

## **GenAI and Higher Education Language Teaching: Human Agency in the Age of Tech-Solutionism**

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Since the introduction of ChatGPT, the popularity of Large Language Models (LLMs) and other types of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has skyrocketed, including in multilingual communication. In higher education, this disruptive (r)evolution is a cause of great concern, while at the same time educational institutions have (either out of conviction, or willy-nilly) jumped on the AI bandwagon. Never before have students, nor humans in general, in companies, news media, the justice system, public services, and their daily lives, left their communication, nor outsourced their thinking to machines, which are seen as fast and easy, or cheap and easy solutions rather than tools. Never before have humans believed that they could communicate in foreign languages without having to master these languages. And never before have professional training and quality of communication been so briskly and unambiguously sacrificed on the altar of tech-solutionism.

In this talk, I shall advocate for tech-realism instead of tech-solutionism, by deconstructing the tech-optimistic hype that surrounds AI, focusing specifically on LLMs, and GenAI used for communication purposes. Tech-realism is a condition *sine qua non* for responsible AI-use to be possible at all. It hinges on due awareness and understanding of how these systems work, of the anthropomorphic and euphemistic terminology used, and the uninvited epistemological, ethical and cultural side-effects that inevitably occur because of the systems' architecture. In this respect, more is needed in education than learning to use the systems effectively. While AI literacy is sometimes understood as a set of technical competences necessary to critically and ethically use AI-systems, AI literacy actually begins with knowing when and why not to use GenAI, and with developing the necessary human knowledge and understanding, skills, and attitudes needed to be able to use GenAI as a tool, rather than as a solution. While educational systems and pedagogical models urge language teachers to integrate GenAI in their teaching to enhance language learning, that learning may actually be hindered by GenAI. LLMs do not 'communicate' as humans do, but only parrot human language; if we do not want language learners to parrot that parrot, education should emphasize human communication and learning, and epistemological, ethical and intercultural awareness and understanding as the core conditions of preserving human agency in the age of tech-solutionism.