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AI as Pedagogical Partner: ELT Teachers' Strategies and Dilemmas in Everyday Classroom Use

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping English Language Teaching (ELT), yet what teachers actually do with AI in everyday classrooms is still poorly documented. Addressing this gap, this study examines how ELT teachers integrate AI as a pedagogical partner, the extent of its classroom use, and the dilemmas that accompany it. Using an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, survey data were first collected from thirty secondary and tertiary ELT teachers who already used AI tools, followed by in depth interviews with five purposively selected participants to explain and deepen the survey patterns. Descriptive statistics show moderately high levels of AI engagement, with reported classroom use ranging from about 60 to 95 percent, most teachers rating AI effectiveness at 4 or 5 on a five point scale, and challenge ratings clustering at 3 or above, indicating that benefits and barriers are experienced simultaneously. Thematic analysis of interview data reveals that teachers employ AI for AI assisted peer review, chatbot supported speaking tasks, data informed lesson planning, and real time language feedback that together enhance student participation and instructional efficiency. At the same time, teachers struggle with unequal access to devices and connectivity, limited institutional training, ethical concerns about data use and academic integrity, and the risk of student over reliance on AI. The study contributes a grounded, teacher centred account of AI integration in ELT and calls for sustained professional development, equitable infrastructure, and clear institutional guidelines so that AI can support more ethical, inclusive, and human centred language education.
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1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly integrated into education, significantly reshaping how teachers develop lessons, engage with students, and conceptualize pedagogical approaches. In English Language Teaching (ELT), AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and intelligent chatbots have moved from futuristic concepts to essential components of modern teaching strategies. These tools have begun to transform language learning by providing real-time feedback, personalized learning experiences, and enhancing student engagement. Popenici and Kerr (2017) indicate that the emergence of AI applications has fundamentally altered teaching and learning structures, emphasizing AI's pivotal role within digital learning environments. This transformation is particularly evident in ELT classrooms, where creatively employed AI tools not only support linguistic accuracy but also foster communicative competence.

The growing reliance on AI aligns with global trends toward digital transformation in education, where technology aims to enhance instructional outcomes and innovate learning interactions. In ELT contexts, AI-driven writing assistants, conversational agents, and automated assessment systems effectively address diverse learner needs while encouraging autonomous learning. For instance, ChatGPT facilitates communication practice for students, while Grammarly offers immediate feedback that aids in improving writing accuracy. Gyawali and Mehandroo (2022) note that the effective use of these tools can lead to significant enhancements in both teaching quality and student learning outcomes. However, this rapid advancement also presents a pedagogical landscape filled with complexity, requiring educators to adapt quickly, refine their approaches, and address the inherent challenges associated with technological integration.

An increasing body of literature investigates the pedagogical value of AI within ELT, emphasizing improvements in learner engagement, writing performance, and personalized instruction. Yunina (2023) asserts that AI-enhanced environments contribute to dynamic learning experiences. Additionally, (Setyaningsih et al., 2024; Chang & Sun, 2024) demonstrate how AI helps students regulate their learning pace according to individual preferences. AI tools streamline routine tasks for educators, allowing them to focus more on meaningful student interactions, aligning with constructivist pedagogies that prioritize collaboration and knowledge co-creation. Furthermore, Idham et al. (2024) highlight that AI tools create vital opportunities for continuous practice through automated feedback mechanisms. Nevertheless, existing literature often emphasizes that AI cannot replace the essential social, cultural, and emotional dimensions of teaching. Hockly (2023) argues that AI frequently struggles with the nuanced aspects of language learning that require human sensitivity and contextual understanding, underlining the need to balance AI benefits with the indispensable role of human educators.

Beyond pedagogical advantages, researchers have uncovered significant challenges and inequities related to AI integration. The persistent global digital divide affects access to AI tools, with Goffi (2023) illustrating how numerous educational institutions, particularly in resource-constrained areas, suffer from inadequate internet connectivity and a lack of devices. Additionally, Nguyen et al. (2023) found that teachers' confidence and technological familiarity significantly influence their ability to implement AI effectively in lesson planning. Ethical considerations, including data privacy, algorithmic bias, and responsible use of AI-generated content, are also essential components of this discussion (Chan & Hu, 2023). Liando and Tatipang argue that without structured professional development, educators may struggle with these complexities, resulting in superficial or inconsistent AI usage. Collectively, these studies expose considerable gaps in understanding how teachers navigate AI integration and devise strategies to address the demands of AI-enhanced teaching.

In light of these gaps, the current study investigates English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers' strategies, their experiences in the classroom, and the subtle challenges that influence their use of AI. While prior research has focused heavily on student outcomes and technological capabilities, fewer studies have examined how teachers address the challenges posed by AI on both practical and pedagogical fronts. This study offers an original contribution by emphasizing teacher agency, exploring how educators creatively leverage AI to facilitate learning while adapting to its limitations. By highlighting teacher strategies and personal experiences, the research provides a grounded perspective on how AI transforms classroom practices rather than merely presenting theoretical predictions.

This study's significance lies in its capacity to illuminate the practical realities of AI-supported ELT through a mixed-methods approach. By integrating survey data with in-depth interviews, the research aims to uncover patterns in teacher strategies, highlight variations in classroom experiences, and identify specific barriers to equitable and effective AI integration. This investigation seeks to generate evidence that not only delineates AI usage but also clarifies why certain strategies succeed, how teachers navigate uncertainties, and what institutional support is critical for sustainable AI adoption. Consequently, it provides a nuanced examination of educator readiness, professional needs, and pedagogical adjustments in the AI era.

In conclusion, the rise of AI in ELT reveals both impressive opportunities and complex pedagogical challenges. This study aims to contribute empirical knowledge that assists educators in navigating an evolving educational landscape. By examining teachers' responses to AI developments, the research presents meaningful implications for professional development, curriculum design, and ethical policymaking. As AI continues to shape the future of language education, understanding teachers' perspectives is critical to ensuring that AI integration is inclusive, responsible, and aligned with the human-centered principles vital for effective language instruction.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Role of AI in Enhancing ELT Practices and Emerging Gaps

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an increasingly influential force in English Language Teaching (ELT) due to its capacity to support personalized learning, adaptive feedback, and data-informed instruction. AI powered tools, including grammar checkers, virtual assistants, and intelligent tutoring systems, provide learners with immediate feedback and facilitate continuous language practice (Vaccino Salvadore, 2023). Applications such as Duolingo demonstrate how machine learning algorithms can calibrate task difficulty in response to learner performance, thereby supporting vocabulary development and more effective grammar mastery. Scholars such as Novawan et al. (2024) further explain that AI facilitates self-directed learning by enabling students to progress at their own pace while engaging with content tailored to their proficiency level. These features align with constructivist approaches that promote learner autonomy, active knowledge construction, and flexible, individualized learning pathways that are responsive to diverse learner contexts (Goffi, 2023).

However, despite these pedagogical advantages, researchers consistently caution that AI cannot fully reproduce the cultural sensitivity, emotional intelligence, and contextual awareness required in language teaching. Hockly (2023) notes that although AI offers a high degree of technical precision, it remains limited in addressing the socio-cultural nuances and interpersonal demands that shape language education. Teng (2024) similarly argues that while AI may enhance writing proficiency through structured and systematic feedback, it cannot entirely replace human-mediated instruction that promotes deeper cognitive engagement and critical reflection.

Taken together, these studies illustrate the considerable benefits of AI yet simultaneously expose a significant gap in understanding how teachers themselves experience AI integration in authentic classroom settings. Much of the existing literature prioritizes learner outcomes or the technical functionality of AI tools, leaving limited attention to how teachers design AI supported lessons, make pedagogical decisions, and negotiate the complexities of daily classroom realities. This gap underscores the need for research that foregrounds teacher agency and investigates how educators integrate, adapt, and evaluate AI tools in relation to their instructional goals and professional judgment.

2.2 Challenges of AI Integration in ELT and Unresolved Issues

While AI tools offer notable advantages, their adoption in ELT is accompanied by serious and persistent challenges that shape pedagogical implementation. A central concern is the digital divide, particularly in regions with insufficient technological infrastructure. Goffi (2023) reports that nearly forty percent of schools in developing countries lack stable internet connections or adequate devices, thereby restricting equitable access to AI supported learning opportunities. Setyaningsih et al. (2024) likewise show that teachers in resource constrained environments struggle to implement innovative technologies because of limited technical support, inconsistent digital readiness, and competing institutional priorities. These structural barriers create an uneven learning landscape in which the potential benefits of AI are distributed inequitably, reinforcing existing educational disparities rather than alleviating them.

Teacher preparedness further complicates the adoption of AI in ELT. Hwang et al. (2024) emphasize that teachers' technological proficiency and pedagogical beliefs strongly influence their willingness and capacity to integrate AI into instructional practice. Nguyen et al. (2023) draw attention to ethical concerns such as data privacy, surveillance, and algorithmic bias that contribute to teacher hesitation and critical skepticism. In a similar vein, Tatipang et al. (2024) and Liando and Tatipang (2024) argue that in the absence of systematic, sustained professional development, teachers are at risk of adopting AI superficially or relying on it in ways that may inadvertently undermine critical thinking, learner autonomy, and academic integrity.

These issues reveal another important gap in the current body of research: although scholars increasingly recognize structural constraints and ethical dilemmas, fewer studies investigate how these concerns concretely shape teachers' day-to-day decisions and adaptive strategies in AI supported classrooms. There remains limited empirical understanding of how teachers interpret risks, negotiate contextual constraints, and maintain pedagogical balance when integrating AI into their practice. This indicates a pressing need for research that moves beyond questions of technological efficiency to focus on the human dimensions of AI adoption, particularly teachers' interpretive and decision-making processes as they seek to align AI use with their instructional goals and professional values.

2.3 The Contribution and Broader Implications of the Study

The novelty of the present study lies in its explicit focus on ELT teachers' strategies, decision-making processes, and classroom experiences when integrating AI tools. In contrast to previous research that has largely centered on technological performance or student outcomes, this study foregrounds teacher agency and examines how educators navigate the complex interplay of opportunities and challenges presented by AI-enhanced pedagogy. Through a mixed-methods design, the research offers a holistic account of AI integration that captures both quantitative patterns and rich qualitative insights. This approach makes it possible to reveal how teachers creatively employ AI for writing support, speaking practice, diagnostic assessment, and real-time feedback, while at the same time managing ethical concerns, infrastructural constraints, and shifts in student behavior.

The study also carries important implications for the broader ELT community. First, it underscores the need for sustainable professional development initiatives that equip teachers not only with technical competencies but also with pedagogical strategies for the responsible use of AI. Second, it highlights the urgency of strengthening digital infrastructure to promote more equitable access to AI-supported learning environments. Third, it reinforces the importance of clear ethical guidelines that safeguard student data and mitigate the risks of overreliance on automated tools. Finally, the findings affirm that AI should function as a complement rather than a substitute for human-mediated teaching, reaffirming the central role of teachers in sustaining contextually rich, culturally sensitive, and human-centered language learning.

3. Method

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) to develop a comprehensive understanding of teachers' strategies, experiences, and emerging challenges in AI-integrated ELT classrooms. Quantitative survey data were first collected from thirty ELT teachers, followed by qualitative interviews with five of these participants (coded Teacher 1 to Teacher 5) to elaborate and explain the survey patterns.

The participants consisted of secondary school teachers and university lecturers with teaching experience ranging from 2 to 15 years Purposive sampling was used to ensure that all participants had direct experience using AI tools in their teaching, thereby aligning the sample closely with the aims of the study and supporting information-rich cases for in-depth exploration (Patton, 2015). Methodological triangulation across data sources and analytic procedures was employed to enhance credibility and provide a more nuanced account of AI integration in everyday classroom practice (Denzin, 1978).

3.1 Data Collection

Data were collected using two complementary instruments: a structured online survey and semi-structured interviews. The survey was developed based on prior literature on AI in ELT and technology integration (Novawan et al., 2024; Zaim et al., 2024; Nguyen et al., 2023) and aligned with key constructs such as AI usage patterns, perceived effectiveness, and perceived challenges. Draft items were reviewed by two experts in ELT and educational technology to establish content validity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018), and the instrument was piloted with a small group of ELT teachers who were not included in the main sample. Feedback from the pilot led to refinement of item wording and response scales. The final survey consisted of Likert-scale items capturing quantifiable trends in attitudes and practices, alongside brief open-ended questions that allowed respondents to elaborate on their instructional decisions and classroom experiences in their own words. Internal consistency for the main multi-item scales was examined using Cronbach's alpha, and all scales met conventional thresholds for acceptable reliability ($\alpha \geq .70$).

The semi-structured interview protocol was designed to probe more deeply how teachers design AI-assisted lessons, respond to student behaviours, and negotiate contextual constraints such as access, training, and ethical concerns. Core questions were informed by survey results in line with the explanatory sequential logic, while flexible prompts enabled probing and follow-up so that participants could articulate nuanced and contextualised accounts of practice. The interview guide was also reviewed by methodological experts to support face and construct validity. All interviews were conducted online, audio-recorded with participants' informed consent, and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Ethical principles particularly confidentiality, anonymity in reporting, and voluntary participation were upheld throughout, consistent with standard guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2018).

3.2 Data Analysis

Quantitative survey data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques (frequencies, percentages, and distributions) to identify patterns in teachers' reported AI integration strategies, levels of confidence, and perceived challenges. These descriptive results provided a broad empirical backdrop that informed the selection of interview participants and the refinement of interview prompts, and later served as a point of comparison for the qualitative themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Interview transcripts were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's approach, which involves familiarisation with the data, initial coding, theme development, review, naming, and reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This reflexive thematic analysis enabled the identification of recurring patterns in teacher experiences, adaptive practices, and concerns related to AI reliance, digital inequality, and pedagogical balance. To enhance trustworthiness, an initial subset of transcripts was independently coded by two researchers and then discussed to refine the coding frame, with ongoing reflexive memoing and peer debriefing used to check interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings followed an explanatory sequential strategy: survey results were used to inform qualitative sampling and questioning, and the two strands were then brought together in the discussion through narrative weaving and joint interpretation (Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). Convergence, complementarity, and divergence across data sources were examined as forms of triangulation to strengthen the credibility and depth of the findings. This mixed-methods integration produced a holistic account of how teachers engage with AI tools and the difficulties they face in classroom implementation, capturing both measurable tendencies and rich, experience-based interpretations.

4. Results

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed numerous fields, including education, reshaping how teaching and learning are conceptualized and enacted. In English Language Teaching (ELT), the integration of AI tools has introduced substantial changes, with the potential to enhance instructional efficiency, personalize learning experiences, and increase student engagement. At the

same time, these opportunities are accompanied by significant challenges, particularly related to teachers' readiness and adaptability, as well as the suitability of AI tools for diverse classroom contexts. This interplay between promise and difficulty highlights the need to understand how teachers strategically navigate the complexities of AI integration in ELT classrooms.

To capture these dynamics, this study employed a mixed-methods design that combined survey data with in-depth interviews. The results are presented in two complementary forms: Diagram 1, which displays the quantitative patterns emerging from the survey responses, and Table 1, which synthesizes the qualitative insights from teacher interviews. Together, these datasets offer a holistic view of the strategies teachers employ, the challenges they encounter, and their perceptions of AI's role in reshaping ELT practice. Diagram 1 visually summarizes the prevalence of specific AI tools in classrooms, teachers' confidence in using these technologies, and their views on AI's effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes, providing a quantitative overview of broader trends among participating educators.

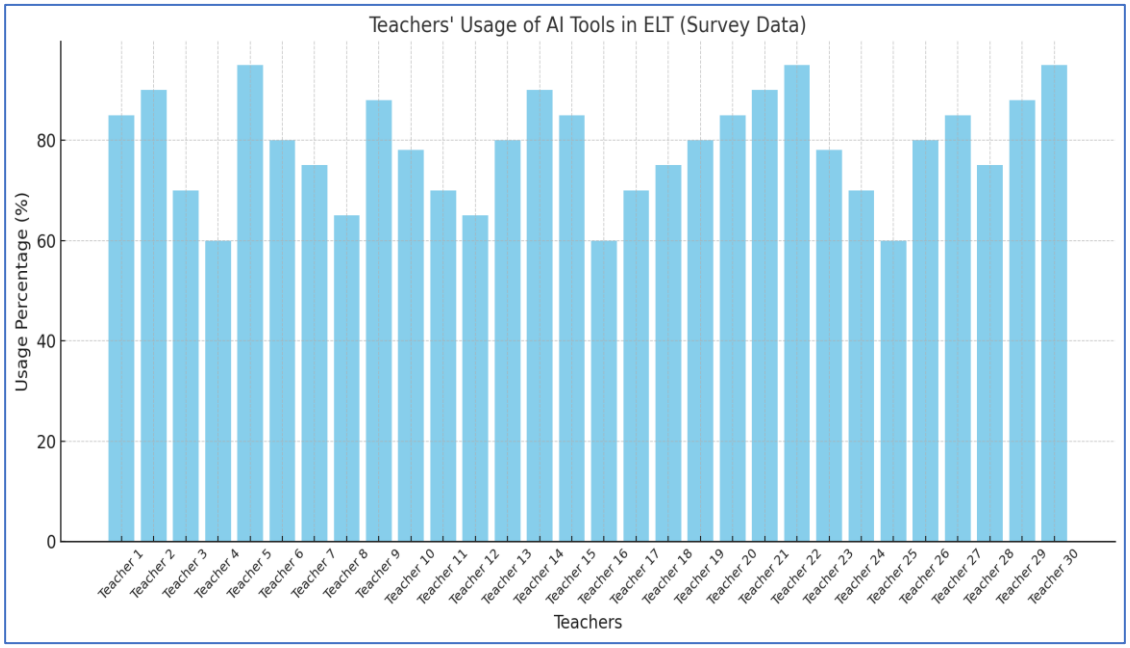

Diagram 1. Data Survey

The quantitative survey data collected from 30 English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers provides a comprehensive perspective on the current integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in classrooms, along with their perceived effectiveness and the challenges faced. This section critically examines the results, highlighting trends, insights, and implications for the future of AI in ELT.

4.1 Usage of AI Tools in ELT

The data reveal a wide spectrum of AI tool usage among respondents, ranging from 60% to 95%. On average, this reflects a moderately high level of engagement with AI, indicating that technology is becoming increasingly embedded in ELT practices. The highest levels of usage, reported by several teachers, suggest strong familiarity with tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and AI-based lesson planners. Teachers reporting usage above 85% appear to be integrating these tools extensively for personalized student feedback, automated grading, and content creation. As illustrated by Teacher 1:

> *"I use ChatGPT to generate discussion prompts and Grammarly to help students refine their writing. These tools save time and enhance student engagement. Automated grading through AI has also streamlined assessments, allowing me to focus on personalized feedback for each student."* [T-1-JK.3L-5L]

In contrast, lower usage percentages (around 60%–70%) point to a group of teachers who are likely in the early stages of adoption. Their engagement with AI tends to be more cautious and exploratory, shaped by uncertainty and limited institutional support. Teacher 2 captures this position:

> *"While I've tried using Grammarly and AI lesson planners, I feel unsure about their full potential. Limited training and a lack of clear guidelines from my institution make it challenging to integrate these tools effectively. I'd benefit from workshops to boost my confidence and skills." ."* [T-2-JK.2L-6L]

These patterns suggest that variations in AI usage are not simply a matter of access to tools, but are closely tied to teacher readiness, confidence, and professional support. Limited exposure to AI and doubts about its pedagogical value can hinder fuller integration, even when tools are technically available. Previous studies, such as Hwang et al. (2024), emphasize that while AI tools can significantly enhance classroom engagement, teacher readiness and confidence play a critical role in their adoption. In line with this, the present findings highlight the need for targeted professional development programmes to bridge knowledge gaps and strengthen teachers' capacity to integrate AI effectively into ELT.

4.2 Perceived Effectiveness of AI Tools

The survey also incorporated a Likert-scale item on perceived effectiveness, and the majority of teachers rated AI tools highly (4 or 5). This strong consensus highlights the perceived transformative potential of AI in meeting diverse learner needs, supporting more personalized instruction, and reducing routine administrative workload. Teachers who selected ratings of 4 or 5 appear to have observed concrete improvements in students' language development and classroom engagement. This view is exemplified by Teacher 5:

> *"I would rate AI tools a solid 5 in terms of effectiveness. Tools like Grammarly have significantly enhanced my students' writing skills by providing instant feedback. This has not only improved their grammar but also boosted their confidence. For instance, students are more willing to draft and revise their essays without fear of making mistakes. However, I still encourage them to reflect on the feedback rather than blindly accept corrections, as critical thinking is equally important. Overall, I see AI as a powerful supplement to traditional teaching, especially for addressing diverse learning needs."* [T-5-JK.7L-10L]

This reflection suggests that teachers do not merely perceive AI as a technical aid but as a catalyst for increased learner autonomy and willingness to engage in iterative writing. At the same time, the emphasis on reflection and critical thinking indicates that effective use of AI in ELT is framed not as passive acceptance of automated feedback, but as an opportunity for students to interrogate and learn from that feedback.

Despite the overall positive trend, a small number of respondents rated the effectiveness of AI tools as 3, signalling a more cautious or ambivalent stance. This middling perception likely reflects reservations about the capacity of AI to foster higher-order outcomes, such as critical thinking, pragmatic sensitivity, and cultural nuance in language use. Supporting this observation, Teng, (2024) argues that while AI is highly proficient at automating repetitive tasks, its ability to approximate human interaction and cultural competence remains limited. Taken together, these insights reinforce the need for a balanced and critical approach in which AI is positioned as a complement rather than a replacement for traditional teaching methods, with teachers retaining a central role in mediating, contextualising, and humanising AI-generated input.

4.3 Challenges in AI Integration

The challenge ratings provided by teachers, measured on a scale from 1 to 5, offer important insights into the barriers to AI adoption. Scores of 3 and above predominate, indicating that a substantial proportion of respondents experience notable difficulties in integrating AI into their teaching. Those who rated the challenges as 4 or 5 most frequently referred to technological disparities among students, limited training opportunities, and ongoing ethical concerns. This pattern is clearly reflected in the voices of Teacher 4 and Teacher 3:

> Teacher 4: *One significant challenge is the technological gap among students. Not all of them have access to reliable internet or devices capable of running advanced AI tools. This creates an imbalance in classroom participation. Another issue is the lack of structured training for educators. Most of us are learning through trial and error, which can be frustrating and time-consuming. Lastly, ethical concerns often come up like ensuring data privacy and preventing students from over-relying on AI for assignments. These factors make it difficult to fully embrace AI, even though its potential is clear. ."* [T-4-JK.3L-5L]

Teacher 3: *One of the biggest issues is technological disparity among students. Many of them don't have reliable internet or suitable devices, which makes it difficult to implement AI-based activities effectively. Another challenge is the lack of proper training; we need more workshops to understand these tools better. Ethical concerns also come into play, I'm worried about data privacy and whether students are becoming too dependent on AI. However, I believe that with the right support and resources, these challenges can be addressed. ."* [T-1-JK.3L-5L]

Technological disparities, particularly unequal access to reliable internet connections and appropriate devices, emerge as a critical and recurring theme. As noted by Foltynek et al., (2023), such disparities can exacerbate existing educational inequities, especially in under-resourced schools. At the same time, the high challenge ratings associated with limited training and uncertainty about AI use underline the urgency of sustained professional development. This finding resonates with Salas-Pilco et al. (2022), who emphasized the importance of equipping teachers not only with technical skills but also with pedagogical strategies to harness AI effectively in educational settings.

Interestingly, teachers who reported lower challenge ratings (1 or 2) may have benefited from better infrastructure, institutional support, or prior experience with technology integration. These individuals can be seen as illustrative cases of successful adaptation, demonstrating that when adequate resources, training, and guidance are available, many of the barriers to AI integration can be substantially reduced or overcome.

4.4 Implications for ELT Practices

The data collectively portray a field in transition, with teachers actively negotiating both the promises and the pitfalls of AI integration in their classrooms. Teachers 4 and 2, in particular, illuminate this dynamic:

> Teacher 4: *AI tools like Grammarly and ChatGPT have significantly improved my teaching practices. Grammarly, for example, has been instrumental in enhancing students' writing accuracy. Students can identify errors in real time, which accelerates their learning process. However, I've noticed some challenges, particularly over-reliance on these tools. Some students tend to blindly accept AI suggestions without critically analyzing them. This raises concerns about diminishing critical thinking skills. To address these issues, I believe tailored professional development programs focusing on effective AI integration would be extremely beneficial. Training that combines technical skills and pedagogical strategies could help lecturers like me use AI as a complementary tool, not as a substitute for traditional teaching.* [T-4-JK.6L-11L]

> Teacher 2: *AI tools bring great opportunities to ELT by fostering creativity and enhancing engagement. For instance, I use ChatGPT to help students brainstorm ideas for argumentative essays. It's amazing how it boosts their critical thinking skills and collaborative learning. However, there are infrastructure challenges, such as inconsistent internet connectivity and limited access to devices in some schools. These issues hinder the full potential of AI in ELT.* [T-2-JK.8L-9L]

Together, these accounts reveal a nuanced picture: teachers recognise AI's capacity to enhance accuracy, creativity, and engagement, yet they remain acutely aware of the risks of over-reliance, the threat to critical thinking, and the constraints imposed by unequal access to technology. The high levels of AI usage and generally positive effectiveness ratings indicate a strong willingness among teachers to embrace technological innovation. At the same time, the challenges they identify underscore the need for systemic, rather than purely individual, responses to support this ongoing transition.

To foster a more equitable and sustainable integration of AI in ELT, several interrelated strategies are necessary. First, professional development programmes should be carefully tailored to teachers' actual needs, combining technical training with concrete pedagogical applications of AI. Such programmes can help educators position AI as a supportive companion, not a replacement for human teaching. Second, schools and policymakers must invest in infrastructural improvements to ensure that all teachers and students regardless of context have reliable access to the devices and connectivity required for meaningful AI use. Third, clear ethical guidelines for AI in education are essential to address concerns about data privacy, academic integrity, over-reliance on automated tools, and the possible erosion of the human dimension of teaching and learning.

The findings also point to fruitful directions for future research. Longitudinal studies could trace the impact of sustained AI use on student outcomes over time, offering deeper insights into its long-term pedagogical value. Comparative studies across different regions, school types, or educational levels could further identify context-sensitive best practices for AI integration, helping to ensure that its benefits are shared more evenly across diverse learning environments. Overall, the quantitative data highlight the transformative potential of AI in ELT while simultaneously exposing the complexities and tensions that accompany its implementation. By addressing the challenges identified and capitalising on the insights gained, educators and policymakers can work towards making AI a genuinely powerful tool for enriching language education.

Meanwhile, Table 1 provides a complementary qualitative lens, summarising interview insights that probe more deeply into teachers' personal experiences and reflections. These narratives reveal how AI integration reshapes teaching methodologies, influences workload, and contributes to evolving professional identities. Taken together, the diagram and Table 1 offer a robust foundation for analysing the interplay between numerical trends and lived experiences, thereby enriching the discussion and paving the way for concrete, actionable recommendations.

Table 1. Interview Insights

Teacher	AI Tools Used	Strategies for Integration	Challenges
Teacher 1	ChatGPT, Grammarly	AI-generated essays, real-time corrections, creative prompts	Limited training, over-reliance on AI
Teacher 2	Interactive Chatbots	Vocabulary building, role-playing, progress monitoring	Access disparities, student unfamiliarity
Teacher 3	Grammarly, AI Lesson Planners	Adaptive lessons, peer reviews, AI-assisted grading	Ethical concerns, time constraints
Teacher 4	ChatGPT, AI Translation Tools	Simplified texts, multilingual projects, combined grammar and translation	Translation accuracy, balancing methods
Teacher 5	AI Diagnostic Tools	Learning pattern analysis, individualized plans, AI workshops	Report interpretation, student resistance

The qualitative insights gathered from five ELT teachers provide a detailed understanding of their experiences, strategies, and challenges in integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into their classrooms. These interviews shed light on the nuanced ways AI is reshaping English Language Teaching and highlight the complexities of adopting this technology.

4.5 AI Tools Used: Adoption Patterns and Preferences

The data reveal a variety of AI tools utilized by teachers, with ChatGPT and Grammarly emerging as the most commonly employed. These tools are valued for their accessibility and their capacity to support writing and grammar instruction. For example, Teacher 1 relies on ChatGPT to create sample essays that guide students in their writing tasks. This practice aligns with studies such as those by Tatipang et al., (2024), which found that generative AI tools like ChatGPT enable teachers to save time while also fostering creativity in students. It is in line with Teacher 5's experience:

Teacher 5: *Certainly. I often use ChatGPT to generate sample essays for my writing classes. For instance, when teaching argumentative essays, I input a prompt and ask ChatGPT to create a model response. This saves me time and provides students with a clear example of structure and style. I also encourage them to critique the AI-generated content,*

which sparks discussions on improving ideas and language. It's an excellent tool for fostering creativity and critical thinking, though I always emphasize the importance of using it as a supplement, not a replacement for their efforts. [T-5-JK.13L-15L]

Teacher 2's use of interactive chatbots for vocabulary building and conversational English activities further highlights the versatility of these tools. Chatbots provide instant feedback, enabling students to practise language skills in a low-pressure, interactive environment. The study by Grassini, (2023) corroborates this finding, emphasizing chatbots' role in facilitating student-centred learning. however, the varied adoption patterns among teachers suggest that personal familiarity, institutional support, and perceived tool efficacy significantly influence AI tool usage. Teachers 3, 4, and 5 expand the scope of AI adoption by integrating tools such as AI lesson planners, diagnostic tools, and translation services. These technologies enhance lesson customization, support data-driven teaching strategies, and make learning more accessible in multilingual contexts. At the same time, their broader adoption is often hindered by challenges related to time, technological training, and tool accuracy, as observed by (Al-khresheh, 2024).

4.6 Strategies for Integration: Pedagogical Innovations

The strategies employed by the teachers reveal an impressive range of pedagogical innovations designed to maximise the benefits of AI tools. Across the cases, AI is not used as a mere add-on, but is purposefully integrated into lesson design, assessment, and classroom interaction. Teacher 1's use of Grammarly for real-time grammar correction and AI-generated prompts illustrates a creative approach to engaging students and streamlining writing activities, while Teacher 3's integration of peer-review exercises using Grammarly shows how AI can foster collaborative learning and strengthen students' critical thinking skills. Teacher 4's utilisation of chatbots for role-playing and vocabulary-building activities further demonstrates AI's potential to create immersive learning environments. Through role-play scenarios, students practise conversational English in context, and the analytics provided by chatbots enable the teacher to monitor progress and plan targeted follow-up support.

Collectively, these practices align with the findings of Al-Khresheh (2024), who emphasises the importance of leveraging AI to create personalised and responsive learning experiences. This is evident in the teachers' own accounts:

Teacher 1: *I use Grammarly during writing sessions to provide real-time grammar corrections. It not only helps students identify errors but also explains why something is incorrect. For instance, I create AI-generated prompts for writing assignments, which spark creativity and help students practise different writing styles.* [T-1-JK.23L-25L]

Teacher 4: *Chatbots have been a game-changer for my vocabulary and speaking lessons. I design role-playing scenarios where students interact with chatbots to simulate real-life conversations. These activities are engaging and give students the chance to practise conversational English in a safe, controlled environment. Plus, chatbot analytics allow me to track their progress and tailor follow-up lessons to address specific weaknesses.* [T-4-JK.11L-15L]

Teacher 5: *Grammarly is also central to my peer-review exercises. Students use it to review each other's drafts, which encourages collaborative learning and builds critical thinking. It's exciting to see them learn from each other and the AI.* [T-51-JK.9L-14L]

In addition, Teacher 4 demonstrates a distinctive use of AI translation tools for multilingual projects. This approach helps students navigate complex texts while simultaneously fostering cross-cultural understanding. When combined with traditional grammar exercises, AI translation illustrates how digital tools can complement, rather than replace, conventional teaching methods. Teacher 5's reliance on diagnostic tools to analyse learning patterns and tailor lesson plans underscores the growing importance of data-driven teaching in improving student outcomes.

Taken together, these strategies reflect a clear move toward a blended teaching model in which AI tools augment, extend, and refine traditional pedagogical practices. This hybrid approach, as noted by Hwang et al. (2024), enables teachers to address diverse learning needs more effectively while preserving the human elements of instruction such as mentoring, empathy, and professional judgement that remain central to meaningful language education.

4.7 Challenges: Barriers to Effective AI Integration

While the benefits of AI tools are evident, the qualitative data also reveals substantial challenges that hinder their effective integration. Technological disparities such as unequal access to devices and stable internet connectivity were highlighted by Teacher 2 as a critical concern. These disparities risk exacerbating existing educational inequities, particularly in under-resourced schools, a concern echoed in studies by (Zaim et al., 2024). Another prominent challenge is the limited availability of structured training for teachers, as noted by Teachers 1 and 3. Despite the widespread availability of AI tools, many educators feel ill-equipped to explore their full potential. This aligns with findings by Setyaningsih et al., (2024), who stress the need for professional development programmes that equip teachers with the technical skills and pedagogical strategies required for effective AI integration.

Ethical concerns also emerged as a recurring theme. Teachers 3 and 4 expressed apprehension about students' over-reliance on AI tools, which may erode critical thinking skills and reduce meaningful human interaction in the learning process. Ensuring the accuracy of AI-generated content particularly in translation tasks remains a further challenge, as observed by Teacher 4. These concerns highlight the urgency of establishing clear ethical guidelines and robust quality assurance mechanisms for AI adoption, as emphasized by (Liando & Tatipang, 2024). In addition, Teacher 5 noted resistance from students who prefer traditional learning methods, illustrating the cultural and attitudinal barriers that can impede AI integration. This resistance, coupled with time constraints for learning and implementing AI tools, underscores the complexity of transitioning toward AI-enhanced teaching.

4.8 Implications and Recommendations

The qualitative data underscores the transformative potential of AI in ELT, while simultaneously revealing systemic challenges that must be addressed to ensure equitable and pedagogically sound integration. On the positive side, AI tools can support differentiated instruction, provide rapid feedback, and expand opportunities for authentic language use. At the same time, teachers must navigate uneven access to technology, limited institutional support, ethical uncertainties, and students' emerging dependence on AI-generated outputs. These findings indicate that AI integration is not merely a technical innovation, but a complex pedagogical and institutional process that demands coordinated support and careful planning.

One key implication concerns the need for sustained, practice-oriented professional development. Teachers require comprehensive training that goes beyond basic tool familiarisation and addresses the pedagogical possibilities of AI in lesson design, assessment, and feedback. Such programmes should also engage explicitly with ethical issues, including data privacy, bias in AI outputs, and academic integrity, while equipping teachers with strategies to reduce student over-reliance on AI. When professional learning is continuous, reflective, and grounded in classroom realities, teachers are more likely to use AI critically and creatively rather than superficially.

The findings also highlight the importance of equitable infrastructure investment. Without reliable internet access, adequate devices, and technical support, enthusiasm for AI risks exacerbating the digital divide.

Governments and educational institutions therefore need to prioritise infrastructure development, especially in under-resourced contexts, so that AI-enhanced learning environments do not become a privilege for only certain schools or regions. Ensuring basic technological readiness is a prerequisite for any meaningful discussion of AI integration in ELT and is closely connected to broader educational policy agendas.

In terms of classroom practice, the study points to the value of pedagogically grounded blended teaching models. Rather than positioning AI as a replacement for teachers, the evidence supports a hybrid approach in which AI tools complement human-led instruction. For example, AI can be used for drafting, practising language skills, or generating personalised exercises, while teachers remain responsible for higher-order feedback, interpersonal support, and contextualised explanations. Such blended models help address concerns about over-reliance on technology while leveraging its benefits, in line with calls for a principled use of AI in education (Akgun & Greenhow, 2022). These insights have direct implications for curriculum design, suggesting that AI-supported activities should be systematically embedded within, rather than added on to, existing language programmes.

The data further indicate the need for clear, context-sensitive ethical and policy guidelines. Institutions should establish transparent rules for the use of AI in teaching and learning, covering issues such as data protection, responsible use of AI outputs, content accuracy, and the preservation of human judgment in assessment. These guidelines should be adaptable to local contexts and developed in consultation with teachers, so that they are both realistic and enforceable in everyday classroom practice. At the policy level, such frameworks can provide a coherent reference point for curriculum developers, school leaders, and teacher educators when making decisions about AI integration.

Another implication relates to students' orientation and AI literacy. Learners cannot be assumed to automatically understand either the advantages or the risks associated with AI tools. Workshops, induction sessions, and ongoing classroom dialogue can help students recognise AI as a support for learning rather than a shortcut that replaces effort and critical thinking. Encouraging learners to question, verify, and critically evaluate AI outputs can foster more reflective and responsible use of technology and promote a more positive, but realistic, attitude toward AI-assisted language learning.

Taken together, the qualitative findings provide a rich understanding of how AI tools are currently used in ELT classrooms, the strategies teachers employ, and the challenges they encounter. The study shows that AI has considerable potential to enhance language teaching and learning, but that this potential can only be realised when professional development, infrastructure provision, curriculum design, and ethical governance are addressed in a coordinated way. For policymakers and institutional leaders, the results highlight the importance of aligning technology initiatives with teacher training and curriculum reform, rather than treating AI as an isolated innovation. For researchers, the findings open avenues for further work on the long-term impact of AI on language acquisition, assessment practices, and teachers' professional identities, as well as on how different educational systems respond to the opportunities and risks associated with AI in ELT.

Overall, the qualitative findings provide a rich understanding of how AI tools are currently used in ELT classrooms, the strategies teachers employ, and the challenges they encounter. While AI holds considerable potential to enhance language teaching and learning, its effective integration depends on systemic support, targeted interventions, and a balanced approach that combines technological innovation with human expertise. By addressing the barriers identified in this study, educators and policymakers can harness AI's potential to improve learning outcomes and reduce educational inequities, while future research can explore the long-term impact of AI on language acquisition, assessment practices, and teachers' professional identities.

5. Discussion

This study set out to explore how ELT teachers integrate AI tools in their everyday practice, how they exercise agency in designing AI assisted pedagogy, and what dilemmas they encounter as they navigate this evolving landscape. The findings highlight three interrelated patterns. First, AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, chatbots, lesson planners, translation tools, and diagnostic platforms are already widely appropriated to support writing, speaking, assessment, and lesson design. Second, teachers generally perceive AI as effective for enhancing engagement, personalizing feedback, and reducing routine workload, yet they remain cautious about over reliance and the erosion of critical thinking. Third, structural inequalities, limited professional development, and unresolved ethical issues shape whether AI becomes a genuine pedagogical partner or remains a fragile, unevenly distributed innovation. Together, these patterns underscore that AI integration is not a purely technical process but a deeply human and contextual one, mediated by teacher judgment, institutional conditions, and broader debates on responsible AI in education.

The high levels of reported AI use and strong perceived effectiveness ratings resonate with broader claims that AI can meaningfully enhance language learning by personalizing instruction, providing rapid feedback, and supporting self regulated learning (Vaccino Salvadore, 2023; Novawan et al., 2024;

Yunina, 2023). Teachers in this study use Grammarly, chatbots, and generative tools to scaffold drafting, foster creativity, and create low stakes spaces for speaking practice, echoing findings that AI can extend opportunities for iterative practice and dialogic interaction when thoughtfully integrated into task design (Hwang et al., 2024; Grassini, 2023; Idham et al., 2024).

At the same time, the data show that teachers rarely adopt AI as a stand alone solution. Instead, they embed AI within blended routines that combine automated feedback with teacher led explanation, peer review, and reflective critique of AI outputs. This pattern supports arguments that AI aligns well with constructivist and student centered approaches when it is used to stimulate exploration rather than replace human mediation (Goffi, 2023; Muthmainnah et al., 2024). Teachers' deliberate efforts to ask students to question, revise, and improve AI generated responses illustrate a pedagogical stance that treats AI as a prompt for critical thinking rather than a definitive authority, which parallels recommendations in reviews of AI assisted writing and language learning (Teng, 2024; Chang & Sun, 2024).

The mixed methods design also reveals how adoption is stratified. Some teachers integrate AI extensively in planning, feedback, and assessment, whereas others are cautious and exploratory, constrained by limited training and institutional guidance. This variation aligns with research showing that teacher beliefs, technological confidence, and perceived pedagogical value are decisive in shaping whether AI is taken up in a transformative or superficial manner (Novawan et al., 2024; Salas Pilco et al., 2022). Our findings add nuance by showing that even highly motivated teachers rely on trial and error when formal support is absent, which can slow innovation and intensify professional workload.

A central contribution of the study lies in foregrounding teacher agency in what might be called the "messy middle" of AI integration, where tools are already present but institutional frameworks remain underdeveloped. Teachers actively design AI assisted tasks such as AI supported peer review, chatbot mediated role plays, AI assisted grading, diagnostic analysis, and multilingual projects, and they appropriate these tools to fit their local curricula and student profiles. These practices affirm that teachers are not passive recipients of technology; they are designers and gatekeepers who filter AI affordances through their professional values and classroom realities (Popenici & Kerr, 2017; Tatipang et al., 2024).

Yet the same teachers articulate strong concerns about student over reliance on AI, the potential dilution of critical thinking, and the risk that AI may narrow rather than expand students' linguistic repertoires if they simply accept automated suggestions. Such concerns mirror broader debates about the limits of AI in capturing the socio cultural, pragmatic, and affective dimensions of language use (Hockly, 2023; Donald & Andrew, 2023). In this sense, the study confirms that teachers are simultaneously enthusiastic experimenters and careful skeptics. They recognise AI's capacity to accelerate feedback and provide models, but they also see that genuine language development still depends on human interaction, contextual understanding, and the cultivation of metalinguistic awareness that AI alone cannot guarantee.

The findings also demonstrate that digital inequalities and ethical dilemmas are not abstract issues but concrete obstacles that shape day to day decisions in AI supported classrooms. Teachers repeatedly point to uneven access to devices and stable internet connections, particularly in under resourced schools, which echoes warnings that AI can deepen rather than reduce existing educational disparities when infrastructural gaps are left unaddressed (Goffi, 2023; Zaim et al., 2024). In these settings, teachers are forced to scale down or abandon AI based tasks or to design alternative activities for students who cannot participate fully, thereby adding layers of complexity to lesson planning.

Ethical concerns around data privacy, surveillance, algorithmic bias, and academic integrity further complicate AI integration (Nguyen et al., 2023; Vaccino Salvadore, 2023; Chan & Hu, 2023). Teachers in this study worry about the opacity of AI systems, the possibility that student data may be misused, and the temptation for learners to outsource entire assignments to AI. These worries align with recent recommendations for more explicit ethical guidelines and institutional policies on AI use in education (Foltynek et al., 2023; Akgun & Greenhow, 2022). Our findings suggest that in the absence of clear frameworks, teachers shoulder the responsibility of defining and policing acceptable AI use, which can generate uncertainty and tension in teacher student relations.

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations that open room for further inquiry. The sample is relatively small and confined to ELT teachers within a particular national context, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other educational systems, disciplines, and cultural settings. While the mixed methods design provides breadth and depth, the quantitative component relies on self reported measures of AI usage and effectiveness rather than direct observation of classroom practice, which may introduce social desirability bias (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Moreover, the study foregrounds teachers' perspectives, while students' voices, classroom interactional evidence, and policy documents are not systematically included. These gaps limit analysis of how AI reshapes participation, assessment, and power at a micro level, and the cross sectional design provides an early snapshot of change over time.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study offers several novel insights. First, it moves beyond technological performance and learner outcomes to provide a grounded account of teachers' strategies and dilemmas in ordinary, often resource constrained classrooms. In doing so, it complements existing work that has tended to focus on AI's potential in idealised or well resourced contexts (Yunina, 2023; Wu et al., 2024). Second, by integrating survey patterns with interview narratives, the study articulates how the same teachers who rate AI as highly effective also describe deep ambivalence about its risks, thereby challenging simplistic narratives of either enthusiastic adoption or outright resistance. Third, the detailed mapping of teacher designed AI tasks contributes practical examples of how AI can serve as a pedagogical partner in writing, speaking, assessment, and multilingual projects, while still preserving the central role of human mediation.

These insights carry implications for professional development, curriculum design, and institutional policy. For teacher education and in service training, the findings support calls for ongoing, practice oriented programmes that address both technical skills and pedagogical reasoning, as well as ethical and affective dimensions of AI use (Salas Pilco et al., 2022; Liando & Tatipang, 2024). Workshops that invite teachers to co design AI supported tasks, critically evaluate tools, and share classroom experiences may help move practice beyond trial and error toward more principled integration. For curriculum developers, the study suggests that AI activities should be strategically embedded within existing syllabi, explicitly linked to language learning outcomes, and accompanied by reflective tasks that cultivate AI literacy and critical digital citizenship. At the policy level, institutions and governments need to address infrastructural gaps, develop clear guidelines on responsible AI use, and ensure that accountability for data protection and academic integrity does not rest solely on individual teachers.

Building on these findings, future research should investigate AI integration in a wider range of educational contexts, including rural schools, vocational programmes, and non formal language learning settings where infrastructural constraints and community expectations may differ significantly. Comparative studies across regions, school types, and educational levels could help identify context sensitive models of AI supported ELT that are both equitable and sustainable. Longitudinal classroom based research that combines observation, discourse analysis, and learner outcome data would deepen understanding of how AI reshapes interactional patterns, identity positioning, and long term language development. In addition, studies that foreground students' perspectives, including their emotional responses, strategies for critical use of AI, and evolving notions of authorship and originality, would complement the teacher centred lens adopted here. Finally, interdisciplinary work that brings together language education, AI ethics, and educational policy could illuminate how macro level regulations and platform designs enable or constrain teachers' efforts to position AI as a genuinely human centered pedagogical partner.

6. Conclusions

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into English Language Teaching (ELT) is beginning to change how teachers plan, deliver, and evaluate instruction. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, this study shows that tools such as ChatGPT and Grammarly can help teachers personalise learning, sustain students' engagement, and ease some of the routine demands of lesson preparation and feedback. The participating teachers used AI in varied and creative ways ranging from grammar support and idea generation to interactive chatbot tasks indicating that many see AI as a resource rather than a threat.

At the same time, the study makes clear that these benefits are not evenly accessible. Gaps in infrastructure, limited training opportunities, concerns about ethics and academic integrity, and resistance from some stakeholders all constrain the meaningful use of AI in classrooms. Without institutional support, AI adoption risks remaining ad hoc and dependent on individual teachers' initiative. What is needed is not simply more technology, but thoughtful integration: professional development that builds teachers' confidence and critical awareness, reliable access to digital tools, and clear guidelines on issues such as data privacy, plagiarism, and fair assessment.

These conclusions should be read in light of the study's specific institutional context and its reliance on self-reported data. Future research would benefit from longitudinal designs that trace the long-term impact of AI on students' language development, critical thinking, and creativity, especially in under-resourced or marginalised settings. Studies that foreground students' perspectives and classroom interactional data would also deepen our understanding of how AI reshapes participation and autonomy. Finally, policymakers and institutions are encouraged to support communities of practice in which teachers can share experiences, experiment safely, and co-construct principles for responsible AI use. With such systemic and collaborative efforts, AI can be positioned not as a replacement for teachers, but as a carefully managed partner in more inclusive and responsive ELT.

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