

JAN 2024

# COUNTRY STREET TER

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SCOS 2024

MONTHLY LESSON
THIS IS MY YEAR







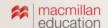




























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# FOR THE BETTERMENT OF ALL

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In this dynamic era of learning, staying ahead requires a constant thirst for knowledge and an openness to exploring new frontiers. That's why we created EduVerse Newsletter — to serve as your guide through the vast universe of education, where ideas collide, perspectives intertwine, and possibilities abound.

With a dedicated focus on the needs and aspirations of educators, we curate a diverse range of articles, tips, and best practices to support your teaching journey. From cutting-edge pedagogical strategies to engaging classroom activities, we are here to equip you with the tools and inspiration you need to ignite curiosity, foster creativity, and cultivate lifelong learners.

So, whether you're a teacher seeking new teaching techniques or an education enthusiast looking for fresh perspectives, EduVerse is here to accompany you on your educational odyssey.

Join us as we embark on this exciting journey together—let's dive into the EduVerse and unlock the infinite possibilities of education!



# Happy New Year

It's hard to imagine where we would be without your support. May your upcoming year be filled with success and growth with each and every day.











**FEATURE** 

# WHERE IS EDUCATION **HEADING?**

# THE TOP **TRENDS** Dr. Le Dinh Bao Quoc

2023 witnessed a surge in experimentation and adaptation. Blended learning blossomed, AI tools found their way into classrooms, and the importance of student well-being took center stage. Yet, inequalities in access and opportunity persisted, highlighting the need for a more equitable and inclusive approach.

These experiences inform the trends that are set to reshape education in 2024 and beyond. The focus shifts from mere knowledge transmission to fostering critical thinking, adaptability, and lifelong learning skills. The student becomes the architect of their own learning journey, guided by Al-powered tools and supported by a teacher who acts as a facilitator and mentor.

Imagine stepping into a classroom no longer defined by rows of desks and a singular voice droning from the front. Instead, picture a vibrant tapestry of learning experiences, where students weave their own paths through knowledge, guided by curiosity and empowered by technology. This is the vision that awaits us in 2024, built upon the seeds sown in 2023.

As we step into 2024, the education landscape is experiencing a dynamic shift. Beyond rote memorization and standardized tests, the focus is turning towards creating meaninaful learning experiences, equipping students with not just knowledge, but also life skills and the adaptability to thrive in a rapidly changing world. The seeds sown by the challenges and triumphs of the year 2023 are poised to blossom into transformative trends in 2024. The echoes of the pandemic, the ever-evolving technological landscape, and the growing demand for personalized learning are shaping the future of education in profound ways.

These trends are not merely a vision of the future; they constitute an urgent call to action. The transformative trends of 2024 demand an unwavering commitment from educators, policymakers, and technology developers alike. Now, more than ever, is the time to seize these opportunities and propel education into a future where every learner, regardless of background, has the tools and resources to shape a brighter tomorrow.



# STUDENT-CENTRIC REVOLUTION

The past year saw a burgeoning focus on student agency. We witnessed the rise of project-based learning and personalization, where students took ownership of their education, constructing knowledge rather than passively receiving it. This trend will blossom in 2024. The focus of learning extends beyond mere academic achievement to encompass the entire learning experience. Educational institutions are increasingly recognizing that a student's success is not solely determined by test scores but is intricately linked to their holistic development.

#### Beyond the textbook, beyond the test

Imagine a classroom where conversations and collaboration replace the monotone of lectures. Students are not passively consuming information; they are actively constructing it, dealing with problems, and building their unique knowledge castles. This is the heart of the student-centric revolution, where classrooms become vibrant ecosystems for personal growth and development.

Goodbye, bubble sheets and multiple-choice woes! Assessments in 2024 will be dynamic, reflecting the true essence of learning. Instead of measuring rote memorization, students will be asked to create a project that tackles local environmental issues, showcasing their understanding of science, communication, and teamwork. That is the kind of learning we'll see valued in the student-centric classroom.



The goal of student-centric approach is to empower students to take an active role in their own learning process to promote not only academic growth but also personal and social development.

#### **Building inner strength**

Social-emotional learning (SEL) will not be an afterthought; it will be woven into the very fabric of the curriculum. Students will learn to manage their emotions, build empathy and compassion, and practice self-awareness. Think of a student navigating a conflict with a classmate, utilizing their communication and empathy skills learned in SEL to reach a peaceful resolution. These skills will empower students to become well-rounded individuals, not just academic machines.

#### Life skills for the future

The future is uncertain, but the student-centric revolution equips students with the tools to navigate it. Learning how to learn, critical thinking, creativity, and problemsolving will be the cornerstones of education. Students will learn how to ask insightful questions, think outside the box, and adapt and problem-solve. These are the skills that will equip students to become lifelong learners and agents of positive change in a rapidly evolving world.

# THE RISE OF BLENDED LEARNING

The rigid lines between the physical classroom and the digital world began to blur during COVID-19, with the help of technological advancements in 2023. In the dynamic educational landscape of 2024, traditional classrooms have transcended their physical boundaries, embracing innovative learning models that respond to the diverse needs and preferences of students.

#### Seamless blending

Picture a classroom where students spend the morning working on complex concepts in a vibrant group discussion, then retreat to their devices for personalized micro-learning modules that solidify their understanding. This is the beauty of blended learning, where online and offline experiences seamlessly blend to cater to individual needs and learning styles.

#### **Bite-sized learning**

For students juggling busy schedules and demanding priorities, traditional hour-long lectures can feel like an eternity. Enter microlearning or nano learning: bite-sized learning modules that deliver focused information in short, digestible bites. Students can learn through engaging five-minute video clips, interactive quizzes, and gamified scenarios. Microlearning empowers students to learn at their own pace, on their own terms, making knowledge accessible even in the tightest of schedules.

#### **AI-powered personalization**

Technology has becoming an active participant in education. Al-powered learning platforms will analyze student data, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles. This information will then be used to personalize learning paths, recommending relevant resources, and adjusting the difficulty level of content. If a student excels at visual learning, the Al might suggest interactive diagrams and simulations to enhance their understanding, while providing additional text-based explanations for students who prefer a more traditional approach.

This blending of learning extends beyond the four walls of the classroom. It is not just about convenience; it's about creating a dynamic, personalized, and accessible learning experience for every student, making learning more engaging, accessible, and relevant to the ever-changing world around us.



# ADOPTION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence (AI), once a distant glimmer, began to inch closer to the heart of education in 2023 with the release of ChatGPT and other AI-powered tools and applications. In 2024, educational institutions are actively incorporating AI not just as a technological tool but as an essential component in preparing students for a future defined by technological literacy and innovation.

#### **Enhancing Alliteracy**

Educators are recognizing the importance of equipping students with the skills to effectively utilize AI. This goes beyond the traditional role of technology in the classroom; it involves fostering a deep understanding of AI principles, its applications, and the ethical considerations surrounding its use, allowing them to create AI-driven solutions and understand the algorithms that power these technologies. In 2024, AI literacy will be integrated in curriculum for teachers and learners of every age group and levels.



#### Empowering, not replacing teachers

Teachers are the heart and soul of the classroom, and AI is here to be their man, not their replacement. Alpowered tools will automate mundane tasks like grading quizzes or scheduling conferences, freeing up teachers' time for what they do best – guiding, inspiring, and connecting with their students. Imagine receiving real-time data on individual student progress, identifying areas of struggling immediately and adapting your teaching accordingly. AI will act as a tireless assistant, giving teachers the insights and tools they need to personalize learning and maximize student growth.

#### Immersive learning experiences

Forget boring lectures and flat textbooks. Alpowered technologies like VR and AR will transform classrooms into vibrant worlds of learning. Imagine students exploring the Great Barrier Reef through a virtual reality dive, or reliving historical events through augmented reality overlays on their smartphones. These immersive experiences will make learning not just informative, but unforgettable, both academically and emotionally.

In the classroom of 2024, AI and human will dance together, each playing their strengths. AI will provide the tools and the data, while teachers will provide the human touch, the guidance, and the inspiration. This symbiotic partnership will create a learning environment that is personalized, engaging, and future-proof. This is not just a technological revolution; it is a human revolution. It's about empowering students to become critical thinkers, responsible AI developers, and lifelong learners.

# LIFELONG LEARNING IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In 2024, the educational narrative is undergoing a profound shift, placing lifelong learning at the forefront. This trend encompasses various facets, each designed to empower individuals to continually adapt and thrive in an ever-evolving world.

#### **Upskilling and reskilling**

As industries evolve and job requirements change, individuals are recognizing the need to continually acquire new skills to stay relevant in the workforce. The days of static careers are over. In 2024, individuals will be equipped to embrace the dynamic nature of the workforce through upskilling and reskilling initiatives. For example, a seasoned accountant taking an online course in data analytics to stay relevant in the age of big data, or a veteran teacher learning new pedagogical tools to enhance their classroom practice. Educational institutions and businesses alike are investing in programs that facilitate the continuous development of employees, ensuring that their skill sets remain aligned with the demands of their respective fields.





Beyond importance of life skills tailored to the demands of the new age. These skills go beyond the traditional curriculum, encompassing vital skills such as adaptability, digital literacy, and emotional intelligence. Individuals are not only expected to excel in their professions but also to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world with resilience and emotional acuity. These skills will equip individuals to navigate the uncertainties of the future, making them valuable assets in any career path or life stage.

# BRIDGING THE EQUITY GAP

In the pursuit of an inclusive and equitable education system, 2024 will see continuous effort in making education a fundamental right rather than a privilege. Several key initiatives will be implemented to bridge the equity gap and ensure that every student, regardless of their background, has access to quality learning opportunities.

#### Tech for all

One of the primary challenges achieving educational equity is the digital divide. In 2024, affordable technology and internet access will be within reach for everyone. There will be initiatives such as subsidized devices, internet connectivity programs, and partnerships with technology companies to make essential tools accessible to students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Digital literacy programs will be accessible for students equipping and families with the skills to navigate the digital world safely and effectively.

## Cost-effective alternatives

Innovative learning models are emerging as powerful tools to education make more accessible and affordable. Micro-credentials and competency-based education, for instance, provide flexible and cost-effective alternatives to traditional degree programs. Micro-credentials students to acquire specific skills or knowledge in a shorter time frame, catering to those who may not have the resources for a full degree. Competency-based education focuses on mastering skills at one's own pace, ensuring that students can progress based on their understanding rather academic than a fixed calendar.

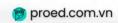
## Culturally responsive teaching

Recognizing valuing and experiences diverse and perspectives is integral to creating inclusive learning environments. In 2024, there is growing emphasis culturally responsive teaching that considers the unique backgrounds, languages, and cultural contexts of students. This approach, aligning with the aforementioned trend 1, fosters an environment where students feel seen and heard, contributing enriching educational experience. We can imagine a classroom where a student's traditional folktale becomes the springboard for a creative writing exercise, or where a historical event is explored through the lens of multiple cultures. This is the beauty of culturally responsive teaching, creating environments where every student feels seen, heard, and valued.

Bridging the education equity gap is not a one-time endeavor; it's a continuous journey of dismantling barriers and building bridges of opportunity. By embracing technological access, exploring innovative learning models, and fostering culturally responsive classrooms, we can ensure that in 2024 and beyond, education becomes a right, not a privilege, for every student, regardless of their background.



**Le Dinh Bao Quoc**, with a Doctorate in Education, boasts 20+ years in ELT. He founded Pro.Ed Education Solutions, offering school consultancies. Author of "The Art and Science of ChatGPT in Education," he highlights EdTech's role in enriching teaching, learning, and educational practices. Research spans EdTech's impact, teacher growth, and educational management.





A new generation takes flight, born amidst the glow of smartphones and the hum of interconnected devices. Generation Alpha, the first truly digital natives, inherit a world sculpted by technology and shaped by the echoes of their millennial and Gen Z predecessors. Understanding their unique needs is not just an educational imperative, it's the key to shaping not just their future, but the future of our world.

Mark McCrindle, the Australian social researcher who coined the term "Generation Alpha" in 2008, painted a picture of a generation uniquely equipped (McCrindle, 2008). Generation Alpha are defined as those born from 2010-2024. More than 2.8 million are born globally every week. When they have all been born (2025) they will number almost 2 billion - the largest generation in the history of the world. Their fluency in the digital language grants them unparalleled access to information imagine classrooms without walls, knowledge cascading at a fingertip's tap, virtual tutors guiding them through uncharted learning landscapes. Yet, within this abundance lurks a hidden serpent - information overload. Cultivating critical thinking skills to navigate this ocean of data will be as crucial as learning to swim. Teachers become less like sages dispensing knowledge and more like navigators, encouraging independent research, discerning truth from noise, and developing the analytical muscles needed to sift through the endless data streams.



But education for Generation Alpha extends beyond the sterile confines of academics. Their emotional landscape is a canvas begging to be painted. Take Sting's iconic "Shape of My Heart," a song that whispers of molding, guiding, and nurturing the essence of who we are – our emotions, desires, and the delicate chords of our dreams (Sting, 1993). Can educators adopt this philosophy, becoming not just sculptors of minds but shapers of hearts?

Absolutely. And the answer lies in fostering empathy and inclusivity. Imagine classrooms where diversity isn't tolerated but celebrated, where every voice resonates within the symphony of learning, and where differences are threads woven into the tapestry of understanding. Encouraging collaboration and social responsibility allows them to see the impact of their actions on the world around them, shaping hearts that value compassion and connection, hearts that beat in tandem with the rhythm of humanity.

Literature becomes a bridge across generations, offering wisdom and guidance for this nascent age. Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist" whispers of listening to your personal legend, your inner calling (Coelho, 1988). This resonates deeply with Generation Alpha, a generation bombarded with countless career paths and societal expectations. Our role as educators is not to dictate their "legends," but to become guides on their soul's journey, empowering them to discover their unique talents, embrace their quirks, and chase their dreams with relentless determination. Richard Bach's "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" adds another dimension – a story of breaking free from limitations, of pushing boundaries and embracing self-discovery (Bach, 1970). Generation Alpha faces a world grappling with climate change, social inequalities, and technological complexities. We must equip them with the courage to challenge the status quo, to innovate beyond preordained paths, and to soar above the limitations of convention. Let us teach them to embrace "flight," to question, to experiment, and to believe in the boundless potential that lies within.

Yet, technology cannot be ignored. It's the air they breathe, the language they speak. But instead of being mere consumers, Generation Alpha needs to become creators, innovators, and responsible stewards of this digital landscape. Imagine coding bootcamps in kindergarten, virtual reality field trips to ancient civilizations, and classrooms buzzing with the collaborative hum of building robots and designing apps. We can utilize technology to personalize learning, catering to individual strengths and challenges, fostering a spirit of exploration and self-discovery.



#### **BULDING BRIDGES, NOT WALLS**

#### Fostering global connection in Generation Alpha

Generation Alpha's inherent digital fluency opens doors to a world beyond their immediate surroundings. They can connect with peers across continents, share ideas and perspectives, and collaborate on projects that transcend geographical boundaries. This interconnectedness presents an incredible opportunity to foster global understanding and empathy.

Imagine virtual exchange programs, where students from diverse cultures learn from each other, explore shared challenges, and celebrate unique traditions. Picture collaborative projects, where young minds from different corners of the world work together to solve global issues like climate change or poverty. These experiences can chip away at prejudice and build bridges of understanding, laying the foundation for a more inclusive and peaceful future.

#### **EMPOWERING ETHICAL STEWARDS** Shaping a sustainable future

Generation Alpha inherits a world grappling with environmental challenges. They will have access to more information and will increasingly be faced with the importance of sustainability, more than any generation before them, even more than Generation Z. To educate Generation Alpha effectively, we must embrace a holistic approach that blends technological innovation with emotional intelligence, global awareness, and environmental stewardship. It's a delicate dance between nurturing their digital fluency and fostering their humanity.

In classrooms where critical thinking meets compassion, where technology coexists with empathy, and where global connection fosters a sense of shared responsibility, we can empower Generation Alpha to shape a brighter future.

#### HOW TO BRING THESE IDEALS TO LIFE

- Personalize learning: Utilize technology to tailor instruction to individual needs and interests, allowing students to explore their passions and learn at their own pace.
- Foster collaboration: Create opportunities for students to work together, both in-person and virtually, to solve problems, design projects, and build communities that transcend borders.
- Promote global understanding: Incorporate global perspectives into the curriculum, encourage virtual exchange programs, and engage students in real-world projects that address global challenges.
- Nurture environmental consciousness: Educate students about sustainability, engage them in hands- on conservation projects, and encourage eco-friendly practices within schools and communities.
- Encourage ethical decision-making: Provide opportunities for students to explore ethical dilemmas, think critically about the impact of their choices, and develop a strong moral compass.
- Balance technology with traditional learning methods: While digital tools are essential, don't neglect the importance of hands-on experiences, social interactions, and physical activity in learning.



#### CONCLUSION

Educating Generation Alpha is not just a task—it is an invitation to reimagine education itself. It calls upon us to transcend traditional boundaries, embrace their unique needs, and empower them to become not just skilled professionals but compassionate leaders, global citizens, and responsible stewards of our planet. By rising to this challenge, we can shape a future that is not only technologically advanced but also more equitable, sustainable, and humane.

And as we step into the new year, let's extend our thanks and wishes to the dedicated teachers and educators who guide Generation Alpha on this journey. I wish you:

#### Renewed enthusiasm

May your passion for learning and growth continue to inspire your students.

#### Unwavering patience

May the challenges you face only strengthen your resolve and dedication.

#### Empowering moments

May each day bring opportunities to witness the potential of your students blossom.

#### Collaborative partnerships

May you find support and camaraderie amongst your fellow educators.

### A heart full of hope

May the new year bring renewed faith in the transformative power of education.

Remember, you are not alone in this noble endeavor. Let's support one another, embrace innovation, and work together to ensure that Generation Alpha receives the education they deserve—one that equips them not just for success in the present but for a future brimming with possibilities.

May your dedication continue to illuminate the path for future generations in 2024.

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Esma Sila Tekinsoy, an EFL teacher with a decade of experience, is a dedicated educator based in Kayseri, Turkey. She holds certifications as a Microsoft Innovative Educator, Apple Teacher, and TESOL Certified. As a passionate content creator, freelance translator, and MEd student, her focus lies at the intersection of technology, AI, and their integration into education. Her dedication to enhancing learning through innovative methods is evident in her work and research.



# In the verse

Welcome to **In the Verse**, your go-to column for curated education articles and news from across the internet. We'll sift through the digital realm to bring you concise summaries, keeping you informed and inspired. Join us as we navigate the vast sea of online resources and uncover the latest in educational innovation.

\* Scan the QR codes or click on the titles to read more.

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#### **TESOL** research directions and resources



Download the full member survey report of TESOL International representing over 2700 data points from 639 members across the globe. Take a closer look at how they got there with 10 focus groups in 16 countries identifying 4 top directions for research.



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#### The 10 most significant education studies of 2023



Edutopia.org selected the ten most important studies in education in 2023. The chosen studies range from teenage mental health issues to the impact of AI in education, from Positive advances in neuroscience to classroom practices such as effective classroom strategies and compassionate testing approaches.



#### READ MORE 🥪

### Three years after pandemic, students still far behind



In the third year after the COVID-19 pandemic, students are still facing significant learning setbacks, with notable drops in math and reading scores in the US and internationally. Chronic absenteeism and the use of AI in education are growing concerns. The limitations of digital tools in learning have also been highlighted.



#### READ MORE 🤡

#### Top 3 tips to motivate mixed-ability classes



The article provides three tips for motivating mixed-ability classes: open up listening tasks by providing options and choices, emphasize repeated attempts and peer feedback in speaking tasks, and use time limits instead of word limits for in-class writing tasks. The focus is on creating a learning-oriented environment that values individual capabilities and provides flexible, formative tasks.



#### READ MORE 🤡

#### Three things that influence our character



The article explores the influence of personal experiences, environments, and relationships on character development. The author shares a personal regret and later engages in character education, developing the Principled Innovation framework. The framework emphasizes personal growth, contextual factors, and relational interactions.







#### How to avoid the 'Feedback hole'

The article emphasizes the importance of valuing student input through feedback processes like "feedback on feedback." It provides examples of student-to-student and teacher-to-student feedback strategies and highlights the significance of actively incorporating student suggestions to create a more meaningful feedback loop.





### Anxiety, depression, less sleep ... and poor academic performance?

Is your teenager's smartphone use affecting their academic performance? Recent evidence suggests that it might be. Smartphone use among teenagers has been linked to a decline in academic performance, especially among low-achieving students. To address this, limiting screen time and promoting better sleep habits are recommended.



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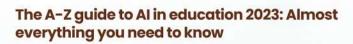


### Researchers: Report cards unclear about students knowledge, learning

A recent study found that many US parents believe their children are performing at grade level, but standardized tests show otherwise. This discrepancy may lead to lack of support for students. Education activists emphasize the need for better communication between educators and parents.







Al in education is both exciting and concerning for educators. While some envision Al-driven classrooms as a positive force, others fear the unknown consequences. To address the scarcity of resources on Al in education, an A-Z guide has been created to empower educators with knowledge and actionable solutions, for the future of Al in education.







### 11 helpful note-taking strategies your students should know

Numerous studies have consistently demonstrated the significance of actively taking notes, as opposed to simply reading, in the process of learning and retaining information. Writing notes actively engages various areas of the brain, creating new connections that aid in the long-term retention of information by students.







Welcome to **Ask the Experts**, the ultimate column dedicated to professional development in the field of education. In this dynamic and ever-evolving field, continuous growth and learning are paramount. In each issue, we explore the most commonly asked topic by interviewing an invited expert for their insights, experiences, and strategies.

#### **EXCLUSIVE**



EduVerse: Hello and a warm welcome to our exclusive interview series, Ask the Experts. Our discussion today will center on the topic of Culture, and we are delighted to host Ms. Roz Weitzman, a renowned ESL Consultant with a remarkable career spanning both her native Canada and the culturally diverse landscape of China. From her beginnings as a dedicated teacher in Toronto to a successful school principal in Beijing, Ms. Weitzman's journey is a truly inspiring story, in terms of personal, cultural, and professional growth. Let's dive in!



Ms. Roz Weitzman (in green jacket) and her staff at Australian International School of Beijing in 2008)

Welcome Ms. Roz Weitzman. Thank you for joining us here to share your incredible story. Your career journey is truly fascinating, especially considering the major shift you made to become an International School Principal in Beijing. Can you walk us through a bit of your background and what drove you to make such a significant career change?

Oh, absolutely! Reflecting on my transition to an International School Principal and ESL teacher consultant feels like revisiting a thrilling roller coaster ride of experiences.

Picture this: after spending over two decades as an elementary school teacher, immersing myself in the tech-savvy world of IT education in the lively mosaic of Toronto, I began to feel this magnetic pull toward something entirely different – something that beckoned from the vibrant cityscape of Beijing.

You asked what drove me to this big career change. Well, it was a combination of factors. The prospect of working closely with teachers to enhance overall teaching and school performance was like a dream come true for me. There's a unique energy in international education, and the idea of embracing that challenge was truly inspiring. I saw it as an opportunity not just to further my career but to embark on a transformative journey where my skills and passion could make a significant impact.

**Ask the Experts** aims to address the burning questions and challenges that educators face in their quest for personal and career advancement. Whether you're an aspiring teacher, a seasoned educator, or a lifelong learner, **Ask the Experts** provides a platform for valuable guidance and expertise from renowned professionals. We believe that investing in professional development not only enhances teaching effectiveness but also leads to improved student outcomes and a stronger education system overall.



It's the matter of grasping the opportunity, right? You know, making a career change at the age of a grandmother is quite a unique journey. Did concerns about such a significant shift cross your mind, and how did you prepare for this major change before boarding that plane to Beijing?

(Laughs) It's the age-old question about changing careers as a grandma! But honestly, age is just a number for me and many Westerners. It's all about embracing opportunities. In my last role in Toronto, I had already shouldered significant responsibilities working closely with the school principal on matters related to technology and teacher assessments. So, the idea of taking on a leadership role in a school felt like the next logical step. It wasn't so much about age as it was about seizing the opportunity.

Well, pronunciation of Chinese names was a start! (Laughs) But on a serious note, immersing myself in the rich tapestry of Chinese culture didn't feel like a leap for me—it was more like a graceful hop. The more I delved into the language and customs, the more I realized the immense value and importance of cultural understanding in my new role.



Roz, moving to an Asian country like China undoubtedly brought about significant cultural changes. How did you prepare for this transition, both personally and professionally?

Five weeks to prep for a major life change? Now, that was a whirlwind!

On a personal level, I armed myself with a growth mindset and a "bring it on" attitude. But let me tell you, the potential Chinese bathroom culture shock was something I wanted to prepare myself for

It became a source of laughter among the school secretaries when I raised my questions and concerns about this topic! Although since the time I moved to China there has been much improvement in the conditions in the bathrooms throughout the country about hygiene and general conditions, it will always be an issue for many foreigners who are not familiar or have a difficult time getting used to squat toilets.

Now, professionally, the switch from Toronto's notfor-profit educational model to China's for-profit emphasis on enrollment threw me a major curveball.

In Western schools, supplies and books are plentiful. Stock rooms are filled with colourful papers of all sizes, scissors, glue, pencils, erasers, rulers and all variety of craft and art supplies.

Teachers, therefore, can effectively implement the

kind of activities that do not only focus on printed worksheets but also on hands on projects to augment the learning through creative activities. And not only supply rooms but main school libraries and classroom libraries filled with all kinds of books that allow students to read and read and read. School boards allocate funds to provide these kinds of learning environments for students.

The situation in China was a huge culture shock for foreign teachers. Teachers had to sign to get a pen or stapler, etc. and had to make sure to return them at the end of the year. Coloured paper and every other craft supplies were non-existent in the school and needed a special permission from the owner or the boss of the school for purchase. A huge explanation of the purpose of these supplies was required and most often funds were not provided. Teachers could not provide the kind of learning experience to the students to benefit their learning.

Now, that was a head-scratcher for us! I can tell you that my staff and I were very disappointed in not being able to implement a complete and vibrant curriculum for the students effectively. All because of cost saving measures!



Roz Weitzman is an ESL Consultant, a certified Canadian teacher with 15 years in China, and on a mission to revive the joy in ESL teaching. Specializing in professional development for ESL teachers worldwide, her community is passionate educators, from diverse backgrounds. She's offering live and online workshops for schools and universities, also through a membership site. Her continuous focus is on empowering ESL teachers with fresh ideas, fostering excitement, and celebrating their successes. For Roz, the journey is fulfilling as she gives back her knowledge and experience to her profession in meaningful ways, making a tangible impact on classrooms worldwide.



Can you share a specific cultural challenge you faced when you first started working in China?

There's not just one! Cultural shocks galore! The transition indeed brought challenges and remarkably impacted my role as an International School Principal, but I faced them head-on. Let me be straight with you; the negative impacts of cultural differences on the role of an International School Principal were vast. Here are just some of my examples.

First up, the Face-saving Culture. Challenges arose because of the reluctance to admit mistakes or address issues transparently, impacting effective problem resolution.

Next, Enrollment Pressures. The emphasis on enrollment sometimes led to compromises on educational quality or deviations from the Canadian educational model.

Then, we have Hierarchy and Authority. Traditional Chinese emphasis on hierarchy hindered collaboration, open communication, and the implementation of innovative approaches.

Moving on to Communication Styles. Differences in communication styles often led to misunderstandings or misinterpretations, affecting feedback and interpersonal dynamics. Speaking directly is my style, but my translator rarely delivered my message correctly to Chinese subordinates.

And let's not forget Work-Life Balance Expectations. Varied expectations regarding work hours posed challenges in aligning with Canadian work-life balance principles while respecting local norms. The 9/9/6(\*) style of workweeks always clashed with teachers' Western values of personal work-life balance. Quite a journey, right?



That sounds amazing. So, how did you navigate through these first cultural shocks?

In navigating this cultural maze, flexibility and understanding became my trusty companions. For example, the intricacies of saving one's face! Navigating through this cultural challenge was like decoding a mystery. In China, vague replies often mask sentiments that are strange to foreigners, but they are for the purpose of looking and seeming to not offend but the problem is that they have a deeper meaning.

I learned to decode those habits. It was a real eye-opener, and now I'm a pro at deciphering those face-saving nuances when a 'maybe' usually means a 'no', in reality. Indirect communication in China posed difficulties in receiving direct feedback or addressing issues. Flexibility in communication style was key. I built relationships, established trust, and created a comfortable environment for indirect sharing. This approach facilitated understanding and effective resolution of underlying issues.

Cultural norms of long working hours in China clashed with the Canadian emphasis on work-life balance. Respecting local expectations, I introduced initiatives like flexible working hours and breaks to promote a healthier work-life balance. By blending local norms with global practices, I created an environment resonating with both Chinese and Canadian values.

In both instances, flexibility and understanding were central to my navigating the cultural maze, fostering a harmonious and effective educational environment.

(\*) The 9/9/6 style requires staff to be on duty from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. for six days each week.



Can you share what strategies you used to overcome the significant cultural challenges that you encountered in your job as a Westerner working in an Asian context?

Working in an Asian context isn't everyone's cup of tea, right? The food culture, the social expectations, the way business is done, the different lifestyle and values...all these things take time to adjust to.

Learning the language (I'm up to about 30% fluency) with a different word structure and set of characters for syllables instead of the Roman alphabet is one of the most important things I did in my 15 years in China. That opened doors that wouldn't have otherwise been opened!

I attended lots of events and organized plenty of parties for both locals and foreigners. Everyone loved to taste all of the delicious Western foods that I cooked!

But I truly found my groove by adapting, being flexible, and embracing cultural differences. It's like learning a dance – once you catch the rhythm, it becomes a harmonious journey. If not for the pandemic, I might still be in China, rocking to the beat of cultural diversity!



As we wrap up our conversation, Roz, what final insights or advice do you have for ESL teachers and educators who aspire to start their careers in a culturally diverse country?

Roz, your journey in China has been quite remarkable. How has the experience of working in China and navigating cultural differences contributed to your personal and professional growth?

China, it's been a game-changer for me! This experience, with all its challenges and triumphs, has molded me into a more accepting and grateful individual. It's not just about personal growth; it's about sharing my enriched knowledge with other Asian educators.

Being a respected ESL consultant in schools and universities allowed me to give back to my teaching profession and lit my fire and passion for education. Understanding how to reignite the joy in ESL teaching is my passion, and I owe it all to this incredible journey.



Ms. Roz Weitzman in a Professional Development workshop for ESL teachers at an English Language Academy

Dear fellow ESL adventurers, as you embark on your Asian journey, carry with you not just a suitcase but a spirit of boundless curiosity, a generous sprinkle of humor, and an open heart ready for the extraordinary. The cultural landscape may be different, but within the diverse tapestry, discover the unchanging threads of the universal language of education and joy.

Embrace each moment with enthusiasm, for in the fusion of cultures, you'll find the inspiration to elevate your teaching to new heights.

Let the shared passion for learning create a symphony of connections that transcends borders, reminding us that, in education, we are united in a magical journey of transformation and discovery.



# ROZ'S PRO TIPS TO NAVIGATE AND EMBRACE CULTURAL CHANGES

#### Adaptability is your superpower

- Be like a chameleon, ready to blend into your new surroundings.
- Find ways to keep local phrases, addresses and maps on your smart phone for future use.
- Flexibility is key, so don't be afraid to adjust your teaching style, mindset, and expectations.

#### Decode the cultural nuances

- Saving face, vague replies, and unspoken rules-get ready for a crash course!
- Understanding these cultural nuances is like unlocking a treasure chest of meaningful connections.



#### **Build bridges, not barriers**

- Language might be a hurdle, but it's also your bridge to building relationships.
- Learn the local language as best as you can—it's a gesture that speaks volumes and breaks down barriers.
- Use body language often to assist you with your communication.



#### Laugh in the face of challenges

- Life is too short to take everything seriously!
- Laugh at cultural quirks, bathroom uncertainties, and any hiccups along the way.
- Humor is a universal language that transcends borders.



#### Cultivate a growth mindset

- Every challenge is an opportunity to
- Approach each experience with an open mind, ready to learn and evolve.
- A growth mindset is your secret weapon in the journey of selfdiscovery.



#### Connect with the community

- Dive into local celebrations, events, and gatherings.
- Engage with the community to understand their values, traditions, and perspectives.
- It's the best way to foster genuine connections.



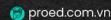
#### Share your joyful teaching secrets

- As an ESL teacher, your mission is to bring back the joy of learning.
- · Share your expertise, innovative teaching methods, and passion for education.
- · Inspire both students and fellow educators.



#### Stay curious and explore

- The journey doesn't end in the classroom.
- Explore the local cuisine, traditions, and hidden gems.
- Celebrate local and your own holidays together.
- Join clubs and activities. Hang out with
- Staying curious keeps your senses alive and adds a vibrant layer to your overall experience.



A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT BY BRITISH COUNCIL

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

In a world captivated by the allure of artificial intelligence (AI), the renowned British Council, through its comprehensive report titled "Artificial Intelligence and English Language Teaching: Preparing for the Future," delves into the multifaceted landscape of Al's impact on English language education.

The report goes beyond the surface, presenting a nuanced understanding of Al's role in shaping the future of English language education. It not only navigates through the myriad perceptions, hopes, and concerns surrounding Al in the realm of language teaching, but also emphasizes the imperative for collaborative efforts among teachers, learners, and stakeholders to harness the transformative potential of Al effectively.

EduVerse Newsletter is excited to introduce this insightful report to its readers, following its December's special edition about Al in Education.







**English Programmes** 

Artificial intelligence and English language teaching: Preparing for the future

Dr Adam Edmett Neenaz Ichaporia Dr Helen Crompton Ross Crichton



To download the report, click HERE or scan the QR.







Welcome to **Tech Tips & Tools**, your go-to resource for staying ahead in the digital age of education. Each month, we'll bring you handpicked tech tips and tools designed to empower teachers and learners. From innovative classroom apps to strategies for integrating technology into your classroom practices to enhancing teaching and learning experiences.

**Ms. Nguyen Tran Phuong Uyen**, Pro.Ed's R&D specialist, oversees this column.



Microsoft Image Creator is a part of Microsoft Designer, an all-in-one platform for crafting attractive designs, logos, flyers, and social media content. Powered by artificial intelligence (AI), it helps users to create one-of-a-kind images by simply typing in your text description.



#### **Key Features**

- Effortless for all: Simple interface for easy use by teachers and students.
- From ideas to visuals: Input your concepts freely and watch the tool transform them into visual representations.
- Time-saving: Transform text input into images within seconds.
- Engaging experience: No sign-in required, providing quick image generation exclusively for you.
- Personalization: Tailor images to suit specific teaching needs or styles.



#### **Teaching ideas**

- Flashcards: Creating images for teaching new key language, such as vocabulary, sentences, or grammar examples.
- Teaching materials development: Designing teaching materials like presentation slides, flashcards, and games.
- Conceptual illustration: Illustrating complex concepts such as for young learners or difficult subjects like science or biology.
- **Story illustrations:** Designing images that depict key scenes or characters from stories.



#### **Quick Start Guide**



#### Generate your ideas

Organize your thoughts into words, type them into the box, and then simply press 'Enter,' or explore the available samples on the platform.



#### Add animation effects

Turn your images to animated by adding available effects (accessible when using the provided prompt at the beginning).



#### Download the image

If the generated image fits your idea, download it directly.



#### Access the website

Go to the Microsoft Image Creator website; no sign-in required. Let's explore some ideas for using Microsoft Image Creator in teaching. Generate



#### Scenario 1:

You are looking for a perfect picture to design a PowerPoint holding slide for a game that showcases two students from each team coming to the front. They will listen to an audio and then spell words quickly to earn points.

#### Input text:

Create a Pixar-style image depicting two kids facing each other with competitive expressions. Place a speaker in the middle, surrounded by cheering students, to add to the lively atmosphere.

#### Scenario 2:

You'd like to teach your students about the happiness of rediscovering old things by telling a story about a girl finding an old teddy bear and remembering the joy it brought her.

#### Input text:

- 1. A young girl discovers a mysterious key hidden in her backyard.
- 2. The young girl, with short blonde hair, discovers an old chest in the garage and her curiosity is piqued.
- 3. The little girl with short blonde hair finds an old teddy bear, her childhood favorite and she hugs the bear tightly.















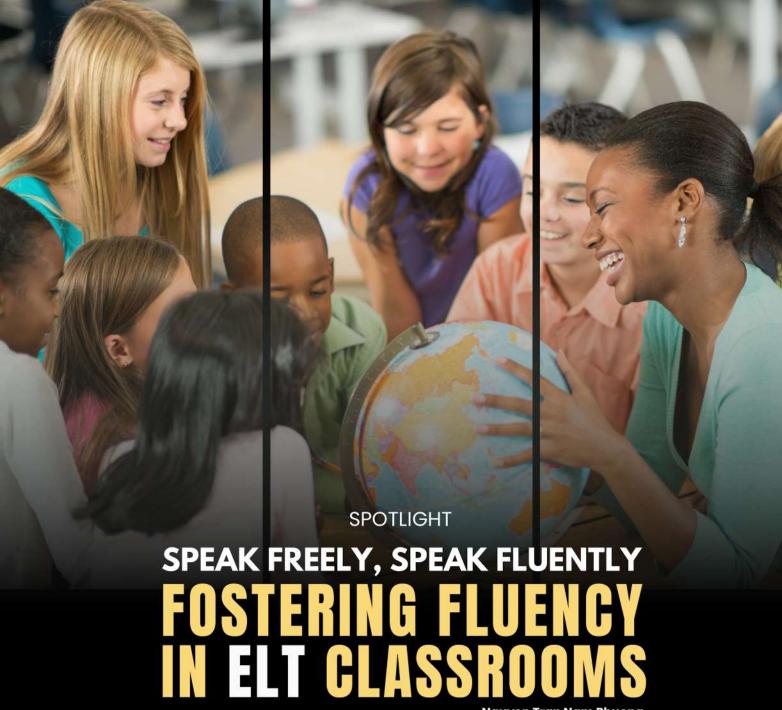
#### Scenario 3:

You want to make special New Year cards for your students that celebrate their individual qualities and characteristics.

#### Input text:

- 1. Create a picture of Bob, with a perpetually grumpy face, is a well-behaved and receptive student in 3D cartoon.
- 2. John, a talkative and easily distracted child, showcases his friendly and supportive nature in a 3D cartoon image.
- 3. Lily, a sweet girl who adores wearing pink, is depicted in a vibrant 3D cartoon image.
- 4. Mary, a girl with long hair, is illustrated in a lively 3D cartoon image. She holds a book and has stickers on her face, reflecting her love for reading and collecting.

Can you figure out which picture shows Bob, John, Lily, and Mary?



Nguyen Tran Nam Phuong

Improving students' English fluency for effective communication to make them more adaptable to modern society has long been a primary concern for language teachers. While achieving fluency is often considered the ultimate goal by learners, it is a challenging objective for many. In reality, practicing fluency in the classroom can be difficult due to factors such as lack of confidence, limited topic-related ideas and vocabulary, and the fear of making mistakes.

In my teaching context, the students are not willing to speak out their ideas, probably due to a lack of interaction opportunities in Vietnamese EFL classes (Hiep, 2007; Canh, 2011; Ngan, 2013; Duy, 2014). To deal with this issue, one of the possible solutions is teachers creating fluency-building activities which could be used to stimulate meaningful classroom communication.



#### The Fluency-oriented approach

Focusing on learner's fluent speech, the fluencyoriented approach considers minor grammatical or pronunciation mistakes as inessential, especially at the early stage of the learning process. Correcting these errors directly or emphasizing them heavily is considered harmful rather than helpful, since it may lead to undue monitor in learners' mind, hindering natural acquisition of speaking ability (Ebsworth, 1998). This approach emphasizes that effective speaking ability is closely tied to meaningful communication.

#### Components of effective fluency-oriented activities

Fluency-building activities should be 'open' exercises, encouraging learners to be more creative and take linguistic risks without worrying about 'right' or 'wrong' answer (Patterson, 2013). Teachers adhering to this approach can focus on the natural production of language, where open-ended activities simulating authentic situations are more appropriate.

Since fluency comes from accessing one already knows (Nation, 2007), a fluency-based activity should not overly emphasize new language forms. Instead they should provide students with multiple opportunities to activate and master the language they have already encountered while reducing unnatural hesitations.

During the fluency-boosting stage, it is better if prompting and correction are held back "as late as possible" so as not to interfere with the students' opportunity to learn through negotiating meaning (Lynch, 1997). The focus should be on the production of language and speed rather than mistake correction. It is crucial to set achievable goals to avoid inhibition in speech, necessiating the of incorporation of certain achievable language items into communication-oriented tasks.

#### Principles of effective fluency-oriented activities

The application and customization of effective fluency-oriented activities should adhere to the following principles.

Efficient communication

Effective communication
involves accurately receiving
and responding to messages.
Educators should prompt
students to grasp the context of
dialogues during fluency
practice in the classroom to
heighten their awareness.

g fluency classroom to awareness.

#### Relevant language

Teachers can enhance fluency by incorporating visual aids such as language prompts or images, to help students focus and memorize language. Students should also be given sufficient time to practice language before presenting it publicly.

#### Unrestricted practice

To alleviate students' speech inhibition, they should be provided with opportunities to express themselves without the fear of immediate correction from the teacher.

#### Constructive Feedback

When providing feedback on a student's performance, teachers should highlight several improved aspects of their speech to motivate and encourage them. In the case of errors, teachers can choose to discuss typical ones that might significantly impact their subsequent performance.

#### Suggested fluency-oriented activities (Utilized at Nam Phuong Center for English)

The chosen fluency-enhancing activities on the next page are carefully introduced based on the outlined criteria and principles, placing emphasis on their adaptability and relevance to the English teaching environment in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Given the prevalent reluctance of learners in Mekong Delta provinces to actively participate and express themselves in English, these activities aim to foster natural classroom interaction. Simultaneously, the objective is to minimize the teacher's focus on error correction, enabling students to engage more actively and speak English more fluently, even in the presence of occasional minor mistakes.



# The Eyewitness

This task is particular suitable for the concluding phase, where students assimilate and apply the provided language in meaningful communication.

- 1. Assemble a set of 4 images featuring individuals that can be easily duplicated (e.g., 4 men with varied ages and facial hair).
- Divide the class into pairs (A and B). Student A plays the role of a witness, and B acts as a policeman.
- 3.Construct a scenario where student A witnessed a serious crime, and they need to provide the police (student B) with information about the perpetrator.
- 4. Briefly display one of the pictures to student A (unseen by student B).
- 5.Student B must interrogate the witness (student A) to describe the person they saw, asking for details like hair, age, clothes, height, and weight. Student B takes notes.
- 6.Present the lineup of 4 people to the police (student B). Which one matches the witness's description?

# **2** Debate

This form of activity can be applied in teaching speaking, as well as reading and writing skills, in the production and brainstorming stages.

- 1.Deliberate on these points before commencing the lesson:
  - Topic: Select a topic that students can relate to, something of interest like a ban on using mobile phones on school campuses.
  - o Debate Format:
    - Whole class or small groups?
    - Who will moderate the debate?
    - Will there be judges to determine the winner?
- Let students brainstorm points for and against the debate motion.
- 3.Introduce useful language structures to help them articulate their views coherently in English.
- 4. Practice:
  - Students have ample time to rehearse their arguments.
  - The teacher doesn't influence the debate; let students guide the flow.
  - Assign some students in the audience to observe their peers' verbal and non-verbal language.



#### FLUENCY-ORIENTED ACTIVITIES

The key factors in selecting and adapting fluency-oriented activities include effective communication, freer practice, useful language, and positive feedback from teachers.

Implemented in EFL classrooms, these activities have demonstrated substantial enhancements in students' spoken fluency across various proficiency levels. They not only improved language skills but also enriched the classroom environment and heightened students' eagerness to converse in English. While acknowledging the contextual limitations, the ideas in this article are expected to aid teachers in Vietnam, and in similar contexts, to enhance their students' speaking fluency.

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Nguyen Tran Nam Phuong is currently an Academic Director at Nam Phuong Center for English, Can Tho City. She received an M.A in TESOL Principles and Methodology in 2014. She has been actively involved in language education as an instructor, teacher trainer, and academic manager. She has worked with learners of all ages including very young and young adult learners, university students, and adult learners. She is now responsible for designing teaching syllabus and materials for EFL courses and teacher training activities. Her professional interests include second language acquisition, teacher professional development, as well as syllabus designing.



In EduVerse PD Webinar #3 last December, our presenter Ms. Teresa Bestwick helped participants explore a range of fluency-oriented activities for adolescent learners to help boost their confidence in the classroom. These activities require minimal preparation and encourage learners to participate in communicative tasks without worrying about giving an incorrect answer.

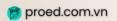
See page 29 for further information.

Boosting Communicative
Confidence
in the Classroom

Recording is
available here.









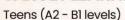
Welcome to the Lesson of the Month column, a dedicated space in our EduVerse newsletter where we bring you insightful and engaging English Language Teaching (ELT) lessons. Whether you're a seasoned ELT professional or a passionate new teacher, this column aims to provide you with a monthly dose of inspiration and practical ideas to enhance your classroom practice.

This lesson plan is specially created and designed by Ms. Nguyen Tran Phuong Uyen, Pro.Ed's R&D specialist.





TARGET LEARNERS





**DURATION** 60 - 90 minutes



**PREPARATION** 

Classroom technology Art supplies

#### LESSON OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- gain a deep understanding of the concept of New Year's resolutions.
- compare the differences between plans and resolutions.
- engage in a debate about New Year's resolutions
- enhance their speaking skills in expressing ideas, preferences, explanations, and comparisons.
- create your own New Year's resolutions



STUDENT WORKSHEET (5 PAGES)



TEACHER'S GUIDE (5 PAGES)







#### **EDUVERSE PD WEBINAR #3**



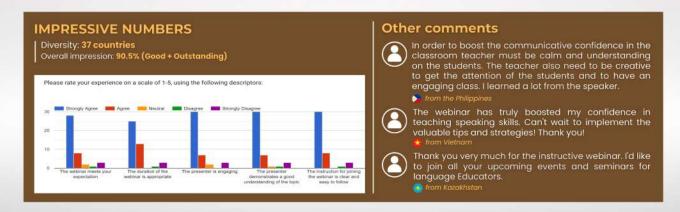


Teachers and educators from 37 countries, including the U.S., U.K., Korea, Japan, Germany, Kazakhstan, Greece, Egypt, and Vietnam came together for this amazing learning opportunity. The active engagement and enthusiasm of all participants in the chat box highlighted dedication from every corner of the world. We're thrilled by the overwhelmingly positive feedback, showing that educators are eager to implement the tips and techniques shared in their classrooms. These factors continue to motivate us to make the EduVerse PD Webinars series a valuable source of professional development for teachers.

Webinar recording is available at https://www.proed.com.vn/eduver se-webinars



A big thank you to Ms. Teresa Bestwick for her high-energy presentation, which provided a range of tips and techniques to help boost classroom confidence. We are excited to announce that our next webinar is scheduled for February 24th, 2024 at 3pm VNT and look forward to having you join us. Stay tuned for more exciting educational insights and opportunities!





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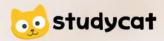
















Pro.Ed and EduVerse are grateful to their partners for their invaluable support in advancing education and empowering teachers and learners worldwide.



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Encouraging children to speak is a key focus. In early levels, pupils practise sounds and letter formations with Monty the mouse. Later on, Lock the detective takes over the ongoing phonics investigation! These dedicated sounds and spelling sections integrate phonics into your lessons, making speaking a natural part of exploring English.



#### **EXAM PREPARATION WOVEN THROUGH** THE COURSE

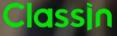
The syllabus follows the Cambridge English Qualifications for Young Learners syllabus, which works towards a celebration of learning for every pupil. Exam preparation is gently woven into each level, familiarising pupils with exam scenarios in a natural way. New exam folders at the end of the Pupil's Books provide the option of a stronger focus on exam preparation.



#### **FUN AND LAUGHTER FOR EVERYONE**

Ultimately, teaching and learning should be enjoyable. Stories of toys that have personalities of their own, hapless detectives and an archaeologist's exploration of the ancient world bring fun, laughter and discovery to the experience. There's just something about Trevor's tendency to eat pencils that makes you smile...

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# ELT BUZZ ¾

EVERYTHING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING



#### **ABOUT ELT BUZZ**



ELT Buzz grew out of the former EFL Classroom, a huge online portal serving teachers from 2005 - 2018.

The changing landscape of how English language teachers interact online led to the creation of ELT Buzz in 2018. We provide teachers with a directory for ELT and updated news and events. Also, a professional lesson library, print and digital. Lastly, a video platform with the best videos for teaching English.

Our Linkedin community serves 88,000 teachers daily. We also provide individual lesson resources through TpTs.

Linked in

#### **OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

ELT Buzz aims to provide English language teachers around the world with essential information about the profession and inspiration for their own classroom teaching and professional development.

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- · Directory Of ELT services, books, tools etc ...
- · Weekly News Report

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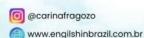




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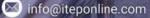
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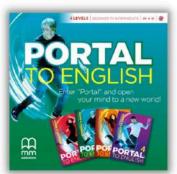


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