- Submission date: May 25, 2025

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- Title of the paper: Maintaining pedagogical integrity in technology-supported English language learning

- Topic: Ensuring quality and professional ethics in technology-enhanced English language teaching

- Research field: English language teaching; Technological education

- Word count of the paper: 2014

MAINTAINING PEDAGOGICAL INTEGRITY IN TECHNOLOGY-SUPPORTED ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

The integration of technology into English Language Teaching (ELT) has accelerated in recent years, offering promising advancements through tools such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), artificial intelligence, and gamification. While these innovations enhance personalization, learner autonomy, and interactivity, they also pose significant risks to pedagogical integrity, defined as the ethical, learner centered, and professionally informed foundation of teaching. This paper examines the concept of pedagogical integrity in contrast to related notions like teacher autonomy, highlighting its distinct role in guiding principled instructional decisions. It critically explores the dual nature of educational technology, identifying both its transformative potential and the threats it poses including digital inequities, teacher resistance, and ethical concerns such as data privacy and algorithmic bias. The paper then proposes strategic approaches to uphold pedagogical integrity, emphasizing teacher training in digital and AI literacy, evidence based instructional design, and the application of integrative frameworks such as TPACK and AI Competency. Ultimately, the paper underscores that technology must serve pedagogy, not the reverse.

Keywords*: English Language Teaching, Pedagogical Integrity, Artificial Intelligence, teacher training*

1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of digital technology into English Language Teaching (ELT) is reshaping instructional practices across diverse educational contexts. Tools such as mobile applications and artificial intelligence platforms are increasingly used to personalize instruction, improve learner engagement, and expand access to educational content. While these developments offer promising opportunities, they also introduce complex challenges. In many cases, technology is adopted rapidly, often under external pressure or institutional expectation, with limited attention to whether its use aligns with sound pedagogical principles. For example, the widespread shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed gaps in teacher readiness and exposed the risks of relying on tools without adequate pedagogical planning.

In this context, pedagogical integrity emerges as a crucial concept. It refers to the consistent practice of ethically grounded, learner-focused, and professionally sound teaching, regardless of the technological tools involved. As educational environments become more digitally

mediated, maintaining this integrity becomes more difficult. Teachers may face pressure to follow technological trends or implement new tools without fully understanding how these resources affect the quality of instruction. The increasing complexity of platforms, especially those powered by artificial intelligence, further complicates this issue by requiring new forms of evaluation and adaptation.

This paper explores how pedagogical integrity can be defined, preserved, and promoted in technology-supported English language learning. It examines foundational principles, traces the evolution of educational technologies in ELT, and identifies risks that may compromise educational quality. It also proposes strategies and frameworks that can guide the ethical and effective integration of digital tools. Ultimately, the paper argues for an approach in which technology complements pedagogical goals, rather than becoming the focus of instructional design.

2. UNDERSTANDING PEDAGOGICAL INTEGRITY IN ELT

2.1. Definition of pedagogical integrity

Pedagogical integrity in English Language Teaching (ELT) refers to the alignment of teaching practices, classroom interactions, and learning conditions with educational goals, ethical considerations, and learner-centered principles (Chval et al., 2009; Lilja, 2014). Rather than focusing solely on structural features such as lesson plans or standardized objectives, pedagogical integrity emphasizes the quality of teaching decisions, the rationale behind instructional choices, and the extent to which these choices support authentic, meaningful learning experiences. It is fundamentally concerned with the how and why of teaching, not just the what.

A key component of pedagogical integrity is professional judgment. Teachers are positioned as professionals capable of making informed decisions that respond to the unique needs of their learners and contexts. This stands in contrast to externally imposed mandates or metrics that reduce teaching to technical execution (Lilja, 2014). Effective pedagogy, especially in digitally mediated environments, requires adaptability, reflection, and ethical awareness. Frameworks such as the iSAP model illustrate how integrity can be embedded in reflective, inquiry-based teaching processes (Dewey, 1938; Nguyen, 2022).

Pedagogical integrity also encompasses broader ethical dimensions. For example, integrating sustainability themes into language education reflects a commitment to socially responsible teaching, fostering intercultural competence and global citizenship among learners (Khoiriyah & Mashuri, 2025).

2.2. Pedagogical integrity and teacher autonomy

Teacher autonomy is essential for maintaining pedagogical integrity. Autonomy allows educators to make context-sensitive decisions about what and how to teach, select appropriate

technologies, and adapt instructional strategies based on learner needs. When teachers are granted professional trust and freedom, they can align digital tools with pedagogical aims rather than following administrative directives (Lilja, 2014; Macdonald Merchant, n.d.).

However, systemic pressures such as standardized testing, rigid curricula, or imposed technology use can erode this autonomy. In such contexts, pedagogical decisions may become procedural rather than principled, and integrity is at risk. Critics have warned that professional development models focused solely on technical compliance can disconnect educators from their own teaching practice and judgment.

Effective professional development must therefore be collaborative, practice-based, and empowering. It should aim to strengthen teachers' reflective capacity and professional identity. The notion of "Pedagogical Instinct," rooted in Waldorf education, emphasizes the adaptive, intuitive, and ethical roles teachers must play in the classroom (Macdonald Merchant, n.d.). This instinct is not innate, but cultivated through professional support structures that foster critical engagement and inner growth.

Ultimately, pedagogical integrity cannot thrive without teacher autonomy. Creating systems that support flexible, ethical, and responsive teaching is fundamental to ensuring that educational technology enhances, rather than undermines, the integrity of instruction.

3. THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ELT: POTENTIAL AND PITFALLS

3.1 Key technologies in TELL: CALL, MALL, AI, and gamification

The evolution of technology-supported English Language Learning (TELL) has introduced a range of tools, notably Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Artificial Intelligence (AI), and gamification. CALL enables learners to practice and interact with language beyond classroom boundaries, while MALL harnesses the ubiquity of smartphones and tablets to facilitate on-the-go learning, especially in vocabulary and writing (Khafaga & Alghawli, 2021; Khan et al., 2019). Gamification incorporates game-like elements such as points and leaderboards to increase motivation and participation (Bai et al., 2020). Meanwhile, AI tools including chatbots, speech recognition, and platforms like ChatGPT provide personalized feedback and adaptive learning environments (Dewey, 2025).

3.2 Prominent benefits: Personalization, interaction, and learner autonomy

These technologies offer substantial pedagogical benefits. Personalized learning systems can adapt content to individual needs, such as recommending reading materials based on proficiency levels (Mahdi, 2017). Interactive features in gamified platforms foster greater engagement and motivation, turning passive learning into participatory experiences (Baldeón et al., 2016). Moreover, learners gain increased autonomy by accessing resources anytime and anywhere,

supporting self-paced and self-directed learning (Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2024). AI further enhances this by providing instant, automated feedback and scaffolding opportunities (Guan, 2024).

3.3 Emerging risks: Tool dependency and pedagogical misalignment

Despite these benefits, significant risks accompany technology use in ELT. A major concern is the overreliance on technological tools, where novelty and convenience may overshadow sound pedagogical design. Tools like AI, while efficient, may produce inaccurate or culturally inappropriate content, requiring substantial teacher intervention to ensure alignment with learning goals (Dewey, 2025). Gamification, if poorly implemented, can shift focus from learning outcomes to superficial engagement (Zhou & Wei, 2024). Furthermore, when technology drives instructional choices rather than serving clear educational objectives, it leads to "pedagogical drift" - a misalignment that threatens instructional coherence and integrity (Kristiawan et al., 2024). These challenges underline the need for critical and intentional technology integration guided by ethical and pedagogical principles.

4. THREATS TO PEDAGOGICAL INTEGRITY IN TELL

4.1 Technological and systemic barriers

One of the most persistent threats to pedagogical integrity in technology-supported English Language Learning (TELL) is the presence of technological and systemic barriers. In many educational contexts, particularly in developing regions, learners and teachers face limited access to essential devices, unstable internet connectivity, and outdated infrastructure. These conditions not only hinder the implementation of TELL but also create unequal learning opportunities that undermine inclusivity and educational equity. Systemic issues such as insufficient institutional investment, rigid administrative policies, and a lack of long-term planning for digital transformation exacerbate these challenges. The rapid shift to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of such systems, where technology was often deployed as an emergency solution without adequate pedagogical preparation (Dewey, 2025).

4.2 Digital illiteracy and teacher resistance

Another major concern is the insufficient digital competence among educators and their resistance to technological change. Teachers frequently report lacking the training and confidence needed to integrate technology effectively into pedagogical practice, particularly when using complex tools such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) or managing online platforms (Nguyen, 2022). Many educators are unfamiliar with prompt engineering, evaluation of AI-generated content, or designing digitally mediated scaffolding, which can lead to ineffective or inappropriate use of technology (Dewey, 2025). In addition to skill gaps, resistance also stems from deeper professional concerns. Some teachers fear that digital tools may dilute academic rigor or reduce their

professional agency. This resistance may be further intensified when technology adoption is mandated in a top-down manner without adequate support or consultation (Kristiawan et al., 2024).

4.3 Ethical concerns: data, bias, and cognitive displacement

The integration of AI tools into ELT raises urgent ethical issues that directly impact pedagogical integrity. A key concern is the handling of personal data, as AI systems often require access to sensitive learner information, raising questions about data privacy and informed consent (Kristiawan et al., 2024). Moreover, algorithmic bias presents risks of inequity, particularly for learners with diverse accents or cultural backgrounds, as AI systems may reproduce or amplify existing social prejudices (Crompton et al., 2024). There is also growing apprehension that overreliance on AI tools may discourage learners from engaging in deeper cognitive processes such as critical thinking and independent problem-solving (Dewey, 2025). These ethical dilemmas demand that educators maintain constant critical awareness and retain control over how technology shapes the learning process.

5. STRATEGIES FOR SAFEGUARDING INTEGRITY IN TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION

5.1 Developing teachers' digital and AI competence

A foundational strategy for preserving pedagogical integrity in technology-supported English Language Learning (TELL) is the systematic development of teachers' digital and AI literacy. Teachers must not only know how to operate technological tools but also understand their pedagogical implications. Digital competence includes the ability to design meaningful learning activities, assess digital outcomes, and select tools based on learning objectives rather than convenience (Kristiawan et al., 2024). As AI becomes more prevalent, specialized AI literacy is increasingly essential. Teachers must learn to evaluate AI-generated content for accuracy, relevance, and bias, and to adapt this content for diverse learner contexts (Dewey, 2025). Frameworks such as the AI Competency Framework for Teachers emphasize five key domains: human-centered mindset, ethical understanding, AI foundations, pedagogical integration, and professional development (Miao & Cukurova, 2024). These domains provide a structured roadmap for equipping educators to use AI responsibly and effectively.

5.2 Pedagogical strategies: scaffolding, authentic assessment, and interaction

Technological integration must be accompanied by evidence-based pedagogical strategies to ensure that learning remains meaningful and learner-centered. Scaffolding is essential in helping students navigate complex content or unfamiliar digital tools. Effective scaffolding in online ELT includes support at multiple levels such as cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and technical (Nguyen, 2022). Authentic assessment is another critical strategy. By designing tasks that mirror real-world situations, educators can evaluate not only language proficiency but also

learners' ability to apply knowledge in context. This approach reduces academic dishonesty and promotes deeper learning (Bautista, 2013). Interactive and dialogical methods also enhance pedagogical integrity by fostering student engagement and collaborative meaning-making. Approaches such as flipped learning, group tasks, and problem-based learning shift the classroom dynamic from passive reception to active participation, promoting critical thinking and communication skills (Chi & Wylie, 2014).

5.3 Applying integrative frameworks: TPACK and AI Competency

To guide educators in aligning technology use with pedagogical goals, integrative frameworks are essential. The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model highlights the interplay between technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, helping teachers design coherent and effective learning experiences (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). TPACK encourages teachers to avoid fragmented or tool-driven instruction by emphasizing how technology can support rather than distort educational aims. Similarly, the AI Competency Framework provides ethical and pedagogical benchmarks for AI integration. Together, these frameworks help educators make informed decisions, maintain professional judgment, and ensure that technology serves as a support mechanism for high-quality English language instruction.

6. CONCLUSION

As educational technologies continue to evolve, the role of the teacher remains central to ensuring pedagogical integrity in English Language Teaching. Teachers are not merely implementers of digital tools but critical mediators who make informed decisions to foster meaningful, ethical, and learner-centered instruction. Their professional judgment, digital competence, and reflective practice are foundational to the responsible integration of technology.

Pedagogical integrity must be upheld as the core of educational innovation. Without it, technological advancements risk becoming superficial interventions that compromise learning quality. Sustaining this integrity requires continuous support for teacher development, ethical awareness, and pedagogical alignment across all stages of technology use.

Ultimately, technology should serve teaching, not drive it. When tools are selected and implemented based on pedagogical rationale, they can enhance language learning in transformative ways. However, when pedagogy becomes subordinate to technological trends, the educational mission is undermined. Centering integrity ensures that innovation in ELT remains grounded in purpose, professionalism, and the best interests of learners.

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