

Lifelong Language Learning in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Reimagining Adult Education through AI Supported Applied Linguistics

Authors: Mousa Alfaifi, dr

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Presenter Name: Mousa Alfaifi

Abstract

The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational contexts has transformed language learning opportunities for adults, offering personalized, flexible, and lifelong learning experiences. Within the framework of applied linguistics, AI-powered language technologies have become increasingly significant in supporting adult learners with diverse educational backgrounds, professional needs, and learning goals. This conceptual paper explores how AI-driven language learning environments contribute to adult education and continuing education by promoting learner autonomy, adaptive instruction, and sustained engagement across formal and informal learning contexts.

Drawing on the principles of lifelong learning and adult learning theory, the paper examines the intersection between applied linguistics and continuing education through the lens of intelligent language learning systems. It discusses how AI applications—including adaptive learning platforms, conversational agents, automated feedback systems, and generative AI tools—can enhance language acquisition while addressing the unique characteristics of adult learners. Particular attention is given to issues of learner motivation, digital literacy, self-directed learning, and equitable access to AI-supported language education.

The paper further identifies pedagogical opportunities and ethical challenges associated with integrating AI into adult language education, including concerns related to assessment validity, academic integrity, data privacy, and algorithmic bias. It argues that successful implementation requires not only technological innovation but also linguistically informed instructional design and adult-centered pedagogical strategies.

The paper concludes by proposing a conceptual framework that integrates applied linguistics, adult education, and AI-enabled lifelong learning. This framework offers practical implications for educators, researchers, and policymakers seeking to develop inclusive, sustainable, and evidence-informed language education initiatives that respond to the evolving needs of adult learners in the digital era.