



TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE AGE OF AI: HOW MODERN TECHNOLOGIES ARE RESHAPING THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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A reflective article for English language educators in technical and vocational institutions

Abstract. Something has shifted in English language classrooms over the past few years — and teachers working in technical colleges have felt it perhaps more than most. Students arrive with smartphones in their pockets, AI tools at their fingertips, and expectations shaped by a digital world that never stops moving. This article takes a practical and honest look at how artificial intelligence and digital technologies are changing the way English is taught and learned. It does not argue that technology solves everything. But it does make the case that teachers who engage thoughtfully with these tools — rather than ignoring or fearing them — will be better placed to serve their students now and in the years ahead.

1. Introduction

Not long ago, the most advanced technology in a language classroom was a CD player and a set of headphones. Teachers who wanted to expose students to authentic English had limited options: a handful of cassette recordings, perhaps a video if the school had a television. The idea that a student could have a real-time conversation in English with an AI language model, receive instant feedback on their pronunciation, or access millions of authentic texts at the touch of a screen would have seemed like science fiction.

It is not science fiction anymore. And for English teachers in technical colleges — institutions whose students are, by their very nature, oriented toward technology and innovation — this shift presents both an opportunity and a responsibility. The question is no longer whether to use technology in the language classroom. The more pressing question is how to use it well.

2. How We Got Here: A Brief History of Technology in Language Teaching

Technology has always had a place in language education, even if that place looked very different in earlier decades. The language laboratory of the 1960s and 70s — rows of booths equipped with headphones and tape recorders — represented an early attempt to use technology to give students more individualized listening and speaking practice. Computer-Assisted Language Learning, or CALL, emerged in the 1980s and expanded steadily through the 1990s as personal computers became more common.

What has changed in recent years is not the idea of using technology, but the sheer scale and sophistication of what is available. The internet gave learners access to an essentially unlimited supply of authentic English content. Smartphones put that content in every pocket. And artificial intelligence — particularly in its most recent, large-scale forms — has made it possible for learners to interact with English in ways that previously required a human



conversation partner. Each of these developments has raised new questions for teachers about what their role should be and what good teaching looks like in this environment.

3. Artificial Intelligence: What It Can Actually Do in the Classroom

The term "artificial intelligence" covers a wide range of tools, and it is worth being specific about what is actually available and what it can realistically offer to English language learners in technical colleges.

Conversational AI and large language models

Tools like ChatGPT have attracted enormous attention, and not without reason. For language learners, they offer something genuinely valuable: a patient, always-available conversation partner that can respond to questions, generate example sentences, explain grammatical structures, and provide feedback on written work at any hour of the day. A student preparing a professional email in English can draft it, submit it to ChatGPT for feedback, revise it, and submit again — going through multiple cycles of improvement without waiting for a teacher's availability. This kind of iterative practice is hard to replicate in a traditional classroom setting.

That said, these tools have real limitations. They do not always catch subtle errors in register or tone. They can reinforce incorrect patterns if students accept their suggestions uncritically. And they cannot replace the kind of socially embedded, culturally nuanced communication that happens between real people. Teachers need to help students use these tools intelligently rather than passively.

Pronunciation and speech recognition tools

Apps like ELSA Speak and Speechace use speech recognition technology to assess pronunciation at a level of detail that is genuinely difficult for a teacher managing a large class. A student can practice a word or sentence repeatedly, receiving immediate feedback on specific phonemes, stress patterns, and intonation. For technical college students who will eventually need to communicate in English in professional settings, this kind of focused pronunciation practice can be enormously valuable — and it is available any time, not only during class hours.

Adaptive vocabulary and grammar platforms

Duolingo is perhaps the best-known example of an AI-driven adaptive learning platform, but it is far from the only one. These tools track learner performance over time, identify areas of persistent difficulty, and adjust the content and pacing of practice activities accordingly. The underlying algorithm does what a teacher with thirty students in a room simply cannot: give each learner a genuinely individualized experience. When used alongside classroom instruction, these platforms can significantly accelerate vocabulary and grammar development.



AI tools for teachers

It is not only students who benefit. AI tools are increasingly able to help teachers save time and improve the quality of their materials. Platforms like MagicSchool AI can generate reading comprehension questions, gap-fill exercises, vocabulary lists, and even full lesson plan drafts in a matter of minutes. For an English teacher in a technical college who is preparing materials across multiple professional specializations — IT, medicine, engineering — these tools can meaningfully reduce the burden of content preparation.

4. The Broader Digital Toolkit: What Else Is Worth Using

AI gets most of the headlines, but it is only part of the picture. A range of other digital technologies has quietly become standard in effective English language classrooms, and teachers who have not yet explored them are missing some genuinely useful tools.

- Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle or Google Classroom allow teachers to organize course content, set and collect assignments, run online quizzes, and communicate with students between lessons. For English teachers juggling multiple groups, an LMS can bring a level of organization and consistency that paper-based approaches simply cannot match.

- Interactive classroom tools like Kahoot!, Mentimeter, and Nearpod introduce an element of play and competition into vocabulary review and comprehension checks. In technical colleges, where students may not arrive with strong intrinsic motivation to study language, a well-designed quiz game can shift the energy of a lesson noticeably.

- Video platforms — particularly YouTube — give students access to an essentially unlimited supply of authentic English content in their professional field. A future nurse can watch English-language medical explanations. An IT student can follow programming tutorials. A construction student can view engineering documentaries. Teachers who actively direct students toward relevant channels are extending the language classroom far beyond its four walls.

- Collaborative writing tools such as Google Docs allow students to work together on texts in real time, with the teacher able to observe, comment, and guide the process as it unfolds. This kind of collaborative writing is both pedagogically rich and practically relevant — most professional writing in real workplaces involves some form of collaborative editing.

5. Putting It Together: The Case for Blended Learning

Here is a temptation worth naming: the idea that if digital tools are good, then more digital tools must be better. This is not quite right. Technology works best in language teaching when it is integrated thoughtfully into a broader pedagogical design — not when it replaces human interaction, but when it extends and enriches it.

Blended learning — combining face-to-face classroom instruction with technology-mediated activities — has accumulated a strong evidence base over the past two decades. The key insight is that different kinds of learning work better in different formats. Direct instruction, communicative interaction, feedback on spoken performance, and the social



dynamics of a real classroom — these are things that human teachers do better than any app. Spaced repetition of vocabulary, independent reading practice, pronunciation drilling, and grammar reinforcement at the learner's own pace — these are things that digital tools can handle effectively, freeing up classroom time for richer human interaction.

A practical example: a teacher might introduce a set of technical vocabulary items in class, using a word map activity and whole-class discussion to build initial understanding. Students then practice the items independently using Quizlet between lessons. The following class uses the vocabulary in a speaking task — a role-play, a presentation, a debate — where the teacher can observe, support, and give real-time feedback. Each stage does what it does best.

6. Honest Challenges: What Technology Cannot Fix

Any article on technology in education risks becoming a kind of advertisement, so it seems worth being direct about the limitations and difficulties involved.

Access is not equal. Not every student has a reliable smartphone or a stable internet connection at home. Teachers who design technology-dependent homework activities need to think carefully about whether all their students can actually complete them. Digital equity is a real issue, and it requires real solutions — whether that means making computer labs available outside class hours, designing activities that work offline, or simply acknowledging that some students will need alternative arrangements.

Academic integrity becomes more complicated when AI writing tools are freely available. A student who submits a ChatGPT-generated essay has not developed their writing skills; they have bypassed the learning process entirely. Teachers need to design assessments thoughtfully — emphasizing process over product, incorporating in-class writing tasks, and helping students understand why developing their own abilities matters even when shortcuts are available.

And perhaps most importantly: not everything valuable in a language classroom can be digitized. The spontaneous conversation that sparks genuine curiosity. The moment when a student suddenly grasps a difficult concept because a teacher found exactly the right way to explain it. The quiet confidence that builds when a student realizes, in a real interaction with another person, that they can actually do this. These things are not downloadable. They are what teachers are for.

7. Conclusion

The English language classroom in a technical college is not the same place it was ten years ago, and it will not be the same place ten years from now. Artificial intelligence and digital technologies have changed what is possible — for students and for teachers — in ways that are still unfolding. Engaging seriously with these changes is not optional for teachers who want to remain effective.

But engaging seriously does not mean chasing every new tool or surrendering professional judgment to an algorithm. It means thinking carefully about what technology





does well, what human teaching does better, and how the two can work together in service of students who deserve both. That combination — rigorous, reflective, and genuinely student-centred — is what good English teaching has always looked like. Technology changes the tools. It does not change the goal.

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