

Beyond EAP: Redesigning Undergraduate Language Pathways for the AI Era

John Iveson

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China

Email: john.iveson@polyu.edu.hk

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2177-6364>

Abstract:

This presentation explores a significant transition within a Hong Kong university as it moves from traditional English for Academic Purposes (EAP) requirements toward a new English language curriculum model. Starting in the 2026/27 academic year, all first-year, first-degree students will be required to complete a mandatory subject titled AI as a Tool for Language Learning (AITLL). This course focuses on the practical application of digital and generative resources to support language development and professional communication. The curriculum follows a project-oriented and scenario-based framework that emphasises active student participation. Key learning objectives include the evaluation of AI-generated content, the study of ethical considerations, and the implementation of personalised learning strategies. While the university will also introduce a separate English exit test as a graduation requirement, the primary focus of this session is the pedagogical shift toward AI integration. Initial feedback from teachers and students who participated in a pilot version of the AITLL course will be presented. This feedback, which highlights various opportunities and obstacles encountered during the pilot, is examined through the theoretical lens of "Big Artificial Literacies" (Big-AL). The analysis moves beyond "little-al" models, which define literacy as a set of individual operational competencies such as prompting and bias awareness. By applying this lens to the pilot data, the presentation explores modes of cognitive delegation and considers how student engagement with AI can support epistemic agency. The session considers how these pilot findings relate to empowerment-oriented literacies, such as system-perception awareness and values-anchored practice, and how human-centred agency is sustained within the new language pathway.

Keywords: English language teaching, AI-assisted education, AI literacy, curriculum design

