Himalayan Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 1(1) [ISSN: 3102-0984]

Original Article *DOI: https://doi.org/10.66562/hjmr.1.1.006*

Integrating Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching in Nepal: Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract

The rapid development of artificial intelligence has brought revolutionary opportunities to English language teaching worldwide, yet the consequences of these technologies on teachers in poor and developing countries like Nepal remain poorly studied. The presented qualitative narrative inquiry research question examines the perceptions, experiences, and paths of English language teachers at the secondary and tertiary levels in Nepal regarding the adoption of AI tools in their teaching. The study used narrative inquiry methodology as part of a constructivist epistemological approach to collect data through in-depth semi-structured interviews and reflective journals with 12 purposively sampled English teachers in government, private, and university settings across Kathmandu Valley and two Terai districts. The thematic narrative analysis was used to analyse data based on Polkinghorne's analysis of narratives and the narrative inquiry approach by Clandinin and Connelly. The results indicate a picture of a combination of eager use and deep fear. The stories of pedagogical change include teachers applying AI chatbots to correct grammar and provide writing and speech feedback, using AI for pronunciation training, and generating AI-generated reading materials to distinguish teaching. At the same time, they share stories of digital marginalization, infrastructural insufficiency, serious issues of academic integrity, and epistemological concerns about the effects of AI on genuine language learning. There were five prevailing narrative themes, namely: AI as skills development pedagogical collaborator, the infrastructure paradox promises versus reality, teacher identity and professional renegotiation, student dependency and critical literacy erosion, and institutional inertia and policy vacuum. The research makes theoretical contributions by developing a Contextualised AI-ELT Integration Framework (CAIEF) that considers the sociocultural, infrastructural, and pedagogical peculiarities of ELT in Nepal. It is implied on professional development of teachers, institutional policy, and AI-responsive curriculum design in other similar Global South settings.

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Article History:

Received: 27 Jan 2026
Reviewed: 22 Feb 2026
Accepted: 13 March 2026

Keywords: *artificial intelligence in teaching, English language teaching, narrative study*

How to cite this article: Yadav, S.(2026). Integrating Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching: A Narrative Study. *Himalayan Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 1*(1), 55-68.

1. Introduction

The nature of the world in terms of education has been transformed by the advent and mainstream adoption of artificial intelligence technologies beyond repair. Intelligent tutoring systems and chatbots powered by natural language processing have infiltrated the language learning field at an unprecedented rate, prompting scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to reconsider the epistemological and pedagogical foundations of language teaching and learning (Luckin et al., 2016). In the sphere of English language teaching, AI presents unprecedented opportunities: the systems of personalised feedback, the automated graders of essays, the pronunciation trainers powered by AI, the adaptive vocabulary assistants, and conversational agents that pretend that they are in the middle of a conversation (Lin & Chang, 2020; Huang et al., 2021). Scientists like Warschauer and Healey (1998)and Healey (1998), and Kern and Warschauer (2000), and recently Chen et al. (2023) have recorded the historical progression of the connection between technology and language teaching as early computer-assisted language learning (CALL), followed by communicative CALL and, most recently, AI-supported language education. Nonetheless, the sheer bulk of scholarship on AI in ELT has been produced by and deployed in the educational environments of rich, technologically developed countries, predominantly the United States, the United Kingdom, China, South Korea, and Singapore (Godwin-Jones, 2022; Selwyn, 2022). The situations of teachers in the countries of the Global South, characterised by infrastructure constraints, resource deficits, heterogeneous student populations, and unique cultural educational traditions, have been dramatically underrepresented (Warschauer, 2004; Canagarajah, 2014; Poudel, 2022). This representational gap is not only an inconvenience of a scholarly nature, but also an epistemic injustice of the deepest kind: educational technologies are devised, theorised, and assessed without sufficient attention to most English language learners worldwide and their teachers. The case of Nepal is a very informative and eye-opening example that should be considered in the study of AI integration in ELT. English language competence has a social value and systemic injustice, as over 30 million people speak it, and English has a complex position as a second language and a key to higher education, economic mobility, and international engagement (Phyak, 2013; Chand, 2014). The educational system in Nepal is typified by extreme inequalities: elite private schools in cities enjoy advanced digital infrastructure, whereas the overwhelming majority of government-sponsored schools in rural and semi-urban areas face unreliable electricity supply, limited or dysfunctional internet access, and a shortage of trained educators. In such an unequal geography, the introduction of AI devices creates a paradox: they can be accessed anywhere in the world via smartphones and web browsers, but only with the infrastructures, training, and institutional resources that most Nepali instructors lack. Nonetheless, AI tools are starting to find their way into Nepali English classrooms in informal, often haphazard ways. Educational professionals have started experimenting with ChatGPT, Google Translate, Grammarly, and other AI-driven tools, both under institutional incentives and independently, and often without any formal training or policy direction. The anecdotes these teachers provide regarding their experience of AI, their enthusiasm and their disappointments, their ethical quandaries and their professional identity shifts make up an invaluable and, to a large extent, unrecorded mass of information on what AI integration really means in a very real sense in a developing-world ELT classroom. This paper fills this gap by using narrative inquiry to elicit the lived experiences of 12 English language teachers across different institutional contexts in Nepal. It is based on the assumption that teachers' narratives are not marginal anecdotes but major epistemological resources (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Johnson &

Golombek, 2002). The given research question is as follows: How do English language teachers in Nepal recount their experience of integrating AI tools into their pedagogical practice? What do they see as their opportunity? What are the problems they are facing? But what do their stories tell us about the general point of intersection of AI, ELT, and the particular sociocultural and infrastructural facts of Nepali education? The research questions that will direct the study will be as follows: How do English language teachers in Nepal describe their experience with using AI tools in teaching practice? What pedagogical possibilities do Nepali ELT teachers find in the integration of AI, and how are these possibilities realised (or not) in practice?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Emergence of Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching

Artificial intelligence in education has evolved from the relatively narrow ambitions of early intelligent tutoring systems of the 1970s and 1980s, such as SCHOLAR (Carbonell, 1970) and the SOPHIE series (Brown, Burton, & de Kleer, 1982) to the current generation of large language models capable of sophisticated natural language interaction, content generation, and adaptive pedagogical response. Within English language teaching specifically, this evolution has been documented across four broad technological generations: CALL 1.0 (structural, drill-based), CALL 2.0 (communicative and interactive), CALL 3.0 (integrative and web-based), and what researchers are now designating AI-CALL or intelligent CALL, characterised by machine learning, natural language processing, and adaptive algorithms (Heift & Schulze, 2007).

Examples of AI tools relevant to ELT include automated assessment of writing systems like Turnitin AI feedback functionality, Grammatically Business; speech recognition pronunciation trainers like Specify and Elsa Speak; adaptive vocabulary learners like Duolingo and Babbel using spaced repetition algorithms; chatbots like ChatGPT-4, Claude (Anthropic), and Gemini (Google); translation systems like DeepL and Google Translate; and systems created to generate content to be read aloud like Curriculum, authentic text, pronunciation, or curriculum development (Zawacki-Rich The evidence about the use of AI tools in ELT, published so far, is mostly, but not consistently, positive. Koltovskaia (2020) provided strong evidence in the enhancement of the revision depth of EFL writing students who got feedback on their writing mediated by AI in the form of automated writing evaluation. Li and Lan (2022) discovered that ChatGPT-assisted feedback resulted in greater substantive revision on university EFL writing situations in China. Huang et al. (2021) reported that AI chatbots raised the willingness of the learners to communicate in low-anxiety digital places. The article by Xu et al. (2022) indicates favorable results of pronunciation learning with the help of AI-based speech recognition applications in Chinese EFL learners. This good news, nevertheless, is practically based on technologically well-endowed conditions, mainly East Asia, Western Europe, and North America and their possibility to apply to resource-scarce environments is to be treated with grave critical scrutiny.

2.2 AI in Education in the Global South: Structural Inequities and Epistemological Tensions

Critics of technologically deterministic discourses in the Global South have long associated the uncritical importation of such discourses in contexts defined by structural inequality, the coloniality of knowledge, and resource scarcity (Warschauer, 2004; Selwyn, 2014; Canagarajah, 2014). The underlying criticism of the one laptop per child paradigm offered by Warschauer is still applicable: without social, institutional, and pedagogical support systems, access to technology cannot be achieved. Selwyn (2022) also challenges the existence of an Ed-Tech imaginary, ‘ the pattern of optimistic, generally Silicon Valley-led projections

about the power of technology to transform education, and notes that the imaginaries themselves carry the systematic erasure of structural inequalities that define the possibility and nature of technology dispensing its claimed benefits. Within the South Asian setting, in particular, studies of technological integration in education have identified consistent trends of what is being described by Poudel (2019) as surface-level adoption, i.e. the availability of devices or access to the internet without actual pedagogical integration. In Nepal, Chand (2014) observed that policies promoting English-medium instruction have increased sociolinguistic inequality, resulting in a two-tier system in which elite private schools adopt international pedagogical practices while government schools are under-resourced. In his or her analysis of the ideological aspects of English in Nepal, Phyak (2013) noted the tension between English as an instrument of social mobility and as a sign of cultural and class privilege. These organizational facts create the uncanny background upon which the integration of AI should be perceived. The more recent literature has directly covered AI and education in South Asia and Nepal. In the South Asian context specifically, research on educational technology integration has revealed persistent patterns of what Poudel (2019) terms 'surface-level adoption,' the presence of devices or internet connectivity without meaningful pedagogical integration. In Nepal, Chand (2014) reported that English-medium instruction policies have strengthened sociolinguistic inequality, creating a new two-tier system in which elite private schools apply international pedagogical standards, while government schools are left starving for resources. Phyak (2013) examined the ideological aspects of English in Nepal and observed a contradiction between English as an instrument of social mobility and as a symbol of cultural and social privilege. These are structural realities that are unavoidable contexts for AI integration. A mixed-methods investigation by Bhattarari (2023) of teacher educators' attitudes towards technology in Nepal revealed high aspirational awareness of AI tools, low practical competence, and a high level of infrastructure anxiety. Poudel and Bhattacharai (2024) interviewed English teachers in Kathmandu Valley about their opinions on ChatGPT; only 31 had used the tool in any pedagogical context, and fewer than 12 had received institutional guidance on its use. Regmi (2022) reported on the digital literacy practices of secondary school teachers in three provinces, with a significant rural-urban disparity in access and digital competence. Such studies set the empirical terrain for the current inquiry.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This paper draws on theoretical foundations at the crossroads of three conceptual traditions: sociocultural theory, critical technology studies, and narrative inquiry epistemology.

2.3.1 The Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory and Mediated Learning

The sociocultural theory put forward by Vygotsky (1978) provides the epistemological basis for understanding language learning and teaching as a socially mediated process. At the center of this scheme is the principle of mediation, the notion that new mental activities are formed by the aid of psychological and technical instruments, which are socially created in turn. AI technologies, in this framework, function as powerful mediational tools that can expand learners' zones of proximal development by providing scaffolded, individualised support at the boundary of current competence and emerging capability. In their turn, teachers act as professional mediators who should know, contextualise, and critically apply these AI tools to the socio-relational context of their classes and communities. The sociocultural grounded CALL scholarship developed by Lantolf and Thorne (2006) is especially applicable in this case, as they argue that the pedagogic promise of technological tools cannot be detached from the social relationships, cultural practices, and institutional structures within which

they are integrated. This theoretical observation is key to understanding why AI-based tools, which are effective in South Korean or Singaporean ELT settings, can perform very differently in Nepali classrooms. The tool is not more significant than its social and institutional mediation.

2.3.2 Political Economy of EdTech and Critical Technology Studies

The critical technology studies (Selwyn, 2014; Noble, 2018; Benjamin, 2019) stipulate that educational technologies are never neutral tools but the products of a particular set of political, economic, and ideological situations that predetermine the interests they are meant to serve, which types of knowledge they are supposed to glorify, and what learning issues they are expected to address. AI systems that are trained on mostly English, mostly Western-cultural data corpora carry assumptions about the standard language and the normative grammar as well as culturally relevant communication that can be disadvantageous to learners who do not conform to these linguistic and cultural norms (Canagarajah, 2014; Pennycook, 2010). This critical approach is imperative to the interpretation of the Nepali situation, in which the implementation of AI tools designed to serve the primarily Western educational markets present practical constraints as well as AI tools that have been trained on the standard varieties of American or British English may fail to recognize South Asian varieties of English and other related epistemological issues of the cultural assumptions informing AI-mediated feedback and content.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design: Narrative Inquiry

This study employs qualitative narrative inquiry as its primary research design. Narrative inquiry, as developed by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), is grounded in the premise that human experience is fundamentally narrative in structure, that people live and retell their lives in story form, and that inquiry into human experience must therefore engage with the stories people tell. Narrative inquiry attends to the three-dimensional space described by Clandinin and Connelly (2022): the temporal dimension (past, present, and future), the social dimension, and the spatial dimension. This three-dimensional space provided the analytical scaffolding for understanding how Nepali ELT teachers narrate their experiences with AI tools across time, in relation to others, and within the specific places of their schools and classrooms.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure maximum variation across institutional type, geographic location, teaching experience, gender, and AI-familiarity. Twelve English language teachers participated in the study. Table 1 presents participant profiles (all names are pseudonyms to protect confidential)

Participants ranged in teaching experience from 4 to 31 years, representing a cross-section of career stages. Seven participants taught in government (public) schools and universities, while five taught in fee-charging private schools. Four participants were based in districts outside Kathmandu Valley, allowing geographic variation to be captured in the data. All participants taught English at secondary (Grades 9–12) or tertiary level. Inclusion criteria required that participants had been teaching English for at least 3 years and had at least some awareness of AI tools, defined broadly to include any AI-assisted application, from Grammarly and Google Translate to ChatGPT. Data were collected through three complementary methods, consistent with Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) recommendation for rich, multi-textured data sources in narrative inquiry: Each participant engaged in two semi-structured in-depth interviews, conducted approximately four to six weeks apart, to allow for reflection between sessions. The first interview (60–90 minutes) focused on participants' teaching histories, their introduction to AI tools, and specific narratives

Table 1: Participant Profiles

Name	Gender	School type	location	Age	AI familirit	School level
Anita	F	Govt. School	Kathmandu	14	Moderate	Secondary
Bikash	M	Private School	Lalitpur	8	High	Secondary
Champa	F	University	Kathmandu	19	Low	Tertiary
Deepak	M	Govt. School	Dhangadhi	22	Low	Secondary
Erina	F	Private School	Pokhara	6	High	Secondary
Faisal	M	University	Birgunj	11	Moderate	Tertiary
Gita	F	Govt. School	Bhaktapur	17	Low	Secondary
Hari	M	Private School	Kathmandu	4	High	Secondary
Indira	F	University	Kathmandu	25	Moderate	Tertiary
Jagadish	M	Govt. School	Janakpur	31	Low	Secondary
Kamala	F	Private School	Lalitpur	9	High	Secondary
Lal Bahadur	M	Govt. School	Dolakha	16	Low	Secondary

***Note**: AI Familiarity (Self-reported): Low = never used AI pedagogically; Moderate = occasional use; High = regular use.*

of AI use in their classrooms. The second interview (45–75 minutes) returned to significant narratives from the first interview, inviting elaboration, revision, or reinterpretation. Interview questions were open-ended and story-inviting, beginning with prompts such as 'Tell me about the first time you used an AI tool in your teaching' and 'Can you walk me through what it looks like when you use ChatGPT with your students?' Interviews were conducted in English or Nepali according to participant preference, and Nepali-medium excerpts were professionally translated and back-translated for accuracy.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis proceeded in four iterative phases, drawing the idea of both Polkinghorne (1995) analytical approaches to narrative data and Braun and Clarke (2006) reflexive thematic analysis:

Phase 1. Narrative Restoring: Each participant's interview transcripts and journal entries were read holistically, then restored and reconstructed into coherent narrative accounts that honoured the temporal, social, and spatial dimensions of the participant's experience.

Phase 2. Narrative Coding: Restored accounts were systematically coded for narrative elements: turning points, significant characters, recurring tensions, and moments of resolution or irresolution. This phase drew on Labov and Waletzky's (1967) structural narrative analysis to identify: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda in participants' stories.

Phase 3. Thematic Analysis Across Narratives: Coded narrative elements were analysed across participant accounts to identify patterns, commonalities, divergences, and tensions. This analysis of narratives by Polkinghorne (1995) generated the five thematic domains reported in findings.

Phase 4. Framework Development: Thematic findings were synthesised with the theoretical framework to construct the Contextualised AI-ELT Integration Framework (CAIEF), which is presented in the discussion.

4. Findings

Thematic narrative analysis of the data generated five dominant themes, each presented below with illustrative narrative vignettes and participant quotations. These themes are not discrete or mutually exclusive; they intersect, overlap, and occasionally contradict one another, reflecting the messy, dynamic complexity of teachers' actual experiences.

4.1 Theme 1: AI as Pedagogical Ally - Transformative Encounters with AI Tools

The most common plot in participants' stories portrays AI tools as potent pedagogical allies that expand teachers' reach, individualise feedback, and open new communicative possibilities for learners. These accounts of change, of what Bikash referred to as before-ChatGPT and after-ChatGPT moments, were shared with excitement, thoroughness, and a characteristic discovery-like quality.

Bikash is an eight-year-old teacher at a privately owned school in Lalitpur who AI-savvy is highly and provided one of the longest-running accounts of AI-guided pedagogical change. His text focused on ChatGPT as a writing feedback tool in his Grade 11 English composition classes: Until ChatGPT, the feedback process was a nightmare, and the fact that I had 45 students and would spend whole weekends providing meaningful written feedback on the essays. I was burning out. Until early 2023, when I began using ChatGPT to produce first-level responses on student drafts. I would copy one paragraph of a student, provide ChatGPT with a clear message about the type of feedback I desired, namely, paying attention to the structure of the argument, sentence-level grammar, and the use of transition language, and the detailed and thought-provoking reply would be provided by the machine, which I could put in perspective with the student. It did not supersede my feedback but hastened it. The students began receiving feedback in 2 days rather than 2 weeks, and the quality of revisions increased significantly. The story of Bikash is educative in several ways. It does not view AI as a substitute for teacher judgment but as a mediating device that enhances teaching capacity, also in line with Luckin (2018) definition of AI as an amplifier of human intelligence.

The material conditions that made AI adoption possible, as revealed in his narrative, include: a private school environment with a consistent Internet connection, a smartphone, and institutional acceptance (or at least not discouragement) of AI experimentation. *A somewhat similar account is given by Kamala, a teacher at a private school in Lalitpur, who wrote about her experience with speech recognition technology powered by AI in teaching pronunciation: My students are horrified of speaking English. They are very Nepali-accented, and they fear being laughed at. I have begun using an app called ELSA Speak, which uses AI to analyse pronunciation and provide real-time feedback. What I discovered was remarkable: students who never talk in school would train by themselves on their mobile phone and would receive hundreds of pronunciation drills within a night. They were not afraid of the AI making fun of them. Their self-esteem in class began to rise. One student informed me that she talked to the AI last night and said he told her that 500 of the sentences were good, and the rest were 80% good—more practice in speaking than I could have in a term. An aspect of the pedagogical value of AI identified in Kamala's narrative is its ability to reduce affective constraints on language practice, especially speaking.*

The anonymity and non-judgmental quality of AI communication offer what Krashen (1982) would term a lower affective filter, a psychological space that is more risk-taking and sincere. Indira indicated that she used AI in differentiated reading instruction at the university level. As a tertiary English teacher in Kathmandu, she taught classes with dramatically different reading competency levels, a challenge that single-level textbooks cannot address. To compare reading passages at various Lexile levels on the same topic, she relies on ChatGPT to create them. In my case, when I am learning about climate change (which is on the curriculum), I would have ChatGPT write a text of basic, intermediate, and advanced levels. The texts assigned to different students vary, though they may all participate in a single discussion. In the past, I had to make the distinction manually, that is, by being awake until midnight. The AI provides me with an initial point in minutes. I am still editing; I always edit, but the time saved is actual. A comparatively young teacher at a private school in Pokhara, Erina, explained that she used an AI to generate authentic

communicative materials unavailable in the standard textbook: Our textbook is tremendously old-fashioned, as it was written in 2018 and contains no mention of anything that has happened since then. I apply ChatGPT to develop dialogue prompts, roleplay, and discuss questions related to the ongoing events. I request that you write a dialogue between two young Nepali individuals discussing employment opportunities, or between a doctor and a patient in a Nepali setting. The students react to them much more effectively than to the artificial conversations in the textbook. They experience the language as real. In these stories, a few common aspects of the transformative pedagogical usefulness of AI have become apparent: expanding the capabilities of teachers to provide feedback, minimizing the affective risks to language use, differentiated instruction, and context-specific and authentic content. These results align with the rest of the AI-ELT literature (Chen et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2021), but they emerge in a curiously Nepali context, characterized by large class sizes, outdated materials, and limited resources**.**

4.2 Theme 2: The Infrastructure Paradox-Promise Versus Reality

Themes 1: Structural constraint and infrastructural impossibility. Structural constraint and infrastructural impossibility is a multifarious narrative, darker and more common, set in counterpoint to the transformative narratives of Theme 1. The disjunction between the theoretical potential of AI and their lived experience, as reported by most respondents, especially those working in government schools outside metropolitan regions, was felt as a form of systemic injustice. Deepak, a 22-year-old English teacher in a government school in Dhangadhi (Far-Western Province), has put this paradox in typically direct words:

People in Kathmandu talk about ChatGPT and AI as if we are all living in the same Nepal. However, when I am standing in my classroom in Dhangadhi, I have 68 students, no projector, electricity that cuts off for 6 to 8 hours every day in winter, and internet that, when it works, is so slow that a single webpage takes 4 minutes to load. My students cannot afford smartphones. I cannot afford to buy them. The school cannot afford to buy them. So when I hear about AI in education, I feel like someone is telling me about a feast while I am starving.

The story of Deepak, as told (first person, in which he vividly and urgently embodies the emphasis of his own voice through the interview), is the one that became the infrastructure paradox: AI tools can be accessed internationally (theoretically, any person with an internet-enabled device can access them) but in practice, the majority of Nepali ELT teachers cannot access them, because of the combination of electricity insecurity, low or no internet, cost of the device itself, and lack of digital literacy. The trend was the same throughout government schoolteachers outside Kathmandu. Last year, I attended a training in Kathmandu where we were shown ChatGPT. I was excited. I came back to Janakpur, and that evening I tried to open it on my phone. The loading circle went around and around for ten minutes. My internet plan had 2GB of data for the whole month. I used half of it just trying to make ChatGPT work. I gave up. That is the reality of AI for a teacher like me.

Gita, a government schoolteacher in Bhaktapur with 17 years of experience, described the experience of electricity load-shedding as the most fundamental barrier to AI integration:

Even in Bhaktapur, which is just outside Kathmandu, we have unannounced power cuts. You cannot build a lesson around AI if you do not know whether the lights will be on. I once tried using an AI vocabulary activity during a computer lab period. Halfway through the period, the electricity went out—thirty students, computers off, lesson ruined. I did not try again.

Lal Bahadur, who taught in a remote school in Dolakha district, provided perhaps the most extreme account of infrastructural exclusion. His school had no internet connection, and the nearest town with reliable internet was a two-hour drive away. His narrative of AI was

entirely vicarious - constituted by accounts he had read in newspapers and heard from colleagues who had attended workshops in Kathmandu:

I know about ChatGPT only from reading. I have never used it. In Dolakha, it is not a question of how to use AI - it is a question of whether AI exists for us at all. We are not part of the conversation. Maybe our children will be, but we are not.

Lal Bahadur's closing observation- 'we are not part of the conversation' -resonates powerfully with critical scholarship on the digital divide as a form of epistemic exclusion. His narrative is not merely a story of missing infrastructure; it is a story of invisibility -of existing in a world where the dominant discourse on educational transformation excludes people like him.

Even among urban private school teachers with high AI familiarity, infrastructure concerns surfaced, though differently. Hari, a young private school teacher in Kathmandu, described the anxiety of platform availability:

ChatGPT is an American company. Its availability in Nepal is not guaranteed. There are already restrictions in some countries. If tomorrow Anthropic or OpenAI decides to restrict access in South Asia, my whole pedagogical system -the parts I have built around AI -collapses. I am building on sand.

4.3 Theme 3: Teacher Identity and Professional Renegotiation

A third thematic domain that emerged with considerable consistency and depth across participants' narratives concerned teacher professional identity. The introduction of AI into teachers' pedagogical lives was narrated not simply as a technical development but as an identity event -a disruption that required active meaning-making, self-repositioning, and narrative work.

Several distinct identity narratives emerged within this theme:

4.3.1 The Expert Redefined: From Knowledge Transmitter to Learning Designer

Multiple participants described a fundamental reconceptualisation of what their professional expertise consists of. Indira, the university teacher with 25 years of experience, articulated this reconceptualisation with remarkable clarity:

For twenty-five years, my identity as an English teacher was inseparable from my command of the language. I was the authority on grammar, on vocabulary, on academic writing. When students came to me with a grammar question, I was the answer. Now ChatGPT can answer that grammar question faster and with more examples than I can. So what am I? I have had to reimagine myself completely. I am no longer the answer machine. I am the person who helps students ask the right questions, evaluate the answers they get, and think critically about language. That is a bigger job, actually. However, it is different.

Indira's narrative reflects what researchers have described as a 'constructivist pivot' -a shift from transmission-oriented pedagogy to facilitative, inquiry-based approaches -that AI's presence has accelerated rather than initiated (Blin & Munro, 2008). Her narrative frames this shift as professionally enriching, though not without anxiety: 'it is a bigger job, actually.'

4.3.2 The Anxious Adaptor: Imposter Syndrome in the Age of AI

Not all identity narratives were as assured as Indira's. Several participants -particularly those with lower AI familiarity -described profound professional anxiety, a sense of being left behind by a technological revolution they did not fully understand and had not chosen.

Anita, a 14-year government school teacher in Kathmandu, offered a quietly distressing account:

When my younger colleagues talk about AI, I feel something I have not felt since I was a new teacher -I feel stupid. I have a Master's degree in English literature. I have been teaching for fourteen years. And I sit in these workshops and I do not understand half of what they are saying. I feel

like the profession has moved forward without telling me. At night I sometimes think: am I already obsolete? At 42, am I already obsolete?

Anita's rhetorical question -'am I already obsolete?' -captures a form of technological imposter syndrome that has been insufficiently documented in the AI-education literature. Her narrative reveals how AI's pedagogical discourse, if it fails to attend to teachers' needs and perspectives at different career stages, can deepen rather than alleviate professional anxiety.

4.3.3 The Critical Resister: Principled Skepticism as Professional Identity

A third identity position, distinct from both the enthusiastic adopter and the anxious adaptor, was what might be termed the principled skeptic -teachers who maintained critical distance from AI not out of ignorance or fear but out of articulated pedagogical conviction. Champa, a 19-year university teacher in Kathmandu, was the most eloquent representative of this position:

I am not afraid of AI. I understand it reasonably well. However, I have serious reservations about what it is doing to language education. Language learning is fundamentally a process of struggle -of working through the difficulty of putting thought into words in another language. That struggle is generative. When we remove it by giving students an AI that will write the sentence for them, we remove the very process through which language is learned. I tell my students: Struggle with the English. The struggle is the learning. ChatGPT can write your essay, but it cannot think your thoughts or build your competence.

Champa's narrative articulates a theoretically coherent pedagogical position consistent with research on the role of productive struggle in language acquisition (Swain, 1985; Skehan, 1998). Her skepticism is not technophobia but principled pedagogical resistance -a refusal to subordinate her epistemological convictions about language learning to the seductive efficiency of AI assistance.

5. Discussion

5.1 Synthesising the Narratives: The Contextualised AI-ELT Integration Framework

The five thematic areas identified in the results reveal a complex reality that cannot be explained by existing frameworks for understanding AI in ELT, which were mostly developed in Global North settings. The proposed Contextualized AI-ELT Integration Framework integrates research findings with theoretical concepts to formulate a superior framework for AI use in English Language Teaching in low-resource areas. CAIEF covers three domains that engage with each other: The Opportunity Domain covers the actual and reported pedagogical advantages of AI integration, including enhanced feedback ability, personalized learning, reduced affective impediments, and the generation of authentic materials. This domain is real and is included in the current findings, though it is conditional on its realization in the following two domains, given the enabling condition. The Structural Constraint Domain points to the physical and organizational factors that may assist or contribute to the usage of AI: such aspects of the opportunity domain as the lack of reliable electricity, the slow Internet connection, the high cost of devices, the difference in accessibility depending on the location, and the absence of clear policies This domain is not peripheral but central in the Nepal and similar Global South environments, and structural constraints are the major factors that define whether the opportunity domain will be accessed at all. The Identity-Agency Domain recognizes that, even though teachers are subject to both restrictive and enabling factors in their teaching contexts, they are capable of making decisions about the use of AI tools, depending on their own experience, career development, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards change in technology. It is a field that does not readily lend itself to technological determinism (the view that AI will inevitably transform teaching) or structural

determinism (the view that structural constraints are the sole reason teachers act as they do). According to CAIEF, effective integration of AI in teaching English ought to be relevant to all three domains: enhancing the opportunity domain, addressing structural constraints, and addressing teachers' identity. Only a policy or training program that targets a single area, such as purchasing AI tools without improving infrastructure or developing regulations without considering teacher identity, is unlikely to make any actual changes to teaching practices.

5.2 The Infrastructure Paradox and Digital Coloniality

The infrastructure paradox, the experience of AI as simultaneously globally accessible and locally inaccessible, documented in Theme 2, merits specific theoretical engagement. The concept of Mignolo (2012) concept of 'digital coloniality' provides a useful analytical lens: the production of AI technologies in Silicon Valley for primarily Western markets, and their subsequent global dissemination as universal solutions, reproduces a colonial logic in which Global South contexts are positioned as recipients of technological solutions designed elsewhere, without adequate regard for their material conditions, epistemological frameworks, or cultural contexts.

The teachers in this study who experience AI as structurally inaccessible are not failing to adapt to a neutral technology; they are encountering a system designed for conditions of reliable electricity, high-speed internet, and English-dominant linguistic environments that their own conditions fundamentally do not meet. This is not a gap that can be closed by teacher training alone; it requires systemic investment in digital infrastructure as a precondition for meaningful AI integration.

5.3 Teacher Professional Development: Towards an AI-Responsive Approach

The results of this study, especially Themes 3 and 5, have many implications for teacher professional development (TPD) in Nepal. According to participants' narratives, the present TPD landscape is defined by the invisibility of AI, a failure to prompt teachers to consider the tools, ethical frameworks, and pedagogical strategies they need to work in an AI-packed education landscape. An AI-responsive TPD solution to the Nepali case would have to address four dimensions: First, critical AI literacy to assist teachers in learning how AI systems operate, what types of data they are conditioned to operate on, and what assumptions they make. This is not a technical training but an epistemological one that builds teachers' capacity to become critically informed users of AI rather than passive consumers, and to develop context-specific pedagogical strategies that cannot be predetermined by formal training. Fourth, ethical frameworks for AI in ELT equip teachers with institutional guidance and advice on academic integrity in AI contexts, such as detecting AI-generated content, redesigning assessments, and providing explicit guidance to students on the proper use of AI. Fourth, peer learning networks support communities of practice among Nepali ELT teachers exploring AI.

5.4 Academic Integrity in the AI Age: Nepal-Specific Considerations

The issues of academic integrity mentioned in Theme 4 must be addressed in the Nepali context, with specific reference to the relevant policies. The educational system in Nepal is characterized by a highly developed culture of assessment-based learning, where test performance is the primary indicator of academic success (Chand, 2014). The given cultural environment is a strong motivator to complete tasks with the help of AI, especially when it comes to assessment tasks that are take-home, time-open, and require written English proficiency. Compared with universities in the United States or the United Kingdom that have invested significant funds in AI detection software (e.g., Turnitin's AI detection module), Nepali universities lack the financial capacity and institutional

structures to respond in a well-organized way to AI-aided plagiarism. The approach to AI-proofing assessment design outlined by Bikash, namely the shift to in-class, oral, and process-based assessment, is promising. Nonetheless, this kind of redesign cannot be done solely with individual teacher innovation. The specific AI-assisted performance assessment system, which clarifies the types of AI assistance allowed, how assessment activities should be structured to require genuine student effort, and how to address academic dishonesty offences, is the much-needed change.

6. Conclusion

The issues of academic integrity mentioned in Theme 4 must be addressed in the Nepali context, with specific reference to the relevant policies. The educational system in Nepal is characterized by a highly developed culture of assessment-based learning, where test performance is the primary indicator of academic success (Chand, 2014). The given cultural environment is a strong motivator to complete tasks with the help of AI, especially when it comes to assessment tasks that are take-home, time-open, and require written English proficiency. Compared with universities in the United States or the United Kingdom that have invested significant funds in AI detection software like Turnitin's AI detection module, Nepali Universities lack the financial capacity and institutional structures to respond in a well-organized way to AI-aided plagiarism. The approach to AI-proofing assessment design outlined by Bikash, namely the shift to in-class, oral, and process-based assessment, is promising. Nonetheless, this kind of redesign cannot be done solely with individual teacher innovation. The specific AI-assisted performance assessment system, which clarifies the types of AI assistance allowed, how assessment activities should be structured to require genuine student effort, and how to address academic dishonesty offences, is the much-needed change.

Implications for Future Research

The issues of academic integrity mentioned in Theme 4 must be addressed in the Nepali context, taking into account the specific policies. The educational system in Nepal is characterized by a highly developed culture of assessment-based learning, where test performance is the primary indicator of academic success (Chand, 2014). The given cultural environment is a strong motivator to complete tasks with the help of AI, especially when it comes to assessment tasks that are take-home, time-open, and require written English proficiency. Compared with universities in the United States or the United Kingdom that have invested significant funds in AI detection software (e.g., Turnitin's AI detection module), Nepali universities lack the financial capacity and institutional structures to respond in a well-organized way to AI-aided plagiarism. The approach to AI-proofing assessment design outlined by Bikash, namely the shift to in-class, oral, and process-based assessment, is promising. Nonetheless, this kind of redesign cannot be done solely with individual teacher innovation. The specific AI-assisted performance assessment system, which clarifies the types of AI assistance allowed, how assessment activities should be structured to require genuine student effort, and how to address academic dishonesty offences, is the much-needed change.

Acknowledgments

The researcher expresses gratitude to the editor and the unnamed reviewers for their feedback, which has significantly enhanced the paper.

Funding

The research did not obtain any outside financial support.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The author states that there are no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability

The data that underlie the findings of this research can be provided by reaching out to the author.

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