



2026



TITLE:

**SOFT SKILLS IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM:
ENHANCING THE HUMAN ADVANTAGE IN
THE AI ERA**

SPEAKER: CATHERINE MANTADAKI

PRESENTATION TYPE: PLENARY

Abstract

As artificial intelligence increasingly takes over routine linguistic and cognitive tasks, the value of uniquely human competencies is becoming more evident than ever. Communication, collaboration, critical thinking, empathy, adaptability and creativity are emerging as essential skills for success in education, work and life. This presentation explores how the English language classroom can serve as a powerful environment for developing these competencies alongside language proficiency. Drawing on the action-oriented approach of the CEFR and its emphasis on learners as social agents, the session examines how soft skills can be integrated into ELT through both explicit and implicit approaches. Explicit approaches raise learners' awareness of skills such as teamwork, communication, and leadership through targeted content and discussion, while implicit approaches develop these competencies through meaningful interaction, mediation tasks, projects, problem-solving activities, and collaborative learning experiences. Particular attention will be given to inclusive practices that support learners with diverse learning profiles, ensuring that all students have opportunities to participate, contribute and thrive. This presentation will explore practical ways to design learning experiences that strengthen both language competence and the uniquely human skills that remain essential in an AI-driven world.

Biography

Catherine Mantadaki is an English Language Teacher, Teacher Trainer, and Senior ELT Educational Consultant at Express Publishing with over 30 years of experience in education. She specialises in inclusive education and neurodiversity. She holds an MSc in Social Neuroscience, Social Pedagogy and Education and regularly designs and delivers teacher-training programmes, workshops, and conference presentations. Her professional interests include Neuroscience, Inclusive Education, Social Pedagogy, Positive Education, Educational Technology and the integration of AI into teaching and learning. She is committed to promoting accessible, engaging, and evidence-informed educational practices that support the success and well-being of all learners.