

## Research Article:

### **Moral Teacher Agency in AI Integration: An Interpretative Phenomenological Study of Writing Instruction by Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Lecturers**

**Aldha Williyani<sup>1</sup>, Naelul Rohmah<sup>2</sup>, Junjun Muhamad Ramdani<sup>1\*</sup>, Ema Wilianti Dewi<sup>3</sup> and Nurul Fadhilah<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Siliwangi, Jl. Siliwangi No. 24 Tasikmalaya, West Java 46115 Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>English Education Department, Institut Prima Bangsa, Jl. Tuparev No. 70 Cirebon, West Java 45153 Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, Jl. Perjuangan By Pass Sunyaragi Cirebon, West Java 45132 Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Tarbiyah (Faculty of Education and Teacher Training), Universitas Islam Negeri Madura, Jl. Raya Panglegur Km. 4, Pamekasan, East Java 69317 Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [junjunmuhamad@unsil.ac.id](mailto:junjunmuhamad@unsil.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies such as ChatGPT and Grammarly become increasingly embedded in educational contexts, lecturers face ethical challenges related to academic integrity, digital equity, and responsible use. Drawing on Molla and Nolan's framework of moral teacher agency, this study aims to explore how Indonesian lecturers make ethically grounded instructional choices in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. Using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion with four Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers experienced in integrating AI tools into their writing pedagogy. The findings reveal that participants exercised moral agency by evaluating AI tools, engaging in continuous professional learning, promoting digital responsibility, and mentoring students in ethical AI use. Reported benefits included heightened ethical awareness, strengthened pedagogical confidence, and enhanced student-centered instruction. However, several key challenges were identified, including the lack of institutional policies, ethical ambiguity, unequal technological accessibility, and limited AI-based training. This study positions lecturers not merely as technology adopters but also as ethical decision-makers who may need to respond to constrained systems. It calls for institutional support through clear ethical policies and targeted AI-focused professional development to ensure values-driven AI adoption in education. The findings underscore the pivotal role of teacher agency in shaping the ethical future of AI-enhanced learning.

**Keywords:** AI integration, ethical pedagogy, Indonesian EFL lecturers, moral teacher agency, writing instruction

**Published:** 9 June 2026

**To cite this article:** Williyani, A., Rohmah, N., Ramdani, J. M., Dewi, E. W., & Fadhilah, N. (2026). Moral teacher agency in AI integration: An interpretative phenomenological study of writing instruction by Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers. *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education*, 41(1), 219–245. <https://doi.org/10.21315/apjee2026.41.1.10>

## INTRODUCTION

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education has transformed teaching and learning practices, offering new tools for personalised instruction, automated feedback, and adaptive learning. In the context of writing instruction, AI tools such as grammar checkers, content generators, and writing assistants provide opportunities to enhance students' engagement, support diverse learning needs, and reduce lecturers' administrative workload (Guo & Li, 2024; Jose & Jayaron Jose, 2024; Kamalov et al., 2023; Walter, 2024). As these benefits become more apparent, considering the ethical and practical challenges is equally important.

These technologies pose significant ethical challenges that lecturers must navigate carefully. These are included in academic integrity, data privacy, equitable access, and the risk of over-reliance on automated systems, which may compromise students' critical thinking and creativity (Eke, 2023; Perkins, 2023; Pratiwi et al., 2025; Williyen et al., 2024). As AI becomes increasingly embedded in classroom practices, lecturers are called to make thoughtful, ethically grounded decisions about how and when these tools should be applied in their teaching practice.

Across various global contexts, the integration AI in education has gained considerable momentum, particularly in Asia, Europe, and North America. In many Asian countries such as China, South Korea, and Japan, AI adoption is driven by state-supported digital innovation agendas and a strong emphasis on data-driven instruction (Filgueiras, 2024; Jaramillo & Chiappe, 2024; Kim et al., 2022; Ryo, 2024). Meanwhile, European education systems have generally emphasised ethical AI deployment, focusing on transparency, students' data protection, and equal access (Aler Tubella et al., 2024; Farrelly & Baker, 2023). In the United States, AI tools have been widely embraced in K–12 and higher education settings, often fueled by private-sector innovation and institutional autonomy, yet concerns persist regarding academic integrity, authorship, and algorithmic bias (Gouseti et al., 2025; Martin et al., 2024). Despite these regional differences, lecturers across continents share a common challenge, navigating the pedagogical benefits of AI while upholding ethical principles such as academic integrity, fairness, data privacy, and transparency in diverse and rapidly changing educational environments.

In Indonesia, national policies encouraging digital transformation have led to growing interest in AI integration in language teaching, particularly in English language teaching (Hafifah & Sulisty, 2020; Luckyardi et al., 2024; Machmud et al., 2021; Marzuki et al., 2023). For Indonesian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers, however, this transformation becomes an issue because of uneven digital infrastructure, varying levels of technological readiness, and disparities in student access (Daflizar et al., 2022; Lie et al., 2023). In such a dynamic environment, lecturers are not only technology adopters but also ethical decision-makers who are increasingly called to evaluate the pedagogical and moral implications of AI use in their classrooms to ensure responsible, equitable, and student-centred learning.

Recent studies have addressed the ethical and moral dimensions of integrating AI in language education. Akinsemolu and Onyeaka (2025) highlighted key ethical challenges such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and unequal access, despite the pedagogical benefits that AI offers. Azman and Tmkaya (2025) also reported the urgent need for clear ethical guidelines to ensure fairness, accountability, and inclusivity in AI implementation. Vaccino-Salvadore (2023) explored concerns surrounding ChatGPT use in language education, including privacy, bias, reliability, and academic integrity, and called for thoughtful integration to promote equitable learning environments. Pack and Maloney (2024) discussed broader ethical and pedagogical concerns, such as authorship and bias in AI-generated texts. Zheng and Stewart (2024) analysed how AI tools like ChatGPT embed cultural values in EFL materials and urged lecturers to develop students' critical cultural awareness. This evidence calls for a study that examines the ethical dimensions of AI integration in higher education.

A study conducted by Abisheva et al. (2024) showed a comprehensive framework of ethical competences necessary for English language lecturers, including AI literacy, professional ethics, and accountability. Nguyen et al. (2023) and Flores-Vivar and Garca-Pealvo (2023) advocated for global ethical standards and institutional mechanisms to monitor AI's impact, including the creation of ethical observatories. Klimova et al. (2023) proposed core principles such as beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, justice, and algorithmic vigilance to safeguard educational integrity. Lastly, Kohnke et al. (2023) examined the ethical use of ChatGPT as a writing aid, noting both improvements in student output and the importance of responsible usage. Thus, these studies underscore the need to embed moral considerations into the design and use of AI in English language education to foster ethical, equitable, and effective learning environments.

Despite the growing body of research on the ethical and moral dimensions of AI in education, limited attention has been paid to how moral teacher agency manifests in AI use, particularly in Indonesian higher education. Previous studies have primarily focused on the ethical implications of AI itself, including questions about whether AI systems can be considered moral agents (Bonnefon et al., 2024; Broek & Janik, 2019), how users perceive the moral agency of robots and chatbots (Banks, 2019; Wester et al., 2024), and how moral attitudes shape human responses to AI actions (Cullen, 2018; Ladak et al., 2024). However, little is known how lecturers engage ethically with AI in their pedagogical decision-making. To fill this void, this study aims to explore how Indonesian EFL lecturers enact moral teacher agency in integrating AI tools into writing instruction. The study aims to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How do Indonesian EFL lecturers enact moral teacher agency in the integration of AI tools within writing instruction?

RQ2: What are the perceived benefits and challenges they encounter in exercising moral agency during AI integration?

By examining the intersection of AI, ethics, and writing pedagogy, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of moral agency in technology-enhanced language education and highlights the role of lecturers as decision makers in shaping ethical and student-centred learning environments. The findings also offer implications for both micro-level (classroom), meso-level (institutional), and macro-level (national) policies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework of the Study: Moral Teacher Agency

Building on the general concept of teacher agency, moral teacher agency focuses on the ethical dimension of lecturers’ professional actions. It refers to the capacity of lecturers to make decisions and take actions guided by moral principles such as fairness, integrity, and responsibility. Rather than viewing teaching as merely the implementation of pedagogical techniques, the concept of moral teacher agency emphasises the ethical judgment teachers exercise when responding to complex instructional contexts. Molla and Nolan (2020) argues that moral teacher agency encompasses ethical decision-making, commitment to professional growth, adherence to ethical standards, and role-modelling ethical behaviour, as seen in Figure 1.

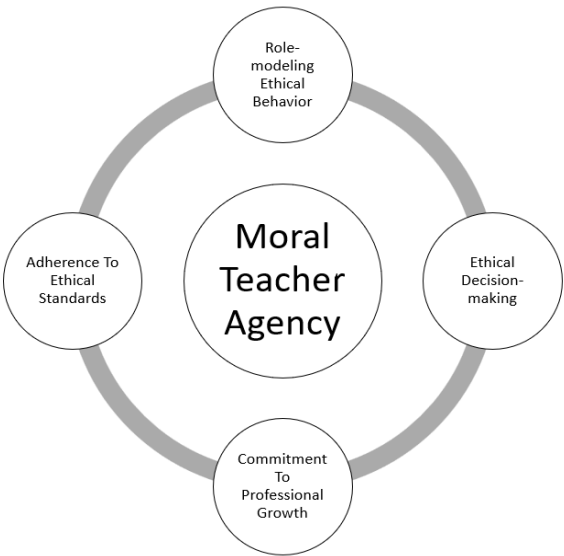


Figure 1. Moral Teacher Agency Model adapted from Molla and Nolan (2020)

In the context of this study, Molla and Nolan’s (2020) framework of moral teacher agency offers a relevant lens to examine how lecturers make ethically grounded decisions when integrating AI tools into their writing instruction. Within this framework, lecturers are

understood not only as technology adopters but also as ethical actors who interpret and negotiate the implications of emerging technologies in educational practice. In terms of ethical decision-making, lecturers reflect on their actions to assess the moral implications of using AI, such as ensuring academic integrity, evaluating the reliability of AI-generated content, and addressing issues of digital equity. To sustain their professional growth, lecturers continually seek to expand their technological literacy of AI integration to support their pedagogical practices. Regarding ethical standards, lecturers are expected to align their use of AI with institutional policies, protect students' data privacy, and foster supportive learning environments. Finally, as role models of ethical behaviour, lecturers exemplify responsible technology use and mentor students in integrating AI tools ethically.

Taken together, these dimensions highlight that integrating AI into educational practice is not solely a technical decision but also a moral one that requires teachers to balance pedagogical innovation with ethical responsibility. This framework is therefore relevant to the present study because it emphasises not only what teachers do, but how and why they make morally informed choices in response to the dynamics of teaching in the age of AI, which inherently raise new ethical considerations.

Moral teacher agency is particularly relevant in today's educational landscape, where lecturers face complex ethical dilemmas arising from diverse student needs, evolving societal expectations, and the increasing use of technology, including Artificial Intelligence (Leijen et al., 2020). These dilemmas often require lecturers to balance pedagogical innovation with ethical responsibility, such as ensuring academic integrity, protecting student data, and addressing unequal access to digital tools. Recent scholarship increasingly frames teachers as key mediators between technological innovation and educational values, highlighting their role in shaping how technologies are used in ethically responsible ways (Williyan et al., 2025; 2026). Lecturers who demonstrate moral agency are not only able to respond thoughtfully to these challenges but also actively shape educational practices that reflect ethical and inclusive values (Molla & Nolan, 2020). Through ethically informed decision-making, they help create learning environments that promote fairness, respect, and the holistic development of students (Geron, 2025; Ta et al., 2023). This perspective suggests that the integration of emerging technologies such as AI must be examined not only from a pedagogical standpoint but also through the lens of ethical teacher agency.

### **AI in Writing Instruction**

Research increasingly highlights the potential of AI to enhance English language teaching and academic writing instruction. AI tools are widely applied to support key stages of writing, including drafting, revision, and feedback, while improving linguistic accuracy, text organization, and learners' self-efficacy (Wale & Kassahun, 2024; Krajka & Olszak, 2024; Malik et al., 2023). Classroom-based studies further show that their pedagogical value is strengthened when combined with reflective practices, such as critically evaluating AI-generated and student-generated texts (Bedington et al., 2024). Other research identifies AI as a tool for idea generation, argument development, and iterative revision

(Wang, 2025; Su et al., 2023; Hwang et al., 2023; Escalante et al., 2023). This literature positions AI scaffolding learners for writing development in relation to linguistic elements, for instance. However, this predominantly benefit-oriented perspective obscures important tensions. In particular, AI is simultaneously framed as a scaffold for learning and a potential source of over-reliance, raising concerns about reduced critical engagement and weakened authorial voice. This suggests that the effectiveness of AI is not inherent, but contingent on how it is pedagogically mediated.

### **Ethical Concerns in AI Integration**

Despite these pedagogical benefits, the literature raises concerns about creativity, authenticity, authorship, and academic integrity. A key tension lies between AI's instructional advantages and the risk that over-reliance may undermine students' independence and authorial voice. While some studies report improved engagement and feedback literacy (Rad et al., 2024), others warn of reduced originality and critical thinking (Wang, 2025; Bedington et al., 2024; Yeo, 2023; Abulibdeh et al., 2024). These contrasting perspectives suggest that the value of AI is not inherent but depends on how it is pedagogically regulated. This divergence highlights unresolved boundaries between innovation and academic integrity, underscoring the need for frameworks to guide responsible AI use in writing instruction.

### **Equity, Inclusivity, and Professional Training**

A recurring theme in the literature concerns equity and inclusivity in AI-supported learning. While AI offers promising opportunities, studies highlight persistent inequalities in access, design, and implementation. For instance, AI tools often fail to accommodate diverse learners' needs, including differences in grade level, language background, and disability (Stornaiuolo et al., 2023; Evmenova et al., 2024). Although students value AI support for brainstorming and editing, concerns remain about reliability and maintaining their own voices (Cummings et al., 2024). These findings suggest that AI's benefits are unevenly distributed across learners. This reflects a paradox in which AI is positioned as both an enabler of inclusion and a potential source of inequality. Institutional challenges, such as limited infrastructure, readiness, and professional development that prioritizes technical over ethical aspects, further complicate integration (Barrett & Pack, 2023; Walter, 2024; Kamali et al., 2024; Mouta et al., 2024). Thus, these studies indicate that effective AI integration requires not only technological adoption but also ethical and inclusive pedagogical support.

### **Teacher Moral Agency and Technology Use**

Addressing these challenges highlights the role of teachers as moral agents in technology adoption. Moral agency, as outlined by Molla and Nolan (2020), involves ethical decision-making, professional growth, advocacy for ethical standards, and role-modelling ethical behaviour. In technology-rich environments, teachers mediate how technological affordances are translated into ethically responsible learning practices, shaping equitable

AI use (Boylan et al., 2023; Priestley et al., 2016). Teacher agency is also contextual and relational, influenced by institutional frameworks, collaboration, and cultural values (Emam et al., 2023; Tran & Li, 2024; Kang, 2025; Karimpour et al., 2023). While existing research acknowledges these dimensions, it largely focuses on students' outcomes, technological affordances, or policy, with less attention to how teachers navigate ethical complexities in practice. In particular, there is limited empirical insight into how teachers interpret and respond to these tensions within their own classrooms.

## **Research Gap**

What remains underexplored is how teachers in underrepresented regions, particularly in Southeast Asia, exercise moral agency when integrating AI into their pedagogy. Existing research has largely been conducted in high-resource Western settings, leaving limited empirical insight into how educators in emerging contexts negotiate the ethical challenges of AI use. In particular, little is known about how lecturers in Indonesian EFL contexts navigate tensions between technological innovation, equity, and academic integrity in writing instruction. This study addresses this gap by examining how Indonesian EFL lecturers enact moral teacher agency in integrating AI tools into their writing pedagogy, providing a contextually grounded contribution to broader discussions on ethical AI integration in education.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design and Ethical Considerations**

This study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as its qualitative research design (Smith et al., 2009) to investigate how Indonesian EFL lecturers exercise moral teacher agency when integrating AI tools into writing instruction. IPA is particularly suited to exploring how individuals interpret and make sense of their lived experiences within specific professional contexts (Hartman & Squires, 2024). In this study, the approach enabled an in-depth examination of lecturers' ethical and pedagogical decision-making as they navigated opportunities and challenges related to AI integration. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate institutional review board. Participants were informed about the study's aims, procedures, and their voluntary participation. A detailed description of the participants is presented in the following section.

### **Research Context and Participants**

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants capable of providing rich, relevant insights into the intersection of AI use and moral agency in writing instruction (Stratton, 2024). This approach aimed to ensure that participants met specific inclusion criteria aligned with the study's focus. Selected individuals were practicing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors actively teaching writing at the secondary or tertiary

level in Indonesia. They also had prior experience integrating AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, or other writing-related platforms, into their instructional practices. Moreover, participants demonstrated an awareness of and a willingness to reflect on the ethical and moral dimensions of AI use in educational contexts. Participation was entirely voluntary, with informed consent obtained prior to involvement. Recruitment was carried out through professional networks, academic mailing lists, and institutional referrals. An invitation letter detailing the study’s purpose and expectations was distributed, and interested candidates completed a brief eligibility form to confirm their alignment with the criteria.

In this study, four Indonesian EFL instructors were recruited. Their varied teaching backgrounds, years of experience, and institutional affiliations were deliberately considered to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and contextual realities. To provide richer context without compromising anonymity, additional demographic details are included, such as participants’ age ranges, educational backgrounds, institutional characteristics, the AI tools they primarily used, and their self-assessed proficiency levels. Table 1 summarises the expanded participant profiles.

**Table 1.** Participant profiles

| Participant | Teaching level                      | Years of experience | Institution type                                                    | Age range | Educational background           | Primary AI tools used        | Self-assessed proficiency |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| P1          | Tertiary (university)               | 10+                 | Public university (urban, large enrollment)                         | 40–45     | PhD in Applied Linguistics       | ChatGPT, Grammarly           | Intermediate              |
| P2          | Secondary (high school)             | 7                   | Private high school (rural, mid-sized)                              | 30–35     | MA in English Education          | Grammarly                    | Basic                     |
| P3          | Tertiary (polytechnic)              | 5                   | Vocational college (urban, specialised programs)                    | 30–35     | MA in Applied Linguistics        | Grammarly, Quillbot          | Intermediate              |
| P4          | Tertiary (Islamic State University) | 12                  | Public Islamic University (semi-urban, faith-integrated curriculum) | 40–45     | PhD in English Language Teaching | ChatGPT, Grammarly, Wordtune | Advanced                  |

Table 1 shows that the participants represented diverse institutional settings, teaching backgrounds, and levels of familiarity with AI tools, providing a varied yet focused sample for exploring how moral agency is enacted in practice. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned pseudonyms (Scheytt & Pflüger, 2024; Wang et al., 2026), coded as P1, P2, P3, and P4, which are used consistently throughout the findings. Any identifiable information was removed or anonymised during the processes of transcription and reporting. The sample size of four participants is consistent with the idiographic

orientation of IPA, which emphasises depth over breadth (Smith et al., 2009). IPA studies commonly use small samples, typically between three and six participants, to allow for detailed, nuanced exploration of individual lived experiences, for instance the works of Ghyasi and Gurbuz (2023), Lo (2023), O'Neill and Kenny (2023). In this study, focusing on four lecturers enabled in-depth engagement with each participant's account while still capturing diversity across institution types and teaching levels. This balance ensured that the analysis remained faithful to IPA's idiographic commitment while enhancing the transferability of the findings across similar contexts.

### Data Collection Procedures

Informed by Geampana and Perrotta (2025), data were collected in two sequential phases: semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion (FGD). This two-phase design allowed for both in-depth individual exploration and collaborative reflection on shared ethical challenges and instructional practices (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In the first phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all four participants. Each interview lasted at least 60 minutes, depending on how the conversation unfolded, and the duration varied across participants. The interviews were conducted either in person or via a secure video conferencing platform. The interview protocol was developed based on Molla and Nolan's (2020) framework of moral teacher agency, covering four key focus areas. Table 2 presents the focus areas and one sample guiding question for each.

**Table 2.** Interview protocol (focus areas and sample questions)

| Focus area                        | Sample question                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ethical decision-making           | "How do you decide whether or not AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Grammarly) should be used in your writing classes?" |
| Commitment to professional growth | "What efforts have you made to improve your knowledge and skills in using AI tools for teaching writing?"      |
| Advocacy for ethical standards    | "How do you address issues such as plagiarism, data privacy, or misuse when students use AI tools?"            |
| Role-modelling ethical behaviour  | "In what ways do you see yourself guiding students to use AI responsibly and ethically?"                       |

In the second phase, a focus group discussion was held with the same participants to further examine and triangulate emerging themes (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The FGD lasted at least 60 minutes, with the duration varying depending on the flow of discussion. It encouraged participants to discuss, compare, and reflect on their individual experiences in a collective setting. To guide discussion, several prompts were used, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Focus group discussion protocol (focus areas and sample prompts)

| Focus area                            | Sample prompt                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Shared experiences with AI tools      | “How do your experiences with AI tools in writing instruction compare with those of your colleagues?”         |
| Ethical challenges and dilemmas       | “What kinds of ethical tensions or uncertainties have you encountered when integrating AI into your classes?” |
| Focus area                            | Sample prompt                                                                                                 |
| Strategies and collective reflections | “How do you and your peers support each other in addressing the challenges of AI use in teaching?”            |

This format facilitated deeper exploration of shared values and tensions surrounding AI use. Both the interviews and FGD were audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed for analysis. This provided rich qualitative data that formed the basis for subsequent interpretative phenomenological analysis.

**Data Analysis**

The data were analysed using IPA (Smith et al., 2009; Ramdani & Rahmat, 2018), which emphasises the in-depth exploration of how individuals make sense of their lived experiences. While IPA is often associated with inductive coding, in this study, a deductive approach was taken to thematic development, guided by Molla and Nolan’s (2020) moral agency framework. This framework identifies four core dimensions of moral teacher agency:

- 1. Ethical decision-making.
- 2. Commitment to professional growth.
- 3. Advocacy for ethical standards.
- 4. Role-modelling ethical behaviour.

These four dimensions served as the foundation for organising and interpreting the data.

The analytic process began with multiple readings of the interview and focus group transcripts to gain familiarity with the participants’ narratives. During this stage, key segments of text related to participants’ experiences with AI integration were highlighted and assigned initial codes. These segments were then coded in alignment with the four dimensions of moral agency. For example, when a participant stated, “I always assess the authenticity and reliability of AI-generated content before incorporating it into my lessons,” this was coded under ethical decision-making. Similarly, statements such as “I seek out training and online courses on AI” were aligned with commitment to professional growth. After the initial coding, related codes were reviewed and grouped into broader thematic categories corresponding to the four dimensions of moral teacher agency. The researchers then compared patterns across participants’ accounts to refine the themes and ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the data.

To ensure transparency and clarity in the analytical process, Table 4 provides illustrative examples of how participant quotes were deductively coded under each of the four dimensions of moral teacher agency.

**Table 4.** Sample coding based on Molla and Nolan's (2020) moral agency framework

| Moral agency dimension            | Sample quote                                                                                                         | Code description                              |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Ethical decision-making           | "I always assess the authenticity and reliability of AI-generated content before incorporating it into my lessons."  | AI evaluation, content appropriateness        |
| Commitment to professional growth | "I actively seek opportunities to enhance my knowledge and skills in AI tools through workshops and online courses." | Self-training, AI literacy, lifelong learning |

Beyond initial coding, the analysis involved an iterative and interpretative process characteristic of IPA, where meanings were developed through a close engagement with participants' accounts. After grouping codes into the four dimensions of moral teacher agency, the researchers revisited the transcripts to explore how participants made sense of their experiences, paying attention to patterns, nuances, and divergences across cases. This process involved moving back and forth between individual excerpts and the broader dataset to refine thematic interpretations. An audit trail was maintained through analytic memos and coding records, documenting how interpretations evolved from raw data to final themes. To enhance rigor, the researchers engaged in regular discussions to review coding decisions and resolve differences through consensus. Reflexive awareness was also maintained throughout the analysis, with the researchers critically considering how their own perspectives and prior understandings of AI and pedagogy might shape the interpretation of the data.

## FINDINGS

### Research Question 1: Enacting Moral Teacher Agency in AI-Integrated Writing Instruction

The analysis employed a hybrid approach to investigate how Indonesian EFL lecturers enact moral teacher agency in integrating AI tools into writing instruction. Drawing primarily on Molla and Nolan's (2020) framework, the data were initially organised deductively into four pre-defined dimensions of moral agency: ethical decision-making, commitment to professional growth, advocacy for ethical standards, and role-modelling ethical behavior. This was followed by an inductive process to identify sub-themes that captured the nuanced ways these dimensions manifested in participants' experiences. Initial coding combined theoretical alignment with emergent patterns in the data, allowing for a layered

understanding of lecturers' moral practices. To enrich the interpretation, representative quotes were selected to illustrate how each theme and sub-theme was enacted in practice. Table 5 presents the main themes, inductively derived sub-themes, codes, and supporting participant quotes. These themes correspond directly to the four dimensions of moral teacher agency proposed by Molla and Nolan (2020), illustrating how lecturers' ethical reasoning, professional learning, advocacy, and modelling practices shape the integration of AI tools in writing instruction.

**Table 5.** Themes and sub-themes reflecting EFL lecturers' moral agency in AI-integrated writing instruction

| Main theme                        | Sub-theme                                                        | Code(s)                                           | Quotes (participants)                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ethical decision-making           | Evaluating the reliability and appropriateness of AI tools       | AI evolution, content appropriateness             | "I always assess the authenticity and reliability of AI-generated content before incorporating it into my lessons." (P1)                                |
|                                   | Balancing student benefit with concerns over fairness and access | Digital equity, access disparity, ethical tension | "It's sometimes hard to use AI tools in good conscience knowing that some of my students don't have internet access or devices to use at home." (P4)    |
| Commitment to professional growth | Engaging in continuous learnig about AI and pedagogy             | Self-training, AI literacy, lifelong learning     | "I actively seek opportunities to enhance my knowledge and skills in AI tools through workshops and online courses." (P2)                               |
|                                   | Reflective practice and peer collaboration                       | Reflection, collaboration, ethical discussion     | "Collaboration with colleagues enables me to leverage collective knowledge to address ethical challenges." (P3)                                         |
| Advocacy for ethical standards    | Promoting digital responsibility and academic honesty            | Academic integrity, AI misuse prevention          | "I make sure they understand that while AI can help with brainstorming or grammar checking, copying AI-generated text as their own is plagiarism." (P4) |
|                                   | Addressing privacy and data protection concerns                  | Privacy awareness, ethical tool selection         | "I'm mindful of students' privacy and data security when using AI platforms for collaborative writing projects." (P2)                                   |

(Continued on next page)

**Table 5.** (Continued)

| Main theme                       | Sub-theme                                               | Code(s)                                          | Quotes (participants)                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Role-modelling ethical behaviour | Demonstrating respectful and inclusive use of AI tools  | Ethical conduct, inclusivity, classroom modeling | “By fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity, I create a supportive learning environment where students feel valued and empowered when we use AI tools to assist in writing.” (P1) |
|                                  | Guiding students to become responsible digital citizens | Digital citizenship, student mentorship          | “We need to show our students not just how to use AI tools, but also how to use them responsibly and ethically.” (P2)                                                                    |

The findings reveal that Indonesian EFL lecturers exercise moral teacher agency in AI-integrated writing instruction through a dynamic interplay of ethical reasoning, professional judgement, and context-sensitive decision-making. Rather than treating AI tools as neutral instruments, lecturers critically assessed their appropriateness, demonstrating a strong sense of responsibility for ensuring that technology aligned with pedagogical and moral values. Their decision-making processes were shaped by concerns over fairness, student access, and the integrity of student work, indicating that ethical considerations were not abstract ideals but practical and recurring challenges. This also exposed a tension between innovation and equity, as lecturers sought to adopt AI creatively while ensuring that no student was left behind due to unequal access. Lecturers often engaged in complex negotiations between institutional expectations, student realities, and personal convictions, positioning themselves as active moral agents within a digitally evolving classroom. This negotiation process reflects the ethical decision-making dimension of moral teacher agency, where educators critically evaluate pedagogical choices in light of their moral responsibilities to students.

The lecturers' commitment to professional growth was not merely about acquiring technical expertise, but about developing ethical competence in navigating uncharted technological terrain. Professional development was described not only as a way to stay updated with AI advancements, but as an ethical imperative to ensure responsible implementation. In this sense, lecturers' efforts to continually improve their AI literacy represent the commitment to professional growth dimension of moral teacher agency. What emerged strongly was a culture of reflective practice and peer collaboration, where lecturers leaned on each other for moral support and shared problem-solving. Yet this reliance on peers also revealed a paradox: while collaboration empowered lecturers to manage ethical dilemmas, the lack of formal training left them to compensate for systemic gaps on their own. These findings suggest that moral agency is not enacted in isolation but is sustained through dialogic engagement and a shared sense of ethical responsibility among lecturers.

Moreover, the enactment of moral agency extended beyond internal reflection to include explicit advocacy for ethical norms and the modelling of responsible behaviour. Lecturers viewed themselves as role models and ethical guides, actively shaping how students understand and use AI. This practice reflects both the advocacy for ethical standards and

the role-modelling ethical behaviour dimensions of moral teacher agency. This involved not only reinforcing principles like academic honesty and data privacy but also mentoring students in becoming critical, responsible digital citizens. However, this advocacy occurred in a policy vacuum, creating a contradiction: lecturers instilled digital ethics in students even as they themselves lacked institutional guidance on ethical AI use. Their efforts to embed respect, inclusivity, and autonomy in AI-supported tasks reveal a moral pedagogical stance that transcends technical functionality. In this way, moral teacher agency becomes a conduit for embedding ethics into emerging digital literacies, ensuring that technological integration remains grounded in human-centered educational values.

While the enactment of moral teacher agency in this study was robust and principled, it often occurred in the absence of formal institutional guidance or systemic support. Lecturers described navigating ethical decisions on their own, drawing primarily on personal values, peer collaboration, and experiential knowledge. This autonomy was empowering in that it positioned lecturers as ethical authorities, but it also created a burden, shifting responsibility from institutions to individuals and resulting in uneven practices shaped more by personal conviction than by shared standards. The lack of institutional training, clear ethical guidelines, and equity-sensitive infrastructure suggests that moral agency is being exercised despite, rather than because of, systemic readiness. In this sense, lecturers are not only classroom practitioners but also *de facto* gatekeepers of ethical AI use. This dual role highlights the urgent need for educational leadership and policymaking to align more closely with the pace of technological advancement. These findings underscore that cultivating moral teacher agency must be accompanied by the development of institutional ecosystems that acknowledge and support the ethical responsibilities lecturers are already undertaking.

### **Research Question 2: Benefits and Challenges of Exercising Moral Teacher Agency in AI-Integrated Writing Instruction**

Research question two was investigated using focus group discussions, which built upon themes from previous semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed for collaborative, in-depth exploration of lecturers' moral agency when incorporating AI tools into writing instruction. As shown in Table 6, analysis revealed four primary advantages:

1. Heightened ethical awareness.
2. Improved teaching confidence.
3. Greater focus on student needs.
4. Development of digital citizenship.

Each theme includes specific coding categories and verbatim quotes demonstrating how these benefits manifested in actual classroom settings.

**Table 6.** Benefits of moral teacher agency in AI-integrated writing instruction

| Theme                               | Code                                               | Description                                                                             | Supporting quotes (Participants)                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Enhanced ethical consciousness      | Reflective judgement, ethical awareness            | Lecturers engaged in critical reflection about the ethical use of AI tools.             | “AI makes me think more about what’s fair and what’s not—for example, when to let students use it or not.” (P1) |
| Strengthened pedagogical confidence | Instructional ownership, agency in decision-making | Lecturers felt more confident in making ethical and instructional choices involving AI. | “Using AI with clear intentions makes me feel more in control of my class and content.” (P2)                    |
| Increased student-centred awareness | Inclusivity, equity-minded practice                | Lecturers became more sensitive to student access and diverse needs.                    | “I think twice now—can all my students benefit from this AI tool? If not, I adjust my plan.” (P3)               |
| Promotion of digital citizenship    | Modelling responsibility, ethical mentorship       | Lecturers saw AI as an opportunity to instill digital ethics in students.               | “We don’t just use AI—we talk about when and how to use it responsibly.” (P4)                                   |

The benefits of exercising moral agency in AI-integrated writing instruction extended beyond tool implementation to fundamentally reshape how lecturers viewed their ethical responsibilities. Rather than treating AI use as a technical choice, participants approached it as a moral practice that required ongoing ethical reflection and professional judgement. For many, this heightened their sense of pedagogical confidence, as acting with moral clarity gave them a stronger voice in deciding when and how AI should support learning. Lecturers also became more student-focused, using moral agency as a lens to evaluate whether AI access was equitable and meaningful for all learners. Importantly, AI integration was seen not just as a challenge but as a teachable moment, a way to embed digital ethics and model responsible behaviour. In this way, lecturers transformed AI into a platform for promoting digital citizenship and fostering values of fairness, autonomy, and responsibility among their students. However, alongside these benefits, participants also revealed several challenges that complicated the enactment of moral agency in AI-enhanced classrooms. These are summarised in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Challenges of moral teacher agency in AI-integrated writing instruction

| Theme                             | Code                                | Description                                                                     | Supporting quotes (Participants)                                                                        |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lack of institutional support     | Absence of guidelines, policy void  | Lecturers faced ambiguity due to a lack of official ethical policies on AI use. | “We’re expected to innovate with AI, but there are no clear rules on what’s ethically acceptable.” (P2) |
| Ethical uncertainty               | Moral ambiguity, conflicting values | Lecturers struggled with where to draw ethical lines when using AI in class.    | “I’m still unsure—how much AI help is too much before it becomes cheating?” (P4)                        |
| Unequal access and infrastructure | Digital divide, systemic inequity   | Inconsistent student access to AI tools created dilemmas about fairness.        | “Some students can’t use AI at all, so I feel guilty designing lessons around it.” (P1)                 |
| Limited professional development  | Training gaps, lack of preparation  | Lecturers lacked formal training on the ethical integration of AI tools.        | “Most workshops just show you how the tool works, not how to use it responsibly in teaching.” (P3)      |

The challenges outlined above demonstrate that moral teacher agency operates within real-world constraints, not in isolation. One of the most pressing issues was the absence of institutional guidance. Lecturers described being left to define ethical boundaries on their own, leading to uncertainty and inconsistent practices. Without policy frameworks or shared standards, moral agency often felt like a personal burden rather than a professionally supported responsibility. Participants also expressed ethical ambiguity, particularly around how much AI involvement was pedagogically beneficial versus academically dishonest. These dilemmas were heightened by systemic challenges such as digital inequality and uneven infrastructure, which often conflicted with lecturers’ desire to implement inclusive and fair AI-supported instruction. Lastly, the lack of targeted professional development left many feeling unprepared to navigate the moral dimensions of AI integration, highlighting a gap between the technical rollout of AI tools and the ethical training needed for their responsible use.

Together, these findings reveal that while moral teacher agency enables lecturers to thoughtfully and ethically integrate AI, it also places them at the frontline of navigating complex technological and institutional terrains. Without stronger systemic support, the full potential of moral agency in promoting ethical, equitable, and student-centered AI integration may remain constrained. Thus, moral agency in this context emerges less as a stable solution than as a negotiated practice shaped by contradictions between empowerment and burden, innovation and equity, and advocacy and systemic silence.

## DISCUSSION

This study explored how Indonesian EFL lecturers enact moral teacher agency when integrating AI tools into writing instruction. The findings reveal a complex interplay between ethical decision-making, professional growth, advocacy for ethical standards, and the modeling of ethical behavior, which correspond to the four dimensions of moral teacher agency conceptualised by Molla and Nolan (2020). These findings offer significant insights into the ethical dimensions of AI integration in EFL contexts, particularly in developing countries like Indonesia, where technological adoption often occurs within constrained infrastructural and institutional environments.

The findings demonstrate that moral teacher agency is not merely an abstract philosophical orientation but a tangible, context-dependent practice that guides lecturers' decision-making processes. Participants consistently engaged in critical evaluation of AI tools' appropriateness for their specific teaching contexts, considering factors such as student access, academic integrity, and cultural relevance. This finding aligns with Emam et al.'s (2023), Kang (2025), and Karimpour et al. (2023) and assertion that teacher agency is inherently contextual and shaped by local realities. In the Indonesian EFL context, where digital infrastructure varies significantly across regions and institutions, lecturers' moral agency manifests as a careful balancing act between technological innovation and ethical responsibility.

Interestingly, despite the absence of formal institutional guidance, lecturers developed sophisticated ethical frameworks for AI integration through peer collaboration and reflective practice. This emergent, socially constructed nature of moral agency resonates with sociocultural perspectives on teacher agency (Tran & Li, 2024) and highlights the importance of professional communities in supporting ethical technology adoption. This finding extends Molla and Nolan's (2020) framework by emphasizing the relational dimension of moral agency, the way ethical practice is co-constructed through professional dialogue and shared reflection. This study contributes theoretically in two ways. First, it demonstrates how the four dimensions of moral agency (ethical decision-making, professional growth, advocacy, and role-modelling) are enacted in conditions of institutional void, where teachers assume responsibilities typically supported by policy. Second, it highlights a developmental dimension of moral agency, showing how lecturers adapt their ethical guidance according to students' age and digital literacy levels. These contributions extend the framework beyond its original scope, situating it within Southeast Asian EFL contexts and illustrating how moral agency operates under both systemic constraint and pedagogical adaptation.

Participants' narratives revealed that ethical decision-making in AI-enhanced writing instruction frequently centred around tensions between pedagogical innovation and core educational values such as equity, authenticity, and academic integrity. These findings parallel concerns identified by Hosseini et al. (2023), Pack and Maloney (2024), and Vetter et al. (2024) regarding the ethical implications of AI in writing pedagogy, particularly issues of authorship and authenticity. However, this study extends this discourse by illustrating

how lecturers actively negotiate these tensions through critical reflection and values-based judgement.

The evaluative processes described by participants, such as assessing AI-generated content for reliability and appropriateness before classroom use, demonstrate what Priestley et al. (2016) term “ecological agency,” where lecturers’ moral actions are both constrained and enabled by their professional environments. Rather than passively implementing technology, participants exercised agency by critically interrogating AI tools against their professional values and pedagogical goals. These findings challenge deterministic views of technology adoption and highlights lecturers’ role as ethical gatekeepers who mediate between technological affordances and educational integrity.

A significant finding was lecturers’ heightened awareness of digital equity issues when integrating AI tools. Participants consistently expressed concern about unequal access to technology among students, echoing Dakakni and Safa (2023) and Stornaiuolo et al.’s (2023) observation that current AI platforms often fail to address equity considerations. However, this study reveals how lecturers exercise moral agency to mitigate these inequities, developing adaptive strategies that ensure all students benefit regardless of technological access.

This equity-minded practice reflects what Boylan et al. (2023) describe as the transformative dimension of professional agency, which refers to lecturers’ capacity to challenge and reshape educational practices in pursuit of fairness and inclusion. By critically assessing the equity implications of AI tools and adapting instruction accordingly, participants demonstrated how moral agency can function as a counterbalance to technological determinism and systemic inequalities. This finding is particularly relevant for educational contexts in developing countries, where digital divides are often pronounced and require lecturers to be especially vigilant about inclusive pedagogical practices.

The findings highlight lecturers’ commitment to continuous professional learning as a fundamental aspect of moral agency in AI integration. Participants actively sought opportunities to enhance their understanding of AI tools through workshops, online courses, and peer collaboration. This proactive approach to professional development aligns with Walter’s (2024) emphasis on AI literacy and prompt engineering as critical skills for effective educational technology use. However, this study extends this perspective by framing professional learning not merely as technical skill acquisition but as an ethical imperative. It positions continuous learning as a means of ensuring responsible and informed AI integration in educational contexts.

The absence of formal training specifically addressing the ethical dimensions of AI use emerged as a significant challenge. Participants reported that most professional development opportunities focused on technical functionality rather than ethical implementation, creating a disconnect between technological knowledge and moral practice. This finding underscores Kamali et al.’s (2024) and Mouta et al.’s (2024) observations that despite AI tools’ alignment with instructional objectives, there remains a critical gap in preparing

lecturers to address diverse learner needs and ethical considerations. The study suggests that sustaining moral teacher agency requires professional development frameworks that explicitly address the ethical dimensions of technology integration, providing lecturers with both theoretical foundations and practical strategies for navigating moral complexities.

A notable finding was lecturers' emphasis on modeling responsible AI use and fostering digital citizenship among students. Participants viewed AI integration not only as a tool for enhancing writing instruction but also as an opportunity to cultivate critical thinking, ethical awareness, and responsible technology use. This approach reflects Tirri's (2023) assertion that moral agency is essential in preparing learners to meet the ethical challenges of the digital era. By explicitly discussing ethical considerations with students and modelling responsible practices, lecturers transformed AI integration from a purely instructional activity into a vehicle for broader digital ethics education.

A noteworthy dimension of moral teacher agency emerging from this study relates to the age and developmental stage of students. Lecturers teaching at the secondary level emphasised the need for stricter guidance and explicit boundaries, as younger learners often demonstrated more limited digital literacy and ethical awareness in relation to AI use. By contrast, lecturers working in tertiary contexts described encouraging students to take greater responsibility, critically evaluate the limitations of AI tools, and reflect on issues such as plagiarism, authorship, and academic integrity. This differentiation underscores how moral teacher agency is exercised not only through personal values and institutional contexts but also through pedagogical adaptations to students' developmental needs. These differentiated approaches highlight that while AI can indeed foster learner autonomy and skill enhancement, as emphasised in earlier studies (Fitriati & Williyen, 2025), such autonomy is not automatic but contingent upon lecturers' ethical guidance and pedagogical adaptation to students' developmental stages.

This student-centred dimension of moral agency resonates with recent calls for critical digital pedagogy that empowers learners to question technological tools rather than merely use them. This finding suggests that moral teacher agency extends beyond lecturers' own ethical practice to include their role in developing students' ethical capabilities, positioning lecturers as critical mediators in students' digital literacy development. By situating Indonesian lecturers' experiences alongside Western and East Asian scholarship, this study highlights both convergences (e.g., concerns with authenticity and equity) and divergences (e.g., reliance on personal ethical judgment in the absence of institutional frameworks). While these findings highlight important enactments of moral teacher agency, they should be understood within the limits of a small, context-specific sample. This reinforces the need for comparative studies across cultural and institutional settings to examine how such practices may vary or converge. Despite the robust enactment of moral agency by individual lecturers, the findings reveal significant systemic challenges that constrain its full expression. The lack of institutional guidelines, limited professional development, uneven infrastructure, and absence of clear ethical frameworks emerged as significant barriers. This institutional void creates a situation where moral agency becomes

an individual responsibility rather than a collectively supported practice, potentially leading to inconsistent approaches and lecturer burnout. This finding aligns with Song's (2024) call for clearer institutional frameworks to guide AI integration in writing instruction. The study emphasises that although individual moral agency plays a vital role, it needs to be reinforced by systemic support structures. These include the provision of clear ethical guidelines, the implementation of targeted professional development programs, and the establishment of equitable infrastructure, all of which are essential to ensure sustainable and coherent ethical practices.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Indonesian EFL lecturers enact moral teacher agency in AI integration through ethical decision-making, commitment to professional learning, advocacy for ethical standards, and the modeling of responsible behaviour. Their practice demonstrates a strong focus on equity, student empowerment, and academic integrity, even in the face of limited institutional guidance and systemic challenges. Importantly, this research contributes a unique perspective by positioning Indonesian EFL lecturers as ethical agents in the AI era. Unlike much of the global literature that frames teachers as adopters of technology, our findings show lecturers functioning as moral gatekeepers who actively negotiate dilemmas of fairness, authorship, and access in the absence of systemic support. By extending Molla and Nolan's (2020) framework to a Southeast Asian context, this study demonstrates how moral agency is exercised in conditions of institutional void, digital inequality, and diverse student readiness. This contextualised perspective underscores that the ethical future of AI-enhanced learning depends on recognising and supporting lecturers as key decision-makers who shape technology integration not only through technical skill but through values-driven pedagogy. Institutions should create clear ethical guidelines for AI use in EFL writing, embed AI literacy and ethics into teacher training, and promote collaborative policy-making between lecturers, administrators, and policymakers to ensure fair and responsible adoption.

This study also has several limitations that open pathways for future research. The small sample size and focus on Indonesian EFL lecturers limits the generalisability of the findings to other educational contexts. Future studies should investigate moral teacher agency in diverse cultural, institutional, and subject-area settings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how contextual factors shape ethical practice. Additionally, this research relied primarily on lecturer self-reports through interviews and focus groups; future work could incorporate classroom observations, student perspectives, and document analysis to offer a more holistic view of moral agency in practice. Given the rapidly evolving nature of AI technologies, longitudinal studies are needed to trace how lecturers' ethical approaches develop over time as both tools and teaching contexts continue to change. Finally, intervention studies examining the impact of professional development and institutional support on lecturers' moral agency would provide valuable insights for educational policy and practice, helping ensure that AI serves as a tool for ethical and equitable learning.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We sincerely thank the participating EFL teachers for their valuable time and insights, which were essential to the completion of this study.

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