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**Research Paper** 

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# Innovative Assessment Techniques with AI Support in ELT: A Qualitative Perspective for Educators

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper explores the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in supporting innovative assessment techniques namely digital portfolios and peer assessments in English Language Teaching (ELT). As traditional summative assessments face increasing criticism for their limitations in measuring holistic language proficiency, educators are turning toward more formative, student-centered approaches. This literature-based qualitative study synthesizes simulated teacher narratives informed by current research to examine the perceived benefits, challenges, and ethical considerations of AI integration in ELT assessment. Thematic analysis reveals four major themes: (1) AI as a feedback facilitator, (2) the importance of scaffolding digital portfolios, (3) enhanced engagement through AI-supported peer assessment, and (4) equity and trust issues in AI use. Practical tools such as Grammarly, Write &Improve, Peer-grade, and Google Sites are recommended for classroom application, especially in Vietnamese contexts. The paper concludes with pedagogical, practical, and ethical recommendations to help ELT teachers adopt AI tools critically and effectively, ensuring that technology supports rather than substitutes the teacher's role in assessment.

**Keywords**: artificial intelligence, ELT assessment, digital portfolios, peer assessment, formative assessment, teacher perspectives, Vietnam

# I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has witnessed a growing demand for more personalized, formative, and learner-centered assessment practices. Traditional assessments such as standardized tests, grammar quizzes, and summative exams often fail to capture the holistic development of learners' language competencies, especially in communicative and intercultural dimensions. As global educational trends shift toward fostering critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration, ELT professionals are reimagining how assessment can better support authentic learning.

Innovative assessment approaches including digital portfolios, peer assessments, and ongoing formative feedback have emerged as promising alternatives to conventional methods. These techniques emphasize learner agency, reflective practice, and process-oriented learning. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education, these practices are gaining new dimensions: AI tools can assist in providing automated, timely feedback; facilitate peer review processes; support teachers in monitoring progress; and analyze learner data to inform pedagogical decisions.

However, while the integration of AI into assessment has generated enthusiasm, it also raises important pedagogical and ethical questions. For instance, to what extent can AI truly "understand" the nuances of language learning? How do ELT practitioners perceive and navigate the use of AI tools in formative assessment? And what challenges arise when combining human judgment with machine-assisted evaluation?

This paper aims to explore the perceptions, benefits, and concerns surrounding AI-supported innovative assessment techniques in ELT, drawing on a qualitative, literature-based perspective. It seeks to bridge the gap between technological advancement and pedagogical practice by critically examining how these emerging tools align with the goals of modern language education.

II.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Rethinking Assessment in ELT

Traditional assessment in English Language Teaching (ELT) has long been dominated by summative evaluations—standardized tests, grammar-based quizzes, and final exams—that often prioritize correctness and memorization over communication and real-world use. However, such practices are increasingly seen as inadequate in addressing the dynamic, interactive, and developmental nature of language learning (Brown, 2015; Reinders & White, 2016). In response, there has been a paradigm shift toward innovative, formative assessments that aim to support learning as and for learning, rather than merely of learning (Black & Wiliam, 2009).

# 2.2. Innovative Assessment Techniques

Among the most widely discussed innovative practices are digital portfolios and peer assessments. These approaches reflect a growing emphasis on learner autonomy, reflection, collaboration, and formative feedback.

#### 2.2.1. Digital Portfolios

Digital portfolios are collections of learners' works that provide evidence of progress, engagement, and language development over time (Barrett, 2007). In the ELT context, portfolios can include written texts, audio/video recordings, reflections, and even feedback from peers or teachers. They foster learner ownership and offer a more holistic view of learning compared to one-time tests (Choi, 2013). When integrated with digital tools, portfolios also allow for easier tracking, revision, and sharing of work.

#### 2.2.2. Peer Assessment

Peer assessment involves learners evaluating each other's work using predefined criteria or rubrics. In ELT, peer assessment has shown potential for enhancing learners' critical thinking, metalinguistic awareness, and collaborative skills (Topping, 2010; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). It can also reduce teacher workload and support ongoing formative feedback. However, issues of reliability, confidence, and cultural appropriateness must be carefully addressed (Liu & Carless, 2006).

#### 2.3. AI Support in Educational Assessment

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education is reshaping assessment landscapes. AI tools can now provide automated feedback on writing, speech analysis, grammar correction, plagiarism detection, and even adaptive testing (Luckin et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2019). In the context of ELT:

• AI can support peer assessment by matching reviewers or offering feedback on the quality of comments (Chen et al., 2021).

• It can enhance portfolios by automatically organizing, tagging, and evaluating multimodal submissions.

• Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools can analyze student output, tracking linguistic complexity and progress.

However, challenges remain. Some researchers raise concerns about algorithmic bias, teacher de-skilling, and the reliability of AI-generated feedback, especially for nuanced language use (Pardo & Siemens, 2014). Moreover, AI systems must be context-sensitive, culturally aware, and ethically implemented to truly serve diverse ELT settings.

# 2.4. Theoretical Perspectives on AI-Supported Assessment

While empirical studies on AI in assessment are growing, there is still limited exploration from a qualitative, human-centered lens. Drawing on constructivist and sociocultural theories of learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1970), this paper views assessment as an interactive, developmental process one where meaning is co-constructed through dialogue, reflection, and feedback. AI, when used ethically and thoughtfully, can serve as a mediating tool to enhance not replace these human processes.

## 2.5. Research Gap

Although research supports the potential of innovative assessments and AI in ELT, few studies critically examine how teachers perceive, adapt, and experience these tools in real or simulated classroom contexts. This paper aims to fill this gap by synthesizing insights from existing literature to simulate findings based on a qualitative exploration of teacher perspectives, challenges, and practical implications.

# III. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design grounded in a constructivist epistemology, which posits that meaning is co-constructed through human experience and social interaction (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given the emerging nature of AI integration in ELT assessment, a qualitative approach is particularly suitable for unpacking the nuanced perceptions, beliefs, and contextual realities of language teachers. Rather than reporting findings from empirical fieldwork, this paper synthesizes insights from literature and simulates findings based on plausible patterns that have been observed or discussed in relevant research.

## 3.2. Research Approach

The study draws on a literature-based simulation of teacher experiences with AI-supported assessment techniques. Inspired by theoretical qualitative methods, such as those used in narrative inquiry or conceptual analysis (Smith, 2008), this approach allows for the construction of hypothetical teacher narratives and thematic patterns grounded in empirical trends. By combining actual literature with simulated teacher voices, the study aims to make abstract discussions more tangible for practitioners.

## **3.3.** Participants

For the purpose of conceptual depth, the study simulates data from eight hypothetical ELT teachers working in a variety of instructional settings, including secondary schools, universities, and private language institutes. These "participants" represent a range of experience levels, technological familiarity, and geographic regions, allowing for a diverse range of imagined perspectives on AI-supported assessment.

# **3.4. Data Sources and Construction**

The data are constructed using composite narratives derived from recurring themes in recent research (e.g., Topping, 2010; Holmes et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2021). These narratives reflect plausible teacher responses to questions such as:

- How do you use digital portfolios or peer assessment in your teaching?
- Have you used AI tools (e.g., Grammarly, Turnitin, peer review platforms) to support assessment?
- What benefits or concerns have you experienced?

By drawing on these types of questions and blending findings across multiple sources, the simulated voices aim to reflect the complexity of real-world ELT practice.

#### **3.5. Analytical Framework**

The study employs thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify and interpret patterns across the simulated data. The six-phase process includes:

- 1. Familiarization with the literature-derived narratives
- 2. Generating initial codes (e.g., "trust in AI feedback," "peer review anxiety")
- 3. Searching for themes
- 4. Reviewing themes
- 5. Defining and naming themes
- 6. Producing the report

This method allows for flexible yet rigorous analysis of qualitative data, even when drawn from literature rather than fieldwork.

# **3.6. Ethical Considerations**

Although this is a simulated study, ethical considerations remain important when representing teacher voices. The composite narratives are **fictional but respectful**, designed to highlight common experiences without reinforcing stereotypes or bias. No actual participants were involved in the study.

# IV. FINDINGS

Through a literature-informed simulation of teacher experiences, four major themes emerged regarding the use of AI-supported assessment techniques in English Language Teaching (ELT). These themes highlight a mixture of enthusiasm, critical reflection, and cautious optimism among educators. Each theme is illustrated through composite teacher narratives and supported by existing research.

# 4.1. AI as a Feedback Facilitator, Not a Replacement for the Teacher

Many simulated teachers emphasized the value of AI tools in providing fast, consistent, and accessible feedback, particularly in large classes or in writing-intensive tasks. Tools like *Grammarly*, *Write & Improve*, or *Turnitin Feedback Studio* were seen as helpful for reinforcing mechanical aspects of language such as grammar, coherence, and plagiarism awareness.

"I use Grammarly with my students' portfolios - it saves me time on basic corrections, so I can focus more on ideas and fluency," said *Ms. Hana*, a university EAP instructor.

"It's not perfect - sometimes it overcorrects or misses context - but overall, it's a good partner," added *Mr*. *Felipe*, a high school teacher in Brazil.

This aligns with research by Chen et al. (2021), who found that AI-assisted feedback can support formative learning when combined with human judgment. However, all teachers agreed that AI should complement, not replace, the nuanced, empathetic role of the teacher.

# 4.2. Digital Portfolios Promote Reflection and Ownership, But Require Scaffolding

Teachers spoke positively about digital portfolios for encouraging student reflection and tracking growth over time. Platforms like *Google Sites*, *Padlet*, or *Seesaw* were commonly cited as useful tools. However, implementing portfolios effectively required significant scaffolding and clear rubrics.

"Portfolios help my students see how far they've come - they choose their best work, reflect on it, and even respond to peer comments," said *Ms. Amina*, an ELT teacher in Morocco.

"But without training, it becomes a dumping ground. I had to teach them how to select, reflect, and revise."

These reflections echo findings by Choi (2013) and Barrett (2007), who argue that the success of portfolios depends on teacher guidance and student engagement.

# 4.3. Peer Assessment with AI Support Increases Engagement—But Trust Matters

Peer assessment, when combined with AI-enhanced platforms (e.g., *Peergrade*, *Eli Review*), was reported to increase engagement and peer learning. Several teachers noted that students took feedback more seriously when they knew it would be part of a structured, tech-supported process.

"When I used Peergrade, students actually read each other's work more carefully," reported *Mr. David*, a teacher trainer in Korea.

"The AI helped flag vague feedback, which was a game-changer. But students still doubted if peer scores were fair."

This highlights the dual challenge of fostering peer trust and ensuring assessment validity, as discussed in Liu & Carless (2006) and Topping (2010). Teachers stressed the importance of training students in giving constructive, respectful feedback.

#### 4.4. Concerns about Equity, Bias, and Over-Reliance on Technology

Despite the potential of AI, most teachers raised ethical and pedagogical concerns. Some worried that AI tools might favor certain linguistic norms or penalize creativity. Others noted access and equity issues, especially in low-resource settings where students lack reliable internet or devices.

"I love using AI tools—but not all my students have the same access. Some submit polished work using expensive tools; others struggle just to upload a file," said *Ms. Trinh*, a teacher in rural Vietnam.

"Plus, AI still can't understand humor or sarcasm in writing - it sometimes flags them as errors."

These concerns mirror critiques by Holmes et al. (2019) and Pardo & Siemens (2014), who caution against overreliance on automated systems without critical oversight.

Theme	Description
AI as Feedback Facilitator	Teachers appreciate AI's speed and consistency, but see it as a support tool.
Digital Portfolios Require Scaffolding	Portfolios empower learners, but need structure and reflective guidance.
Peer Assessment Gains with AI Support	AI-enhanced peer review promotes engagement, but fairness must be ensured.
Ethical and Equity Concerns	Access disparities and AI bias remain major challenges for educators.

#### **Summary of Themes**

# V. DISCUSSION

This study has explored how ELT teachers might experience and respond to AI-supported innovative assessment practices, based on literature-informed simulation. The findings affirm that while digital tools— especially those powered by AI—offer significant potential to transform assessment, their successful integration depends on pedagogical intentionality, contextual sensitivity, and ethical consideration.

# 5.1. Human-Centered AI Integration

The first theme revealed that teachers view AI as a valuable feedback assistant, not a replacement for teacher expertise. This distinction is critical. While AI-powered tools can provide immediate surface-level corrections, they are often limited in interpreting context, tone, or communicative intention. Research by Chen et al. (2021) and Holmes et al. (2019) similarly emphasized that AI performs best when paired with human judgment, especially in tasks that involve creativity or intercultural nuance.

For ELT teachers, this highlights the need to position AI as a co-teacher - a supportive presence that handles repetitive tasks, freeing educators to focus on deeper, formative feedback.

# 5.2. Structuring Digital Portfolios for Impact

Digital portfolios emerged as a promising means to support learner reflection, autonomy, and growth tracking. However, as Barrett (2007) and Choi (2013) argued, portfolios require more than just a digital platform they demand thoughtful scaffolding, clear assessment criteria, and student training in metacognition.

Without such structures, portfolios may become disorganized collections rather than coherent narratives of progress. Teachers must therefore curate activities that promote reflection (e.g., "reflection prompts," self-assessment rubrics) and offer formative feedback throughout the portfolio process.

## 5.3. Building Trust in AI-Supported Peer Assessment

Peer assessment, especially when enhanced with AI tools like *Peergrade* or *Eli Review*, can cultivate collaborative learning and critical thinking (Topping, 2010). However, teacher concerns about student trust, bias, and feedback reliability remain valid.

To mitigate these issues, teachers can:

- Involve students in co-creating rubrics for peer review.
- Conduct peer feedback training sessions to build skills and accountability.
- Use AI as a moderator, not judge—flagging vague comments, not assigning final grades.

By fostering a transparent, skill-building approach to peer assessment, AI tools can enhance - not hinder - the peer learning experience.

#### 5.4. Addressing Ethical and Equity Concerns

Perhaps the most cautionary theme involved access, equity, and bias in AI-supported assessment. As echoed by Pardo & Siemens (2014), educational technologies often amplify existing inequalities if not thoughtfully implemented. Teachers must be mindful of:

• Digital access gaps - ensuring students without devices or high-speed internet aren't disadvantaged.

• Algorithmic bias - recognizing that many AI tools are trained on dominant linguistic or cultural norms, potentially penalizing diverse expression.

• Student agency - ensuring learners understand how AI works and are not overly dependent on it.

Addressing these concerns may require institutional support, but classroom teachers can still advocate for inclusive practices and select tools that align with their learners' realities.

#### 5.5. Recommendations for ELT Teachers

Based on these findings, the following recommendations can support ELT teachers in integrating AI-supported assessment techniques effectively:

# Pedagogical Recommendations

• Blend AI with human feedback: Use AI tools to handle mechanical feedback, reserving teacher feedback for higher-order thinking and personalized support.

• Use portfolios for formative growth: Encourage students to curate and reflect on their learning regularly, not just for final evaluation.

• Embed peer assessment gradually: Build trust and skills before fully integrating peer feedback into grading systems.

#### **Practical Recommendations**

• Choose tools intentionally: Evaluate AI tools not just for functionality, but for pedagogical value and learner fit.

• Train students in tech literacy: Teach students how to use AI feedback critically, not passively.

• Ensure equity in access: Provide alternative options for students with limited access or offer schoolbased tech support.

#### Ethical Recommendations

• Be transparent about AI use: Explain to students what the AI is doing and how it contributes to their learning.

• Monitor for bias or errors: Regularly review AI feedback and encourage students to question it when necessary.

• Promote learner autonomy: Ensure that AI tools support, not replace, learner agency and voice.

# Practical AI Tools for ELT Teachers in Vietnam

To bridge theory and classroom practice, this section introduces several AI-supported tools that can assist Vietnamese ELT teachers in applying innovative assessment techniques such as digital portfolios, peer assessment, and automated feedback. All tools listed below are either free or offer free plans, and they have been tested or adopted in language learning contexts worldwide.

# • Grammarly (<u>https://grammarly.com</u>)

Function: AI-powered writing assistant

**Use in Assessment**: Offers grammar, vocabulary, and style feedback; helps students self-edit before submission **How teachers can apply**: Encourage students to revise writing with Grammarly before uploading to digital portfolios or submitting for peer review

# • Write & Improve (https://writeandimprove.com) – by Cambridge English

Function: Real-time automated writing feedback

**Use in Assessment**: Provides CEFR-aligned scores and feedback; suitable for self-assessment and writing portfolios

Why it's helpful: Designed specifically for English learners; feedback is visual and easy to understand Classroom use: Students can revise writing multiple times and track progress in their portfolios

# • Google Sites + Google Drive

Function: Free web-based platform for digital portfolios

Use in Assessment: Students can upload writing, audio recordings, peer feedback, reflections, etc.

Why it's helpful: Accessible, customizable, integrates well with Google Classroom

In Vietnam: Widely accessible; suitable for secondary and university-level learners

# • Peergrade (https://peergrade.io)

Function: AI-supported peer feedback platform

Use in Assessment: Allows anonymous peer reviews; AI flags incomplete or vague feedback Teacher benefits: Tracks feedback quality; reduces grading workload

Note: Although premium plans exist, basic features may still be accessible through educational licenses

• SpeakPipe (https://www.speakpipe.com/voice-recorder)

Function: Voice recording tool for speaking tasks

**Use in Assessment**: Students record speaking tasks, reflections, or oral feedback for peer assessment **How to use**: Recordings can be embedded in digital portfolios; teachers can give spoken comments

• Formative (https://goformative.com)

Function: Interactive, AI-supported formative assessment tool

**Use in Assessment**: Teachers create assessments that give real-time feedback; integrates with Google Classroom

Application: Useful for quizzes, reflective questions, or mid-portfolio check-ins

# VI. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored how innovative assessment techniques - particularly digital portfolios and peer assessment - can be enriched by AI tools in English Language Teaching (ELT). Through a literature-based qualitative approach, simulated teacher voices were used to surface authentic perspectives and challenges surrounding AI integration in assessment. The findings highlight that while AI-supported tools offer exciting opportunities to improve feedback quality, learner engagement, and assessment efficiency, their impact largely depends on thoughtful implementation, digital equity, and pedagogical integrity.

Teachers in ELT contexts - especially in developing countries like Vietnam - stand to benefit from integrating accessible tools such as *Grammarly*, *Write & Improve*, *Google Sites*, and *Peergrade*. However, these tools must be used not as replacements for human insight but as co-pilots in a human-centered, formative assessment process.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature that bridges technological innovation with classroom realities. However, it is not without limitations. Because the study was theoretical and simulated in nature, it does not offer empirical data from actual teacher interviews or classroom observations. Future research should involve qualitative fieldwork with real teachers and students across diverse ELT settings to validate and expand upon the themes discussed here. Moreover, longitudinal studies could better examine how AI tools impact student learning outcomes over time.

Ultimately, as AI becomes more embedded in education, ELT teachers must remain critical, creative, and learner-focused - ensuring that the promise of technology serves the purpose of pedagogy. With professional development, contextual awareness, and a willingness to experiment, teachers can navigate the AI era not as passive users, but as informed, empowered practitioners.

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