

ENLISTING CHATGPT TO ENHANCE LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING

L'intégration de l'IA, en particulier du ChatGPT, dans la formation des enseignants de langues évolue rapidement et présente à la fois des opportunités et des défis. Cet article examine comment le ChatGPT peut être utilisé comme outil dans la formation des enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère (EFL) pour améliorer et évaluer de manière formative l'apprentissage des enseignants. Par le biais d'une pratique exploratoire en classe, l'étude examine comment ChatGPT soutient le développement de connaissances didactiques théoriques et pratiques et de compétences d'auto-réflexion critique. L'article détaille les procédures d'utilisation de ChatGPT, évalue son alignement sur les principes didactiques et discute des avantages et des limites de l'IA dans le développement professionnel. Il conclut que si le ChatGPT offre de précieuses possibilités d'auto-évaluation personnalisée et un retour d'information en temps réel, son intégration nécessite une gestion prudente afin d'équilibrer le soutien de l'IA avec l'apport humain essentiel.

● Holli Schaubert
| University of Geneva



Holli Schaubert, Ed.D., teaches EFL Didactics and Research Methods in Foreign Language teaching in the IUFE, at the University of Geneva. Her teaching and research are conducted as related activities.

Introduction

The integration of AI in language teacher education has rapidly gained our attention sparking a considerable incentive to explore, understand, and harness the new opportunities it offers. While the novelty accompanies intense enthusiasm, many educators are scrambling to keep pace with the flood of anecdotal accounts and research-driven claims highlighting its innovative and harmful potential. Endorsements and cautionary words dot the current literature (Moorhouse, 2024; Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2024; Karan & Angadi, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023; Sok & Heng, 2023; Mai et al., 2024). Notwithstanding divided claims, the preoccupation with the role AI can play in language teacher preparation has led to a wave of exploratory in-class practices to which this article seeks to contribute. For the most part, those initiatives and the case described here currently represent ancillary synchronous teacher training events and tools rather than didactic cornerstones as we learn how to

navigate the possibilities, risks, and challenges AI presents. As part of the current exploratory wave, this article provides a practice-driven overview illustrating how ChatGPT serves as a teacher training tool to deliver innovative in-class learning opportunities that support, enhance, and reinforce the fundamental theoretical principles and practical frameworks of professional development in English as a foreign language (EFL) didactics (Bodong et al., 2023; Johnson & Golombek, 2020; Starkey, 2020). A theory-driven practical example of L2 listening is presented (selected because it was the focus of the didactics class on the day ChatGPT was used) alongside procedural details, followed by a discussion of how ChatGPT supports, benefits and enhances EFL teacher learning in light of course objectives.

Didactics course objectives and the integration of ChatGPT

These objectives emphasize informed instruction-driven skills, reflective practices, and professional development guided by the EPOSTL (The European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages). Several overarching objectives drive the EFL didactics course and the teacher education approach used to initiate trainees into the field with the support of ChatGPT:

- Develop an informed didactic perspective to design coherent, logically sequenced EFL lessons that respond to diverse learner needs and the cantonal curriculum.
- Apply various teaching methodologies and strategies effectively
- Develop a theory-driven practical understanding of how to optimize the teaching of the four language skills: reading, **listening**, speaking, and writing, and the subsystems of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation within the larger interactive and communicative frameworks resting on the can-do descriptors in the EPOSTL.
- Develop the ability to critically reflect on and assess one's teaching and knowledge against the backdrop of the theoretical principles examined in the didactics course through active and autonomous learning affordances that prompt trainees to test, revisit, and reinforce their understanding of the didactics course content.

The integration of ChatGPT is specifically aligned with those objectives and is intended to:

1. Evaluate whether the prompt requests entered into ChatGPT generated teaching principles and notions commensurate with the theoretical frameworks and practical models examined in the didactics course.
2. Facilitate the use of ChatGPT as a tool for collaborative problem-solving and lesson brainstorming among teachers.
3. Prompt trainees to question ChatGPT's capacity to support their teaching objectives, as well as the learning objectives and affordances they intend for their learners.
4. Formatively evaluate trainee concept development around teaching L2 listening.

The role AI can play in language teacher preparation has led to a wave of exploratory in-class practices

After an informal in-class survey of over 25 trainee teachers enrolled in two EFL didactics courses, the majority admitted to using both the free and paid versions of ChatGPT to generate lesson plans, materials, activities, and prompts for their teaching practicum. Both the free and paid versions of ChatGPT generate output text based on user input prompts; however, only the paid option, ChatGPT 4.0, provides more detailed, nuanced, and accurate responses. While many trainees claimed to be capable of generating those teaching resources themselves (as required by their teacher educators and practicum mentors), they admitted relying on ChatGPT because of the enormous time-saving advantages it provided. However, they likewise revealed their uncertainty about whether the output generated by either version of ChatGPT systematically resonated with the theoretical principles discussed in the didactics courses. Motivated by these admissions, a decision was made to formally introduce ChatGPT into the didactics course as a formative teacher and self-evaluation tool to determine whether trainees were using suitable prompt requests to generate desired outputs from ChatGPT and whether they could determine how well those outputs aligned with the principles and practices of the theoretical frameworks examined in the course.

Procedures used for Integrating ChatGPT:

The procedures for integrating ChatGPT sought to actively engage trainees in critically evaluating: a) ChatGPT's output in comparison to their own professional knowledge; b) the suitability of the prompts; and c) the presence or absence

of the theory-driven practical considerations discussed in the didactics course. For each ChatGPT session, the following procedure was implemented:

1. **Solicit a Prompt Request:** Students offered a prompt request for ChatGPT to simulate an activity or set of questions linked to the theme of the didactics class. Typically, the first volunteered prompt was entered, although often more than one prompt is required to generate text that aligns closely with the learning objectives/output the trainees seek.
2. **Enter the Prompt:** The teacher educator entered the prompt into ChatGPT on the screen, while some students did the same in parallel on their own laptops.
3. **Review the Output:** The group reviewed the output generated by ChatGPT within a short timeframe individually or in tandem with classmates.
4. **Evaluate Alignment:** The group collectively evaluated whether the generated output aligned with the principles, models, and frameworks discussed prior to the simulation. Trainees began to offer their thoughts on the output's link to the theory. Some trainees took notes to add to their current understanding of L2 listening.
5. **Identify Elements and Suggest Modifications:** Trainees were asked to identify elements that were present or absent in the output and to suggest how it might be modified in light of their contextual challenges and relevant theory. We also briefly discussed the need to be precise

and adjust input prompts, but did not explore that idea further in this context.

6. **Evaluate Understanding:** Trainees used this event to evaluate their understanding of the didactic concepts by assessing whether they could reasonably explain whether the ChatGPT output reliably resonated with the theory. This is when requests for clarification of their understanding emerged, and when they could confirm or refute their comprehension.

Example 1. Prelistening

In this output example, ChatGPT is enlisted to simulate elements considered crucial for effective pre-listening, allowing trainees to evaluate the output's alignment with theoretical principles examined and suggest modifications as needed.

Summary of the theory discussed in the didactics class on L2 listening

In the didactics course, we explore examples of listening sequences that emphasize pre- during and post-listening events that activate schema and encourage the learner to circle back to confirm or refute content generated during the pre-listening phase. Our examination of L2 listening prioritizes pre-listening because of the way it focuses learner attention and provides a purpose for listening and prepares students to monitor their comprehension. We examine how the teacher can demonstrate the development of listening skills and strategies via pre-listening questions and predictions, front-loading and/or scanning of key vocabulary, and the schema activation of content via visuals, anecdotal references, discussion, or semantic mapping. These focal points are set against the backdrop of the principles of second language acquisition and cognitive psychology as events that scaffold learners' comprehension by activating their prior knowledge and arming them with strategies that they can apply independently in follow-up listening activities (Goh & Vandergrift, 2021). It is through this framework for a listening sequence that students in the didactics course were asked to evaluate ChatGPT output pre-listening to compare it with their own didactic knowledge and understanding.

The integration of ChatGPT into EFL teacher training reveals both innovative opportunities and noteworthy risks.

ChatGPT prompt suggested by a trainee teacher:

what should you include in prelistening for EFL students?

ChatGPT output:

Prelisting activities for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students are crucial for setting the stage for successful comprehension and engagement with the listening material. These activities should aim to activate prior knowledge, build context, and prepare students for the specific content and language they will encounter. Here are some key components to include in prelistening activities:

1. **Activate Prior Knowledge:** Begin by activating students' prior knowledge about the topic of the listening task. This could involve discussing related vocabulary, concepts, or personal experiences.
2. **Predictions:** Encourage students to make predictions about the content of the listening material based on the title, topic, or any visual aids provided. This helps set a purpose for listening and primes students to anticipate key information.
3. **Vocabulary Preview:** Introduce or review any important vocabulary or expressions that students may encounter in the listening. This could involve pre-teaching keywords, discussing their meanings, or providing context to aid understanding.
4. **Listening Task Instructions:** Clearly explain the task or tasks students will complete while listening. This could include specific questions to answer, information to note down, or gaps to fill in a summary.
5. **Schema Activation:** Help students activate their background knowledge related to the listening topic. This might involve brainstorming related ideas, discussing relevant cultural or contextual information, or making connections to previous learning.
6. **Listening Strategies:** Teach and review effective listening strategies with students, such as predicting, summarizing, and focusing on key information. Encourage students to employ these strategies while listening to enhance their comprehension.

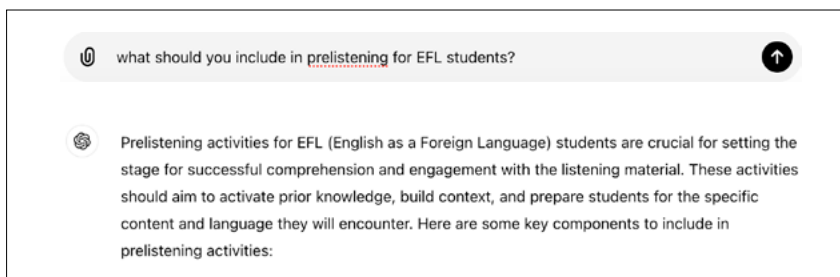


Figure 1

ChatGPT prompt-response interaction

7. **Modeling:** Model the listening task or a similar task yourself to demonstrate effective listening strategies and provide an example of how to approach the activity.
8. **Visual Aids:** Use visual aids such as pictures, diagrams, or videos to support comprehension and provide context for the listening material.
9. **Interactive Activities:** Engage students in interactive activities related to the listening topic, such as discussions, role-plays, or games. This helps activate their interest and engagement before listening.
10. **Review:** Quickly review any relevant grammar or language points that students may need to understand the listening material. This could include reviewing verb tenses, sentence structures, or pronunciation patterns.

By including these elements in your pre-listening activities, you can effectively prepare EFL students to engage with and comprehend the listening material.

Trainee evaluation of the output

Elements aligned with principles discussed in the didactics course

- ✓ aligned with top-down schema activation through interaction, images, and personalization of the topic, which allows learners to connect on some level with the content;
- ✓ aligned with providing learners with a focus for listening through predictions and task instructions so they listen actively;
- ✓ aligned with bottom-up schema activation through frontloading of vocabulary and grammar so that their encounter with the language is not a first exposure;
- ✓ aligned with enabling listening strategy application through teacher demonstration

Elements deemed missing from ChatGPT output

- Even though the output refers to language points and pronunciation patterns, trainees identified word stress as an integral part of pre-listening and believed it should have been specifically mentioned.
- Pre-listening questions were also deemed missing from the output and trainees pointed out that learners can either generate their own questions or can preview the questions in the coursebook.
- Circling back in the post-listening to answer these questions allows the learners to check their comprehension of the content. It also sets a purpose for the listening event and creates a possible instructional sequence that helps learners avoid getting stuck in bottom-up processing.

Perspectives on the benefits to teacher development and the attainment of course objectives

This experience helped trainee teachers strengthen their conceptual knowledge through active engagement in teacher learning, the fundamental objective of the didactics course. They found that using ChatGPT to test themselves on L2 listening principles and practices in the didactics course was beneficial for the following reasons:

- ✓ Trainees recognized whether they could confidently evaluate the resonance of the output with their understanding of the range of events and elements associated with prelistening's role in developing learners' listening skills.
- ✓ Trainees admitted that the opportunity to question one's understanding of theory reinforced and consolidated their professional knowledge.
- ✓ Trainees declared that evaluating the output created space to address any gaps in their understanding, particularly if the output featured information that they were not previously aware of or had not considered as part of their self-evaluation, reflection, and examination.
- ✓ Trainees claimed that generating prompts empowered them to determine the validity and reliability of ChatGPT output and recognize

whether human expertise was necessary for a critical analysis of the output.

- ✓ Trainees admitted that the process reinforced teacher autonomy and the reflective elements promoted in the course.
- ✓ Trainees agreed that the speed of the process made ChatGPT a highly valuable and easily accessible teacher learning and self-evaluation tool.
- ✓ Trainees appreciated revisiting and reinforcing theoretical concepts individually and collaboratively
- ✓ Trainees held that it confirmed their understanding of key concepts in L2 listening

To the teacher educator, the ChatGPT prompted process exposed areas of misunderstanding about the practical elements involved in activating pre-listening. These misunderstandings included how much time to spend on the pre-listening phase, what role they and their learners play in the pre-listening phase, and what combinations of pre-listening events to target to set a purpose and focus for the listening (activating schema about the content, front-loading vocabulary and word stress, student-generated pre-listening questions and predictions). Trainees expressed their appreciation for the immediate teacher-educator feedback while recognizing the need for additional repetition and reinforcement to enhance their professional knowledge and improve their lesson planning for L2 listening instruction. What is also noteworthy is how ChatGPT personalized and scaffolded the learning process by revealing the trainees' individual needs for follow-up clarification on pre-listening (Mai et al., 2024). Each trainee interacted with the output individually, signaling to the rest of the class whether they could independently and confidently evaluate it from the perspective of the L2 listening principles examined in the didactics course. That further necessitated an appeal to the teacher educator's input for confirmation beyond what ChatGPT and their classmates offered.

While these perspectives highlight how compatible the ChatGPT teacher learning event was with the course objectives of developing professional knowledge through active engagement involving critical self-reflection and evaluation, they likewise expose ChatGPT's

limitations as an independent, complete, and fundamental source of conceptual input and suggest the continued need for teacher educator oversight and backup. Notwithstanding the need for human intervention, ChatGPT offers a meaningful, scaffolded, and active way to refine the teacher learning experience that is not only easy to integrate but is on the training tip of one's fingertips. ChatGPT's real-time tutorial function provides trainees with opportunities to revisit and adjust their thinking en route to deepening their understanding of key language teacher fundamentals that may not yet be part of their professional repertoire or are at least developing. It should not be viewed as a competitor but rather as an ally.

Conclusions and Implications for Language Teacher Training

The integration of ChatGPT into EFL teacher training reveals both innovative opportunities and noteworthy risks that underscore the need for a **balanced** approach aligned with course objectives and teacher educator expertise. In practical terms, it promotes engagement with core language teaching principles that encourage trainees to confirm, question, reflect upon, and expand their professional knowledge. These form part of ChatGPT's unique combination of teacher training elements that enhance teacher learning through instantly adaptive, scaffolded support, synchronous formative feedback, and personalized learning mediated by the teacher educator. Despite its appeal as a novel teacher training tool, over-reliance on AI risks undermining or eliminating critical reflection, evaluation, and independent decision-making, essential skills for informed lesson preparation and instruction. Teacher educators and trainees should first be prepared to critically assess and challenge the output and, second, question whether the prompts entered need adjusting. Both require expertise, as this case illustrates. Drawing a direct link between what we teach trainees about pre-listening, the ChatGPT output omitted the important role of word stress in acclimating learners to the words they encounter, of learner-generated questions in providing a focus and a purpose for listening and of revisiting those questions during the post-listening phase to

confirm or refute comprehension. Additionally, while ChatGPT personalizes learning, it may unintentionally limit valuable interactions with the expertise of mentors and peers.

In conclusion, although ChatGPT can reinforce didactic concepts and provide real-time feedback, it must be managed carefully. Guided by the teacher educator's expertise, trainees should critically evaluate AI-generated responses against expert pedagogical knowledge and classroom realities, adjusting prompts to generate reliable output while dismissing ineffective ones. As AI evolves, its role in teacher training should complement traditional methods to ensure the human element remains central to education.

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