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Shaping AI Policy and Practice in English Language Teaching: Pioneering stories from classrooms around the world



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What will we cover in this paper?

How are early adopters using GenAI to teach English, and what can policy-makers learn from this?

That's the focus of our new paper, which is helping to unlock the potential of this game-changing tech for teachers in the digital age. Those faced with developing best practice guidelines for classrooms, putting together professional development programmes, or writing national or institutional policies, need insights and data.

Our paper provides insights from English teachers around the world who have been experimenting with GenAI. They include teachers in primary, secondary and adult settings. The teacher accounts reveal how AI is being translated into everyday classrooms. Coupled with past Cambridge research, these insights provide important lessons for policy-makers.

1 Why is GenAI and teacher adoption such a big topic?

One of the challenges teaching communities face is that the most widely available GenAI tools were not originally developed for use in education, meaning teachers have to adapt them for the classroom. By understanding how teachers actually use GenAI, we're able to see where it truly adds value and where the risks and concerns are.

2 Our study

We spoke in depth to 15 teachers from 13 countries across six continents, who have all been pioneering the use of GenAI in the classroom. We focused on how they're using GenAI in their jobs, the benefits and challenges it presents, and what it means for developing key life skills.

3 What did we discover?

Although the teachers were from diverse backgrounds, we found lots of common ground. Here's a quick summary:

Technological proficiency: Teachers consistently told us that their guiding mindset was 'don't be afraid of Gen AI.' They were keen to experiment with the technology, develop their skills, build their confidence and step outside their comfort zones. We heard positive experiences of teachers experimenting with new GenAI tools, learning alongside colleagues and students, and developing the confidence to integrate AI into teaching.

The essential role of pedagogy and teachers: Teachers overwhelmingly disagreed that Gen AI can replace humans, emphasising the supporting role the technology plays and the importance of always starting with the learning aims. They explained how GenAI can enhance the teacher and free them from some routine tasks, but it cannot replace the expertise of the teacher, a deep understanding of pedagogy and the essential human elements of learning.

Risks, ethics and wellbeing: The teachers were all pulling in the same direction to promote safe and responsible use of GenAI. Teachers also understand the essential principles, misuses, and ethical considerations of AI-assisted teaching and learning. Teachers told us they were encouraging responsible use of AI by promoting critical thinking and helping students to spot the signs of bias.

Professional integration: Teachers told us they used GenAI to do some of the heavy lifting around creating lesson plans, giving feedback, and developing student-centred materials. This approach, which is especially helpful when dealing with large class sizes, allows teachers to focus more on personalised instruction and student engagement.

Student preparation: Teachers are keenly aware of the limitations of GenAI and expressed significant concern about students offloading their learning to GenAI tools. This dependency can undermine students' confidence in their own abilities, discourage independent thinking, and erode foundational skills. Teachers were taking action by encouraging students to not take AI answers at face value and bring in their own personal views.

4 What does it mean for the future of teaching and policy-makers?

The teachers in our study are redefining what it means to operate in an AI-mediated world. Their experiences suggest that the future of teaching will not be about choosing between humans and AI, but finding effective ways for the two to work together. We expect to see a transformation into a new Gen AI-integrated learning and assessment era. Responsible integration will require policies that enable innovation while protecting equity, quality, teacher agency, and learner development. In the full paper, we give recommendations for policy-makers centering around human judgement, trust, teacher training, AI literacy, and ethics.

We also expect to see a greater focus on teaching key life skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, autonomous learning, emotional intelligence, and social responsibility. These are the skills that make us distinctly human.



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Introduction

Generative AI (GenAI) is not simply a trendy phenomenon: it is here to stay. It is both a tool and a paradigm shift in education, which for centuries has been an essentially *human* endeavour. If used skilfully, GenAI offers many benefits, but if used without an awareness of its risks, it opens up many pitfalls. Whether GenAI should be used in education is no longer a meaningful question. Rather, *why* and *how* it could and should be used have become the key questions. These questions matter because they can inform both classroom-level decisions that teachers make on a daily basis and also policy-level decisions which shape educational systems and set up conditions for student success.

> **If used skilfully, GenAI offers many benefits, but if used without an awareness of its risks, it opens up many pitfalls.**

The benefits of GenAI for education will not emerge automatically or inevitably. Many of the most widely available GenAI tools, e.g., Open AI's ChatGPT or Google's Gemini, were not developed with education goals in mind and a layer of adaptation and transformation becomes essential in the integration of GenAI tools into education. It is important, therefore, to probe into how teachers manage this integration to understand what GenAI can and can't do for learning, teaching and assessment.

In this paper we aim to provide insights into the use and perceptions of GenAI in English language education and in education more broadly. We focus not just on insights of relevance for English language learning, teaching and assessment, but also probe the increasing role of life competencies in education in the face of the ascent of GenAI. Our foundation for this is the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework, which focuses on the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to participate in society.



Our insights are drawn from in-depth interviews with teachers from around the world who are integrating GenAI in their teaching context. We gathered their key sentiments, uses of GenAI, and main concerns through interviews which focused on three key areas:

1. **How are early adopters of GenAI in English language teaching around the world using it in their work?**
2. **What do teachers see as the benefits and challenges of GenAI in their context, and how are they learning to use it critically?**
3. **What is the role of life competencies for these teachers and their students, and how does GenAI impact on them?**

The teacher accounts in this research, complemented by past Cambridge research and recommendations in this area (e.g., Galaczi & Luckin, 2024; Khabbazbashi et al., 2024; Macinska & Vinkler, 2024), reveal how beliefs, sentiments and principles for GenAI in education are being translated into everyday classroom practice. As such, the findings enable the **development of good practice guidelines** for language teachers (and teachers more broadly) on the integration of GenAI. They also provide a valuable springboard for **policy-level recommendations** embedded in classroom realities and informed by evidence from educators.

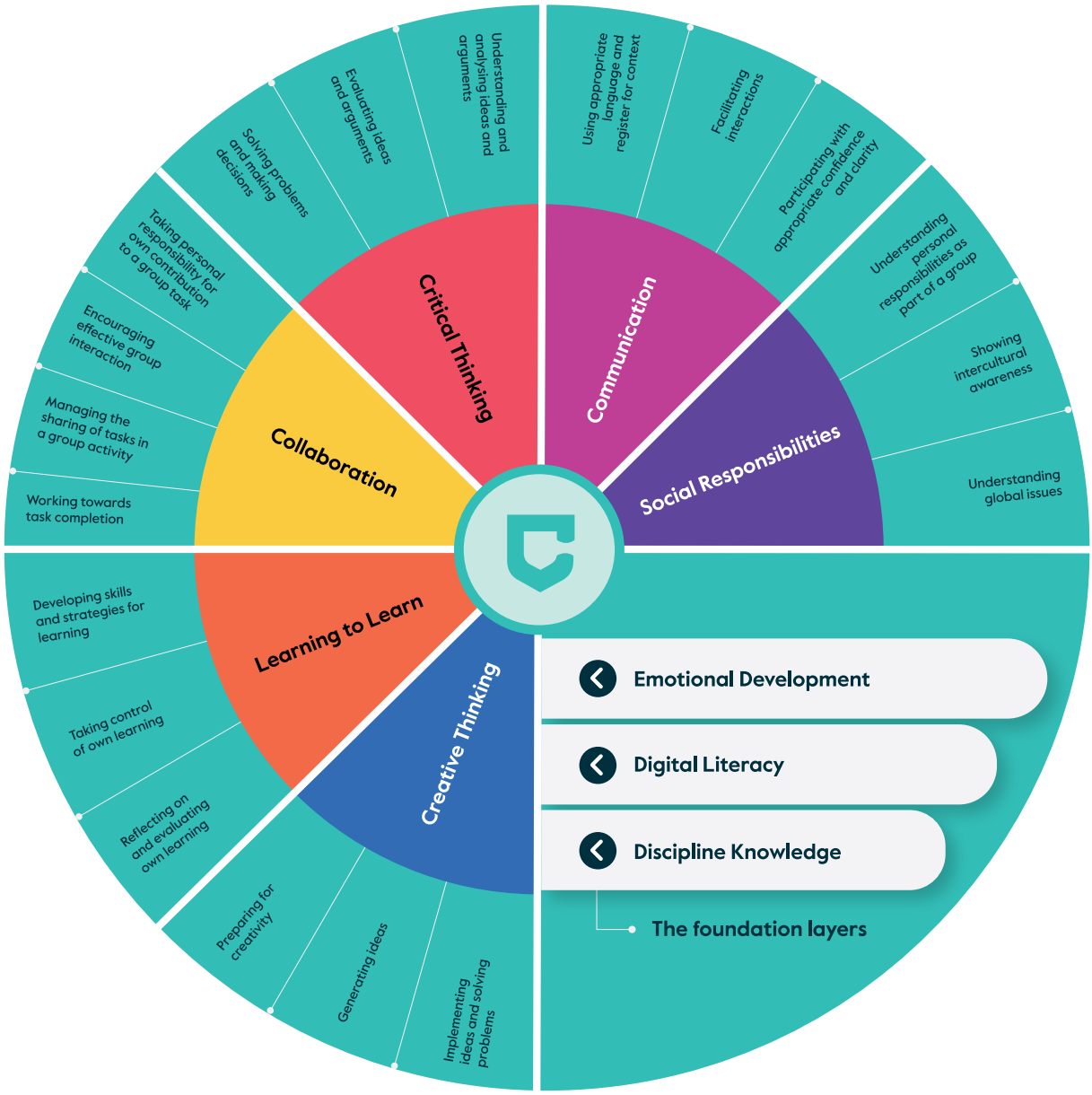


Figure 1: Cambridge Life Competencies Framework

What do we know about the use of generative AI in education?

There is a growing body of research in this area, with a wealth of new publications providing insights into various aspects of the use of GenAI in education. For example, we are seeing research that builds on opinion pieces from education experts on the potential benefits and challenges of the technology (see for example Dwivedi et al., 2023; Hamilton et al., 2023; Peters et al., 2023) and extends into the practice of integrating GenAI in education (e.g., Popenici et al., 2025). We are additionally seeing research drawing on large-scale surveys (e.g., Digital Education Council's Global AI Student and Faculty surveys published in 2024 and 2025 respectively, and the HEPI/Kortex AI Student survey, 2025).

Research is also emerging in the area of *language* education, focusing on how language teachers are using GenAI in their professional practice. Much of this research either describes how teachers and students perceive GenAI through survey data (British Council, 2023; Chan & Hu, 2023; Karatas et al., 2024; Khabbazbashi et al., 2024), provides scoping reviews of research (e.g., Law, 2024) or discusses what the potential for GenAI in language education might be (e.g., Tafazoli, 2024). This body of research provides invaluable insights and reinforces the emerging view that the use of GenAI is a 'double-edged sword' and is highly context-dependent on how skilfully it is integrated by teachers and guided by policy.

Little research has taken a deep dive into how language teachers are using GenAI globally to systematically identify key 'ingredients' of good practice. A notable exception is a recently published volume of the Cambridge Elements series, *Generative Artificial Intelligence and Language Teaching* (Moorhouse & Wong, 2025), in which the authors conceptualise the knowledge and skills needed by language teachers in the GenAI world, which they term 'professional GenAI competence':

1. **Technological proficiency**: understanding GenAI tools, their functions and uses.
2. **Pedagogical compatibility**: applying GenAI to achieve learning objectives.
3. **Professional integration**: using GenAI for tasks beyond teaching, such as feedback and administration.
4. **Risks, ethics and wellbeing**: managing risks, safeguarding wellbeing and addressing ethical concerns.
5. **Student preparation**: equipping learners to engage critically and productively with GenAI in study and future work.

(adapted from Moorhouse & Wong, 2025, p.2)

Alongside the research literature, governments and international organisations are beginning to develop policy frameworks for AI in education, as seen in the UNESCO AI Competency Framework for Teachers, 2024. These identify key areas of focus, such as teacher competence, learner safety, data protection, equity of access, procurement, and accountability.

We position the present study alongside this policy landscape, and we advocate for a data-driven approach based on evidence from the realities of global classrooms to inform and shape debate and policy.

Who are our GenAI experts?

We included English language teachers and teacher trainers who are actively experimenting with and integrating GenAI in their teaching. In total, **15 teachers or teacher trainers from 13 countries across six continents** participated in this study in early 2025. The participants are all early adopters of GenAI in English language education. They are on the ground every day in primary, secondary, and adult classrooms around the world, or training other teachers.

In addition to geographic diversity, the participants also brought experience from a range of educational contexts: private and state, primary and secondary, as well as adult and higher education. The length of their teaching experience spanned from 5 years to over 20 years.



Figure 2: Countries of origin of interviewed teachers

Name	Type of School		School Stage			Class Size		
	State	Private	Primary	Secondary	Adult	10–20	21–30	31+
Ana G. (Mexico)		●	●	●			●	
Ana P. (USA)	●				●	●		
Anna S. (Germany)	●				●	●	●	●
Chiho (Japan)		●		●			●	●
Cristina (Spain)		●	●			●		
Danson (Kenya)	●			●				●
Elena (Israel)		●			●		●	
Gabriel (Australia)	●			●		●		
Heather (Australia)	●			●		●		
Helena (Brazil)		●		●			●	
Koray (Turkey)	●	●			●		●	
Maria Clara (Brazil)		●		●			●	
Peter (Switzerland)	●			●			●	
Trang (Vietnam)	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Yiviri (Cameroon)	●		●	●				●

Figure 3: School and classroom type of interviewed teachers

Ana Gómez (Mexico)

Ana is an English teacher in a bilingual primary and secondary school in Mexico City. Her school is a private school of 2,500 students.



Cristina de Vega Benavides (Spain)

Cristina is a primary school English teacher at a small state-owned school in Spain, for students aged 9 to 12 years old.



Ana Petersen (USA)

Ana is an English teacher at a state-owned university in Orlando, Florida. She also tutors English online for Brazilian teenagers seeking to sit Cambridge examinations.



Danson Kimathi (Kenya)

Danson works at a state secondary school in Kenya, which is a boarding school for boys. The school has around 1,200 students.



Anna Schönbach (Germany)

Anna is a teacher trainer who coordinates and delivers training to teachers across one of 16 regions in Germany. This region includes around 600 schools.



Elena Mizrahi (Israel)

Elena is a lecturer at a state university and college in Israel. In addition, she trains pre-service and in-service English teachers, supporting them with curriculum design and technology integration.



Chiho Nakagawa (Japan)

Chiho works at a private school in Tokyo, Japan, which serves middle and high school students. There are approximately 1,100 students aged 13 to 18 years old.



Gabriel Azpilcueta (Australia)

Gabriel works at the English Language Centre (ELC) at Adelaide University, which is a state university in Adelaide, Australia. His classes consist of international students of English aged 18 and older.



Heather Sparrow (Australia)

Heather works at the English Language Centre (ELC) at Adelaide University, which is a state university in Adelaide, Australia. Her classes consist of internal students of English aged 18 and older.



Maria Clara Oliveira (Brazil)

Maria Clara works at a private high school in Sao Paolo, Brazil, with a teaching centre providing continuous professional development.



Helena A. Mendoca (Brazil)

Helena is the Digital Learning Coordinator for a network of 12 private schools across several regions in Brazil. She leads teacher development in digital education, supporting approximately 1,500 teachers who serve more than 11,000 students.

Peter Jucker (Switzerland)

Peter works at a lower secondary state school in Switzerland.



Dao Xuan Phuong Trang (Vietnam)

Trang is a lecturer at a state university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She also teaches at an IELTS preparation examination centre, in addition to training kindergarten to secondary school teachers.



Koray Tunç (Turkey)

Koray is an English teacher at a university in Turkey, partially state-funded and private. There are approximately 1,000 students in their English foundational program.



Yiviri Tombir (Cameroon)

Yiviri works at a state secondary school in a rural area in Cameroon. Her students come from various backgrounds and are part of a bilingual education system (English and French).

What did we learn from the participating educators?

Although the teachers and teacher trainers in this study came from diverse educational and geographic contexts, their perspectives and applications of GenAI in practice showed strong convergence. Ten key themes emerged from our interview data, which we present through the categories proposed in Moorhouse and Wong's (2025) framework for professional GenAI competence.

Ten key principles

The 10 key themes that emerged from the interview data were:

Technological proficiency

1. The guiding mindset is don't be afraid of GenAI.
2. Teachers leverage GenAI to assist with their own professional development and lifelong learning.

Pedagogical compatability

3. Informed and purposeful pedagogic decisions guide GenAI use.
4. GenAI is not seen as a substitute for human educators.

Risks, ethics and wellbeing

5. The ethical challenges around using GenAI in education are top-of-mind.

Professional integration

6. GenAI is used to create lesson plans and tailored student-centered materials.
7. GenAI is used to assist with feedback and marking.
8. Increased GenAI-enabled practice opportunities and personalised materials could enable better student engagement outcomes.

Student preparation

9. The number one concern is mindless use of GenAI by students and teachers are actively developing conscientious GenAI users.
10. Enhancing the development of life competencies, alongside language, is an ongoing focus of learning.

Technological proficiency

1. **The guiding mindset is: don't be afraid of the technology.**
   Teachers emphasised the importance of developing confidence to use GenAI tools and not being intimidated by the technology. Their top advice for teachers who are novices when using GenAI is to experiment with this technology and get out of their comfort zone. They emphasised the importance of learning together with colleagues, students, and professional communities.

> "Don't panic. ... I panicked. I was really concerned about the fact that my students wouldn't learn anything ... but we can deal with AI."
>
> Maria Clara (Brazil)

> "It's a powerful tool for us and it is not against us and do not be afraid of it ... So let's bring it to our life. And if teachers also see it this way, students will see. The parents will see it this way."
>
> Ana G (Mexico)

> "Think more outside of the box. Because there are amazing things ChatGPT can do."
>
> Peter (Switzerland)



> "I'm kind of a technophobe, but I think that I have to change myself and become one of the person who applies AI a lot in my work, because I think that that would help me to work effectively."
>
> Trang (Vietnam)

> "When ChatGPT was launched onto the world, I was a little bit sceptical and like many of us, a bit trepidatious about what is this all about and what are we going to do and how are we going to cope with this in education. And then as time went on ... it was kind of like well, we're just going to have to try and take this leap of faith and see how we can make it work. Instead of letting it control us, you know, sort of like take the reins."
>
> Heather (Australia)

2. **Teachers leverage GenAI to assist their own professional development and lifelong learning.**

   Teachers are aware of the need to continuously develop and improve teaching practice. GenAI is used to help teachers personalise their professional development, offering tailored resources and training based on individual needs and interests.

> "Using AI for professional development has helped me stay updated with the latest teaching strategies and technologies."
>
> Elena (Israel)

> "AI-generated recommendations for professional development have been very useful in improving my teaching practices."
>
> Cristina (Spain)

> "AI helps me identify areas where I need to improve and provides resources to address those needs."
>
> Ana G (Mexico)

Pedagogical compatibility

3. **Informed and purposeful pedagogic decisions guide GenAI use.**

   Just like any education tool, teachers critically assess when and how to use GenAI based on an understanding of its advantages and limitations for a specific purpose. The primary questions they start with are: Why should I use AI? How does it help with learning objectives? They integrate GenAI in their teaching practices, but do not let it take over. Pedagogy – not technology – comes first.

> "If there is no curriculum alignment or learning outcomes alignment, then AI will be for just entertainment and nothing."
>
> Koray (Turkey)

> "In my 31 years teaching, I'm always going back to the past and in the sense of the basic premises of teaching are still there, even though we are in the modern world. The basic premise of preparing your class, lesson planning, is also inside of this, so you should be prepared to be the filter. You are the filter. In between the student and the artificial intelligence."
>
> Ana P (USA)

> "It's not about radically changing the way we do things, ... because we're still the experts in the classroom."
>
> Gabriel (Australia)

4. **GenAI is not seen as a substitute for human educators.**

   The teachers in the study overwhelmingly disagree with the notion that GenAI can replace human teachers. They emphasised that GenAI plays a supporting role in their pedagogic practices: it can enhance the practices of the teacher and it can free them from some routine tasks, but it cannot replace the expertise of the teacher and the essential human social and emotional elements of learning.

> "Our role is to be there, to be present, to provide encouragement. And that's where we actually experienced, I think, the best learning outcomes as well, when the AI and the teacher work together and collaborate."
>
> Gabriel (Australia)

> "Students need the warmth of a teacher, no? The students need to know that someone is worried about their problems or about their worries."
>
> Ana G (Mexico)

> "No matter the technology, no matter the program, no matter the activities, no matter whatever resources I have, if I am unable to make informed decisions about how to integrate them in my teaching, they are useless. So it is the teacher who can get technology to enhance English language learning."
>
> Yiviri (Cameroon)

> "I believe that teachers cannot be replaced with AI. But then at the same time that doesn't mean that they ignore it. They need to use it as something that can aid them in teaching."
>
> Danson (Kenya)

Risks, ethics and wellbeing

5. **The ethical challenges around using GenAI in education are top-of-mind.**

   Teachers understand the essential misuses and ethical considerations of AI-assisted teaching and learning. They promote safe and responsible use, the importance of critically analysing AI outputs, and proactively questioning the accuracy of AI-generated content. They are mindful of the need to ensure inclusivity in the development and use of AI from social, economic, and cultural perspectives.

> "A big concern is being exposed to AI-generated content that may contain mistakes, biases. Students actually can learn to question, and they can learn how to check information."
>
> Koray (Turkey)

> "We must ask ourselves if the training data and the AI algorithms contain a bias, then we should be aware of this bias and we should be able to understand it. That's why we look always at the new AI tools quite critically. And give our teachers some questions for reflection and for checking whether the use of the tool justifies the effort that the teachers would put into using it."
>
> Anna (Germany)

> "We cannot hide or pretend AI doesn't exist or punish the students for using this, but I believe that we have to teach them to use it well. It's one more teaching skill that we should have and develop with them."
>
> Ana P (USA)

> "I think this is the responsibility now of a teacher or a lecturer to actually specifically say to students when not to go to AI and when they can do this or that with it and should use it."
>
> Elena (Israel)

> "So again, we need to critically frame AI not as a technology that is beyond our world. But is rooted in everything that came before AI. So how is it producing and reproducing ideology? How is it conveying a certain idea of the world?"
>
> Maria Clara (Brazil)

> "I would like AI that integrates elements of different languages. Because in some context, like mine, we have the local languages like the Swahili language which is commonly spoken in East Africa."
>
> Danson (Kenya)

> "I would put AI developers in intense contact with educators. I feel like educators really need to be a part of this."
>
> Maria Clara (Brazil)



Professional integration

6. **GenAI is used to create lesson plans and tailored student-centred materials.**

   GenAI tools are used to assist with workloads and save time by automating routine tasks such as lesson planning, materials creation, feedback and marking, as well as administrative tasks. For example, teachers use GenAI to:

   - create **lesson plans**
   - **generate new ideas** when lesson planning
   - **create materials** to fit students interests and context
   - **tailor materials,** for example to address different difficulty levels for mixed-ability classes or neurodivergent learners
   - track **student progress**
   - create classroom **quizzes**
   - offer suggestions on **curriculum** revisions

   Such practices harness the potential of GenAI to allow teachers to focus more on personalised instruction and student engagement. (We provide some examples of AI tools later in the paper and also in Macinska and Vinkler (2024).)

> "Concepts related to winter, such as snow, can be highly abstract for Cameroonian learners, and when textbooks lack visual representations, these concepts can be meaningless. But now, with the advent of artificial intelligence, teachers can easily generate images or videos that vividly illustrate such concepts. In this way, GenAI enhances the meaningfulness of English language learning."
>
> Yiviri (Cameroon)

> "In primary school we like creating songs and we sing the songs. Because you can ask AI to have the vocabulary of the lesson and also the topic. You can say use this vocabulary with past tense or use this vocabulary with future tense. So this AI program generates the song, and we sing it."
>
> Ana G (Mexico)

> "You need to tailor the material to at least three different levels, and this is something that had been very time consuming to do for teachers in the past and that has been enhanced by the AI tools really immensely... The research of two hours is now downsized to maybe trying out the prompts for five minutes."
>
> Anna (Germany)

> "We usually have suggested materials but usually you want to bring them to life or tailor them to your specific group and to the students or connect it to the context of what you've been doing. Instead of keeping like a general grammar exercise, you actually generate another activity that you know uses the same kind of grammar but connecting to the topic and the context that the students have been using. So I've used that a lot to contextualize the grammar activities in particular."
>
> Gabriel (Australia)

> "The point is not for the students to listen to people with English as first language, but to be able to get the student listen to these varieties of Englishes around the world. And AI gives you this affordance."
>
> Yiviri (Cameroon)

> "An affordance [of AI] is multimodality. The possibility of work with text, image, sound, data and so on. This not only impacts directly the language teaching, but it changes completely the way and we deal with language."
>
> Helena (Brazil)

7. **GenAI is used to assist with feedback and marking.**

GenAI is utilised to provide feedback on student work, particularly writing assignments. This helps teachers to ensure that students receive personalised feedback.

"Another very interesting activity that I used AI for is feedback, especially when it comes to writing essays or composition. Now imagine having a class of about 80 students, who have to write essays, which you need to mark. And it is important that you give students constructive feedback, so they know their progress. If you have five classes with 80 students each, to mark their writing and give really constructive and detailed feedback, it is almost impossible. Without AI, what I'd usually do, and what I think most teachers do, is you just mark. We don't have time to give detailed feedback to the students so they can understand what they did right and what they didn't, so they can improve. AI is wonderful when it comes to giving feedback. AI can also rewrite the essays for the students to show them what a good essay looks like."

Yiviri (Cameroon)

"AI helps me grade ... tests quickly and accurately, freeing up time for more personalized feedback."

Peter (Switzerland)



"We conducted lessons in a traditional way, with activities like pen and paper and working in pairs. After that, we incorporated the use of pronunciation apps in our research. These apps allowed the students to record their own text and get immediate, color-coded feedback on which sounds they were pronouncing correctly and which ones needed adjustment."

Gabriel (Australia)

8. **Increased GenAI-enabled practice opportunities and personalised materials could enable better student engagement and outcomes.**

When used well, GenAI could increase student engagement, confidence, and learning gains. GenAI tools could make learning more engaging and motivating by incorporating interactive and multimedia elements, gamification, and real-time feedback.

"Using AI for personalized learning has improved student outcomes and engagement. AI-generated scenarios and role-plays enhance student engagement and creativity."

Koray (Turkey)

"AI tools help students create visual content, making lessons more engaging."

Helena (Brazil)

"Using AI in storytelling activities has made my classes more dynamic and fun."

Chiho (Japan)

"Using AI for language practice has helped my students become more confident in their speaking and writing."

Cristina (Spain)

Student preparation

9. **The number one concern is mindless use of GenAI by students, and teachers are actively developing conscientious GenAI users.**

   Teachers are keenly aware of the limitations of GenAI and they expressed significant concern about students offloading their learning to GenAI tools. This dependency can undermine students' confidence in their own abilities, discourage independent thinking, and erode important foundational skills. Importantly, they believe that the use of GenAI is most effective when their students already have the necessary foundational skills.

> "Over reliance on AI: that is a big problem. Whenever students turn on their computer, they will ask ChatGPT first. They are not confident in themselves learning or thinking about their own experience. So I always say to them, I want your personal story. I don't want a universal story. If they rely so much on AI, then their real competences will decrease... AI can be very effective for the student who knows what they are doing, who already developed the skill of self-study, self-access, independent learning."
>
> Trang (Vietnam)

> "Many people are worried that students' critical thinking and creativity could be murdered. I want to use that word – 'murdered' – because of AI. Students will just rely on AI. 'Do this for me, do that for me' – and they don't do anything ... AI should be a starting point, and not the destination."
>
> Yiviri (Cameroon)

> "Using AI just to get an answer is a problem. Use AI to learn from it ... breaking it down to be a helper rather than just like solution itself."
>
> Cristina (Spain)

> "I suggest to my students - try AI in the areas that they are most knowledgeable ... Such as if they're interested in, for example, motorcycles. I ask them, why don't you ask what AI knows about that? And there are some motorcycle models it hallucinates about, and it can create new models that they have no idea about. So they can check the accuracy."
>
> Koray (Turkey)

> "Students need to be educated about which tools we should be choosing and when and why and when do we talk to a human, and when do we use this AI tool."
>
> Heather (Australia)

> "I ask students to critically analyze AI-generated texts and identify any biases or inaccuracies."
>
> Elena (Israel)

> "Of course students should use it. Because it's very convenient. But that's the problem. They just believe everything AI says."
>
> Chiho (Japan)

> "[A teacher I work with] felt that she would have to discuss with the students about using ChatGPT. And so she proposed for them to analyze one text that was written by a school student, one text that was written by a student but revised by ChatGPT and one text that was written by ChatGPT on a specific prompt. And then they were involved to analyze those texts and choose which text was done by whom and with the AI support or not. And then they would share their analyses, finding criteria for recognising AI-generated text."
>
> Helena (Brazil)

10. **Enhancing the development of life competencies , alongside language, is an ongoing focus of learning.**

Essential skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity and learning are a core part of language education, and teachers proactively use GenAI to develop those competencies. GenAI is also used to develop metacognitive skills by helping students reflect on their own learning process. Frameworks such as the Cambridge Life Competencies Framework become an invaluable set of ideas for teaching and learning.

> "AI-generated content serves as a starting point for collaborative discussions and activities... AI tools help students develop critical thinking by providing diverse perspectives on a topic."
>
> Maria Clara (Brazil)

> "I use AI to help students create digital art and develop multimedia projects that encourage creative thinking."
>
> Trang (Vietnam)

> "The 21st century skills are, of course, the major focus of all our CPD. And we start with critical thinking because of this ambivalence and ambiguity of AI and some possible outcomes that might be undesirable."
>
> Anna (Germany)

> "AI-generated tasks, activities and materials challenge students to apply their knowledge and think critically."
>
> Danson (Kenya)

> "We have to invest time and to gain experience on activities that are only human. So I think this is something that we have to think as educators also. Otherwise we, you know, we go too digital and we lose a lot of human-only capabilities."
>
> Helena (Brazil)



Which generative AI tools are typically used?

Almost all teachers talked about using generic chatbots (such as ChatGPT, Copilot or Gemini), but many of them have also been experimenting with custom tools designed for specific purposes. They also showed an eagerness to trial AI tools that had been developed locally, and tools that were designed specifically with teachers in mind. Below is a high-level overview of tools participants mentioned during our interviews.

AI tools mentioned by participants

Teaching Specific
noteLab
brisk
magic school
diffit
twee
gibbly
cogniti (local)
letrus (local)

Feedback & Assessment
grammarly
write & improve
saiten navi

Speaking Practice
elsa speak

Translator
deepl

Chatbots
chatgpt / custom gpts
copilot
gemini
claude
poe

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Speech-to text (STT)
speaknotes.io

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canva
stable diffusion
adobe firefly
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microsoft designer

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luma
heygen
synthesia

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gamma

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suno
loudly

Research
perplexity
elicit

Teacher quiz: Where are you in integrating GenAI in your teaching?

Understanding individual practices is a useful way to inform professional development. The quiz below can be a springboard for individual insights and actions.

For each statement, choose the option that best describes your current practice.

Scale

- **(Almost) always – 5 points**
- **Often – 4 points**
- **Sometimes – 3 points**
- **Occasionally – 2 points**
- **(Almost) never – 1 point**

Pedagogical compatibility and human-centred mindset

1. I critically evaluate AI outputs and do not accept them at face value.
2. I help students understand when *not* to use GenAI and encourage independent thinking.
3. I prioritise human connection, empathy, and teacher presence when designing lessons that include AI.
4. I use GenAI when it meaningfully supports clear learning objectives.

Professional integration

5. I adapt AI-generated content to match my learners' proficiency, age, and interests.
6. I use GenAI to increase opportunities for practice, personalisation, or engagement (e.g., role-plays, visuals, feedback).
7. I use AI to help grade student work and provide feedback.
8. I use GenAI to support my own professional tasks (e.g., planning, admin, adapting materials).

Technological proficiency

9. I feel confident experimenting with new GenAI tools.
10. I can prompt AI effectively to generate teaching materials or tasks I need.
11. I can compare different AI tools and identify which are suitable for English Language Teaching (ELT) purposes.
12. I seek out or create professional learning opportunities to grow my GenAI competence.

Safe, ethical and responsible use

13. I discuss risks (bias, inaccuracies, dependency, privacy) with my students.
14. I check whether tools are age-appropriate, safe, and compliant with privacy expectations/laws.
15. I help students develop critical AI literacy (e.g., corroborating information, identifying bias).

Preparing students for a world with GenAI

16. I teach students how to use GenAI tools productively (not just to get an answer).
17. I design activities that use AI as a springboard for creativity, collaboration, or critical thinking.
18. I help learners understand the role of GenAI in learning with its benefits and risks.

Scoring

Add up your points for all 18 items.

- **72–90 points →** *Expert*
- **50–71 points →** *Developing*
- **18–49 points →** *Emerging*

Your development profile and recommended next steps

For all the profiles below, useful tips and information can be found on the Generative AI page on the World of Better Learning blog and the webinars of TIRF's AI Show & Tell, which are developed and delivered by teachers.

72–90 points: Expert Integrator

You are confidently, critically, and creatively integrating AI into ELT.

- You already co-design learning experiences with your students.
- You combine human judgement with AI tools intentionally.
- You support colleagues and model responsible use.

Next steps:

- Experiment with custom GenAI tools for your teaching context.
- Mentor colleagues; lead professional development around safe and human-centred GenAI integration in your school or teaching community.
- Contribute to policy discussions on ethical, equitable AI adoption in your organisation and beyond.



50–71 points: Growing Practitioner

You have a solid foundation and are moving toward sophisticated use.

- You use AI purposefully and refine your prompting or critical checks.
- You balance innovation with caution.
- You see clear pedagogical benefits but want to deepen knowledge of ethics or tool capabilities.

Next steps:

- Strengthen your prompting techniques for accuracy and safety.
- Develop classroom routines and ground rules for transparent, ethical student use.
- Explore GenAI for differentiation, multimodal materials, and formative feedback.
- Join or form communities of practice on GenAI in ELT in your organisation.

18–49 points: Emerging User

You are at the start of your GenAI journey and may feel cautious or unsure. This mirrors many pioneer teachers' early experiences:

- Uncertainty about safety, accuracy, or ethics.
- Limited confidence in knowing 'what's possible.'
- Desire for guidance and examples.

Next steps:

- Start with low-stakes uses, e.g., lesson planning ideas, vocabulary explanations, adapting texts.
- Try simple, transparent prompts and compare outputs critically.
- Explore UNESCO's 'human-centred mindset' competencies (UNESCO AI Competency Framework for Teachers, 2024).
- Observe experienced colleagues using AI and borrow templates.
- Build a small set of safe, approved tools to use regularly.

Final reflections – and what next?

The educators in our study are actively redefining what it means to teach and learn in an AI-mediated world. Their practices are harbingers of evolved pedagogies in which GenAI shapes new activities, criteria for success and professional roles, while human judgement, teacher agency and learner development remain central. Most exciting of all is the potential for educators and policy-makers to *transform* English language learning, teaching and assessment practices. Puentedura's (2006) SAMR model of technology adoption for learning is a helpful way to reflect on the different roles that GenAI might play:

- (**S**)ubstitution: Doing the same activities with technology as without.
- (**A**)ugmentation: Using technology to supplement a learning task.
- (**M**)odification: From this stage on, technology is starting to transform the learning, with learning tasks redesigned to depend on the technology.
- (**R**)edefinition: This is 'technology as alchemy' and involves both learners and teachers working in fundamentally new ways.

In the next 5–10 years we expect to see not just the substitution and augmentation of traditional education activities with GenAI, but the transformation into modified and redefined Gen AI-integrated learning, teaching and assessment realities. Importantly, these are realities in which the old and new will co-exist. Their success will depend on considered practice and evidence-informed policy.

> **Importantly, these are realities in which the old and new will co-exist. Their success will depend on considered practice and evidence-informed policy.**

Our findings point to core areas where policy needs to make a practical difference in order to ensure that GenAI-enabled innovation is pedagogically purposeful and safe.

- Practices and principles will see a **shift towards pedagogies that prioritise human agency and dialogue alongside the appropriate use of AI**. Rather than positioning humans as supervisors of automated systems, our teachers insist on pedagogies that humans define and own (Hau, 2025). GenAI is integrated as a supportive tool within approaches grounded in sound educational principles, ensuring that technology serves learning goals rather than dictating them. For policy-makers, this means that AI strategies should not treat teachers as implementers of externally selected tools, but as professional decision-makers whose expertise is essential to tool selection, classroom integration, evaluation and ongoing improvement.

- The future of education is one where **learning and assessment build learner agency and adaptability**, with a growing emphasis on metacognition and self-reflection, enabling learners to understand and regulate their own learning (Yan et al., 2025). At policy level, this suggests that independent learning, authorship, self-regulation and responsible tool use should be treated as explicit curriculum expectations rather than optional add-ons.
- While traditional assessment systems which focus on end products, for example summative tests taken at the end of a school year or international standardised tests, will continue to play a key role, such **summative assessments will need to co-exist with formative approaches that emphasise the learning process itself**. Integrating learning and assessment, which can be supported by GenAI, is a valuable way to provide ongoing evidence of progress and actionable feedback, as discussed and illustrated in Salamoura et al. (2024). This has important policy implications: in addition to summative assessment, which will retain its role as an important way of measuring language proficiency, curriculum and assessment frameworks will need to recognise process evidence, feedback literacy, learner reflection, and independent thinking alongside final products, in an integrated learning and assessment approach.
- A focus on **life competencies in learning** will only increase (Desai, 2025). Dialogue, collaboration, critical thinking, authentic problem solving and personal experience become central to education design, preparing students for complex and interconnected realities. Policy frameworks for GenAI in education should therefore go beyond technical access and acceptable-use rules. They should specify the human capabilities that education systems want AI to strengthen, protect and assess, guided by influential frameworks of intelligence which underpin learning and emphasise its cognitive, emotional and social nuances, as seen in the work of Prof Rose Luckin (2018).
- Teachers' concerns about **ethical and responsible use of GenAI, as well as equitable access**, indicate that critical AI literacy requires explicit guidance. Understanding algorithmic bias and accuracy, ensuring transparency about AI use, age-appropriate access, and support for linguistically and culturally inclusive tools are not peripheral implementation issues; they are core considerations underpinning trusted policies. Policy should therefore enable safe and responsible use, critical analysis of AI outputs and proactive questioning of the accuracy of AI-generated content. It should be guided by principled frameworks about the ethical use of GenAI in language education which engage with the complexity of the ethical use of GenAI in education (e.g., Pastorino-Campos & Saville, 2025).



In essence, the educators we had the privilege to work with are charting a course towards an **education system that values human judgement over algorithmic reductionism, learning process over product, and inclusivity over exclusivity**. For policy-makers, the implication is clear: responsible GenAI integration requires more than just access to GenAI tools. It requires investment in teacher professional development and guidance on safe and ethical use. It sets the scene for assessment approaches that value process and judgement alongside traditional summative approaches. It also drives curricula that foreground communication, critical thinking, collaboration, autonomous learning, emotional intelligence and social responsibility. These are essential life competencies and the skills that make us distinctly human. Such human-centred skills are ascendant in importance, as seen for example in World Economic Forum projections (2025), and are integral to success – in the classroom or in the world beyond the classroom.

> **We are charting a course towards an education system that values human judgement over algorithmic reductionism, process over product, and inclusivity over exclusivity.**

As the education reformer John Dewey wisely reminded us, 'You cannot teach the students of today the way you did yesterday to prepare them for tomorrow.' We hope that through sharing practices and insights from a group of global teachers, we have provided information and inspiration for educators and policy-makers alike to ensure that the policies shaping the education of tomorrow embrace innovation with integrity and do not come at the expense of the fundamentally human nature of education.



Call to action for policy-makers

We end with eight recommendations for national and institutional policy, which are grounded in classroom realities. These recommendations position GenAI not simply as a technology adoption issue, but as a paradigm shift in education systems.

1. **Involve teachers and learners in AI governance.**
Teachers and learners should contribute to decisions about the implementation and evaluation of GenAI tools so that policy is grounded in classroom realities.

2. **Invest in sustained teacher professional learning.**
Teachers need ongoing support to evaluate tools critically, make informed pedagogical decisions, adapt GenAI to learning goals, and teach students responsible use.

3. **Embed critical AI literacy as a curriculum expectation.**
Students should learn how to question AI outputs, identify bias and inaccuracies, use GenAI as a learning support rather than a shortcut, and understand when not to use it. Critical AI literacy is essential and not an optional add-on.

4. **Reform curriculum and assessment frameworks.**
Curriculum and assessment systems should recognise process evidence, feedback literacy, learner reflection, and independent thinking alongside final products, in an integrated learning and assessment approach.

5. **Prioritise human-centred educational outcomes.**
Policy frameworks should focus on the human capabilities that need to be strengthened in the AI era, such as critical thinking, communication, autonomy, emotional intelligence and social responsibility.

6. **Build trust through ethical use and robust safeguards.**
Responsible integration and trust by all stakeholders, e.g., teachers, learners, parents, depends on clear approaches to data privacy, age-appropriate access, inclusivity, responsible authorship, transparency and accountability.

7. **Protect teacher agency and professional judgement.**
Policies should position teachers as decision-makers in tool design selection, classroom integration, evaluation and improvement – not merely as implementers of externally chosen technologies.

8. **Ensure equitable access to high-quality tools.**
Policy should address language diversity, local contexts, accessibility, and under-resourced settings so that GenAI does not widen existing inequalities.

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