# Integrating AI into Beginner-Level Foreign Language Education for Adult Learners: Methods and Insights

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**Abstract**

*Asserting the insignificance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in language education today is a myopic perspective. Educators worldwide have rapidly integrated AI into their pedagogical strategies, utilizing its capabilities not only for preparing lessons and grading assignments but also for providing student support. Nonetheless, it is imperative to recognize AI's role not merely as a facilitator of evaluative, writing, and creative tasks but as a crucial element within the methodological arsenal.*
*This article aims to explore specific strategies, as proposed by the author, for incorporating AI in the instruction of foreign languages. It is pertinent to highlight that the discussion centers on teaching foreign languages at the A1-A2 levels – representing the initial and elementary phases. Moreover, it is important to note that these methods have been applied to adult learners, particularly those undertaking the challenge of learning a new foreign language post-30.*
*This scenario presents a complex interplay of three distinct elements: AI as a pedagogical tool, adult learners, and the foundational level of foreign language acquisition. We will discuss potential methods in conjunction with the essential skills of writing, speaking, reading, and listening.*

**Keywords:** *AI, methods, tasks, adult students, foreign language for beginners*

## 1. Overview

It seems outdated to argue that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in education today is of little necessity[1]. It appears that the teaching community has at least reached a common understanding – often unspoken – that the use of AI is an inevitable reality, and that AI is here to stay. After the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, and some degree of depression (to which we will likely be returning quite frequently), the next step must be acceptance and learning to coexist and collaborate. For language educators, perhaps earlier than for others, it has become clear that embracing AI's potential will not only help us lighten the load of preparation and assessment but will also make language learning easier, more engaging, and more stimulating for students.

In this article, the author shares personal experience, focusing on teaching adult students (aged 30 and above) at the beginner level. The author teaches the Russian language at the Estonian Military Academy; however, in the context of this discussion, this fact is not particularly relevant. What matters the most are the two key aspects: the adult learner and the beginner level of language instruction.

This article does not aim to extensively discuss the specific profile of adult learners[2] or delve into the educational details of the academy. However, it is essential to acknowledge the unique challenges faced by adult learners, particularly those in the rank of the officer in the Estonian Defence Forces, when starting language acquisition from the very basics, such as the alphabet. Factors such as ego, preconceived notions, prior personal experience, and a forgotten or absent history of foreign language learning often come into play, influencing their learning journey in profound ways.

It is important to clarify from the outset that the author of this article is not an expert in artificial intelligence or the broader field of information technology. Nevertheless, there is a growing body of research and development focused on the use of chatbots in foreign language education across various levels. Some of these studies specifically emphasize the value of real-time feedback and the potential for chatbots to support the development of speaking skills. For example, in order to record

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[1] "Already, the current generation of artificial intelligence is powerful enough to force a reevaluation of the fundamentals of teaching. <…> AI is here to stay." [5]
[2] It's a big topic that deserves a separate deep conversation.

their speech on computers or mobile devices, where they receive scores and evaluations through a speech assessment system, language learners can utilize AI technology. Additionally, learning outcomes have been shown to improve through collaborative activities within social networking environments, where AI is employed for speaking practice [9].

### 2. AI Expertise

The primary focus of this article is to explore the potential applications of chatbots in foreign language lessons, based on the author's own teaching experiences. The use of AI for both personal and professional purposes varies significantly across individuals. While some people interact with AI chatbots on a daily basis, others remain hesitant and cautious in their approach. Regardless of this variation, it is now widely understood that the key to effective AI interaction lies in formulating the right question or prompt[3].

A language teacher is certainly not responsible for instructing students in the proper or most efficient use of AI as a separate discipline. That role is better suited to IT specialists, various courses, and, of course, each student's personal experience. However, when integrating AI into language lessons from a methodological and didactic perspective, it is essential to set clear tasks from the outset and demonstrate how different prompts yield different results, while also clarifying the desired outcome. "A basic pedagogical principle is to demonstrate how to do something before asking learners to do it themselves" [6] – this pedagogical postulate is never to be forgotten.

This approach helps prevent situations where students are unclear about the task, which could result in neither the AI usage skills nor, more importantly, the language learning objectives being effectively achieved.

It is a misconception to believe that today's students are fully adept at using AI with ease and proficiency. The common belief among teachers that "students know how to use all this better than we do" is, not always aligned with reality, unfortunately. At times, we encounter adult students who are fundamentally resistant to using AI. In such cases, it is necessary to spark their interest by example or to collaborate in creating content that proves useful to them. We also face situations where students are encountering the need to use AI in class for the first time. Naturally, this can lead to feelings of uncertainty, a fear of making mistakes, and discomfort.

To address this, it is crucial for the instructor to first present materials they have created themselves and highlight the role AI played in their development. By doing so, students can see the final product first-hand and gain an understanding of the ´technology´ behind its creation. Ideally, this could even inspire students to take an interest in experimenting with AI themselves[4].

### 3. Suggested Methods

This chapter presents a concise overview of several methods that were developed and tested during the course of teaching practice. Each of these methods can (and should) be personalized by instructors when preparing their foreign language lessons.

### 3.1. Sentence Generation

When studying a new topic and exploring new vocabulary, we often reinforce words by asking students to write their own sentences using the new terms and phrases. It is well known that this method helps students internalize new vocabulary quickly by placing it in their own context. At the beginner level, it is essential that students, even with a limited grammatical toolkit, can generate their own sentences. This aspect of learning remains, of course, unchanged.

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[3] "And, if asked well, it might even produce quite good ones. The key difference here is that without input (prompt), it does nothing at all. A vague input yields a generic output, resulting in wallpaper-like content. A precise input, informed by expert knowledge, with a defined target audience and style, typically produces a better outcome. The same applies to image generators, which are now capable of near-photorealism." [5]

[4] Here perfect ´pearls´ can be born; one should observe carefully and not be afraid to adopt them. A few words about such ´discoveries´ will be found in the 3.6. section.

However, we now have an additional tool for reinforcing vocabulary, beyond what the teacher provides (a) and what the student independently creates (b). We can now ask AI to generate 5-10 different sentences using specific words or phrases in various contexts. It is important to specify the language level (A1 or A2, in our case). This way, within a very short time, we receive a wide range of diverse examples highlighting the use of a particular lexical element. By sharing their examples in class, students further develop their reading and listening skills while reinforcing the newly acquired vocabulary.

### 3.2. Dialogues Generation

Even today, with the abundance of modern language-learning methods, we must not overlook the foundational principles of language teaching. One of the most important tenets is that "what is discovered and worked through by the learner themselves is better remembered than what is simply provided, as creative cognitive processes are most intense" [6]. AI-based communication can serve precisely this purpose: for instance, by asking AI to generate dialogues on a given topic (with the language level specified). The resulting text is not immediately shared with other students; instead, the learner is tasked with independently analyzing the content.

Students are given clear instructions on how to work with the generated text: they are asked to read it, grasp the general meaning, identify unfamiliar words, translate these words, and pay attention to grammatical structures. If needed, they can request that the AI rephrase unclear parts using vocabulary they are familiar with. Before presenting the final dialogue to the group, the student compiles a brief list of new words and, if necessary, grammatical constructions.

Through this process, the student is not merely analyzing a pre-made text (as would be the case with textbook materials or texts written by the instructor); instead, they are partially creating the text themselves, while avoiding frustrating errors. A clear advantage of this approach is the absence of lexical and grammatical mistakes, allowing the student to engage with and practice the material creatively. This fosters deeper involvement in the learning process, as they are actively working through the content rather than passively receiving it.

### 3.3. Tests Generation

Grammar, as one of the foundational elements of language skills, undoubtedly requires special attention during the early stages of foreign language acquisition. Mastering and using any language is inherently connected to its grammatical structure[5], which demands an understanding of grammatical forms and rules for effective communication. A primary objective for both teachers and students is to develop the ability to apply these rules automatically and unconsciously in speech. This automation is achieved through repeated practice, particularly by using grammatical models with new vocabulary. Grammatical skills are considered fully automated when the speaker's attention is focused on the content of their message rather than on the grammar itself [6].

To help students reinforce and practice grammar at their own pace and according to their individual needs, a method involving a chatbot can be employed. The student can prompt the chatbot to generate a grammar test on a specific topic, using A1-A2 level vocabulary (depending on the students' level). Additionally, they can specify the number and types of questions, such as 10 true/false questions, 10 multiple-choice questions, and 10 fill-in-the-blank questions.

At first glance, this simple method provides students with a powerful tool: they can independently reinforce difficult or unclear material, focusing on the grammatical points they personally find challenging. The chatbot allows for real-time interaction, modifying or rewriting questions as needed and creating new tests based on errors or inaccuracies in previous ones. This not only saves teachers considerable time in creating tests but also gives students the flexibility to practice the specific grammatical structures they need, at a time and pace that suits them.

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[5] Although we are strong proponents of the communicative approach to foreign language learning and, following George Yule, believe that the function of language should be emphasized rather than its forms, the grammatical component should never be overlooked, especially at the foundational level of language acquisition [8].

Once the mechanism is explained and demonstrated, students can repeatedly use and practice the complex grammar models they find difficult, applying them to a wide range of vocabulary (which they can specify in the prompt).

### 3.4. Generating Texts of Different Genres

An academically compelling and pedagogically valuable task involves requiring students to generate a text in a specific genre – such as a fairy tale, thriller, novel, or short story – using newly acquired vocabulary with the support of a chatbot. While the core principles of this exercise have been previously discussed (in Chapter 3.2, addressing dialogue creation), this assignment also offers an additional educational benefit: it introduces students, even at beginner levels, to a variety of literary genres, fostering an understanding of stylistic and genre-specific distinctions in the target language.

A critical component of this task is the formulation of a well-structured and detailed prompt, which must clearly specify the language proficiency level, the desired length of the text, the topic, and the genre, as well as any specific vocabulary that might be incorporated (although this is optional). The subsequent engagement with the AI-generated text allows students to refine and perfect the output, providing them with an opportunity for autonomous learning. Furthermore, the process of vocabulary reinforcement, grammatical refinement, in-class reading, and peer feedback through listening to other students' texts, collectively renders the language lesson dynamic, enriched, and aligned with contemporary pedagogical approaches, while also diversifying the instructional materials beyond those traditionally provided by the teacher.

### 3.5. Image Generation

One of the most common and visually impactful applications of AI is image generation. Those who have experimented with this know that the results are not always ideal. AI-generated images often feature anomalies such as seven-fingered individuals without eyes, rivers flowing through residential buildings, or hunters grilling multi-headed fish – among other more extreme distortions. However, from an educational standpoint, such unconventional outcomes can, at times, be more effective teaching[6] tools than perfectly refined images.

In language instruction, visual aids are predominantly used to encourage students to describe what they see, utilizing their linguistic repertoire. According to student feedback, when confronted with surreal or absurd imagery, they are compelled to move beyond rehearsed expressions and engage more creatively in spontaneous speech. While these ´AI avant-garde´ images can be particularly useful for fostering creative language use, more traditional visuals also have a place in illustrating narratives and supporting students' creative processes.

Thus, AI's capacity to generate diverse visual materials tailored to various themes in language lessons is an invaluable resource, enhancing both student engagement and language acquisition

### 3.6. The Students´ Discoveries

Allow us to highlight some particularly successful examples of how students have utilized AI in foreign language classes. At the beginner level, where students have a limited command of the language, it is an impressive achievement when a student independently creates a poem in a foreign language. Admittedly, without the help of a ´virtual friend´, such a result would be nearly impossible, as composing a rhymed text at the beginner level is extremely challenging.

Another example is the independent creation of learning materials on a given topic (for instance, clothing or health) tailored to a specific language level, with a specified vocabulary minimum that must be included. These materials typically include a description of the topic and goal, a vocabulary list, a dialogue, and relevant images. The true value of this exercise lies not in the final product itself but in the process – allowing students to analyze, add, inquire, correct, and supplement the content instantly.

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[6] "Education is always a specific and actual relation; it is always the same, yet always diferent. If it were not, then it would not be our experience and indeed would not be expereince at all" [7].

These kinds of student initiatives demonstrate that collaborating with AI is not simply a trend, but a necessity driven by current realities. In this new landscape, we must become self-directed learners[7], cultivate analytical and structured thinking, and develop the skills to both learn and teach others how to master modern technologies.

## 4. Conclusion

In their article "Key Aspects of Teaching and Learning Languages" [4], Gray and Klapper highlight communicative language teaching as a strategy that integrates the four essential language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Similarly, the use of AI as both a tool and a method for language instruction naturally fosters this integration. AI-based tasks blend these skills, reflecting the real-world demands of language use, where skills are seldom applied in isolation. For example, interactions with AI may involve reading prompts, generating written responses, listening to AI-generated audio, and participating in dialogue simulations. AI-driven language learning models acknowledge this interdependence and design tasks that simulate authentic language use, moving away from artificial separations between skills. This holistic approach allows learners to engage with language in a more natural, integrated manner, enhancing both fluency and comprehension.

To summarize the incorporation of chatbots´ involvement and help into the language learning process is both practical and justified, even for students at the earliest stages of language acquisition. When working with adult learners, it is essential to acknowledge the unique challenges and stresses of starting from scratch, which makes clear and well-structured tasks crucial. It is not necessary to be an expert in AI technologies to explore, test, and refine methods for using chatbots in the classroom. As Chapman has aptly noted [1], "AI need in no way be our enemy, but perhaps the tasks we require of our classes should change". With well-defined tasks in place, we must not lose sight of the importance of creativity and collaboration between students and instructors in the learning process.

Our teaching methods will undoubtedly evolve, and there is great value in beginning to experiment with and develop new approaches today. The use of AI, particularly chatbots, in foreign language education promises a vast array of discoveries and innovations across various levels. It is crucial that we remain open to these changes, listen to one another, and embrace the opportunity to create and explore new possibilities together.

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[7] Expanding on Damon Flores' idea that e-learning enables students to achieve a higher level of self-direction and personalization in their learning process, it is worth noting that AI undoubtedly broadens the horizons of self-regulation, self-development, and autonomy within the framework of the self-directed learner [3].