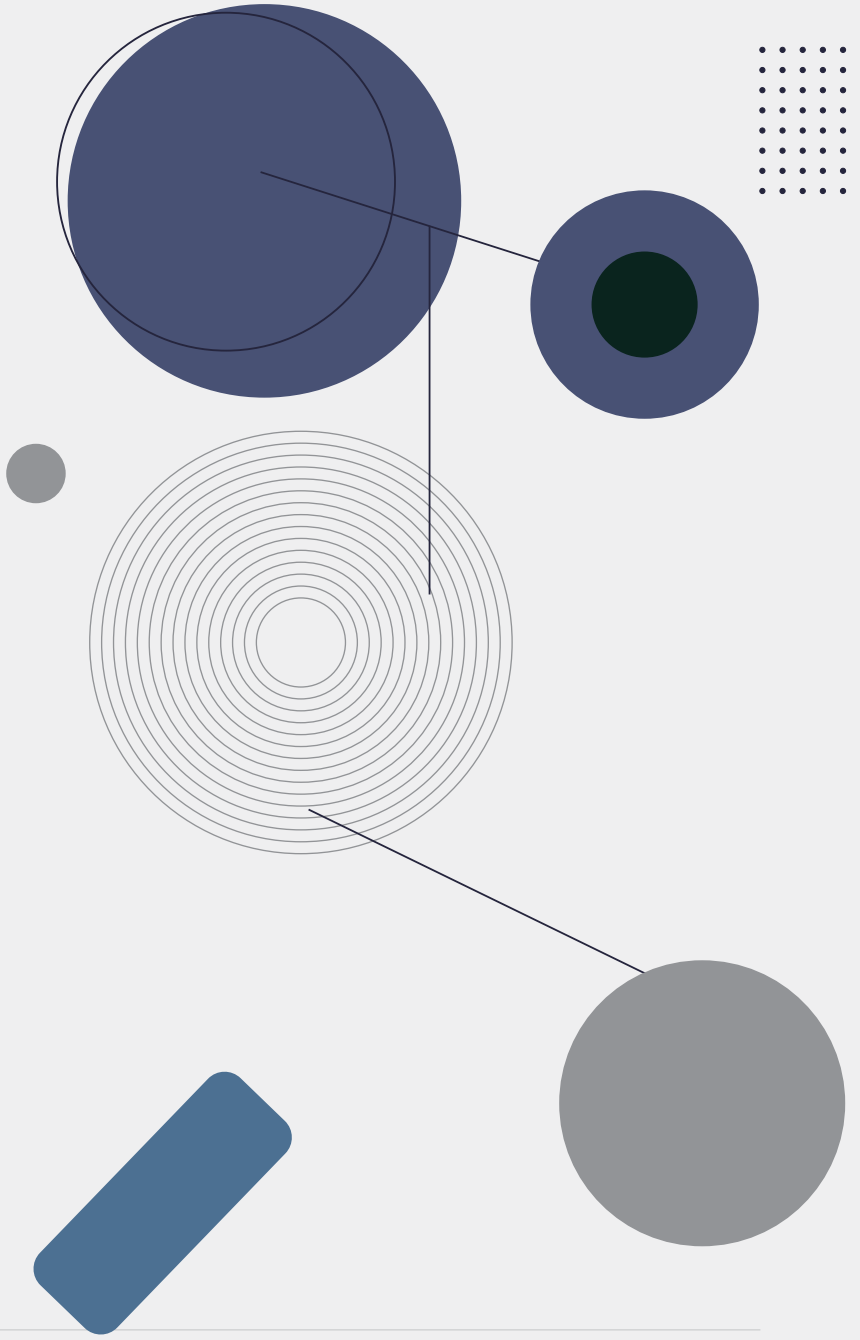

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ILL2026

Language Teachers in the Age of Generative AI

A Contextualised Review of International Evidence and Implications for Teacher Education in Malta

Dr Joseph Vancell PhD

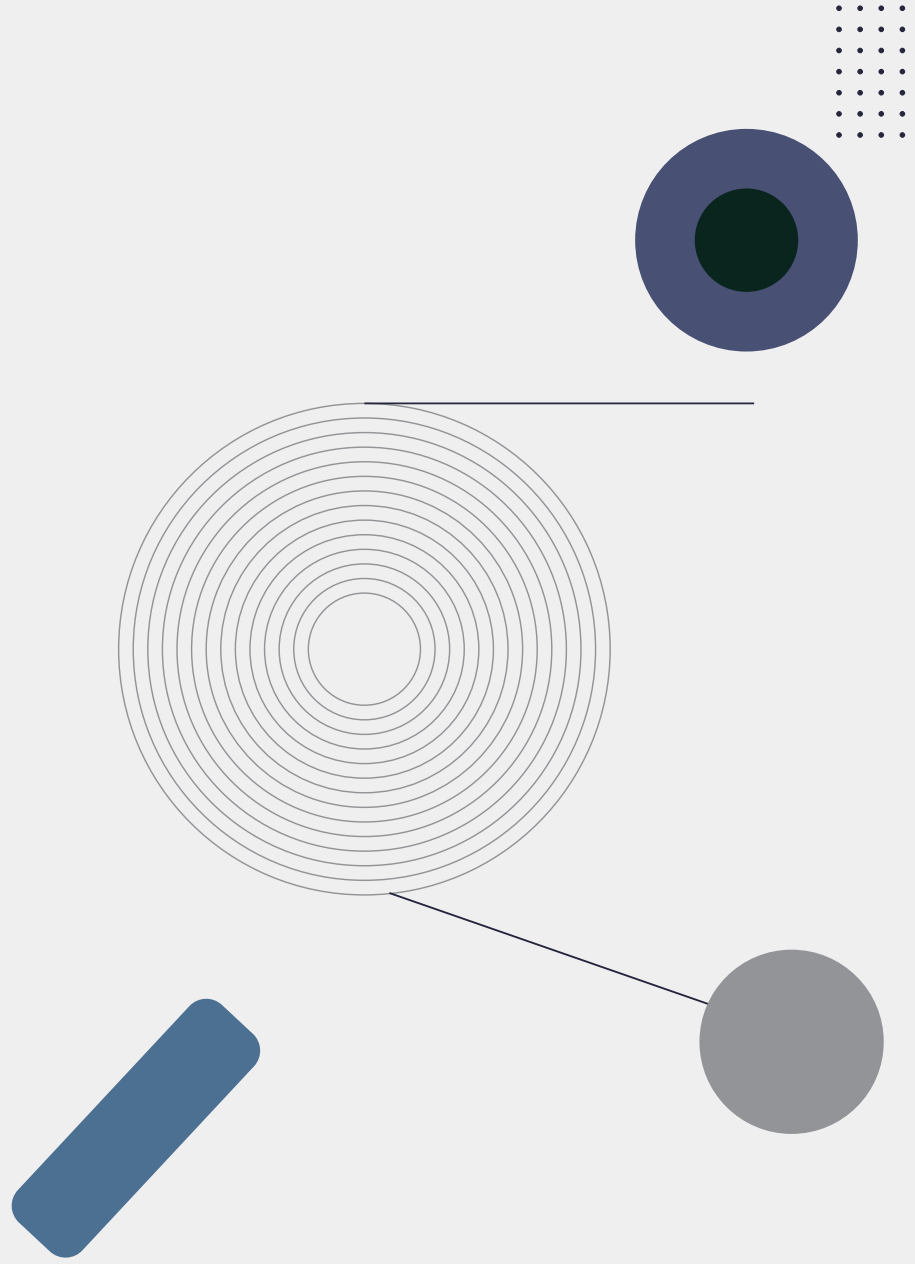


01

Introduction

Since the launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, GenAI has attracted the attention of educators, including language teachers and their mentors.

Powered by Large Learning Machines (LLMs) known as **generative pre-trained transformers** (GPTs), ChatGPT, and later, Google Gemini, DeepSeek, Claude and other AI machines, have demonstrated the ability to generate coherent and grammatically correct text while continuously improving through machine learning from user inputs.

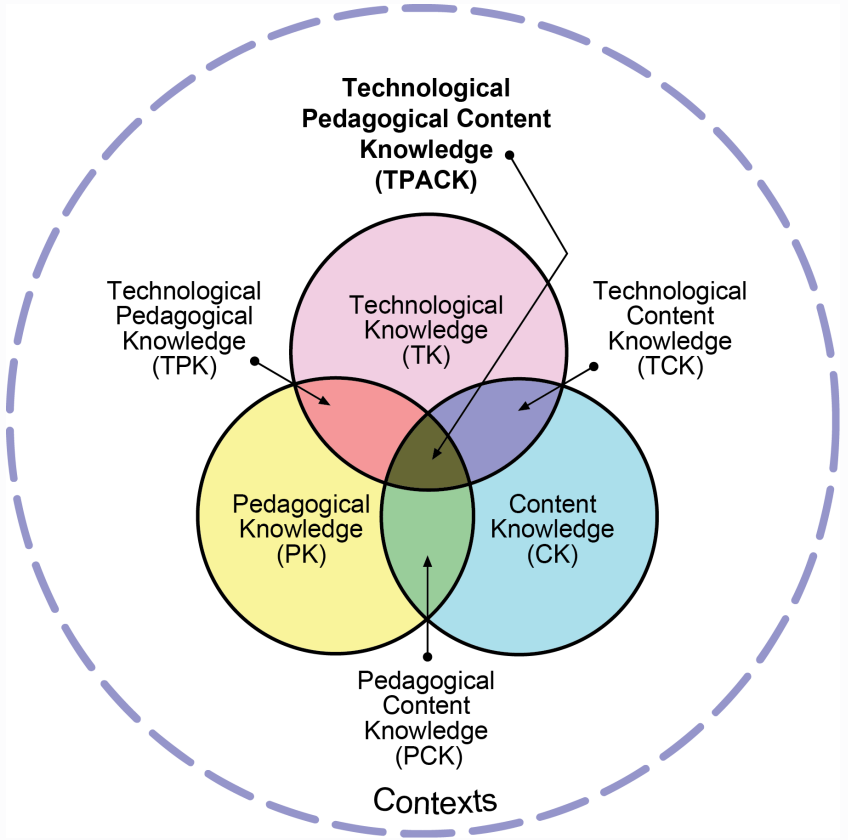


02

Central Argument

The main argument is that preparing language teachers for Generative AI (GenAI) requires much more than teaching them to use AI tools or write effective prompts.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) should develop teachers who can critically evaluate AI-generated materials, exercise professional judgement, make informed pedagogical decisions and use technology responsibly.

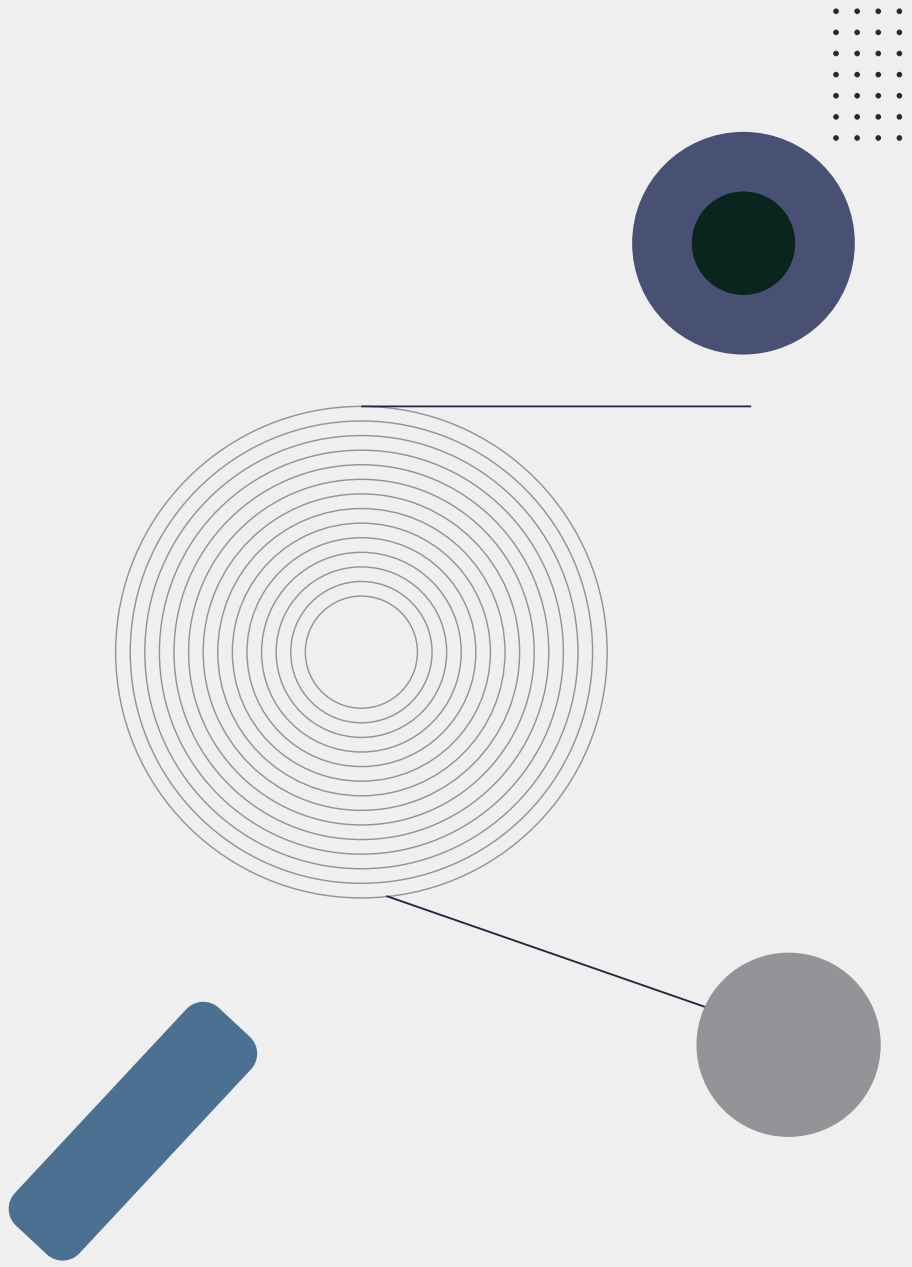


03

Literature review

Language teaching and learning play a vital role in today's globalized world, where effective communication and intercultural understanding are essential for personal, academic, and professional success.

Proficiency in a language enables individuals to engage in meaningful interactions, express clear ideas, and navigate diverse cultural contexts.



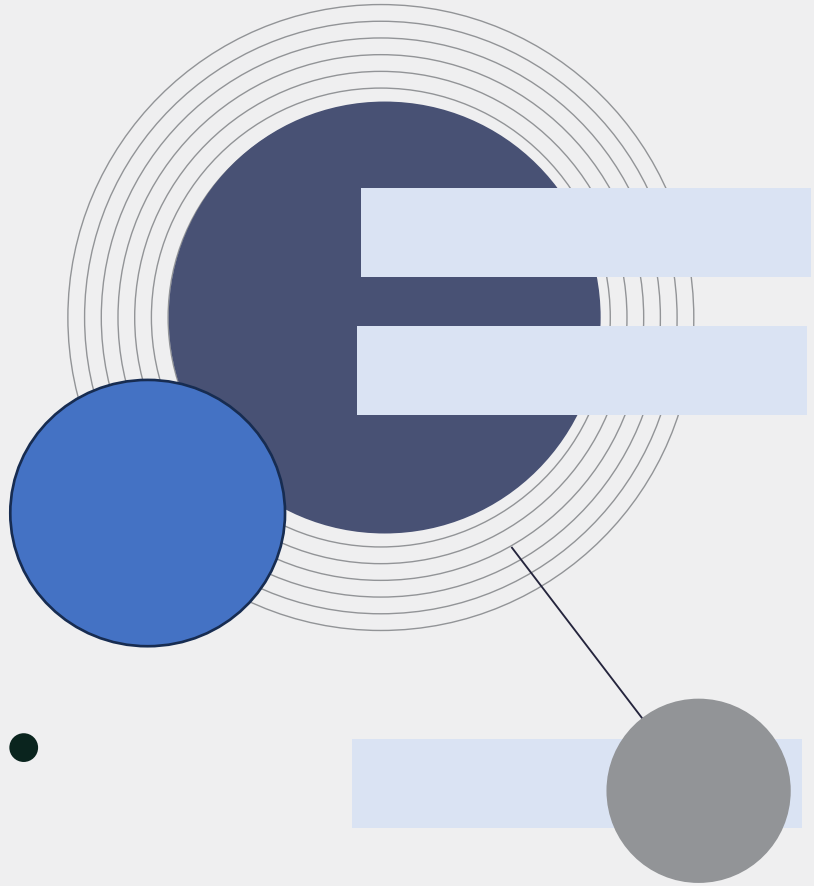
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Rationale for this review

After 3 years in the public sphere, the empirical research on **GenAI in language teaching and learning** is growing but is still **very limited**.

This is therefore a **contextualised narrative review** intended to inform an empirical study (of this researcher).

It is also intended to make arguments for future research directions and guide the actions of language student teachers and their trainers, policymakers, developers, and researchers in this evolving field, in Maltese and international contexts.



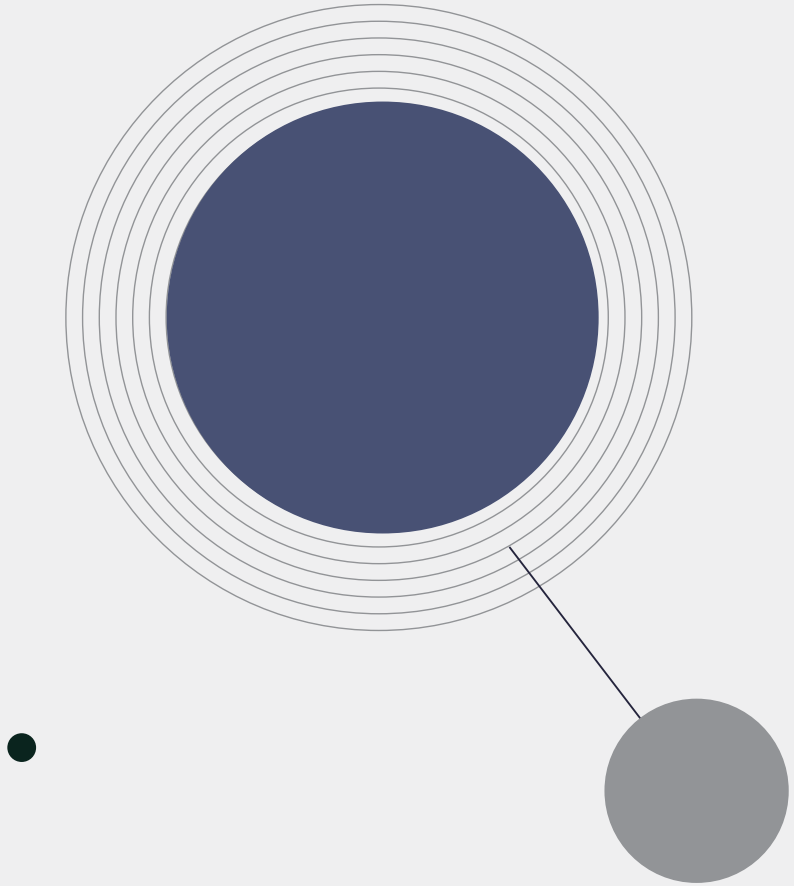
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Selection of sources

The literature, identified through **Scopus**, **Google Scholar**, **ERIC**, **JSTOR** and the University of Malta **Hydi** (Hybrid Discovery) databases.

The papers (41 journal articles) were then selected purposively for their relevance to pre-service and early-career language teachers, practical language-pedagogy tasks, professional identity, technology acceptance and the Maltese policy and programme context.

I only considered published empirical studies.



07

Results – Advantages (1)

Only one paper (from the selection) adopts a negative attitude.

The other papers express a positive attitude towards GenAI in language teaching and learning.

Among the selected papers, the most widely studied application of GenAI in language teaching and learning has been its use for **writing** instruction.

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Results – Advantages (2)

Studies have demonstrated that GenAI systems can, to various extents, assist learners improve their writing skills by providing real-time feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure.

These systems can also help learners expand their vocabulary and improve their sentence structures by providing suggestions for alternative word choices and sentence rephrasings.

09

Results – Advantages (3)

For teachers, GenAI can help in **lesson planning**, **motivating students** and streamlining the **assessment** process, saving time and effort for the them.

The literature indicates that by automating certain aspects of grading, teachers can focus on other critical aspects of language pedagogy.

Finally, most empirical studies noted that level of accuracy and reliability of scoring L2 writing is enhanced by the integration of linguistic features such as **lexis, syntax,** and **cohesion**.

Results – Challenges (1)

The literature raised various concerns regarding the potential challenges, limitations, and pedagogical impact of GenAI.

More than half the selected papers mention the ethical considerations regarding the use of GenAI, with keywords involving **plagiarism**, and **biases**.

Some papers argued that the **threats of GenAI outweigh its potential benefits**.



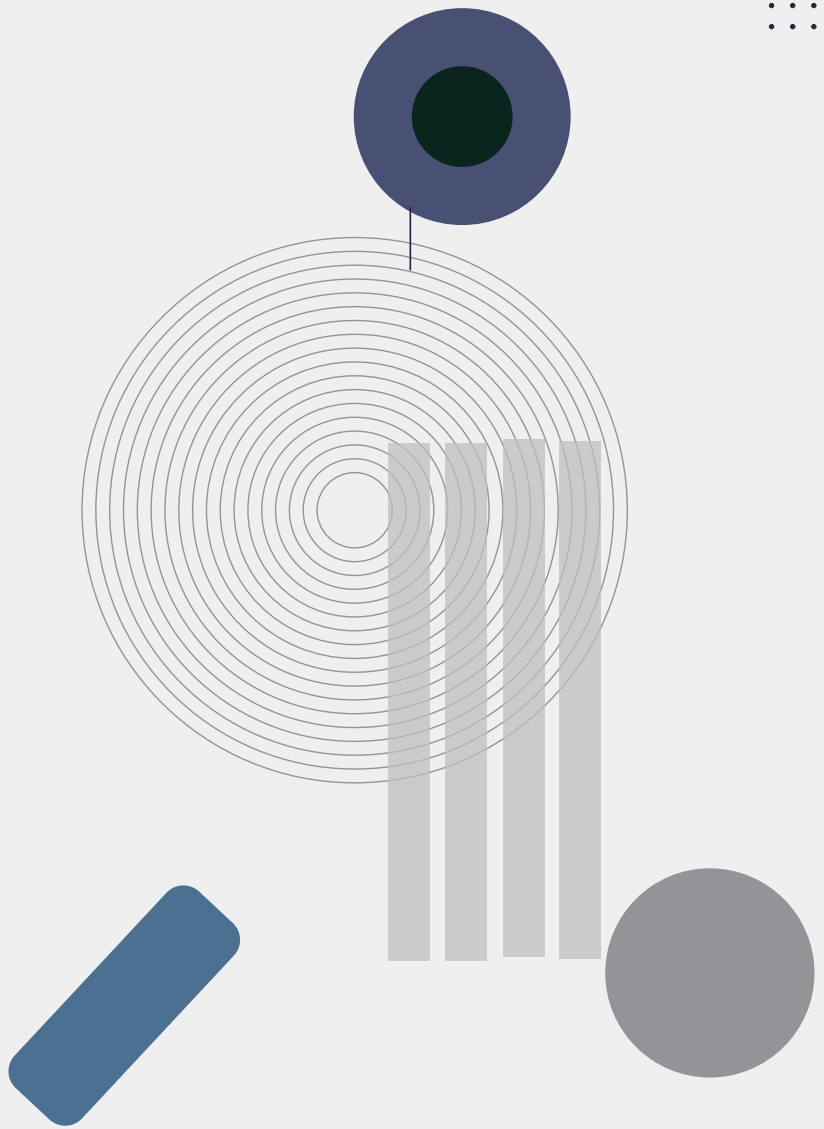
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Results – Challenges (2)

Most importantly:

- The aspect of **data privacy** and **security**. There is a need to ensure that students' personal information is protected and handled in a secure manner

- GenAI can produce a **hindrance of students' development of critical thinking and research skills**, of referred to as cognitive offloading (or laziness).



Results – Challenges (2)

Key threats include:

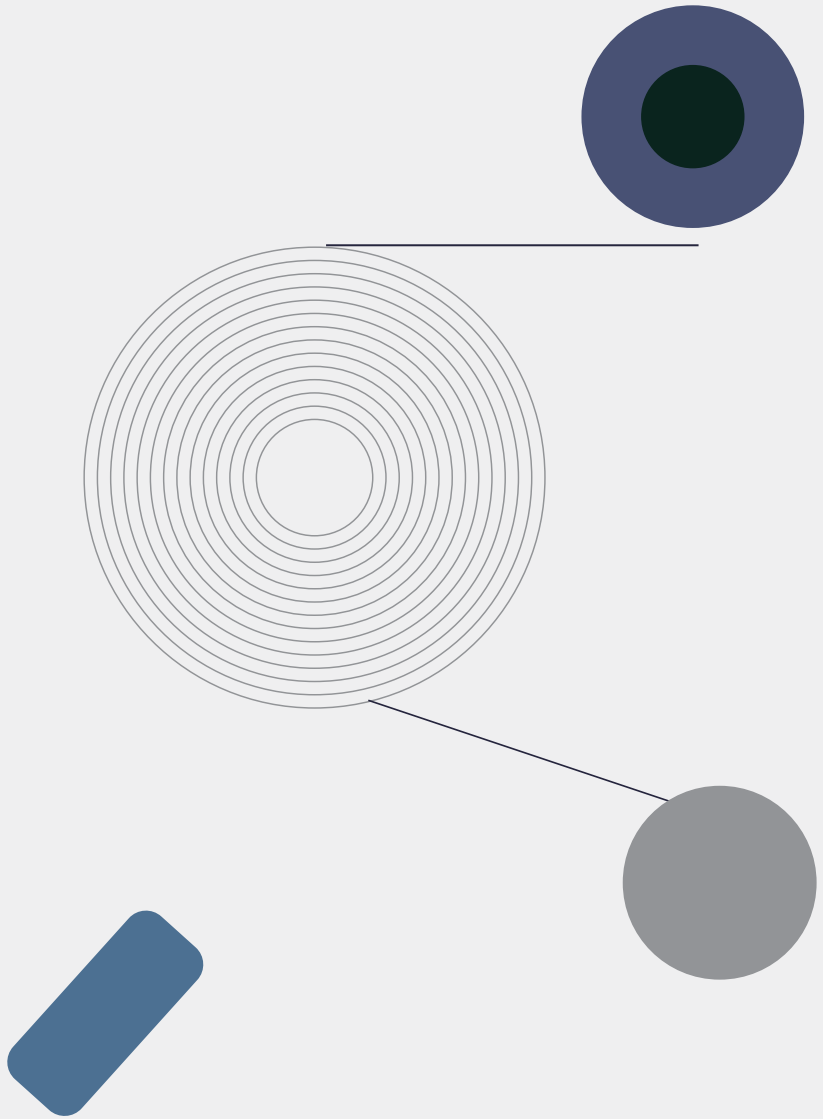
- **Academic dishonesty** (i.e., students take credit of AI-generated writing),
- **Educational inequality** (i.e., the GenAI program may
- create disparities among students due to unequal accessibility to and proficiency in using the tool),
- **Reinforcement of cultural biases**
- **Misinformation** (including halucinations)
- **Plagiarism detection avoidance** (i.e., AI detectors do not currently, detect at 100% accuracy, GenAI-created work)



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Significance of findings

Where does this lead me?



The question the local evidence must address

The present paper offers a conceptual foundation—not findings from MTL participants.

“What effect does explicit training for using GenAI tools for language teaching have on pre-service language teachers?”

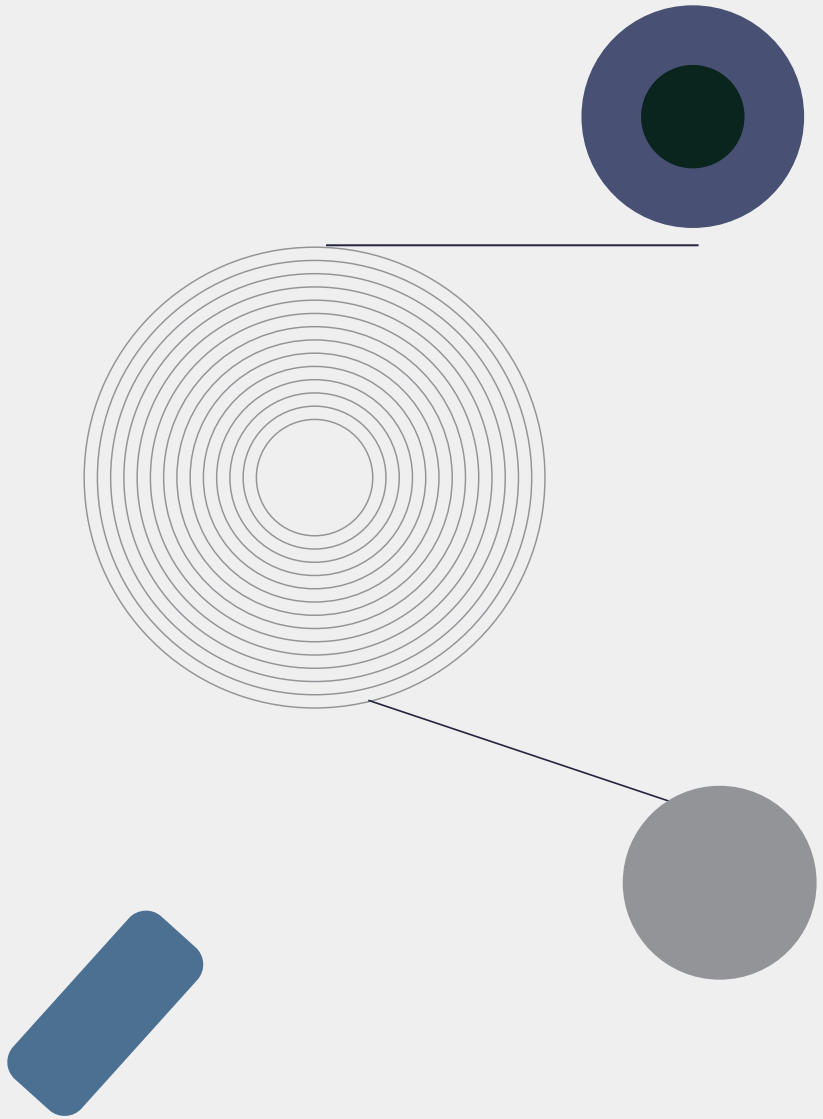
FOUR LINES OF INQUIRY

USE / NON-USE	How do students use or avoid GenAI?
PERCEPTIONS	What benefits, risks and norms matter?
IDENTITY	How are responsibility and agency negotiated?
CONTEXT	How do languages, schools and access shape practice?

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Conclusion – Major finding

It is essential to adapt **Initial Language Teacher Education** (ILTE) programmes in light of Generative Ai (GenAI) developments.

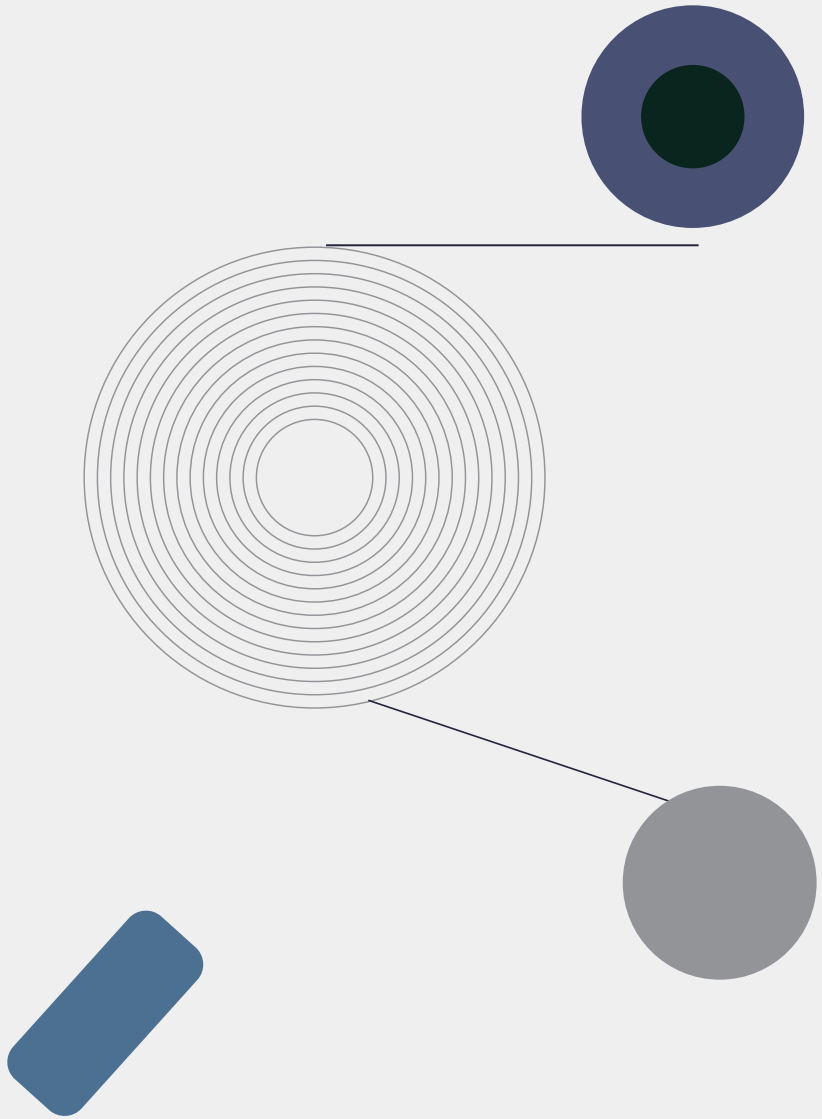


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Conclusion

Adapting ILTE programmes is essential because GenAI has dramatically changed the knowledge and skills needed to be an effective teacher.

1. Beginning teachers have historically reported feeling underprepared to use technology as they enter the profession, creating a mismatch between professional requirements and skills provided by ILTE.

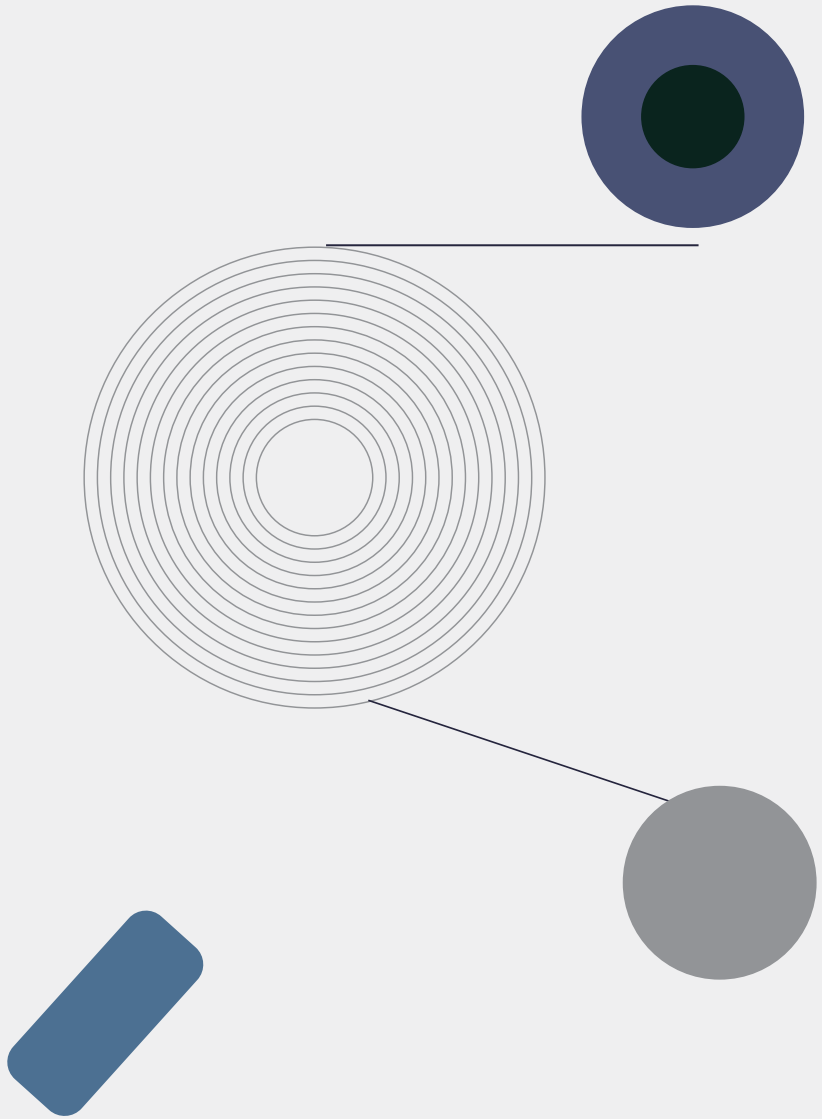


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Conclusion

2. GenAI's rapid advancement and adoption demand urgent action: teachers will be essential agents in society's response to GenAI 3, requiring them to use these tools productively, critically, and ethically while guiding students to do the same . Although ILTE has been slow to integrate technological advancements historically, GenAI creates a pressing need for revision and reformation.

This adaptation ensures pre-service language teachers can use GenAI tools effectively and responsibly in their professional practice .

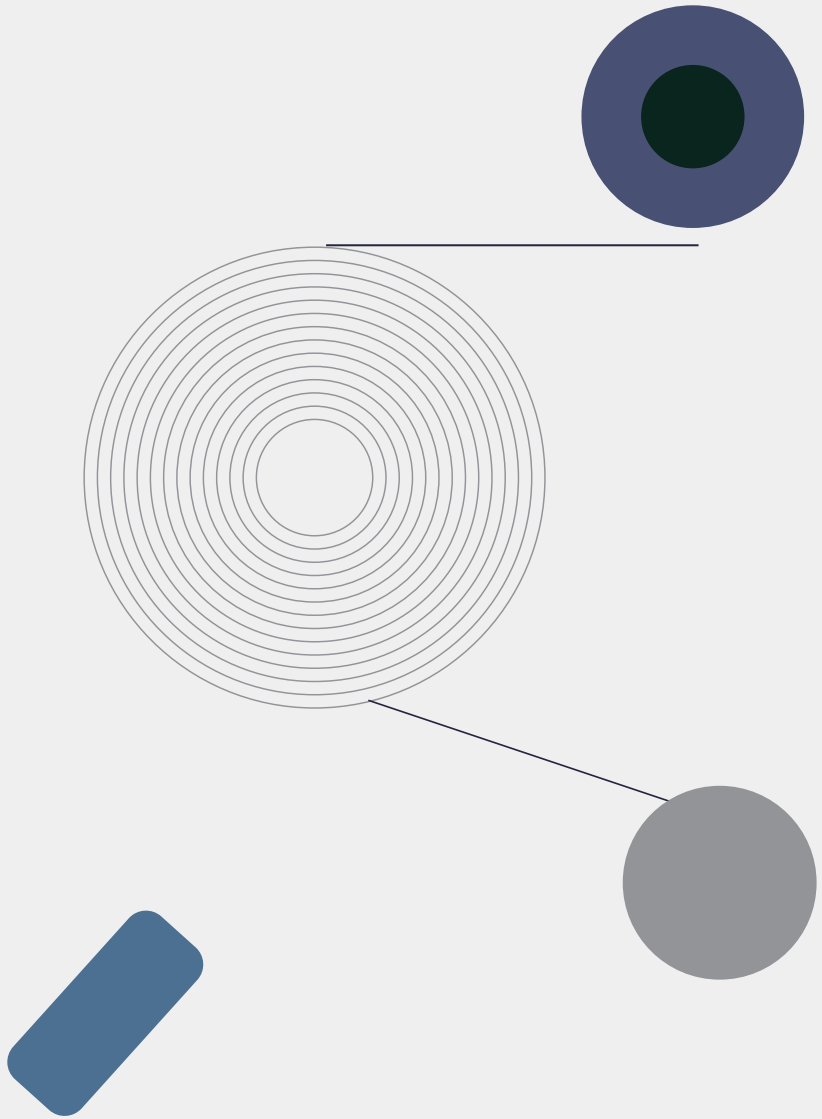


Limitations

Studies on GenAI are expected to surge after the cut-off date of this review – that is, September 2026.

This means many potentially useful articles have not been considered in the current study.

The selection of papers was done by this researcher, not using the standard scoping review methodology and may have missed important studies.

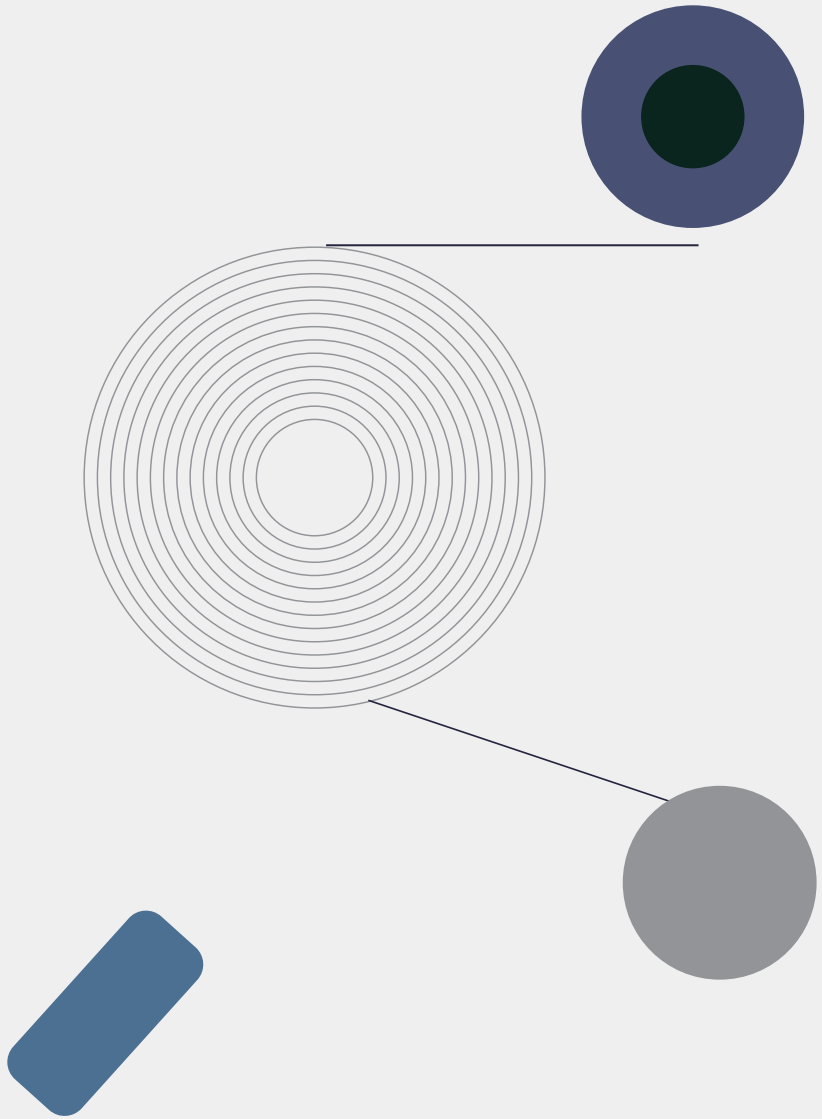


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Use of AI

Declaration of Generative Ai and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the author used Google Gemini in order to improve readability and language. After using this tool/service, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.



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Thank you

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