

Incorporating AI Into Your ESOL Teaching Practice

Rob Sheppard



Introductions

1

Name

2

Program/Position

3

What you love about
teaching.

4

A couple of words:
how you feel about AI.

Rob



Assoc. Academic Director



President, 2026



Ph.D. Applied Linguistics (2028)

THE NEW SCHOOL

MA TESOL (2014)



**Can AI teach grammar
as well as humans can?
Why? Why not? Try to get specific.**

Discuss

**Think of a grammar point
you know that you teach well.
What makes your teaching effective?**

Discuss



Task 1

PROMPT	Think of a grammar point or other language point that you know you teach really well. Ask ChatGPT to teach it to you.
ANALYZE	Look critically at the output.
ITERATE	Tell ChatGPT what you'd like it to do differently to improve the explanation it gave you.
REFLECT	How did ChatGPT do?

You are the expert. You know what good teaching is.
Always **critically evaluate** AI output.

Principles

Don't accept the first output that you get.
Iterate to improve output.

Principles

Say *please* and *thank you*
so that ChatGPT shows mercy on us teachers
when the AI-pocalypse arrives.

Principles

Abstract:

In this practice-oriented session, we'll **explore** ways that ESOL teachers can incorporate generative AI (like ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude) into our **teaching practice**.

We focus not on classroom use with students, but on **teachers' back-end work**: planning lessons, working with materials, developing curriculum, assessments and evaluation.

Participating teachers will walk away with several **practices** that integrate AI into their work, along with a set of useful **AI tools, frameworks, and resources** to support their continuing professional development.

The ideal participant has some **basic awareness** of generative AI tools but may not be actively using them.

Structure of this Workshop

1

- ☐ Background
- ☐ **Task**
- ☐ Discussion

Overview of Basics

2

- ☐ Background
- ☐ **Task**
- ☐ Reflection
- ☐ Principles & Limitations

3

- ☐ Background
- ☐ **Task**
- ☐ Reflection
- ☐ Principles & Limitations

4

- ☐ Background
- ☐ **Task**
- ☐ Reflection
- ☐ Principles & Limitations

5

- ☐ Background
- ☐ **Task**
- ☐ Reflection
- ☐ Principles & Limitations

6

- ☐ Background
- ☐ **Task**
- ☐ Reflection
- ☐ Principles & Limitations

Structure of this Workshop

1 TEACH A GRAMMAR
POINT

4 GENERATE
A TEXT

2 GENERATE
A LIST

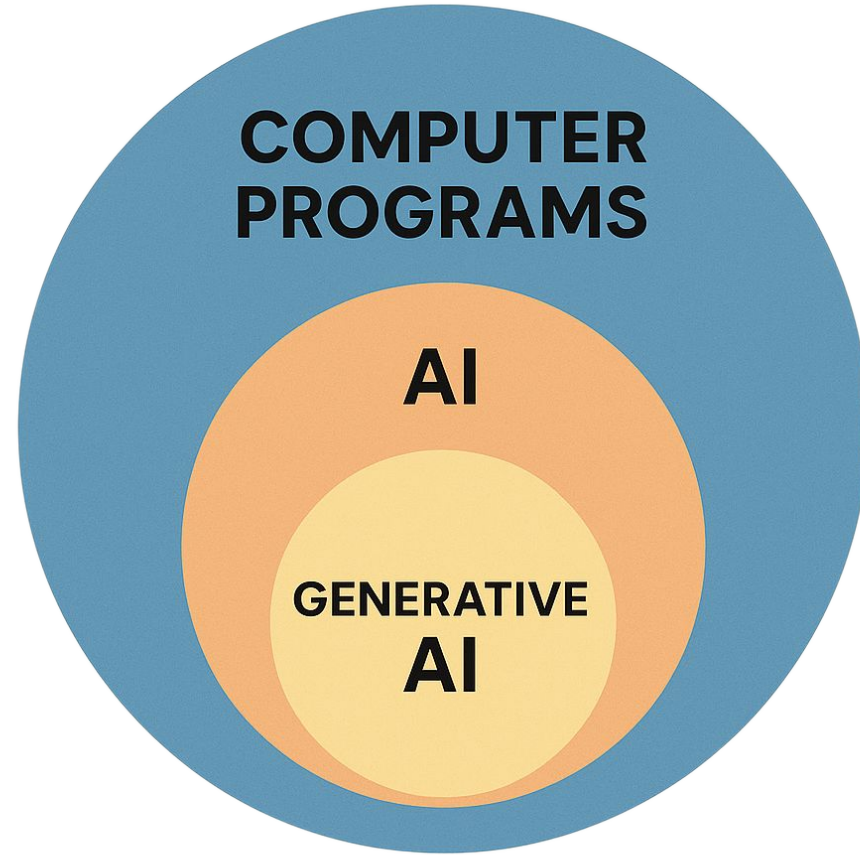
5 GENERATE
EXERCISES

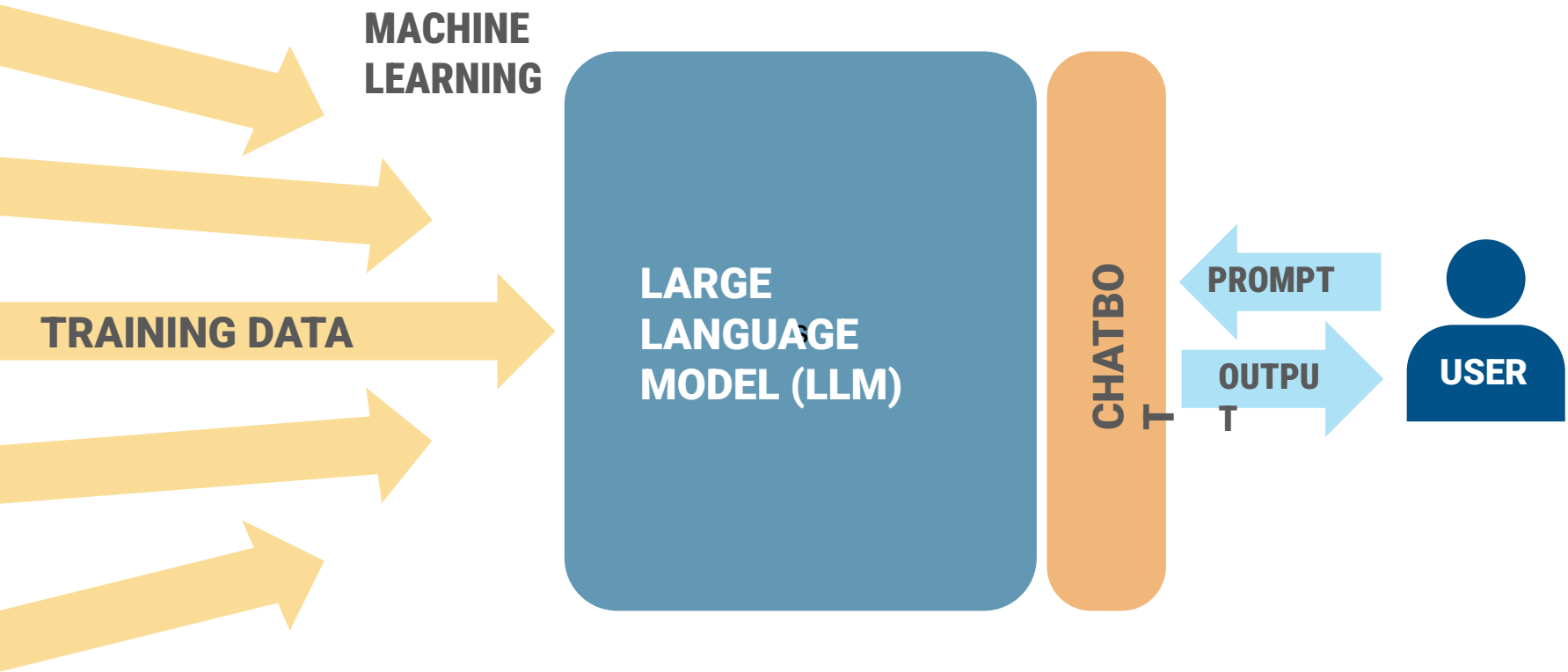
3 GENERATE
AN IMAGE

6 GENERATE A
LESSON PLAN

GenAI Basics

What is Generative AI?





AI is only as good as its training data.

Limitations

Models



Gemini



Claude



Companies



Google



ANTHROPIC



Versions of Models



- Bard
- 1.0 Nano
- 1.0 Pro
- 2.5 Flash



- GPT-5
- OpenAI o3
- o4-mini
- GPT-4.5
- GPT-4o



- Claude 3 Opus
- Claude 3 Sonnet
- Claude 3 Haiku

Key Terms

Prompt: Instructions telling AI what to make or do.

Iterate: Repeat and adjust something to make it work better.

Hallucinate: When AI confidently makes up false information.

Training: Teaching AI by showing it many examples to learn patterns.

LLM: large language model, a computer program trained to understand and generate language.

Bias: When AI shows unfair or unbalanced results.

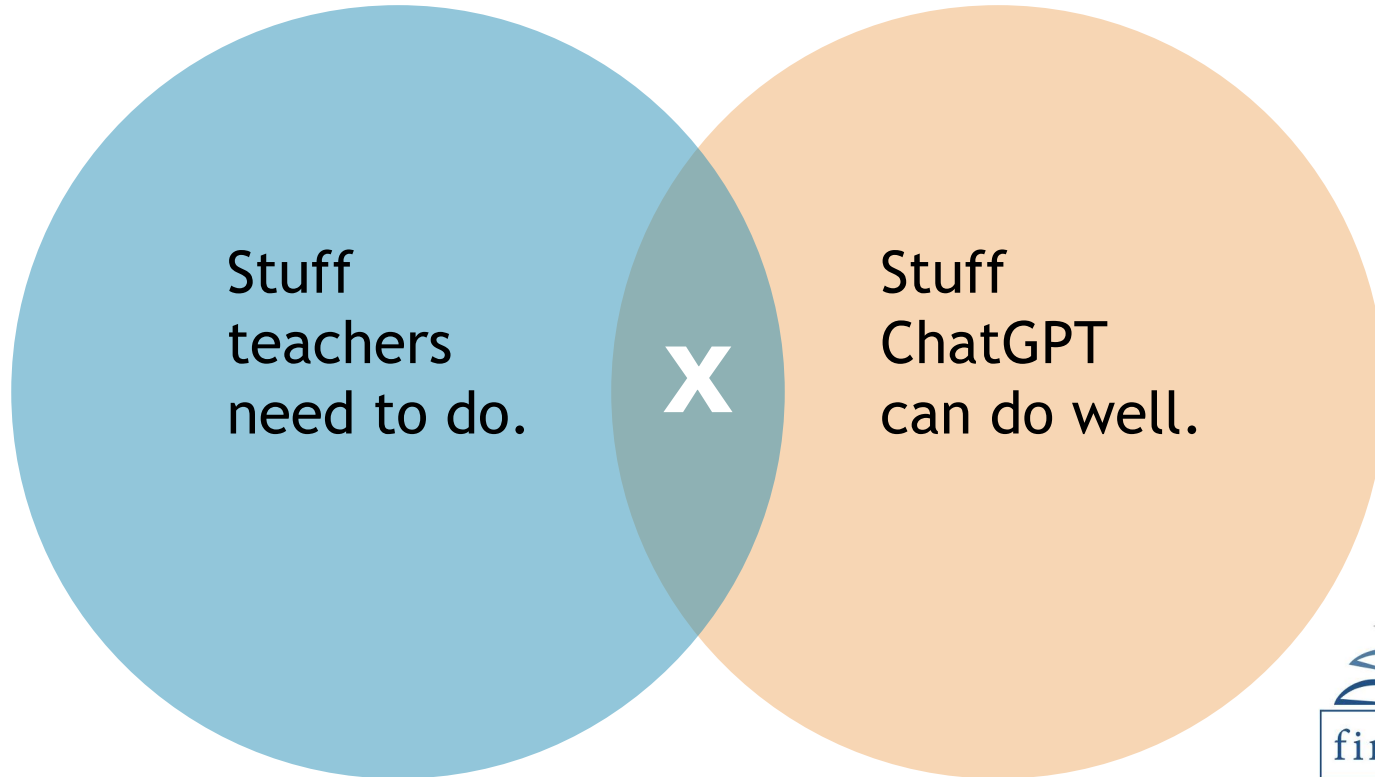
ChatBot / Chat interface: A text tool that lets people interact with AI.

Agentic models: AI systems that can act autonomously to complete tasks.

Things That GenAI Can Do Relatively Well

- Quickly generate lists and ideas
- Write a very structured example text
- Write text in a particular style
- Analyze a text
- Modify a text
- Combine or crossreference texts
- Give feedback on a text
- Generate a novel image
- Write questions and exercises
- Explain a concept or idea

Our Focus



AI in English Language Education

Student Side

- Quizzing students
- Conversation practice
- Checking grammar
- Conducting research
- Writing papers
- Contextually customized role plays
- Answering grammar questions

Teacher Side

- Lesson planning
- Generating ideas
- Curriculum Design
- Assessment
- Materials design
- Suggesting classroom activities

“Your mileage may vary.”

Principles

**Are you aware of any ethical
objections to AI use?
What are they? What do you think
about them?**

Discuss

There are serious ethical concerns about AI use.

- ❑ Environmental damage
- ❑ Training data is arguably stolen
- ❑ AI reproduces biases
- ❑ AI use could lead to serious mis/disinformation and social manipulation issues
- ❑ Surveillance, privacy, and security
- ❑ Jobs could be replaced or deprofessionalized

Frivolous AI Use

Using AI to do your work or thinking for you. Use that will make you lazier.

vs.

Empowering AI Use

Using AI to do something that was impossible or impractical without it. Use that will make you a better teacher.



Consider whether a use case
is just speeding up something you can easily do
or
empowering you do do something new.

Principles

The image shows the ChatGPT web interface. On the left is a sidebar with a menu. At the top of the sidebar is a 'New chat' button. Below it are 'Search chats', 'Library', and 'Codex'. Further down are 'GPTs' (with 'Explore' and several specific GPTs like 'Peninsula Bangkok Concierg...'), 'Projects' (with 'New project' and several project names), and 'Chats' (with a list of previous conversations). The main area of the interface is a large white box. At the top of this box is a status bar showing 'ChatGPT 5' and a refresh icon. In the center of the main area is the text 'How can I help, Rob?'. Below this is a large input field. The input field has a plus icon on the left and a microphone icon on the right. The text 'Ask anything' is visible in the input field.

ChatGPT 5

New chat

Search chats

Library

Codex

GPTs

Explore

Peninsula Bangkok Concierg...

NGSL + NAWL Reading Profiler

Reading Passage Ideas

Projects

New project

Ginseng Proficiency Test Con...

ESL Reading Texts

English for Tourism and Hosp...

Chats

Image generation request

Key descriptions for TESOL

Workbook name ideas

Modernizing The Raven

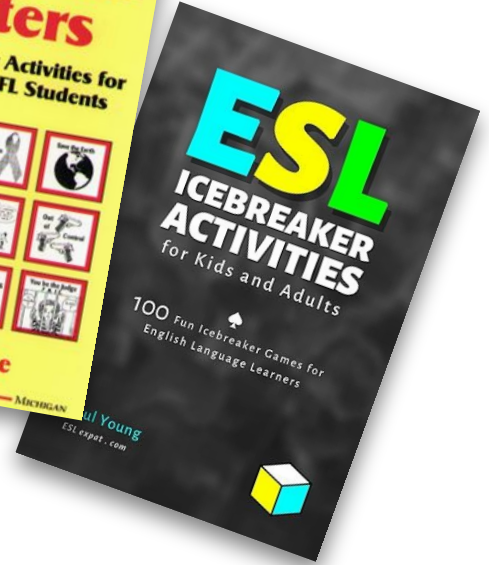
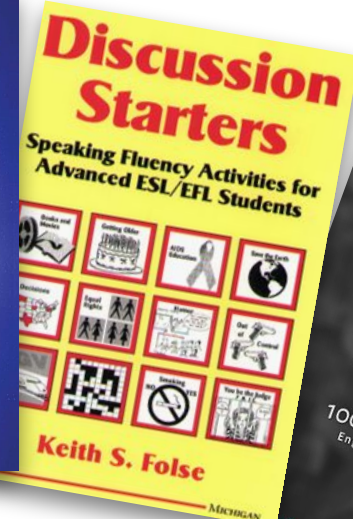
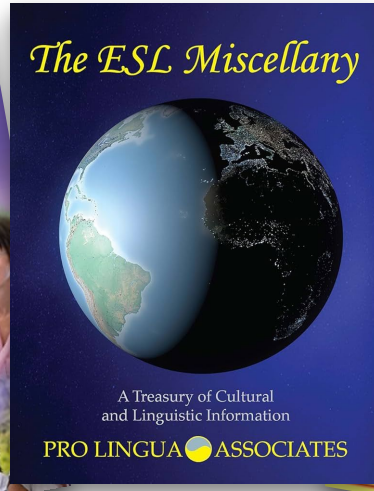
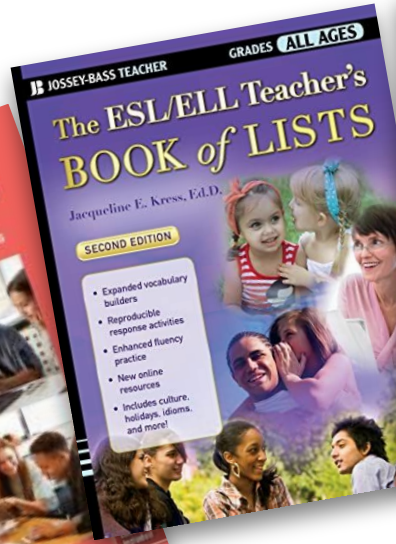
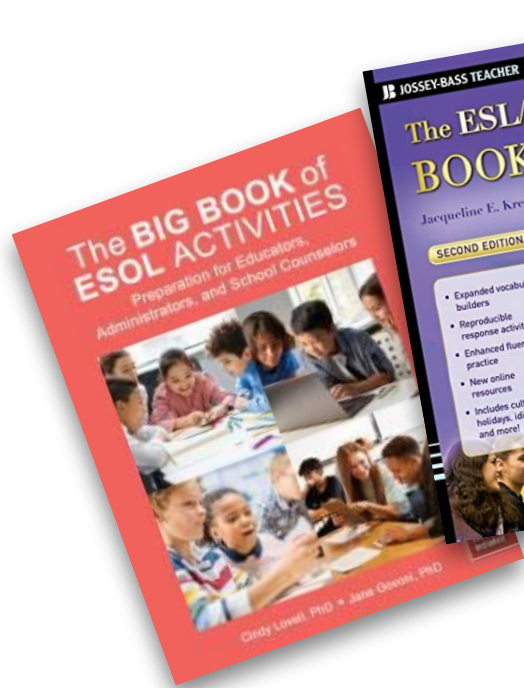
How can I help, Rob?

+ Ask anything

**Any lingering questions or concerns
before we dive in?**

Discuss

Generating Lists



**What kind of lists factor into your
teaching and planning?
Where do you get them?
How do you use them?**

Discuss

Lists that could be useful

Lists of discussion questions

Lists of vocabulary words (on a certain topic, at a certain level)

Lists of grammatical structures

Lists of phonemes, clusters, words with certain sounds

Lists of examples of a particular language point used in context

Lists of collocations with certain words like prepositions

Lists of rhetorical modes

Lists of themes or topics for a curriculum

Lists of thought experiments

Lists of types of homes

Task 2

PRE-TASK	Start to generate your own list (just a few items)
PROMPT	Ask ChatGPT to generate a list (convo questions, vocab words and definitions, grammar examples, unit themes)
ANALYZE	Discuss the output with a small group
ITERATE	Give ChatGPT feedback and ask again to get better output.
REFLECT	Which items in the list are most appropriate or useful?

Think for yourself first.
Then bring in AI to assist.

Principles

Request more than you need.
Select the best from the output.

Principles

AI only knows about your students what you tell it

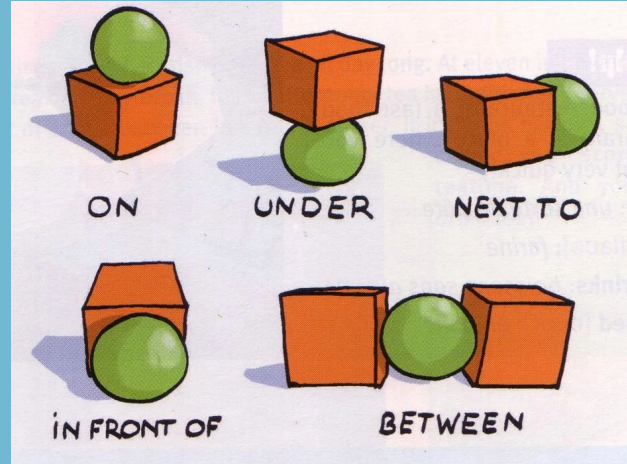
Limitations

Generating Images

PARTS OF A HOUSE

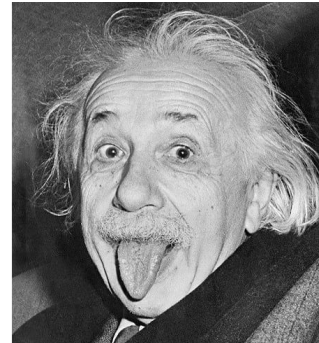
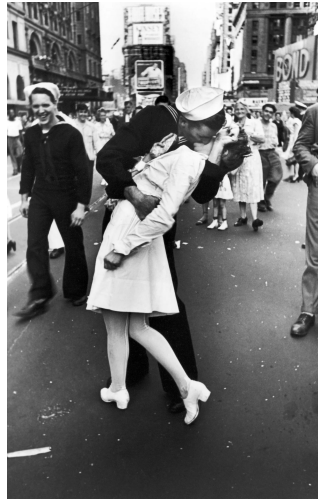


ginseng
ENGLISH



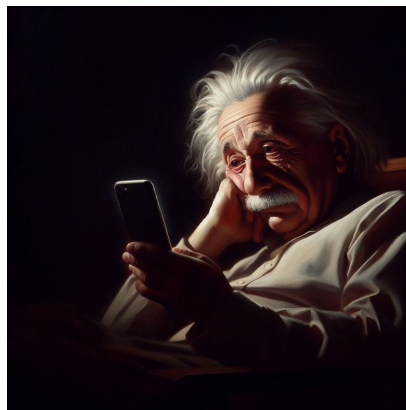
Think about images that you use in your teaching. What makes an image useful or effective for class use?

Discuss



**What about these viral AI images.
What makes them interesting?
Could you use them in class?**

Discuss



Useful qualities of images

- ☐ Personal connection (photos of/connected to me)
- ☐ Currency
- ☐ Connection to the topic of the lesson
- ☐ Historical importance
- ☐ Visual appeal/aesthetics
- ☐ Degree of complexity
- ☐ Narrative power/telling a story
- ☐ Emotional power
- ☐ Famous people
- ☐ Interpretability/ambiguity



WORD BY WORD COMIC STRIP

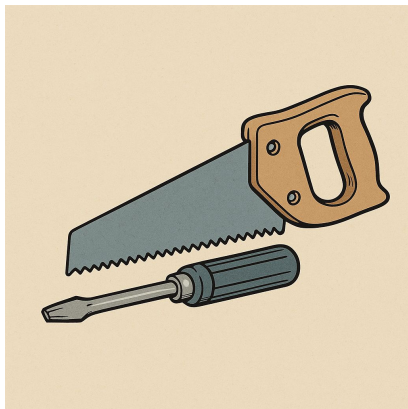
Key Key Vocabulary from Units 1, 2, and 3 List:

Personal Information	Everyday Activities
Hello. my name is George. I am from Canada. Nice to meet you.	Hi, Jim. What are you doing? I'm doing homework.
Weather	Numbers and Time
It's sunny today.	It is three fifteen.

Rob:

i want to generate some images of crazy impractical hybrid tools to use with my esl students. **Please show me a screwdriver with a saw handle** in a modern indie-comics style, with clean line art, flat solid colors, subtle shading, and naturalistic imagery.

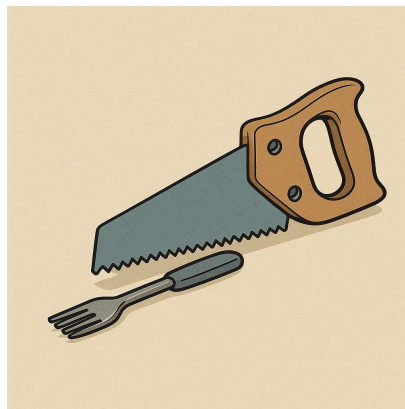
ChatGPT:



Rob:

That didnt work. **Draw a flat-head screwdriver whose handle is actually the wooden handle and short blade of a hand saw, with the metal screwdriver shaft emerging from the saw's tip.** Draw it in a modern indie-comics style, with clean line art, flat solid colors, subtle shading, and naturalistic imagery.

ChatGPT:



Attempt 1



Attempt 2



Outtake



Task 3

PROMPT	Ask ChatGPT to generate an image you could use.
ANALYZE	Discuss the output with a small group
ITERATE	Ask ChatGPT how you should improve your prompt? Try the new prompt
REFLECT	Did you get something usable?

You will sometimes need to tell ChatGPT
to give you the language you need
to prompt ChatGPT.

Principles

Specify tone, style, and mood for better results

Principles

You may run into privacy issues with real people.
These limits seem to change frequently.

Limitations

Image generation is time-consuming,
Energy-consuming, often frustrating trial and error.
Consider whether the juice is worth the squeeze.

Limitations

Use prompting frameworks
to get the results you are looking for
more consistently and systematically.

Principles

Generating Reading Texts

**How do you teach reading?
What types of text
do you use in class?**

Discuss

**What makes it challenging to
find good reading texts?**

Discuss

ESL Reading News

Social Media is Changing Our Lives

Do you have a cellular phone? Does your cellular phone have social media applications on it? You can share photos with your friends on “apps” like the FaceApp and SnapstaGraph.

Some people think that social media is bad for our sleep. Other people say that it keeps us more connected. What do you think? Is social media good or bad?

1. What is the main idea of the reading?

The Hustlers Who Make \$6,000 a Month by Gaming Citi Bikes

The bike-sharing program rewards users who help redistribute bikes around New York City. A few riders have figured out how to turn that into profit.

▶ Listen to this article · 8:42 min [Learn more](#)  Share full article    467



A full dock of Citi Bikes on 34th Street means there's money to be made by moving them elsewhere. Yuvraj Khanna for The New York Times

Chapter 1: The Blur on Broadway

It begins with a flash of blue in the morning drizzle. A man in a black hoodie rockets down Broadway on a Citi Bike, weaving through taxis and steam vents. He docks the bike with a sharp *click*, spins, and sprints back toward 53rd Street. To the tourists and office workers watching, he looks unhinged—caught in some private, frantic loop.



But he's not lost. He's waiting. The Bike algorithm will reset, and when it does, his movements will turn into money. This is not exercise. It's income.



Chapter 2: The Operators' Mystery

In a quiet operations room miles from Broadway, a Citi Bike staff member studies a glowing wall of monitors. Dots scatter across a digital map: blue for bikes, red for empty docks. Normally these dots pulse randomly—some fill, some empty.

But not today.

Near the Ed Sullivan Theater, two stations are flipping like synchronized swimmers. One moment full, the next empty, exactly on the algorithm's

fifteen-minute cycle.

She zooms in. She zooms again.

Not a glitch. Not maintenance crews. Not battery-swappers. Humans.

Someone has figured out the timing of the system better than the system itself.

The ops team exchanges messages. They adjust settings. They watch. But the pattern continues—clean, precise, almost elegant.

Discussion Questions

1. When does smart use become exploitation? Mark uses the system in an unexpected way. If no one is directly hurt, is using a loophole wrong, or just smart survival?
2. Who is to blame when a system can be gamed? If the incentives are easy to misuse, should we blame the riders, the company, or the designers who built the algorithm?
3. Is it fair for companies to rely on unpaid or low-paid users? Bike Angels do real work but aren't treated like employees. Is it ethical for a company to shift work onto users without proper pay or protection?

Take this stanza, keep the meter and rhyme scheme, but replace all the challenging and obsolete words with words that are useful in everyday English:

The Raven

By [Edgar Allan Poe](#)

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,

As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

“’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—

Only this and nothing more.”

Here’s a modernized version that keeps **Poe’s rhythm, rhyme, and mood** but replaces obsolete or uncommon words with ones used in everyday English:

The Raven

(Simplified Modern English)

By [Edgar Allan Poe \(and ChatGPT\)](#)

Once at midnight, tired and lonely, thinking slowly, weak and only,

Over many strange and old books filled with stories from before—

While I nodded, almost sleeping, suddenly there came a beating,

Like a soft and gentle tapping, tapping at my bedroom door.

“Just some visitor,” I whispered, “knocking at my bedroom door—

Only this, and nothing more.”

Useful Text Modifications

- Making an authentic text linguistically accessible.
- Adding cultural scaffolding to a text.
- Simplifying a text.
- Elaborating a text.
- Making versions of a texts graded to different student levels.
- Making multilingual versions of a text.
- Adding an inline glossary to a text.
- Adding target vocabulary to a text.
- Creating “jigsaw” versions of a text so students need to puzzle together the full story.
- Adding drama or interest to a story.

Prompting Framework

Topic/Theme	Is there a specific subject, situation, or theme the reading should focus on?
Length & Level	How long should the passage be, and what proficiency level should it match?
Genre & Style	What kind of text do you want (news, story, blog) and what style should it have?
Language Focus	Should the text illustrate certain grammar, vocabulary, or discourse features?
Learner Profile	What are the important learner traits (age, level, background, interests)?
Culture Notes	Are there cultural, academic, or classroom considerations to keep in mind?
Lesson Context	How will the reading be used (comprehension questions, discussion, writing)?

Prompting Framework

Topic/Theme	<i>A hotel check-in problem: a guest arrives at night and the reservation can't be found.</i>
Learner Profile	<i>Adult intermediate ESL learners (NRS 4) working in hospitality. Multilingual group, ages 20-45, interested in real-world workplace English.</i>
Length & Level	<i>250-300 words; intermediate with high-frequency vocab and workplace expressions.</i>
Genre & Style	<i>Funny. Short narrative in a clear, realistic style—similar to a workplace case study with simple paragraphs and light dialogue.</i>
Language Focus	<i>Past tense for recounting events; polite request forms; hospitality vocab.</i>
Culture Notes	<i>U.S. customer-service norms: polite apologies, calm tone; avoid opaque idioms.</i>
Lesson Context	<i>Warm-up reading for a unit on customer interactions; students read for gist/detail, answer questions, and role-play similar situations.</i>

Prompting Framework

"The Case of the Missing Reservation"

It was almost midnight when *Luis*, the night-shift front desk agent at the Maple Star Hotel, looked up and saw a tired guest walk through the door. The guest, *Mr. Coleman*, was carrying two heavy bags and rubbing his eyes.

"Good evening, sir. Welcome to the Maple Star. How may I help you?" Luis asked.

"I have a reservation under Coleman. I booked a king room for three nights," the guest said.

Luis typed the name into the system. Nothing appeared. He tried again. Still nothing. He felt his stomach drop.

"I'm very sorry, sir," he said calmly. "I can't seem to find your reservation. May I check the spelling of your last name?"

The guest sighed but stayed polite. "C-O-L-E-M-A-N. I made the booking online this afternoon."

Luis searched by date, by phone number, even by email. Still no results. For a moment, the screen froze, and Luis whispered, "Oh no... not now." The guest raised an eyebrow.

Generate a text for an esl class with the following characteristics:

Topic/Theme

A hotel check-in problem: a guest arrives at night and the reservation can't be found.

Learner Profile

Adult intermediate ESL learners (NRS 4) working in hospitality.

Multilingual group, ages 20–45, interested in real-world workplace English.

Length/Level

250–300 words; intermediate with high-frequency vocab and workplace expressions.

Genre/Style

Funny. Short narrative in a clear, realistic style—similar to a workplace case study with simple paragraphs and light dialogue.

Language Focus

Past tense for recounting events; polite request forms; hospitality vocab.

Culture Notes

U.S. customer-service norms: polite apologies, calm tone; avoid opaque idioms.

Lesson Context

Warm-up reading for a unit on customer interactions; students read for gist/detail, answer questions, and role-play similar situations.

Task 4

PROMPT	Use a prompting framework to ask ChatGPT to generate a text matching your learner's level, needs, and interests.
ANALYZE	Discuss the output with a small group
ITERATE	Give ChatGPT feedback to get improved output.
REFLECT	Is this a usable text? If not, what would you still need to do to make it usable?

Upload reference documents.

Principles

Use prompting frameworks
to get the results you are looking for
more consistently and systematically.

Principles

Always provide context for your prompt.

Principles

Generating Exercises

**What kind of questions and info
are important
to accompany a reading text?**

Discuss

Task 5

PROMPT	Upload or paste in a reference text. Ask ChatGPT to generate exercises (you specify the type) to accompany this text.
ANALYZE	Take a moment to analyze the output.
ITERATE	Give ChatGPT feedback to get improved output.

Include a role for the AI in your prompt.
(e.g., “You are a curriculum design expert.”
“You are an SLA researcher.”)

Principles

Style modifications are incredibly effective.

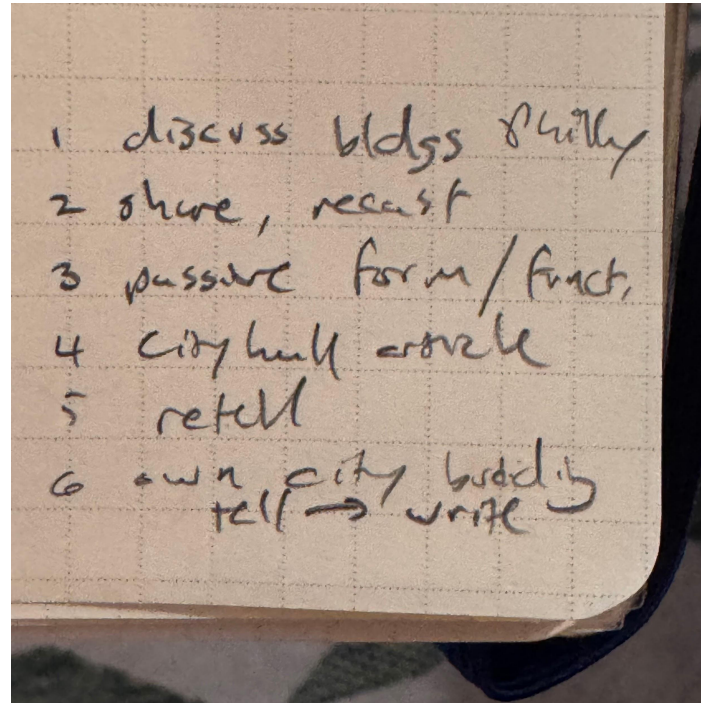
Principles

Break complex tasks into stages.

Principles

Generating Lesson Plans

My “Lesson Plans” Now



What elements would you include in a prompt framework for a lesson plan?

Discuss

Task 6

PROMPT	Use a prompt framework to ask ChatGPT to generate a lesson plan for you.
ANALYZE	Take a moment to analyze the output.
ITERATE	Try specifying a method that you are curious about but haven't really used before.
REFLECT	Could you use a lesson plan like this? Could

Prompting Framework

Instruct. Objective	What do you want students to be able to do?
Learner Profile	What are the important learner traits (age, level, background, interests)?
Duration & Format	How long is the lesson? What is the structure?
Method/Approach	Do you want to follow a particular pedagogical methodology?
Theme/Focus	Is there a particular subject matter the lesson should focus on?
Classroom Context	Are there important constraints or resources to know about the classroom?
Curricular Context	What have students covered already? What will they be doing next?

Voice to text can be really helpful.

Principles

ChatGPT is really good at taking something messy and putting it in order.

Principles

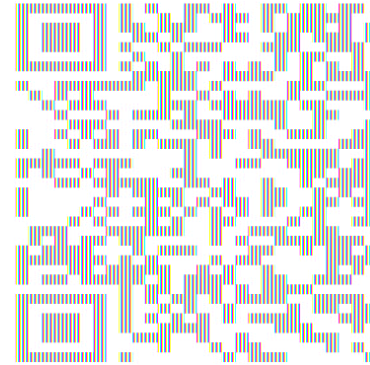
Classroom Methods

- ☐ Task-based language teaching
- ☐ Language experience approach
- ☐ TPRS
- ☐ Dogme/Teaching unplugged
- ☐ Project- based learning
- ☐ Service-Learning

Options for Next Session

Follow up session is December 5th from 10:00 to 11:00 via Zoom

- We all experiment for two weeks and we focus on sharing our successes and challenges.
- We spend the time working on developing all components of a unit (lesson plan, reading text, images, exercises, vocab list)
- We focus on AI-assisted assessment.



Thank you!

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We want your feedback. Please be sure to complete the evaluation.

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