

AI as a Reflective Partner in English Language Teaching: A Conceptual Perspective

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Abstract- Generative artificial intelligence has gained popularity in English language teaching, being employed in lesson planning, material generation, feedback, assessment, and personalisation in learning. However, most discussions concerning AI use in ELT focus exclusively on its ability to automate content creation and overlook the possibility of using AI for fostering critical reflection among teachers. Conceptually, this paper considers the potential of AI to serve as a reflective partner for teachers of English language. It presents an AI-enabled reflective partnership model based on the theoretical background of reflective practice, teacher cognition, and collaborative work of humans and machines. The proposed framework consists of five interrelated dimensions: pedagogical experience; externalisation of classroom issues; AI-aided exploration of alternative options; human evaluation based on contextual and ethical judgement; and pedagogically informed actions leading to further reflection. Within the framework suggested, the teacher serves as the main decision-maker, whereas the machine is utilised for asking questions, providing alternative explanations, and generating strategies. Moreover, the paper identifies possibilities and problems associated with lesson planning, feedback, assessment, differentiation, professional development, inaccuracy, bias, privacy, over-reliance on technology, and digital inequality. . Hence, AI is educationally most significant in terms of fostering reflection, retaining teacher agency and contextually-driven improvement in English language teaching. In sum, the proposed framework provides the conceptual perspective for responsible teacher development and empirical studies in the future

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, English Language Teaching, Reflective Practice, Teacher Development, Generative AI, Human–AI Collaboration

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 AI in Contemporary English Language Education
The implementation of artificial intelligence has gone very fast from its experimental application to the integration in English language education. The systems of AI help teachers to make lesson plans, develop level-related passages, organize vocabularies and grammar exercises, adapt teaching materials for particular purposes, make assessment questions, build rubrics, give preliminary advice on writing, translate texts, provide personalized explanations and exercises for learners. As research shows, generative AI affects language teaching preparation, instruction of writing, feedback, assessment, and independent learning in many different educational settings (Zaim et al., 2024; Li et al., 2025). Instead of being occasional digital assistants, these systems become an integral part of daily professional activity of teachers. Thus, the growing importance of these tools demands not just an efficiency focus but rather the attention to how the AI outputs are interpreted and used by teachers. (ScienceDirect)

1.2 The Problem with the “AI as a Tool” Perspective
Most of the existing research views generative AI as a tool aimed at improving productivity by automating routine processes in education. It is commonly described as a teaching assistant capable of generating lesson plans, instructional materials, quizzes, feedback, translations, and administrative documents with greater speed and efficiency (Kasneci et al., 2023; Tlili et al., 2025). While these functions definitely help to reduce the amount of work done by teachers, the instrumentalist approach confines AI to the status of a mere tool without considering the way in which continued engagement

with it can motivate teachers to challenge their assumptions about teaching and try out different methods. The potential of AI as an instrument for reflective professional development is conceptually underdeveloped in the field of English language teaching.

1.3 Conceptual Gap

Existing scholarship on generative AI in English language teaching has primarily examined its applications in instructional design, automated feedback, assessment, personalised learning, and learner support (Crompton & Burke, 2023; Lo, 2023). While these works showcase the pedagogical usefulness of AI, there is a lack of conceptualisation of AI as a partner in encouraging teachers' reflection and professional development. This paper does not aim to argue that AI is conscious and intentional and can reflect on its own. What this paper aims to prove is that AI can provide prompts, alternative explanations, and different viewpoints that will help teachers to reflect on their practice.

1.4 Aim and Structure of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to explore the notion of generative AI as a reflective partner in English language teaching (ELT), taking the discussion about it further from its productivity-promoting nature into a different dimension. Namely, this study reveals the mechanisms by which artificial intelligence can assist in teachers' reflective practices, outlines a framework to describe the human-AI collaboration in terms of reflection, and explores its pedagogical relevance and potential, constraints, and ethical aspects. Thus, the paper is an effort to contribute to the current academic discourse about the responsibility of incorporating AI into education and professional development (UNESCO, 2023; Holmes et al., 2022). The following paragraphs elaborate on what reflective partnership means, the suggested framework, practical application, and challenges.

II. CONCEPTUALISING AI AS A REFLECTIVE PARTNER

2.1 Meaning of Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is a well-known approach that denotes a consistent process whereby teachers

critically reflect on their pedagogic experience, classroom decisions, reactions of students, and personal beliefs regarding teaching to learn from successes and mistakes and make future teaching more effective (Schön, 1983; Brookfield, 2017). Reflective practice implies not only evaluation of the success of a certain lesson but analysis of the reasons behind the results of particular instructional strategies used. Schön (1983) distinguishes between reflection before teaching (reflection-for-action), during teaching (reflection-in-action), and after teaching (reflection-on-action). Through reflection Schön emphasizes the importance of reflecting as an ongoing professional activity. Reflective practice through its connection to practical teaching experience and critical inquiry allows transforming everyday teaching into professional learning and development (Farrell, 2015).

2.2 From AI as a Tool to AI as a Reflective Partner

AI as a Tool AI as a Reflective Partner

Completes tasks Stimulates critical examination

Generates teaching materials Produces alternative pedagogical perspectives
Saves time Encourages professional questioning
Provides answers Supports dialogue, interpretation, and reconsideration
Focuses primarily on efficiency Focuses on pedagogical understanding and reflective growth
The current discourse about the application of generative AI in education sees it primarily as a technical tool for automating routine tasks of lesson planning, content generation, assessment, and feedback generation with an intention of increasing efficiency and alleviating the administrative burden of teachers (Kasneci et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023). Despite the emphasis made on its capabilities in completing tasks and generating answers, the instrumental approach overlooks the potential of AI to promote reflective thinking. On the contrary, this paper offers to look at generative AI as a reflective partner who will help teachers reflect on their classroom experiences, consider other approaches to teaching, raise questions about underlying assumptions and have professional conversations based on evidence. In this context, the term “partner” means an interactive collaboration that helps humans reflect while not implying equality, autonomy, and independent judgement on the part of the machine.

Table 1. Contrasting Two Perspectives of AI in ELT

AI as a Tool	AI as a Reflective Partner
Completes tasks	Stimulates critical examination
Generates teaching materials	Produces alternative pedagogical perspectives
Saves time	Encourages professional questioning
Provides answers	Supports dialogue, interpretation, and reconsideration
Focuses primarily on efficiency	Focuses on pedagogical understanding and reflective growth

2.3 Defining Reflective Partnership

In light of theories of reflective practice and current studies on man-machine partnerships, the concept of AI-mediated reflective partnership described in this paper refers to a human-driven activity whereby teachers collaborate with generative AI to reflect on their teaching experiences, come up with new perspectives, challenge prevailing teaching assumptions and make contextualized teaching decisions. Contrary to decision automation processes, in reflective partnership, AI serves as an interactive tool for reflection, instead of substituting for professional judgement (Schön, 1983; Holmes et al., 2022). It has six main characteristics including being teacher-driven, enabling human agency in the process; dialogic, facilitating reciprocal interactions between teacher and AI; iterative, fostering the development of ideas through iterations; context-based, taking into consideration varying classroom contexts; critically evaluated, involving validation of recommendations made by AI and ethically mediated, focusing on ethical use of data in education (UNESCO, 2023).

2.4 Human Authority within the Partnership

Despite the collaborative approach involved in the reflective partnership through AI, teachers still bear the full accountability for the interpretation of the generated results, ethical judgement, contextual and cultural realities, sensitivity to students, and making final decisions regarding pedagogy. AI provides other points of view and reflective opportunities, yet it lacks professional agency and does not define educational actions. Therefore, AI should be

perceived as an auxiliary decision-making tool to human expertise and critical thinking in education (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

III. AI AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN ELT

3.1 Reflection Before Teaching

Reflection before teaching provides teachers with an opportunity to critically analyze instructional plans before implementing them in classrooms in order to ensure that educational decisions are purposeful and culturally relevant (Schön, 1983; Farrell, 2015). In the case of an AI-mediated reflective partnership, generative AI serves not only as a generator of information but also as a reflective agent that encourages teachers to rethink and revise their instructional designs. While preparing lessons, teachers may apply AI to determine whether lesson objectives are realistic and feasible, detect any possible biases in educational material, predict the possible misconceptions or language barriers of learners, think of additional teaching methods, modify activities for students with different levels of proficiency, and ensure that there is consistency between learning objectives, classroom activities, and assessment techniques (Biggs & Tang, 2011; UNESCO, 2023). Instead of blindly following the advice provided by AI, teachers analyze them based on the curriculum requirements, learner characteristics, institution-specific aspects, and classroom resources. A sample reflection prompt might be: "Analyze this lesson plan for a mixed-ability English class and find assumptions I made about learners' previous knowledge."

3.2 Reflection During Teaching

The concept of reflection in teaching or reflection in action relates to the ability of teachers to think critically and make changes in their teaching plans while teaching is actually occurring (Schön, 1983). While the actual use of AI in real-time may be limited due to technological restrictions, AI-based material developed ahead of time may contribute to responsive teaching. The teacher could utilize AI to come up with an alternative explanation for a difficult idea, create graded examples for students of differing abilities, design emergency scaffolding activities, offer additional vocabulary support or even

modify the lesson plan when the student encounters some unforeseen difficulty in learning (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023). Nonetheless, such recommendations would only provide the teacher with teaching options.

3.3 Reflection After Teaching

Reflection on teaching activities allows educators to critically analyze their experience in the classroom and turn it into professional development (Farrell, 2015). In the context of AI-assisted reflective partnership, teachers could share anonymous notes from their classroom, observations made by themselves, and/or reflections and ask AI to spot any patterns of learners' engagement, draw the comparison between intended learning objectives and performance in the classroom, suggest possible causes of learners' struggles, raise critical questions for reflection, and suggest new strategies for future instruction (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023). This analysis might help teachers discover any hidden instructional assumptions or recurrent issues among learners that need to be addressed. Yet, interpretations offered by AI cannot be seen as an objective assessment of the quality of instruction. These are merely exploratory answers based on the available data and thus should be verified in terms of context and practice by teachers' experience and professional judgment.

3.4 Dialogic Reflection and Professional Questioning

A unique feature of reflective partnership with AI assistance is its ability to encourage dialogic reflection through sustained conversation. Instead of just narrating classroom events, teachers can pose questions to the AI to help develop a deeper understanding of their pedagogical practice. The process of dialogic reflection may begin by wondering about what took place, why something might have taken place, what assumptions were made behind specific instructional choices, what other ways of looking at things there might be, how the lessons could have been designed differently, and what data would be needed prior to making any changes (Schön, 1983; Brookfield, 2017). In other words, teachers will be encouraged to consider various perspectives rather than taking the first one for granted. Of course, one should not think of AI as providing answers. The main benefit of it is creating reflective questions, pointing out different possibilities, and encouraging professional inquiry.

IV. PROPOSED REFLECTIVE PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Figure 1: AI-Supported Reflective Partnership Cycle for ELT



4.1 Stage 1: Pedagogical Experience

The reflective process starts with a concrete educational experience that occurs due to classroom activities and not the interaction with an artificial intelligence. Examples of such experiences may range from low levels of learners' participation, bad practices of giving feedback to learners, continuous struggles of teaching grammatical principles, unequal learners' participation in class, difficulties in conducting classroom assessments, or learner's behaviour that goes contrary to what was expected of him/her. All these scenarios present chances of engaging in professional inquiry as they expose discrepancies between what should happen and what happens. Consistent with reflective practice theory, meaningful reflection originates from authentic teaching experiences that require interpretation and improvement rather than hypothetical scenarios detached from educational practice (Schön, 1983; Farrell, 2015).

4.2 Stage 2: Externalisation of Experience

After the experience has occurred, the teacher will externalise the experience through making it ready for analysis. In this process, one might engage in writing a reflective journal, summarising the lesson taught, recording anonymous classroom activities, reporting learners' responses, analyzing assessment results, or simply coming up with a brief description of the learning problem. Externalization will lead to the making of implicit experiences explicit in order for both the teacher and AI to analyze them critically. Incomplete or biased descriptions may restrict reflective depth and reduce the usefulness of AI-generated perspectives, reinforcing the importance of thoughtful professional self-reporting (Farrell, 2015).

4.3 Stage 3: AI-Assisted Exploration (150 words)

When an experience has been externalized, teachers enter into an analysis conversation with generative AI to consider various meanings rather than get solutions. In response to a prompt by the teacher, AI could come up with other interpretations of classroom happenings, ask reflective questions, contrast different teaching methods, raise potential assumptions or bias, suggest ways to adapt, mention related teaching principles, and even anticipate the effects of various instructional choices (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023). The extent to which such

explorations can be meaningful greatly depends on the prompt. Analytical prompts facilitate reflective conversations more than directive instructions do since they allow the AI to develop pedagogical possibilities instead of giving instructions. For instance, one could say: "Please provide three other explanations of why there is not much engagement in this class activity. For each explanation, point out what else I need to see in my classroom."

4.4 Stage 4: Human Evaluation and Contextual Judgement

Human evaluation becomes the pivotal step within the framework, as an AI-generated response does not gain educational relevance without being carefully evaluated by a professional. An AI suggestion will be critically analyzed by a teacher according to such factors as the level of a learner's competence, his/her age and educational background, institutional expectations, local culture, technology resources available, number of students in a class, curriculum needs, personal teaching experience, and ethical responsibility. An AI-generated recommendation that works for one educational setting may turn out inappropriate for another due to the peculiarities of the learners, the institution itself, or the local culture. Besides, sometimes generative AI may provide misleading facts, too general suggestions, culturally inappropriate examples, or invalid pedagogical claims. That is why teachers need to ensure the validity of any AI-generated output based on their professional experience, classroom practice, and educational principles (Holmes et al., 2022; Kasneci et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

4.5 Stage 5: Pedagogical Action and Re-reflection

Based on the evaluation, teachers have the option of adopting, modifying, or rejecting the possibilities that have been created from the reflective thinking facilitated by the AI application. Possible pedagogical action can include restructuring lessons, modifying approaches to feedback, altering methods of assessment, incorporating differential learning activities, enhancing instructions in the classroom, or employing new methods for engaging learners. Such modifications of instruction are later observed and evaluated during the next rounds of teaching, giving teachers the opportunity to evaluate the efficacy of

such action and discover more improvements to be made. Thus, the process of reflection does not end with action but starts a new round of professional inquiry.

4.6 Principles Governing the Framework

The proposed framework is based on five guiding principles: human agency, maintaining teachers as the main decision-makers; critical validation, ensuring critical evaluation of the AI results; contextual relevance, acknowledging different learning contexts; ethical responsibility, advocating fairness, transparency, and accountability; and constant reflection, fostering professional learning. Taken together, these principles imply that AI facilitates reflection but does not replace teachers' professional competence.

V. APPLICATIONS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

5.1 Reflective Lesson Planning

An AI-based reflective partnership may enhance lesson planning through prompting teachers to critically reflect on their instructional choices prior to the actual classroom application. Instead of simply creating lesson plans, AI may assist teachers in reflection about the realistic achievement of learning goals, logical task sequence for gradual learning, proper cognitive load, inclusiveness of activities, equal engagement opportunities, and alignment of assessments with desired learning outcomes (Biggs & Tang, 2011; UNESCO, 2023). Thus, through this reflection process, teachers develop their lessons with professional judgment.

5.2 Reflective Feedback Practices

Interactions with AI that involve reflection will help teachers assess the quality and efficacy of their feedback in the classroom. Teachers will be able to look at different kinds of feedback, and determine whether they are clear, constructive, overcorrective, culturally aware, relevant for the language level of students, and autonomous for learners. AI suggestions will encourage teachers to think about the nature of their feedback, its aim, and how standardised it is. At the same time, final decisions will depend on teachers' knowledge about their

learners and the educational context (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

5.3 Reflective Assessment Design

Generative AI will enable teachers to carry out reflective assessment design by checking whether assessment tasks test the right skills, rather than just the performance of language skills. Teachers will be able to check their tasks for possible bias related to culture or language, and the transparency of the marking criteria, and will reflect upon whether they promote authentic language use and communication in learners. However, teachers need to critically assess suggestions provided by AI before using them in their assessments (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Holmes et al., 2022).

5.4 Inclusive and Differentiated Teaching

Reflective dialogue facilitated by the application of AI could assist teachers in designing more inclusive learning opportunities as reflective practices would allow for taking into account diverse needs of learners. Adaptations might be made for mixed-proficiency classrooms, first-generation learners, multilingual students, those with limited access to technology, as well as for those who need additional instructional supports. The use of AI could produce various alternatives for teaching which would foster differentiated instruction but would encourage teachers to question their assumptions about the abilities and engagement of learners (UNESCO, 2023; Farrell, 2015).

5.5 Continuing Professional Development (90 words)

Moreover, beyond classroom teaching, AI-facilitated reflective partnerships could promote continuing professional development through such activities as teacher journaling, peer observation reflections, teaching portfolios, mentoring conversations, action research, and professional learning communities. Reflective inquiries generated by AI could include reflective questions, identification of emerging themes throughout teacher's experiences and suggestions of the relevant literature. Such interactions would assist in fostering inquiry into teaching practice as well as in promoting professional collaboration. At the same time, meaningful professional development would depend on critical

interpretation of AI-generated data by teachers and integration thereof into their experiences, evidence, and professional dialogue (Farrell, 2015; Holmes et al., 2022).

VI. CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL ISSUES

6.1 Fabricated and Generic Results

Although the technology is advanced, sometimes, the output from generative AI applications may be inaccurate and not aligned with what really happens in classrooms. It is due to the lack of context or the inherent characteristics of the algorithms. As a consequence, teachers need to evaluate carefully the recommendations provided by AI and compare them with their own experience, evidence, and needs of students (Kasneci et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2023).

6.2 Data Protection

It is important that the use of AI is done responsibly. It implies protecting learners' and institution's data. Thus, teachers cannot insert student names, personal details, assessment results, or any other confidential institution's materials into AI. Any classroom description needed for reflection must be anonymous (UNESCO, 2023).

6.3 Bias and Cultural Limitations

Generative AI may replicate the linguistic, cultural, and educational bias inherent in the dataset used to train it. Recommendations based predominantly on prevailing educational systems may not resonate with the local ELT classroom environment, multilingual setting, and culturally specific teaching practices. Teachers need to critically assess AI-recommended strategies for their suitability in context (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

6.4 Overreliance and Diminished Teacher Autonomy (60 words)

Overreliance on AI may undermine teachers' capacity to exercise autonomous professional judgement and reflection. Educators should make sure that they do not delegate to AI problem definition, learner interpretation, and pedagogical decision-making processes. Rather, AI needs to act as an advisory tool supplementing, but not supplanting, teachers'

professional skills and judgement (Schön, 1983; Holmes et al., 2022).

6.5 Digital Divide

Teachers may have unequal access to AI technology in their institutions. Unequal access to hardware equipment, subscription services for using AI technologies, consistent internet connection, and professional development may lead to inequalities in AI-enabled teacher reflection. Addressing this challenge requires investment in infrastructure and equal access to resources (UNESCO, 2023).

VII. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Implications for English Teachers

The above framework emphasizes the importance of developing competencies by English language teachers beyond just using AI technologically. The skills necessary for reflective practice include prompting, critical evaluation of AI products, fact-checking, ethics related to educational data, adapting the recommendation to the context, and recognizing the AI algorithm bias. This way, AI can be used as an impetus for reflection and inquiry and not a substitute for pedagogical judgement. In such a way, reflective AI literacy should be incorporated in contemporary English language teaching practice (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

7.2 Implications for Teacher Education

Teacher education should not be limited to the demonstration of functionalities of the AI tool but rather involve reflective and critical interaction with the tool. The future teachers need to be able to formulate the authentic pedagogical problem, engage in a structured reflection with AI, critically analyze the AI recommendation, preserve learners' privacy through the responsible use of data, and preserve professional autonomy in decision-making. Such preparation equips educators to employ AI responsibly without diminishing their professional expertise or decision-making authority (Farrell, 2015; UNESCO, 2023).

7.3 Implications for Institutions (90 words)

Education institutions play an important role in promoting ethical AI implementation in teaching and

professional development. Educational institutions should develop institutional policies on AI use responsibly, design professional development programs, develop guidelines for data protection, provide equal access to technological tools, and establish ways of assessing AI-enabled pedagogy. The institutional strategy should focus on education quality, teacher learning and development, and learning outcomes rather than adoption of AI due to technology innovation and trends (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

VIII. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS (170 WORDS)

Further research should be conducted in order to verify empirically the applicability and effectiveness of the proposed AI-Supported Reflective Partnership Cycle for ELT. The studies could be devoted to understanding how teachers employ generative AI for reflection, the effect of AI-enabled reflection on classroom decisions and the difference in reflective practice between new and experienced teachers. Further research should focus on teachers' attitudes to AI-generated feedback, the effectiveness of AI in rural, urban, and multilingual classrooms, as well as cultural differences in human-AI reflective interaction. . Longitudinal studies can be undertaken to assess the impact of AI-enabled reflection on the long-term development of teacher autonomy, whereas studies with learners could investigate their perceptions of AI-enabled teaching approaches. It is also necessary to consider the effects of varying prompting techniques on the depth and quality of reflection conducted by teachers. Methods that can be used in such empirical studies include interviews, reflective journals, classroom observation, case study analysis, action research, mixed methods research, and longitudinal studies. Instead of considering the suggested framework as an ultimate model, further empirical research should focus on validating, developing, and building upon its theoretical premises.

IX. CONCLUSION (200 WORDS)

This paper has reconsidered the use of generative AI in English language teaching from the perspective of

enhancing reflection, rather than being treated as a productive tool. Instead of regarding AI as an independent authority on instruction, this approach considers AI as something that can generate reflective questions, multiple interpretations, and possible solutions for teachers. However, the process of reflection is inherently human, and it requires teachers to apply critical thinking skills, ethics, context, and expertise.

This proposed AI-supported Reflective Partnership Cycle for ELT—consisting of Pedagogical Experience, Externalisation of Experience, AI-Enabled Exploration, Human Judgement and Contextual Evaluation, and Pedagogical Action and Re-reflection—provides a conceptual model for embedding the use of generative AI within reflective teaching practice without compromising teacher autonomy. In all phases of the cycle, AI enhances the opportunities for reflection, while teachers make decisions regarding educational value and practical use.

In the end, AI attains its educational value not only by generating lessons, teaching materials, or feedback more efficiently, but through motivating teachers to reflect on their reasons for doing things in one way, on the reactions of learners to those choices, and on other possible pedagogies that could better serve the students. Responsible use of AI technology in ELT must thus foster professional reflection and critical decision making, rather than undermine it.

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