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ISSUE II

TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING

2025



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# Content

|    |   |
|----|---|
| 4  | Welcome   |
| 5  | Words from our editor   |
| 7  | Putting Pedagogy First: ELT in the Age of Digital Tools - Deirdre Slevin  |
| 9  | Beyond the Classroom Walls: Implementing Virtual Reality into the EFL Syllabus at BELS - Arianna Muscat             |
| 11 | Rethinking Teaching and Assessment in the Age of Generative Artificial Intelligence - Neil Harris                   |
| 14 | How we use Tech in the EFL Classroom: practical Tips from a Boutique School with big Ideas - Slavenka Vukovic-Bryan |
| 16 | Beyond Comprehension: Using AI to train Listening Skills with authentic Audio - Sarah Corrigan                      |
| 19 | Fear-free Tech in the Classroom: Engaging Learners with Confidence - Elizabeth Agholor & Theingi Shaung             |
| 21 | ChatGPT did my Homework. Now what? - Giedre Balcytyte   |
| 23 | Towards an EdTech Selection Framework - Jeff Butt   |

## Academic Journal

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# Welcome to our Academic Journal



**“Through our shared efforts, this Journal is becoming a source of inspiration and support for educators around the world.”**

The release of our second issue reflects not just progress, but a continued celebration of shared purpose and collaboration within the EFL community.

We are proud to present the second issue of our Academic Journal - a continuing testament to our shared commitment to advancing knowledge and collaboration within the EFL community.

Building on the strong foundation laid by our inaugural edition, this issue reflects the growing momentum of our initiative and the invaluable contributions of educators, researchers, and institutions who share our vision. We are deeply grateful to all the authors, reviewers, sponsors, and supporters who have made this publication possible.

This journal is more than a publication; it is a platform for dialogue, innovation, and connection across the global EFL landscape. As we move forward, we remain dedicated to fostering a vibrant and inclusive academic community.

Thank you for being an essential part of this journey. With your continued engagement, we look forward to achieving even greater milestones together.

**Jonathan Swindell**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Words from our editor

Welcome to the second edition of the Quality English Academic Journal, which showcases the innovative work taking place in QE member schools worldwide. The range of articles reflects not only a shared love of pedagogy but also a deep commitment to language education, with the ultimate goal of creating a positive learning experience for all QE students.

The 2025 theme, Technology in Language Teaching, is as exciting as it is broad. Although the phrase may immediately call to mind generative AI tools like ChatGPT, technology in ELT can encompass everything from simple 'bring your own device' approaches to using advanced platforms such as Synthesia to create video avatars for conversation practice. The possibilities are remarkable, as is the speed of change.



**JANE DANCASTER**

What is clear is that AI is becoming a valuable classroom assistant. Teachers can use it for simple lesson planning tasks such as generating worksheets, quizzes, and exercises tailored to learners' needs, while more sophisticated speech recognition and grammar tools can provide instant feedback and highlight common errors. Interactive tools such as chatbots and text-to-speech can enhance learner engagement and support diverse learning styles. Effective use of AI reduces preparation time, freeing teachers to focus on communication, collaboration, and creative classroom activities.

Yet for many educators, the sheer pace of change can feel overwhelming. It is not always easy to find time to explore new tools, ensure responsible use, or even keep pace with students who may be more digitally confident than their teachers.

This edition brings together contributions that range from the highly practical to the more theoretical. We hope these articles will encourage educators to embrace innovation, reflect critically on its implications, and feel inspired by the practical examples of how technology can enrich English language teaching.

This year we have articles from eight QE members - one based in Malta, two in Ireland, one in Wales and four in England. Across all eight articles there is a central theme: pedagogy must guide technology, not the reverse. In *Putting Pedagogy First*, Deirdre Slevin from Cork English Centre reminds us that the most effective digital learning happens when tools are chosen intentionally to support student-centred, collaborative learning, not for their novelty. This sentiment is echoed in *Towards an EdTech Selection Framework*, where Jeff Butt from Broadstairs English Centre calls for clear evaluative criteria to help teachers critically select from the abundance of tools available.

At the practical level, the articles showcase how technology can enhance engagement, creativity, and skills development. Arianna Muscat describes how BELS Malta integrates Virtual Reality into the syllabus, creating immersive, task-based scenarios that bring real-world English into the classroom. Sarah Corrigan from ATC in Dublin demonstrates how AI tools such as Turboscribe and ChatGPT allow teachers to design decoding tasks that build listening confidence with authentic audio. Meanwhile, Slavenka Vukovic-Bryan from Languages United in Bath shares simple, practical, cost-effective ideas using Alexa, mobile phones and in-house apps to enrich learning, and Elizabeth Agholor and Theingi Shaung from Wimbledon School of English show that technology need not be intimidating, arguing that teachers can boost motivation with simple tools such as games, videos, and project work without needing advanced expertise.

Another thread running through these contributions is how generative AI is reshaping teaching and assessment. Neil Harris from CELT in Cardiff argues that we must move beyond fearing misuse to rethinking assessment design itself, while Giedrė Balčytytė from Academic Summer reframes homework for an AI-integrated world, urging educators to use tasks that build students' critical, reflective, and metacognitive skills.

Together, these perspectives highlight both the opportunities and responsibilities facing ELT professionals: technology can enhance learning when grounded in pedagogy, guided by principled choices, and oriented towards the human skills that remain beyond automation.

These articles show that technology in ELT brings both opportunities and challenges. From VR to Generative AI, tools can motivate learners, enrich skills, and reshape assessment. Yet pedagogy must remain central. By using technology critically and purposefully, teachers can ensure it enhances rather than replaces the human, communicative heart of language learning.

A big thank you to all the contributors for sharing their research, their ideas and their experience.

We hope you enjoyed reading our journal and we welcome any comments - please send them to us at [info@quality-english.com](mailto:info@quality-english.com)

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# Putting pedagogy first: ELT in the age of digital tools

DEIDRE SLEVIN

In EdTech, education comes first, right? Yet there seems to be a growing concern—or even a fear—that the tech tail is wagging the pedagogical dog. It seems as if we as teachers are very clear about what we do not want in this technological revolution we are currently experiencing – we do not want more bells and whistles at the expense of pedagogy. This is equally true of using AI in the ELT classroom, and it's crucial to see beyond the hype. Regarding pedagogy, many would argue that we are in a post-method era, and pedagogical frameworks abound, as discussed below.

A student-centred classroom with a focus on collaborative learning offers one of the best ways to harness the affordances of EdTech. In such an environment, technology can support inquiry-based, project-based, and problem-based learning—models grounded in socio-constructivist theory. Digital tools can offer access, flexibility, and interactivity, when used with pedagogical intent. A principled eclecticism framework (Larsen-Freeman, 1991) allows teachers to meet the needs of learners in a wide range of contexts, drawing on a variety of methods and approaches that best suit their students. Elements of a flipped classroom, for example, may complement this approach by moving lower-order tasks, such as information acquisition, outside the classroom, freeing up in-class time for more meaningful communication and collaborative work.

As Pegrum (2014) points out in *Digital Literacies*, effective digital learning is “more about the accompanying pedagogies, the tasks they underpin, and their contextual appropriacy, than the tools themselves” (p. 62). Technology should not be used for its own sake; rather, it must align with pedagogical goals. This perspective helps frame the use of tools such as Padlet for collaborative brainstorming, Google Docs for co-authoring tasks, or Flipgrid for asynchronous video discussions—not just as digital novelties, but as meaningful means to support student engagement, interaction, and reflection.

Pedagogical sophistication should ideally meet technological sophistication. Pegrum (2014) argues that the most transformative learning experiences occur when digital tools enable learners to engage in active, collaborative, and constructivist tasks that foster higher-order thinking skills.

Puentedura's (2014) Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition (SAMR) model offers guidance on how to enhance or transform learning tasks through the introduction of technology. For example, a lesson asking students to research an issue, present it as a multimedia story using Canva or Adobe Express, and respond to peer feedback online goes well beyond the substitution of analogue tools. It supports analysis, synthesis, and creativity—levels high on Bloom's Taxonomy.

Another key insight from *Digital Literacies* is the call for intentional planning: “We have to decide on our content and pedagogical aims before determining whether students should use digital or analogue tools” (Pegrum, 2014, pp. 65–66). This design-first mindset is especially important in our so-called post-method era. This era is not a free-for-all of eclectic practices, but a space that demands principled choices, and principled eclecticism is a response to the complexity of modern classrooms: it involves adopting a coherent, pluralistic approach to language teaching, guided by a clear view of language, learning, and teaching. It encourages experimentation, but also critical reflection—where theory and practice inform each other dynamically (Pegrum, 2014, p. 266).

While frameworks like TPACK (Technology, Pedagogy, and Content Knowledge), from Mishra and Koehler (2006) and PICRAT offer ways to think through tech integration, the most important factor remains the teacher. Even the most advanced tools are unlikely to be effective without expert pedagogical guidance. It is the teacher who decides when, how, and why a tool is used. For instance, a teacher using AI-powered writing feedback (like Grammarly or QuillBot) must consider how to scaffold its use, how to address over-reliance, and how to align it with learning objectives such as genre awareness or peer review.

Of course, not all digital tools require heavy investment or steep learning curves. Even something as simple as WhatsApp can support out-of-class communication, resource sharing, and asynchronous Q&A forums. The point is not to find the most high-tech solution, but the most appropriate one.

As Pegrum notes, contextual appropriacy is key: what works in one class or cultural setting may not work in another. A tool that fosters autonomy and participation in one context may cause confusion or disengagement in another if not supported by adequate training or scaffolding. Additionally, one often overlooked but increasingly essential area is attentional literacy. As Mavridi (2020) and others have noted, technology can support but also distract. In her work on digital distraction in education, Mavridi highlights the importance of teaching students how to manage their attention in tech-rich environments.

So where does this leave us as ELT practitioners? With a lot of freedom—but also a lot of responsibility. We are no longer bound by rigid methods, but this doesn't mean we should embrace chaos. The digital era invites us to be designers of learning experiences by reflecting on, adapting, and justifying our choices. Technology offers a broader canvas, but it is pedagogy that must shape the picture.

### Conclusion

Ultimately, putting pedagogy first is more than just a slogan—it's a mindset. It requires us to ask not what a tool can do, but rather what our students need to learn, and how we can best support that process. By grounding our decisions in clear pedagogical aims, drawing on flexible frameworks like principled eclecticism, and staying attuned to learners' cognitive and emotional needs (including their ability to focus), we can ensure that our use of technology in ELT is not just innovative, but effective. Let us not be dazzled by the flashy new tools, but instead be guided by what truly matters: meaningful learning through sound teaching practice.



Deirdre Slevin is the Academic Manager at Cork English College, Ireland, having served as a teacher, lecturer, and Director of Studies in Germany before returning to Ireland. She is DELTA qualified and is in the process of completing an M.A. in Language Education, reflecting her dedication to lifelong learning.

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# Beyond the classroom walls: implementing Virtual Reality into the EFL syllabus at BELS

ARIANNA MUSCAT

## Introduction

As technology continues to reshape the educational landscape, BELS Language School has embraced the potential of Virtual Reality (VR) to transform the English language learning experience. With students increasingly expecting immersive and practical learning environments, BELS has sought to integrate VR in a way that enriches classroom interactions, bridges the gap between theory and real-world use, and supports communicative language learning. This article explores the rationale, implementation, and outcomes of introducing VR into our syllabus, as well as lessons learned along the way.

## Why VR?

Traditional language classrooms, while effective, can lack the spontaneity and contextual depth of real-life interactions. When looking into the benefits of VR, we found that it offers an accessible and engaging way to simulate authentic settings where learners can use English meaningfully. It also enhances learner motivation, increases engagement and offers a new experience. It supports the development of key 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability. It allows learners to practise situational language use, improve listening comprehension in realistic contexts, and engage in intercultural experiences that are difficult to replicate in traditional classrooms.

## How We Integrated VR at BELS

Our approach to VR integration was carefully planned to complement our communicative syllabus rather than replace existing practices. We selected specific scenarios where immersive experiences would add the most value. These included apps like:

- VR4LL
- Wander
- Job Simulator
- Vacation Simulator
- National Geographic Explorer
- Ebers Anatomy
- Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes
- Lost Recipes

We initially piloted these sessions with our junior students, aged 10-15, using Meta headsets. Teachers were provided with both external and in-house training and guidance on how to structure lessons around these tools, including pre-task planning, target language focus, and post-task reflection.

Importantly, students were never passive observers as each VR task required them to speak, problem-solve, and interact in real-time.

Our lessons follow a task-based learning model with clear CEFR-aligned outcomes. For example, A2 students using “Vacation Simulator” practise travel-related vocabulary and functional language such as making suggestions or giving directions. Each lesson includes a warm-up to introduce context and language, an immersive VR task, and a reflective stage where learners consolidate their language through discussion or follow-up writing tasks.

When it comes to device use there is one headset per class, and students take it in turns, using the headset for no longer than 10 minutes at a time. While the student is wearing the headset, everything they are seeing is projected onto our digital panels, so all students can see what is happening.

## Impact on Learning

The response from students and teachers alike has been positive. Learners reported feeling more confident when encountering similar real-life situations, and teachers observed improved fluency, vocabulary retention and engagement in their students. A student from a group of dentists remarked how you could observe ‘different points of view of parts of the mouth/body’. One A2-level junior student commented, ‘I learned to work in a group and how to describe different places’. A C1-level adult student said ‘I can imagine what ancient Rome used to look like’. Other comments included: ‘It’s a fun way to learn’ and ‘It was good practice but I got a little dizzy’. VR also proved particularly useful for small group lessons, allowing for more personalised pacing and targeted feedback.

## Challenges

Despite its many benefits, implementing VR into our teaching practices was not without its challenges. One of the most significant hurdles was ensuring good Wi-Fi connection. We had to upgrade our internet connection to ensure all students could participate without connection issues.

Financial investment was also a consideration. While initial costs for hardware and app licensing were significant, we viewed this as an important long-term investment in innovation. We continue to evaluate its cost-effectiveness by comparing learner outcomes and satisfaction across traditional and VR-integrated lessons.

For teachers, the learning curve in mastering VR platforms and integrating them meaningfully into lessons required dedicated training time and ongoing support. Some educators initially felt overwhelmed by the technology, and balancing this new mode of delivery with traditional methods demanded flexibility and patience.

Additionally, some students experienced motion sickness or found certain simulations disorienting. We addressed this by creating tasks that allowed students to have different roles in the classroom and balancing the activities between those willing to wear headsets and those not. Ensuring that technology did not distract from the language focus was a key priority throughout. We also addressed unfamiliarity with the hardware by issuing teachers with step by step manuals which explained the buttons and settings.

### Reflections and Next Steps

Implementing VR into the BELS syllabus has demonstrated that immersive technologies can play a powerful role in language acquisition when used thoughtfully. Key takeaways include:

- VR should be pedagogy-led, not technology-led.
- Preparation and reflection are essential to maximise learning.
- Flexibility is key...VR may not suit every learner or lesson.

We plan to continue expanding our VR offering, with custom simulations aligned to industry-specific courses, and further training for staff.

Clear safety protocols and safeguarding procedures need to be established, especially for junior learners, to ensure safe use of headsets and supervised interaction.

### Conclusion

By incorporating VR into our language programmes, BELS is not only responding to changing learner expectations but also actively shaping a more dynamic, immersive, and effective EFL environment. As technology continues to evolve, so too will our commitment to innovation in teaching and learning.

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# Rethinking teaching and assessment in the age of generative artificial intelligence

NEIL HARRIS

The history of the private English language school and that of external English language assessment is lengthy and often interrelated. The London School of English, one of Quality English's founding members, dates back to 1912, and the Cambridge C2 Proficiency test, originally known as the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English, was first administered a year later, in 1913.

Some one hundred or so years on exam preparation courses are an important course type for many of Quality English's members, with high-stakes exams such as IELTS and TOEFL in heavy demand worldwide. With future study and immigration decisions conditional on the results of these high-stakes tests, it is not surprising that across the world a minority of students have always looked for ways to gain an unfair advantage (or in common parlance, cheat) in their exam preparation or even in the test itself.

However, such instances of unfair practice by which a student gains an "unpermitted advantage in an assessment or examination" (University of Wales, 2025) have traditionally been relatively unusual, and it is only more recently, with the rise to prominence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), that teachers have had to confront unfair practice as a more common phenomenon.

GenAI is both a threat and an opportunity to everyone involved in assessment, be it in the setting and marking of tasks set either informally as class homework, or more formally as assessments for external awards such as foundation programmes and teacher training programmes like CELTA and CertTESOL.

Teachers can be forgiven for their frustration when they suspect students of (mis)using GenAI tools like Chat GPT to gain an unfair advantage, but who is to blame when this happens? Is it as simple as blaming the student or do teachers themselves share responsibility when an answer is produced (or sometimes part produced) by an AI tool? This article suggests that the advent of GenAI requires a fundamental shift in how teachers conceptualise and devise assessment tasks and that we best serve our learners if we rethink how we teach and how we assess, placing GenAI centre stage in our own and our learners' practices.

GenAI is and probably will remain a divisive topic in society generally. Questions around data protection and privacy, bias, and

the sustainability of a power-hungry technology co-exist with concerns over the impact that GenAI may be having on the critical thinking skills of its users, particularly among those from Gen Z and Gen Alpha.

In ELT specifically, the positive use of GenAI by teachers for the creation of materials which offer genuine differentiation and for devising individualised learning pathways vie for attention with claims that cheating is now commonplace and that teachers are wasting more and more time trying to prove suspected use of AI by their students to gain an unfair advantage. However, this polarised view of GenAI can be sidestepped if we embrace GenAI as a powerful agent for transformation of learning and assessment and one which teachers can manage proactively.

Let's consider this through the optic of setting our learners a writing task which culminates in the production of an opinion essay. This is a staple IELTS Writing Task 2 for both the General and Academic Training versions of the exam and is not dissimilar to essays written for foundation or pre-sessional programmes, albeit with less focus on an evidence base and a more impersonal academic style. A focus on writing skills development is likely to favour process writing with self, peer and teacher feedback, while preparation for external assessments may also use a more product-based approach, with essays written under timed conditions. So far so good if the essay is handwritten and in class time, with no access to GenAI. However, as soon as the student is allowed to access a device, such as a phone, tablet or a laptop, either in class or if writing at home, there is a risk that students may present as their own essays which have made use of GenAI. And too often, this GenAI use is not attributed. Furthermore, the use by teachers of AI detectors to identify GenAI created work can be unreliable and therefore highly problematic (Elkhatat et al., 2023): the same essay submitted to different detectors can (and does) generate potentially contradictory results and savvy learners can easily sidestep detectors using prompts which take no more than five or ten minutes to learn. Personal experience has taught me that proving suspicions of GenAI use is difficult and perhaps worse, that allegations of GenAI (mis)use can lead to learner denial and the breakdown of a teacher-learner relationship. There has to be a better way, and in fact, there is.

In essence, English language teachers are faced with a set of choices when considering the impact of GenAI-enhanced learning and assessment. The choices they face can be described as follows:

1. Stasis (nothing changes): assessment design and implementation remain as before
2. Adaptation: either assessment design or its implementation changes
3. Transformation (everything changes): assessment design and implementation are changed to take account of the potential of GenAI

In the case of Stasis, GenAI is not factored into the learning or assessment process, and at worst conflict will ensue if the teacher suspects that the student has used GenAI, but cannot prove it. The student presents work that is not a true reflection of their writing level and is unlikely to actively learn anything from their use of GenAI. Everyone loses. In Adaptation, however, we start to see a more nuanced and beneficial use of GenAI. Two examples of Adaptation are the teacher facilitating the learners use of GenAI to generate ideas for the essay, or the teacher developing the learners' ability to use GenAI as a writing buddy which provides feedback on an initial draft of an essay.

Learners can then critically evaluate this feedback and incorporate its best features into a second draft, which is submitted for assessment. Such Adaptation brings GenAI into the classroom, reflects what many learners are already doing and legitimises it whilst developing the students' AI literacy. In Transformation, GenAI use goes even further and ideally is taught explicitly as a discrete skill and is included in the assessment of an essay as a metacognitive skill in its own right. Transformation requires learners to go beyond the use of GenAI as part of their content brainstorming and research and / or as a partner in the process of writing as is the case with Adaptation, and then to reflect on and account for its use as part of a portfolio of evidence submitted with the essay itself.

It is evident that ELT is at a turning point. GenAI use is already seen as a real-world skill, and it is arguably our responsibility to incorporate it into ELT. This will require training our teachers to be able to deliver AI literacy in the language classroom as without it we will do our learners a disservice and risk bringing into question our role as providers of "quality education in English" (Quality English, 2025).

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# How we use tech in the EFL classroom: practical tips from a boutique school with big ideas

SLAVENKA VUKOVIC-BRYAN

Technology can play a positive, practical role in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom—not just to impress, but to support learning, build confidence and bring a little fun into lessons. At our boutique school in Bath, we've been lucky to have a bit of an advantage: one of our directors is a true tech enthusiast, which means we often test and adopt ideas early, even though we're a small team. Here are some simple ways we use tech in the classroom that might be useful for others too.

## Alexa in the classroom

Each of our classrooms in our main school is equipped with an Amazon Alexa. It's not just a quirky add-on—it's genuinely useful. Alexa greets us with music as we arrive, creating a welcoming, relaxed atmosphere. During lessons, it becomes a tool that students and teachers can interact with in controlled, purposeful ways.

Here are a few ways we use Alexa:

1. **Weather updates** – great for pronunciation practice (“What’s the weather like in Bath today?”).
2. **Spelling help** – students can ask Alexa to spell new or tricky words.
3. **General knowledge** – use trivia games or daily facts for listening and vocabulary work.
4. **New word of the day** – build routines around vocabulary development.
5. **Timers for activities** – useful for managing pair work or speaking games.
6. **Background music** – set the tone for creative writing or themed lessons.
7. **News headlines** – ideal for listening and summarising tasks.
8. **Idioms or quotes** – fun starters to launch a discussion.
9. **Translation check** – helpful in monolingual classes for quick comparisons (used carefully!).
10. **Student challenges** – let students take turns giving Alexa a task that links to the lesson focus.

Naturally, Alexa is only used at designated points in the lesson to maintain structure and minimise distraction.

## Digital coursebooks and extended access

For our long-term courses, we offer digital coursebooks that students can access on any device. This allows learners to study from anywhere, even after the course finishes. Having access to the materials for a full year supports revision and independent learning.

This format works especially well for:

- Students who travel frequently.
- Those who want to review lessons in their own time.
- Learners who prefer to practise on the go using their phones or tablets.

As a Green Standard Accredited School, the move to digital also helps us meet our environmental goals by significantly reducing paper use and photocopying.

## Mobile phones as learning tools

Have you ever organised a mini film festival with your students? You might be thinking, Film festival? That sounds complicated. What kind of equipment would we need? But actually, it can be incredibly simple—and effective—using just the mobile phones your students already have in their pockets.

We encourage mobile use during project-based activities, particularly in our summer courses. Students script, film and edit short films entirely on their phones. It's creative, collaborative and surprisingly low-tech.

This leads to:

- Development of collaborative and planning skills.
- Creative use of English in real-world situations.
- A real sense of pride when their work is showcased at our student-run mini film festival.

To keep things balanced, phones are only used during specific activities and are stored away at other times. That way, students stay focused and mobiles remain helpful rather than distracting.



### Smart scheduling with our in-house app

Printed timetables can be confusing, especially when changes are made at short notice. To streamline communication and reduce paper usage, we developed a simple in-house app.

This allows:

- Students to see their programme and receive updates in real time.
- Host families to stay informed about student activities.
- Staff to communicate changes efficiently and clearly.

The app has become an invaluable tool for supporting student welfare and operational efficiency—without ever needing to print dozens of daily schedules.

### Exploring AI and future steps

We're currently exploring ways to bring artificial intelligence (AI) into the classroom in a supportive, human-centred way. Inspired by the work of Nik Peachey, we're trialling "AI buddies" to give students extra speaking practice and boost their confidence in a low-pressure environment.

Although this is a new area for us, we see real potential in AI-powered feedback, personalised grammar tools and speaking simulations that support learners both during and outside of classroom hours.

### Final thought

Technology doesn't have to be complex or expensive to make a difference. Sometimes the smallest changes—like asking Alexa a question, using a mobile phone for a class project, or replacing photocopies with digital resources—can open up new ways to learn, create and connect.

As a boutique school, we're still learning and love seeing how even the simplest tools can spark new ideas in the classroom. We hope some of these tips will be useful for others too.

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# Beyond comprehension: using AI to train listening skills with authentic audio

SARAH CORRIGAN

Listening is consistently cited by language learners as one of the most challenging skills to develop. Despite its centrality to real-world communication, it remains underrepresented in classroom practice, where it is often reduced to passive comprehension tasks. Traditional approaches, typically based on scripted coursebook audio and comprehension questions, tend to test students' listening ability rather than train it. These materials rarely reflect the complexity of natural speech and do little to prepare learners for the demands of authentic listening outside the classroom (Thorn, 2009).

In contrast, research-informed approaches have highlighted the importance of training learners to process what they hear, particularly at the level of individual sounds, words, and grammatical structures. John Field (2008) argues that bottom-up processing, the ability to recognise and decode the sound shapes of words in real time, is too often neglected in favour of higher-level guessing strategies. Instead Field advocates micro-listening tasks: short, focused activities that target the recognition of features such as weak forms, linking, and elision, helping learners become more accurate and confident listeners. Building on this, Thorn (2010, 2011) promotes the use of authentic audio paired with these decoding tasks that guide learners in identifying how spoken English differs from its written form. Simon Mumford (2016) complements this work by offering creative variations on dictation and gap-fill activities, including musical texts, 'horse race' dictations, and other techniques that engage learners in focused, yet playful, listening. Together, these alternative models offer a more effective framework for listening development, one that prioritises decoding, awareness of spoken discourse features, and student confidence.

While these approaches are pedagogically sound and supported by research, creating such tasks can be extremely time-consuming for teachers. Developing even a short activity focussing on speech perception skills requires sourcing or recording appropriate authentic audio, transcribing it accurately, identifying salient features such as reduced forms or connected speech, and designing exercises that target specific listening challenges. As Thorn (2010) acknowledges, this level of preparation is often beyond what most teachers can reasonably manage on a regular basis, especially in busy classroom contexts.

I set out to explore whether AI and technology could be used to meaningfully support the kind of listening development recommended by Thorn, Mumford and Field. Specifically, I wanted to know two things:

- a) Could AI tools like Turboscribe (an AI platform that utilizes speech recognition technology to generate fast and accurate transcriptions) and ChatGPT (the large language model chatbot developed by OpenAI) be used to generate listening activities focussing on speech perception skills?
- b) Would these activities lead to tangible improvements in students' listening skills, particularly in their ability to decode authentic, connected speech?

I explored this potential with an A2 adult class using a video from the Cutting Edge Pre-Intermediate World Culture section. The narration was clearly articulated, but the interviews contained authentic, unscripted English with regional accents and informal discourse markers. With the video being available on YouTube, I was able to create an accurate transcript using Turboscribe, a process of about two minutes. In comparison with the transcript available on YouTube, it proved to be more accurate and in addition gave me the option to edit it, translate it, download the audio and download it as a .srt file. I then prompted ChatGPT to analyse the audio and transcript (uploaded as attachments) for weak forms using the following prompt: "Analyse the attached transcript and audio and identify all the reduced words/weak forms and create a gap fill activity targeting those reduced forms for listening practice for A2 level students."


The resulting activity aligned closely with the principles of speech perception skills focused training, offering learners the chance to improve their decoding ability through repeated, focused exposure.

**Transcript Excerpt with Gaps:**

1. New York, the Big Apple, is home \_\_\_ more than 8 million people.
2. New York is also \_\_\_ important sporting city.
3. As well as sports such \_\_\_ baseball, the city is also famous \_\_\_ a sport played there \_\_\_ more than 70 years.
4. The first people \_\_\_ play stickball were immigrants \_\_\_ the 1930s.
5. Played \_\_\_ old broom handles and a ball, the sport became popular \_\_\_ poor areas of the city.
6. Stickball began \_\_\_ a social game, but people soon started \_\_\_ take it seriously and the first stickball leagues began.
7. People play stickball all over New York, but the real heart \_\_\_ the sport is the Bronx.
8. Fran Martinez is \_\_\_ star stickball player.
9. He helps \_\_\_ organise the Emperor Stickball League.
10. It began \_\_\_ 1985. The Emperor League helped \_\_\_ bring different communities together.


Image 1: ChatGPT Gapfill result

In follow up prompts, ChatGPT also successfully identified examples of linking and more specifically consonant – vowel linking in the transcript.

 **Examples of Linking in the Transcript**

| Phrase                           | Likely Linking Sound | Spoken As                |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| home to more than 8 million...   | /m/ + /t/            | home_to /həʊm_tə/        |
| famous for a sport...            | /r/ linking          | for_a /fə_rə/            |
| played with old broom handles... | /d/ linking          | with_old /wɪð_əld/       |
| areas of the city...             | /l/ + /ð/            | of_the /əv_ðə/           |
| began as a social game...        | /z/ + /ə/            | as_a /əz_ə/              |
| started to take it seriously...  | /t/ + /t/            | to_take /tə_tek/         |
| heart of the sport...            | /t/ + /ð/            | of_the /əv_ðə/           |
| helps to organise...             | /t/ + vowel          | to_organise /tə_ɔːɡənəz/ |
| helped to bring...               | /t/ + /t/            | to_bring /tə_bɪŋ/        |
| people in New York...            | /n/ + /n/            | in_New /ɪn_njuː/         |
| be active                        | /f/ + /æ/            | be_active /bi_æktɪv/     |

Image 2: ChatGPT analysis of linking in the transcript

 **C-V Linking Examples from the Transcript**

| Written Phrase                | Likely Spoken As | Explanation                             |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---|
| played with old broom handles | /pleɪd_wɪð_əld/  | /d/ links to with, and /ð/ links to old |
| areas of the city             | /ˈeəriəz_əv_ðə/  | /v/ links smoothly into the vowel /ð/   |
| as a social game              | /əz_ə/           | /z/ links into the vowel sound of a     |
| but it was huge               | /bʌt_ɪt/         | /t/ links into the vowel /ɪ/            |
| take it seriously             | /teɪk_ɪt/        | /k/ links to /ɪ/                        |
| in 1985                       | /ɪn_nætiːn/      | /n/ links to /aɪ/                       |
| with old broom handles        | /wɪð_əld/        | /ð/ links to the /ə/ vowel              |
| bring it together             | /brɪŋ_ɪt/        | /ŋ/ links to /ɪ/                        |
| come here                     | /kʌm_hɪə/        | /m/ links into vowel /ɪ/                |
| be active                     | /bi_æktɪv/       | /i/ links into the vowel /æ/            |
| was actually                  | /wəz_æktʃəli/    | /z/ links to vowel /æ/                  |

Image 3: Examples of C-V Linking from the Transcript

I took the gapfill generated by ChatGPT (see image 1) into the classroom. First, the students read the sentences extracted from the transcript and discussed what words might be missing. I then played the audio for them three times: the first two times to listen closely for the missing word, and the third time to check their answers. This task revealed which weak forms were particularly hard for them to hear. Seventy-five percent of the students misheard “as” as “is,” and one hundred percent did not catch the reduced form of “for” following “famous.” Using these insights, I replayed the challenging excerpts, slowing down the audio, using the transcript as a guide, and counting out the words to help students identify the weak forms. Once they had successfully recognised them in slow, supported conditions, we returned to full speed and drilled the sentences for fluency. To consolidate the work, students completed dictation tasks, listening carefully and transcribing the full sentences, this time focusing on capturing the weak forms they had previously missed. The whole task took about fifteen minutes, and by the time we moved on to tackle the traditional coursebook comprehension questions, they were noticeably more confident and attentive. Having tuned their ears through focused decoding work, students were better able to follow the fast, authentic speech in the video and answered the comprehension questions with greater accuracy and less hesitation.

This classroom trial suggests that AI can indeed be used to create effective decoding activities, as proposed by Thorne et al. Tools like Turboscribe and ChatGPT made it possible to generate tailored, text-supported tasks that focused learners’ attention on bottom-up listening skills. While based on a single context, the lesson showed clear signs of increased engagement with the sound–meaning relationship, and students reported greater confidence and awareness of pronunciation features. These initial results support the idea that AI-assisted decoding activities can play a meaningful role in developing learners’ listening skills, particularly when integrated into a principled, scaffolded lesson framework.

Further, by automating the most time-intensive elements of task preparation, they allow teachers to bring decoding-based listening practice into their classrooms more regularly. Teachers can also tailor the focus depending on learner needs: identifying collocations, targeting accents, or zooming in on common learner difficulties. This technology also enables better integration of authentic English materials into classroom practice.

Whereas coursebooks tend to rely on scripted audio with artificially slow and clear pronunciation, AI tools allow teachers to work with real-life audio in a way that is accessible. The fear that authentic texts are too difficult for lower-level learners is addressed by technology: teachers can slow playback speed, focus on micro-excerpts, and build confidence gradually. In this way, the teacher can give learners access to the kinds of language they will encounter outside the classroom.

Of course, AI tools are not without limitations. Transcripts can be less accurate for non-standard or heavily accented speech, and automated analyses may miss pragmatic or discourse-level features that an experienced teacher would highlight. Over-reliance on automation may also risk diminishing the development of teacher intuition and learners' self-regulation skills. Nonetheless, these are not reasons to avoid the technology, they are reasons to use it critically and reflectively.

Ultimately, integrating AI into listening pedagogy offers a way to reconcile best-practice theory with real-world constraints. It provides a feasible route for teachers to train rather than just test listening, using authentic input that better reflects learners' future communicative needs. In doing so, it supports learners in developing the confidence and perceptual skills required to engage with English as it is really spoken.

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# Fear-free tech in the classroom: engaging learners with confidence

ELIZABETH AGHOLOR & THEINGI SHAUNG

Does anyone remember the days when all you needed to teach a lesson was a whiteboard and a marker, and the most advanced technology you used was a CD player? If you are getting a bit misty-eyed thinking about that, you are not alone. Things seemed much simpler then and a lot less could go wrong. Today, however, technology is everywhere. This may strike a little bit of fear into the hearts of some of you. After all, our time is limited, platforms can be complicated, and what appears cutting-edge may ultimately prove to be little more than a flashy gimmick.

These concerns are valid. Prensky (2001) talks about the gap between digital immigrants—those of us who grew up with paper and pens—and digital natives, who've grown up learning through screens, devices, and online platforms. That gap is exactly why we, as teachers, need to rethink how we approach our lessons. One of the great advantages of using technology in the classroom is its ability to increase learner engagement. As Cheng and Dörnyei (2007) point out, motivation plays an important role in language learning and motivated learners are more likely to be engaged in lessons. This aligns with what Razali et al. (2023) found - the integration of technology, particularly through digital game-based learning (GBL), can significantly boost learner motivation and improve outcomes in the ELT classroom. However, you don't need to be a tech wizard to use technology effectively.

Project-based learning is one area where using technology encourages collaboration and creativity as learners can experiment, for example with different presentation applications and other online tools. However, it can also be integrated in many different ways in non-project-based courses, and we have seen firsthand how valuable using technology in all classroom contexts can be. In the following section, we share some of the most effective ways we have brought technology into our classrooms, starting with a closer look at using projects.

As already mentioned, project-based learning is an excellent way to encourage communication, broaden learners' lexical knowledge, and help them develop soft skills, such as critical thinking. This method can be used with all types of course, such as general English young learners, or business English. However, in our experience, setting up a project can feel challenging if you are new to project-based learning, and adding technology into the mix can be daunting as you may think it will require a great deal of extra work from the teacher. Surprisingly, this is not the case.

You first need to choose a suitable project for your group, such as creating a video advert, planning a proposal for a team-building day, or initiatives to make an area more environmentally friendly. Then you need to consider the language input your students will need to complete the project successfully and present the finished product at the end. When thinking about the language needed, you can include lexis, functional language, and grammatical structures, with suitable topic related examples and practice activities all readily available in course books if you are short of time. So, for example, we have used lessons from both business English and general English coursebooks in project-based courses to present and practise language for brainstorming or presentations. In the setup of the project the key thing is to describe the intended product, provide clear, step-by-step instructions, and demonstrate how the target language will enable the learners to complete the activity.

After the language input phase, students should start work on the body of the project. Your learners will definitely need to do some research regardless of the project they choose, so encourage them to use the Internet as well as other research methods. It's important to guide them on how to evaluate online sources and think about the credibility of the information they find online. In class the learners could be trained on how to see if information found online comes from a reliable source (e.g. a recognised news outlet, like the BBC), to look for bias in what they find, and to check the accuracy of information they find by looking at more than one source. After the research is done, give your learners a choice in terms of programs or platforms to use when putting the project together. Let them make their own decisions regarding what they want to use and feel comfortable using. Students who aren't very tech-savvy can use programs they are already familiar with, while those who enjoy using technology can choose the platforms or tools that work best for them.

Don't think that you need to be an expert in using AI to help your students in this stage of the project. If they have chosen a particular program, they are probably comfortable using it. During this stage, your role is to guide and support learners, helping them with any language-related questions or challenges they encounter.



One of the most valuable aspects of this part of the project is that you can discover new programs and their functions by observing your students in action. Much of what we have learned about AI image generators, ChatGPT, and other platforms has come from watching how our students use these tools and discussing both their in-class and out-of-class experiences.

Finally, learners should present their work. This gives them the opportunity to receive feedback from you and their peers, while also allowing classmates to ask questions about the process. In this way, students learn not only from you but also from one another.

Turning to the use of technology in other courses, our classroom experience has shown that whether it is through using online games from sites such as [www.wordwall.net](http://www.wordwall.net) or [www.gamestolearnenglish.com](http://www.gamestolearnenglish.com), where learners can review language items, or through short video clips that activate learners' schemas, taking students' eyes off the course book and giving them something different to engage with can significantly improve the classroom dynamic. Another benefit of using technology in the classroom is that it is a fun way to encourage language production. Video/audio clips and images can be great sources of inspiration for written and spoken output - for example, learners could be shown a short film, and then asked to either write an alternate ending for the film or create a concept for a sequel. Using sites such Kahoot or Quizlet enables our learners to engage in restricted practice with language points and lexical items in a way that is more enjoyable than completing a gapped exercise. Finally, the use of different types of media in our classes also promotes learner autonomy. Lessons based on short films from <https://vimeo.com> or Film English, podcasts, or even online short stories or blogs, can be used as a way of encouraging our students to engage with more English-language media outside of the classroom. Even something as simple as promoting the use of an online dictionary in class or <https://youenglish.com>, a site where the learners can see clips of lexical items being used in context, can enable our learners to become more independent as they may feel more motivated to use such tools for their self-study. If our students adopt even two of the suggested activities, they are more likely to progress faster.

The key message we'd like you to take away is that technology can boost learner engagement and enrich the classroom experience — but you don't need to be highly tech-savvy to use it effectively. Relax, experiment, and let your students be your teachers!

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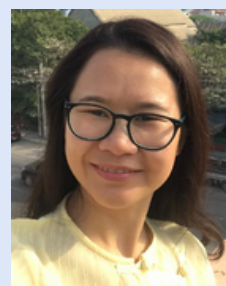
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# ChatGPT did my homework. Now what?

GIEDRĖ BALČYTYTĖ

## Introduction

The recent explosion of generative AI tools has provoked widespread concern in education. Nowhere is this more visible than in the language classroom, where ChatGPT and similar platforms can instantly generate summaries, essays, paraphrased texts and even responses tailored to specific rubrics. Understandably, this has raised questions about integrity, fairness and the reliability of traditional assessments. Teachers are increasingly expected to mediate between promoting responsible use of AI and guarding against its misuse. However, despite the attention these issues receive, this is not where the most consequential change must happen.

The core challenge facing education today is not how to regulate AI use but how to fundamentally rethink the skill set we teach, and, just as importantly, the tasks we use to measure it. In other words, we are facing a deeper pedagogical issue: many of the tasks we assign, especially in language learning, no longer reflect the true understanding or skills of students today. If a machine can do a student's homework in seconds, then the real issue is not that the student used AI, it's that we asked them to complete a task better suited for automation than for learning.

## Reclaiming purpose in learning design

Recent research supports this shift in perspective. Scholars such as Neil Selwyn (2023) and Alex Beard (2022) argue that traditional educational tasks are misaligned with the realities of a digital, AI-integrated world. These tasks often assess outdated skillsets rooted in recall and static production. Instead, the future of learning requires emphasis on adaptive, interpretive, ethical and metacognitive skills, the skills that cannot be easily automated or outsourced.

Selwyn (2023) calls for a "post-digital pedagogy" that doesn't resist technology, but redesigns learning around it, asking what it still means to learn in a world where machines can generate content. Similarly, Lee et al. (2025) show that overreliance on generative AI can reduce students' cognitive effort and critical thinking, as learners begin to trust AI-produced content over their own judgment. Their findings underline the importance of reorienting education toward deeper reasoning, self-awareness and human-led evaluation, areas where humans still outpace AI.

Language teachers in particular must recognize that traditional exercises, such as essays, summaries, comprehension tasks, vocabulary drills and others, are increasingly unreliable indicators of independent thinking. Even sophisticated tasks such as tone manipulation or abstract writing can now be produced by generative AI. The solution is not to ban these tools but to reframe their use: AI should be the starting point for critique, revision, and reflection, rather than the endpoint of a task.

## Homework reinvented: from product to process

A practical rethinking of homework is a central piece of this puzzle. If homework can be outsourced to ChatGPT, then educators should redefine the value of that work. For instance, students might be assigned to use AI to summarize a chapter in a novel and return not with the summary itself, but with a critique of its accuracy, tone or cultural assumptions. A student could be asked to feed an article into AI and then analyse what was lost in summarization, what bias emerged, what nuance disappeared and what perspectives were ignored. In a language class this supports higher-order skills such as evaluation, synthesis, inference and meta-linguistic awareness.

## From tasks to thinking for an AI-aware classroom

The transformation of tasks should also reshape classroom practice. Rather than concentrating on form-focused production, class time should focus on interpretive discussion, spontaneous dialogue, collaborative critique and improvisational tasks that emphasize ambiguity, nuance, human intention and judgement. Communicative competence, as Godwin-Jones (2024) reminds us, is constructed through interaction, negotiation and meaningful use. These are precisely the domains where AI falls short and where the human element remains indispensable.

Listening and speaking tasks, for example, must move beyond scripted dialogues towards unpredictability: interpreting tone in a conversation, resolving conflict or adjusting speech for varying contexts. These are skills deeply embedded in cultural and emotional intelligence and ones that cannot be reliably simulated by machines. Similarly, reading comprehension must evolve to emphasize lines of argumentation, perspective-taking and contextualization. Students should ask: Who is speaking? From what position? To whom? With what assumptions?

Even writing, so long central to language curricula, must be reimagined. Rather than testing whether a student can generate a well-structured opinion essay, which is a task AI now performs with ease, we should ask learners to revise flawed arguments, rewrite text for new audiences, identify rhetorical strategies or defend and critique AI-generated content. Overall, writing should become an act of conscious rhetorical choice, rather than formulaic reproduction.

In all of this, the role of the teacher fundamentally changes. The teacher becomes less an arbiter of correctness and more a designer of interaction, a facilitator of interpretive debate and a guide through ambiguity. This shift is actually a shift in epistemology. It reflects what Selwyn (2023) calls a "post-digital" pedagogy: one that accepts the presence of AI and redefines human learning within and beyond it.

### Conclusions

To conclude, the question facing us is not "Should students be allowed to use ChatGPT for their homework?" The real question that demands our pedagogical attention is: "What kind of tasks, learning experiences and, above all, skills still matter in a world where ChatGPT exists?" The answer requires courage, creativity and a complete re-evaluation of what we mean by the term homework. We may find that language education is not weakened by AI, but revitalised by the opportunity AI provides to rethink how and what we teach to more effectively align with the needs and mindsets of today's learners.

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# Towards an EdTech selection framework

JEFFREY BUTT

## What is EdTech?

Educational technology (EdTech) – the creation or using of technology for teaching and learning – is not new (e.g., BBC Micro, Oregon Trail, Sesame Street), but its ubiquity is.

According to the search engine, Google n-gram, the term “EdTech” first appeared in 1960 with few subsequent occurrences until an increase from the mid-90s to the early 2000s, followed by rapid expansion from 2010 onwards. This growing awareness of the importance of technology in education has been matched by escalating investment, with global spending on EdTech projected to reach \$404 Billion this year.

## Why is a framework needed?

As of April 2025, the UK Department for Education (DfE) had not released a final, unified EdTech quality framework, though the DfE has been actively working towards developing such a framework.

Why is a framework necessary?

“Only 8% of educators trust the claims made by EdTech companies”, yet stakeholders frequently advocate new EdTech uncritically. Sophie Winkleman, actress and prominent advocate for responsible EdTech use, presented substantial peer-reviewed evidence supporting her concerns about the uncritical use of EdTech. However, she also praised No More Marking (NMM) without caveat. While NMM is an easy-to-use and simple comparative marking software, a 2022 paper highlighted the need for further research to support comparative judgement from a psychological standpoint, despite the software’s promise.

Between 2020-21 the DfE gathered responses from 1,012 schools in England, including 897 headteachers, 1,006 teachers, and 652 technical leads, to a questionnaire designed to assess technology use and challenges in education. Strikingly, 71% of secondary teachers indicated that peer recommendations were their most trusted source when selecting EdTech.

The survey was carried out during the pandemic when teachers face unexpected challenges by a once-in-a-generation event which left them searching for quick solutions. However, now stability has been restored, it is important to critically evaluate the use of EdTech in the classroom. How can teachers begin this process?

The 2023 EdTech Quality Frameworks and Standards Review appraises several existing frameworks which meet their four standards for quality EdTech:

1. Product design meets users’ needs
2. It adopts an evidence informed approach
3. It enables digital pedagogy (rather than just augmenting traditional teaching)
4. It develops digital competencies

Of the frameworks which meet these four criteria, the Teacher Ready Framework from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) is currently the most useful for teachers because of its accessibility and user-centred design.

## The Teacher Ready Framework

This post-pandemic framework, designed in 2023, emphasizes practicality and ease of use, making it ideal for teachers without a background in educational research. It focuses on product usability and provides a structured yet accessible way to evaluate tools based on how they function in real teaching and learning environments.

### Key dimensions of the framework include:

- **User Interface and Agency:** Is the product intuitive and user-friendly for teachers and students?
- **Learning Design:** Does it support sound pedagogical practices and align with curriculum goals?
- **Digital Pedagogy:** How well does it enhance or transform traditional teaching methods?
- **Inclusivity:** Is it accessible for learners with diverse needs and backgrounds?
- **Assessment and Data:** Can it track student progress and provide useful insights?



A simple evaluation tool is freely available and teachers can assess whether an EdTech platform is suitable within five minutes by choosing yes/no statements regarding the product. This provides a score of total indicators and essential indicators at the bottom of the page allowing the teacher to evidence that they have done their due diligence. It can be found at: <https://teacher-ready.iste.org/tool/>

There is one section on data privacy under user interface and agency (which is positive) but given the regulatory context (GDPR) and recent high-profile breaches (e.g., PowerSchool, Edmodo), a stronger emphasis on data privacy may be necessary.

### Conclusion

Given the ever-increasing digitisation of our classroom space, it is important that we have a comprehensive evaluative framework to inform the integration of EdTech tools. While the DfE’s official guidance is forthcoming, it is important to begin considering the criteria now to aid teachers’ critical engagement with the multitude of tools now available, ensuring that they enhance, rather than detract from, student learning.

As the DfE has advised, the selection of digital tools should not be based solely on pedagogical and usability standards but should also support the development of digital literacy and competency. We must ask whether a tool will not only engage students in their learning but also equip them with skills for navigating an increasingly digital world, particularly in English.

In coming years, as frameworks become more refined and widely accepted, critical evaluation will become a cornerstone of a truly integrated, future-ready education system. This will ensure that EdTech supports meaningful learning experiences, with school investments focused on sustainability and long-term impact, rather than short-term and profit driven motives. The current lack of consensus presents an exciting opportunity for teachers, schools and curriculum designers to explore these issues.

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