

HOW CAN EDUCATIONAL APPS THAT RELY ON AI ALGORITHMS HELP ITALIAN STUDENTS WITH SWLDs TO SIMPLIFY EFL (ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING)?

PhD Federico Valente

Prof. Dr. Francesco Spilabotte

University of Cassino and Southern Lazio, **Italy**

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to investigate whether educational apps that utilize Artificial Intelligence can help students with specific learning difficulties to facilitate English language learning. The interest for this research stems from our experiences in teaching English as foreign language in learning environments where students, particularly those with learning impairments, manifested several difficulties during the acquisition process, therefore we conducted this investigation in order to explore whether AI could provide better results for the type of learners identified for this study. This survey was conducted in Italy and data gathering consists of qualitative semi-structured interviews with eight university students with specific learning difficulties. The literature review analyses theoretical issues regarding the distinguishing traits of students with intellectual disabilities along with the benefits of using AI as a means to enhance their learning experiences, moreover it makes reference to important results from prior investigations. Findings seem to indicate encouraging outcomes since not only could the use of learning apps based on AI simplify and facilitate English language acquisition for learners with SLD, but they also seem to have the advantage of reducing the problems associated with lack of confidence and low self-esteem which, in many cases, delineate the kind of students examined in this research.

Keywords: adaptive learning, artificial intelligence (AI), dyslexia, LLDs (language learning disabilities), SWLDs (students with learning disabilities).

INTRODUCTION

First and foremost, it appears that the number of students with learning problems is progressively increasing. Specific learning difficulties can affect learners' abilities such as reading, listening, thinking, writing, spelling and speaking, then the consequence is that this factor contributes to the need for special education. However, it has to be pointed out that not only can learning impairments affect several academic abilities, but they could also impact their interpersonal skills, sociability and emotions [10].

With this regard, research has demonstrated that students with learning disabilities (SWLDs) tend to manifest more anxiety and frustration in their learning path when compared to students without specific learning difficulties. Consequently, helping SWLDs in overcoming their main learning difficulties can also lead towards their