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The regulatory lag in English Intensive Course: How do the lecturers manage AI in the classroom?

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Abstract
The rapid proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has fundamentally disrupted higher education, creating a pronounced incongruity between technological pace and institutional regulatory response. This study investigates the resulting policy vacuum within English Intensive Courses (EICs) in Indonesia, analyzing the regulatory landscape (RQ1), current instructional practices (RQ2), and the emergent pedagogical strategies (RQ3) employed by ELT lecturers to manage AI integration. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach utilizing sequential semi-structured interviews with seven English intensive lecturers in Indonesia, the findings confirm the absence of fixed, centralized policies, leading to highly fragmented, course-level implementation. Lecturers primarily managed AI through a proactive recalibration of assessment toward higher-order thinking, mandatory process documentation (scaffolding), and the integration of critical AI literacy into the curriculum. This reliance on individual instructor agency, however, generates significant burdens regarding monitoring and ethical arbitration, indirectly exacerbating risks related to academic integrity, institutional consistency, and equity for non-native English speakers. The study concludes that lecturer professional expertise is currently compensating for systemic failures in institutional policy, necessitating urgent standardization and systemized professional development.

Keywords:
Artificial Intelligence; Regulatory Lag; ELT; Pedagogical Strategies; Indonesia

A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies has profoundly transformed higher education, particularly within the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (Egbert, 2024). AI applications offer significant potential benefits for Second Language Acquisition (SLA), demonstrating effectiveness in improving EFL/ESL learners' skills, vocabulary knowledge, and affective factors, while also assisting instructors by accelerating pedagogical processes like lesson planning and material preparation (Li & Wang, 2024; Wang & Chen, 2024; Smith, 2024). However, this technological surge is counterbalanced by critical pedagogical and ethical challenges related to data accuracy, academic integrity, and the viability of traditional assessment methods (Li & Wang, 2024; Guler & Dogan, 2025).

In response to these challenges, existing solutions identified in the literature focus on two main areas: pedagogical adaptation and institutional governance. Pedagogical research confirms that maintaining integrity requires shifting instruction towards assessments that foster higher-order thinking skills and implementing process-focused pedagogies such as scaffolding, frequent feedback, and metacognitive reflection (Wang & Chen, 2025; Chen, 2024; Demian et al., 2013; Roza, 2019). Simultaneously, institutional reactions often involve decentralized models, such as the widely adopted "traffic light system," which allows for fragmented, course-level

policies (Red, Yellow, Green Light) across different classes. This decentralization confirms that variance across courses is not only anticipated but institutionalized, transferring the substantial burden of interpreting ambiguous policies, policing integrity rules, and mitigating student over-reliance ("abuse of effort") and "blind trust in AI" to the individual instructional staff (Guler & Dogan, 2025; Wang & Chen, 2025).

The systemic problem addressed here is the resultant regulatory lag (RQ1). While some studies address student attitudes and the need for policy, the literature severely lacks dynamic, real-time investigations into how lecturers practically adapt to this environment over an extended period. This gap is critical, as the lack of centralized policy exacerbates equity risks, particularly in the Indonesian EFL context, given that AI detection tools are documented to exhibit bias against non-native English writers (Liang et al., 2023; Jones, 2024). Therefore, understanding how frontline educators manage AI in the absence of centralized governance represents a necessary area of inquiry to ensure equitable implementation.

This study provides unique empirical documentation of the bottom-up, emergent pedagogical strategies (RQ3) employed by Indonesian EIC lecturers over the duration of one academic semester, demonstrating how instructor agency (RQ2) functions as the functional, compensatory regulatory mechanism against systemic failure. The findings are intended to inform the design of systematic professional development programs and provide a necessary foundation for the formulation of robust, equitable institutional policy. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. Is there any fixed regulation on how to use AI properly in the classroom? (RQ1)
2. How do lecturers integrate AI into instructional practice (RQ2)?
3. What localized strategies mitigate AI misuse (RQ3)?

B. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and interpret the complex professional experiences and practices of English Language Teaching (ELT) lecturers navigating AI integration within a policy vacuum, as this design is appropriate for describing social phenomena within the specific context of Indonesian EICs (Sari & Bachtiar, 2024; Lee & Kim, 2023). The subjects comprised seven (N=7), experienced EIC lecturers. Data collection utilized a sequential, real-time semi-structured interview protocol conducted continuously over one academic semester (approximately 16 weeks) until the data was considered saturated, no new information was gained. This data collection involved conducting post-session interviews immediately following teaching periods, serving as process tracing to capture lecturers' spontaneous, real-time reflections and emergent strategies (RQ3). The interview instrument covered institutional policy, instructional practices, and pedagogical strategies, ensuring flexibility and focus on the research questions (RQ1-RQ3). The obtained data underwent thematic analysis following established protocols (familiarization, coding, theme definition), employing concurrent within-case and cross-case analyses to track the evolution and consistency of pedagogical strategies across the semester. Rigor was ensured through inter-rater reliability checks on emerging descriptive themes (e.g., *Scaffolding as Regulation*).

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

The main scientific finding of this study is the identification of individual lecturer pedagogical agency as the functional, compensatory regulatory force mitigating the destabilizing effects of institutional regulatory lag. The findings confirmed the categorical absence of fixed, centralized AI regulation governing EICs (RQ1), revealing that regulatory control is devolved entirely to the course level. Lecturers explicitly stated that they "don't really know there is fixed regulation" and receive "no further information from my supervisor or faculty members." This regulatory vacuum compels instructors to "improvise based on my understanding from time to time," leading to a perceived crisis of professional isolation often described as "like the blind leading the blind." The practical consequence of this fragmentation is that AI rules "regulate differently from one lecturer to another lecturer," determined

subjectively by individual "standing" and "teaching materials," which ultimately jeopardizes institutional consistency and fairness for students. This result is consistent with wider reports of regulatory lag in higher education globally, where technology outpaces governance (Guler & Dogan, 2025), but the data uniquely details the resulting professional isolation and ad-hoc rule creation within the Indonesian EIC context. The variance in policy permissiveness, summarized in Table 1, highlights that the primary regulatory burden centered on the enforcement of fragmented "Yellow Light" policies, necessitating substantial instructional time to arbitrate the appropriate limits of restricted AI use.

Table 1. Institutional AI Policy Fragmentation and Lecturer Perceptions

Policy Model	Stated Institutional Permissiveness	Observed Application in EIC Contexts	Lecturer Perception of Clarity and Enforcement
Red Light (Prohibitive)	Zero AI tool use allowed at any stage.	High-stakes writing; foundational skills assessment (e.g., grammar, syntax).	Clear boundaries, but limits development of necessary AI skills; relies on potentially biased detection systems.
Yellow Light (Restricted)	Permitted for specific tasks (e.g., outline/draft) if cited.	Used for complex project management or editing non-academic discourse.	Low clarity due to subjective boundaries of use; heavy monitoring burden; citation difficulty.
Green Light (Integrative)	Encouraged use, focused on collaborative or critical analysis of output.	Emergent practice among tech-savvy faculty; often associated with co-design.	Requires high lecturer AI literacy; promotes critical engagement.

Source: Research Findings

Regarding current instructional practices (RQ2), lecturers utilized AI tools for efficiency gains in planning and material creation (Wang & Chen, 2024; Smith, 2024), confirming existing literature that AI augments professional tasks. This benefit, however, was critically offset by acute instructional challenges that threatened the EIC curriculum's core purpose. The qualitative data repeatedly stressed student over-reliance, labeled as "abuse of effort" (Lee & Kim, 2023), and an uncritical "blind trust in AI" (Lee & Kim, 2023) resulting in factual and linguistic inaccuracies (Chen, 2024; Gibran, 2025). This finding reinforces concerns raised in previous studies regarding the integrity of AI-generated submissions (Guler & Dogan, 2025). The subsequent pivot towards critical evaluation, "Students must learn to question and verify the information they receive from the AI tool. The risk is that they stop developing critical-thinking skills when they take the output at face value," (Gibran, 2025) scientifically justifies the conclusion that AI integration is forcing pedagogy away from simple language production toward meta-cognitive evaluation, a shift consistent with trends observed internationally (Chen, 2024). This dynamic confirms that the efficacy of AI management is demonstrated to be neither uniform nor systematically assured; rather, it is a direct function of individual lecturer agency and expert pedagogical skill.

To mitigate these risks (RQ3), lecturers developed three key compensatory strategies

centered on process integrity, confirming that effective AI management is currently a pedagogical, not administrative, function. These strategies, which advance beyond mere restriction, included the Authentic Assessment Shift and the Emphasis on Process and Reflection. These findings align strongly with international literature recommending authentic and process-based assessment redesign (Wang & Chen, 2025; Chen, 2024), but the study emphasizes the regulatory nature of these pedagogical shifts. Lecturers are not just improving learning; they are structurally segmenting assignments (scaffolding) to create verifiable human effort, confirming the philosophical shift that "AI can't replace the learning process. Assessments need to encourage students to think independently by requiring them to analyze and adapt AI output, not just copy it." (Wang & Chen, 2025; Roza, 2019). The adoption of mandatory process journals and reflections turns pedagogical steps into functional regulatory mechanisms, mitigating integrity risks where policy fails (Demian et al., 2013; Collier, 2011). Finally, through AI Literacy Integration, lecturers proactively addressed AI ethics, limitations, and bias, viewing this transparency as a critical, instructor-led attempt to manage ethical expectations (Adha et al., 2023; Roza, 2019). The key strategic clusters developed by the lecturers are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Lecturer Strategies for Mitigating AI Misuse and Fostering Integrity

Strategy Cluster	Specific Pedagogical Actions (RQ3)	Pedagogical Rationale
Assessment Redesign	Authentic assignments; renewable tasks; focusing on application to novel problems; co-design.	Shifts cognitive demand toward Creating and Evaluating; requires integration of subject knowledge in complex contexts.
Process Documentation	Chunking/scaffolding; mandatory process writings; requiring heavy citations; peer feedback.	Forces transparency and tracks the learning process; ensures human effort is measurable, mitigating plagiarism concerns.
Verification & Transparency	Live, technology-free in-class components; ethical debates on AI bias and privacy; clear definition of misuse.	Builds AI literacy and mutual trust; verifies knowledge acquisition synchronously.

Source: Research Findings

This reliance on individual agency creates a significant equity paradox that constitutes a major limitation of the current fragmented model. While lecturers manage immediate academic threats, their decentralized enforcement indirectly amplifies existing equity risks in this EFL context. This is because AI detection software, often the final tool for verification, is known to suffer from high false positive rates against non-native English writers (Liang et al., 2023; Smith, 2024), creating an unjust environment rooted in the decentralized enforcement structure. This structural inequity, amplified by decentralized enforcement, is a key difference between our findings and ideal governance models. Therefore, standardization of policy is not merely an administrative ideal but an equity imperative, required to remove the disproportionate risks faced by non-native English writers under fragmented, lecturer-dependent enforcement. To successfully transition from fragmented, reactive management to systematic, equitable integration, institutions must urgently prioritize systemic support. Recommendations for sustainability include Mandatory AI Literacy Professional Development for all faculty, covering practical skills alongside critical evaluation and ethical considerations (Chen, 2024; Lee & Kim, 2023; Roza, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Institutions must also implement Standardized Policy Frameworks to standardize core AI principles (e.g., universal citation requirements) across the university level, thereby mitigating the logistical and ethical burdens associated with total

fragmentation. Finally, sustained Investment in Authentic, Process-Oriented Assessment must incentivize curriculum redesign that prioritizes renewable assignments, reflection, and higher-order cognitive skills, aligning assessment with critical engagement in the age of AI (Sari & Bachtiar, 2024; Hird, 2025).

D. CONCLUSION

This study directly addressed the research objectives concerning the status of fixed AI regulation (RQ1), instructional integration (RQ2), and localized mitigation strategies (RQ3) within Indonesian EICs. The central conclusion is that individual pedagogical agency (RQ2) is currently the principal regulatory force (RQ1) compensating for institutional policy failure, a critical finding that advances the field beyond the current state of knowledge, which largely discusses the need for policy rather than the mechanisms substituting for it. The observed shift toward Authentic Assessment and Process Documentation (RQ3) scientifically justifies this finding: lecturers are adopting a high-effort, low-institutional-support model where they pivot pedagogy to resist automation, rather than rely on non-existent or inadequate enforcement tools.

This demonstrates that effective academic integrity management in the AI era is fundamentally a pedagogical, not purely a technological or administrative, challenge. The findings have significant implications for application: standardization of policy is not merely an administrative ideal but an equity imperative, required to remove the disproportionate risks faced by non-native English writers under fragmented, lecturer-dependent enforcement. For institutions, this necessitates immediate prioritization of systemic support, shifting resources from futile detection methods toward robust AI literacy training and incentivizing curriculum-wide assessment redesign.

This study is subject to several limitations, including its context and its focus on a single context (Indonesian EICs), which restricts the generalizability of findings to other educational sectors or cultures. Future research should focus on quantifying the institutional costs of this decentralized approach versus the centralized investment required for standardized frameworks. Further longitudinal studies are also needed to track the long-term impact of "Scaffolding as Regulation" on student learning outcomes and affective factors in high-stakes EFL contexts, particularly concerning the ethical adoption of AI as a legitimate learning partner.

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