

Position Statement on Generative AI in teaching and research

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Linguistic subjects at La Trobe take a consistent approach to AI (particularly Generative AI and LLMs) for learning and teaching. Staff will generally limit their use of generative AI in teaching and research, and clearly communicate if such tools are used. We also encourage students to limit their use of AI for the sake of their own educational experience. Some limited use by students will be supported in specific circumstances. In all instances our use of AI in teaching and research is framed around critical evaluation of the utility of these technologies, as well as the cost and benefit of their use. For more information about this approach, including where Generative AI will be used in teaching and learning [see the full statement](#).

As teachers and researchers in the discipline of linguistics at La Trobe, we take a **sceptical stance** towards using Generative AI (GenAI); including Large Language Models (LLMs), particularly the more prominent commercial tools. This stance applies to all aspects of our work, and we also promote this approach to our students. Our sceptical stance, which is coherent with [Australia's AI Ethical Principles](#), commits us to carefully interrogate demands and discourses regarding the use of GenAI, and to adopt its use only when the potential benefits clearly outweigh the disadvantages. AI is not a single technology, but a range of different technologies and products that need to be evaluated on their own merits. In every instance, we need to carefully consider the disadvantages of GenAI: social, environmental, economic, and intellectual.

- **Social.** GenAI frequently reproduces harmful social stereotypes regarding race, gender, sexuality, neurotype, and disability. Rather than encouraging critical reflection on dominant discourses, it typically circumvents such reflection, and presents bias as fact. GenAI also reinforces the dominance of a small number of languages, excludes the majority of the world's languages and their users, and threatens Indigenous peoples' digital sovereignty. When combined with various forms of power, GenAI outputs have the capacity to shape reality and negatively impact us, and our colleagues, students, and research partners.
- **Environmental.** GenAI is environmentally harmful and unsustainable: it consumes large amounts of electricity, releases large quantities of carbon, and also consumes scarce water resources for data centre cooling. Recent modeling suggests that the environmental costs of using GenAI

are coming down, but there is still a lack of transparency, and tasks are less energy-intensive when they don't use GenAI. In an age of accelerating climate change, the environmental impacts of GenAI should not be ignored.

- **Economic.** GenAI is largely trained on datasets of questionable legality and operates on a financial model based on the dispossession of intellectual property. Although GenAI is often touted as a labor-saving device that increases efficiency, it sometimes entails hidden human labor. Furthermore, the productivity gains from AI do not necessarily benefit workers. GenAI is therefore based on economic models that are exploitative and against the interest of university workers, as well as the interests of our students, whose employability is potentially negatively impacted by the increasing use of GenAI in the workplace.
- **Intellectual.** GenAI has the potential to undermine research integrity and to deprive students of the capacity to acquire graduate capabilities. Writing is essential to learning, thinking, and generating insight, and reliance on LLMs to produce text can negatively impact all of these. Furthermore, the training and data acquisition methods currently used by LLMs do not model the academic integrity we seek to impart to students.

Given these recurring features of GenAI production and use, we move forward with the use of these technologies in our classrooms by:

- **Informing:** ensuring that students are aware of the negative impacts of GenAI (see above)
- **Pre-bunking:** showing students the errors that GenAI commits, such as hallucinating facts and sources, and entrenching bias
- **Discussing:** engaging students in conversations about the wider impacts of GenAI and encouraging reflection on its use
- **Designing:** tailoring assessment to encourage authentic student work, rather than relying on a punitive approach to students' GenAI use
- **Modelling:** being transparent around our own use of AI, and modelling best practice for the ethical adoption of targeted technologies
- **Researching:** continuing to monitor and explore new developments in ethical AI, including working with the Language and Ethical AI Lab in the department to train students and create useful educational materials.

Beyond these contexts, staff in linguistics will generally avoid using GenAI in our teaching and research, including generating and delivering content, communicating with and providing feedback to students, reviewing academic literature or writing articles, and writing letters of reference.

Having considered all the above, where students have identified clear value to help them meet learning outcomes, we are likely to support GenAI use by our students only in the following contexts:

- Students for whom English is an additional language, including D/deaf students whose first language is Auslan. In these cases students will be supported to use GenAI to revise texts that they have written themselves, so long as they have made use of other tools available to them, such as grammar and spell checkers in Word, and other tools approved by the university, such as Studiosity. Students should be aware that these tools have the same limitations and issues as other GenAI, and should not substitute their own research and writing for Studiosity output.
- Students who have a learning disability or other condition that impacts their capacity to produce text in the required genres. Such usage of GenAI will be scaffolded by staff and must be based on the student's own input, not simply on providing relevant prompts.
- Students who are critically evaluating GenAI for a research project.

Any use of AI by linguistics staff in our teaching and researching should be transparent, following the guidelines used by the Australian Research Council and designed by the Australian Digital Transformation Agency. We also encourage transparent usage of AI by our students, requesting them to submit an AI declaration with any assessment involving appropriate AI use, declaring if GenAI was used, and if so how.

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Sharable link:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PZe9C3chqAenHHV7Sdxme_bBbKrgZvAMC5Ils2LcxdM/edit?usp=sharing