

AI Literacy for Social Justice and Inclusion

What does it mean for the learning and teaching of languages and cultures?

Mirjam Hauck

Professor of Critical Digital Pedagogies

Academic Lead for AI in Learning, Teaching and Assessment

I do not arrive at this conversation from nowhere

- A learner of languages, German first.
- A scholar of Critical Digital Pedagogies and Critical CALL
- A practitioner of Virtual Exchange across European, American, African and Chinese contexts.
- A European who works in English and is shaped by that asymmetry.

POSITIONALITY

Critical AI literacy begins with the question of who is speaking, with what authority, and from where.

In name my own location so that what follows can be heard as one position in a wider conversation.

THE QUESTION FOR THIS ROOM

Who benefits from AI in the learning and teaching of languages and cultures,
and who is left behind?

It is the question that should sit underneath every decision we make about classrooms, curricula, assessment and research.

Language is where AI's assumptions become visible

01

ENCODED IN LANGUAGE

AI's assumptions about knowledge, authority and belonging are most visibly carried by, and most plainly shaped by, language data.

02

CROSSING BORDERS

Language and culture education has always been, at its best, an exercise in crossing borders, questioning norms and inhabiting other perspectives.

03

AT THE FRONTLINE

Translation, feedback, conversation practice, cultural mediation, assessment. AI is touching every part of our practice already.

Whose languages count as languages?

THE PROMISE

AI as universal translator. As patient tutor. As infinite practice partner. As scaffold for the learner who cannot afford private tuition.

These are real possibilities. They matter. They should not be dismissed.

THE DISPLACEMENT

English fluency dressed as language fluency. Standard dialect treated as correctness. Translation as the death of multilingual thought.

The same systems that promise access also recode whose language counts as language.

Most of the world's languages are not in the model

BY THE NUMBERS

~7,000

languages spoken in the world today

under 100

have substantive coverage in major LLMs

Sources: Joshi et al. 2020; Bender et al. 2021; ACL2024 surveys

WHAT THIS MEANS IN PRACTICE

- A learner of Yoruba, Quechua, Welsh or Irish gets a thinner, less accurate, less culturally tuned tool than a learner of English.
- Communicative norms outside the training distribution are flagged as errors by automated feedback.
- Mandarin is well-resourced; Wu, Cantonese, Hokkien and the languages of China's ethnic minorities are not.
- The same gap appears inside every region: a small number of prestige varieties dominate the data.

Cultural and linguistic data, processed without consent

Communities are discovering that their songs, their oral traditions, their religious texts, their endangered-language corpora and their everyday social media have already been scraped, trained on, and resold, without anyone asking.

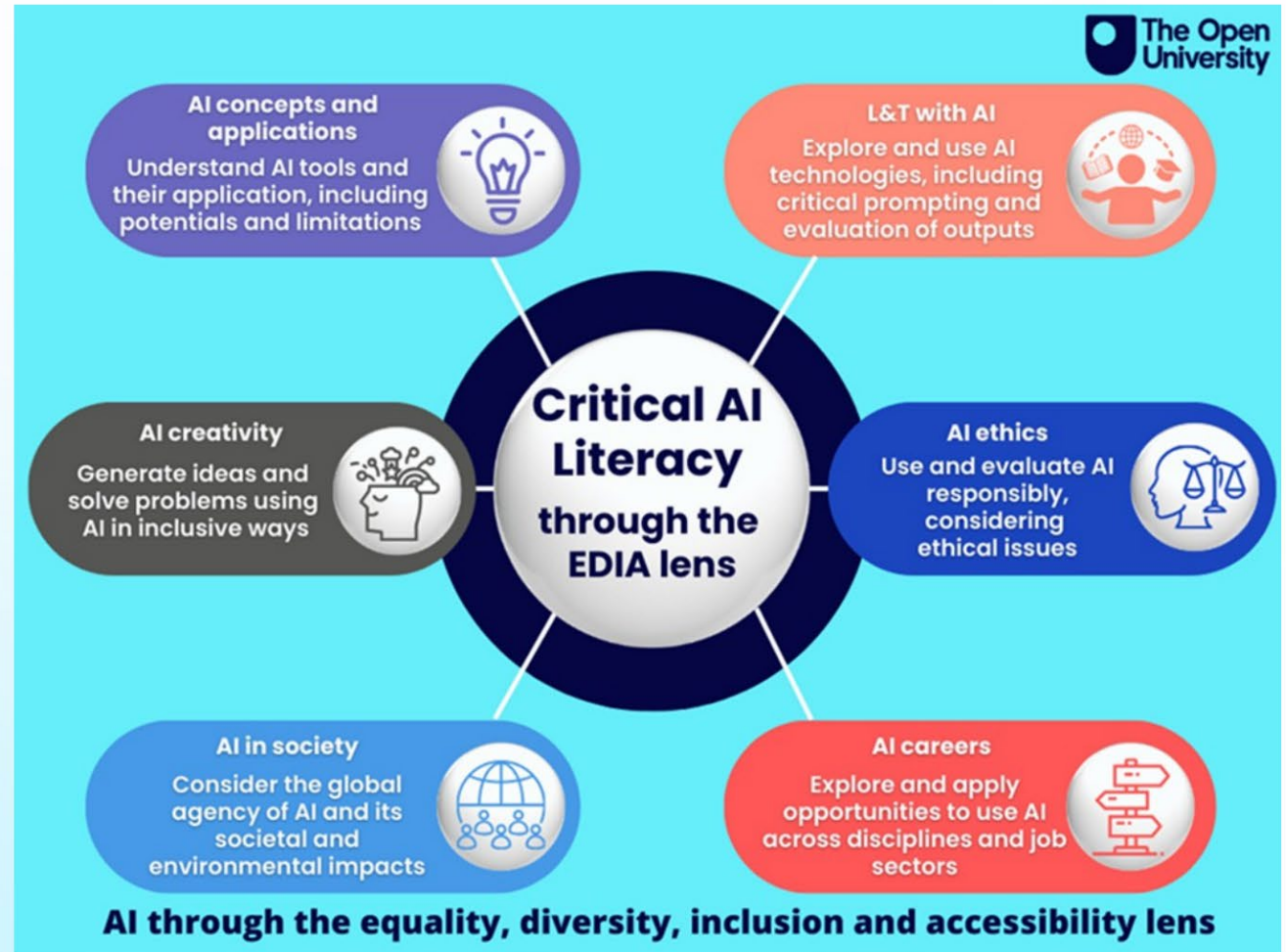
Māori data sovereignty and Te Hiku
Media

Indigenous-language corpora from
missionary archives

Confucian classics through Western
philosophical frames

The six CAIL dimensions

EDIA-grounded, developed at the OU



The six dimensions, translated for languages and cultures

Concepts & Applications

What does a multilingual LLM actually do? What is happening when it translates, scores or rewrites?

Creativity

Whose voice does the model write in? Can we use it to surface, rather than smooth over, cultural variation?

AI in Society

Who built the corpora, in what working conditions, with what environmental cost, and who profits?

Learning & Teaching

Where does AI complement language learning, and where does it short-circuit the labour learning requires?

Ethics

Consent, attribution, dialect penalty. Whose feedback gets normalised as correctness?

Careers

What does a translator, a teacher, a culture mediator do that no model will do for them?

ubuntu

I am because of you

Wellbeing is not an individual achievement.

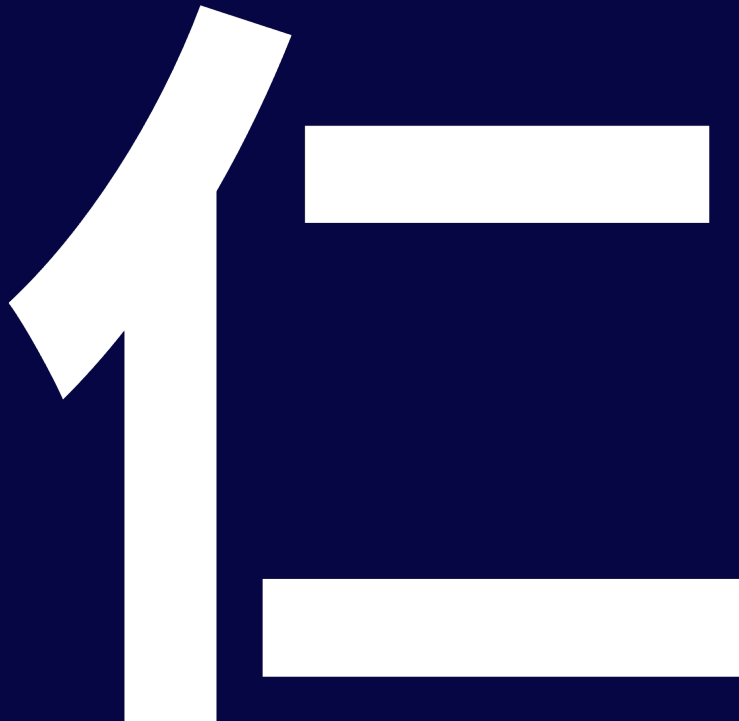
Personhood is not what you are alone. It is what you become with others.

An ethics that begins from interdependence, not from autonomy.

FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

If learning is relational, then literacy, including AI literacy, cannot be reduced to what one user can do with one tool.

Care, relationality and interdependence are conditions for any literacy at all.



ren

humaneness, constituted through relation

The central virtue of Confucian ethics.

The character 仁 combines 人 (person) and 二 (two).
One cannot be fully human alone.

Paired with 和 (he, harmony): not uniformity, but
resonance across difference.

*君子和而不同 · the exemplary person seeks harmony, not
sameness.*

FOR THIS ROOM

*A relational
ethics that is
not Western,
not
technocentric,
already
present in the
traditions you
teach.*

ubuntu and ren in dialogue, each on its own terms

WHERE THEY MEET

- Personhood is relational, not autonomous.
- Difference is productive, not a problem to be solved.
- Ethics begins in the encounter, not in the abstract user.
- Both pre-date the autonomous-user model that AI products assume.

WHERE THE TRADITIONS DIFFER

- Ubuntu emerges from southern African histories of colonialism and solidarity.
- Ren sits within a Confucian social order with its own hierarchies and tensions.
- Their critical value lies in the difference, not in collapsing it.
- Dialogue between them enacts the 和 principle: harmony through difference.

A relational ethics for human-AI encounter, drawn from the traditions already in our classrooms.

Responsible by Design

Four ethical pillars. Developed under the leadership of Eleanor Moore, OU Learning Design.



Environmental impact

Consider the carbon emissions, computing power and energy consumption associated with GenAI.



Encoded Bias

Consider the normative predictions of AI models and how they mirror, reproduce and even exacerbate stereotypes.



Exploitation

Consider the exploitation of labour in the global south, as well as the use of huge datasets for which rights have not been obtained.



Digital Divide

Consider who has access to these tools, what level of access they have, and what implications this has for equitable technology use.

What is it?

The Responsible by Design (RBD) Framework is a tool that can be applied to any use of, or introduction to, GenAI in OU modules. It has been designed to prompt consideration of ethical implications.

Why is it important?

By considering GenAI through the lens of ethics, the RBD Framework will support wider OU strategy and facilitate a greater consideration of how we approach GenAI ethically and responsibly with our students.

Five commitments for language and culture educators

- 1 Treat multilingualism as an epistemological resource, not a problem to be solved by better translation.
- 2 Audit the tools we use for whose languages, whose dialects and whose norms they penalise.
- 3 Make positionality and consent part of every assignment that involves AI.
- 4 Build assessments that reward the irreducibly human work: judgment, mediation, repair, intercultural listening.
- 5 Defend the opt-out and the right to a slower pedagogy.

Two examples from current Open University work

EXAMPLE 01

Better Words for AI

A working lexicon that resists the language of replacement, optimisation and frictionless productivity, and replaces it with terms that hold relation, labour and accountability in view.

With Eleanor Moore, Nancy Pontika and colleagues. v0.2, 30 entries.

EXAMPLE 02

Critical Virtual Exchange (CVE)

Intercultural encounter as the relational context in which AI literacy can be learned without losing the encounter itself. Difference is treated as productive, not as a translation problem.

*Salomã o, Satar, Hauck and Prim o, AILA Review 2025.
Operationalised through the VE China Hub.*

THE QUESTION I LEAVE YOU WITH

What would it look like

if the communities most at risk from AI in our languages and cultures

were the ones setting its agenda?

That is the question this room, with its philosophical inheritances, its linguistic range and its institutional reach, is well placed to answer.

Thank you

谢谢

Mirjam Hauck

Professor of Critical Digital Pedagogies

Academic Lead for AI in Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The Open University, UK

mirjam.hauck@open.ac.uk

