very context in which the language is learned and used through the learner's and other's embodied history and subjectivity'
- **Critical interactional competence (CritIC) (this talk): A form of interactional criticality that enables language learners/users to engage in interactions with agency and reflexivity**

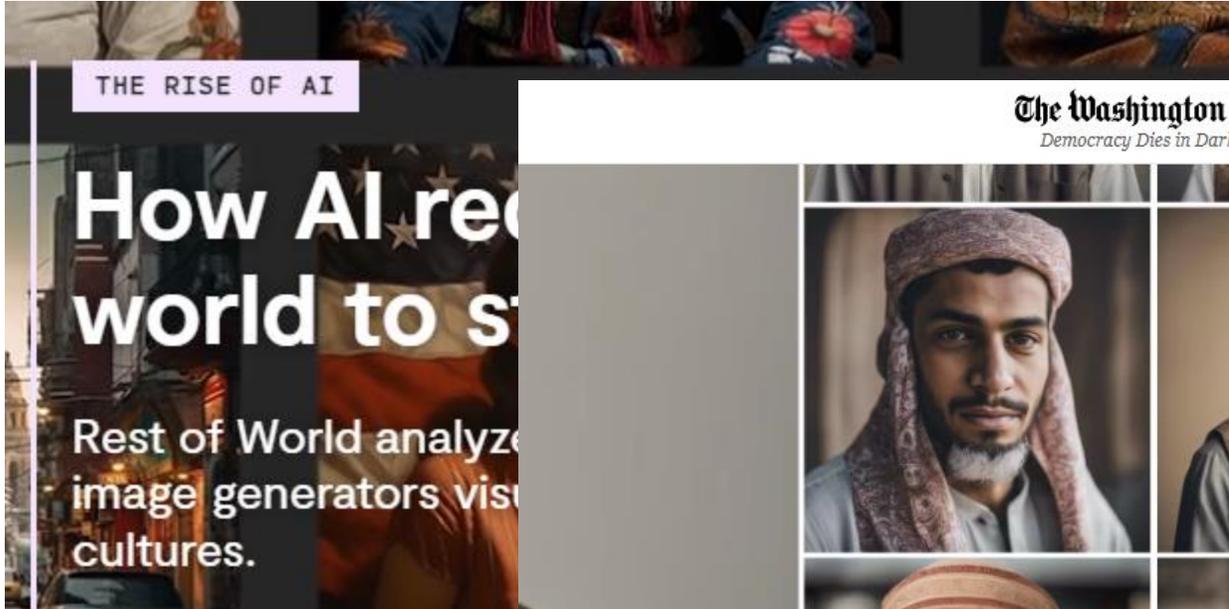
The age of GenAI

✦ AI Overview

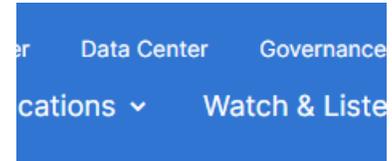
Generative AI, or GenAI, is a type of artificial intelligence (AI) that can create new content and ideas, such as text, images, music, audio, and videos. GenAI uses machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP) to learn from large amounts of data and then generate new content based on those patterns. [🔗](#)



- Recent large-scale survey (776 participants) found that **88%** of respondents use large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT in their everyday learning: conversational engagement, societal and cultural enquiry (Terzimehić et al, 2025)
- National Literacy Trust Annual Literacy Survey: **2 in 3 (66.5%) young people aged 13 to 18** told us in 2025 that they used generative AI



prompt:
Muslim people
are men with head coverings



These fake images reveal how AI amplifies our worst stereotypes

AI study
ence of
regressive gender stereotypes

Use case

- L2-English physiotherapist Ling using Gen AI to improve language and cultural knowledge
- Talking to neck-injury patients coming from diverse language and cultural backgrounds
- Chinese-background physiotherapist currently working in Australia
- Chinese- and Indian-background ChatGPT-4o 45-year-old female patients
- Moment-by-moment interactional analysis

Chinese AI patient

Al: I live with my family, my husband and two children.

Ling: Uh huh. Yes. And do you and your husband have a full time job? I want to check if you need to go to some treatment. Someone can help you.

Al: Yes. Both of us have full time job. My parents live with us too. They can help if I need treatment.

Ling: Okay. So, your parents live with you guys. Okay. And where do you living now? Is this like um a very simple one storey house? Or are you living a town house?

Al: We live in apartment. It's small but comfortable.

Ling: Um. Okay. That's good. And do you have any difficulty to use any service in your apartment? Like cooking? Cleaning?

What AI says

“I tried to represent Chinese cultural values by ... I also mentioned family living arrangements as multi-generational living is common in Chinese culture.”

What human says

“...Yes, it's true most of the Chinese people living in Australia have their families. Er. And they have the children but I think Chinese people will prefer townhouse or house...because I think that they move to a foreign country...Maybe they would prefer much bigger space? I don't know”

“...And for the parents, if they just move out, move to- I don't know if move to Australia for 10 years, I'm, I'm not sure their parents can take off her because they- her parents can speak English, or not?”

- 96 B Yes (.) both of us have full time job my parents live with us
97 too_
98 A Mmm-hm
99 B They can help if I need treatment_
100 (1.4)
101 A Oka::y .hhh so your parents is live with you guys ok:ay .hhh
102 an::d .hhh ↑where do you living now (.) is this (0.4) like (0.2)
103 erm (0.4) a very simple s- .hhh one story ↑house or live in a
104 townhouse_
105 (3.2)
106 B We ↑live ↑in apartment (.) it's sm:all [but] comfortable_
107 A [Mmm]
108 (1.9)
109 A Ok::ay that's good .hhh and do you ↑have (.) any difficulty to
110 use <any service> .hhh in your apartment .hhh like cookin::g (.)

Indian AI patient

Ling: And for this pain, is that always on your shoulder

AI: Yes, Ling. Pain is going to my shoulders-

AI: -also. It is very hard for me to do my daily work.

Ling: Okay. It is understandable. And could you give me a bit more information about your daily work? What- Er are you working at this moment?
[pause] Er what kind of job you're working for?

AI: I am housewife. I do all housework like cooking, cleaning, taking care of family.

Ling: Mmm.

AI: Sometimes lifting heavy things also.

Ling: Okay. Sounds like the bad neck pain will affect your working during life.

AI: Yes, Ling. It is very hard to do my work properly. Even simple things are very painful now.



Ling: Ah could they help you for all the house cleaning too-

Al: Yes, Ling. My family is very supportive-

Al: -but I need to get better soon.

Ling: Mmm hm. Yes, I know because you still need to help to do all of the, the housing stuff. But-

Al: Yes, Ling. I need to take of my family.

Al: And do all the housework.

Ling: Mmm hm.

Al: It is very important for me.

Ling: Uh, it's understandable.

Al: Thank you Ling



What AI says

“In the role play, I represented Indian cultural values by mentioning family as a central part of daily life and responsibilities. As well as emphasising the importance of taking care of the household.”

What human says

Ling: ...And in terms of- She is, um, housewife [pause] and our conversation is most focus, focus on, [sighs] [pause] housekeeping, mmm, and she is a little bit anxious to go back. It is understandable. But I don't know if it is stereotype or not [laughs].

INT: Yes, why, why do you think it could be a stereotype?

Ling: Yes, just like perform, er, India woman as a housewife.

INT: Based on your experience do many of your Indian patients, if they are female, are they housewives and don't work? Or?

Ling: I don't know actually because my patient is, uh, is a man.

36 B [Yes Ling pain is going to my] shoulders also_=It is ↑very
37 hard for [me to] do my daily work_

38 A [Mmm]
39 (1.7)

40 A Okay it is understandable .hhh and could you give me about more
41 information about your daily work .hhh what er are you working
42 at this moment;
43 (1.8)

44 A Er what kind of job you are working for,

45 B I am a housewife I do all housework like cooking cleaning taking
46 care of [family] ↑sometimes lifting heavy things al↓so_

47 A [Mmm]
48 (1.5)

49 A Oka::y .hhh sounds like er ba- that pain will affect your
50 working (0.5) during your life.
51 (3.0)

52 B <Yes Ling (.) it is very hard to do my work properly ↑even
53 simple [things] are very painful now.

- 110 A Ye:ah .hhh er:: could they help you
 111 [for all the house cleaning to]
- 112 B [Yes Ling my family is very supportive] but I need to get better
 113 [soon]
- 114 A [Mm-hm]
 115 (1.7)
- 116 A .hhh Yeah I know .hhh <because you still need to help to do all
 117 of> (0.7) .hhh >the housing ↑stuff< .hhh but
- 118 B Yes Ling [I need to take care of my family] and do all the
 119 A [[unclear 00:04:38]
- 120 B [housework] it is very important for me_
 121 A [Mmm-hm]
 122 (1.8)
- 123 A Er it's understandable=

Concluding thoughts and looking forward

- Language and culture learning in the Gen AI era
- GenAI opens the space for developing interactional skills but also highlights the need for critical engage with technology to combat biases, stereotypes and interactional entrenchment
- We need Critical Interactional Competence (CritIC), which is not stated criticality but **interactional criticality**
- Focus on learners' lived experiences and subjectivities
- More work needed that uses interactional analysis to study language and culture learning in action

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

How does interaction with LLM powered chatbots shape human understanding of culture? The need for Critical Interactional Competence (CritIC)

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<https://www.critic-net.com>

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Developing better social interaction and social relationships in the posthuman era

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Thank you!

Do you have any questions or comments?

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