

Navigating AI in language education: Exploring the role of online language teacher communities

YURIKA ITO  

Kanagawa University, Japan

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has increasingly become a major discussion topic within the field of language education, prompting teachers to adapt to this rapidly changing teaching landscape. The current research study focuses on how language teachers are preparing themselves to navigate the use of AI for educational purposes. Specifically, it aims to uncover the role of AI-focused online language teacher communities as a means to learn more about generative AI, like ChatGPT. A mixed-methods approach is employed, combining qualitative content analysis of community posts and self-reported data from in-depth interviews with community members and non-members, alongside descriptive data on community membership growth. This study hopes to contribute to the growing body of research on AI in language education by providing insights into how language teachers can capitalise upon online language teacher communities on Facebook, which are free and easily accessible worldwide. It will also highlight the potential of such online communities to serve as collaborative spaces for teachers to explore new technologies and enhance their practice in the age of AI.

Keywords: Online teacher communities; language teachers; professional learning; social media; Facebook; Artificial Intelligence

Introduction

Teaching is a lifelong journey of learning, which requires teachers to continually grow, adapt, and expand their knowledge throughout their careers. The rapid advancement of emerging technologies like AI has further increased the need for teachers to continuously learn and adapt to new tools in the evolving educational landscape. However, despite these growing demands, teachers are often overwhelmed with heavy workloads (MacIntyre et al., 2019) and neglected by their institutions, particularly when it comes to support for their professional growth in technology (Ito, 2023b, 2024). Although AI is not a new concept and has been present in language

education for some time (e.g., Underwood, 1989), the release of ChatGPT and other AI technologies in recent years has significantly increased interest in their educational applications (e.g., Abdelaal & Sawy, 2024; Kohnke et al., 2023b).

Recent scholarship has explored the affordances and challenges of AI in language education (e.g., Barrot, 2023; Yan, 2023), the perceptions of language teachers (e.g., Alm & Ohashi, 2024), learners (e.g., An et al., 2023), or both (e.g., Slamet, 2024) regarding the use of AI in language education, as well as the knowledge and skills teachers and learners need to ethically and effectively utilise AI for language learning purposes (Kohnke et al., 2023a). While numerous studies have emerged in the field, there is still limited evidence on how language teachers are expanding their knowledge and skills in AI for educational purposes (Kohnke et al., 2023b). More specifically, this study explores the role of online teacher communities on social media, which is widely recognised as a valuable professional learning resource across various fields, including language education (e.g., Ito, 2023b; Wesely, 2013) in the context of AI in language teaching and learning.

The proliferation of social media has expanded how individuals connect, collaborate, and share knowledge, so it is little surprise that online teacher communities formed on these platforms have become an increasingly important space for teachers. Teachers are motivated to participate in online teacher communities on social media for a myriad of different reasons, including to obtain educational resources (Staudt-Willet, 2019), reflect on their own teaching (Marcelo-Martínez et al., 2024), collaborate with other teachers (Carpenter & Krutka, 2014), and combat isolation (Carpenter et al., 2024). Online teacher communities existed long before the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Duncan-Howell, 2010), but the pandemic, which prompted stay-at-home measures, notably increased their importance (Knight, 2020), leading more teachers to turn to these spaces for professional and emotional support, resource sharing, and collaboration (e.g., Ito, 2023b; Trust et al., 2020). Although the pandemic has subsided, it remains unclear how online teacher communities are evolving in the post-pandemic era, with AI technologies becoming more prominent, and what role they continue to play in teachers' professional development. Similar to the surge in online teacher communities focused on online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a notable increase in online teacher communities centred on AI in education, with new communities emerging and existing ones shifting their focus from online teaching to AI. Further, while relevant studies in the past few years have focused on how teachers make use of various platforms, such as X (e.g., Carpenter et al., 2024), Reddit (Staudt Willet & Carpenter, 2021), Instagram (Richter et al., 2022), and TikTok (Hartung et al., 2022), the current study examines online teacher communities formed on Facebook, one of the longest-running and most popular social media platforms used by teachers, to explore how these communities have evolved over the years. The main research questions specifically guiding the study are:

What role do AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook play in supporting teachers' learning about AI?

- a. What activities take place in these online communities?
- b. How do language teachers perceive these online communities?

Literature Review

Research on AI in Language Teaching and Learning

The past few years witnessed an emergence of various generative AI technologies: For example, ChatGPT was launched in November 2022, followed by Anthropic's Claude in March 2023 and Google's Gemini in December 2023. ChatGPT gained over 100 million users within two months

of its launch (Babu, 2024), and other AI large language models like Gemini and Claude have also attracted millions of users in a short period of time (Cook, 2024). Accordingly, the increasing prominence of AI technologies has become a major topic of discussion in the educational sphere, particularly in language education (e.g., Kohnke et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2024). Given AI's ability to generate text, provide feedback, facilitate translation, enable real-time interactive language practice, among others, it has sparked discussions among researchers about the opportunities and challenges it presents in language education, making it a key research theme in AI-driven language teaching and learning.

Kohnke and his colleagues (2023a), for instance, were among the first researchers to conduct a technology review specifically on ChatGPT's applications for language teaching and learning. They identified various ways in which language learners could potentially use ChatGPT for pedagogical benefits, such as obtaining dictionary definitions and examples, preparing vocabulary notes in both the target and primary language, and generating comprehension and expansion questions based on reading texts. Moreover, they outlined several debates and challenges surrounding the use of ChatGPT in language education, including ethical concerns, the accuracy of the generated responses, and potential cultural biases.

Similarly, Barrot (2023) examined the potential benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT in language education, with a particular focus on second language writing. The researcher suggested that ChatGPT offers several potential benefits for language learners, including assisting with writing refinement, improving language use, offering immediate written corrective feedback, and providing tailored essay topic suggestions based on users' interests. Drawbacks of using ChatGPT in writing instruction were also noted: concerns about potential learning loss, over-reliance on AI, the loss of creativity and critical thinking, and the difficulty of detecting AI-written content, which can blur the distinction between the content generated by students and machines. Based on such pitfalls, Barrot (2023) emphasises the need for "clear guidelines to teachers and students" (p. 5), hands-on training for both parties, and teacher collaboration through workshops, online platforms, and in-person meetings to share their teaching experiences and practices.

As teachers play a key role in guiding students on how to use AI technologies in an effective manner (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2024), it follows that another key theme in the literature is the focus on teachers themselves. For example, Alm and Ohashi's (2024) exploratory study examined how 367 language teachers in various parts of the world initially responded to the release of ChatGPT. Through an online survey, the study's results demonstrated that most respondents (over 90%) were familiar with the tool and knew its existence, though only a small proportion of them had actually used it for educational purposes. The participants also noted the potential benefits of the AI tool in terms of time and cost efficiency, as well as concerns about misuse, cheating, and overreliance, which were similarly highlighted in previous studies (e.g., Barrot, 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023). While the participants showed mixed reactions, ranging from positive to reserved to the AI tool, the study highlighted the importance of teachers having adequate support in developing competencies in using ChatGPT for pedagogical purposes.

In another study, Moorhouse and Kohnke (2024) investigated language teacher educators' perceptions of the impact of generative AI tools on initial language teacher education. Findings from the in-depth interviews with 13 English language teacher educators in Hong Kong revealed that most participants felt they were not competent users of such tools. Additionally, all participants expressed the need for professional development and support to enhance their skills and knowledge in the field. The researchers suggested that future research should involve identifying specific training to help language teacher educators develop the competencies necessary to use generative AI tools effectively.

As a related but separate study, Moorhouse et al. (2024) examined the impact of explicit instruction on using generative AI tools for language teaching to increase pre-service language teachers' professional competence in generative AI. The mixed-methods intervention study consisted of four main parts: During the first weeks of the course, the 87 pre-service language teachers enrolled in an ELT program in a university in Hong Kong were asked to fill out a pre-intervention questionnaire. The training sessions (i.e., the intervention), which were conducted over an 11-week period, primarily introduced the participants to various generative AI tools and their application in language teaching contexts. In the final sessions of the training, participants completed a post-intervention questionnaire to observe if there were any changes in their reported competence with generative AI. One or two weeks after the last training session, three follow-up group interviews, each involving three to four participants, were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' beliefs and experiences with AI tools, as well as their intentions to use them in their future teaching. The study's findings illustrated how the 11-week training sessions served as a positive force in enhancing pre-service language teachers' pedagogical competence and increasing their awareness of how to use generative AI in language teaching.

Formal training appears to be beneficial, as noted in Moorhouse et al.'s (2024) study, but previous research has shown that financial and time constraints often hinder teachers' access to it (e.g., Ito, 2024), and there is limited research on informal learning methods that could be crucial for developing AI-related skills. To date, little is known about the specific tools that language teachers use to learn about AI. Online teacher communities on Facebook, which are freely accessible regardless of financial, geographical, or time constraints, represent a viable and inclusive resource for language teachers as they offer flexible opportunities to stay informed about emerging AI-related pedagogical practices. This study, therefore, aims to explore this gap, with a particular focus on examining the role of AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook.

Social Media for Professional Learning: The Use of Facebook Groups

There are currently over five billion social media users worldwide, with Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok being some of the most popular platforms (Nyst, 2023). Teachers are no exception to this trend, and previous research has shown that these social media platforms serve as popular destinations for teachers to connect with one another. Facebook, for instance, has consistently attracted many teachers for more than a decade, providing them a platform to interact with one another through Facebook groups (e.g., Kelly & Antonio, 2016; Ito, 2023a, 2023b; Patahuddin & Logan, 2019; Rutherford, 2010; Yildirim, 2019). One of the main features of Facebook groups is that they allow individuals to easily discuss ideas and share resources, among other activities, without the need to be actual friends on the platform.

In Yildirim's (2019) study, a Facebook group for mathematics teachers was examined by analysing 2442 shared posts during a month-long period in May 2016 and conducting semi-structured interviews with 14 mathematics teachers who used the group. The findings revealed that the two main types of posts shared in the observed Facebook group were sharing information or documents with colleagues and asking for help. The posts covered a range of themes, including math subject tests, books, curriculum teaching materials, technological content knowledge, and university entrance examinations. In a similar study, Rutherford (2010) carried out a content analysis of 1867 posts shared in the "Ontario teachers - resource and idea sharing" group on Facebook. In this study, the researcher found that the most common type of post was related to pedagogical content knowledge (14.9%), with many teachers using the group to seek advice and ideas on how to make their classes "more creative, engaging, interactive, or fun" (Rutherford, 2010, p. 65).

In addition to studies that describe what is happening in self-generated online teacher communities on Facebook, there are also studies focusing on exploring the benefits of utilising such communities. Bissessar (2014), who interviewed four group administrators and 22 members of the “A Teacher’s Voice” Facebook group, which comprised teachers from Trinidad, found that teachers turned to the platform to give and receive pragmatic advice on teaching, socialise, vent, and build collaborative relationships with other teachers. Kelly and Antonio (2016) investigated the types of support teachers can receive by participating in online teacher communities on Facebook through an analysis of the interactions occurring in several large online teacher communities. Their findings revealed that the online teacher communities mainly offered the participating teachers practical advice and social support. Further, in Mercieca and Kelly’s (2018) study, which focused specifically on early career teachers, the researchers conducted interviews with 22 early career teachers to understand how private online teacher communities on Facebook can be used to receive support from other members. Casual teachers, who lacked job security, were turning to online communities to cope with the demands of the job and to assist in finding employment. Other teachers also were making use of the online teacher communities to enhance collegiality and get a sense of having peer support. In general, the teachers in the study appeared to be capitalising on the online teacher communities to obtain support which were not available in the school they were teaching.

Online teacher communities on Facebook have also proven to be beneficial in times of a crisis. For instance, Ito (2023b) carried out a mixed-methods research study to explore the realities of a technology-focused online language teacher community on Facebook during the COVID-19 pandemic. The content analysis of the 340 posts shared in the observed online teacher community revealed that, during the pandemic, particularly in the first few months, many community members flocked to the online community to support and assist one another. They mainly shared information about future online events, including conferences, seminars, and social gatherings, and reading materials related to emergency remote teaching. Through the questionnaire ($n = 51$) and semi-structured interviews ($n = 13$), the online community members reported that the community served not only as a space for professional help but also for emotional support. One teacher, for instance, commented that the online community felt like “counselling because everybody else was freaking out and stressed, because they had the pressure of learning new technology themselves” (p. 10).

While online teacher communities on Facebook have limitations, such as unequal levels of engagement among community members (Nelimarkka et al., 2021), the uncertainty of the quality of shared posts, and the risk of receiving harsh or critical comments by other members (Ito, 2023b), these online communities seem to serve as a space where teachers can share resources, discuss challenges, and learn from one another, particularly as they adapt to new technologies. This study is based on the premise that it is essential for language teachers to learn about AI, as they must be equipped to integrate these technologies into their teaching rather than ignoring their growing influence in the classroom. Consequently, based on prior research, AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook may provide a valuable platform for this purpose, as this study aims to explore how such communities can support language teachers using AI in educational settings.

Methods

Relevant past studies investigating the role of online teacher communities have often relied on either online observation of shared posts (e.g., Rutherford, 2010; Staudt Willet, 2019) or self-reported data gathered through questionnaires and/or interviews (e.g., Bissessar, 2014; Carpenter & Krutka, 2015) as their primary data sources. While such a single data collection

method can provide valuable insights, it may also present limitations in capturing the full complexity of teachers’ interactions and experiences within online communities. Hence, for the study, the current study employed multiple data collection methods to gain a more comprehensible understanding of the role of online language teacher communities as a source of learning about AI for teaching and learning purposes. In the first phase of the study, three online language teacher communities on Facebook were observed over a 12-month period. The researcher reviewed the posts which were shared in these online language teacher communities to gain a general understanding of their content and recorded the number of members. In the second phase of the study, a month’s worth of posts from the communities were recorded and categorised. In the third phase of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four language teachers, including those who were members of AI-focused online language teacher communities and those who were not part of any online language teacher communities.

The Observed Three Online Communities

Three self-generated online language teacher communities formed on Facebook were selected for observation. While other social media platforms, such as Instagram (e.g., Carpenter et al., 2020a), X, formerly known as Twitter (e.g., Carpenter & Krutka, 2014), Reddit (Staudt Willet & Carpenter, 2020), and TikTok (Carpenter et al., 2024), provide space for teachers to connect, a substantial body of research over the past decade or so has shown that Facebook remains a popular platform for teachers to form communities and discuss various educational matters (e.g., Bissessar, 2014; Ito, 2023a, 2023b; Kelly & Antonio, 2016; Rutherford, 2010; Yildirim, 2018).

A broad criteria, informed by the research questions and prior studies, was developed and applied to identify suitable online communities through the Facebook search engine. Firstly, since the primary aim of the study was to examine an online language teacher community focused on AI in educational settings, the online communities needed to fit this description. Secondly, the online communities were to be large as larger communities tend to generate more content and interactions (Hur & Brush, 2009).

Ultimately, Online Language Teacher Community #1 (OLTC-1), Online Language Teacher Community #2 (OLTC-2), and Online Language Teacher Community #3 (OLTC-3) which met all three criteria were selected for observation (see Table 1). As Kelly and Antonio (2016) emphasise, it should be noted that the selection was not the result of a fully exhaustive search, since Facebook’s search engine personalises results based on the Facebook user’s preferences, friends, location, and existing group memberships. Therefore, a different user conducting the same search might have obtained slightly different results.

Table 1. *Details About the three observed online language teacher communities*

	OLTC-1	OLTC-2	OLTC-3
Number of members	8339	3102	5434
Date of inception	February 12, 2021	May 13, 2023	June 10, 2023

Note. Number of members as of March 4, 2025.

The observed posts were analysed using content analysis. Specifically, the observational data were organised and prepared for analysis using Microsoft Excel, where they were categorised, coded, and analysed for patterns and trends (Selvi, 2023). The numerical frequencies of each type of activity occurred was also counted to see how often they appeared in the data.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted with both language teachers who were members of AI-focused online language communities on Facebook and those who were not participating in any. Most past studies have focused on examining the perspectives of those participating in online teacher communities (e.g., Yildirim, 2010). However, it is equally important to consider the viewpoints of teachers who choose not to engage in these communities to understand the barriers, limitations, or alternative AI-related professional learning methods they prefer. Hence, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of AI-focused online language teacher communities, interviews were conducted with four language teachers.

Recruitment Process

The four teachers were recruited using two main ways through convenience sampling: Firstly, the online community members were recruited on the observed online community. The author contacted all three community administrators to request permission to post the interview invitation; however, only the administrators of OLTC-1 and OLTC-2 responded and ultimately granted permission. In the end, only one online community member responded to the interview request. Despite posting interview requests on the platform multiple times, recruitment proved challenging, limiting the sample size and potentially affecting the representativeness of insights drawn from the observed communities. While the low response rate may be seen as a limitation, it also reflects the typical dynamics of large online communities, where many members are passive or non-participatory (e.g., Bozkurt et al., 2020). Secondly, the author reached out to language teachers she had previously met at conferences, events, and professional settings. In total, three language teachers agreed to be interviewed for the study: two were members of similar AI-focused online teacher communities, while one was not part of any such community.

Sample

All four teachers who were interviewed were working at a university in Japan, with three based in Tokyo and one in Osaka. Three were male and one was female. Their ages range from their 30s to 50s, and their teaching experience spans from 5 to 25 years. Regarding their employment status, three teachers were working full-time, while one was employed part-time at the time of the interview (see Table 2).

Table 2. Background information of interviewed language teachers

Pseudonym	Gender	Location	Age	Teaching experience	Employment status
Teacher #1	Male	Osaka, Japan	50–59	21–25 years	Part-time
Teacher #2	Male	Tokyo, Japan	30–39	5–10 years	Full time
Teacher #3	Female	Tokyo, Japan	50–59	16–20 years	Full-time
Teacher #4	Male	Tokyo, Japan	30–39	11–15 years	Full-time

Interview Details

The interview followed a semi-structured format using an interview guide (see Appendix). The interview questions included inquiries about their experiences with AI-related professional

learning and their perceptions of AI in language education. For those who were using online language teacher communities in some way, questions focused on their reasons for joining, what they liked or disliked about these communities, and how they perceived their impact on their teaching practice. For those who were not using any online language teacher communities, questions focused on their reasons for not engaging with them, their perceptions of such communities, and any alternative professional learning methods they preferred. To provide a clear picture of AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook, the author presented the three observed communities to the interviewees.

All the interviews were conducted online via Zoom, and the automatic transcript feature was used on Zoom. The interview data were analysed using thematic coding to identify key themes, patterns, and insights related to teachers’ experiences and perceptions of AI-focused online language teacher communities.

Ethical Considerations

Studying online communities remains an ethically debated area (Kelly & Antonio, 2016), particularly concerning issues of privacy and informed consent. Obtaining informed consent from every member of large online communities with over 1,000 participants is neither feasible nor practical, and some scholars argue that contacting individuals via private messages may itself constitute a violation of their privacy (Sugiura et al., 2017). Hence, the author decided to assign pseudonyms to the AI-focused online language teacher communities (i.e., OLTC-1, OLTC-2, OLTC-3) to protect the members’ anonymity. Considering that the discussion topics in the three online communities were not particularly sensitive, the research proceeded without direct consent from each individual member. For the interviews, the author obtained informed consent from each interviewee. The interviewees were assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and protect their privacy. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage.

Results

Membership Growth

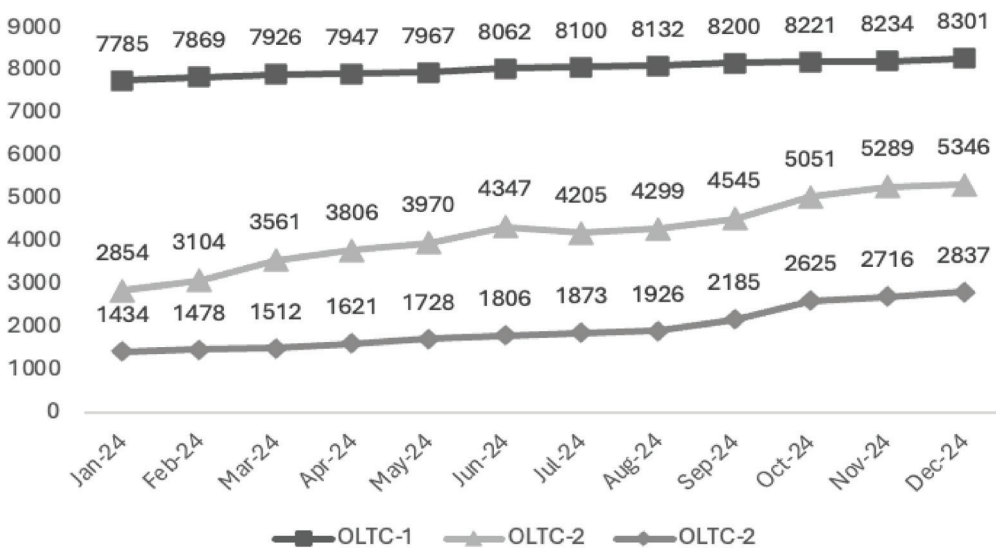


Figure 1. Monthly changes in member numbers between January 2024 and December 2024

On average, the OLTC-1 community grew by 47 members per month, while OLTC-2 increased by 128 members per month, and OLTC-3 saw the highest growth, adding 227 members per month (see Figure 1). This illustrates how the membership of all three observed online teacher communities grew throughout 2024. OLTC-2 experienced the most dramatic overall increase, rising by 97.7% and nearly doubling in size. OLTC-3 also saw substantial growth, increasing by 87.3%. Meanwhile, OLTC-1 grew more steadily, with a 6.63% increase. These trends seem to highlight the growing popularity of AI-focused online language teacher communities.

Types of Shared Posts

As indicated in Table 3, during the four-week period in March 2025, OLTC-1 had the highest number of posts (i.e., 49 posts), followed by OLTC-3 with 37 posts, and OLTC-2 with 13 posts. While OLTC-1 had the highest level of activity in terms of posts, comments, likes, and shares, it had the lowest rate of new monthly memberships, indicating that a higher membership rate does not necessarily lead to greater engagement.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the observation data (March 1st, 2025–March 31st, 2025)

	OLTC-1	OLTC-2	OLTC-3
posts	49	13	37
comments	87	0	67
likes	297	1	251
shares	27	1	9

Through content analysis, the shared posts were classified into two primary categories: (1) sharing information and resources and (2) requests. The category of “sharing information and resources” was further categorised into six main other categories: sharing (1) an event; (2) a video; (3) a tool; (4) a podcast; (5) an article; and (6) a blog. The second main category of “requests” was classified into three further subcategories: (1) asking a question; (2) questionnaire requests; and (3) asking for recommendations. As shown in Table 4, much of the content was related to AI, language teaching, and/or learning. Specifically, information about events, videos, tools, podcasts, academic and news articles, and blogs related to using AI for language teaching were frequently shared. Members of the online community were also asking how others were using AI in their classes and how to use specific AI tools for particular needs.

Table 4. Categories of the main types of the posts

Category	Example post
1) Sharing information and resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Sharing an event</i>	“Hi everyone, I’m delighted to be giving a plenary at this year’s BBELT conference, organised by the British Council...My session is called “Practical AI for ELT: Enhancing Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing”, and I’ll be sharing a range of hands-on tools and ideas to help you make the most of AI in your teaching practice...”

(Continued)

(Continued)

Category	Example post
• <i>Sharing a video</i>	“The David Crystal interview on the future of English is now available! https://www.youtube.com/... ”
• <i>Sharing a tool</i>	“I have just created my AI Chatbot on WhatsApp. You can ask about learning English. 24 hours. Free. Click this link to chat [XXX]”
• <i>Sharing a podcast</i>	“The AI Language Lab Podcast is officially LIVE! 🌐📌 After weeks of testing prompts, tweaking scripts, and talking to myself in a mic (more than I care to admit), I’m thrilled to share the very first episode with you all...”
• <i>Sharing an article</i>	“I read a post by [YYY] on LinkedIn about freewriting which cited this paper: https://journals.sagepub.com/... ”
• <i>Sharing a blog</i>	“In my last blog post I explore ways to create open-ended grammar exercises in the classroom with Gen.AI as teaching and learning happen. [https://aielt.org/...]”
2) Requests	
• <i>Asking a question</i>	“Hey teachers! 😊 Do any of you use voice ChatGPT or something else to help students practice conversation? I would love your experience and tips!”
• <i>Questionnaire requests</i>	“Dear Colleagues, I kindly request a few moments of your time to contribute to a research study examining educators’ intentions to integrate AI tools into their teaching practices...”
• <i>Asking for recommendations</i>	“Hello 🙋😁 Can anyone suggest an AI tool to create multiple choice exams, but long ones, 250 questions? I need to make long exams based on specific content. I’ve tried ChatGPT but it’s not always very accurate...”

Sharing an event, a video, and a tool were the three categories found in all three online language teacher communities (see Table 5). This seems to suggest a common emphasis on sharing practical resources and staying informed within the teaching community. The “asking a question” category received the highest number of comments, with an average of 5.67 comments per post. This seems to indicate that questions were not overlooked but rather attracted considerable traffic and responses.

Insights From Language Teachers

Reasons for Use

One of the main themes derived from the interview dataset was the reasons for using AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook. Teacher #2, #3, and #4 were the three who were using online language teacher communities on Facebook in some way. Teacher #4 commented that he would mainly use OLTC-1 to get teaching ideas. He mentioned the convenience of being able to access Facebook anytime, noting that he would browse the online community during his free time, such as while riding the train. He explained that this flexibility was important, as it would otherwise be difficult for him to participate due to raising small

Table 5. Main categories of posts shared in the three online language teacher communities

Category	Count		
	OLTC-1	OLTC-2	OLTC-3
1) Sharing information and resources			
• Sharing an event	8	2	11
• Sharing a video	8	3	10
• Sharing a tool	9	1	1
• Sharing a podcast	1	0	3
• Sharing an article	4	0	2
• Sharing a blog	1	0	4
2) Requests			
• Asking a question	2	0	4
• Questionnaire requests	3	0	0
• Asking for recommendations	0	1	1

children. As indicated in the following excerpt, he explained how it was difficult for him to participate in in-person events:

I'm sure like there's probably some good conferences as well that I could go to, or some good workshops, but it's just I'm usually so busy with the kids.

He also mentioned that he preferred using Facebook over X and Instagram for professional purposes, as Facebook communities felt more like a community; with X and Instagram, individuals need to follow each other or specific hashtags to see relevant content. In contrast, with Facebook, users can simply join their preferred groups and see shared content directly in their timelines. Teacher #2, who used online language teacher communities on Facebook less frequently than Teacher #4, similarly mentioned that one of the main benefits was that teachers could take advantage of the accessibility and ease of participation offered by the online language teacher communities. Teacher #3 was not specifically part of any AI-focused online language teacher community on Facebook but was engaged in several general communities she had joined during the COVID-19 pandemic, which occasionally included topics related to AI in language teaching and learning. While she relied on the online communities more often during the pandemic, she indicated that she still uses them to connect with teachers beyond her university bubble because she feels she cannot freely talk about AI with her colleagues at her workplace. She explained that she avoids discussing AI with her Japanese colleagues within the department, as she feels that some are conservative about its use and disapprove of incorporating it into the classroom.

Reluctance Toward Use

Out of the four interviewees, Teacher #1 was the only interviewee who was not in any kind of online language teacher communities on Facebook or social media platforms. He commented that he was not a big fan of social media in general. Since he did not use Facebook or any other social media platform for personal purposes, he had not considered joining AI-focused online language teacher communities for professional use. While Teacher #2 was in several online language teacher communities on Facebook, he was not very active and not posting anything

within them because he felt that he did not have enough knowledge or skills to comment and give advice to others. He also wanted to avoid receiving criticisms from other members. Further, both Teacher #1 and #2 were on a short-term contracted position at a university, so they felt that “finding a job is more of a priority than learning about AI.” A perceived sense of job insecurity appeared to reduce the teachers’ motivation to engage with AI in language teaching and learning, which, in turn, contributed to their lack of motivation to engage in AI-focused online language teacher communities.

Methods for Learning About AI

While the level of motivation to learn about AI varied, all four interviewees mentioned that they were learning about AI in some way or form. All four participants stated that their workplaces provided no support regarding AI, and that is the reason why they were reaching out to easily accessible tools and resources to stay informed about different AI technologies. For example, Teacher #1 and Teacher #2 explained that they often enjoyed watching YouTube videos which introduced them to different AI technologies and how to incorporate them into one’s lessons. Teacher #3 also mentioned how she participated in professional development events, like workshops and conferences related to AI in teaching and learning. She also commented on how she read a range of books and scholarly articles on AI that were published in Japanese educational settings. Teacher #4 similarly noted that he makes a habit of browsing through free research articles related to AI in teaching and learning on Google Scholar. Further, he explained that he read posts shared in Reddit, particularly teaching-related threads, alongside AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook. It is also worth mentioning that all four teachers were occasionally talking about how they were dealing with AI in their classes with their teacher friends and/or co-workers. None of the teachers had received formal training in the use of AI in educational settings. In all, while they were not frantically trying to learn about AI, they were making an effort to stay informed by regularly participating in various events, watching online videos, reading books and articles, joining online communities, and/or engaging in casual conversations with colleagues.

Discussion

The current study outlined the dynamics of three large AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook through an analysis of membership trends and the content of shared posts. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted to investigate teachers’ perceptions of these communities. In the AI-focused online language teacher communities, a range of AI-related posts were shared, including information about professional development events such as workshops, seminars, and conferences, as well as resources like YouTube videos, blogs, and research articles. As noted in previous studies (e.g., Ito, 2023b), these trends appear to reflect patterns established during the pandemic, a period when many online language teacher communities emerged and gained popularity. These communities were primarily formed to support online teaching, as many teachers faced challenges and frustrations adapting to the sudden shift. Similar to the onset of the pandemic, when ChatGPT was released to the public in November 2022, it initially sparked widespread concern within the educational sphere, with many teachers feeling overwhelmed by the potential implications for teaching, assessment, and academic integrity (e.g., Cotton et al., 2024). It is likely that the AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook functioned not only as information boards where teachers could stay up to date with developments related to AI in language teaching and learning but also as supportive spaces where they could seek help and share experiences. As all four interviewees mentioned how they were not receiving any type of support regarding the use of AI at their

workplace, the AI-focused online language teacher communities could provide much-needed support, particularly to those who are feeling anxious about the rapid pace of technological change and the lack of institutional guidance on integrating AI into their teaching practices. Technostress associated with AI tools amongst teachers have been a growing concern (Kohnke et al., 2024), and while the current study did not examine whether, and to what extent, AI-focused online language teacher communities can alleviate teachers' negative emotions toward the use of AI tools in educational settings, simply knowing that support is available may offer a sense of reassurance and security. As technostress has been said to be a critical factor affecting teacher wellbeing (Yang et al., 2025), it is essential for teachers to hold appropriate coping strategies to mitigate its adverse effects, and online teacher communities could potentially serve as a valuable resource in this process.

Like described in past studies about online teacher communities (e.g., Nelimarkka et al., 2021), the AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook were clearly not without limitations. The primary concern was the low level of activity in one of the observed online communities. All three online communities were large in scale, with over 3000 members in each, but OLTC-2 noticeably had very little engagement, with only 13 initial posts and zero comments during the four-week observational period. Of all the community administrators contacted for permission to post a recruitment notice for interview participants for this study, only those of OLTC-2 failed to respond. Even though OLTC-1 and OLTC-3 responded and granted permission, only one member across the communities agreed to participate. While recruiting research participants on social media platforms is considered to be generally challenging (Basa-Martinez et al., 2018), the recruitment process seems to reflect how large online teacher communities do not necessarily lead to high engagement rate. One plausible reason for the limited engagement in the online communities is that many members may be passive observers, a behaviour often referred to as "lurking" (Sun et al., 2014). Another possible explanation is that teachers join these communities but remain disengaged, not reading posts or comments, as noted by Teacher #2 during his interview. As is common in many large online communities, the findings of the current study suggest a wide range of participant types within the observed online language teacher communities, including highly active contributors, occasional participants, passive observers, and non-participants. The perceived value of these online communities is likely to vary according to the specific needs, interests, and engagement preferences of individual members.

The findings also revealed that negative experiences within online communities may discourage participation. Although none of the interviewees indicated having personally experienced negative comments in the AI-focused online teacher communities, Teacher #2 specifically noted witnessing arguments or critical comments in other online communities he belonged to in the past. He did not explicitly state that this was the reason for his limited use of the online communities, but he commented that he felt that he does "not know enough about AI to contribute" to the existing discussions. There is a possibility that Teacher #2's lack of engagement stems from a concern about receiving critical feedback for not being knowledgeable about AI.

Spam messages are another type of negative content that may have discouraged some teachers from engaging with online teacher communities like OLTC-2. As noted in earlier research (e.g., Carpenter et al., 2020b), social media platforms are often targets for spam, which can undermine the quality of engagement. During the four-week observational period, in OLTC-2, there were two spam messages (e.g., "100% off Udemy course coupon ChatGPT & Midjourney: 23 Proven Methods to Earn with AI..."). When asked about spam messages, Teacher #4 recalled that when OLTC-1 was first launched, there were posts like "Please join my new AI

group or check out my new AI service.” However, after the administrator began moderating the community, such posts apparently disappeared. In OLTC-1 and OLTC-3, administrators seem to maintain a visible and active presence, reviewing each post shared in the communities and regularly engaging with other members. Such involvement likely fostered a safe and supportive environment by ensuring rules were upheld and discussions remained respectful.

Final Remarks

By analysing the content shared in three AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook and the data obtained from the in-depth interviews with both community members and non-members, the study provided a multi-faceted understanding of the role that AI-focused online language teacher communities play for language teachers in the age of generative AI. What the study revealed is that some teachers were left to navigate the recent technological shifts driven by AI on their own, with limited institutional guidance or structured professional development. While AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook are not a silver bullet, they are serving as a valuable source of peer-driven support, offering access to practical resources, a space to share experiences, and informal learning opportunities that may help alleviate feelings of isolation, panic, and uncertainty.

As noted in previous sections, the limitations of this study should be re-emphasised, and the results interpreted with caution. Considering the limited self-reported data collected through interviews, the findings only provide a preliminary understanding of what some language teachers view AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook. The next steps of the study involve conducting research with a larger sample and observing activities in additional AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook and other social media platforms such as X, Instagram, TikTok, and Reddit.

With AI constantly evolving and technological advancements showing no signs of slowing down, it is increasingly important for language teachers to keep abreast of emerging trends and innovation. Considering the wide range of online teacher communities currently available, teachers should choose those that best fits their professional goals and preferences. In today’s rapidly shifting educational landscape, preparing for the next wave of technology is not just important but also a professional responsibility, and online teacher communities appear to have the potential to play a key role in facilitating this process.

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Appendix

Main Interview Questions

1. Are you currently a member of any AI-focused online language teacher communities on Facebook?

If the answer was “yes”:

- What motivated you to join the online teacher communities, and what do you typically look for when engaging with them?
- How often do you engage with posts or discussions in these online communities?
- What kinds of members or posts do you find most helpful in these online communities?
- Do you ever contribute to discussions about AI in these groups? Why or why not?
- Are there any limitations, challenges, or concerns you’ve experienced when relying on Facebook or online groups to learn about AI for language teaching?
- How would you compare the value of learning about AI from these communities versus more formal sources (e.g., workshops, academic articles, or official training)?

If the answer was “no”:

- What are your main reasons for not participating in the online teacher communities?
 - Have you ever considered joining such online teacher communities, especially for learning about new teaching tools like AI?
 - What kind of support, resources, or training would help you feel more confident in using AI for language teaching and learning?
 - Do you feel that not being part of online teacher communities affects your ability to keep up with innovations in teaching, such as AI? Why or why not?
2. Do you rely on other networks or resources to learn about AI in language teaching and learning? If so, what specific methods do you use?
 3. What are your general thoughts about using AI-focused online language teacher communities to learn about AI?