



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

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.

Read the [full paper](#) **Shaping AI Policy and Practice in English Language Teaching: Pioneering stories from classrooms around the world** by Evelina Galaczi, Andrea Vinkler, Safiatú Lopes and Sam Oliver at cambridge.org/English-insights

Take our quiz

It's clear that teachers of the future will need to be AI-ready, but are you? Take our quick quiz (available in the full paper) to help you find your level, with tips and next steps for skills development.