Indexed in NepJOL
JPPS Star-Rated Journal

Journal of NELTA Gandaki (JoNG)
(A Peer Reviewed Open Access Research Journal)
ISSN: 2676-1041 [Print] E-ISSN 2822-1559 [Online]
Vol. VIII Issue (1-2) October, 2025, pp. 117-127
eJournal site: www.nelta.org.np/page/gandaki

Exploring University Teachers' Experiences in Integrating Generative AI and AI Tools in English Language Teaching and Learning in Rupandehi

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Article History:
Submitted: 5 February 2025
Reviewed: 2 May 2025
Accepted: 1 July 2025
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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.3126/jong.v8i1-2.85076

Publisher
Nepal English Language Teachers' Association Gandaki Province, Pokhara, Nepal
Email: neltagandaki2018@gmail.com
URL.:www.nelta.org.np/page/gandaki

Abstract

This study explored how Nepalese university educators used Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) and AI tools in English Language Teaching (ELT). The research sought to establish how the tools impacted teaching and learning and how educators modified their pedagogical practices to incorporate these technologies successfully. A qualitative methodology, utilizing narrative inquiry, was employed to gather data from three university-level English educators with more than five years of experience and who were actively using AI tools in their classrooms at the time of the research. Three rounds of semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of the educators' experiences with integrating AI. Data were coded thematically for patterns and insights into the teachers' experience, challenges, and strategies in utilizing AI tools. It was found that AI tools such as Grammarly, ChatGPT, and Google Translate assisted teachers in giving real-time feedback, enhancing grammatical correctness, and enabling students to engage in the classroom. The teachers also had some challenges, such as technical issues, resistance from the students, and no official training in utilizing the AI tools effectively. The research indicated that AI tools had the potential to enhance English learning and teaching substantially, if there was effective integration and support, including necessary infrastructure and teacher training. The research also suggested continuous development in policy and support mechanisms to dismantle hindrances and harness the potentialities of AI adoption in Nepalese classrooms.

***Keywords**:* Generative AI, English language teaching, narrative inquiry, AI tools, teacher integration

Introduction

Artificial intelligence technology and tools have increasingly gained acceptance in English language instruction and learning globally. Since its inception, artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed education by creating innovative pathways for both students and educators to enhance learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness (Bates, 2020). Generative Artificial Intelligence takes it

a level higher: creating personalized work, reducing instructors' workloads, and providing beneficial feedback. Despite all, ethical approaches must be embraced in a search for academic integrity and genuineness. Forment et al. (2024) state that GenAI is an AI field that deals with predominantly content creation and tools for studying with an eye towards deeper contacts between instructors and learners. Emerging technology comes with increased AI tools such as language processors, grammar checkers, and chatbots. Both English language instructors and learners can benefit from this technology. In this regard, Akbarani (2024) says that AI tools can boost instruction in the English language through personalized lessons, immediate feedback, and immersive language practice by reducing instructors' workloads and improving overall instruction quality. AI tools in instruction, and instruction in the English language in particular, have gained a lot of momentum worldwide.

With the rise of GenAI, teachers can make use of a variety of tools that can make language learners' experiences rich through providing them with personalized guidance and real-time feedback. According to Hao (2023), AI will revolutionize language teaching in a significant manner. AI grammar correctors and smart writing assistants can correct students' mistakes in real-time and introduce them to their learning path adaptively, and learners can learn at a rapid pace and develop language expertise in a shorter duration of time. Besides, according to Alqahtani (2023), AI tools not only introduce an improvement in language skills but also develop an environment for interactive learning in which students can learn at their own pace and gain a head start in studies. As with AI tools being personalized with variable types of learning, students can target areas of weakness and build language expertise.

Aside from grammar and writing, Rahimi (2024) sees AI tools as useful technologies in improving listening and pronunciation skills. According to Miao (2024), AI's role is useful for learners in simplifying complex language structures in order to provide personalized feedback and explanations. AI's adaptability aids in developing an efficient and interactive environment for students with personalized guidance in terms of individual requirements. AI and GenAI both have a key role in teacher development in terms of professionals in instruction in the English language. However, training areas, availability of tools, and supporting structures, in most cases, have not yet developed to an ideal level; it is at such times that AI tools cover such gaps with personalized, scalable, and cost-effective tools for instruction in the English language (Alhusaiyan et al., 2024; Crompton et al., 2024).

A critical review of AI tool use in ELT in the literature reveals a high level of worldwide concern for the issue, with most studies concerned with AI's potential to build language competency, provide personalized feedback, and promote learner independence. As argued in the works of Hao (2021) and Miao (2020), AI-powered tools make students' pronunciation and fluency feasible through adaptive tools for learning. AI tools such as Duolingo, ChatGPT, and Grammarly provide immediate feedback, and the reading and writing skills of students will most likely become even enhanced (Rahimi, 2020; Wu, 2021). Although such consequences sound positive, little research is conducted on how these tools are adopted in university curricula by teachers in Nepal.

A survey in 2023 conducted by Bista revealed that even when a portion of instructors have adopted digital tools in instruction, AI use in schools in Nepal is in its infancy. There are gaps not only in teachers' use of AI but also in institution-level support and proper policy frameworks for its integration. Apart from that, poor infrastructure, poor teacher level digital skill, and hesitation towards change make AI tool integration in the educational process challenging (Giri, 2022). In the context of Nepal, even though the Education Sector Plan (2016-2023) advocates for AI integration, a lack of planning for its integration and funding disengages the objectives from actual policy (Sharma &Koirala, 2021).

AI-assisted tools have been utilized in developing countries in English language teaching. However, the integration of AI tools and Generative AI in ELT in Nepal has not been researched enough yet. While there's growing interest in AI in Nepalese education, particularly in ELT, comprehensive studies on the *actual utilization* of various AI tools by university instructors are scarce. It is important to explore how university instructors in Nepal utilize both complex AI, including GenAI, and traditional AI tools in instruction and learning processes in an effort to understand the path of modernization in terms of technology and instruction in the country. Besides, this will also resonate with national educational policy in Nepal, which has been a strong supporter of modernization in instruction and integration with technology in schools.

Review of the literature shows that lack of infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, ethical considerations, equity and access, and lack of awareness, policy intention are major challenges for the integration of AI tools in education. Ethical and bias concerns (Alali & Wardat, 2024), resistance and training (Vera et al., 2024), equity and access; technical and infrastructure barriers (Morandin-Ahuerma, 2024), and educational and pedagogical challenges (Yan et al., 2024) are discussed as some of the challenges. In this context, Sharma (2024) explained that the Education Sector Plan (2016-2023) encourages AI use, but the implementation is not effective because of a shortage of infrastructure and untrained human resources. Given these prevailing challenges, this research aimed to explore Nepalese university educators' experiences in effectively utilizing GenAI and other AI tools in English Language Teaching (ELT). This inquiry was guided by the following research question: To what extent do university educators use GenAI and AI tools in teaching and practice in English language teaching?

TPACK as a Theoretical Lens

One of the most visible models of comprehending this integration of technology in learning is the TPACK model, more precisely, in the application of the integration of GenAI and AI tool use by university instructors in ELT. Mishra and Koehler developed TPACK in 2006 as an intersection of the content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and technological knowledge (TK) fields on the proviso that effective teaching with technology is only at the intersection of these domains.

This framework implies teachers need to be knowledgeable not only about the content of the English language and good pedagogy, but also in technological expertise in choosing, modifying, and implementing GenAI tools. Various studies have established that TPACK provides an overall model within which challenges and potential regarding the implementation of technology into practice can be described. For example, Koehler et al. (2013) contend that TPACK enhances nuanced understandings of teachers' designs for learning with content, pedagogy, and technology. In AI integration, TPACK cares about how instructors can reconcile AI tools, such as writing tools or grammar tools, with instructional approaches to develop language proficiency in terms of grammar, pronunciation, and composition (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Other researchers, such as Graham et al. (2009) and Chai et al. (2011), used TPACK to describe how knowledge of technology transforms the practices of teachers; thus, it is an important framework for analyzing the adoption of GenAI tools in ELT.

In university teacher education, the TPACK framework can be especially useful in identifying teachers' technological, pedagogical, or content knowledge shortages that can be anticipated to hinder successful AI adoption. As Zhao and Frank (2003) put forward in their research, technological knowledge of teachers is an important variable that affects teachers' intention and capability to utilize new tools. Similarly, Koehler et al. (2013) and Harris et al. (2009) highlight the importance of professional development in enhancing teachers' TPACK. The application of the TPACK framework in this study will give insight into how university teachers in Nepal use AI tools in tandem with their

pedagogical goals and content expertise, hence providing useful information for strategies of effective integration of AI in ELT.

Methodology

This section presents the research design employed in this study, the participants, and the data generation process. Furthermore, we have highlighted the meaning-making process through the data.

Narrative Inquiry

We adopted narrative inquiry as a research method emphasizing the exploration of lived experiences through storytelling. Based on the works of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Barkhuizen et al. (2014), this approach allows researchers to delve into the personal experiences, beliefs, and practices of respondents. In the context of teachers integrating AI into English Language Teaching (ELT), narrative inquiry facilitated an understanding of how their initial encounters with AI, problem-solving strategies, and epistemic beliefs evolved. It also highlighted the temporality, sociality, and contextual specificity of teachers' experiences, as noted by Clandinin (2013), enabling a nuanced investigation into the institutional, cultural, and technological influences shaping their pedagogical adaptations.

This method was specifically suitable for studying the transformative learning processes associated with AI integration in English Language Teaching (ELT). Teachers often face significant shifts in their pedagogical approaches, requiring a rethinking of traditional methods and an embrace of emerging technologies. Narrative inquiry provided a longitudinal lens to examine these transitions and their implications for teaching practices. By capturing how teachers interpret and adapt to the growing capabilities of AI tools like GenAI, the research offered insights into the broader educational and theoretical advancements in ELT. Consequently, the narrative inquiry approach enriched the study's ability to address the complexities of integrating AI into teaching, contributing to a deeper understanding of educational innovation and transformation.

Participants

We purposively selected three university-level English teachers teaching in three different community campuses of Rupandehi district by using three criteria: 1) Participants must have been teaching English at the bachelor's or master's level at any community campus in Nepal for more than five years. 2) Participants must be actively using AI tools in their English language teaching. 3) Willingness of the participants to share their experiences and views about integrating AI into the classroom. We gave them pseudonyms using alphanumeric symbols such as T1, T2 and T3 for their anonymity.

The use of three respondents in this narrative inquiry is justified as it enables an in-depth exploration of individual experiences, aligned with the methodology's focus on depth over breadth. Stringent selection criteria ensure relevance and quality, while the manageable sample size facilitates detailed analysis of time-intensive qualitative data. This approach supports thematic saturation, prioritizes ethical considerations like anonymity, and enhances the illustrative value of each participant's case in understanding AI integration in English language teaching.

Out of three participants, one was a male of thirty-four years old, who had been teaching English subjects such as compulsory and majors for about six years continuously. Similarly, participant two was also a male of thirty-seven years old, who had been teaching the English subject for about eight years. In the same way, the third participant was a male of 34, who had been teaching the English subject, especially in Bachelor's Degree programs, for six years.

Data Generation

The empirical data for this investigation were obtained through semi-structured interviews with participants, aimed at examining their experiences regarding the integration of artificial intelligence into English pedagogy. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a tranquil meeting room situated within the participants' respective educational institutions, thereby ensuring a comfortable and familiar ambience. Open-ended inquiries were utilized to stimulate comprehensive and reflective responses. Each participant underwent three distinct interviews, with each session spanning approximately 45 to 60 minutes.

The initial interview concentrated on gaining insight into the participants' backgrounds, pedagogical methodologies, and preliminary perceptions of artificial intelligence in the context of English instruction. The subsequent interview probed more profoundly into particular challenges, advantages, and practical applications of AI tools within their instructional environments. The final interview sought to rectify any lacunae from the prior discussions, clarify uncertainties, and investigate participants' prospective expectations or concerns pertaining to the integration of AI.

Notes were meticulously taken throughout each interview to document non-verbal indicators and contextual nuances that complemented the audio recordings captured via a mobile device. These recordings were subsequently transcribed and translated for comprehensive coding, with scrupulous attention devoted to maintaining the subtleties inherent in the participants' responses. A fourth round of interviews was considered superfluous as the third round sufficiently fulfilled all research objectives, thereby attaining data saturation.

Meaning-making Process

During coding, the transcripts were tabulated, first read and re-read to develop an in-depth understanding of the data and identify patterns. Lines of importance were highlighted, and codes were developed for categorizing the information. Codes, categories, and themes were developed in accordance with the framework established by Braun and Clarke (2012. These themes were then used to construct a logical flow of the presentation of data in the research, placed within the broader context of the research questions and existing literature. This iterative process of data analysis allowed us to draw on deeper insights into the phenomenon that contributed to the meaning-making process. Data analysis, findings, and conclusions have shed light on the insights of the participants and have broadened the understanding with respect to the integration of AI in teaching English within the Nepalese context.

Findings

From the analysis of the interviews with participants, we identified four themes:

Adoption and Integration of AI Tools in Instruction

The participants reported that they have used AI tools such as Duolingo, Grammarly, and ChatGPT in practice instruction. Some of the participants have used AI tools in completing work that involves grammar checking, suggesting, developing ideas, or providing immediate feedback (Mishra & Mehta, 2022). Participant T1 stated, "I use a lot of AI tools in my instruction in English. I use ChatGPT to assist me in explaining, Grammarly in checking my language and grammar and HelloTalk and ELSA Speak for speaking and pronouncing a word."

By using AI tools, the participant facilitated students' speaking, writing, and reading. It helps students use language appropriately since it gives them practice and in-depth explanations. The practice, therefore, increased instruction and enjoyment. Similarly, T2 added:

> I use tools such as Grammarly for writing and Google Translate for quick translation in class. Grammarly works perfectly in polishing students' writings in that not only will it correct grammar, but it will even give them tips for improving sentence structure and vocabulary.

AI tools were utilized even in language instruction to aid in a variety of skills, including speaking, writing, and conversation practice. AI tools like ChatGPT helped in generating ideas for writing, Grammarly helped in immediate grammar checking, speech recognition tools like Google Speech helped in pronunciation, and conversation practice tools like Replika make conversation practice a lot of fun and in real-time, simulating a real-life conversation. In this regard, T3 stated:

> *I use ChatGPT for writing practice, Grammarly for grammar checking, and AI speech tools like Google Speech for speaking practice. I have even used tools like Replika for conversation practice, and students enjoy it a lot because it feels like chatting with a real person.*

AI tools like ChatGPT have facilitated real-time feedback. Learning has become even more interactive for students in improving their language skills with the help of AI technology. Learning has become more interactive and dynamic because of AI technology (Mishra et al., 2023). Thus, in the views of Mumtaz (2023) and Hassan and Yu (2022), it will not only help enhance the speaking and writing skills of students but also enhance students' self-efficacy. This, though, calls for pedagogy to be blended with technology tools in a bid to render instruction personalized and participatory.

Difficulties and Challenges in AI Implementation in Instruction

Adoption and integration of AI tools were not free of challenges. Participants mentioned a range of obstacles, including technical, students' reluctance, and lack of training for instructors. These obstacles confirm that full realization of AI in instruction must be accompanied by proper infrastructure, institutions, and training for students and instructors. As T1, said:

> Sometimes, technology doesn’t work, such as when the internet is slow or a tool fails, and that can become frustrating. In addition, not all students have access to similar gadgets and good internet at home, and that makes it challenging for everyone to contribute in an even manner.

These challenges, therefore, require safe and secure infrastructure and equitable access to technology, such that all students can effectively use AI-facilitated learning. Besides, new technology is received with a kind of resistance, most particularly with students who will not have a comfort level with technology, or even know how to use AI at all. As T2 remarked:

> Yes, a little bit of resistance when introducing new things, specifically with students who don’t have a comfort level with technology. Some of them worried that the AI would make them not have to learn, or that they were overwhelmed by technology.

Such resistance requires proper training and guidance, such that students can view AI as an adjunct tool, and not a tool for substituting traditional forms of instruction. Similarly, participant T3 added that no training in tools is ever conducted in the institution, and therefore, they had to learn for themselves, and in a way, figure out for themselves, and therefore, value that the institution facilitated access for them to pilot several AI tools. There is, therefore, a need for proper professional development programs to allow teachers to effectively use AI in teaching.

These challenges, technical issues, students' resistance, and lack of training correspond with hindrances in effective learning (Sharma, 2024). In addition, students' resistance, according to T2, corresponds with concerns regarding AI substituting conventional learning addressed in Hassan and Yu (2022). The lack of training, according to T3, further reflects the necessity for technological knowledge (TK, in AI tool integration in order to ensure success (Mishra et al., 2020). The lack of training, according to T3, further accentuates the necessity for developing technological knowledge – TK, in AI tool integration to ensure its success (Mishra et al., 2020).

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Student Learning Impact of AI Tools

Notwithstanding, AI tools benefited students' motivation, participation, and language progress. Consequently, the teachers witnessed the development in speaking confidently, more organized work, and enhanced participation through engaging tools such as quizzes and personal feedback tools. T1 said:

> I have surely witnessed improvements in students in their language, especially in speaking and writing. With AI tools, they practice more and get immediate feedback, and hence know immediately what to correct. Likewise, they are more participatory in class and more willing to try new things. Some of the quieter students have started to participate more in class, having become more confident with the use of the tools.

The use of AI tools allowed students to practice and receive feedback in real-time and, therefore, develop confidence and willingness to contribute in class. As T2 mentioned:

> The immediate feedback actually engages them a lot. They're actually hands-on with the tool. They enter sentences or paragraphs, and AI tools review them. Some students have so many questions, wanting to know why AI proposed such a change. They have generated some useful discussions regarding grammar and writing.

Interactive features of AI facilitated deeper learning among the students. The grammar and writing discussions deepened students' awareness and critical thinking. T3 added:

> My students use AI tools in studying a lot, and according to them, it is exciting and engaging to study with, for instance, with tools such as Duolingo or Kahoot. Some of them added that it is easier for them to understand grammar when using tools such as ProWritingAid. They enjoy practising alone with AI, for instance, with tools such as Speech notes for speaking.

The conclusion is that students liked AI tools and saw them as useful, specifically in grammar and speaking practice. They liked practising alone with AI tools, and these aided them in developing skills out of class.

The findings align with the literature in AI tools' positive contribution to students' increased engagement and improvement in skills as learners (Mishra & Mehta, 2022). They also represent integration of technological knowledge (TK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and content knowledge (CK) in developing educational experiences in terms of the TPACK model.

Projected Learning with Artificial Intelligence in the Future

The students foresaw artificial intelligence becoming increasingly significant in schools, specifically in personalized instruction, immersive educational experiences, and increased administration efficiency. They predicted the development of AI tools becoming a part of instruction in schools in future years, in addition to traditional approaches. As T1 added:

> I believe AI tools will have an even larger role in future instruction in English. There are so many benefits, such as personalized instruction and immediate feedback, that it’s not even conceivable to have a future classroom without them. As AI technology continues to develop, I believe that even newer tools will become accessible to students with even newer language capabilities, such as conversation fluency or deeper reading comprehension.

They saw AI tools becoming even more personalized, following students' development, and offering individualized experiences. They saw even more schools investing in AI tools in routine practice in school. As mentioned in response by T2:

> I do believe I will see a lot of AI tools in a classroom in a few years. I believe that AI tools will become even smarter, and in that case, students will receive even more individualized experiences. Perhaps, we will see AI tools following students' development and advising them about what they must practice. I believe even schools will make investments in them, such that it will become a part of routine learning.

T3 envisioned AI tools becoming as common as traditional tools in a classroom, like textbooks and whiteboards, with greater confidence in AI's contribution to improving instruction: The more teachers and students get used to technology, I think AI tools will become as common as textbooks and whiteboards. They simply have too many good things about them to ignore. These predictions paint a picture of a future with AI tools prevalent in instruction, optimizing instruction and learning effectiveness. What emerges from the participants' feedback is how AI tools evolve in the TPACK model, in which technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge must harmonize in a triad in developing effective instruction approaches. With technological advancement in AI, it is seen to build on traditional instruction with personalized instruction experiences, and that will produce increased instruction and learning effectiveness.

Discussions

Based on the results of the study, the discussions have been presented with the following themes.

Adoption and Integration of AI Tools in Instruction

The findings illustrate that the integration of AI tools in English language instruction has profoundly impacted teaching practices, fostering more interactive and efficient pedagogical approaches. Participants leveraged a variety of AI tools, including ChatGPT, Grammarly, and language-specific applications like ELSA Speak and Duolingo, to facilitate diverse aspects of language learning. This aligns with Mishra and Mehta (2022), who emphasize the role of AI in providing immediate feedback and enhancing instructional quality. AI tools supported skill-specific learning, such as writing with Grammarly, speaking with HelloTalk, and pronunciation with Google Speech. These tools not only enriched the students' linguistic abilities but also made the learning process engaging and dynamic. This finding underscores the necessity for blending pedagogy with technology to create personalized and participatory learning environments, as suggested by Mumtaz (2023).

Difficulties and Challenges in AI Implementation in Instruction

Despite the evident benefits, participants reported significant challenges in adopting AI tools. Technical issues, such as slow internet connections or inadequate infrastructure, were recurrent obstacles, echoing Sharma (2024). Furthermore, students' resistance to new technologies, driven by apprehensions or lack of familiarity, compounded the difficulties. The absence of institutional training for instructors further hindered effective integration, as educators were often required to self-learn and experiment independently. This highlights a critical gap in professional development, emphasizing the need for structured training programs to equip instructors with the necessary technological knowledge (TK) for successful AI integration, as reflected in the TPACK model (Mishra et al., 2020). Addressing these challenges through equitable access to resources, comprehensive training, and fostering a culture of technological adaptability is imperative for the effective adoption of AI in education.

Student Learning Impact of AI Tools

The use of AI tools demonstrated substantial positive effects on student motivation, engagement, and language proficiency. Participants observed improvements in students' confidence,

particularly in speaking and writing, facilitated by immediate and constructive feedback from tools like ChatGPT and Grammarly. Interactive applications like Kahoot and ProWritingAid further enriched the learning experience by encouraging participation and critical thinking. These findings corroborate Mishra and Mehta (2022), who highlight the role of AI in enhancing student engagement and fostering deeper learning. Additionally, the incorporation of AI tools supported individualized learning, enabling students to practice independently and at their own pace, which contributed to skill development beyond the classroom. This aligns with the principles of the TPACK model, demonstrating the synergy between technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge in optimizing educational outcomes.

Projected Learning with Artificial Intelligence in the Future

Participants envisioned a future where AI tools become integral to classroom instruction, offering personalized and immersive educational experiences. The ability of AI to provide individualized feedback and track student progress was highlighted as a transformative feature, promising to enhance learning effectiveness. Participants anticipated increased institutional investment in AI technologies, envisioning classrooms where AI tools are as ubiquitous as traditional resources like textbooks and whiteboards. This forward-looking perspective reflects the evolving role of AI in the TPACK framework, where technological advancements complement and extend traditional pedagogical practices. The emphasis on personalized learning through AI aligns with the vision of a more adaptive and efficient educational landscape, fostering both instructional quality and student achievement.

Conclusion and Implications

The findings of the study, therefore, indicate that AI tools in instruction and learning of the English language could boost both processes immensely. Participants testified that AI tools such as Google Translate, Grammarly, and ChatGPT helped them in writing, speaking, and comprehension. AI tools have an added advantage of offering immediate feedback, an improvement in grammar accuracy, and active classroom participation. AI tools have an added advantage of offering immediate feedback, an improvement in grammar accuracy, and active classroom participation. Areas that hindered full potentiality in AI integration in instruction in the English language included technical glitches, resistant students, and a general lack of training in utilizing such incorporated tools formally. Nonetheless, AI tools can actually become a powerful tool in instruction, with proper integration in consideration of positive impact through students' motivation and participation, and effectively enhancing skills. AI tool integration, therefore, goes together with effective pedagogy and content mastery, such that the greatest impact in terms of students' learning achievement is attained. Integration of AI tools must, according to the study, be adopted in an attempt to enhance language instruction, with schools and universities classes providing infrastructure, training, and support for such an exercise. Other studies and development of policies need to seek to overcome barriers to AI adoption and provide access to technology for students and teachers in an equitable manner.

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