

Negotiating Meaning: Strategies for Discussing AI with Language Learners

January 30, 2025

Have you talked with your learners about AI?

- If no, why not? What hesitations or concerns do you have?
- If yes, what did you/your learners take away from those discussion(s)?

Why talk about it

- Learners may want to, and they may not be getting the opportunity.
- Opportunity to co-create expectations

Discussion Goals

Learners want to know:

What is and isn't okay for class?

We want to reinforce:

What is helpful vs. harmful for language learning (and/or for learning this particular language)?

November 11, 2025

Faculty Lead AI Usage Conversations on Campus

Survey data shows a majority of college students are aware of appropriate AI use cases in the classroom because their instructors—not administrators—set the expectations.

By Ashley Mowreader

Starting Off the Discussion

1. Personal connection and transparency; modeling curiosity.
2. Keep the focus on language learning (and/or learning your specific language).

What is a story about your own interaction(s) with AI that you could share?

During the Discussion

1. **Scaffolding:** Engage them in a **communicative task** with a tangible outcome.
 - a. Sorting/Ranking/Brainstorming
 - b. No right or wrong answers (yet)
 - c. Learners can add their own ideas

Wrapping Up the Discussion

1. Compare group results and ask them to notice:
 - o What do people generally agree on?
 - o Where is there the most variation across groups?
 - o Focus on areas of uncertainty; offer your perspective as the expert.
 - o (Optional) See what an AI tool says.
2. Point students to your policy/syllabus language, or assign drafting one as homework.

Try These Strategies

Facilitate a discussion with one or more of your classes, and come share how it went on February 27!

Padlet Remake Link:

<https://padlet.com/columbiau/remake-link/m9LGXqYoA3ZLXaKY>

References

- Digital Education Council. (2024, August 7). What students want: Key results from DEC Global AI Student Survey 2024. <https://www.digitaleducationcouncil.com/post/what-students-want-key-results-from-dec-global-ai-student-survey-2024>
- Jarenski, S. (2024, September 5). Conversation as care: Why talking to students about AI is our most essential task right now. The Hub for Teaching and Learning Resources, The University of Michigan - Dearborn. <https://dearbornhub.net/conversation-as-care-why-talking-to-students-about-ai-is-our-most-essential-task-right-now/>
- Mowreader, A. (2025, November 11). Faculty lead AI usage conversations on college campuses. *Inside Higher Ed*. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/student-success/academic-life/2025/11/11/faculty-lead-ai-usage-conversations-college-campuses>
- The Ohio State University. (n.d.). AI teaching strategies: Having conversations with students. Office of Academic Affairs. <https://teaching.resources.osu.edu/teaching-topics/ai-teaching-strategies-having>
- Webb, Tessa M. (2023, December 21). Navigate the AI conversation: Talking to your students about AI. Academic Technology Solutions. <https://academictech.uchicago.edu/2023/12/21/navigate-the-ai-conversation-talking-to-your-students-about-ai/>

Plain text list of prompts for printing:

Asking AI to correct grammar in a composition

Asking AI to explain how to use a grammar structure

Using AI to quiz you on vocabulary

Using AI to write a first draft of a composition

Using AI to begin researching for a cultural project

Asking AI to explain the difference between two similar words

Asking AI to complete grammar/vocabulary homework

Asking AI to check completed grammar/vocabulary homework

Having AI draft bullet points for an oral presentation

Using AI to get answers about cultural expectations

After reading/listening to something, using AI to summarize key points

Before reading/listening to something, using AI to summarize key points

Asking AI to break down a sentence you don't understand

Asking AI for feedback on your ideas in a composition

Asking AI to give general suggestions on grammar points to improve in your writing

Using AI with speech recognition to practice pronunciation

Using AI to translate a reading into English

2 pg handout for organizing prompts using numbers:

Roughly organize these actions along the spectrum, from “Ultimately Helpful” to “Ultimately Harmful” for language learning.

1. Asking AI to correct grammar in a composition
2. Asking AI to explain how to use a grammar structure
3. Using AI to quiz you on vocabulary
4. Using AI to write a first draft of a composition
5. Using AI to begin researching for a cultural project
6. Asking AI to explain the difference between two similar words
7. Asking AI to complete grammar/vocabulary homework
8. Asking AI to check completed grammar/vocabulary homework
9. Having AI draft bullet points for an oral presentation
10. Using AI to get answers about cultural expectations
11. After reading/listening to something, using AI to summarize key points
12. Before reading/listening to something, using AI to summarize key points
13. Asking AI to break down a sentence you don't understand
14. Asking AI for feedback on your ideas in a composition
15. Asking AI to give general suggestions on grammar points to improve in your writing
16. Using AI with speech recognition to practice pronunciation
17. Using AI to translate a reading into English

Ultimately helpful: Actions closer to this end serve language learning.

Ultimately harmful: Actions closer to this end don't serve language learning.