

DIGITAL SEMANTIC STABILIZATION IN AI - MEDIATED ENGLISH LEARNING: IMPLICATIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Phra Thirathon Panyavaro (Panupiboonwat)^{1,*}

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Abstract

This paper examines how semantic meaning is constructed and stabilized in AI - mediated English learning environments. As artificial intelligence increasingly functions as a learning agent in language education, understanding the underlying cognitive and linguistic mechanisms of meaning development has become essential. However, existing studies have largely focused on performance outcomes and technology adoption, leaving the processes of semantic construction underexplored. To address this gap, this paper proposes the concept of Digital Semantic Stabilization (DSS) as a theoretical framework for explaining how learners construct, negotiate, and stabilize meaning through interaction with AI systems. The framework conceptualizes meaning development as a dynamic process shaped by iterative cycles of inquiry, AI - generated feedback, verification, and consolidation within a learner - AI interaction loop.

The DSS model identifies four possible patterns of semantic stabilization: simplified, equivalent, contextual, and distorted stabilization. These patterns reflect varying levels of cognitive engagement and semantic accuracy in AI - mediated English learning. While AI enhances accessibility, autonomy, and linguistic support, it also introduces risks related to cognitive offloading and superficial understanding. This paper contributes to applied linguistics and digital pedagogy by offering a new perspective on semantic development in AI - mediated learning and by highlighting the importance of critical AI literacy and structured meaning verification in contemporary English education.

Keywords: Digital Semantic Stabilization, AI - Mediated English Learning, English Learning

¹ Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

* Corresponding author. E-mail: thirathon.pan@mcu.ac.th

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been integrated - into language teaching, which has significantly redefined the processes that learners use to acquire, interpret, and generate English in digital learning settings. Artificial intelligence - driven technologies provide adaptive feedback, personalized training, and interactive learning experiences. As a result, they have been increasingly utilized in EFL classrooms in recent years in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes during the past few years. A large - scale meta - analysis that investigated the applications of artificial intelligence in language instruction found that AI had a statistically significant positive impact on the performance of students across a variety of language skills, particularly in the areas of vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Torres & Kahveci, 2025). These advancements are indicative of a broader pedagogical shift toward technology - mediated learning, which utilizes digital resources to supplement conventional teaching methods and to redefine the participation of students. The link between language input, learner cognition, and technological mediation has emerged as a significant and important topic of research in the field of applied linguistics as educational institutions continue to adopt pedagogies that are supported by artificial intelligence. It is therefore essential to understand how learners construct meaning in AI - mediated learning environments in order to develop effective educational frameworks. This study aims to explore this process within the context of English language learning.

The Transformation of English Learning in the AI Era

With the advent of generative artificial intelligence, a paradigm shift has occurred, moving away from education that is centered on the instructor and toward language learning models that are learner - centered and assisted by technology. Therefore, artificial intelligence systems have the ability to replicate authentic communication, provide feedback in real time, and modify instructional content to the specific needs of individual learners. This enhances learner autonomy and engagement. Enhancements in understanding, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary growth, and idea production have been observed among English language learners in studies that investigated the incorporation of artificial intelligence chatbots (Li, 2024). In addition, recent studies have emphasised that settings mediated by artificial intelligence have the potential to enhance higher - order thinking and learning performance by providing learners with the opportunity to engage in dynamic interactions with digital language resources (Saarela, 2026). Because artificial intelligence is progressively being integrated into multimodal learning platforms, students are becoming more and more reliant on digital tools for meaning negotiation, task accomplishment, and discourse formation. As a consequence of this, the process of learning English is transforming into a hybrid one, in which cognitive processing is dispersed among

human learners and intelligent technologies. Building on the broader transformation of AI in language learning, it is important to examine the specific roles of widely used AI tools in mediating language processes.

The Role of AI as learning agent such as ChatGPT and Google Translate

The use of conversational artificial intelligence systems and machine translation learning agents is of critical importance in the process of mediating language information and providing support for the interpretative processes of learners. For example, ChatGPT can help students come up with new ideas, support them in rewriting written documents, and engage in simulated dialogues that are similar to real - life communication situations (Nizzolino, 2024). Similarly, it has been discovered that artificial intelligence chatbots can facilitate semantic learning through collaborative interaction and reflective note - taking methods. This enables students to negotiate meaning in a more efficient manner during the learning process (Chen, 2024). As a result of their ability to provide rapid lexical explanations, paraphrases, or translations, these technologies frequently serve as cognitive scaffolding that minimize the complexity of processing information. Consequently, artificial intelligence technologies are increasingly being regarded as digital teachers that have the ability to influence the manner in which students understand linguistic structures and generate meaning in the language that they are learning. Important problems regarding the development of semantic competence in AI - supported learning contexts are raised as the dependence on artificial intelligence (AI) continues to expand. The boundaries between human cognition and technological mediation are becoming increasingly blurred. Despite these advantages, concerns have emerged regarding the potential cognitive and pedagogical implications of excessive reliance on AI tools.

Emerging Problems in AI - Mediated English Learning

Even though using AI in the classroom can help teach, some concerns have been raised that too much dependence on automated feedback could hurt students' ability to think critically and understand information on their own. According to research, AI tools may facilitate task completion but make it harder to learn long - term techniques for self - regulation and independent learning (Torres & Kahveci, 2025). Furthermore, the likelihood of contextual mistakes or superficial understanding underscores the necessity of paying more attention to semantic depth in contexts that are mediated by artificial intelligence for language learning.

Research Gap

While there has been a growing corpus of study that has investigated the efficacy, usability, and acceptance of artificial intelligence technology in language education, there

has been a very small amount of emphasis paid to the ways in which AI mediation influences the stabilization of meaning in the process of learning a second language. There are currently research that concentrate largely on quantitative outcomes such as performance improvement, learner satisfaction, or technological adoption. However, these studies do not concentrate on the linguistic processes that are responsible for meaning being negotiated, simplified, or distorted during interactions with artificial intelligence (Chen, 2025). Moreover, whereas generative AI tools exhibit considerable promise in augmenting higher - order thinking and learning perception, their impact on semantic development is still inadequately understood. A more nuanced framework that incorporates applied linguistics, cognitive processing, and digital education is required since this gap shows the necessity for such a framework. For this reason, the purpose of this research is to investigate how students generate, reinforce, or modify meaning while they are engaged with English learning activities that are mediated by artificial intelligence (AI). To address this critical gap, this study introduces the concept of Digital Semantic Stabilization (DSS) as a central analytical framework. DSS explains how learners construct, negotiate, and stabilize meaning through iterative interaction with AI tools. It conceptualizes semantic development as a dynamic process shaped by cycles of inquiry, AI - generated feedback, verification, and consolidation.

AI - Mediated Language Learning

CALL → ICALL → AI Learning Ecology

Over the course of the last few decades, Computer - Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has seen a significant transformation, transitioning from behaviorist drill - based systems to settings that are more flexible and intelligent. Natural language processing and machine learning have been integrated into Intelligent Computer - Assisted Language Learning (ICALL) in recent years, which has enabled the provision of individualized training and real - time linguistic support. The current body of research contends that the rise of generative artificial intelligence represents a further movement toward an AI learning ecology. In this ecosystem, students interact with a variety of digital tools that are interconnected and mediate language input, output, and feedback (Godwin - Jones, 2022). Language learning is no longer constrained to the confines of institutional settings in such ecosystems; rather, it takes place across mobile applications, conversational bots, and online collaborative platforms. This transformation shows a shift away from technology as a supplementary assistance and toward technology as a co - participant in the process of language learning to be more accurately described.

Feedback, Autonomy, and Dependence

AI - mediated feedback has been demonstrated to augment student autonomy by offering prompt error correction, elucidations, and recommendations for linguistic enhancement. Empirical research demonstrates that automated feedback systems can facilitate self - regulated learning and enhance learners' propensity to engage with complicated structures (Ranalli, Link & Chukharev - Hudilainen, 2021). However, experts caution that overreliance on AI technologies may result in cognitive dependence and diminished participation in comprehensive linguistic analysis. Recent research indicates that generative AI can enhance motivation and task completion efficiency; yet, it may also diminish critical evaluation skills if learners accept automated replies uncritically (Kohnke, Moorhouse & Zou, 2023). These different results show that we need to look at how feedback techniques affect both the growth of independence and the possible reliance on technology in AI - supported learning environments.

Semantic Development in Second Language Acquisition

Lexical Inferencing

The process of lexical inference is an essential component of semantic development. This is because students regularly come across unfamiliar words in authentic texts and are required to rely on contextual clues in order to infer the meaning of these words. Recent studies have shown that the capability of learners to successfully infer depends on the breadth and depth of their vocabulary, as well as their background knowledge and strategic competency (Webb, 2020). There is a possibility that the availability of fast translation and dictionary tools in digital contexts will diminish the need for inferencing procedures, which may have an impact on the ability to retain lexical information over the long term. In light of this, it has become increasingly vital in contemporary research on second language acquisition to comprehend how students strike a balance between independent inference and the use of digital help.

Interlanguage Semantics

The term “interlanguage semantics” refers to the ever - evolving system of meaning representation that students of a second language develop as they progress in their language learning. Research highlights the fact that learners' semantic systems are dynamic and are influenced by a variety of factors, including conceptual restructuring, cross - linguistic transfer, and exposure to input in the target language (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2021). In AI - mediated English learning contexts, interlanguage development may be shaped by algorithmically generated examples and translations that standardize or simplify semantic

distinctions. This raises questions about whether AI tools facilitate accurate conceptual alignment or contribute to fossilization of partial semantic knowledge.

Meaning Negotiation

Meaning negotiation, which is usually linked to interactionist approaches to SLA, includes requests for explanation, checks for confirmation, and reformulations during conversations. Recent classroom studies show that technology - mediated engagement can help with negotiation by letting students go back over conversations, compare interpretations, and think about their language choices (Ziegler, 2022). But when AI systems give quick answers, there may be fewer chances for people to work together to come up with a solution. This change shows how important it is to look at how digital mediation changes the way people interact and how they acquire new words.

Digital Mediation and Meaning Construction

Machine Translation Cognition

Machine translation (MT) tools are now an important part of how students build meaning, especially in international classrooms. Research shows that MT can be both a helpful tool and a mental short - cut, making it easier to understand quickly while maybe making it harder to deal with complicated syntax and meaning (Tsai, 2022). Learners' cognitive processing techniques may change from analytical decoding to verification - based reading, where meaning is accepted following rapid digital confirmation rather than being created by linguistic reasoning, as they depend more and more on automatic translation to interpret texts.

Cognitive Offloading

The idea of cognitive offloading offers a helpful foundation for comprehending the manner in which students allocate their mental effort between internal and external resources. In the context of language learning that is supplemented by artificial intelligence, offloading refers to the process by which students outsource work to digital systems, such as retrieving vocabulary, verifying grammar, or paraphrasing. Recent studies have shown that cognitive offloading, despite the fact that it can free up working memory for higher - order processing, may also reduce opportunities for skill internalization if it is used excessively (Risko & Gilbert, 2021). Therefore, examining the balance between cognitive support and cognitive engagement is essential for understanding semantic competence development in AI - mediated English learning environments.

Theoretical Framework

1. Digital Semantic Stabilization

Based on the theoretical perspectives discussed above, this study proposes the concept of Digital Semantic Stabilization (DSS) to explain how meaning is constructed and stabilized in AI - mediated learning environments. Digital Semantic Stabilization (DSS) is a dynamic process that relates to the way in which learners of a second language construct, adapt, and consolidate meaning while dealing with linguistic input that is mediated by artificial intelligence (AI). It is no longer the case that human interaction or exposure to text is the only factor that influences semantic development in learning environments that are supported by artificial intelligence; rather, algorithmically generated feedback, paraphrase, and translation also play a role. Recent studies in the field of technology - enhanced language learning have stressed the importance of artificial intelligence tools serving as semi - autonomous mediators of linguistic knowledge. These tools have the ability to influence how learners comprehend lexical subtleties and discourse meanings (Godwin - Jones, 2022). DSS therefore conceptualizes semantic competence as a digitally negotiated phenomenon in which learners stabilize meaning through repeated engagement with AI - produced language representations.

From a cognitive - linguistic point of view, meaning stability means adding new semantic information to mental models that are already there while clearing up any confusion or differences between languages. New SLA research shows that digital environments change this process by making it easier to understand things by giving quick feedback. This may speed up understanding but change the depth of processing (Ziegler, 2022). DSS offers a paradigm for analyzing how semantic comprehension becomes “fixed,” enhanced, or altered when learners consistently utilize AI aid in language activities, including translation, paraphrase, and discourse interpretation.

1.1 Process of Digital Semantic Stabilization

The DSS process can be thought of as a series of steps that include exposure, analysis, confirmation, and consolidation. First, students come across language they don't know in real - life or task - based situations. Second, they figure out what something means by using what they already know, clues from the context, and answers made by AI. Third, students check or change their ideas by contrasting AI results with their own ideas. This is an example of mindful meaning negotiation. Lastly, semantic understanding is strengthened by doing something over and over, finishing a job, or communicating clearly. Automated feedback system research shows that repeated exposure to AI suggestions can improve learners' ability to connect form and meaning and boost their trust in their language

decisions (Ranalli, Link & Chukharev - Hudilainen, 2021). On the other hand, researchers say that relying too much on digital proof can cause learners to accept simple interpretations without doing more research (Kohnke, Moorhouse & Zou, 2023). DSS thus highlights both facilitative and constraining dimensions of AI - mediated semantic development, emphasizing the importance of balanced cognitive engagement.

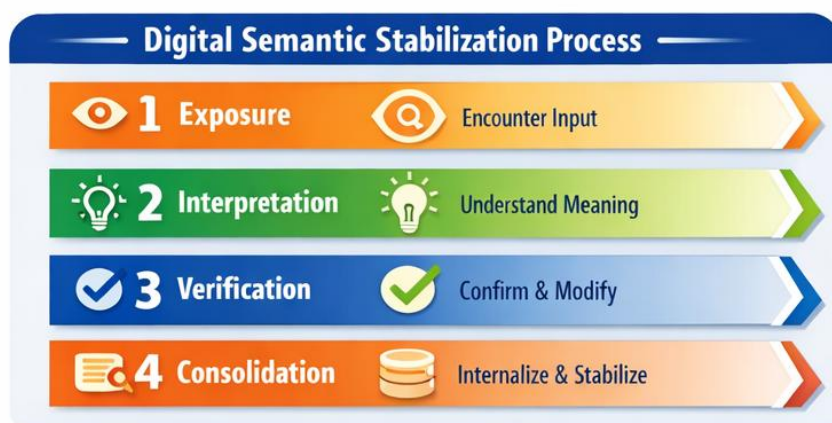


Figure 1 Digital Semantic Stabilization Process

Source: Prepared by the Author

1.2 Learner - AI Interaction Loop

The learner - AI interaction loop is an important part of the DSS framework. It sees meaning creation as a cycle of asking questions, getting input, and making changes to the meaning. Learners start a conversation in this loop by asking questions, translating words, or looking for paraphrases. AI systems react with language that is generated by chance and is based on patterns of usage rather than individual communication intentions. Then, learners think about these answers, add important parts to their interlanguage system, and move on to more involvement.

Theories of cognitive offloading, which suggest that people divide mental effort among internal and external resources to maximize task performance, are consistent with this recurrent pattern (Risko & Gilbert, 2021). In AI - mediated language learning, giving digital systems the job of retrieving words or forming sentences can free up brain resources for planning more complex conversations. However, relying too much on outside help may also make it harder to draw conclusions and try hypotheses on your own, which could change the course of semantic stabilization. As a result, the learner - AI circle is one of the main ways that DSS works in modern schools.

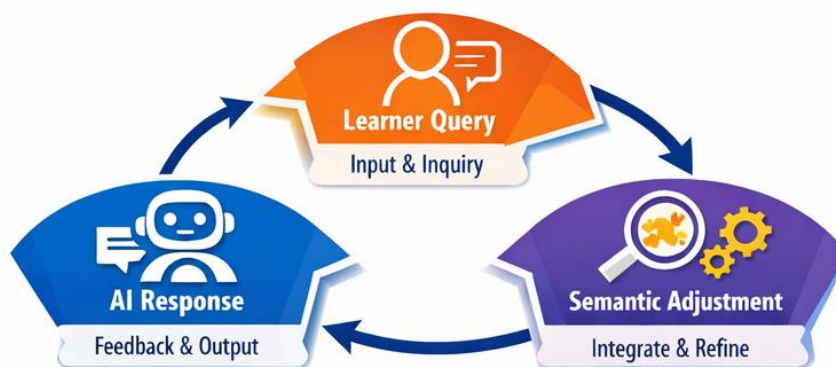


Figure 2 Learner - AI Interaction Loop

Source: Prepared by the Author

2. The DSS Model: Four Types of Stabilization

This paper provides a typological paradigm to operationalize the idea of Digital Semantic Stabilization, comprising four interrelated stabilization patterns: Simplified Stabilization, Equivalent Stabilization, Contextual Stabilization, and Distorted Stabilization. These kinds exemplify various results of learner-AI interaction during semantic processing.

2.1 Simplified Stabilization

Simplified stabilization happens when AI - assisted explanations make things less complicated by giving generic or surface - level interpretations. Simplifying things can make them easier to understand and access, but it can also hide subtle pragmatic or symbolic connotations. Research on the use of machine translation in reading assignments indicates that learners frequently favor immediate comprehension above comprehensive semantic analysis when digital aid is accessible (Tsai, 2022). As a result, learners may stabilize meaning around prototypical or literal interpretations that facilitate task completion but limit conceptual depth.

From an educational point of view, Simplified Stabilization can be helpful for beginners who need help with their learning. But depending too much on simple representations may make it harder to build the nuanced semantic awareness needed for advanced communicative competence.

2.2 Equivalent Stabilization

Equivalent Stabilization means that learners' first language (L1) and the target language (L2) are able to understand each other. In this model, AI tools help with correct

cross - linguistic mapping by giving translations, paraphrases, or instances that fit the context and enable semantic equivalence. Studies on cross - linguistic influence demonstrate that learners systematically compare conceptual categories across languages to attain communicative accuracy (Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2021). The mediation of artificial intelligence can make this process easier by providing learners with a variety of lexical options and use contexts, which in turn enables them to refine their semantic hypotheses. Therefore, Equivalent Stabilization is the best possible outcome of DSS, which is characterized by the fact that digital support improves conceptual alignment without reducing analytical engagement.

2.3 Contextual Stabilization

The term “contextual stabilization” refers to the process by which artificial intelligence systems enhance the comprehension of learners by incorporating linguistic objects into larger discourses or situational frameworks. An example of this would be conversational artificial intelligence, which may construct illustrative dialogues or culturally relevant scenarios that clarify pragmatic meaning. Through the establishment of a connection between new vocabulary and experiential knowledge, research on technology - mediated interaction reveals that contextualized input makes for more profound processing and retention (Ziegler, 2022). In DSS terms, contextual stability means a change from interpreting words separately to putting together meanings that make sense together. When learners are exposed to different situations over and over again, they can stabilize meaning. This helps them build flexible and transferable language skills. This trend makes it clear that AI could be used to help people talk to each other instead of just translating.

2.4 Distorted Stabilization

Distorted Stabilization is a bad result that happens when students accept false or contextually inappropriate interpretations because they trust AI outputs or automated feedback without thinking about them. Even if generative AI systems are very advanced, they may nevertheless give answers that are wrong or too simple, which goes against how people really use language (Kohnke et al., 2023). When learners repeatedly encounter such outputs without verification, semantic misconceptions may become fossilized within their interlanguage systems.

This phenomenon corresponds with apprehensions about technological reliance and diminished metalinguistic awareness in AI - enhanced educational settings. Distorted Stabilization emphasizes the necessity for pedagogical interventions that foster critical

analysis of AI - generated language and motivate learners to triangulate meaning from many sources.

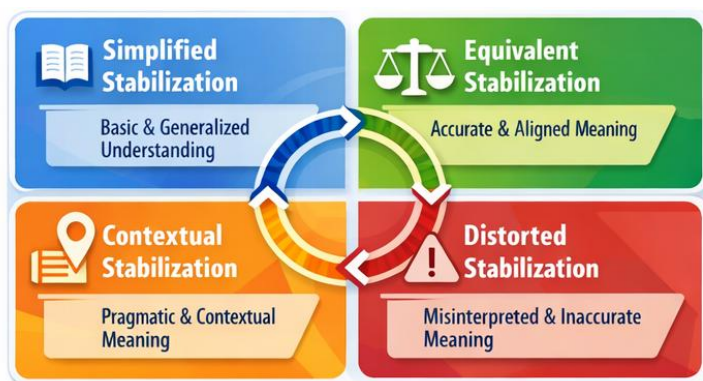


Figure 3 The DSS Model: Four Types of Stabilization

Source: Prepared by the Author

The four forms of DSS should not be seen as separate groups, but as points on a continuum of semantic growth that is affected by how well the learner knows the material, how difficult the task is, and how AI interacts with the learner. In genuine learning environments, learners may undergo many stabilizing processes concurrently. For example, a student might start with a simple understanding, improve it by seeing it in several contexts, and then reach a level of stabilization that is the same. The DSS framework contributes to existing discussions in applied linguistics about how language learning is changing in situations with a lot of technology by seeing semantic competence as a digitally mediated phenomenon. It also lays the groundwork for empirical research into the influence of AI tools on meaning creation, cognitive engagement, and cross - linguistic comprehension. Ultimately, understanding different stabilization paths can help teachers come up with ways to use AI's benefits while reducing its risks.

Knowledge Gained from the Study

This work adds to what is known about how semantic development happens in English learning environments with AI. This is the most important contribution: it suggests that Digital Semantic Stabilization (DSS) is a changing way that people think and communicate with computers that helps them gradually form stable representations of meaning while using AI tools.



Knowledge Gained from the Study

The study of Digital Semantic Stabilization (DSS) in AI-mediated English learning reveals new insights about semantic development in techno-mediated environments: Key knowledge gained includes:



Figure 4 Knowledge Gained from the Study

Source: Compiled and Prepared by the Author

1. Reconceptualization of Meaning Development in Digital Learning

In modern English learning, input exposure, interaction, and meaning negotiation no longer explain semantic growth. Students today build meaning using verbal input, computer interfaces, and algorithmic feedback in a hybrid cognitive ecology. AI mediation aids semantic comprehension internally and externally, according to this study. Students learn unknown lexical or pragmatic meanings with AI - generated explanations, translations, paraphrases, and contextual examples. Technology and cognition share meaning stabilization.

2. The Learner–AI Interaction Loop as a New Learning Mechanism

Identification of the Learner–AI Interaction Loop as a recurring semantic consolidation mechanism is another important discovery. The study shows that learners cycle through iterative stages of interaction and meaning construction. This loop provides micro - level interactional input, replacing or enhancing teacher - mediated feedback. AI replies' speed, availability, and apparent authority enhance semantic elucidation but may change learner autonomy and critical evaluation.

3. Typology of Digital Semantic Stabilization

The study presents a four - type semantic stabilization typology to better understand how learners internalize meanings in AI - supported environments: Recognizing that digital learning semantic outcomes are qualitatively variable rather than uniformly advancing promotes language pedagogy.

4. Cognitive Offloading and Semantic Risk

The study also shows cognitive offloading's growing relevance in language learning. AI tools minimize cognitive strain and speed comprehension, but overuse may reduce inferencing and semantic memory. This shows a semantic risk–benefit continuum where AI mediation can improve or destabilize meaning acquisition.

5. Pedagogical and Theoretical Implications

Finally, the work connects CALL research, semantic theory, and digital pedagogy theoretically. To drive learners toward Equivalent and Contextual Stabilization rather than Simplified or Distorted levels, future English training should include organized verification tactics, critical AI literacy, and guided meaning negotiation exercises. Digital Semantic Stabilization presents a complete paradigm for understanding meaning formation, adjustment, and internalization in AI - mediated English learning.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that semantic meaning in AI - mediated English learning is not passively acquired but actively constructed through continuous interaction between learners and AI systems functioning as learning agents. Within this context, meaning development is shaped by processes of digital mediation, where AI - generated input influences how learners interpret, verify, and internalize language. A new theory and way of teaching called Digital Semantic Stabilization (DSS) was put forward in this study as a way to look at how meaning is made, negotiated, and absorbed in English learning environments

that use AI. The results show that meaning development in the digital age doesn't just happen in the old - fashioned way of input - interaction - output, but also in a constantly changing learner - technology ecosystem. Learners constantly interact with AI tools, going through rounds of asking questions, figuring out what things mean, checking their answers, and solidifying what they've learned. These repeated processes help to stabilize semantic knowledge.

The study also shows that semantic results are not always the same when AI is used to help with learning. Instead, students may achieve different levels of stability, from basic and clear understanding to correct equivalent alignment, context - sensitive interpretation, or even skewed semantic internalization. This typological view shows how important it is to think critically about AI - generated feedback and how language teaching needs guided verification processes. While AI tools can speed up understanding, provide a lot of linguistic input, and help learners be more independent, relying on them too much may cause cognitive offloading, which hurts the ability to draw conclusions and remember things for a long time.

These findings suggest that educational institutions should develop AI literacy frameworks, implement structured meaning verification strategies, and promote critical engagement with AI - generated content. The DSS approach emphasizes the need to teach English via AI literacy, reflective meaning negotiation, and organized semantic validation exercises. A complete model that encompasses the affordances and hazards of AI mediation bridges computer - assisted language acquisition, semantic development, and digital pedagogy research. Future study should experimentally investigate DSS processes across competence levels, learning situations, and technological platforms to improve its explanatory power and practical usefulness in modern language teaching. This study provides a foundation for future research and contributes to the evolving field of AI - mediated language learning.

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