AI AS YOUR PERSONAL ASSISTANT: LEARNING LANGUAGES SMARTER, NOT HARDER

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The current stage of higher education development is characterized by the transition from the local use of digital tools to the systematic inclusion of artificial intelligence (AI) in educational, communicative, research and management activities. Formation of a holistic system of competencies allows not only to use AI, but also to critically understand its capabilities, limitations, risks and consequences for education, science and society. The transition from basic AI literacy to a broader competency model is of particular importance. While at the initial level the focus was mainly on familiarization with technology and its tools, modern frameworks emphasize the need to integrate AI knowledge, ethical guidelines, practical skills, critical judgment and responsible behavior into a single system [1, 2].

The highest level, creation, is associated with the transition from using ready-made solutions to more active participation in the formation or adaptation of AI systems. In a pedagogical sense, this may mean designing one's own AI usage scenarios, customizing datasets, participating in open-source work, constructing problem-solving models, or at least consciously designing the interaction between the user, data, and system. In the UNESCO framework, this level is directly related to AI system design, which indicates the importance of not only using the technology, but also understanding its architecture, construction logic, and improvement possibilities [3, 4].

This is especially important for higher education, as university training should focus not only on digital adaptation, but also on developing the ability to create new solutions. That is why it is important to include elements of system design thinking in the structure of digital competence [5, 6]. This is about the ability to outline the boundaries of the problem, determine which tasks are appropriate to transfer to AI, what data is needed for this, what risks the system may create and how it should be improved in an iterative manner.

This approach moves interaction with technology from the level of consumption to the level of meaningful design. The 21st century requires students who not only possess knowledge but also critical thinking [6], the ability to collaborate, proactivity and problem-solving skills.

Thus, we consider the analysis of the options available today, the choice of an individual trajectory for adequate steps and the pace of achieving the goal.

An AI language assistant is a computer program that can understand what you write or say, and respond in a natural, human-like way. When discussing AI in language learning, the immediate association is often Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT or Claude, which can explain grammar, contextualize translations, and simulate real-life dialogues such as job interviews or ordering at a restaurant. However, AI's application is much broader, operating seamlessly within everyday tools. Platforms like YouTube or Netflix generate automatic subtitles or create their own, Language Reactor provides dual-subtitles and instant translations, and applications like Elsa Speak use advanced speech recognition to analyze and correct specific pronunciation sounds. Even Zoom and Google Meet have AI real-time subtitles, and tools like Grammarly check not just spelling but writing style and tone using AI technologies.

A highly practical advantage of this AI ecosystem is its cost-effectiveness. Traditional tutoring platforms often charge between $15 and $50 for a single 50-minute lesson. To maintain visible progress, learners typically spend $60 to $100 monthly for very limited practice time. In stark contrast, a premium LLM subscription costs approximately $20 per month for unlimited, round-the-clock practice, while tools like Language Reactor offer powerful features entirely for free. This shifts language acquisition from being an expensive privilege to a universally accessible resource.

Furthermore, AI empowers learners with technical inclinations to design their own educational infrastructure. Instead of relying solely on pre-packaged apps, students can "vibecode" custom tracking applications or engineer dedicated Telegram bots to manage daily practice, correct homework, and track progress over time.

Despite these profound advantages, it is critical to recognize AI's limitations. AI can generate inaccurate or unnatural explanations, particularly regarding modern slang or regional idioms. More importantly, it cannot fully replicate the cultural nuances, unpredictable reactions, and human connection inherent in speaking with a native speaker. The greatest risk remains over-reliance - using AI to bypass independent thought rather than as a collaborative partner.

Personal experience utilizing AI to study French over a three-month period underscores its efficacy. While traditional lessons resulted in slow progress, integrating tools like Claude for generating structured weekly schedules, ChatGPT for validating the natural flow of sentences, and DeepL for contextual vocabulary significantly accelerated skill acquisition and personal confidence. For optimal results, learners should maintain consistency - even 15 minutes daily, like in my case, assign specific roles to the AI for realistic practice, and combine these digital sessions with real-world content. With AI, I began practicing every day through short conversations, grammar explanations, and vocabulary exercises. I also use tools like DeepL and ChatGPT to check if my sentences sound natural.

Looking forward, the integration of real-time voice AI tutors, fully adaptive learning paths, and immersive AR/VR environments will continue to radically transform educational methodologies [7]. However, the most effective approach to language mastery remains a hybrid model: leveraging AI for efficient, personalized daily practice, while engaging with human tutors to develop genuine cultural understanding and real-world communication skills.

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