ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov736

Two's Company, Three's a Crowd? A Thematic Review of Teachers' Roles in Traditional and AI-Mediated Language Learning

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Publication Date: 2026/11/23

Abstract: Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly used to support language instruction, practice, feedback, and assessment, reshaping how teaching responsibilities are carried out. This thematic review examines the changing roles of English teachers across traditional and AI-mediated language learning, focusing on responsibilities that are transformed, retained, shared with AI, or newly emerging. The literature synthesized in this study suggests that AI can assist with instructional planning, language practice, feedback, and assessment, while teachers continue to provide pedagogical judgment, contextualized guidance, learner engagement, and human interaction. AI integration also brings additional responsibilities, including evaluating AI-generated content, aligning tools with learning objectives, promoting academic integrity, and considering ethical issues and equitable access. However, the reviewed literature offers limited insight into how English teachers experience these changes in specific local settings, particularly in Ilocos Sur. The study therefore examines the evolving relationship among teachers, learners, and AI, and how English teachers negotiate their professional roles amid technological change. It argues that AI is best understood not as an automatic substitute for teachers, but as a resource whose educational value depends on informed, context-sensitive teacher involvement.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence; English Language Teaching; Teacher Roles; AI-Mediated Learning; Generative AI; Language Education.*

How to Cite: Joren C. Gumba (2026) Two's Company, Three's a Crowd? A Thematic Review of Teachers' Roles in Traditional and AI-Mediated Language Learning. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(11), 1103-1109. https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov736

I. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly performing tasks traditionally associated with teachers. This is the reality of the current teaching-learning scene supported by the study of Celik, et al. (2022) which states that AI could help teachers understand student needs and choose content, monitor learning in a timely way, provide feedback or support interventions, and automate parts of assessment such as essay scoring. The study also expounds that teachers contributed data and pedagogical judgments to AI systems, although their involvement in development and decision-making was limited. In AI-mediated language teaching, the teacher's role is shifting from carrying out every instructional task directly toward guiding and interpreting a learning process that AI can also support. The following themes examine the evolution of AI in language education, its instructional applications, the transformation and continuity of teachers' roles, the emergence of new professional responsibilities, the difficulties of integrating AI, and the comparison of traditional and AI-mediated language learning in order to better understand this changing relationship between teachers and AI.

Moreover, the phrase "Two's a Company, Three's a Crowd?" captures the changing relationship among teachers, learners, and artificial intelligence in language education. Traditionally, language learning has centered on the teacher–learner relationship, with teachers guiding instruction, providing feedback, assessing progress, and supporting learners' development. The introduction of AI adds a third participant that may assist with tasks such as generating materials, offering feedback, and supporting language practice. The question mark is central: it challenges the assumption that AI's presence necessarily disrupts or diminishes the teacher–learner relationship. Instead, this study examines how AI functions within that relationship, as a potential instructional partner, a means of redistributing responsibilities, or a source of new challenges to teachers' roles in language learning.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

- *The Evolution of Language Teaching in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*

Huang et al. (2023), in Trends, Research Issues and Applications of Artificial Intelligence in Language Education, review the development and expanding use of AI in language

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov736

education. They describe a shift from conventional computer-assisted language learning tools toward more advanced and interactive applications that support language learning and instruction. This growing integration is reshaping the language-education landscape and has implications for instructional practices and learners' experiences. It also raises questions about how teachers' responsibilities may evolve as they select, guide, and integrate AI applications into pedagogical practice. In particular, it supports the relevance of investigating teachers' changing roles. As instructional practices and learner experiences are shaped by AI applications, teachers may need to adapt how they guide, support, and assess learners in traditional and AI-mediated settings.

Within this broader evolution of AI in language education, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning provides a specific context for examining the expanding use of AI. Tang and Zhang (2026) examined the technologies and tools used in AI-supported EFL learning and their reported impacts. Their review situates the growing use of these applications within a wider shift toward technology-mediated language learning. This trend indicates that AI is becoming more integrated into language education, expanding opportunities for technology-supported instruction and language learning.

Recently, generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has expanded the range of tools available for language teaching and learning, including applications that generate content, support writing, and assist with instructional activities. In a systematic review, Li et al. (2025) examined emerging directions in GenAI research in language education. The review highlighted research on teaching strategies, language-skill development, writing, feedback, and the implementation of GenAI in educational settings. Together, these developments suggest that GenAI is being used not only to automate support but also to assist with activities traditionally guided by language teachers. This provides a relevant context for the present study, which examines how GenAI may reshape English teachers' instructional responsibilities and the transition from traditional to AI-mediated language learning.

- *AI as an Emerging Instructional Assistant in Language Learning*

Artificial intelligence is increasingly used to support language learning by offering learners opportunities for practice, interaction, and responsive assistance. In a systematic review of chatbot-supported language learning, Huang, Hew, and Fryer (2022) examined chatbot applications for language interaction, simulations, information delivery, and personalized recommendations. Their findings point to the potential of conversational AI to extend opportunities for language practice beyond the classroom. These applications may support instructional functions that teachers have traditionally facilitated, particularly practice and immediate learning assistance. This development is relevant because it raises the question of how English teachers adapt their roles when learners can also practice and seek support through AI-powered chatbots outside teacher-led interactions.

Moreover, AI-driven chatbots may support second-language development, particularly in productive skills such as speaking and writing. Wiboolyasarin et al. (2025) reported improvements associated with chatbot-assisted learning, which they linked to real-time feedback, increased opportunities for practice, and reduced language-learning anxiety. They also reported positive outcomes in reading and listening, while noting limitations in chatbots' capacity to support deep contextual interaction and human-like emotional engagement. Taken together, these findings point to a possible shift in teachers' role. Rather than serving as the sole source of language input and feedback, teachers may increasingly facilitate learning and help students interpret and use AI-generated support. This perspective informs the present study's examination of how AI-assisted language learning reshapes teachers' instructional responsibilities while preserving the need for contextualized guidance, meaningful interaction, and human-centered teaching.

Generative AI has further broadened the range of tools available for language teaching and learning. Li et al. (2025) identified work on teaching strategies, language-skill development, writing assistance, and feedback. These applications may support instructional activities that have often involved substantial teacher input. However, their presence also makes teachers' judgment important in deciding whether and how AI-generated content and feedback align with learning objectives. This literature therefore provides a basis for examining how English teachers organize and adapt their responsibilities in planning, facilitating, and assessing language learning when AI becomes an additional instructional resource.

- *The Transformation of English Teachers' Instructional Roles*

In traditional English language teaching, teachers typically plan instruction, facilitate classroom learning, assess student performance, and monitor learners' progress. The integration of AI may change how these responsibilities are carried out and shared within technology-supported environments. In a systematic review conducted by Zhao et al. (2026), they identified responsibilities related to teaching, evaluation, organization, coordination, management, supervision, and professional development. Their review suggests that AI does not necessarily remove teachers' established responsibilities. Rather, it may alter how teachers enact them. This provides a framework for the present study to examine which responsibilities are supported by AI, which are transformed, and which remain central to English teachers' work.

At the level of generative AI use, Zhai (2024) identified four teacher roles in AI-supported education: Observer, Adopter, Collaborator, and Innovator. The Observer and Adopter roles illustrate initial awareness and practical use, while the Collaborator and Innovator roles highlight deeper integration and the development of new instructional practices. Rather than implying a fixed sequence, the roles offer a way to consider the varied forms of teacher engagement in AI-mediated instruction. These four teacher roles are relevant because these can evaluate how English

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov736

teachers understand and enact their responsibilities as they incorporate AI into established teaching practices.

In the Philippine context, Mabuan (2024) examined the perspectives of 115 English language teachers in Metro Manila on using ChatGPT in English language teaching, including its instructional applications, benefits, and limitations. Teachers identified several potential applications of the tool, including vocabulary development, writing practice, fluency building, and communication support. They also noted that ChatGPT could assist learners through translation, simplified explanations, conversational practice, and access to information about diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. At the same time, teachers raised concerns about cheating and plagiarism, limited contextual understanding, the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated responses, privacy and data security, and students' potential over-reliance on AI at the expense of creativity and critical thinking. It therefore provides context of how Filipino English teachers respond to generative AI and how its availability may influence their established teaching responsibilities.

- *The Continuity of Human-Centered Teaching Responsibilities*

Despite AI's growing capabilities, some teaching responsibilities continue to depend on human interaction, pedagogical judgment, and sensitivity to learners' needs. Ulla et al. (2024) explored the perspectives of 14 Philippine university academics on using generative AI to foster inclusive language classrooms, drawing on a critical language pedagogy perspective. Their study foregrounds inclusion, learner confidence and participation, and teachers' pedagogical decision-making in AI-supported language education. This suggests that although AI may assist with instructional content and learning activities, teachers remain responsible for adapting instruction to learners' diverse experiences and needs. The study therefore informs that English-teaching responsibilities remain important as AI becomes more involved in instruction.

The importance of human involvement also raises the question of which language-teaching functions AI can support and which still call for teachers' judgment and interpersonal engagement. Huang et al. (2022) reviewed chatbot applications for language interaction, simulations, information delivery, and personalized recommendations. While such applications can offer additional opportunities for practice and responsive assistance, chatbot-supported learning also has technological and cognitive limitations. AI-mediated interaction should therefore be understood as a possible supplement to, rather than an automatic substitute for, teacher-guided language learning.

- *Emerging Professional Responsibilities of English Teachers in AI-Mediated Learning*

As AI becomes more integrated into language education, English teachers may need competencies that extend beyond language pedagogy and classroom management. In a systematic synthesis of research on generative AI literacy in English language education, Zhang et al. (2026) identified three dimensions: conceptual understanding, strategic application, and critical-ethical evaluation. These dimensions encompass understanding AI, selecting and applying it for instructional purposes, and assessing the accuracy, appropriateness, and ethical implications of its outputs. Accordingly, teachers' professional responsibilities may increasingly include evaluating and guiding the use of AI, not simply operating the tools.

Teachers' readiness to integrate AI also involves connecting technological knowledge with pedagogical and subject-matter expertise. Bautista et al. (2024) examined readiness to integrate AI-based tools among 429 Filipino preservice teachers using the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. Their study offers a lens for considering the technological, pedagogical, and content-related knowledge involved in AI integration. From this perspective, teachers' changing responsibilities involve not only learning to use AI tools but also deciding how their use aligns with instructional objectives and the specific demands of English language teaching.

- *Challenges and Limitations of AI Integration in Language Education*

These challenges and limitations arise across global, national, and local contexts, underscoring the need to examine how teachers address AI's limitations while sustaining their pedagogical and interpersonal roles in the teaching-learning process.

At the global level, integrating AI into education remains challenging because technological capabilities do not always align with pedagogical needs. Celik et al. (2022) noted that AI developers may lack sufficient knowledge of learning sciences and pedagogy to support effective classroom implementation. They highlighted the need to address "challenges in AI implementation in teaching practice" (p. 616). This underscores that AI's capacity to assist with planning, instruction, or assessment does not, by itself, ensure meaningful learning. In AI-mediated settings, teachers must use their professional judgment to assess and validate AI-generated materials and outputs, and to ensure that their use aligns with learners' needs and sound pedagogical principles.

Deng and Jamaludin (2026) likewise identified limitations in the use of generative AI (GenAI) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, particularly in the quality of feedback and its contribution to language development. Although findings on AI-generated feedback varied, their review reported that "students consistently preferred teacher feedback over GenAI feedback" (Abstract). This finding highlights the continuing value of teachers' expertise in providing personalized and contextualized guidance. AI-mediated instruction may therefore add to teachers' responsibilities: educators need to evaluate the accuracy and appropriateness of machine-generated feedback rather than assume it is suitable for learners. AI may support language assessment, but effective teaching continues to depend on teachers' professional judgment and human interaction.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov736

In the Philippine context, academic integrity and the reliability of AI-generated information are important concerns in the use of AI for English language teaching. Mabuan (2024), identified limitations of ChatGPT that included "cheating and plagiarism, lack contextual understanding and nuance, reliability and accuracy of information". These concerns raise questions about learners' reliance on AI and the development of their independent language skills. They also point to the need for teachers to set expectations for responsible AI use and to assess students' learning and work appropriately. In this context, teachers' roles as facilitators of critical thinking and academic integrity remain important, alongside their use of AI to support language learning.

Teachers' preparedness is another consideration in Philippine secondary English language classrooms. Cabato (2025), in a study of 181 secondary ESL teachers in Zamboanga City, reported moderate knowledge, somewhat positive attitudes, and high positive usage of ChatGPT. The study also noted "uneven awareness of ChatGPT's features, ethical implications, and varied implementation in classroom settings" (Abstract). These findings suggest that willingness to use AI does not necessarily mean teachers feel equally prepared to integrate it effectively. AI-supported teaching may require educators to assess generated content, consider ethical implications, and select tools suited to their instructional purposes. Professional development and institutional support may therefore help teachers adapt their practice to AI-integrated education.

Equitable access is also central to AI integration in Philippine language classrooms. Ulla et al. (2024), examining the perspectives of 14 academics from Philippine higher education institutions, discussed GenAI's potential for "boosting inclusion, participation, and confidence among students", as well as its implications for educational equality. Whether learners can benefit from these tools may depend on access to devices and connectivity, as well as on their digital competencies. AI integration is therefore not only a question of technology but also of inclusion and accessibility. Teachers need to consider students' differing circumstances when incorporating AI, so that its use does not disadvantage learners with fewer resources.

At the local level, internet connectivity and access to technology may constrain the use of AI in geographically isolated communities. Quimoyog and Torda (2026), in a report published by the Philippine Information Agency, documented the distribution of 454 SIM cards to learners and teaching and non-teaching personnel in six public schools in the upland municipalities of Cervantes, Alilem, and San Emilio, Ilocos Sur. The report stated that "Limited internet access restricts learning opportunities and access to essential government services." This illustrates why local connectivity conditions matter when considering the availability of AI-supported learning resources. Where access to devices or reliable internet is limited, teachers may face practical barriers to using AI for lesson preparation, instruction, and assessment. These conditions should be considered when examining how English teachers' practices and responsibilities change in AI-mediated learning.

More broadly, disparities in educational infrastructure may affect how widely AI can be used across the Philippines. UNESCO (2026) reports that "Only around 60% of schools are connected to the internet" (Key Insights section). Limited connectivity may restrict teachers' and learners' access to AI applications for language practice, writing support, lesson preparation, and assessment. Consequently, the transition to AI-supported language education depends not only on teachers' competencies but also on whether schools and learners have the resources needed to use these tools. Differences in infrastructure may shape how AI is incorporated into instruction and should be considered when assessing its accessibility and implementation.

- *Comparative Synthesis: Traditional and AI-Mediated English Language Teaching*

The literature suggests that AI integration is reshaping English teachers' responsibilities rather than simply replacing them. In traditional settings, teachers typically plan instruction, present content, facilitate learning, assess student progress, and monitor learners. In AI-mediated settings, tools such as automated systems, intelligent tutoring applications, chatbots, and generative AI may support some of these activities. Li et al. (2025) examined generative AI research on teaching strategies, language-skill development, writing, feedback, and implementation. This review provides context for understanding how AI is being applied to activities that teachers have traditionally guided.

- *Research Gap*

Although the reviewed studies describe AI applications, potential benefits, implementation challenges, and emerging teacher competencies, several questions remain within the scope of this study. The literature often discusses AI-supported activities, such as language practice, writing assistance, feedback, and assessment, without directly comparing how teachers perform these responsibilities in traditional and AI-mediated settings. This leaves unclear which responsibilities are genuinely transformed, which remain primarily teacher-led, and which are shared between teachers and AI tools.

Moreover, identifying potential teacher roles, such as facilitator, evaluator, collaborator, or AI-literacy guide, does not by itself explain how teachers enact those roles in day-to-day English instruction. Further attention is needed to teachers' own experiences: how they decide when to use AI, how they evaluate or adapt its outputs, and how they balance automated assistance with learner needs, interaction, and professional judgment.

III. METHODOLOGY

- *Research Design*

This article adopts a qualitative narrative review methodology with an integrated thematic analysis approach to examine the evolving roles of English teachers in traditional and AI-mediated language learning. A qualitative narrative review was selected because the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into language education is a developing phenomenon that involves pedagogical,

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov736

technological, and professional considerations. It requires an examination of how instructional responsibilities are traditionally performed, how they are transformed through AI integration, and which responsibilities remain dependent on teachers' professional judgment and human interaction.

Narrative reviews are suitable for exploring complex educational phenomena because they allow the synthesis and interpretation of existing scholarly literature from different perspectives. Through this approach, the study examines the instructional applications of AI, the transformation and continuity of teachers' responsibilities, and the emergence of new professional expectations in AI-supported language education. It also considers the challenges associated with AI integration, particularly in relation to teachers' preparedness, academic integrity, technological accessibility, and equitable learning opportunities. Ultimately, the review seeks to establish how AI influences the relationship among teachers, learners, and technology without assuming that technological advancement necessarily leads to the replacement of human educators.

➢ *Data Sources and Literature Identification*

The review draws on existing scholarly literature from the fields of English language teaching, educational technology, artificial intelligence in education, applied linguistics, and teacher professional development. Relevant academic sources were identified through scholarly databases and research platforms, including Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, SAGE Journals, and other accessible academic publications.

The literature search focused on studies examining the development and applications of AI in language education, particularly those addressing the instructional responsibilities and professional roles of English teachers in traditional and AI-mediated learning environments.

Search terms included combinations of the following:

- Artificial intelligence in language education
- AI-mediated language learning
- English language teaching and generative AI
- Traditional and AI-assisted language teaching
- English teachers' roles and responsibilities
- ChatGPT in English language teaching
- Teacher-AI collaboration
- AI literacy and teacher competencies
- Human-centered language teaching
- Challenges of AI integration in education
- AI integration in Philippine education
- Digital divide and educational accessibility

The selected literature provided international, national, and local perspectives on the integration of AI into language education. International studies offered insights into emerging technologies and changing pedagogical practices, while Philippine-based studies provided contextual understanding of teachers' experiences, preparedness, and concerns regarding AI integration. Local reports and relevant publications concerning technological accessibility in Ilocos Sur were also considered to situate the discussion within the educational realities of the study's geographical context.

➢ *Inclusion Criteria*

To ensure the relevance and academic value of the reviewed literature, sources were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles, systematic reviews, and scholarly research publications.
- Studies directly addressing artificial intelligence, generative AI, or AI-assisted applications in education and language learning.
- Literature discussing English teachers' instructional roles, responsibilities, and professional competencies.
- Studies examining the applications of AI in instructional planning, language practice, feedback, assessment, and classroom facilitation.
- Research exploring the relationship between human teachers and AI technologies in educational settings.
- Studies addressing the benefits, limitations, ethical considerations, and challenges of AI integration in language education.
- Literature providing international and Philippine perspectives, with particular consideration of technological accessibility and educational conditions in Ilocos Sur.
- Relevant institutional reports and credible publications providing contextual information about digital infrastructure and access to technology.

These criteria ensured that the review incorporated literature addressing both the technological developments influencing language education and the pedagogical responsibilities that continue to define the work of English teachers. Particular attention was given to studies that offered insights into how traditional teaching practices are maintained, modified, or supplemented through AI integration.

➢ *Thematic Analysis and Synthesis*

An integrated thematic analysis approach was employed to examine, organize, and synthesize recurring concepts and findings across the reviewed literature. The selected studies were examined through repeated reading, comparison, and interpretation to identify common patterns concerning the changing responsibilities of English teachers in traditional and AI-mediated language learning environments.

Relevant findings were grouped according to their conceptual similarities and relationships with the objectives of the review. The identified concepts were then organized into broader thematic categories to establish how AI influences instructional practices, teacher responsibilities, and the overall teaching-learning relationship.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov736

This process resulted in the identification of the following major themes:

- The Evolution of Language Teaching in the Age of Artificial Intelligence – examines the development of AI technologies and their growing influence on language education.
- AI as an Emerging Instructional Assistant in Language Learning – explores how AI applications support language practice, interaction, writing, feedback, and other instructional activities traditionally facilitated by teachers.
- The Transformation of English Teachers' Instructional Roles – discusses how teachers' responsibilities in planning, facilitating, assessing, and monitoring learning are modified or shared with AI technologies.
- The Continuity of Human-Centered Teaching Responsibilities – highlights the teaching functions that remain dependent on human interaction, contextual understanding, pedagogical judgment, and sensitivity to learners' needs.
- Emerging Professional Responsibilities of English Teachers in AI-Mediated Learning – examines the additional competencies and responsibilities required of teachers, including AI literacy, critical evaluation, ethical decision-making, and responsible technology integration.
- Challenges and Limitations of AI Integration in Language Education – identifies the technological, pedagogical, ethical, and accessibility-related concerns associated with incorporating AI into language instruction across global, national, and local contexts.
- Comparative Synthesis: Traditional and AI-Mediated English Language Teaching – integrates the findings to distinguish which teaching responsibilities are transformed, retained, shared with AI, or newly emerging.

IV. CONCLUSION

This article set out to examine the evolving roles of English teachers in traditional and AI-mediated language learning, particularly in understanding how artificial intelligence (AI) transforms, supports, and redistributes instructional responsibilities. The thematic review demonstrates that the integration of AI does not simply introduce another technological tool into language education; rather, it reshapes the relationship among teachers, learners, and technology. As AI becomes increasingly involved in instructional planning, language practice, feedback, and assessment, the responsibilities of English teachers continue to evolve alongside these developments.

The findings highlight that AI can support instructional activities traditionally performed by teachers, providing learners with additional opportunities for language practice, immediate feedback, writing assistance, and personalized learning support. However, these capabilities do not eliminate the importance of teachers' professional expertise. Pedagogical judgment, contextualized instruction, meaningful human interaction, learner engagement, and sensitivity to students' individual needs remain essential aspects of effective language teaching. Furthermore, AI integration introduces additional professional responsibilities, requiring teachers to develop AI literacy, critically evaluate AI-generated content, uphold academic integrity, address ethical concerns, and ensure that technological applications are aligned with appropriate learning objectives. These responsibilities become particularly significant in educational contexts where technological accessibility, internet connectivity, and institutional support remain uneven.

Ultimately, the effective integration of AI in language education requires a balanced relationship between technological assistance and human-centered teaching. Rather than viewing AI as a replacement for English teachers, it should be recognized as an instructional resource whose effectiveness depends on teachers' knowledge, critical judgment, and purposeful involvement. As language education continues to evolve, teachers must adapt to emerging technologies while preserving the interpersonal and pedagogical dimensions that make teaching meaningful. Particular attention must also be given to the experiences of English teachers in local educational settings, such as Ilocos Sur, where technological opportunities and limitations may influence how AI is incorporated into classroom practices.

The article concludes that the future of English language teaching is not a competition between teachers and artificial intelligence, but a process of collaboration in which technology supports instruction while teachers continue to provide the human guidance, judgment, and understanding that meaningful language learning requires. In the relationship among teachers, learners, and AI, the third presence does not necessarily make the classroom a crowd; rather, when thoughtfully integrated, it can create new possibilities for teaching and learning without diminishing the indispensable role of the teacher.

➢ *Funding Statement*

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

➢ *Conflict of Interest Statement*

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

➢ *Ethical Statement*

This article is based solely on a qualitative narrative review and thematic synthesis of existing academic literature and relevant institutional publications. No primary data were collected from human participants, and ethical approval was therefore not required.

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