# Iboux Academy and the Arrival of AI: Pioneering English Lessons [B2]

L'avvento delle tecnologie moderne di intelligenza artificiale offre nuove possibilità di apprendimento delle lingue. Tuttavia, per eccellere, l'intelligenza artificiale deve andare di pari passo con la creatività umana, in modo che ogni progresso tecnologico possa essere utilizzato per ottimizzare il percorso di ogni studente. È a questo che serve Iboux.



Iboux is an academy of English which **strives** to make the best possible use of the innovative tools provided by pioneering artificial intelligence technologies. However, those technologies alone are not enough for language students to truly learn. Language is not simply a set of rules and vocabulary that can be learned mechanically, it is **tied** to culture: no language exists in a **vacuum**, it is instead linked to a history and multiple contexts and customs which, with their **subtleties**, can only be **grasped** by an emotional intelligence, which AI **lacks**. In order to become a proficient English speaker, it is necessary to understand the global use of this language and its implications for the meanings of its words, expressions and their different uses. At Iboux, teachers understand the importance of human connection for an **engaging** as well as effective, learning process. The

practices of this academy are **enhanced** by the use of AI: its use allows its already personalised teaching methods to be even more specifically **tailored**, making the learning of the English language as **straightforward** and effective as it has ever been. To find out more about its use of AI, Speak Up talked with Brian Kantt, Chief Product Officer at Iboux Academy. He began by **reflecting on** the impact of AI on society and on education in particular.

**Brian Kantt (American accent):** The release of ChatGPT to the public last November really **shook things up** in many sectors, including, of course, language education. AI gets cheaper so fast, and that means access will be democratised just as quickly. This shift makes us question the human role, not just in teaching, but in jobs overall. Questions **pop up** like, "Should I even bother learning this skill, or will it soon be **outdated**?" And in the world of language education, it's like asking, "Do I even need to learn English for professional purposes?"

## IRREPLACEABLE QUALITIES

The Iboux team is fully **aware** and certain that, both for their own team and for professionals at any company, it is vital to know English as **proficiently** as possible: there is far too much that would be lost in a translation executed by AI alone. **Brian Kantt:** The main goal is usually to be able to interact directly with clients, **suppliers** or teammates, person to person. While AI is a fantastic tool and is already making learning easier, it cannot replace the entirety of the human experience. Empathy, building genuine relationships, that real connection between people — AI just cannot recreate that because it doesn't have emotional intelligence. Plus, a common **misconception** is that learning a language is a purely linguistic **endeavour**. But it's way more than that. Language does not exist in isolation; it's deeply **tied** to culture. So, when you're working in English, understanding the cultural background of the person you're speaking with is key. Especially in English, which is not just **tied** to a specific national culture, such as American or British culture; it's also **tied** to a broader global culture.

## A WHOLE NEW TOOLBOX

The arrival of AI has been a total **game- changer** for English learning. The key, however, is how it is used. To the Iboux team it is very clear that it must make the learning process even more **customised** to the needs of each student. **Brian Kantt:** For students, the game changes quite a bit. One big shift is that class time can be optimised. Think about all those tasks that **take up** so much class time, like checking homework or going over exercises. Well, an AI, like ChatGPT, can handle those. Or if you have a question about grammar or vocabulary, ChatGPT can answer those **on the spot**. What this does is free up more time in class for what really matters: talking and interacting in English with another human being. Now, there's also the benefit of practising conversations with AI. We often talk about "low-stakes" and "high-stakes"" environments in education. Chatting in real life? That's high stakes, that's the ultimate goal. Practising in class? That's low stakes. But practising with AI? That's the lowest stakes, because you can do it over and over without any pressure. So AI kind of adds a new **layer** to the learning experience. From a teacher's **standpoint**, it's like **unlocking** a whole **new toolbox**. One of the coolest things we're seeing is how teachers can hyper-personalise content for each student. Let's say you've got a textbook passage. Before, you'd be **stuck** with it. But now, with an AI like ChatGPT, you can **tweak** that passage in seconds to better fit the student's interests or level. This is **due to** ChatGPT's generative capacities.  Doing this wasn't impossible before, but it wasn't **feasible**, **due to** the amount of human work that this would have **entailed**.

## TESTING WITH A PURPOSE

Kantt talked more about the Iboux English Proficiency Test, which is all about the human element. **Furthermore**, it is specifically designed to meet employers' demands: the test is made in such a way that it allows them to positively evaluate the candidate's level of English. **Brian Kantt:** Apart from our courses, we offer a service called the Iboux English Test. We developed it because a lot of our corporate clients said they needed a way to **gauge** the actual English skills of their staff and potential **hires**. The Iboux English Test **steps in** and gives companies a clear picture of someone's English level in

about 48 hours. And the best part? It's 100 per cent human-driven. It's not machine-powered or even hybrid. And because the **assessment** is fully conducted by a real person, you can trust the results. If you want to know how well someone can use English in a high-stakes environment (meaning interacting with another human in a real-life context), the best way to do this is to recreate this scenario during the **assessment** phase. This way, companies get an authentic look at how someone will **perform** in English when it counts.

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

While AI can be a very useful tool, the human element is not a thing of the past: Iboux understands the importance of not leaving an entire learning process in the hands of AI. **Brian Kantt:** First off, people just **crave** real, direct connections with others. So, if you're learning English to use it in a work setting, that human-to-human interaction is always going to be key. Next, when you're learning English, you're not just learning the language; you're **diving into** a whole culture. That's a tough thing for AI to truly capture. Also, remember, AI doesn't have emotional intelligence. Emotions play a big part in learning. But **don't get me wrong**, AI is changing the game. It's helping us tailor lessons in super-innovative ways.

## CUSTOMISED METHODS

Iboux is also an expert at tailoring its training to fit different company needs. **Brian Kantt:** If you **hop onto** our website and click on the "Companies" section, you can set up a meeting with someone from our **B2B** team. In that first meeting, we'll discuss what the company's needs and goals are. From there, we'll come up with a personalised learning plan — maybe one-on-one lessons, group classes, General English, Business English, or even exam **prep**. Everything's **customised** to fit what the company and its employees need. We also invite everyone to try out a lesson, a free thirty-minute trial class that can also be **booked** on our website. This way, you can see how our platform **rolls** and even chat about the learning needs and methodological approach with the instructor.

## LEARN FOR THE REAL WORLD

Finally, Brian Kantt described the academy's teaching approach in detail:
**Brian Kantt:At its core**, our curriculum is based on Competency-Based Education. What that means is that every learning unit is focused on mastering practical, **actionable**, real-life skills. So instead of just theory, students learn how to do practical things like making a sale, participating in video calls, or interviewing. When it comes to levels, we use the Common European Framework of Reference (or CEFR). So, students progress from levels A1 up to C2. **As for** our teachers, they are all native speakers with proper teaching certifications. However, aside from teachers, every student gets paired with a Learning Coach. For our corporate clients, we assign each company a **B2B** Account Manager. They're the bridge between the company and us at Iboux Academy.

# Glossary

- **enhanced** = perfezionare
- **standpoint** = punto di vista
- **stuck** = bloccato
- **hires** = nuovi dipendenti
- **steps in** = intervenire
- **tailored** = adattare
- **outdated** = obsoleta
- **take up** = occupare
- **diving into** = immergersi
- **game- changer** = che cambia le carte in tavola
- **crave** = desiderare
- **due to** = dovuto a
- **misconception** = idea sbagliata
- **endeavour** = sforzo
- **feasible** = possibile
- **entailed** = comportare
- **strives** = sforzarsi
- **lacks** = mancare
- **reflecting on** = riflettere
- **layer** = strato
- **vacuum** = vuoto
- **don't get me wrong** = non fraintendetemi
- **rolls** = funzionare
- **As for** = per quanto riguarda
- **shook things up** = sconvolgere
- **hop onto** = passare
- **straightforward** = diretto
- **B2B** = tra un'impresa e un'altra impresa (business-to-business)
- **unlocking** = aprire
- **prep** = preparazione
- **booked** = prenotare
- **grasped** = cogliere

- **-low-stakes- and -high-stakes"** = -bassa posta in gioco- e -alta posta in gioco-
- **new toolbox** = una nuova cassetta di attrezzi
- **customised** = personalizzare
- **At its core** = essenzialmente
- **aware** = consapevole
- **Furthermore** = inoltre
- **subtleties** = sottigliezze, sfumature
- **engaging** = coinvolgente
- **pop up** = emergere
- **proficiently** = con padronanza
- **suppliers** = fornitori
- **on the spot** = immediatamente
- **perform** = esprimersi
- **tied** = legare
- **tweak** = modificare
- **gauge** = valutare
- **assessment** = valutazione
- **actionable** = fattibile