

THE ELT BUZZ DIGEST

All The "Buzz" In Education – August 09

Beyond the ghosts: navigating identity, precarity, and haunting in freelance ELT

A research article applying ideas of hauntology and liminality to freelance English teachers, exploring how they navigate precarious, unstable work while being treated as both essential and invisible. It looks at how these teachers assert their professional legitimacy and build community despite unstable conditions.

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I Could Not Get AI to Edit One Page

A first-person account of trying, and failing, to get an AI tool to properly edit a single page of writing, raising doubts about how far AI editing assistance can really go. It lands amid a wider debate among Substack writers over AI's growing role in the writing and editing process.

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What the panic over Gen Z's reading habits gets wrong

Researchers behind a new study on Gen Z's book habits argue that concerns about declining youth reading rely on measures that miss how young people actually read today, across print, audiobooks, and platforms like Wattpad and BookTok. Their data shows a growing share of Gen Z identifying as readers, with print books making a comeback as a deliberate choice.

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Embracing our humanity

A personal essay reflecting on what's lost when AI is used to write things that once required a human touch, prompted by a live concert and a busy family season. The author makes the case for keeping live, human creativity and connection at the center of work and art.

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How to Teach a Good First Day of Class

James M. Lang lays out core principles for making a strong first impression in class, arguing instructors should spark students' curiosity about the course content before handing out the syllabus. The piece blends theory with practical examples for shaping a first day that sets the tone for the whole semester.

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To Catch AI Cheating, Turnitin Wants to Monitor Students' Keystrokes

Turnitin's new tool, Clarity, tracks students' typing patterns, revisions, copy-paste use, and time spent writing in an effort to detect AI-generated work. It's the ed-tech giant's latest move in an ongoing effort to stay ahead of AI-assisted cheating since it launched its original AI detector after ChatGPT's debut.

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[The Despair of the Professor in the Age of A.I.](#)

Jay Caspian Kang gathers reflections from a dozen college and high-school instructors on how generative AI has reshaped their teaching, with reactions ranging from cautious optimism to genuine grief. Many describe losing the sense of guided intellectual struggle that once defined the relationship between teacher and student.

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[CLIL and EMI: The Curate's Egg](#)

ELT researcher Geoff Jordan takes a critical look at Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and English Medium Instruction (EMI), weighing their claimed benefits against the evidence for how well they actually work. As the title suggests, his verdict is mixed: good in parts, but far from an unqualified success.

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[AI Is a 'Wicked Problem.' That's the University's Specialty.](#)

Drawing on research into how generative AI has upended assessment, this piece argues universities should stop chasing a single fix and instead treat AI as a wicked problem, one with no correct answer, only better or worse trade-offs. It suggests that navigating exactly this kind of open-ended, high-stakes uncertainty is what universities are built for.

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[College Students Are Testing at the Level of 10-Year-Olds](#)

A new OECD survey of roughly 160,000 adults finds that 8% of college students across member countries read at a ten-year-old's level, with the U.S., Poland, and Israel among the weakest performers. Researchers point to pandemic-era learning gaps, loosened admissions standards, and heavy classroom technology use as likely contributing factors.

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[AI Can't Fix the Student-Motivation Problem](#)

Despite years of hype around AI tutors like Khan Academy's Khanmigo, actual student uptake has stalled even as access has soared, exposing the limits of what a chatbot can do. The piece argues AI can answer questions and offer feedback, but it can't manufacture the motivation students need to actually engage with learning.

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Teaching and the \$1.98 Porsche

Peter Greene argues that framing teacher recruitment struggles as a shortage misdiagnoses the real problem, much like concluding there's a Porsche shortage just because you can't buy one for \$1.98. He contends that low pay and poor working conditions, not a lack of willing candidates, are what's actually driving people out of the profession.

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How AI is Shaping Childhood

Drawing on child-development research, the piece warns that AI tools built for kids too often prioritize speed over safety, producing error-filled content that can misinform young users before regulation catches up. The author argues parents and caregivers, not policymakers or companies, are ultimately the ones who will decide how AI shapes the next generation's childhood.

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Summer Break Is Over

David Deubelbeiss returns to ELT Buzz's regular teaching content as the new school year begins, signaling a shift back to the newsletter's usual mix of lesson ideas and teacher-development tips after the summer lull.

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The Real Problem Behind Grade Inflation

Beth McMurtrie reports on how professors, under pressure to keep students and administrators satisfied, are quietly lowering the bar even as they privately admit students aren't doing the work. Faculty interviewed describe a system where evaluations and job security are tied to generous grading, leaving little incentive to push back.

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Dear Anthropology

Dawn Nafus reflects on anthropology's uncertain place in an industry that once found it useful to appear interested in academic insight but increasingly no longer sees the need to keep up the pretense. She argues the discipline now faces a stark choice: fight for the kind of engaged, independent scholarship it actually wants, or keep chasing a corporate relevance that's fading fast.

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What Is Digital Pedagogy? A Practical Guide For Teachers (Talking ELT S16 EP1)

The season-16 opener of the Talking ELT podcast features Graham Stanley and Sophia Mavridi unpacking what digital pedagogy actually means in practice, moving beyond buzzwords to concrete

classroom guidance. It's a practical entry point for teachers thinking about when and how to bring technology into their lessons.

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[**A Teacherbot's Tangled Web**](#)

The Cybertraps newsletter, which tracks legal and ethical risks tied to classroom technology, examines a case where an AI teacherbot led to complications for the educators involved. It's a cautionary look at how quickly new AI tools can create legal and reputational exposure for teachers who adopt them without thinking through the risks.

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[**What Stories Are We Told?**](#)

Audrey Watters connects a viral essay about retailers locking up everyday goods over exaggerated theft fears to how schools get sold on unproven technologies, both driven by instinct rather than evidence. She argues the media narratives told about schools rarely match what people actually experience working and studying in them.

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[**Personalization for Young Learners \(with Matt Courtois\) — TEFL Training Institute**](#)

In this TEFL Training Institute podcast episode, host Ross Thorburn talks with Matt Courtois about practical ways to personalize lessons for young learners, tailoring activities and content to individual interests and needs. It's aimed at teachers looking for concrete strategies to make young-learner classes feel less one-size-fits-all.

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[**Stop investigating, start teaching**](#)

B. Jean Mandernach argues that trying to catch students using AI is a losing battle that turns teachers into ill-equipped investigators chasing ambiguous evidence. She proposes shifting from detection to verification: asking students to demonstrate their understanding directly through conversation rather than relying on AI-detection scores.

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[**THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT JUST ADMITTED I WAS RIGHT FOR 35 YEARS: WHY THE TIMES ARTICLE CHANGES EVERYTHING FOR LANGUAGE...**](#)

The author of the Wormhole Method newsletter claims vindication after a UK government report and a Times article appeared to validate language-teaching ideas they've championed for decades. The piece

argues this shift could have significant implications for how language learning is approached going forward.

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[Schools are rethinking whether every student needs a laptop](#)

As pandemic-era one-to-one device programs mature, districts like Los Angeles Unified and Marietta City Schools are pulling back, limiting screen time and making laptops available only when they add clear instructional value. At least 17 states have debated classroom screen-time legislation this year, with six already enacting new laws.

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[Over my shoulder](#)

In her ongoing PhD-journey newsletter, Vicky Loras shares a personal, reflective post from her doctoral studies, part of the running series where she chronicles the ups and downs of academic research and writing.

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[3 trends that will shape ed tech in 2026](#)

K-12 tech experts predict school districts will apply a much more critical lens to ed-tech purchases in 2026, especially AI-powered tools, as vendors face growing accountability pressure over student data privacy. Budget constraints may also force schools to start paying for AI tools that used to be free.

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