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Humanising Language Teaching in the Age of AI

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Article information	
Abstract	While language teachers widely acknowledge affordances of digital technologies for enhancing language learning and teaching, an accompanying sense of disquiet has intensified as technological innovation increasingly sets instructional agendas and undermines professional autonomy. In particular, the growing influence of algorithms, large-scale data analytics, and, more recently, generative artificial intelligence has raised concerns that decision-making power is progressively shifting away from human educators. This displacement prompts critical questions about teacher agency, emotional well-being, and the preservation of meaningful human interaction within increasingly technology-mediated language teaching environments. Drawing on contemporary research in Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL), this paper argues that the rapid automation of instruction necessitates a proactive re-centering of the educator. It proposes a "humanising pedagogy in language teaching" structured through five interrelated dimensions: personalisation, digital literacy, digital well-being, positive computing, and the prioritisation of human relationships and interaction Based on these considerations, the paper then discusses not only how teachers can remain relevant as human mentors in an automated landscape, but also how they can practically support their learners as they continue to interact with complex AI tools. By examining the intersection of ethics and instructional design, the paper concludes by offering future directions regarding how language teachers can coexist and collaborate with technology. Specifically, it advocates for a shift from replacement to synergy through the Teacher-AI Collaboration (TAC) framework, ensuring that technological integration serves to augment, rather than diminish, the human element of ELT.
Keywords	Artificial Intelligence, humanising language teaching, teacher-AI collaboration, digital literacy, digital well-being
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1. Introduction

Several important developments of direct relevance to Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) have occurred in the last decade. Ongoing technological innovation has reshaped how learning and teaching are conceptualised, as well as how knowledge itself is produced, accessed, and mediated. In language education, digital technologies have expanded access to learning opportunities through, for example, mobile-assisted language learning, online language courses, digital games, learning management systems, and informal digital learning practices outside the classroom (Godwin-Jones, 2018; Hsieh, 2024; Jitpaisarnwattana & Reinders, 2025; Reinhardt & Bain, 2026). Networked technologies have also enabled learners and teachers to interact across geographical, linguistic, and cultural boundaries through telecollaboration, virtual exchange, online peer feedback, and participation in multilingual digital spaces (Gijsen et al., 2024; O'Dowd, 2025; Trust et al., 2023). These developments are further amplified by the advent of user-friendly generative artificial intelligence, which, beyond ethical, privacy, and security implications, invites renewed scrutiny of the nature of knowledge, agency, and meaning-making among language teachers.

More recently, user-friendly generative artificial intelligence has further intensified these developments by allowing teachers and learners to generate, revise, translate, personalise, and evaluate language-related texts in real time (Chapelle, 2025; Kohnke, 2025; Li et al., 2025; Tour et al.,2025). However, the significance of generative AI for language teaching extends beyond its practical affordances. It also invites renewed scrutiny of ethical responsibility, authorship, assessment, teacher agency, learner autonomy, and meaning-making in AI-mediated language education (Choi et al., 2025; Creely et al., 2025; Jitpaisarnwattana, 2024; Lee et al., 2025; Matthews & Peer Mohamed, 2025; Moorhouse & Wong, 2025). These questions provide the impetus for revisiting what it means to humanise language teaching in the age of AI.

Undoubtedly, most teachers recognise and gain directly from potential technology to improve both language learning and teaching. Nevertheless, there is growing concern that rapid technological developments are increasingly shaping educational priorities in ways that constrain teacher agency (Reinders et al., 2024). More importantly, several human-related concerns have surfaced from the increased interaction with technology, including digital literacy, digital well-being, and the place for human teachers in the future of language teaching. In what follows, we will briefly discuss *humanising pedagogy in language teaching* through five interrelated dimensions, namely personalisation, digital literacy, digital well-being, positive computing, and human relationships and interaction. Also, we will prompt teachers to consider their roles not only as human teachers, but also as supporters for their learners and members of digitally-mediated language teaching communities. Finally, the discussion addresses how language teachers can collaborate with AI in effective and mindful ways, while maintaining professional agency and pedagogical decision-making.

2. Humanising Pedagogy in Language Teaching

Humanising pedagogy refers to an educational approach that foregrounds language teachers as holistic professionals, acknowledging their human needs, identities, and agency alongside their pedagogical roles. It seeks to foster professional environments in which language teachers are not reduced to passive implementers of algorithmically driven practices, but are recognised as active, reflective professionals who bring their social, emotional,

cognitive, and creative capacities into their pedagogical decision-making (Salazar, 2013). Grounded in Freire's (1970) emphasis on dialogue and critical consciousness, this perspective underscores the importance of teachers' agency in critically engaging with educational technologies rather than uncritically adopting them. In this article, we argue that humanising language teaching in the age of AI requires more than adding ethical guidelines to existing CALL practices. It requires a shift in orientation: from asking how teachers and learners can use technologies more efficiently to asking how technologies can be pedagogically mediated in ways that preserve agency, support well-being, cultivate responsible participation, and sustain human relationships. The framework proposed here therefore brings together five interrelated design commitments: (1) reclaiming teacher agency in personalised CALL; (2) fostering digital literacies for responsible participation; (3) promoting digital well-being in technology-mediated learning; (4) advancing positive computing in CALL design; and (5) emphasising human relationships and interaction in relational CALL design. The contribution of this framework lies not in treating these areas as separate themes, but in positioning them as mutually reinforcing conditions for humanising CALL: teachers need agency to make pedagogically meaningful decisions; learners need digital literacies to participate responsibly; both teachers and learners need well-being protections to sustain participation; technology design should support human flourishing; and language learning must remain relational, dialogic, and socially situated.

2.1 Reclaiming Teacher Agency in Personalised CALL

Human agency is a central principle of humanising pedagogy. In educational contexts, agency refers to the capacity to exercise responsibility, make informed and meaningful choices, and engage in reflective and purposeful action (Bandura, 1986; 2001). Within language education, this entails empowering teachers to retain control over their pedagogical practices, exercise professional judgment, and critically reflect on and shape their teaching in responsive and intentional ways. Essentially, teacher agency (TA) is central to understanding how teachers interpret, negotiate, and interact with AI tools and digital environments (Du & Curdt-Christiansen, 2026). Although algorithm-driven personalisation and adaptive recommendations can offer clear pedagogical advantages, such data-driven approaches may constrain language teachers' professional judgment by narrowing the range of choices available to them, potentially leading to dehumanised teaching practices (Reinders et al., 2024). A human-centred pedagogy therefore encourages language teachers to reclaim their agency by personalising their own professional practices rather than relying on suggestions from algorithm-driven personalisation. This involves critically evaluating technological recommendations, adapting them to local teaching contexts, and making pedagogical decisions based on learners' actual needs, identities, and classroom realities.

Downes (2016) proposed a distinction between two types of personalisation: *personalised* and *personal.* While the former relies on computational systems to make decisions on behalf of teachers, the latter provides support without prescribing actions, allowing pedagogical decisions to remain with teachers themselves. Teachers may also engage in personal learning environments (PLEs) by selecting and curating digital tools and resources that support different aspects of their teaching practice (Jitpaisarnwattana et al., 2022; Jitpaisarnwattana 2025; Xu et al., 2020). We believe that language teachers can productively draw on both forms of personalisation by engaging critically with digitally generated resources

while retaining control over the selection, adaptation, and use of these materials within their own teaching contexts. This underscores the need for teachers to develop digital and AI literacies through concrete practices such as critically evaluating AI-generated outputs, experimenting with and refining prompts, triangulating digital resources with pedagogical goals, and making informed decisions about when and how to integrate or reject AI support in their teaching.

2.2 Fostering Digital Literacies for Responsible Participation

From a humanising perspective, digital literacies should not be treated as a technical supplement to language teaching, but as a condition for responsible participation in AI- and platform-mediated communication. Recent CALL work has moved away from viewing digital literacy as an optional "tech add-on" and toward understanding it as a set of socially situated abilities that combine *skills* (knowing how to use tools), *dispositions* (knowing how to make responsible choices), and *participation* (knowing how to communicate and act appropriately in digital spaces) (Pegrum et al., 2022). Because platforms and AI tools change rapidly, the field now emphasises literacies that help learners evaluate, circulate, remix, and co-produce texts in environments shaped by platforms, algorithms, and AI systems. Humanising language teaching therefore requires teachers to make digital participation itself an object of pedagogical attention.

To support teachers, the Digital Literacies 3.0 framework offers one accessible way to organise these developments through four interlinked areas: Communicating, Informing, Collaborating, and (Re)designing, while keeping ethical questions such as credibility, responsibility, privacy at the centre (Pegrum et al., 2022). This aligns with the humanising agenda (Reinder et al., 2024), which identifies that "becoming digitally literate" as a priority because learners need to understand risks, seize opportunities, and adapt responsibly as technologies and platforms evolve.

Our argument, however, is that digital literacies become humanising only when they are embedded in meaningful language use rather than taught as a separate unit in the curriculum. For instance, teachers can embed a simple, context-flexible routine such as "Verify and Rewrite" into everyday language tasks: students read a short online text (or an AI-generated summary), then (1) highlight two claims that need evidence, (2) check those claims using at least two sources, (3) rewrite the text as a "responsible version" that includes citations, cautious language (e.g., may, seems, evidence suggests), and a brief note on what remains uncertain. This single task directly supports language outcomes (summarising, hedging, referencing, stance) while building "Informing" and critical literacies, including source evaluation and misinformation awareness. To keep the task humanising and inclusive, teachers can also offer tiered support, such as pre-selected sources, sentence starters, or group roles, because learners' digital experience can be uneven, and some may need more scaffolding before they can participate confidently. The point is not simply to train learners to use digital tools, but to help them become more discerning, ethical, and agentic participants in digitally mediated language practices (Pegrum et al., 2022; Reinders et al., 2024).

2.3 Promoting Digital Well-being in Technology-Mediated Learning

Digital well-being is a central concern for humanising language teaching because technology-mediated participation can impose emotional, attentional, and organisational costs

on learners. If CALL design focuses only on access, efficiency, or engagement, it risks overlooking the ways in which learners may experience stress, distraction, organisational overload ("digital disarray"), and privacy vulnerabilities in platform-mediated learning environments (Pegrum & Palalas, 2021; Reinders et al., 2024). A humanising approach therefore asks not only whether a tool supports language learning, but also whether the conditions of participation are sustainable, safe, and attentive to learners' cognitive and emotional capacities.

Recent digital literacies frameworks support this shift by including well-being-related capacities such as *attentional literacy*, understood as learners' ability to direct and sustain attention by choice across changing digital contexts, in ways that connect self-regulation with relationships and learning (Palalas et al., 2024; Pegrum et al., 2022). This concept is important because attention is not merely an individual self-management issue; it is shaped by platform design, task structure, social expectations, and the demands of multilingual communication. Supporting digital well-being in language teaching therefore requires more than advising learners to "manage their screen time." It involves designing language tasks in ways that reduce unnecessary overload, normalise privacy-aware participation, and help learners develop reflective habits for navigating digital environments.

One practical example is a short "Focus–Privacy–Reflect" protocol that can be embedded before and after online reading, discussion, or AI-supported writing tasks. Before the task, students set a focus plan, such as silencing notifications, using one tab, or setting a short timer. They then make one privacy choice, such as deciding whether to post under a real name, avoiding identifiable details, or checking what information the platform will display. After the task, they write a brief reflection on what helped them stay focused and what they would adjust next time. This routine directly addresses concerns about stress, distraction, disarray, and privacy invasion while developing attentional and personal/security literacies (Pegrum et al., 2022; Reinders et al., 2024). In the proposed framework, such routines matter because they reposition well-being as part of pedagogical design, not as an individual problem learners must solve on their own.

2.4 Advancing Positive Computing Language Teaching Contexts

Positive computing, as conceptualised by Calvo and Peters (2014), refers to the research and design of technologies that intentionally support well-being and human potential. When applied to language education, positive computing foregrounds the needs, experiences, and professional sustainability of language teachers. Informed by principles of positive psychology, which examine the conditions that enable individuals and communities to flourish, this perspective explores how digital and AI-mediated tools can be designed and implemented to enhance teachers' professional agency, emotional well-being, and pedagogical effectiveness, rather than intensifying workload or eroding autonomy (Reinders et al., 2024). Several core dimensions are central to understanding positive computing in language-teaching contexts.

2.4.1 Teacher-centred Design: This approach foregrounds language teachers' professional needs and values, ensuring that technological and AI-mediated tools genuinely support teacher well-being, agency, and pedagogical practice.

2.4.2 Teacher Potential: Positive computing emphasises language teachers' professional growth by fostering creativity, reflective capacity, empathy, and resilience essential for sustainable teaching.

2.4.3 Teacher Wellbeing: Prioritising teacher well-being requires strong ethical safeguards, including privacy, transparency, and the protection of professional autonomy in technology use.

When positive computing principles are integrated into language teaching, digital practices should encourage language teachers to engage creatively and critically with educational technologies, supporting their professional growth and human potential. For instance, teachers may be asked to evaluate and selectively combine digital tools in ways that align with their pedagogical goals and teaching contexts. Crucially, technology-enhanced language learning should move beyond algorithm-driven "personalisation" towards enabling teachers to actively personalise their own practices by articulating professional needs, instructional priorities, and informed choices. Alongside personalisation, ethical considerations surrounding data use are essential, as digitally mediated teaching generates extensive professional and learner data. Teachers should therefore be informed about what data are collected, how they are interpreted, and how they shape system recommendations, enabling critical and responsible engagement. To support this, schools and universities should provide ongoing professional development, transparent data governance policies, and access to flexible digital infrastructures that empower teachers to make informed and autonomous pedagogical decisions. In this way, positive computing in CALL shifts the focus from efficiency and usability towards a more holistic framework that prioritises teacher agency, well-being, and sustainable professional development.

2.5 Emphasising Human Relationships and Interaction in Relational CALL Design

A humanising approach to CALL must begin from the premise that language learning is not just cognitive but also emotional, relational, and identity-related. The "affective turn" in language education reinforces why this matters: if we ignore learners' feelings, desires, and the social meanings attached to language use, we miss the deeper reasons participation and belonging shape long-term learning trajectories (Pavlenko, 2013). From this perspective, technology should be evaluated not only by the linguistic output it supports, but also by the quality of social experience it makes possible. Reinders et al. (2024) argue that a central question is whether a tool sustains learners' belonging, voice, and long-term engagement. This is particularly important in AI-mediated environments, where learners may receive immediate responses, feedback, or personalised input without necessarily experiencing reciprocal human interaction.

To humanise technology use, we first need clearer anchors for what it means to be "relational" online. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework offers a useful starting point, proposing that meaningful learning depends on the interplay of teaching presence (intentional design and facilitation), social presence (learners feeling seen and able to relate), and cognitive presence (making meaning together). Importantly, within this framework, social presence is not about simply "sending more messages"; it provides the conditions under which inquiry, dialogue, and collaboration become possible (Garrison, 2007). This distinction matters because digital learning can easily slip into "weak" interactivity—clicking, automated responses, individualised tool use, or task completion—without producing the kinds of human-to-human interaction that sustain motivation, confidence, and participation (Clandfield & Hadfield, 2017).

Rather than treating platforms as neutral "delivery systems," recent work frames them as sociotechnical environments—spaces shaped by participation norms, expectations, and the identities learners bring from their everyday digital lives (Pegrum et al., 2022; Reinders et al, 2024). From a humanising perspective, then, "community" cannot be treated as a built-in feature of a platform; it must be cultivated as an ongoing practice through *participatory literacy*: learners' capacity to contribute responsibly to shared knowledge and collaborate ethically in networked spaces (Pegrum et al., 2022). At the same time, community-building must be equity-aware. Differences in access, data poverty, confidence, safety, and prior experience mean inclusive design requires realistic assumptions and deliberate scaffolding rather than idealised expectations of "active participation" (Pegrum, 2025).

One adaptable approach is the Community Contribution Cycle. Learners work in small groups to create a short audience-facing product linked to the unit, such as a bilingual myth-busting post, a short explainer, or a polite response template. They share it in a low-risk space (class forum/LMS), and respond to peers using a simple protocol: one appreciation, one genuine question, and one suggestion, supported by language stems. The teacher then "closes the loop" by synthesising a few key patterns the class demonstrated (e.g., effective strategies, common challenges, useful language). This cycle supports concrete language goals while also strengthening belonging, voice, and participatory literacy. Its humanising value lies in making interaction cumulative, visible, and relational rather than episodic, automated, or purely task-driven (Garrison, 2007; Clandfield & Hadfield, 2017; Pegrum et al., 2022; Reinders et al, 2024).

2.6 Bridging the Five Dimensions: Humanising CALL as Pedagogical Mediation

The five dimensions discussed above constitute an original framework for humanising CALL as pedagogical mediation. We do not intend to present these dimensions as a checklist of desirable qualities to be added to technology-enhanced language teaching. Rather, we propose them as a coherent set of mutually reinforcing commitments through which teachers can design, mediate, and evaluate technology use in ways that protect human agency, support well-being, cultivate responsible participation, and sustain relational language learning. In this sense, the framework shifts the focus of CALL from tool adoption to pedagogical mediation. The central question is not simply whether a technology is effective, efficient, interactive, or innovative, but whether its use is mediated in ways that preserve the human purposes of language education.

The selection of these five dimensions is deliberate because they respond to the major pressures currently reshaping language teaching in AI- and platform-mediated environments. Personalisation reflects the growing influence of algorithmic recommendation, adaptive learning systems, and AI-generated learning pathways on pedagogical decision-making. Digital literacies address the need for learners and teachers to participate responsibly in digital spaces where texts are generated, circulated, remixed, evaluated, and contested. Digital well-being responds to the attentional, emotional, organisational, and privacy-related burdens that accompany technology-mediated participation. Positive computing foregrounds the design and implementation of technologies that support human flourishing rather than merely optimise performance. Finally, human relationships and interaction reaffirm that language learning is fundamentally social, dialogic, affective, and identity-related. Other dimensions could certainly be added to discussions of CALL, such as access, assessment, creativity,

multimodality, or inclusion. However, we argue that these five dimensions are foundational because they address the core human conditions under which technology-mediated language learning becomes pedagogically meaningful rather than merely digitally enabled.

The framework's originality can be attributed to the way it brings important, yet often fragmented, dimensions into a single relational structure. Existing discussions of CALL often examine personalisation, digital literacies, well-being, technology design, and online interaction as isolated concerns. Our framework instead positions them as interdependent conditions for humanising technology use. Personalisation without teacher agency risks becoming a form of algorithmic prescription, where technological systems determine learning pathways rather than supporting teachers' pedagogical judgment. Digital literacies without attention to well-being may become another demand placed on already overloaded learners. Digital well-being without relational design may reduce participation to individual self-management while overlooking how classroom relationships, task design, and peer expectations shape learners' focus, confidence, and sense of belonging. Positive computing without teacher agency may produce tools that appear supportive but still constrain professional judgment. Human interaction without digital literacies may generate participation that is active but not necessarily ethical, critical, or inclusive. The five dimensions therefore do not operate in sequence; they work structurally, with each dimension qualifying and strengthening the others.

At the centre of this structure is *pedagogical mediation*. By pedagogical mediation, we refer to the teacher's active role in interpreting technological affordances, aligning them with language-learning purposes, anticipating risks, and shaping the conditions under which learners engage with tools, texts, peers, and communities. This does not mean that teachers must control every aspect of technology use. Rather, it means that technology should enter the language classroom through principled pedagogical judgment. Teachers mediate between system affordances and learner needs, between efficiency and ethical responsibility, between individual autonomy and social participation, and between innovation and care. In doing so, they transform technology from a neutral or externally imposed tool into a pedagogically situated resource.

This mediating role operates across three interconnected levels. At the level of teacher agency, personalisation and positive computing foreground teachers as reflective professionals who intentionally retain control over pedagogical decisions, rather than becoming passive recipients of system-generated recommendations. At the level of learner participation, digital literacies and digital well-being support learners in becoming responsible, critical, and sustainable participants in digital communication. At the level of social learning, human relationships and interaction ensure that technology-mediated language learning remains dialogic, communal, and attentive to learners' identities and affective experiences. These levels are mutually dependent. Teachers cannot support learner agency without sufficient professional agency of their own; learners cannot participate meaningfully without literacies and well-being protections; and digital learning cannot be humanising if it weakens the relational conditions through which language learning becomes meaningful.

A classroom example may illustrate how the framework can operate in practice. In an AI-supported writing lesson, students might use a generative AI tool to produce alternative openings for an argumentative paragraph. A non-humanising approach would treat the tool primarily as a productivity device: students generate a text, choose the most fluent version, and

submit a revised paragraph. A humanising approach, by contrast, would encourage redesigning the task through pedagogical mediation. The teacher first retains agency by deciding what role AI should play. For instance, they may limit its use to idea generation rather than full text production. Students then practise digital literacies by comparing AI-generated openings, identifying claims that require evidence, and discussing how stance, voice, and credibility are constructed. Digital well-being may also be addressed by setting clear boundaries for tool use and inviting students to reflect on whether the tool supported or disrupted their thinking, thereby reducing the pressure to produce a "perfect" AI-polished text. Positive computing is enacted when AI support broadens students' linguistic options and strengthens their confidence as writers, while preserving their responsibility for making decisions about meaning, expression, and revision. Finally, relational interaction is built into the task when students discuss their choices with peers, explain what they accepted or rejected from the AI output, and receive teacher feedback that recognises both linguistic development and authorial decision-making. The same tool is therefore no longer simply an AI writing assistant; it becomes part of a mediated learning ecology in which agency, literacy, well-being, human potential, and interaction are deliberately held together.

This example also clarifies why humanising CALL cannot be reduced to ethical compliance or responsible AI use. While ethics is essential, a humanising orientation asks a broader pedagogical question: *What kinds of learners, teachers, relationships, and communities are being produced through technology use?* A classroom may comply with privacy rules and still be dehumanising if learners feel isolated, over-monitored, dependent, or unable to exercise their voice. Conversely, technology use may become more humanising when teachers design conditions that allow learners to act with judgment, participate with confidence, protect their well-being, and experience language learning as a socially meaningful practice. Humanising CALL, then, is never about a rejection of technology but rather a refusal to allow technology to define the purposes of language education.

For this reason, the framework proposed here should be understood as both conceptual and practical. Conceptually, it offers a way to bring together concerns that are often fragmented across separate discussions of AI, digital literacy, online learning, teacher agency, and learner well-being. Practically, it offers teachers a set of guiding commitments for making decisions about technology use in specific contexts. A humanising CALL design asks:

- *Who retains agency?*
- *What literacies are being developed?*
- *What well-being risks are being anticipated?*
- *How does the technology support human potential?*
- *What forms of relationship and interaction are made possible?*

These questions do not attempt to provide a universal formula, but they help ensure that technology-enhanced language teaching remains accountable to human purposes. The framework therefore reframes humanising CALL from an ethical afterthought to an ongoing process of pedagogical decision-making about how technology should serve language learning. The next section extends this argument by considering what such mediation means for the role of human teachers in the age of AI.

3. The Role of Human Teachers in the Age of AI: Bringing out the 'Human'

If humanising pedagogy is grounded in relationship and interaction, then the role of the teacher in today's digitally saturated classrooms must shift from being a 'provider of information' to being a 'guardian of the learning experience'. Humanising CALL invites us to reconsider what remains uniquely human about our work—and why these qualities matter even more as digital tools become pervasive. From this perspective, teachers do not stay relevant by competing with technology on speed, automation, or volume. Instead, their value lies in foregrounding what technology cannot reliably provide: ethical judgment, relational care, contextual sensitivity, and a deep responsibility for learners' dignity and well-being.

3.1 Redefining Connection in Digital Spaces

The first role is to redefine connection in digital spaces. In AI-mediated language teaching, connection cannot be assumed simply because a tool enables communication, feedback, or interaction. Rather, teachers need to act as architects of the learning environment, deliberately shaping how digital tools enter classroom relationships, communication patterns, and learning routines. This means considering not only whether a tool is useful, but also how it structures participation, whose voices are amplified or silenced, whether learners feel seen and supported, and whether interaction remains dialogic rather than merely automated.

This role is fundamentally values-led and relational. While AI tools can accelerate the mechanical aspects of teaching, such as drafting lesson plans, summarising texts, or providing instant grammar feedback, they cannot resolve the nuanced questions of trust, bias, dependency, privacy, and inclusion that their use inevitably raises. A humanising approach therefore requires teachers to move beyond technical adoption toward pedagogical judgment. They must ask, for example, whether a tool strengthens students' independence or creates new forms of dependency; whether it expands participation or intensifies inequality; and whether it supports learning in ways that are meaningful, safe, and sustainable. Technology, in other words, should not be adopted simply because it is available, but because teachers judge that its use serves learners' best interests.

In practice, redefining connection may involve using AI tools to support particular stages of learning while preserving opportunities for human dialogue, peer collaboration, and teacher feedback. For example, a teacher may allow students to use an AI chatbot for brainstorming, but still require them to discuss their choices with peers, explain how they evaluated the AI-generated ideas, and receive feedback that responds to their intentions and emerging identities as language users. This role responds to the risk that AI-mediated teaching may produce efficient but relationally thin learning environments, where learners receive instant responses without experiencing genuine dialogue, care, or belonging.

3.2 Mentoring the Agentic Learner

The second role is to mentor the agentic learner. If teachers are responsible for mediating how technology enters the learning environment, they are also responsible for helping learners mediate their own use of digital tools. This means supporting students not only in using technology, but in developing the judgment needed to use it responsibly, critically, and independently. Learners need to understand when a tool is useful, when it is unnecessary, how to evaluate its outputs, what to accept or reject, and how to remain cognitively active during technology-supported work.

This mentoring role is especially important because AI tools can easily turn language-learning tasks into acts of outsourcing. Students may use AI to generate ideas, polish writing, translate texts, or receive feedback without necessarily developing their own linguistic, critical, or metacognitive capacities. A humanising approach therefore does not frame learner agency as unrestricted tool use. Rather, it treats agency as the capacity to make informed decisions, justify those decisions, and gradually become less dependent on external support. In this sense, teacher agency and learner agency are closely connected: teachers exercise professional judgment not in order to control learners' digital practices, but to create the conditions under which learners can develop their own judgment.

One practical way to support this is to normalise brief reflective routines that keep learners "in the driver's seat." For instance, teachers can introduce a short Tool Use Reflection after any digitally-supported task, whether it involves a standard search engine, a translation app, or an AI chatbot:

- What did I use the tool for?
- What did I accept, change, or reject from the tool's suggestions, and why?
- What did I learn today that I can do without the tool next time?

By making these internal decisions visible, teachers turn a potential shortcut into a meaningful learning process. Such reflection helps learners see technology use not as a way to bypass learning, but as an opportunity to practise judgment, evaluate support, and gradually build independent capacity. This role responds to the risk that learners may become passive tool users who outsource thinking, writing, feedback, or decision-making to AI systems without developing their own voice, competence, or responsibility as language users.

3.3 The Collective Human Anchor

The third role is to serve as a collective human anchor. Bringing out the "human" in language teaching requires more than individual classroom-level decision-making; it also requires a commitment to equity and collective action. Humanising teachers cultivate critical self-awareness by recognising that technology is never neutral and that digital policies may unintentionally disadvantage particular learners (Salazar, 2013). Learners differ in their access to devices, connectivity, digital experience, confidence, linguistic resources, and sense of safety in online spaces. For this reason, teachers need to consider not only whether a digital tool works, but for whom it works, under what conditions, and with what consequences.

In practice, serving as a collective human anchor involves questioning institutional policies, sharing classroom-tested practices, discussing emerging concerns with colleagues, and contributing to collective norms around responsible AI use. For example, teachers may work together to develop shared expectations for AI-assisted writing, student privacy, feedback practices, or acceptable levels of automation in assessment. Such collaboration helps ensure that humanising technology use is not treated as the private responsibility of individual teachers, but as a collective professional commitment.

This anchoring role responds to the risk that broader institutional systems may normalise surveillance, workload intensification, inequitable access, or uncritical AI adoption while placing the burden of ethical mediation on individual teachers. By sharing practices and surfacing concerns such as student privacy, algorithmic bias, and increased workloads, teachers build the collective capacity to respond responsibly as technologies evolve. In this sense, the

human teacher serves not only as an individual mediator in the classroom, but also as part of a wider professional community that keeps language education focused on meaningful human interaction, ethical participation, and the flourishing of learners and teachers alike.

4. Future Direction: Teacher-AI Collaboration

The growing use of AI as a humanised agent in educational settings presents a promising area for further research, particularly in understanding human-AI interactions in language learning and teaching. Although ongoing theoretical debate regarding the difference between human-AI interaction and human-AI collaboration still persists (Stockwell & Wang, 2025), this paper focuses more on the practical aspects of how language teachers can collaborate with AI tools in their teaching practices. AI systems, designed to mimic human characteristics such as communication, empathy, and responsiveness, can create interactions that feel more personal and professionally supportive for language teachers. Such forms of human-like engagement have the potential to enhance teachers' motivation, support emotional well-being, and provide context-sensitive feedback, making AI a valuable resource for addressing diverse pedagogical needs in language education.

Research on teacher–AI collaboration has typically been framed by two paradigms: replacement, which positions AI as a substitute for teachers, and augmentation, which views AI as enhancing pedagogical capacity (Kim, 2023). While pedagogically and logistically attractive, the replacement paradigm is reductionist in nature, positioning technology as an automated instructor capable of replicating and optimising teachers' guidance. The augmentation perspective, however, conceptualises AI as a means of enhancing rather than replacing teachers' professional agency and effectiveness in supporting student learning (Baker, 2016). Put differently, it highlights the potential of AI tools to build on teachers' distinctive pedagogical strengths in order to extend and enrich their instructional capacities. Collaboration in this context is intended to integrate human teachers and AI instruction in ways that allow them to mutually perceive, learn from, regulate, and monitor one another's actions in order to perform optimally. Within this framework, humans and AI are viewed as collaborative partners who co-create complex teaching activities and achieve outcomes that neither humans nor AI could realise independently (Wetzel et al., 2018). To this end, Stockwell and Wang (2025) proposed several criteria that need considerations when looking at human-AI collaboration. We revisit four of these criteria that are relevant to language teachers: task interdependence, complementary capabilities, acknowledged contribution and calibrated trust (See Stockwell & Wang, 2025 for the full list of criteria).

4.1 Task Interdependence

When language teachers use AI to produce initial drafts of teaching materials, they may legitimately rely on AI-generated output to advance their work within existing time and resource constraints. However, the production of pedagogically meaningful materials continues to depend on teachers' active involvement, particularly in defining tasks, shaping instructional contexts, and applying professional judgment to review and refine AI-generated output. In this relationship, teachers supply pedagogical purpose, constraints, and judgment, while AI contributes rapid, large-scale text generation. This results in a form of conditional interdependence in which neither teacher nor AI can achieve the desired outcome independently, while agency and accountability remain firmly located with the human teacher (Stockwell & Wang, 2025). Importantly, teachers also remain responsible for ensuring that AI-

generated materials are pedagogically appropriate, contextually relevant, culturally sensitive, and aligned with learners' proficiency levels and educational needs. Human oversight therefore becomes essential in determining how AI outputs are adapted, implemented, and evaluated within specific language-teaching contexts.

4.2 Complementary Capabilities

In teacher–AI collaboration, complementary capabilities describe the distinct strengths each partner brings to the table. While AI offers rapid text generation, extensive information access, continuous availability, and a high tolerance for repetitive tasks, language teachers contribute indispensable contextual knowledge, nuanced pedagogical judgment, creative direction, and evaluative decision-making aligned with specific instructional goals (Stockwell & Wang, 2025).Drawing on our teaching experience, we have found AI particularly useful for generating diverse alternative materials, adapting complex tasks to suit different learner proficiency levels, and scaling formative feedback on student writing in ways previously constrained by time. However, this partnership is not equal in terms of responsibility; we emphasise the need for educators to retain firm pedagogical control. This involves actively setting the instructional purpose, critically evaluating AI outputs for accuracy and bias, and making the final instructional decisions, rather than deferring these professional responsibilities to automated systems. Ultimately, the goal is a synergistic relationship where AI handles the computational heavy lifting, allowing the teacher to focus on the socio-affective and relational dimensions of language learning that technology cannot replicate.

4.3 Acknowledged Contribution

Many language teachers increasingly allow students to use AI tools in different aspects of their language learning. For example, students are allowed to use AI tools for proofreading their essays before submission given that they are transparent about it. Teachers should, therefore, exert the same level of transparency in their AI use regarding material developments, rubric creation or feedback provision. By acknowledging such collaboration, it does not diminish a sense of agency or ownership, nor does it take away your accountability or responsibility as authors. Rather, it shows that you are fully aware of your roles as human teachers in the process. It also demonstrates ethical awareness and professional integrity in recognising how technological tools contribute to pedagogical and academic work. In effect, this is probably the best place to acknowledge the use of AI in the preparation of this paper. Generative AI tools have been used to assist with language improvements, grammar checking and occasional synthesis of literature review. At the same time, all interpretations, pedagogical arguments, and conceptual framing presented in this discussion were critically evaluated and refined by the authors themselves. Any arguments put forward in this paper are ours and we take full responsibility for that.

4.4 Calibrated Trust

Despite its generative capabilities, GenAI tools can perform unevenly across language-teaching tasks, often in ways that are difficult for teachers to anticipate (Stockwell & Wang, 2025). For example, an AI system may produce a well-structured reading passage with appropriate comprehension questions, yet generate inaccurate explanations of grammar rules, misleading vocabulary usage examples, or culturally inappropriate prompts for speaking activities. Similarly, AI-generated feedback on learner writing may be highly effective for

surface-level features such as grammar or cohesion, while offering unreliable or overly generic advice on argumentation, task achievement, or pragmatic appropriateness. Hence, it is essential for language teachers to understand what AI can and cannot do. In other words, teachers should make informed and appropriate use of AI tools in accordance with their actual capabilities and limitations. Without appropriately calibrating AI outputs, language learners may be negatively impacted by inaccurate / inappropriate AI-generated language outputs, given that they are still developing their language proficiency (Stockwell & Wang, 2025). This highlights that establishing appropriate levels of trust in AI-generated language continues to depend on the professional expertise and judgment of language teachers.

There remain several challenges and concerns that language teachers need to pay attention to. The most fundamental challenge is verification. As teachers use AI to generate teaching materials, learning tasks or even test questions, they will need to ensure that such AI-generated materials meet the quality required in a specific context. Not only may teachers need to spend equal, if not more, time reviewing such materials as they would when producing the materials themselves, but they are also required to have high-level expertise in a given topic to do so (Stockwell & Wang, 2025). Another important challenge is skill compromisation. When teachers outsource certain teaching related tasks such as course design, creating learning tasks or even writing model answers for academic writing classes, to AI systems, they may struggle to do so unaided. As Ng et al., (2021) emphasises, knowing when *not* to rely on AI is as important as knowing how to use it, especially in teaching professions where effective teaching depends on informed judgment, pedagogical effort, and reflective practice. Therefore, for teachers to remain *human* and *relevant*, they need to make informed decisions about what skills they want to maintain and try their best to be cognitively independent when using such skills. Now that Ginnie is out of the bottle, we know firsthand that not using AI assistance is virtually impossible (we are using one now). We envision that more and more teachers will rely on AI to generate materials and provide feedback to students, but it is paramount that teachers carry professional responsibility for pedagogical decision-making by themselves. Ultimately, although AI can reshape the processes through which pedagogical tasks are undertaken, accountability and responsibility remain firmly anchored with the human teacher.

5. Conclusion

Essentially, humanising language teaching in the age of AI is not about resisting technological innovation, but about reasserting the pedagogical, ethical, and relational purposes of language education within increasingly automated environments. As AI systems continue to shape how language is produced, evaluated, and circulated, the central challenge for CALL is no longer simply whether technologies can enhance learning efficiency, but whether they can be integrated in ways that preserve teacher agency, learner well-being, and meaningful human interaction. The five-dimensional framework proposed in this paper positions humanising pedagogy as a form of pedagogical mediation through which teachers critically interpret technological affordances, align them with contextual needs, and ensure that digital participation remains ethical, sustainable, and socially meaningful. Importantly, this framework does not reject AI or advocate a return to pre-digital pedagogies. Rather, it calls for a reorientation from technological determinism toward principled human–AI collaboration in which teachers remain active decision-makers, relational facilitators, and ethical mediators of learning.

Looking ahead, future research should investigate how teachers and AI can coexist in pedagogically responsible and context-sensitive ways across diverse educational settings. More empirical work is also needed to examine how humanising CALL can be operationalised in real classrooms, particularly in relation to teacher well-being, learner agency, participatory digital literacies, and equitable access to AI-supported learning opportunities. Ultimately, the future of language teaching will not be determined solely by the sophistication of technological systems, but by the extent to which educators continue to foreground dialogue, care, criticality, and human connection within digitally mediated learning environments. In this sense, the enduring relevance of language teachers lies not in competing with AI, but in ensuring that language education remains fundamentally human.

6. About the Author

Anuchaya Montakantiwong is a lecturer at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Mahidol University, Thailand. She holds a DPhil in Education from the University of Oxford and an MA in TESOL from Boston University. Her research focuses on Global Englishes, language and technology, English Medium Instruction (EMI), learner identities, and multiliteracies in language education. Her recent journal articles examine the development and validation of the Global Englishes Mindset Questionnaire for EFL learners and the implementation of Global Englishes Language Teaching in Thai higher education. She is also a co-author of *Global TESOL for the 21st Century: Teaching English in a Changing World*. Her recent work includes a forthcoming contribution on *Humanising Language Learning in MALL Environments* in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Computer-Assisted Language Learning*. She has also led workshops on AI, design thinking, and human-centred ELT, and developed a MOOC on *English for Digital Communication Skills*. Her current work explores humanising approaches to technology-enhanced language teaching, with particular attention to AI, digital communication, and learner agency.

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7. Declaration of AI Use

The authors declare that AI tools including ChatGPT (version GPT-5.5) and Gemini (version 3.1) were used to assist with language editing, grammar checking, and checking the structure of writing. All content, data interpretation, and conclusions remain the responsibility of the authors. The authors critically reviewed and revised all AI-assisted outputs to ensure the accuracy, integrity, and academic quality of the final manuscript.

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