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Book Reviews

AI-powered language teaching (book review)

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A chatbot can return a corrected paragraph almost immediately. Deciding whether its corrections help the learner takes longer. A grammatically acceptable revision may remove a student's intended meaning; an accurate explanation may be too difficult for the student to use. Such decisions remain with the teacher, even when the technology makes the production of feedback look effortless. They are also central to Jeong-Bae Son and Andrew Philpott's (2026) *AI-Powered Language Teaching*. The book considers what language teachers need to understand before introducing AI into their work, and what they need to keep questioning afterwards. Its interest is in the educational decisions surrounding the technology, with particular attention to teacher preparation and classroom practice.

Both authors have established connections with computer-assisted language learning. Son is an Honorary Professor at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia, whose specialisms include language teacher education. Philpott is a Special Instructor of Language at Kwansei Gakuin University's Language Center in Japan. His research includes second-language motivation and autonomous learning, alongside work on educational technologies. Their experience is apparent in the book's recurring concern with the distance between knowing that a tool exists and knowing how to use it for a particular group of learners.

The intended audience includes prospective and practising teachers, as well as teacher educators and researchers. Someone approaching AI for the first time will find explanations of familiar applications and their educational uses. A teacher already experimenting with generated materials will have more reason to pause over the discussions of assessment and professional judgement. The book assumes that readers want to make informed choices about AI, although it acknowledges scepticism, uneven preparation and practical constraints. This gives the discussion a recognisable connection with departmental life.

The authors place generative AI alongside a longer history of language-learning technologies. Automated writing feedback and speech recognition had already raised questions about accuracy, learner independence and teacher intervention before the arrival of current chatbots. Son et al.'s (2025) earlier research review considered journal publications from 2010–2022, and the present volume continues several of its concerns. This historical perspective helps explain why technical improvements do not settle the educational questions. A system may produce better sentences while teachers still need to determine what students learn from accepting, rejecting or revising them. The book's contribution is an introductory synthesis of these questions for language-teacher education, followed by proposals that readers can try and assess.

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Its account of AI literacy gives that synthesis a consistent vocabulary. The authors adopt Son's (2024) definition of AI literacy as *'the ability to use AI technologies creatively, critically, effectively, efficiently, and ethically in an AI world'*. Each of these five commitments receives practical attention. Together, they encourage teachers to consider the purpose of an activity and their responsibilities towards learners. The distinction between effectiveness and efficiency is particularly relevant to everyday work. Producing an exercise quickly may reduce preparation time, but the exercise still needs to serve a language-learning objective. Conversely, an activity that requires considerable preparation may be justified if it gives learners practice they would otherwise miss. These questions are easy to recognise in the examples, although the framework leaves some decisions open. The book does not specify how much evidence would establish that an activity is effective or how teachers should assess progress in each commitment. It gives them questions to pursue and a vocabulary for discussing their choices. Readers looking for a tested instrument for measuring professional competence will therefore need additional material. For a teacher-education seminar, however, the openness permits discussion of differences between classes and teaching purposes.

Professional learning occupies a considerable part of the argument. Teachers are encouraged to test applications, discuss their experiences and reconsider decisions after use. There is an assumption here that deserves attention from institutions: teachers require time to do this work. The recommendation to develop AI literacy entails more than access to an account and a demonstration at the beginning of term. Sustained preparation requires opportunities to examine examples of student work and discuss what happened during a lesson.

The research summarised in the book helps make that requirement concrete. One intervention involved 54 M.Ed students in an 11-week course at a Hong Kong university. Questionnaire and interview evidence indicated improvement in professional generative AI competence, with greater evidence for pedagogical competence and critical awareness than for participants' capacity to help their students use AI responsibly. Son and Philpott (2026) retain that qualification. A teacher can become more capable with a technology and still have difficulty teaching someone else to use it. The distinction has consequences for course design: opportunities to practise explaining AI use to learners would address a different need from opportunities to produce teaching materials. The study also leaves the subsequent effects on pupils' language learning unresolved. Its reported improvements concern the participating teachers' knowledge and perceptions.

The practical part of the book brings these discussions closer to the classroom. Five detailed activities correspond to the five commitments in the AI-literacy definition. They specify learner proficiency and preparation requirements, with suggested timings and procedures. This is information a teacher can use to decide whether an activity fits an upcoming lesson. The estimates are planning suggestions, and the book supplies no classroom evaluation data for these particular activities. Their value for prospective readers is that the instructions are sufficiently explicit to inspect, modify and question.

In the storytelling activity, students request a generated narrative, adjust its content and difficulty, and prepare to recount it to classmates. The procedure offers a reason for individual preparation to lead into speaking and listening. Learners have some control over the material, and the possibility of changing a story may help a teacher accommodate different reading abilities without preparing a separate text for every student. The task also places an audience in the room: the story has to be communicated to classmates who have not necessarily seen it. That gives the exercise an educational purpose that a sequence of private chatbot exchanges might lack.

The instructions nevertheless permit memorisation of the generated story. A teacher would need to decide whether successful recall met the lesson objective. If independent spoken production were the aim, asking students to retell the narrative in different words or respond to unprepared questions could provide more relevant evidence. Similar questions apply to creativity. Choosing a theme and requesting changes involve decisions, but the teacher would still need criteria for recognising the learner's contribution. The activity leaves those criteria for readers to develop.

The fact-checking exercise offers a more explicit account of critical judgement. Students encounter a fabricated news story, then consider ten statements, half of which are deliberately false. After consulting AI, they use a search engine to verify statements identified as false and provide a source for each correction. The external check makes the procedure educationally defensible: students must look for support outside the generated answer. Yet the instructions give less attention to statements accepted as true. Those statements require verification too. A teacher adopting the exercise could require a source for every claim and ask students to explain why they trusted it. The book supplies enough detail for this adjustment to follow naturally from the authors' stated purpose.

Teachers considering AI for marking will probably read the writing-feedback activity with particular interest. Its main procedure asks them to compare generated comments with their own assessment and then incorporate relevant suggestions into the feedback returned to students. The comparison allows disagreement to become part of the teacher's decision. An optional instruction subsequently states that *'the teacher can skip their own assessment and rely on the AI feedback'*, provided that the teacher is familiar

and confident with it. The qualification acknowledges the need for experience, although familiarity does not establish the quality of every later response. Earlier discussion in the book recommends monitoring automated writing evaluation and avoiding complete reliance on it. Readers are left to resolve the tension between that recommendation and the optional procedure.

The assessment discussion does provide terms for making the decision. Validity concerns whether an assessment measures what it claims to measure; reliability concerns consistency, while accuracy concerns correspondence with the learner's proficiency or ability. These distinctions deserve practical examples. Agreement between a teacher and an AI system on a selection of paragraphs would tell the teacher something about those paragraphs. It would leave questions about unfamiliar genres and different varieties of English. A worked example of checking generated feedback would make the advice easier to use, especially for readers who have little experience evaluating assessment tools.

Language variation introduces a further difficulty. The authors acknowledge dialect bias and discuss teachers' responsibility for helping students understand cultural contexts. They also refer to research documenting prejudicial AI responses associated with dialect. Such findings concern particular systems and tasks, and should not be assumed to describe every classroom application. They do, however, give teachers a reason to examine the standards implicit in automated correction. A suggested revision may express a preference for a particular variety of English. Before presenting it as an improvement, the teacher needs to consider the learner's intended audience and the purpose of the text. The book identifies this problem, but its activities provide relatively little assistance with the analysis itself.

Readers interested in intercultural communication may consequently want more examples of language use in specific relationships. Requests and refusals would offer material for considering how generated language represents politeness or professional authority. Learners could compare responses intended for different recipients and explain their choices. All five detailed activities in the book specify English, despite its stated concern with second and foreign languages. Adaptation is encouraged, but examples in another target language would help readers judge what transfers and what requires revision. The potential readership is international; the worked classroom material is more restricted.

Access deserves similar attention before adoption. The authors recognise financial inequalities and inadequate infrastructure, while the activities repeatedly require internet-connected devices. Teachers must also test applications and prepare supporting materials. These requirements make the exercises easier to envisage in a well-equipped setting than in a class where students have intermittent connectivity or must use one device between several people. The book gives little detail on alternatives under such conditions. A department using it for professional development would need to discuss equipment and preparation time alongside pedagogical questions. Otherwise, teachers could find themselves responsible for recommendations they lack the resources to implement.

The volume's scope becomes clearer beside other recent books. Chan and Colloton's (2024) *Generative AI in Higher Education: The ChatGPT Effect* devotes more space to university assessment and institutional policy. Readers responsible for developing university procedures would find additional material there about the organisational decisions surrounding AI use. Son and Philpott (2026) stay closer to language-teacher preparation and classroom activity. The two books could support different parts of the same professional-development programme, with institutional questions discussed alongside decisions about particular learners and lessons.

Fraser's (2026) *Teach English with AI: A Practical Guide for Secondary English Teachers* addresses a more curriculum-specific audience. Its intended readers teach students aged 11–18, and its exercises are connected to GCSE and A-level English. Writing and literary study receive sustained attention, including the difficulty of judging students' thinking from a finished text. Son and Philpott (2026) offer more concentrated discussion of second- and foreign-language teacher development. English departments seeking activities for literary texts may prefer Fraser's (2026) treatment of those tasks, whereas teacher educators considering AI literacy will find Son and Philpott's (2026) account more directly relevant.

The prose generally makes the subject approachable. Technical terms receive explanations, and applications are connected with recognisable teaching practices. The tables are convenient when a reader wants to return to an exercise without rereading the surrounding discussion.

Read continuously, however, the book can become repetitive in its recommendations to develop AI literacy and evaluate generated outputs. Its inventory of commercial tools also uses space that could have supported fuller accounts of classroom decisions. The authors acknowledge that applications change and advise teachers to test them. Their questions about educational purpose are likely to remain useful after particular product descriptions need revision.

For someone considering whether to read *AI-Powered Language Teaching*, the intended use matters. The book provides an entry point for teachers who want enough understanding to begin making defensible choices. It also supplies material for professional discussion: colleagues could adapt an activity, compare their reasons and investigate the resulting student work. Readers who are seeking

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measured learning effects or detailed procedures for validating automated assessment will need further research. The practical proposals should be read with those limits in mind.

Son and Philpott (2026) make AI-assisted language teaching available for discussion at the level of ordinary professional decisions. Their examples give teachers something concrete to work with, while their emphasis on critical and ethical use provides reasons to question those examples. Some connections between principle and procedure need fuller development, especially in assessment and linguistic diversity. Even so, the book can help readers begin a more informed conversation about what they are asking technology to do, what learners are practising, and how teachers will know whether the activity has served its purpose.

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