

ReSpeak custom GPT: <https://chatgpt.com/g/g-68effe761eb08191891ac11e33f83a0e-respeak-the-conversational-rewriter-for-learning>

Link to this transcript in ChatGPT:

<https://chatgpt.com/share/6a21d670-8760-83ea-bdbf-ca04dd840141>

I'm having trouble understanding the concept that understanding issues can be different and aren't always the same type of problem. I like to learn by listening to a story with the main point brought out in the resolution of the story. Can you tell me a story about this to help me? See below.

Text (from the blog post draft) copied and pasted into the ReSpeak ChatGPT input field:

Understanding Is Not One Problem

One of the challenges in supporting learning is that “not understanding” can mean several different things.

Sometimes a learner is encountering an unfamiliar idea for the first time and needs help developing a basic mental model. Sometimes the learner can repeat a term or definition but cannot yet use it. Sometimes the learner understands individual ideas but cannot connect them. And sometimes the learner needs to encounter the same idea in a different form before it begins to make sense.

This is where AI can be useful, not as a shortcut to answers, but as a scaffold for sense-making. The key is to match the AI-supported activity to the specific barrier the learner is facing.

“I Don't Understand This Yet”

The first challenge is the most familiar. A student encounters a new concept, theory, process, or framework and simply does not understand it yet.

One example of a tool designed to support this challenge is My Learning Helper, a custom GPT that provides tutor-style support for developing understanding. Students can ask clarifying questions, request examples, explore alternative explanations, or connect a new idea to something they already know.

The goal is not for the tool to complete the work. The goal is to help the learner build enough understanding to keep going.

This use of AI fits well with the idea of scaffolding. Support is provided at the point where the learner cannot yet move forward independently, but still needs to remain engaged in the thinking process. In Vygotsky's terms, AI can help learners work within the zone of

proximal development when it provides support that extends their current capability without replacing their effort (Vygotsky, 1978; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

“I Can Repeat It, But I Don’t Really Understand It”

A second challenge is more subtle. Students may recognize an idea, repeat a definition, or feel familiar with a concept after reading or watching a video. But familiarity is not the same as understanding.

One example of a tool designed to support this challenge is Quiz Me!, a custom GPT that provides a self-assessment environment where learners can check their understanding and identify gaps. The value here is not grading. It is helping students discover what they know, what they partially understand, and what still needs attention.

This matters because students often overestimate their understanding when they only reread or review materials passively. Asking students to retrieve, explain, and apply ideas gives them a more accurate picture of their learning. Retrieval practice can strengthen learning, and self-assessment can support students’ ability to monitor and regulate their own progress (Karpicke & Blunt, 2011; Zimmerman, 2002).

“I Understand the Pieces, But I Can’t Connect Them”

A third challenge often appears in more advanced learning. Students may understand individual readings, examples, or concepts but struggle to see relationships among them.

This is where discussion matters.

One example of a tool designed to support this challenge is Breakout Companion, a custom GPT that supports structured peer interaction as a way of refining understanding. Rather than telling students what the ideas mean, the tool can help frame discussion, prompt comparison, surface assumptions, and encourage learners to articulate their own interpretations.

This kind of AI support is valuable because understanding is often constructed through dialogue. When learners explain their thinking to others, respond to alternative perspectives, and negotiate meaning, they deepen and refine their understanding. This aligns with constructivist views of learning that emphasize active meaning-making rather than passive reception of information (Duffy & Cunningham, 1996).

“I Need a Different Way to Encounter the Idea”

A fourth challenge cuts across the others. Sometimes learners do not need more information. They need a different representation of information they already have.

This is where tools such as NotebookLM and ReSpeak can be especially helpful.

NotebookLM provides one way to help learners encounter the same source material through multiple representations. A reading or set of documents can become a summary, a conversational podcast, or an explainer-style video. For this post, I plan to create an example podcast and explainer video about AIMON itself to show how the same concept can be represented in different ways for learners who are still building basic understanding.

For shorter passages of text, ReSpeak offers another form of support. A dense paragraph can be re-expressed as a simpler explanation, a practical example, an analogy, or even in story mode. These alternative forms of expression can help learners find an entry point into an idea that initially feels abstract or inaccessible.

This connects well with Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which emphasizes that learning can be supported when words and images, or other complementary representations, are designed to support meaningful processing rather than simply add more information (Mayer, 2009). From an AIMON perspective, the important point is not that one representation is always better than another. The point is that different representations can provide different pathways into understanding.

Output from ChatGPT:

Mode: Storytelling Mode

Mara was a tutor in a small learning center.

Every afternoon, students came to her with the same sentence.

“I don't understand.”

At first, Mara treated that sentence like one problem.

So she used one solution.

She explained the idea again.

Then she explained it more slowly.

Then she explained it with more examples.

Sometimes that helped.

But sometimes the students still looked lost.

One day, four students came in with the same complaint.

“I don’t understand this.”

Mara almost gave her usual explanation.

But then she paused.

She wondered, “What kind of not understanding is this?”

The first student was Leo.

He pointed to a page about a new theory.

“I have never seen this before,” he said.

Mara realized Leo needed a starting point.

So she did not quiz him.

She did not ask him to apply the theory yet.

She helped him build a simple mental picture.

She said, “Think of this theory like a map. It shows how the parts fit.”

Leo nodded.

“Oh,” he said. “So I need the basic shape first.”

That was one kind of problem.

Leo did not understand yet because the idea was new.

The second student was Priya.

She could repeat the definition perfectly.

But when Mara asked for an example, Priya froze.

“I know the words,” Priya said. “But I cannot use them.”

Mara smiled.

“That is a different kind of not understanding.”

So she gave Priya small practice questions.

Priya had to explain the idea in her own words.

Then she had to apply it to a new situation.

At first, she stumbled.

Then she started to see the gap.

“I thought I understood,” Priya said. “But I mostly remembered the definition.”

That was another kind of problem.

Priya had familiarity, but not usable understanding.

The third student was Omar.

Omar understood each reading.

He understood each example.

But when the teacher asked him to compare them, everything fell apart.

“I understand the pieces,” he said. “But I cannot connect them.”

So Mara invited two other students into the conversation.

She asked them to compare the ideas out loud.

They talked through similarities.

They noticed differences.

They questioned each other’s assumptions.

Slowly, Omar started drawing lines between the concepts.

“Oh,” he said. “The ideas are not separate boxes. They are connected.”

That was a third kind of problem.

Omar needed dialogue to build relationships among ideas.

The fourth student was Nina.

She had read the chapter twice.

She had watched the lecture.

She had even reviewed her notes.

Still, the idea felt flat and distant.

“I do not need more information,” she said. “I need another way in.”

So Mara told her a story.

She turned the abstract idea into a scene with people and choices.

Then she made a simple diagram.

Then she gave a short spoken explanation.

Nina’s face changed.

“That is it,” she said. “I needed to meet the idea differently.”

That was the fourth kind of problem.

Nina needed a new representation, not just more content.

At the end of the day, Mara looked at her notes.

Four students had said the same sentence.

“I don’t understand.”

But they had not needed the same help.

Leo needed a basic mental model.

Priya needed practice using the idea.

Omar needed help connecting the pieces.

Nina needed the idea in a different form.

Mara wrote one sentence on the board.

“Understanding is not one problem.”

Then she added another sentence beneath it.

“So support should not be one solution.”

That became her new rule.

When a learner says, “I don’t understand,” do not rush to explain again.

First ask, “What kind of not understanding is this?”

Because sometimes the learner needs a map.

Sometimes they need practice.

Sometimes they need conversation.

And sometimes they need a new doorway into the same idea.

Here’s the main point.

AI can help, but only when it matches the real barrier.

It should not replace the learner’s thinking.

It should support the next step the learner is ready to take.

Learner can have this script read to them by ChatGPT or by another text to speech converter.