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## How to use Artificial Intelligence (AI)

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Foto: Paul Finnerty

*Paul Finnerty is lecturer at the Loughborough University in the UK, but also the Erasmus+ Coordinator and course designer at Atlas Language School in Dublin. One of the courses he has recently designed is English for Higher Education Academics addressing the topic Artificial Intelligence. There is a huge debate about the use of Artificial Intelligence swirling around universities at the moment. To use or not use, is one question, but perhaps a better way of looking at it is "How to Use AI". Since Paul originally comes from the UK, works for an Irish language school and lives in Poland, he can give an insight into his view of Artificial Intelligence in terms of AI in different education systems.*

**You teach English at a language school in Dublin and have also been lecturer at the Loughborough University in the UK. How important is Artificial Intelligence (AI) for your language teaching?**

Paul Finnerty: I must admit that I am a little slower to the AI game than some of my colleagues, partly fuelled by the fact that I have built up a lot of materials and lesson plans



over the years, so I had no real need to go out and do something new. But I feel that 2023 saw a surge in students using AI to help them complete presentations and assignments, and so I felt obliged to get involved and see what they were doing. I now use ChatGPT when brainstorming lessons and lectures, but the 'old-fashioned' side of me still likes to consult books and journal articles.

**How do you mix AI tools like ChatGPT with your usual teaching ways? Can you share a simple example of using both to help students learn better?**

ChatGPT can be useful in terms of providing information, even if it is not so adept regarding critical thinking and originality. For example, let us imagine students are learning how to give instructions for tasks to young learners. They might ask ChatGPT something like 'Tell me five recommendations for teachers when giving instructions for tasks to young learners'. ChatGPT will generate a list of ideas, most likely based on theory, and then students can discuss these recommendations and think about how they might (or might not) apply to their own classrooms, and incorporate these tips into a specific lesson plan or teaching practice.

**What does AI mean to you?**

AI can be an acronym for both Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity, and for me, we have to remember how these two things are intrinsically linked.

## The potential of AI

**Is AI commonly used in the British/Polish/Irish educational institutions? How and what are the main differences?**

AI is new for all of us, but my colleagues are embracing it more and more. The main reason is for teachers to save time in lesson planning; AI provides easy-to-access and quick ideas that get the mental fluids flowing – something like brainstorming. Some teachers ask AI to write whole lesson plans for them, while I prefer to use it as an initial generator of ideas, many of which are somewhere stored in my head anyway! I think this is the same across all countries. At the end of the day, teachers need to teach and students need to submit assignments, regardless of where they are.

**How are AI and Academic Integrity linked?**

These two things go hand in hand and students must realise what both of them mean. Abuse of Artificial Intelligence can lead to a rupture in Academic Integrity, but at the same time, if used ethically and efficiently, Artificial Intelligence can become a very useful tool, especially when doing research.

### **What are the most important advantages and disadvantages of AI in terms of education?**

Advantages are obviously that it saves time and effort for teachers and students. Certain AI apps are very learner-centred – think of language apps like Duolingo – and can respond to learners emerging needs more quickly and efficiently than a teacher can in a classroom of thirty students. However, students can use AI to write essays for them, which is a form of academic misconduct. And a dependence on AI can lead to a lack of critical thinking among the student population. We also have to face the reality that AI is based on algorithms and patterns and is not capable of producing anything original, so whatever a student asks ChatGPT to do, it is unlikely to be anything new.

### **What potential does AI have to sustainably improve education?**

The potential of AI to make education more sustainable is massive. Correct use of AI mitigates the need for the printed copy, whether it be student handouts, assessments or feedback forms. Whatever we can do to push students and teachers towards digital materials is welcome, and if AI encourages a move away from paper-based learning, this only spells good news for the environment.

### **What tips do you have for making sure students use AI in a proper way, without cheating? How can teachers support students to understand why?**

The first rule is not to completely prohibit the use of AI. Nowadays, it is almost an inevitability that students will use AI, so it is better to have a few lessons on HOW students can use it ethically, clearly outlining what they should and should not do with the help of AI. Simply put, there needs to be a lesson or lecture in which a teacher clearly says what does and does not constitute cheating, and then students have no excuses further down the line.

### **How can teachers instill a sense of academic honesty while promoting the beneficial use of AI for learning and research?**

Much like above, rules have to be set out, but we also have to encourage students to produce their own work and give them positive feedback about it. It might even be a case of being more lenient in your feedback if a student has written a report in class without the help of AI, as giving them overly critical feedback will simply push them towards the shortcut of using AI. Try to instill in students that AI can be useful for generating ideas, but not for writing academic papers. This is the key.

### **How can school leaders support teachers in their work with AI?**

Simply put, education institutions need to be willing to make an investment of time, money and effort. Teachers need to be trained to use AI, firstly to improve and make their own practice more effective, and secondly, so they know how to explain the ethical use of AI to students, and of course, to recognise when students have used it unethically. Clearly, professionalisation measures as part of personnel development are of particular importance



in this context. AI is always changing, so teachers should be given regular professional development sessions.

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