



2026



TITLE:

**DESIGN THINKING: A HUMAN-CENTRED
APPROACH TO DEVELOPING LANGUAGE
COURSES**

SPEAKERS: VALENTINA HOLUBEVA & ELENA BIALKO

PRESENTATION TYPE: WORKSHOP

Abstract

To remain competitive with AI in providing learner-tailored courses, teachers need to upgrade their course design skills.

Teachers can shift from rigid curriculum delivery to courses that genuinely resonate with learners' expectations by applying Stanford's innovative Design Thinking framework. It can be successfully applied to ESP and General English course design. Design Thinking empowers teachers to create dynamic learning processes that help learners meet their real-world needs.

In our workshop, we will demonstrate examples of applying Design Thinking in teaching Business English, preparing students for international tests, general English for teenagers and pre-teens.

By the end of the workshop you will see that Design Thinking is not a one-size-fits-all methodology. It is a living, student-driven curriculum that evolves with every cohort.

You will leave with a practical framework for designing courses your students genuinely need and want to take.

Biography Valentina Holubeva

Valentina Holubeva is an experienced EFL teacher, linguistic researcher, teacher trainer, founder of ICAN Online English Speaking Club, and a leader within the professional communities EdYOUFest and PATE. Her teaching approach is shaped by extensive academic and professional experience, including studies in intensive teaching methods, communicative linguistics, and the E-Teacher Scholarship Program. She has taught in diverse educational contexts, from young learners to international exam candidates and corporate clients, and has participated in international educational projects. Valentina has shared her findings through publications and presentations at international conferences in nine countries, including TESOL. An early adopter of technological and methodological innovation, she actively explores the potential of AI in education.

Biography Elena Bialko

With a career spanning classrooms, boardrooms, and Zoom screens, Elena Bialko has spent over 20 years shaping English learners and the teachers who guide them. A Cambridge DELTA (2009) and CELTA holder and TOEIC Propell Accredited Trainer (2019), she led the Foreign Language Department at IBA Group in Minsk for nearly two decades building curricula, running teacher development programmes, and serving corporate clients across Belarus. Today she works as an online tutor in General and Business English and exam preparation, and a teacher trainer. She believes great teaching is about never stopping learning and making students believe that the sky is the limit.