

Exploring AI-enabled vs AI-enabling resources

Transcript

Katie: My name is Katie, and today I'm speaking with ClarityEnglish's founder Andrew Stokes. We'll be speaking about the challenges of implementing AI into online English-language learning resources. So clearly, AI has a lot of potential benefits. Andrew, can we just start by talking about some of the challenges.

Andrew: I think one of the things that we've noticed since AI came out, [what a couple of years ago?], is that a lot of publishers have felt that they have to put AI into their products, because that's what the market expects. And I think that is true, perhaps more so in Asia than in Western countries, but there is a pressure to incorporate AI. Unfortunately, the result has been that AI has been forced into roles which it isn't really equipped to deal with.

So if I can give you one example, there's a language learning platform that I use, which is basically a tuition platform, that pairs up teachers and learners. It's an excellent platform in every way, or at least it was, until it added AI. And the AI is, I mean, it doesn't spoil the platform at all, but it's an irritant. I did the free trial, and the kind of information that the AI produces is just simply not useful for language learners or teachers. To give you just one simple example, it gives you an average word count per sentence that you speak, and then diagnoses your level from that number. Now any language professional knows that in an uncontrolled text type, speaking text type, that's simply not a valid measure of level. So either they felt obliged to put in AI because that's what everybody else was doing, or they thought that this could be quite a nice little extra money spinner, so they put it in, but it actually doesn't have any pedagogically useful function the way that they're doing it. So it's a good example of putting AI in just for the sake of it, where it doesn't really belong. And there's a lot of that.

Katie: I think that's a really good example, and I'm sure many people can think of places where AI has come up that we're not really sure why it's there, what value it adds. So how is Clarity combating that? How are they putting AI in in a useful and meaningful way, into the resources?

Andrew: So we've had a good long think about this over the last 18 months. We've done a lot of research. We've looked into what the AI can do, and we've also considered the ways in which it will actually be practically and pedagogically useful for the students. And the conclusion we've come to is that we need to take two separate approaches to implementing AI into Clarity programs.

The first we can call AI-enabled. So there's a clear use, a clear practical advantage, a clear benefit to putting AI into, for example, a speaking test, as we've done in the Dynamic Speaking Test. So why is that useful? Well, you know, when I was a teacher many, many years ago, I used to do speaking tests for people who are coming into the school. For a young teacher to do that, you're not going to get a valid or reliable output in terms of the grade that you give them, and it's very time intensive. With a reliable, valid AI test you can do 20 or 30 students at the same time. It's very much more efficient. It saves admin costs,

and you also come out with a more accurate result. So obviously, the same applies to writing tests as well. So that's just an example of how an AI-enabled program is useful.

The other side of it, which in many ways is more interesting, I think, is to help independent learners understand how AI can benefit their learning. So for example, you're practising reading, and you have a text which is a dialogue between two friends who are perhaps deciding what they want to do at the weekend. You read that, but it's useful to consolidate that learning by reading parallel texts. So with the correct prompt, you can ask the AI to come up with parallel text at the same level, the same word count, same language level I mean, the same word count, perhaps reinforcing some of the vocabulary. But you need to know how to do it. You need to understand how the AI prompts work, and what you can expect the AI to deliver, and how you can judge what the AI delivers. So we call this AI-enabling.

If I just give one more example. We're currently updating our grammar program, Tense Buster, and we've worked out quite a fun little activity called the Preposition Detective Agency. So we are teaching the students how to create a prompt so that the AI becomes a detective agency. The AI is actually the Chief Inspector. The student is the detective, and the AI produces texts with mistakes in it. The detective has to investigate the texts, find the mistakes, explain why they are mistakes, and then come up with a report for the chief inspector, who can then review the report. So interactive, fun, something that couldn't be done before AI. So I think that's just a couple of examples of the different ways in which AI can be useful.

Katie: I suppose the most important part of this introduction of AI is acknowledging and accepting that AI isn't going anywhere. It is very much only developing and giving learners the tools to understand it, to utilise it, to use it in the right way, is a really important skill that we need to be teaching and educators need to be aware of. So I think that that all sounds really great. If people want to learn more about AI in Clarity programs, where can they turn to? Who can they ask? Where can we refer them?

Andrew: There's plenty of stuff that we've written on AI on the Clarity blog, blog.clarityenglish.com. Read about the Dynamic Speaking Test, which there's a lot of information and resources on the Dynamic Speaking Test page on our website, clarityenglish.com. And of course, you're always welcome to contact us to discuss it, me or anybody else at Clarity, info@clarityenglish.com is a good place to start. Just find the details on our [contact page](#).

Katie: Fantastic. Thank you, Andrew.

Andrew: Thank you. Bye.
