

Podcast 500: What Are We Really Doing Here? Part 2

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: I believe authenticity that is going to be the currency of the AI age, and we are going to be drawn and attracted to people who can be authentic.

Julie Walker: Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, “IEW.” My name is Julie Walker, and I’m honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

Julie Walker: Welcome back everyone to part 2 of our 500th episode podcast. And to start off this portion of our podcast, Andrew and I are going to share about our coffee cups. Go ahead, Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: thi this

Julie Walker: I'm sorry, I have to go first because yours is more fun.

Andrew Pudewa: okay. Your yours has a battery charging icon.

Julie Walker: It is an Ember, Ember coffee

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, I had one of those.

Julie Walker: Yes, and the reason why I have one, this is how influential Andrew is. He's like, these are the best because they keep your coffee hot. So I now own three of these.

Andrew Pudewa: And mine doesn't work anymore.

Julie Walker: What I love is a traveler mug because actually, you can see my battery is dead, but if my battery were not dead, I would be able to tell you what the temperature of my coffee is. And this sits on a charger, so there's a battery built into here and it sits on a charger and it keeps my coffee hot. And it's delicious all day long until you run out of batteries.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, and we do not have a discount code for our listeners to buy an Ember cup. We have no sponsorships or

Julie Walker: No affiliate link. No. I should become an affiliate 'cause I'm a gusher. I love my Ember. I own three. My husband actually owns three. They're not cheap, but they're pretty good. So, alright, now you share your one. Yours is more fun.

Andrew Pudewa: I have always kind of disliked these motivational posters that you used to see 15 years ago. They were all over the place, and so there was a company that made

de-motivational posters. I think it was called Despair, Inc. And so I have a few of those, but I also have a cup. And on one side you see a bear eating a salmon, and on the other side it says Ambition: The journey of a thousand miles sometimes ends very badly.

And I really appreciate this cup.

Julie Walker: It is just the right size, and Andrew and I are both in the stage of life where we don't need any more coffee cups. So we do a little secret Santa around here at Christmas time because we love Christmas and I always fill out my form "No cups." because I have one cup that I use. Well three. But I don't need any more cups as cute as they are

And so,

Andrew Pudewa: All right. What's up for this part?

Julie Walker: Okay, so I wanna, so we had a question that came about accreditation. How long here it is. So this is from Crystal. How long should one expect to take to go through the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*? Are we assigned one person to check our compositions? Are we in a queue? How are we able to communicate with the person who checks our compositions?

Okay, so we have a small accreditation team. So it's not just one, Crystal, it's a few, which in my world is three.

Andrew Pudewa: Exactly

Julie Walker: Exactly three, right?

Andrew Pudewa: Right, in your world.

Julie Walker: So it's either a few or several, which several is four. But we have a very, very elite group. And Andrew, the way we do it now is with our new Gradebook. Gradebook is an app, it's a web-based app that helps teachers grade their student papers. And we use Gradebook. To evaluate these submissions, but what we've done for our accreditation process now is applicants submit their papers first, like a self check, and Gradebook will flag what needs to be corrected before they actually submit it. It's much easier to get an accepted A than an incomplete now for the accreditation process, but you do do it one submission at a time. So Crystal, until you pass Unit 2, you can't do unit three because these are cumulative.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, okay, let's rephrase that. She can do the video course. She can do the assignments. Yes, she can work on it. Yes, but you can't submit the Unit 3 until you've submitted the Unit 2

Julie Walker: Well, and submit the Unit 2 and pass.

Andrew Pudewa: and pass. Okay.

Julie Walker: Yeah, because you've got all your dress ups in your Unit 2. And so if you don't, if you haven't nailed the dress up in Unit 2, you're probably not going to nail them in three and four and beyond

Andrew Pudewa: Well, it'll be more practice.

Julie Walker: It would be more practice. So, Crystal, I hope that helps. So it should be pretty, pretty quick.

Andrew Pudewa: And she can communicate directly with the accreditation team with more questions, correct.

Julie Walker: the accreditation, email accreditation@IEW.com accreditation.

Andrew Pudewa: You do have to know how to spell that.

Julie Walker: You do? Yes. Okay. Another question. Oh, another question from Crystal to add. "I'm currently teaching level A. I feel bad that I'm taking a few times for submitting composition." Don't feel bad. My goodness. We, we want you to experience some of the empathy for your students. "However, I've grown so much as I work through. Right. I was, I literally said that yesterday to someone, the best way to learn is to teach."

Andrew Pudewa: I'm currently on Unit 5 and had a light bulb moment. Yes. We don't know what the lightbulb moment is, but we thank you, Crystal, and I think you will continue to have light bulb moments. it was funny when she said, how long does it take to accomplish the teaching? Nine And in my mind I thought, well, gosh, I've been at it 30 years and it's just one of those things you can keep understanding more and more and more and more and more so. And I used to worry in the, in the early days since we're reminiscing, I used to worry that if someone came to my seminar and then bought the video, or if they bought the video and then came to the seminar, I would be making them pay for the same thing twice. And I felt bad about that. But then actually it was once the Classical Conversations moms started to tell me, at conferences, well, we have to go through the whole TWSS every year that we have a kid in Essentials.

Julie Walker: We have to.

Andrew Pudewa: But, but what the comment was is "I learn more every year. I understood it better every year. I felt like I really started to understand it." So it is, I think, one of those things that you can experience again and again and again and get more value out of it each time.

Julie Walker: I have to stop wverything right now because I forgot to mention this at the very top, which I was going to do. And that is we give away gifts for these types of episodes, these type of momentous occasions. And so what our team...

Andrew Pudewa: She just wants to give away the store.

Julie Walker: You know what? I do not wanna give away the story and Andrew, I take a page from your playbook 'cause you are

Andrew Pudewa: It's true, it's true. But I don't want to like just play along like, oh, we get to give away gifts.

Julie Walker: You could, that'd be kind of fun. That'd be unique. For me, it would be fun, very fun.

We are giving away for an honor of the 500th episode, 500 Portable Walls, and so there is a coupon code for you to use and if you happen to have a free shipping code, perhaps because you're a premium member, because our premium members have a free shipping code, they can use one a year. And Phoebe, I'm going to have you come up here and tell me what the code is and then I'm going to introduce everybody to Phoebe. Okay? So Phoebe, what's the code for the free Portable Wall?

Phoebe: Okay, the code is capital E500-PWSS.

Julie Walker: Okay, say it again and then maybe Danielle, you could post that in the chat.

Phoebe: Capital E 500. So 5 0 0 dash in all caps. PWSS.

Andrew Pudewa: So that's to translate. Episode 500 Portable Walls for Structure and Style.

Julie Walker: Right, exactly. And we're giving away 500 of those. And so if you're the 501st person. That tries to use that code, you won't be able to.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh gosh. Then they'll have to call the office and

Julie Walker: they'll cry and it would be so sad. But I want to

introduce Phoebe. So we have gone through a few, what we call podcast princesses.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, and even a podcast prince there in the middle of it, yes podcast. But the podcast princess seems to suit.

Julie Walker: So Phoebe is a recent college grad who works for us. She's a digital designer, which basically means she helps to oversee all of our social media stuff that we do here at IEW. I want to read a few stats. Oh, look, I still have that code. Um, oh, my papers, little disorganized, but Phoebe does the post for Instagram, which we have 16,000 followers on Instagram.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay.

Julie Walker: Facebook, 74,000 followers. LinkedIn, not as many, but our teachers and professionals like to see what we're doing on LinkedIn, just over 3000 followers. Pinterest, we have a Pinterest board that we're starting to rejuvenate, so right sitting literally right at 4,000, but we expect that to grow.

Andrew Pudewa: I have not met a single person who uses Pinterest for anything within the last year.

Julie Walker: Okay, I'm just going to introduce you to Phoebe.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, are you,,, you would be, wouldn't you? Yes. Okay. I just don't have the interest, I guess.

Julie Walker: And X, do you remember X used to be Twitter,

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah.

Julie Walker: So it's pretty easy, pretty seamless for us to post on, on X. So almost 4,662. And then we have 13,000 followers on YouTube. And our newest social media channel that we're just dabbling in somewhat. A little bit controversial, but it's time. We are now on TikTok and we have 2000, I'm sorry, only 200 followers, but we expect that's actually

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, it's going to grow

Julie Walker: double doubly doubling and quadrupling every year.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, let's, let's set a goal for 2026.

Julie Walker: okay, let's say.

Andrew Pudewa: Double all those numbers.

Julie Walker: Double all those numbers. Tell your friends. And Phoebe sent this out to our IEW team and she says, comment, like and share. So that's what your

charge is, dear friends.

Andrew Pudewa: But I just read my ambition cup, so yeah.

Julie Walker: Yes. Yes, that's true. That's true. But I just want to say one more thing about Phoebe: she's relatively new, but working, was an IEW student. For many years, her mother works for us, but she's relatively new on our team and is finding, we're finding her to be more and more valuable. But here's the unique thing about Phoebe. Lots of unique things about Phoebe, but she can sit in that podcast room with just you and me. And we can be a little scary sometimes. Andrew and Julie, we, we can be a little scary, but she comes in with a smile every week and ready with her little timer and tells us when we have to stop and we listen to her and we obey most of the time. So we're so grateful to have you here. So thank you, Phoebe.

Andrew Pudewa: That's a talent, but I think her drawing those little artistic French curves all over the page, it's so beautiful. I want like wallpaper on that

Julie Walker: She does paisley design.

Andrew Pudewa: What do you call it?

Julie Walker: Yeah, so we'll put an image in our show notes.

Andrew Pudewa: One of your little notebooks. Take a picture

Julie Walker: That'll be really fun.

Andrew Pudewa: All right.

Julie Walker: so hold on. Portable walls. It's this one. Oh, I'm so sorry. This is the one you get. PWSSs, so IEW.com/pwss. That's the one we're giving away. We actually have several different portable walls.

Andrew Pudewa: Could we very quickly tell the story of how the Portable Walls came to exist?

Julie Walker: Absolutely. We should.

Andrew Pudewa: Not everybody knows.

Julie Walker: No, I know. It's a great story.

Andrew Pudewa: It's a great story. And so this was back in the early 2000s, I was working for the Rocklin School District in California. And back in those days, I was just bringing to people the ideas I had learned from Dr. Webster, Mrs. Ingham, and the Canadians, which is you make the stuff, and when we'd go up to Grouard for 10 days, there were hours every day dedicated to making your posters, making your list, making your activities, making the stuff that you're going to use to teach in the classrooms. And so I was kind of giving teachers this vision, like you make a poster, you make reminder signs, you make your -ly word list, you make your list of prepositions, you get those things up on the walls. And someone told me that the fire marshal in Sacramento County had made a policy or a law that you couldn't cover more than 20% of your walls with paper, unless you bought this very special, super expensive fire resistant paper.

And I was so angry. I mean, I thought that guy should be strung up by his toes upside down in a room full of caffeinated, nine year olds with Nerf bats or something. I was so angry.

Anyway, I went back to the hotel that night. And I was thinking, okay, if the children cannot go to the walls, the walls must come to the children. So I went over to the store, bought a couple file folders, taped them together, and then I hand wrote kind of an idea, here's what would be on three panels, and it would stand up. Here's what would be on this if the children were seeing what I would imagine you'd want on the walls, right? And so we put that together to stand up on the kids' table, kind of like three taped together folders.

Anyway, I took that back in to the teachers and I said, okay, here, I'm going to pass this around. You can make these, you can have your kids make these. I thought it was such a good

idea. It's one of the best ideas I ever had. And then what we discovered is people would rather buy things than make them.

Julie Walker: Well, and remember when Denise gave you a lapbook?

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, A lapbook. That's true because those have been around for quite a while in the homeschool world. And so having that combination of, of ideas, well anyway, so here you see it and it's got strong verbs, quality adjectives, -ly adverbs. It's got examples of the dress-up techniques. It's got all six sentence openers, and then it has all nine of the unit model charts that the students can refer to and it even has a pocket and it even has a joke hidden in the pocket.

Julie Walker: Don't tell the joke. Wait. These guys will

Andrew Pudewa: no, I'm not going to say it. So anyway, that's the story of the Portable walls. And now we have a whole series of them, don't we? We've got

Julie Walker: Portable walls, Grammar on the Go

Andrew Pudewa: Grammar and the Go

Julie Walker: and Portable Walls for the Public Speaker

Andrew Pudewa: public speaking,

Julie Walker: And Portable Walls for Academic Writing.

Andrew Pudewa: and then we have that one for the little kids.

Julie Walker: Yeah. Tools for Young Writers. And that one has stickers on it.

Yeah, so that's very fun.

Andrew Pudewa: Alright.

Julie Walker: So I'm also, when you were telling that story, I was reminded when I first started working for you, we came up with the idea of doing classroom posters because we had just started a team working directly with full-time school teachers and they need posters. And I don't know if you remember, you probably do. We were a young company, definitely looking at the cost of goods, and the posters that we wound up getting, were too small to be useful, too large for them to be sitting on anyone's desk and too small to be on a wall. So that first iteration of posters is gone. But we certainly have now a new iteration of posters and classroom teachers who are not required to have that same fire code can use these posters that we've prepared for them. And they're beautiful.

Yeah, very clean and easy to read and easy to use. So do we have any more questions? I think we do. Oh, Mikael, could you help find us another question, please. And then I want to

introduce two other people that are behind the scenes for our podcast that are not here. One of them was that podcast Prince: Braden.

Andrew Pudewa: Braden. Yes. Braden.

Julie Walker: Braden. And he is a student at Regent

Andrew Pudewa: I think region.

Julie Walker: Regent in Virginia. Yes.

And he's studying to be a lawyer and he actually works for MiKael. And among other things. He edits our podcasts. So whenever we have guests on our podcast, they're usually a little nervous. I said, don't worry, Braden is going make you sound smarter than you actually are. So that's Braden.

And then another behind the scenes hero to our podcast world is Danielle. And Danielle lives in Michigan, and she goes through our episodes and creates the show notes.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh yeah. Very important

Julie Walker: puts the links on there, which is really good. And then she goes through the transcript because now our podcast has a transcript and sometimes has to correct what the bots have said. Like your name in particular. And Danielle, that would actually be funny to know because she has said that there are some things that the bots get your name totally butchered.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, that's funny.

Julie Walker: Yeah, I know. Isn't that funny? So,

Well, they never get my name wrong, Julie Walker.

Andrew Pudewa: yeah, it's pretty straightforward. I, I think AI's going to solve all that, so.

Julie Walker: So let's take a couple questions here and then we'll get to our most frequently asked question of all time.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay.

Julie Walker: Alright. Our family's homeschooling journey with *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* is just beginning. This is not a question. This is a great kudos. Thank you, Kieran. I'm going to read it anyway. I like kudos. Our girls just turned in their first compositions. The lessons learned are already spilling into other areas of life.

That's so amazing. Thank you. It's an exciting time over here. Yay. Thank you. Oh, Kathleen, this, this coupon code. Code is good right now. All the way until we run out of 500 uses of that coupon code. So you can use this for this product right here. It will be completely free.

Unfortunately, if you're in the UK, you have pay to ship. Have to pay to ship it. I'm so sorry, but that's just the way it is, right? We're not charging you extra, I promise. We don't charge our international families any extra to ship our products. We just try to not lose too much money on it.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. We, we lose money on it.

Julie Walker: Alright, Mrs. Brown, you are predicting what our next topic is, which is what are the changes in education?

What are the trends that we're seeing past, present, and future? And your question, I'm going to read it for our listeners. "I'd love for you to address AI in education as it pertains to writing. Do you see it playing any useful role for teachers and students? What warnings would you provide? Pros and cons." We should do a whole episode on this.

Andrew Pudewa: I think we're going to have a whole series of

Julie Walker: Yeah, We've done at least two, and I know that we've got another one in the hopper

Andrew Pudewa: A couple guests lined up. Um, 'cause it is the big topic.

Julie Walker: It is a hot topic.

Andrew Pudewa: I think perhaps one of the best ways to address this quickly so that people can kind of get where you're going is to make the analogy with calculators. Okay. So calculators were kind of to math knowledge the way AI, large language models are going to be to language knowledge. So before calculators, people had to understand math a lot, and they had to practice it a lot so they could be relatively fast, whether that was in things like statistics or economics or pure maths or business. And that ability created mathematical thinking.

So then when you give those people calculators, now they are even better off, right? They can use calculators much better than people who didn't learn math. Right? So, so the question you would ask and, and part of the reason for answering this is because all of our people out there are also in a position of maybe having to defend what they want to do in terms of teaching language to their kids. So just ask the question, who's going to use a calculator better? Someone who knows enough math to do math without a calculator or someone who knows math and can use the calculator, right? So most people that's like, well, of course, of course it's better to know. Know what's behind the thing you're doing. I am profoundly grateful that my parents taught me mental math. And I wish we saw a whole lot more mental math because not only would it just be good for the brain, it would be good for math, of which we're failing miserably as a country and everybody knows it well.

The same thing I think we can see with language. So yes, here's a thing that can do language faster and better than most people. It's going to be a tool. Can you use the tool? Certainly

Who's going to use it better? The people who have an intimate experience of having wrestled with grammar and syntax and vocabulary and nuance and, and device and that got that inside them from doing it, or people who said, well, I don't need to know how to do that because I have a machine to do it. Who's going to use that tool better?

And another thing I think is kind of a really good reason to keep the kids away from the AI in the writing part and do use it for research, whatever I have opinions that are irrelevant to this exact subject, but keep it away from their writing and make them write on paper and make them type without the assistance of technology and wrestle with that for as long as you can. And then they're going to be strong. They're going to be capable users of language. And then they're going to get tools and they're going to use them better.

So the other thing I want to say is we are living in a time now where it's really increasingly difficult to believe that anything is what it appears to be. We can't believe a picture or a video or any statement that anyone makes, and that's very unnerving to all of us. It's a hard time to be alive in that you just can't trust anything around you. So we have to be careful not to fall into cynicism. So what's the antidote? I believe authenticity. That is going to be the currency of the AI age, if you want to call it that. And we are going to be drawn and attracted to people who can be authentic in everything they do. And we're going to want that. And so I think for our kids to learn to be authentic in everything they do, without the use of artificial added intelligence input, there's going to be a strong benefit there. And it, you don't really have to worry about whether they're going to learn to use it or not. They will. Or they won't. But that's not something you should be thinking about when they're 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 years old. It's a developmental period.

Julie Walker: It definitely reminds me of the process versus product conversation that we've had any number of times. Our goal is to create students who can write and think, and if you give them those tools too young, they're not going to be able to have that. So are we crippling them by not giving them the tools when they're young?

No. I just think about Chris, your son and my son, who were late readers. Did that in any way hinder them in their adult lives? Absolutely not. Your son is an entrepreneur, owns his own business. My son is rocking it here at IEW, and those Structure and Style for Students videos that you love and know and love is has his fingerprints all over them. Mikael, are you kidding me? Are we out of time already? Okay, we're going to, we're going to take another break and then we're going to come back in just a few minutes.

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.