language learning, but only if it is used meaningfully and responsibly, in combination with traditional teaching methods.

Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort among educators, technology developers, and policymakers to ensure equitable and high-quality access to modern educational resources. As technology continues to evolve, the prospect of integrating it with traditional teaching methods provides a balanced, holistic approach to language education. When implemented thoughtfully and continually evaluated, technology can help create inclusive, effective, and engaging language learning experiences for students around the world.

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METHODOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF CHARACTER.AI WEB-APPLICATION

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Nowadays, our world is experiencing a powerful rise of artificial intelligence characterized by using its algorithms and AI-powered tools in various spheres of social life, and foremost in education. Multiple researchers and teachers [see: 1; 3; 5] stress the inevitability of applying artificial intelligence in education, hence its abilities are great and methodological potential immeasurable. While recognizing these prospects in studying different subjects, we would like to focus on possible merits of AI-powered platforms in the language training, particularly on the use of the chat-bot known as *Character.ai* (also *c.ai* and *character AI)* in ESL teaching and learning.

Web-application *Character.ai* is a site that uses a neuro-linguistic model to read vast amounts of text and respond to prompts using that information. The principle of its operation is not complicated. Anyone who is 13 or older can create a character on

the site either fictional or based on real people, dead or alive. In case the character is original, its creator is able to customize things like their appearance, voice, conversation starts, their tone, and other characteristics. It is also possible to choose a rout (or rather a mode of practice). The options available include practicing a new language, planning a trip, practicing for an interview, wring a story, brainstorming ideas, playing a game, getting book recommendations and help in decision-making. Besides you can opt for different language levels, select between colloquial, general or academic language, choose various types of interaction (with the AI bot acting as your work/study friend, a detective in a crime storyline, a fantasy/sci-fi/adventure story character, a fortune-teller etc.). The application adapts to the users' preferences offering a wide range of story settings (there can be anime world, settings from various video games, movies, historical periods and the like). The same goes to a genre – from a comedy to horror stories, depending on the users' scenario.

Such variety of choice implies that practicing the language will become not a task to complete but an entertainment to experience. It gives the learner a chance to develop their communication skills both in writing and in speaking, since the AI bot is able to engage in text message exchange as well as voice message interaction. In the process, the student taking part in this kind of practice trains all basic skills required for fluent and accurate English communication.

In particular, the AI-powered algorithm of the chat-bot gives very extended vocabulary, ranging from common collocations, expressions and idioms to specific slang and scientific terms depending on the choice of the storyline. Practically speaking, one academic year of using the *Character.ai* chat-bot intensively can significantly improve students' vocabulary (e.g. form average A2 to B2+ closer to C1). Students' speaking gets more fluent and accurate, not lacking naturalness and idiomaticity which is not so easy to acquire in a single year of intensive practice in the traditional classroom [see: 2, p. 222].

As per speaking skills, the *Character.ai* chat-bot, when used in the form of the voice interaction, develops not only strong ability to communicate in a certain type of the English accent (e.g. British English or American English) but also gives a chance to distinguish quickly between different accents, social and territorial dialects, teaches to use (or rather introduces in its "speaking") certain intonation patterns, appropriate pitch and tempo of speech, presents the common features of fast speaking, basic principles of emphases and sentence stress.

In terms of grammar, any AI bots don't tend to make grammar mistakes, unless they are asked to do otherwise. And even if the student does not possess profound efficiency in grammar, with extensive language practice *Character.ai* provides, the lack of grammar knowledge is compensated by remembering grammar patterns from the communication with the bot and using them in other communicative situations accurately.

The same approach can be applied to writing skills: even without focusing on the writing itself, the student can adopt appropriate writing patterns from text message form of communication with the AI bot, as well as the sequencers and linkers, various signpost phrases, personalization remarks and even the basics of structuring the written paragraph.

When it comes to assessment, the chat-bot is not prone to adapting a tutor's function. But depending on the type of the bot-interlocutor the user chooses from the beginning of the story rout, it can provide if not correction, then at least certain measure of criticism (strict or not, sarcastic or humorous etc.) in case the human character makes grave mistakes in communication.

At the same time, even the most autonomous learner, about whom so many educators talk these days [see: 4, p. 590], needs teacher's guidance to this or that extend. And despite the fact that students can sometimes trace their own progress (by simple comparison of their abilities and language skills before interactions with AI chat-bot and after those), it is usually the teacher who can provide insightful and professional outlook into learners' improvements or shortcomings. Yet, in our digitalized life of today, as well as in the foreseeable future, the role of gaming chat-bots like *Character.ai* and its equivalents will only increase, providing the whole new world of opportunities to those who are eager to learn ESL remotely, individually and in a creative way.

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