

**S.M.A.R.T. STRATEGIES FOR CAMBRIDGE EXAM SUCCESS:
ENHANCING PREPARATION THROUGH AI AND DIGITAL TOOLS**

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Abstract: *This article explores the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools in the preparation of learners for Cambridge English examinations, with a focus on enhancing teaching effectiveness and learner outcomes in TEFL contexts. Building on a comprehensive literature review and empirical data from Romanian English language teachers (primary to university level), it introduces two complementary frameworks: S.M.A.R.T. (Supportive AI Tools, Maximising Student Potential, AI-Driven Insights, Resourceful Teaching Approaches, Tech-Enhanced Exam Practice) and P.R.O.M.P.T. (Purpose, Role, Output, Material constraints, Parameters, Testing) for effective AI interaction design. The study highlights teachers’ generally positive attitudes toward AI, alongside concerns about reliability, overreliance, and its potential impact on critical thinking. Poll findings identify key learner challenges, notably in writing and speaking, and the role of AI in addressing them through adaptive learning, instant feedback, and exam simulations. The practical recommendations align with Cambridge exam rubrics and ethical guidelines, offering concrete strategies supported by supplementary resources. The article concludes that targeted AI integration, combined with sustained teacher training, can enhance both skill proficiency and exam confidence, providing a replicable model for AI use in high-stakes language testing.*

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence; Cambridge Exam Preparation; Personalised Learning; Automated Feedback; Adaptive Learning Platforms; British Council*

0. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an increasingly influential force in education, transforming both pedagogy and assessment. Within English language teaching, particularly in the preparation for Cambridge English Qualifications such as A2 Key, B1 Preliminary, B2 First, and C1 Advanced, AI offers new opportunities to personalise instruction, deliver immediate feedback, and extend access to authentic practice materials. As the British Council notes, “AI-powered resources can personalise learning, provide immediate feedback, and create engaging practice opportunities aligned to exam requirements”¹. These innovations address the enduring challenge of ensuring targeted, effective preparation for high-stakes language exams.

Despite the transformative potential of AI, its integration into exam-focused teaching must be approached with pedagogical caution. The European Commission’s guidelines stress that “AI should be viewed as a complement, not a

¹ Stiegelbauer Laura-Rebeca, compiled *Guide to AI for Cambridge International Exam Preparation*, 2025, p. 1.

substitute, to teacher-led learning”². This perspective underscores the need for frameworks that balance technological efficiency with human expertise, ensuring that the role of the teacher remains central to the learning process.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

One such model that I propose is the **S.M.A.R.T.** framework - **S**upportive AI tools, **M**aximising student potential, **A**I-driven insights, **R**esourceful teaching approaches, and **T**ech-enhanced exam practice - which provides a structured approach to integrating AI into Cambridge exam preparation. Supportive AI tools such as Grammarly, ChatGPT, and adaptive learning platforms can provide instant, individualised feedback, particularly in the domains of writing and speaking. Research by Makwana shows that “AI-powered tools can replicate certain teacher feedback functions while providing instant scoring and analysis”³. These tools, including Cambridge’s Write & Improve, allow learners to “diagnose specific writing weaknesses and target them through iterative drafts”⁴.

In listening preparation, AI-driven transcription tools such as SpeechTexter (<https://www.speechtexter.com>) and Otter.ai (<https://otter.ai>) enable students to compare spoken input with accurate written transcripts, helping them to “identify lexical gaps and track listening comprehension progress over time”⁵. Such tools are particularly useful for addressing challenges in understanding different accents, speech rates, and authentic contexts.

In writing, AI grammar and style checkers like Grammarly (<https://app.grammarly.com>), ProWritingAid (<https://prowritingaid.com>), and Cambridge’s Write & Improve (<https://writeandimprove.com>) support exam candidates in producing coherent, accurate, and appropriately formal responses. Qazi, Munir, and Zaigham found that “AI can reduce revision cycles and increase lexical diversity in learner output”⁶.

Speaking preparation benefits from AI chatbots, pronunciation tools, and simulated exam tasks. Tools like ELSA Speak (<https://elsaspeak.com/en/>) and Duolingo’s AI (<https://www.duolingo.com>) module provide corrective feedback without the social pressure of live interaction. These “dialogue-based language models can scaffold spontaneous speaking without the social pressure of live interlocutors”⁷.

² European Commission, *Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data in Teaching and Learning for Educators*, Brussels, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, p. 14.

³ Makwana, V., *A Comparative Analysis of AI-Powered and Teacher-Led Feedback: Investigating Student Perceptions and Writing Performance*, Journal of English Language Teaching, Chennai, ELTAI, 2025, p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁵ Stiegelbauer Laura-Rebeca, compiled *Guide to AI for Cambridge International Exam Preparation*, 2025, p. 3.

⁶ Qazi, M.H., Munir, T., & Zaigham, M.S., *The Impact of AI-Assisted Self-Regulated Learning, Specifically ChatGPT, on Students’ Engagement and Writing Skill Enhancement*, Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL, Karachi, JALT, 2025, p. 12.

⁷ Stiegelbauer Laura-Rebeca, compiled *Sample Lesson Plans Integrating AI for Cambridge Exams*, 2025, p. 2

In reading, AI summarisation tools such as Quillbot (<https://quillbot.com>) and ReadTheory (<https://readtheory.org/>) help learners to process complex texts quickly, focusing on extracting main ideas and identifying supporting details. These tools “mirror Cambridge reading comprehension demands”⁸.

The British Council’s digital ecosystem further supports AI integration with resources like the Exam Preparation Online Support Platform, which provides practice tasks, model answers, and AI-enhanced feedback for writing and speaking. This platform “bridges the gap between independent study and expert evaluation”⁹.

Pedagogically, AI addresses persistent challenges for both learners and teachers. Adaptive learning systems, for example, allow mixed-ability classes to work at individualised paces without undermining group cohesion. As Cecilia observes, “adaptive learning systems allow mixed-ability classes to receive individualized input without fragmenting class cohesion”¹⁰.

Nevertheless, there are limitations. Makwana warns that “AI feedback lacks the nuanced pedagogical judgment of a human assessor”¹¹. Ethical concerns, data privacy, and the risk of over-reliance on AI require careful consideration and transparent integration into teaching practice.

AI, when applied through a structured model like the S.M.A.R.T. framework, can greatly enhance Cambridge exam preparation, but it should complement, not replace, skilled educators. Recognising both its potential and its limits, this article examines practical AI applications in the Cambridge context and provides recommendations for ethical, effective use.

2. METHODOLOGY / PEDAGOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This article adopts a conceptual-practice methodology, drawing upon my professional experience in Cambridge exam preparation, materials from British Council and Cambridge English digital platforms, and recent literature on AI integration in language assessment. The approach is framed around the S.M.A.R.T. model I propose, namely, **S**upportive AI tools, **M**aximising student potential, **A**I-driven insights, **R**esourceful teaching approaches, and **T**ech-enhanced exam practice.

This framework was designed through a process of *Literature synthesis* - Reviewing empirical studies and practitioner reports on AI in Cambridge exam preparation (as detailed in the previous section); *Resource mapping* - Identifying AI-powered tools and British Council/Cambridge resources that address skill-specific exam preparation needs; *Practical validation* - Piloting lesson plans and activity sequences in actual classroom contexts (aligned with Cambridge levels A2–C1), with informal feedback from both learners and fellow teachers.

⁸ Idem, compiled *Guide to AI for Cambridge International Exam Preparation*, 2025, p. 7.

⁹ Idem, compiled *Guide to British Council Digital Tools for Cambridge Exam Preparation*, 2025, p.2.

¹⁰ Cecilia, C.T.L., *Interactive Multimedia Resources and Writing Skills*, Ambato, Universidad Técnica de Ambato Press, 2025, p. 14.

¹¹ Makwana, V., *A Comparative Analysis of AI-Powered and Teacher-Led Feedback: Investigating Student Perceptions and Writing Performance*, Journal of English Language Teaching, Chennai, ELTAI, 2025, p. 8.

2.1. Supportive AI Tools

These include AI-powered applications such as Grammarly, ChatGPT, and adaptive learning platforms. They are chosen for their capacity to offer direct, timely, and context-aware feedback tailored to the Cambridge writing assessment criteria. The criterion for inclusion was alignment with the Cambridge English Assessment objectives for accuracy, coherence, and task achievement.

2.2. Maximising Student Potential

This component focuses on personalised learning pathways, enabled by adaptive platforms (e.g., Quizlet AI, ReadTheory, Kahoot! (<https://kahoot.com>), MagicSchool (<https://app.magicschool.ai/tools>)). These platforms adjust difficulty based on learner performance, helping students to consolidate weaker areas while maintaining challenge for stronger learners.

2.3. AI-Driven Insights

Data analytics from tools like Write & Improve and ELSA Speak provide quantifiable insights into learner performance over time. Such analytics “enable teachers to target instruction more effectively by highlighting individual strengths and weaknesses”¹².

2.4. Resourceful Teaching Approaches

These involve integrating official Cambridge and British Council resources with AI enhancement. For example, teachers can use British Council listening clips combined with AI transcription for error correction tasks, or pair Cambridge practice tests with AI-generated vocabulary flashcards.

2.5. Tech-Enhanced Exam Practice

The final element applies AI to replicate authentic exam conditions. Chatbots simulate speaking exam interactions, adaptive reading comprehension adjusts to real-time performance, and AI-based scoring tools mirror Cambridge marking criteria, offering immediate formative feedback before official testing. By structuring Cambridge exam preparation within the S.M.A.R.T. model suggested, this methodology ensures, as stated above, a balance between innovation (through AI and digital tools) and pedagogical rigour (through alignment with recognised exam frameworks). The next section will present findings and discussion on the practical outcomes and implications of implementing this framework.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In order to better understand the perceived relevance and practical role of artificial intelligence in the teaching of English and the preparation of Cambridge exam candidates, a series of targeted polls was conducted between March and June 2025 among English language teachers in Romania, covering educational levels from primary school to university. The poll results collected from English language teachers in Romania (primary to university level) offer valuable insight into both the readiness of educators to adopt AI in their teaching and the perceived challenges students face in Cambridge exam preparation. These findings enrich the

¹² *Ibid*, p. 6.

theoretical perspectives discussed earlier and serve as a bridge between research and practical classroom realities.

3.1. Teacher Comfort with AI in Education

In the multiple-choice poll “How comfortable are you with using AI in the classroom and/or at home?”, out of 82 participants, 46% indicated they felt “quite comfortable”, 22% “very comfortable”, 26% “a little” comfortable, and 6% “not at all” comfortable.

This distribution suggests a majority of respondents (68%) are already open to incorporating AI tools into their teaching practice, indicating fertile ground for S.M.A.R.T. aligned interventions. The 26% who expressed only a small degree of comfort, and the 6% who reported no comfort, point to an important implementation challenge: even with widespread enthusiasm, there is a clear need for structured professional development and guided exposure to AI-powered educational tools.

Makwana’s work supports this interpretation, noting that “teachers’ openness to AI often depends on prior exposure and clear pedagogical value”¹³. This aligns with the Supportive AI Tools and Resourceful Teaching Approaches elements of the S.M.A.R.T. model, which emphasise not only tool selection but also building user competence and confidence.

3.2. Perceptions of AI in a Single Word

The word cloud poll “If you had to describe AI in one word, what would it be?” (64 participants-*they could submit multiple answers*) revealed a dominant cluster of positive descriptors, with “Helpful” most prominent. Other supportive terms included “Tool”, “Innovation”, “Interactive”, “Resourceful”, and “Facilitator”. These reflect the positive framing of AI in education as described in British Council materials, where “AI-powered resources can personalise learning, provide immediate feedback, and create engaging practice opportunities aligned to exam requirements”¹⁴.

However, the poll also captured more cautious or critical descriptors such as “Unpredictable”, “Overestimated”, “Formulaic”, and even “Death of critical thinking”. This duality mirrors the literature’s recognition that while AI offers significant advantages, its limitations, including the risk of over-reliance and the absence of nuanced human judgement, must be managed¹⁵.

From the perspective of the S.M.A.R.T. framework proposed, these mixed perceptions suggest that while implementation strategies can lean into the “Helpful” and “Innovative” aspects, they must also address concerns head-on, particularly through teacher training on ethical use and the design of activities that encourage critical thinking rather than replacing it.

3.3. Student Challenges in Cambridge Exam Preparation

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴ Stiegelbauer Laura-Rebeca, compiled *Guide to AI for Cambridge International Exam Preparation*, 2025, p. 1.

¹⁵ European Commission, *Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data in Teaching and Learning for Educators*, Brussels, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, p. 14.

In the open-text poll “What struggles do students face when they prepare for Cambridge exams?”, the most frequently mentioned issues were “speaking format” and “coping with stress”. Teachers described students as anxious about the unpredictability of speaking topics, the formal nature of the assessment, and the need to perform under time pressure.

These findings echo those presented and generated by me using ChatGPT model 4.0 in the lesson plan resources (see the QRcode in the Bibliography), where speaking confidence and exam-related anxiety are identified as persistent barriers to performance. Within the S.M.A.R.T. framework, these issues can be addressed by *Supportive AI Tools*: Chatbots and conversational AI to allow repeated, low-stakes speaking practice; *Tech-Enhanced Exam Practice*: Simulated exam conditions to familiarise students with timing, format, and interaction patterns; *Maximising Student Potential*: Adaptive pathways that reduce overload by targeting specific weaknesses. Additionally, stress management can be integrated into AI-based preparation through mental health apps such as Woebot (<https://woebothealth.com/>) or Youper (<https://www.youper.ai/>), which provide strategies for maintaining focus and reducing anxiety.

3.4. Skills Students Struggle with the Most

In the multiple-choice poll “Which skill do your students struggle with the most in Cambridge exams?” (78 participants), Writing emerged as the most problematic area (65%), followed by Speaking (22%), Reading & Use of English (9%), and Listening (4%).

The predominance of writing as the key challenge supports the existing literature, where Qazi, Munir, and Zaigham found that “formal writing for exams remains a persistent difficulty due to grammar control, coherence, and lexical precision”¹⁶. AI-powered writing platforms (e.g., Write & Improve, Grammarly, ProWritingAid) fit exactly into the AI-Driven Insights component of the S.M.A.R.T. model. These tools provide immediate, targeted feedback, enabling students to iterate drafts and correct persistent issues, a process that is often difficult to achieve in traditional classroom settings due to time constraints.

3.5. Linking Findings to the S.M.A.R.T. Model

The synthesis of poll data collected from Romanian English language teachers reveals a strong alignment between the identified challenges and the strategic aims of the S.M.A.R.T. framework. The high proportion of teachers expressing comfort with AI integration - 68% being either “quite comfortable” or “very comfortable” - suggests that the educational context is receptive to innovation, providing fertile ground for the introduction of AI-enhanced teaching practices. However, the existence of a notable group of educators who remain only slightly comfortable or not at all comfortable with AI indicates that implementation must be accompanied by targeted training and ongoing support. This reflects Makwana’s observation that sustained exposure to AI and a clear demonstration of its pedagogical value are

¹⁶ Qazi, M.H., Munir, T., & Zaigham, M.S., *The Impact of AI-Assisted Self-Regulated Learning, Specifically ChatGPT, on Students’ Engagement and Writing Skill Enhancement*, Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL, Karachi, JALT, 2025, p. 12.

essential for teacher adoption¹⁷. The Supportive AI Tools and Resourceful Teaching Approaches components of the S.M.A.R.T. model directly address this need by promoting both the accessibility of AI technologies and their practical application in real classroom contexts.

The teachers' perceptions of AI, as reflected in the word cloud data, add further nuance to the model's implementation strategy. While "Helpful" dominated the responses, along with other positive descriptors such as "Innovation", "Tool", and "Interactive", the presence of more cautious or critical terms, "Unpredictable", "Overestimated", and "Death of critical thinking", underscores the importance of embedding AI use within a robust pedagogical framework. The S.M.A.R.T. model responds to this duality by advocating for AI as a complement rather than a substitute for teacher expertise, a view consistent with the European Commission's guidance that "AI should be viewed as a complement, not a substitute, to teacher-led learning"¹⁸. This balance is vital to ensuring that the benefits of AI, particularly in terms of efficiency, adaptability, and student engagement, are realised without compromising the development of critical thinking and authentic communicative competence.

Equally significant are the specific challenges students face in preparing for Cambridge exams, as reported by the teachers. The emphasis on difficulties with the speaking format and coping with stress suggests a pressing need for interventions that go beyond content mastery to include affective and psychological preparation. Within the S.M.A.R.T. model, these challenges can be addressed through the integration of conversational AI for repeated, low-stakes speaking practice, AI-simulated oral exams for familiarisation with format, and stress-reduction tools that help students manage performance anxiety. The model's Maximising Student Potential and Tech-Enhanced Exam Practice pillars are particularly relevant here, offering personalised, adaptive pathways that can progressively build both skill competence and exam confidence.

Finally, the finding that writing is by far the most problematic skill for students, identified by 65% of respondents, directly supports the incorporation of AI-powered writing platforms into the exam preparation process. Tools such as Write & Improve or Grammarly, aligned with Cambridge rubrics, not only provide instant feedback but also track learner progress over time, offering AI-Driven Insights that inform both student self-assessment and teacher intervention. This aligns closely with Qazi, Munir, and Zaigham's conclusion that "formal writing for exams remains a persistent difficulty due to grammar control, coherence, and lexical precision"¹⁹. By addressing writing alongside speaking and anxiety-related

¹⁷ Makwana, V., *A Comparative Analysis of AI-Powered and Teacher-Led Feedback: Investigating Student Perceptions and Writing Performance*, Journal of English Language Teaching, Chennai, ELTAI, 2025, p. 7.

¹⁸ European Commission, *Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data in Teaching and Learning for Educators*, Brussels, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, p. 14.

¹⁹ Qazi, M.H., Munir, T., & Zaigham, M.S., *The Impact of AI-Assisted Self-Regulated Learning, Specifically ChatGPT, on Students' Engagement and Writing Skill Enhancement*, Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL, Karachi, JALT, 2025, p. 12.

challenges, the S.M.A.R.T. framework demonstrates its flexibility and applicability across both linguistic and psychological dimensions of exam readiness.

Therefore, we can say that the poll findings not only validate the relevance of the S.M.A.R.T. model but also offer precise directions for its application. They highlight the necessity of teacher training to foster confidence in AI use, the value of framing AI as a supportive rather than substitutive tool, and the importance of targeting high-need areas such as writing proficiency, speaking confidence, and stress management. This convergence of empirical teacher insights and the principles underpinning the S.M.A.R.T. framework strengthens the argument for its adoption in Cambridge exam preparation contexts and underscores its potential as a replicable model in TEFL more broadly.

4. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the combined insights from the literature review, the S.M.A.R.T. framework, and the poll data collected from Romanian English language teachers, this section proposes a set of practical, context-sensitive strategies for integrating AI into Cambridge exam preparation. These recommendations are designed to ensure that AI use is both pedagogically sound and adaptable across diverse teaching contexts. While S.M.A.R.T. (Supportive AI Tools, Maximising Student Potential, AI-Driven Insights, Resourceful Teaching Approaches, and Tech-Enhanced Exam Practice) provides the overarching pedagogical structure, this section also introduces my P.R.O.M.P.T. framework, a step-by-step guide for designing effective AI interactions. Together, these two frameworks enable educators not only to identify *what* areas to target and *how* to integrate AI, but also to communicate with AI tools in a way that produces high-quality, exam-relevant learning materials and activities.

4.1. Supportive AI Tools: Building Teacher and Student Confidence

Given that 68% of surveyed teachers reported moderate to high comfort with AI integration, the initial focus should be on introducing AI applications that are both intuitive and demonstrably beneficial. Tools such as Grammarly and Cambridge's Write & Improve provide immediate, context-sensitive feedback on grammar, coherence, and register, making them particularly valuable for writing preparation. These applications can be used in self-access contexts or integrated into teacher-led writing workshops, where learners receive instant suggestions and can experiment with multiple drafts before final submission.

In speaking, ELSA Speak offers AI-driven pronunciation analysis aligned with the phonological accuracy expectations of the Cambridge English scale. Learners can use the tool for daily micro-practice sessions, recording and replaying their responses to Cambridge-style speaking prompts. The implementation of such tools must be accompanied by professional development sessions for teachers,

ensuring they understand not only the technical features but also how to integrate these tools into a coherent syllabus²⁰.

4.2. Maximising Student Potential: Differentiated, Adaptive Learning Pathways

The poll data and teacher feedback indicate a significant range of ability levels in Romanian Cambridge preparation classes. Adaptive AI platforms such as Quizlet AI, ReadTheory, and Kahoot! can respond dynamically to each learner's performance, adjusting the difficulty of tasks and reinforcing weaker areas without holding back stronger learners. This is particularly relevant for exam preparation courses where heterogeneous skill levels can pose a challenge to pacing and curriculum balance.

For example, in reading preparation, ReadTheory can progressively introduce more complex passages and comprehension questions, while in vocabulary work, Quizlet AI can generate personalised study sets targeting a learner's specific lexical gaps. This supports the Maximising Student Potential pillar of **S.M.A.R.T.**, ensuring that every learner, regardless of starting level, can make measurable progress. As noted in the British Council's digital toolkit, "adaptive resources can help maintain engagement and achievement across diverse ability levels"²¹.

4.3. AI-Driven Insights: Data for Targeted Intervention

One of the most powerful contributions of AI to Cambridge exam preparation is the provision of actionable learning analytics. Platforms such as Write & Improve for writing and ELSA Speak for speaking generate progress reports that highlight accuracy trends, recurrent errors, and areas for improvement over time. Teachers can use these reports to design focused mini-lessons or remedial workshops, while students can engage in self-directed correction cycles, an approach that mirrors Cambridge's emphasis on continuous improvement.

Makwana's study reinforces this point, noting that such analytics "enable teachers to target instruction more effectively by highlighting individual strengths and weaknesses"²². For best results, analytics should be reviewed regularly, ideally on a fortnightly basis, to inform both teacher-led intervention and learner self-reflection.

4.4. Resourceful Teaching Approaches: Blending AI with Official Materials

AI integration is most effective when it complements, rather than replaces, established Cambridge preparation resources. The *Sample Lesson Plans Integrating AI for Cambridge Exams* provides ready-made examples of how to blend official listening, reading, and writing materials with AI enhancements. For

²⁰ Makwana, V., *A Comparative Analysis of AI-Powered and Teacher-Led Feedback: Investigating Student Perceptions and Writing Performance*, Journal of English Language Teaching, Chennai, ELTAI, 2025, p. 7.

²¹ Stiegelbauer Laura-Rebeca, compiled *Guide to British Council Digital Tools for Cambridge Exam Preparation*, 2025, p. 3.

²² Makwana, V., *A Comparative Analysis of AI-Powered and Teacher-Led Feedback: Investigating Student Perceptions and Writing Performance*, Journal of English Language Teaching, Chennai, ELTAI, 2025, p. 6.

example, teachers can pair an authentic Cambridge listening test with an AI transcription tool such as SpeechTexter, then guide students in identifying misheard words, reconstructing sentences, and practising pronunciation.

In reading, summarisation tools like Quillbot can be used to model how to extract main ideas from dense academic texts, a skill essential for higher-level Cambridge papers. By explicitly connecting these AI-supported activities to official exam rubrics, teachers can ensure that the technology enhances, rather than distracts from, the exam's communicative and cognitive demands.

4.5. Tech-Enhanced Exam Practice: Simulating High-Stakes Conditions

The poll data indicated that speaking anxiety and writing difficulty are the most significant obstacles for Cambridge candidates. These can be diminished through AI-powered simulations that replicate exam conditions. In speaking, ChatGPT or Duolingo's AI chatbot can act as interlocutors, delivering timed prompts and follow-up questions modelled on Cambridge Part 2 and Part 3 speaking tasks. For writing, timed essay tasks in Write & Improve help students practise generating, organising, and revising ideas under pressure.

To further address exam-related stress, AI-supported mental health tools such as Woebot or Youper can provide guided mindfulness exercises and cognitive behavioural strategies. This holistic approach reflects the S.M.A.R.T. model's recognition that exam readiness is both a skill-based and emotional process.

4.6. Resource Access through QR Codes

To support implementation of the above-mentioned, readers will have access to three key resources personally compiled, available via QR codes in the Bibliography section of this article:

1. *Guide to AI for Cambridge International Exam Preparation*
2. *Guide to British Council Digital Tools for Cambridge Exam Preparation*
3. *Sample Lesson Plans Integrating AI for Cambridge Exams*

These resources provide detailed, ready-to-use strategies, examples, and step-by-step guidance for integrating AI into Cambridge exam preparation, and are designed to complement the recommendations outlined above.

In summary, these recommendations and resources apply the S.M.A.R.T. framework through evidence-based practices, linking its pillars to supportive tools, adaptive platforms, analytics, blended pedagogy, and simulations. This approach addresses the challenges revealed by poll data, aligns with pedagogical principles, and bridges research and practical implementation in Cambridge exam contexts.

4.7. P.R.O.M.P.T. Framework for AI Interaction Design

While the S.M.A.R.T. model provides a broad pedagogical blueprint for integrating AI into Cambridge exam preparation, its effectiveness is maximised when educators can communicate with AI tools in a structured and purposeful way. To support this process, the P.R.O.M.P.T. framework, that I developed, offers a step-by-step approach to crafting effective AI prompts, ensuring that the outputs generated are relevant, accurate, and pedagogically sound. The acronym **P.R.O.M.P.T.** stands for:

P - Purpose: Define the educational objective of the AI interaction. For example, “Generate a Part 2 Cambridge Speaking prompt for B2 level focusing on environmental issues.”

R - Role: Assign the AI a specific role (e.g., “Act as a Cambridge English Speaking Examiner”). This sets tone and context for its responses.

O - Output format: Specify the exact form of the response, list, dialogue, table, or exam-style question, to match classroom needs.

M - Material constraints: Indicate parameters such as word count, difficulty level, or vocabulary scope to ensure appropriateness for the target learners.

P - Parameters for style and accuracy: Request adherence to Cambridge exam rubrics, CEFR level descriptors, or specific marking criteria. (*all can be found online*)

T - Testing and tweaking: Pilot the prompt, review AI output, and adjust wording to improve precision and pedagogical value.

For example, a teacher wishing to practise Part 3 of the Cambridge C1 Advanced Speaking test could use the following P.R.O.M.P.T. aligned instruction: “Act as a Cambridge English Speaking Examiner. Provide me with three discussion questions for Part 3 of the C1 Advanced Speaking exam on the topic of globalisation. Ensure that each question encourages extended answers, uses C1-level vocabulary, and reflects the style of the official exam materials.”

By following P.R.O.M.P.T., teachers can ensure that AI-generated content is not only contextually accurate but also aligns with exam standards and classroom objectives. This framework also empowers students to use AI tools for autonomous study, enabling them to request targeted practice activities in a way that mirrors classroom-level quality.

The P.R.O.M.P.T. framework is included in full in the supplementary resources accessible via QR code in the Bibliography section, alongside the author’s *Guide to AI for Cambridge International Exam Preparation*, *Guide to British Council Digital Tools for Cambridge Exam Preparation*, and *Sample Lesson Plans Integrating AI for Cambridge Exams*.

5. CONCLUSION

The integration of artificial intelligence into Cambridge exam preparation marks a major development in English language teaching, enabling personalised learning, greater engagement, and precise skill targeting. Based on a literature review and data from Romanian English teachers, this article introduced the S.M.A.R.T. and P.R.O.M.P.T. frameworks as complementary tools for maximising AI’s benefits in exam contexts.

S.M.A.R.T. offers a structured approach to addressing skill gaps, from Supportive AI Tools to Tech-Enhanced Exam Practice, while P.R.O.M.P.T. guides teachers in crafting accurate, level-appropriate AI interactions aligned with Cambridge standards. Together, they address teacher readiness, student challenges in writing and speaking, and the need to balance innovation with human-led pedagogy.

Findings show that effective AI use relies on aligning tools with clear objectives, ethical standards, and exam requirements. Benefits include differentiated learning, reduced anxiety, and targeted feedback, but sustained teacher training and evaluation of AI's reliability and inclusivity remain essential.

Practical application is supported through supplementary resources, accessible via QR codes in the Bibliography. Future research should examine long-term effects on performance, student perceptions across CEFR levels, and AI ethics in teacher training. These frameworks provide a replicable model for using AI to support both exam success and lifelong language learning.

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