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ORIGINAL PAPER

Using Artificial Intelligence in Teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language

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Abstract:
The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in teaching Romanian as a foreign language (RLS) to foreign students is a modern trend that transforms the learning process, offering personalization, instant feedback and interactive resources. This technology is used especially in the preparatory year to support the development of oral and written communication skills of foreign students. In Romanian universities, where AI technologies are used, the emphasis is on a learning model, where AI does not replace the teacher, but helps him. Active learning and teaching with the help of AI of the Romanian language as a foreign language is one of the best ways to learn, and artificial intelligence systems can help foreign students take control of the lessons taught and progress at their own pace. Teaching Romanian to foreign students with the help of digital tools requires more than linguistic knowledge; it requires a mix of psychology, technology and cultural anthropology. The development of language technologies and artificial intelligence at the university level adapted for Romanian as a foreign language is a priority to ensure institutional digital sovereignty and the inclusion of foreign students.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, learning process, Romanian language, resources, foreign students*

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Introduction

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based systems into the teaching of Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) to international students represents a modern paradigm shift that fundamentally restructures the architecture of learning. It necessitates a transition from standardized instruction to a fluid model defined by adaptive personalization, instantaneous feedback, and interactive resources. Far from being a mere fleeting technological trend, the infusion of generative algorithms and natural language processing (NLP) tools optimizes the acquisition of the complex grammatical and lexical structures inherent to the Romanian language. In a globalized academic environment—where Romanian universities attract diverse, multicultural cohorts of students—the dynamics of interaction between native and non-native speakers are enhanced by digital environments capable of simulating real-world communication contexts, thereby mitigating negative affective filters such as language anxiety.

The practical, high-impact utility of these technological ecosystems is most evident during the university preparatory year. This transitional phase—encompassing both linguistic and socio-cultural adaptation—is pivotal for international students, as it is specifically designed to foster the rapid development of two-way communication skills, in both oral and written forms. Within this context, TELL (Technology-Enhanced Language Learning) tools serve as a powerful catalyst.

According to relevant research, the proper implementation of these systems in universities does not aim to exclude or diminish the human role; rather, it is founded on the principle of complementary support and educational symbiosis: "Artificial intelligence is not intended to replace the teacher, but instead functions as a system geared toward optimizing teaching work (a teacher-facing system) by handling the automation of administrative processes, iterative grading, and the generation of differentiated materials" (Schmidt, Strasse, 2022: 45).

This approach frees up valuable pedagogical time, shifting the focus from the mere transmission of information toward mentorship and individualized cultural guidance. Through the use of intelligent Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) platforms, the traditional teaching model is replaced by active learning. Adaptive algorithms allow international students to take full control of their educational journey, enabling them to navigate morphosyntactic structures and progress at their own pace, independent of the average level of their peer group.

This cognitive autonomy is vital for consolidating competencies, providing a safe space where mistakes are not publicly penalized but rather corrected contextually, in real time. As recent specialized literature highlights: "Intelligent tutoring systems provide automated differentiation, capable of recalibrating the difficulty level of texts and exercises for A1–C1 proficiency levels; they directly stimulate long-term memory through spaced-repetition techniques based strictly on the individual performance of the non-native student" (Chira, Câmpean, Daisa, 2026: 89).

Modern, digitally-mediated pedagogy for teaching Romanian as a second language goes beyond the mere transmission of grammatical data or strictly lexical skills; it demands an organic blend of applied psychology, technological expertise, and cultural anthropology. International students do not merely learn words; they assimilate a new way of structuring reality. Psychology plays a role in monitoring the motivational dynamics and cognitive barriers specific to foreign learners acquiring a language with a complex inflectional structure, such as Romanian.

At the same time, while technology provides the tools for decoding, digital platforms lacking the integration of cultural anthropology fail to convey the spirit of the language. The idiomatic context, pragmatic subtleties, humor, and socio-cultural nuances specific to the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic region cannot be translated word-for-word by generic algorithms trained primarily in English. This phenomenon is addressed in current research: "Global commercial AI models often exhibit significant accuracy gaps when generating colloquial Romanian or metaphorical structures a result of the acute scarcity of high-quality, large-scale Romanian datasets. This necessitates deep human intervention to calibrate the cultural and anthropological filters applied to the content" (Museanu, 2024: 115).

However, in Romanian universities that have already adopted such innovations, the fundamental approach does not aim to exclude the human element; rather, it seeks to implement a model of complementary support in which AI does not replace the instructor, but instead assists them.

Learning and teaching Romanian as a foreign language with the aid of AI offers one of the most effective paths to language acquisition, as artificial intelligence systems can empower international students to take charge of their lessons and progress at their own pace. Yet, teaching Romanian to international students using digital tools requires more than just linguistic knowledge; it demands a sophisticated blend of psychology, technology, and cultural anthropology. Furthermore, the development of language technologies and artificial intelligence tailored for Romanian as a foreign language within a university setting is a strategic priority for ensuring institutional digital sovereignty and the full inclusion of international students.

Reconfiguring the Didactics of Romanian as a Foreign Language (RFL) in the Digital Age

The transition of the didactics of Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) into the digital age represents more than just a shift of course materials from paper to computer screens; it entails a structural redefinition of pedagogical interaction, content delivery methods, and the ways in which international students develop their linguistic autonomy. The progression from emergency remote teaching (characteristic of the pandemic period) to sustainable hybrid systems and subsequently to platforms optimized by Artificial Intelligence (AI) has highlighted the need to adapt teaching techniques to the new cognitive profile of digital natives. In this new ecosystem, the instructor is no longer the sole transmitter of knowledge, but rather a facilitator of technologically mediated learning experiences. The digitalization of RFL has demonstrated that traditional teaching strategies centered on long lectures lose their effectiveness in the absence of direct physical contact. A far more dynamic and interactive approach is required, underscoring the importance of diversifying platforms and maintaining pedagogical flexibility: “Teaching Romanian as a foreign language in an online environment requires a careful selection of digital tools (such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Moodle) that can sustain students' attention and replace the physical classroom interaction with collaborative tasks and real-time interactive exercises” (Burtea-Cioroianu, 2022: 136).

Consequently, the reconfiguration of didactics stemmed from the need to break away from the rigid patterns of frontal teaching, paving the way for an e-learning model centered on flexibility one in which multimedia materials and synchronous or asynchronous tools lay the groundwork for the introduction of intelligent technologies.

Digital didactics in higher education is shifting from a phase where all students view the same screen to one where the screen adapts interactively to the individual viewer. In this regard, Adăscăliței (2025) provides a highly rigorous theoretical and applied perspective on how AI is redefining instructional design and the assessment of competencies within universities. The author highlights the immense potential for personalization offered by these systems: "Artificial intelligence is reshaping the act of teaching through its capacity to analyze the performance data of each pupil or student in real time, generating individualized learning paths and providing a precise diagnosis of cognitive gaps transcending the time constraints of a conventional class session" (Adăscăliței, 2025: 54).

In the specific context of the preparatory year for the Romanian language where students come from highly diverse linguistic backgrounds this capacity for automated diagnosis is essential. AI can detect, for instance, whether a native Arabic speaker faces specific difficulties in correctly writing the unique Romanian vowels (*ă*, *î*, *â*), while a French-speaking student might struggle with neuter gender agreement; the system can then provide each with entirely different sets of exercises, tailored to their immediate needs.

However, Adăscăliței (2025) draws attention to a fundamental ethical and methodological issue, warning against using technology as an end in itself, devoid of a solid pedagogical foundation: "The introduction of artificial intelligence into the academic sphere must not fall into the trap of a sterile technological determinism. Its pedagogical value emerges only when algorithms are subordinated to clear learning objectives, and the instructor remains the primary architect of the didactic scenario ensuring the content is both ethically sound and scientifically valid" (Adăscăliței, 2025: 112).

Understanding how AI can support the teaching of the Romanian language requires a clear conceptual distinction between general language and the specialized language used in academic or professional settings. International students in their preparatory year require more than just basic conversational skills; they must, in a remarkably short time, master the scientific jargon specific to their future fields of study (such as medicine, engineering, law, or economics). During this transition, distinguishing between a word in common use and a strictly specialized term becomes crucial for the design of AI systems and linguistic databases.

This issue of conceptual distinction is examined in depth within the Romanian specialized literature by Chirițescu and Păunescu (2021), who explore the semantic complexity of terminologies. The authors emphasize: "Although terms and words share the same lexical stock, terms are highly specialized linguistic units that operate within a well-defined conceptual structure. In Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), the semantic stability of a term is vital for cross-cultural academic integration" (Chirițescu, Păunescu, 2021: 97).

For designers of AI platforms dedicated to Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP), this implies that computer systems must go beyond merely translating or generating grammatically correct sentences; they must be trained on specific terminological ontologies. AI algorithms must recognize that, within the context of LSP, a word's semantic network and syntactic valencies undergo a radical shift.

Furthermore, Chirițescu and Păunescu draw attention to the lexical dynamics of modern society and the way in which terms migrate into general language a phenomenon accelerated by technology: "The line between a common word and a specialized term is becoming thinner in the digital era, as technological advancements force professional

terminologies into everyday discourse, challenging foreign learners to master both simultaneously" (Chirițescu, Păunescu, 2021: 102).

Consequently, an effective AI platform for teaching Romanian as a second/foreign language (RLS) must incorporate dynamic vocabulary modules capable of demonstrating to international students how the meanings of Romanian lexemes shift according to context. This form of adaptive e-learning allows for the immediate contextualization of scientific terms, fostering a deep conceptual understanding that traditional, print-based dictionary methods cannot provide in a dynamic way. Educational theory must always be validated by the reality of the classroom. The transition toward AI-mediated instruction cannot occur in an institutional vacuum; it depends directly on the digital competencies, perceptions, and openness of university faculty. Recent empirical studies provide highly valuable data on how Romanian educators experience and conceptualize this transformation.

In a recent landmark study, Pop and Marc (2025) investigated the perceptions of teachers in Romania regarding the integration of AI into foreign language instruction. Their research reveals a sense of moderate optimism, coupled with a keen awareness of the need for continuous professional development: "Romanian in-service teachers recognize the immense potential of AI in personalizing learning pathways, yet they express significant concerns regarding the lack of institutional guidelines and the urgent need for professional development in digital pedagogy" (Pop, Marc, 2025: 311).

The data collected by Pop and Marc indicate that educators do not exhibit a technophobic resistance toward AI; rather, they express a structural concern regarding the lack of clear methodologies for validating machine-generated materials. In the context of teaching Romanian as a Second Language (RSL) during the preparatory year where time is extremely limited the use of materials containing subtle errors could compromise the entire pedagogical process.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Pop and Marc (2025) highlights that teachers perceive AI as a tool for time optimization, confirming the "digital assistant" model detailed in the abstract of this article: "AI should not be seen as a replacement for human empathy and cultural mediation, but as a cognitive tool that automates repetitive grading tasks, allowing teachers to focus on genuine interactive and communicative activities" (Pop, Marc, 2025: 314).

This feedback from practitioners demonstrates that the successful implementation of AI in Romanian universities depends on the creation of strategic training programs for teaching staff, enabling them to become architects of technologically augmented learning experiences and capable of orchestrating the interaction between the student and the digital tutor. To fully understand the viability and sustainability of intelligent systems in the teaching of Romanian as a Second/Foreign Language (RLS), a rigorous analytical assessment of the competencies that students and instructors must develop is required. An overview of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (a SWOT analysis) provides an essential diagnostic framework.

In this regard, Lăpădat and Lăpădat (2025) have conducted a detailed SWOT analysis of specific competencies in foreign language teaching, offering theoretical conclusions that are directly applicable to the context of RLS. The authors highlight the structural value of communicative competencies adapted to the contemporary environment: „The SWOT analysis reveals that while digital competencies significantly enhance learner autonomy and provide unprecedented access to authentic linguistic resources, they can also lead to cognitive overload and a fragmented understanding of

grammatical systems if not properly scaffolded by the instructor" (Lăpădat, Lăpădat, 2025: 271).

Applying this perspective to the teaching of Romanian in the preparatory year, we can identify the elements of a SWOT matrix:

• Strengths: AI offers personalization at a granular level, providing immediate corrective feedback on pronunciation and writing; it eliminates the stress of being evaluated in front of peers and allows for an individualized pace of learning.

• Weaknesses: A high risk of fragmented learning, the loss of the language's macro-structural cohesion, and the possibility that students might memorize automated templates generated by a chatbot rather than developing authentic linguistic reasoning.

• Opportunities: The democratization of access to personalized language-learning resources; the ability to instantly generate exercises tailored to a student's specific interests (e.g., medical or technical case studies in Romanian); and the promotion of social and academic inclusion.

• Threats: Excessive technological dependence, the erosion of direct human interaction skills, and a decline in linguistic quality resulting from the use of AI models that are not culturally calibrated to the nuances of the Romanian language.

Lăpădat, L. and Lăpădat, M-M (2025) also draw attention to the crucial aspect of assessing competencies in a hybrid environment: „Traditional assessment methods are insufficient to measure the complex, non-linear competence acquisition driven by modern technologies. European educational frameworks demand an integrated approach where communication, digital literacy, and cultural adaptability are evaluated simultaneously" (Lăpădat, Lăpădat, 2025: 275).

This conclusion compels the Romanian academic community to revise not only its teaching tools but also its examination methodologies within the preparatory year. AI-assisted assessment should not be limited to automated multiple-choice tests; rather, it must evaluate the international student's ability to perform spontaneously and coherently within complex social and academic interactions.

As noted in the abstract that underpins this research, teaching Romanian as a foreign language via digital platforms is not merely a matter of software engineering or applied linguistics. It lies at the inextricable intersection of three major fields: psychology, technology, and cultural anthropology. Consequently, learning a foreign language as an international student under the pressure of rapid integration into the university environment is a process characterized by a significant emotional burden. The "affective filter" hypothesis, a concept within foreign language pedagogy, explains how negative emotions such as the fear of failure, shyness, or anxiety can hinder language acquisition, regardless of the quality of the instructional materials.

AI systems act here as a factor for psychological stabilization. An AI-based conversational agent (a dedicated chatbot) serves as a non-judgmental interlocutor. A foreign student can repeat a difficult grammatical structure such as phonetic alternations or the correct use of the dative and genitive cases in Romanian dozens of times, without the fear of being mocked or negatively evaluated. This safe interface lowers cortisol levels and encourages active linguistic experimentation. Thus, AI becomes a form of psycho-pedagogical support that fosters the learner's cognitive resilience.

As for the technological challenge, in the context of learning Romanian as a second language (RLS), it stems from the highly inflectional nature of the Romanian language characterized by extensive morphological richness, a complex system of

declensions and conjugations, and contextual nuances arising from a relatively flexible sentence word order.

Unlike English, which features rigid word order and limited inflection, the Romanian language requires far more sophisticated NLP algorithms to detect and correct subtle errors in grammatical agreement—regarding gender, number, and case—as well as the proper use of clitic forms of personal pronouns. Consequently, the technology employed in universities must go beyond the capabilities of a generic translation tool; it should instead utilize large language models (LLMs) that have been fine-tuned specifically on corpora of Romanian academic texts and samples of speech characteristic of foreign learners.

As is well understood, language serves as the vehicle for a culture; it cannot be divorced from the historical, mythological, and social context of the people who speak it. A foreign student in a preparatory year must do more than simply translate words; they must grasp why certain structures function the way they do within Romanian society. For instance, polite forms of address, idiomatic expressions, colloquial metaphors, and the pragmatics of discourse are all deeply rooted in the anthropology of the Romanian cultural sphere.

Global commercial AI models, having been trained predominantly on Western data that has undergone automated translation, frequently fail to capture these specific nuances. While they may generate text that is grammatically correct, it often proves entirely sterile or socioculturally inappropriate. Without an infusion of cultural anthropology - achieved through the manual selection and labeling of data by human experts - the technology risks producing an artificial, hybrid, and deculturalized version of the Romanian language, thereby depriving international students of the tools necessary for organic integration into society.

It must be noted, however, that the digitalization of education through AI inevitably brings into play a geopolitical and macro-institutional dimension: digital sovereignty. In the current landscape, knowledge of and control over data constitute a fundamental form of power. When Romanian universities fully outsource their teaching, assessment, and content-creation processes to commercial platforms owned by large transnational corporations, they relinquish a portion of their academic autonomy.

Institutional digital sovereignty entails that universities in Romania ideally organized into national academic consortia develop and own the technological infrastructure used in the teaching process. In the context of teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language (RFL), this means creating a National Corpus of the Romanian Language as a Foreign Language, hosted on secure, domestic servers and governed by rigorous ethical and scientific standards, in full alignment with the directives of the Romanian Academy.

This technological independence has a direct impact on the quality of inclusion for international students. Having proprietary infrastructure allows for the customization of platforms to suit the specific needs of each university for instance, by integrating medical terminology for universities of medicine and pharmacy, or technical terminology for polytechnic universities. Inclusion goes beyond merely providing access to a screen featuring a chatbot; it entails ensuring an equitable digital environment that recognizes each student's starting linguistic profile whether they are a native speaker of Arabic, French, English, or Chinese and offers them cognitively bridging tools that are culturally optimized. Thus, digital sovereignty serves as a shield, safeguarding the quality, authenticity, and high standards of Romanian higher education on the international stage.

Conclusion

The use of Artificial Intelligence in teaching Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) serves as an essential driver of modernization for contemporary Romanian higher education. Technology can no longer be viewed merely as an auxiliary element; rather, it functions as a structural component of the didactics within the preparatory year one capable of driving significant transformation by personalizing the educational journey and fostering learner autonomy among international students.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that AI should not and cannot replace the human instructor. The added value of technology emerges specifically when it operates as a "teacher-facing system," handling administrative tasks and repetitive grading, thereby freeing up the instructor's time for mentoring, direct communicative interaction, and cultural mediation.

An interdisciplinary approach is required. Consequently, the development of educational software must bring together diverse teams comprising linguists, programmers, educational psychologists, and cultural anthropologists. Only through this convergence can it be ensured that digital tools are capable of addressing learners' affective filters while accurately conveying the pragmatic and sociocultural nuances of the Romanian language.

Teaching staff require substantial institutional support for training in AI practices applied to the teaching of Romanian as a foreign language. It is therefore imperative to introduce continuous professional development courses focused on digital didactics and the ethical use of AI in education. Teachers must be trained to become critical evaluators of content generated by algorithms.

Consequently, universities in Romania must collaborate to develop indigenous language models, trained on reliable, scientifically verified academic corpora. Relying exclusively on global commercial platforms poses a long-term risk to linguistic identity and the security of institutional data. Artificial intelligence serves as an invaluable driver of modernization for the teaching of Romanian as a foreign language, with the potential to transform passive learning into a dynamic, student-centered journey. Nevertheless, its pedagogical value depends on maintaining a stable hybrid model, in which the teacher remains the central orchestrator of the educational process—validating linguistic accuracy and fostering cultural-anthropological competence.

At a macro-educational level, the development of language technologies and artificial intelligence systems natively adapted to the specificities of the Romanian language and implemented within universities is an absolute priority. This endeavor is essential not only for safeguarding the institutional digital sovereignty of Romanian universities but also for ensuring the genuine, equitable, and successful inclusion of international students into the local academic and social landscape.

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