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Towards an Evidence-Based Institutional AI Policy: Phenomenological Insights from English Language Teaching in Indonesian Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education has created new opportunities for English Language Teaching (ELT) while simultaneously raising concerns regarding learner autonomy, academic ethics, and institutional governance. Although Indonesia has introduced national guidelines for the responsible use of generative AI in higher education, evidence on how AI is experienced and interpreted within specific educational contexts remains limited. This study explores the lived experiences of AI use among lecturers, students, and institutional leaders in English Language Teaching within Indonesian higher education. Employing an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the study analyzed data collected from 46 participants across nine English Language Education programs in South Kalimantan through semi-structured interviews, qualitative questionnaires, and institutional document analysis. Three superordinate themes emerged: (1) making sense of AI as an accessible learning partner, (2) negotiating learner autonomy and academic ethics in AI-assisted learning, and (3) translating lived experiences into evidence-based institutional AI policy. The findings indicate that participants perceived AI not merely as a technological tool but as a learning partner whose educational value depends on critical judgment, ethical responsibility, and contextual pedagogical practices. The study contributes to AI and ELT scholarship by providing a phenomenological understanding of AI-assisted learning and demonstrating how lived experiences can inform context-sensitive institutional AI policies that complement broader national policy directions. These findings offer practical insights for higher education institutions seeking to develop responsible, evidence-based AI governance.

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Introduction

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has marked a new phase in the transformation of higher education. Unlike earlier digital technologies that primarily functioned as tools for information delivery, generative AI is capable of supporting learning through instant feedback, idea generation, knowledge exploration, and real-time text production (Bahroun et al., 2023; Giannakos et al., 2025). These capabilities have brought about substantial changes in teaching practices, assessment, and academic interactions, positioning AI not merely as a supplementary technological tool but as an integral component of the higher education learning ecosystem (Al Farhan & Aflahah, 2026). Consequently, the central challenge facing higher education is no longer simply whether AI should be adopted, but how institutions can establish governance frameworks that balance technological innovation with the preservation of academic values.

Among various academic disciplines, English Language Teaching (ELT) has experienced one of the most profound impacts of generative AI because much of its instructional practice revolves around language construction, text production, and academic interaction, activities that AI can now directly facilitate (Alshumaimeri & Alshememry, 2024; Limiya & Kumar, 2025). This intensive engagement suggests that ELT is not only one of the primary domains of AI adoption in higher education but also a context in which the evolving relationship among students, lecturers, and technology can be most clearly observed. However, the widespread integration of AI in ELT also raises critical questions concerning the acceptable boundaries of AI use, how learner autonomy can be fostered without compromising academic ethics, and how higher education institutions should respond through clear and responsible policies. Understanding the lived experiences of lecturers and students in ELT is therefore essential not only for explaining how AI is used, but also for revealing how these experiences are interpreted and translated into evidence that can inform responsive institutional AI policies.

The use of AI in English Language Teaching has evolved from serving as a supplementary instructional tool to becoming an integral component of more personalized and learner-centered educational practices (Almohesh, 2024; Satiti et al., 2024). A growing body of research suggests that AI can enhance language learning by providing timely feedback, facilitating idea development, and supporting more flexible forms of self-directed learning (Al-Smadi et al., 2024; Khasawneh et al., 2025; Wei, 2023). From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, these characteristics have the potential to strengthen learner autonomy by enabling students to exercise greater control over their learning processes and retain agency in making learning decisions (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Nevertheless, as AI

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assumes a more prominent role in education, ensuring that these pedagogical benefits do not undermine the academic values that underpin higher education has become increasingly important. This also highlights the importance of maintaining meaningful human involvement in AI-assisted learning, in which AI supports rather than replaces learners' and educators' intellectual judgment.

As AI becomes more deeply embedded in educational practice, scholarly attention has increasingly shifted toward the ethical and governance challenges associated with its use (Alrayes et al., 2024; Suchithra & Arya, 2025). The ability of AI to generate texts and complete academic tasks almost instantaneously has intensified concerns regarding academic integrity, learner dependency, and the validity of assessment. Previous studies consistently argue that these challenges cannot be addressed simply by restricting AI use; rather, they require the development of AI literacy, including the ability to critically evaluate AI-generated information and recognize its limitations, alongside thoughtfully designed pedagogical practices and clear institutional policies (Eke, 2023; Francis et al., 2025; Yusuf et al., 2024). Consequently, the central issue is no longer whether AI should be incorporated into teaching and learning, but how users' lived experiences can provide a foundation for developing responsible and context-sensitive AI governance that supports human judgment, academic integrity, and meaningful AI integration in higher education.

Despite the rapid growth of research on AI in higher education, most existing studies have primarily focused on technological effectiveness, user perceptions, and the potential of AI to enhance teaching and learning (Al Farhan & Istiqamah, 2026; Utami et al., 2023). Although an increasing number of studies have begun to examine learner autonomy, academic integrity, and institutional AI policy (Lan & Zhou, 2025), these issues have largely been investigated in isolation, leaving their interrelationships insufficiently understood. Consequently, there remains limited research exploring how lecturers and students make sense of their experiences of using AI in English Language Teaching (ELT) and how these experiences shape their understandings of learner autonomy and academic ethics. Such an understanding is essential because the values, principles, and practices emerging from users' lived experiences may provide an empirical foundation for developing more contextually appropriate institutional AI policies (MacIntyre et al., 2022).

The above gap becomes particularly significant in the context of Indonesian higher education, where the adoption of AI has progressed more rapidly than institutional efforts to establish comprehensive governance policies for its responsible use. In response, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology published the Guidelines for the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education Learning

(2024), providing a national framework for responsible and ethical AI use in teaching and learning. However, as a broad national framework, the guideline cannot fully capture the diverse institutional and disciplinary contexts in which AI is implemented. A similar situation can be observed in higher education institutions across South Kalimantan, where AI has increasingly been integrated into academic activities despite the absence of institution-specific AI policies governing its pedagogical use, academic integrity, and ethical responsibilities. As a result, AI-related practices often depend on the individual interpretations of lecturers and students, potentially leading to inconsistent academic practices across institutions (Schaeffer et al., 2024). Understanding users' lived experiences within this local context is therefore essential to ensure that future institutional policy recommendations are grounded in empirical realities rather than based solely on normative assumptions.

These developments suggest that the integration of AI in ELT cannot be fully understood solely through evaluations of technological effectiveness or existing institutional policies. Instead, the ways in which lecturers and students make sense of their experiences with AI provide an important lens for understanding how learner autonomy, academic ethics, and AI-assisted learning practices interact within educational settings. Examining these lived experiences enables researchers not only to explain what occurs in everyday academic practice but also to uncover the underlying values and principles that shape participants' decisions and actions (Prosek & Gibson, 2021). Such insights are essential for developing institutional recommendations that genuinely reflect users' experiences rather than relying exclusively on prescriptive or normative perspectives.

Against these conceptual and contextual gaps, this study seeks to explore the lived experiences of lecturers and students in using AI within English Language Teaching in Indonesian higher education. Employing an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, the study aims to examine how participants make sense of AI use and how these meanings relate to learner autonomy, academic ethics, and the values that emerge from everyday educational practice. By foregrounding participants' lived experiences, the study contributes not only to a deeper understanding of AI integration in ELT but also to the development of empirically grounded principles and recommendations for institutional AI policy. To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions: (1) How do lecturers and students make sense of AI use in English Language Teaching (ELT) in higher education? (2) How do lecturers and students interpret the relationship between AI use, learner autonomy, and academic ethics within the context of ELT? and (3) What values, principles, and recommendations can be derived from the ELT context to inform

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institutional AI policy in higher education?

Method

This study adopted a qualitative research design using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore how participants made sense of their experiences of using AI in ELT within higher education. IPA was selected because it focuses on lived experience and the ways individuals interpret and construct meaning from a particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). The in-depth interview accounts from lecturers and higher education leaders constituted the primary phenomenological corpus, while students' open-ended questionnaire responses provided complementary experiential perspectives. This approach allowed the study to preserve the idiographic depth of interview accounts while incorporating a broader range of student experiences into the interpretive process.

The study was conducted across nine higher education institutions in South Kalimantan, all of which offer undergraduate English Language Education programs. Including all institutions within the region enabled the study to obtain a comprehensive understanding of AI use in ELT, thereby providing regional coverage of the phenomenon under investigation. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling based on their direct engagement with AI in academic activities. A total of 46 participants took part in the study, comprising nine English language lecturers, 34 undergraduate students who had experience using AI to support their learning, and three higher education leaders involved in institutional academic decision-making. This combination of participants provided complementary perspectives spanning classroom practice, students' learning experiences, and institutional leadership. For the phenomenological analysis, the 12 interview participants (nine lecturers and three higher education leaders) constituted the primary in-depth cases, while the 34 students contributed complementary experiential accounts through the open-ended questionnaire. To ensure participants' confidentiality, each participant was assigned an anonymous identification code according to their participant group (Table 1). These codes are used throughout the Findings section when presenting verbatim excerpts.

Table 1. Participant Coding Scheme

Participant Group	Code	Number
Lecturers	L01–L09	9
Students	S01–S34	34
Higher Education Leaders	H01–H03	3

Data were collected from three participant-based sources: semi-structured interviews with nine lecturers and three higher education leaders, and a qualitative exploratory

questionnaire administered to 34 students. Lecturer interviews explored experiences of AI integration, its implications for teaching and learning, and pedagogical recommendations, while leader interviews focused on institutional responses, governance values, and future policy directions. Given the larger student participant group (n = 34), students provided experiential accounts through eight open-ended questions administered via Google Forms. The questionnaire was designed as a qualitative exploratory instrument rather than a structured survey, allowing students to describe their experiences, reflections, and recommendations regarding AI use in ELT. These responses served as complementary experiential accounts alongside the in-depth interviews.

Institutional policy documents were collected as contextual evidence. Of the nine participating institutions, only one had formally adopted specific guidelines on AI use at the time of data collection. Therefore, its policy document was purposively included as the only available institutional policy evidence. This document was not treated as representative of the other institutions or as a phenomenological data source, but was used to contextualize participants' accounts and examine how formal institutional provisions related to the values and concerns emerging from the data. Together, these complementary sources supported source triangulation while combining the depth of interview accounts with the breadth of student perspectives.

The data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) following the analytical procedures proposed by Smith et al. (2009). The analysis began with repeated reading of the 12 interview accounts to develop familiarity with each case, followed by initial noting of descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual observations. Emergent themes were then developed within each interview account before cases were compared to identify patterns of convergence and divergence. The 34 student questionnaire responses were analyzed separately as complementary experiential accounts, focusing on meanings and patterns relevant to the research questions rather than treating them as equivalent substitutes for in-depth IPA interviews. The institutional policy document was used as contextual evidence rather than as a phenomenological case. Finally, insights from the idiographic interview analysis and complementary sources were brought together through an iterative interpretive process to develop the superordinate themes and address the study's three research questions.

The trustworthiness of the study was enhanced through an audit trail, reflexive journaling, and source triangulation involving lecturers, students, higher education leaders, and institutional policy documents, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings. Ethical principles were observed throughout the study by obtaining institutional

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permission prior to data collection and informed consent from all participants. To protect participants' confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout the research process, and all data were securely stored and used exclusively for research purposes.

Findings and Discussion

A. Making Sense of AI as an Accessible Learning Partner in ELT

Participants consistently described AI as an integral part of their everyday experiences in English language teaching and learning. Rather than viewing AI solely as a technological innovation, they interpreted it as an accessible learning partner that supported various academic activities, including idea generation, language refinement, translation, and writing development. Across students, lecturers, and institutional leaders, AI was valued because it expanded learning opportunities beyond the classroom while providing immediate academic support whenever needed. However, participants' narratives also revealed that the educational significance of AI was not defined simply by its availability. Instead, they constructed its meaning through continuous negotiation between technological assistance and human responsibility, recognizing that the benefits of AI depended on users' ability to engage with it critically and purposefully.

Participants' accounts demonstrated that AI had become embedded in routine learning and teaching practices. Students frequently explained that they used AI to clarify difficult concepts, improve grammar and vocabulary, generate ideas for writing assignments, and receive immediate feedback during independent study. The availability of instant responses enabled them to continue learning outside scheduled classroom sessions, making the learning process more flexible and responsive to individual needs.

> *"I use AI on my own to learn the rules of English grammar. I ask a lot of questions about it and **have learned a lot about grammar** from my conversations with ChatGPT." (S13)*

For S13, the significance of AI lay not simply in receiving grammatical explanations but in being able to initiate repeated, self-directed interactions whenever difficulties arose. The account suggests that AI was experienced as an accessible learning resource that extended the participant's opportunities to revisit language problems beyond scheduled classroom interaction. This individual account illustrates how the meaning of AI as a "learning partner" was constructed through a particular pattern of self-directed engagement rather than assumed from AI's technological availability alone.

> *"In my opinion, AI is very helpful because **it responds very quickly** and provides the answers we're looking for, especially when it comes to learning English." (S20)*

The student's account illustrates that AI was experienced as a readily available learning companion rather than merely an information retrieval tool. Its value lay in providing continuous academic support that encouraged learners to revisit language problems, explore alternative expressions, and develop greater confidence in completing English-related tasks.

Lecturers similarly described AI as supporting classroom learning by assisting students with preliminary academic tasks, such as brainstorming, language editing, and text organization. Rather than replacing teaching, AI was perceived as allowing classroom interactions to move beyond basic language correction toward more analytical discussions and higher-order learning activities.

> *"One of the biggest advantages of using AI is that **it helps me brainstorm ideas** almost instantly. When I'm preparing teaching materials or looking for examples, AI gives me initial ideas very quickly, which saves me a lot of time." (L08)*

Although L08's account came from a teaching rather than a learning perspective, it converged with S13's experience in portraying AI as valuable primarily because it extended the user's capacity to initiate and continue academic activity independently.

Institutional leaders further acknowledged that AI had become an unavoidable component of contemporary higher education. While recognizing its potential to enhance learning efficiency, they emphasized that AI should function as an educational support system whose outputs require verification, ethical consideration, and responsible human judgment.

> *"At this point, **AI is no longer something that higher education can avoid**. The real challenge is how we optimize its use within appropriate academic and ethical boundaries. **AI should remain a supporting tool**, while the development of ideas, critical thinking, and disciplinary knowledge must continue to come from the learners and educators themselves." (H01)*

Taken together, these accounts indicate that participants shared a common understanding of AI as a valuable educational resource. Nevertheless, they consistently rejected the idea that AI should replace human thinking. Instead, they regarded it as a partner that facilitates learning while preserving learners' and educators' responsibility for evaluating information and making academic decisions.

From an interpretative phenomenological perspective, participants' experiences suggest that AI acquired meaning not because of its technological sophistication but because of the ways it became integrated into their everyday learning practices. Accessibility emerged as the defining characteristic of this experience. Participants valued AI because it enabled continuous interaction with learning, allowing them to seek explanations, refine ideas, and solve linguistic problems whenever such needs arose.

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More importantly, participants' narratives revealed that this accessibility gradually transformed their perceptions of learning itself. Learning was no longer understood as an activity confined to classroom instruction but as an ongoing process supported by interactions among learners, lecturers, and AI. Nevertheless, this transformation did not diminish the importance of human agency. Participants consistently emphasized that meaningful learning still required critical thinking, reflection, and personal responsibility. In this sense, AI was experienced not as a substitute for intellectual engagement but as an educational partner whose value depended on thoughtful and responsible use.

The findings extend existing research on AI in higher education and English language teaching by demonstrating that participants' experiences were shaped not only by the functional capabilities of AI but also by the meanings they attached to its use within everyday academic practices. Previous studies have highlighted AI's capacity to provide immediate feedback, support writing development, facilitate personalized learning, and improve learning efficiency (Black & Tomlinson, 2025; Mohammed & Khalid, 2025; Naz & Robertson, 2024). The present findings are consistent with these observations but also suggest that participants valued AI because it enabled a more continuous and flexible learning experience that extended beyond formal classroom interactions.

Unlike studies that primarily evaluate AI in terms of learning outcomes or technological effectiveness, the present study foregrounds participants' lived experiences. AI was experienced as a learning partner whose educational significance emerged through daily interactions that encouraged exploration, supported independent engagement with learning tasks, and facilitated language development (Katsenou et al., 2025; Kim et al., 2022). At the same time, participants consistently maintained that technological assistance should remain subordinate to human judgment. This shared understanding indicates that the educational value of AI lies not in replacing human cognition but in complementing it through responsible and reflective use. Consequently, the findings contribute to the growing discussion on human–AI collaboration by illustrating how lecturers, students, and institutional leaders collectively construct AI as an enabling resource rather than an autonomous educational agent.

The experiences reported by participants suggest that institutional AI policies should acknowledge AI as a legitimate educational resource while reinforcing the importance of critical thinking, academic integrity, and responsible human decision-making. Rather than adopting policies that focus exclusively on restriction or misconduct prevention, higher education institutions should provide guidance that supports the pedagogically meaningful use of AI. Such an approach creates a stronger foundation for developing institutional AI

governance that is informed by the lived experiences of lecturers, students, and academic leaders.

B. Negotiating Learner Autonomy and Academic Ethics in AI-Assisted English Language Learning

Participants' experiences revealed that the increasing use of AI in English language teaching was accompanied by continuous reflection on its educational and ethical implications. While AI was widely recognized as a valuable learning partner, participants consistently questioned how far technological assistance should be incorporated into academic work without diminishing learners' intellectual responsibility. Rather than perceiving learner autonomy and academic ethics as separate concerns, participants interpreted them as closely interconnected dimensions of responsible AI use. Their narratives demonstrated an ongoing negotiation between benefiting from AI's capabilities and maintaining independent thinking, academic honesty, and personal accountability throughout the learning process.

Although students acknowledged that AI enabled them to complete learning tasks more efficiently, many emphasized that its outputs could not be accepted uncritically. Participants described reviewing AI-generated responses, comparing them with other learning resources, and modifying the outputs to ensure that their assignments reflected their own understanding. These accounts suggest that responsible AI use was experienced not as passive acceptance of machine-generated information but as an active process of evaluation and refinement.

> *"On several occasions, I will **back up the AI's answers with references** I've found in physical books or answers I've received from people." (S15)*

> *"Understanding that relies solely on AI tends to be less in-depth because the information obtained is often not followed up with an examination of its sources and context. Therefore, **reading books or other references remains necessary** to build a broader and more comprehensive understanding." (S04)*

S15's account illustrates how the responsibility for validating AI-generated information remained with the learner. Rather than treating verification as an additional step imposed after using AI, the participant experienced it as part of the learning process itself. S04 similarly described the limits of AI-generated understanding, but emphasized the need to return to books and other sources. Across these two accounts, a convergent meaning emerges: AI assistance was considered educationally legitimate only when accompanied by active judgment and independent verification.

Lecturers expressed similar concerns. While recognizing AI's potential to support language learning, they emphasized that excessive dependence on AI could reduce

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opportunities for students to develop critical thinking, creativity, and academic writing skills. Consequently, lecturers increasingly viewed their role as guiding students to evaluate AI-generated content rather than simply prohibiting its use.

> *"I've noticed that some students become **overly dependent on AI**. When they are asked to write without using AI, even **constructing simple sentences becomes difficult**." (L03)*

L03's account introduces a contrasting dimension to the student experiences above. While S15 and S04 described autonomy through active verification, L03 encountered situations in which AI assistance appeared to displace rather than support independent language production. The contrast is analytically important because it shows that the meaning of AI use was not uniformly experienced as autonomy-enhancing. Its effect depended on whether learners retained responsibility for the intellectual work.

Institutional leaders likewise highlighted that the educational challenge was not whether AI should be used, but how its use could remain consistent with principles of academic integrity and responsible scholarship. They argued that institutional guidance should promote transparency, accountability, and ethical awareness while recognizing AI as an inevitable component of contemporary higher education.

> *"I believe technological development should be embraced because it brings many educational benefits. However, its value depends on how we use it. AI should help students and lecturers **expand their knowledge and explore new ideas**, not become a shortcut that discourages genuine learning." (H02)*

Across these perspectives, participants converged on one central idea: responsible AI use requires learners and educators to remain intellectually accountable for academic work, regardless of the technological assistance involved.

From an interpretative phenomenological perspective, participants' accounts suggest that learner autonomy was experienced not as independence from external support but as the capacity to exercise informed judgment when interacting with AI. The presence of AI did not diminish autonomy; rather, it altered the conditions under which autonomy was enacted. Participants described autonomy as an ongoing process of questioning, verifying, selecting, and refining AI-generated information before incorporating it into their own learning.

Similarly, academic ethics emerged as a lived practice rather than a fixed set of institutional rules. Ethical AI use was understood through participants' everyday decisions regarding transparency, originality, and intellectual responsibility. These experiences indicate that learner autonomy and academic ethics are mutually reinforcing: autonomy requires ethical judgment, while ethical AI use depends on learners' willingness to think

critically rather than delegating cognitive responsibility to technology. Consequently, participants interpreted responsible AI use as a balance between technological assistance and sustained human agency.

The findings contribute to contemporary discussions on learner autonomy in AI-assisted education by demonstrating that autonomy is not weakened simply because students use AI. Instead, participants experienced autonomy as an active process of regulating their engagement with AI, evaluating its outputs, and integrating technological assistance into their own learning decisions. This perspective extends previous studies that have primarily examined AI as a tool for improving learning efficiency by highlighting its influence on learners' reflective decision-making and intellectual responsibility (Dahri et al., 2024; Yan et al., 2025).

The present findings also enrich research on academic integrity in the era of generative AI. Existing literature has often framed AI as a potential source of plagiarism or academic misconduct (Dabis & Csáki, 2024; Song, 2024). In contrast, participants in this study adopted a more nuanced perspective. They did not reject AI itself; rather, they questioned the ways in which AI was used. Their experiences suggest that ethical concerns arise not from the technology alone but from the extent to which learners relinquish or retain ownership of their thinking and academic work. This interpretation aligns with emerging scholarship advocating a shift from surveillance-oriented approaches toward educational models that cultivate ethical AI literacy, critical evaluation, and responsible human–AI collaboration.

Participants' narratives indicate that institutional AI policies should move beyond defining acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI. Instead, policies should explicitly foster learner autonomy, critical evaluation, and ethical responsibility as interconnected competencies. Such an approach positions academic integrity not merely as compliance with institutional regulations but as a reflective practice that enables students and lecturers to engage responsibly with AI while preserving human judgment as the foundation of scholarly work.

C. From Lived Experiences to Evidence-Based Institutional AI Policy

Participants' experiences collectively extended beyond individual learning practices and pointed toward broader institutional implications for AI integration in higher education. While students, lecturers, and institutional leaders approached AI from different perspectives, they consistently emphasized the need for clear guidance that supports responsible, transparent, and educationally meaningful AI use. Rather than advocating unrestricted adoption or strict prohibition, participants envisioned institutional policies

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that balance technological innovation with academic integrity, critical thinking, and human accountability. These shared experiences suggest that effective AI governance should emerge from the realities of educational practice rather than being driven solely by technological developments or compliance-oriented regulation.

Participants consistently acknowledged that AI has become an inevitable component of higher education and that institutions should respond proactively through appropriate governance. Students expressed a desire for clear guidance regarding acceptable AI use in learning and assessment, while lecturers highlighted the need for institutional support in redesigning teaching strategies and assessment practices. Institutional leaders similarly emphasized that AI policies should encourage responsible innovation without compromising academic integrity or scholarly standards.

> *"**Universities need to set limits on the use of AI** in academic assignments and provide clear guidelines to students. That way, AI can be used to aid learning, but students remain responsible for the work they do on their own." (S02)*

> *"Universities must not only regulate but **also teach what responsible use of AI looks like**, so that there are no misconceptions about AI itself among academics." (S20)*

> *"Universities should **require transparency when students use AI** and provide ethical guidelines to ensure that AI is used as a learning tool, not as a substitute for their own work." (S16)*

The student's account reflects the expectation that institutions should provide transparent guidance rather than leaving learners to navigate AI use independently.

> *"AI policy should clearly explain **how AI can be used as a discussion partner** rather than a substitute for students' thinking, and what consequences apply if students misuse it. Clear assessment guidelines and reliable AI detection tools would also help lecturers implement these policies fairly and consistently." (L02)*

L02's account illustrates this institutional meaning from the lecturer's position. Policy was valued not simply for defining prohibited behavior but for providing practical boundaries within which AI could be integrated into teaching and assessment. The emphasis on course-specific limits, assessment consequences, and institutional support suggests that policy was experienced as an enabling structure for pedagogical decision-making rather than solely as a compliance mechanism.

> *"The key issue is not whether lecturers and students use AI, but **whether they understand how to use it wisely**. Strengthening AI literacy will help them evaluate AI-generated information critically, recognize its limitations, and apply it responsibly in teaching and learning." (H03)*

H03's perspective extends this interpretation from classroom implementation to institutional capacity, linking responsible AI use with the development of AI literacy among both lecturers and students. Taken together, the two accounts indicate a shared institutional

meaning that effective policy should provide both normative boundaries and the capacity to use AI critically within those boundaries.

These perspectives resonate with the institutional policy document, which emphasizes transparency, verification of AI-generated outputs, accountability, respect for academic integrity, and the continued responsibility of researchers and students for the originality and accuracy of their work. Rather than introducing entirely new principles, the policy document reinforces many of the values that had already emerged from participants' lived experiences.

From an interpretative phenomenological perspective, participants' accounts indicate that institutional policy acquires meaning only when it reflects the realities of educational experience. Rather than perceiving policy as an external set of rules imposed upon AI users, participants implicitly understood it as a shared framework that supports responsible educational practice. Their narratives suggest that effective AI governance is grounded in trust, critical reflection, and mutual responsibility among students, lecturers, and institutional leaders.

Importantly, participants did not frame policy as a mechanism for controlling technology itself. Instead, they viewed policy as supporting the human capacity to use AI ethically and thoughtfully. This distinction shifts the focus of AI governance from regulating technological tools to strengthening the competencies and values required for their responsible use. Consequently, institutional AI policy emerges not as an end in itself but as a reflection of the educational values negotiated through participants' everyday experiences.

Recent scholarship increasingly emphasizes that higher education institutions require AI governance frameworks capable of balancing innovation with academic integrity. Existing studies have proposed principles such as transparency, accountability, AI literacy, and human oversight as essential components of responsible AI implementation (Cheong, 2024; Radanliev, 2025; Shukla, 2024). The present findings support these principles while extending the discussion by demonstrating that effective institutional policy should originate from the lived experiences of those who use AI in everyday educational practice.

Unlike governance models that prioritize compliance or risk mitigation, participants in this study consistently highlighted the importance of educational guidance, shared responsibility, and critical engagement. Their experiences suggest that institutional AI policy is likely to be more effective when it is perceived not merely as a regulatory instrument but as a pedagogical framework that enables responsible learning and teaching (Chan, 2023; Perkins et al., 2024). This interpretation contributes to current discussions on

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AI governance by illustrating how phenomenological insights can inform evidence-based policy development within higher education, particularly in English language teaching contexts.

The findings indicate that institutional AI policy should be developed through continuous dialogue among students, lecturers, and academic leaders, ensuring that governance reflects authentic educational experiences rather than technological trends alone. Such policies should promote AI literacy, transparency, critical evaluation, and academic integrity while recognizing AI as a legitimate educational resource that complements rather than replaces human intellectual responsibility. In this way, evidence-based institutional AI policy becomes a mechanism for sustaining responsible innovation and preserving the core educational values of higher education.

The three superordinate themes collectively demonstrate that participants' experiences extend beyond descriptions of AI use in English language teaching. Through interpretative phenomenological analysis, these individual accounts were first examined within their particular contexts and then compared across participant perspectives, revealing a developmental pathway in which everyday interactions with AI gradually shaped broader educational values and ultimately informed institutional considerations for responsible AI integration. Rather than representing isolated findings, the themes form an interconnected process through which lived experiences are transformed into evidence that can support institutional policy development. Figure 1 illustrates this interpretative pathway.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the development of evidence-based institutional AI policy begins with participants' lived experiences rather than predetermined governance principles. Through the interpretative process, individual experiences of learning, teaching, and leading with AI were synthesized into three interconnected themes. These themes subsequently revealed a set of shared educational values including critical thinking, human agency, transparency, accountability, and AI literacy, which collectively provide the conceptual foundation for institutional AI policy.

The pathway also demonstrates that policy recommendations did not emerge directly from isolated participant statements or from the institutional policy document alone. Instead, they resulted from an iterative process of phenomenological interpretation in which empirical experiences were examined, compared, and integrated into broader institutional principles. This analytical progression reflects the central contribution of the present study by showing how qualitative evidence can inform higher education policy while remaining grounded in the lived experiences of its academic community.

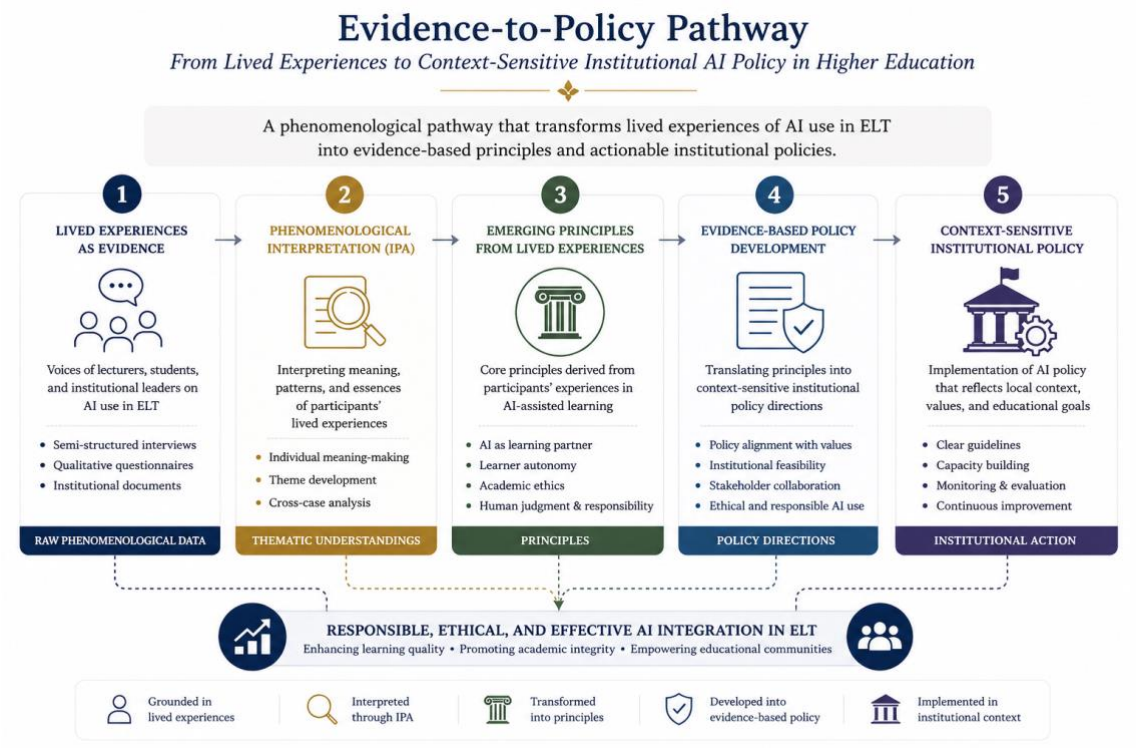


Fig.1. The Evidence-to-Policy Pathway

Building upon the conceptual pathway presented in Figure 1, the final stage of the analysis translates the emergent educational values into practical institutional recommendations. Rather than prescribing universal regulations, these recommendations are intended to demonstrate how phenomenological evidence can inform context-sensitive AI governance within higher education institutions.

Table 2 summarizes how the findings of the present study were translated into institutional recommendations. Each recommendation is explicitly derived from empirical findings and the interpretative themes generated through IPA, ensuring that the proposed policy directions remain grounded in participants' lived experiences. This evidence-to-policy approach differs from normative policy frameworks that begin with predetermined governance principles. Instead, it emphasizes that institutional AI policy should emerge from an understanding of how lecturers, students, and academic leaders experience, interpret, and negotiate AI within authentic educational settings.

Table 2. Evidence-Based Policy Recommendations

Empirical Finding	Emerging Principle	Institutional Recommendation
AI is experienced as an accessible learning partner.	AI should be recognized as a legitimate educational resource.	Develop institutional guidance for responsible pedagogical AI use.
Learners value AI but emphasize verification and independent judgment.	Human agency remains central to AI-assisted learning.	Integrate critical evaluation and AI literacy into the curriculum.

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Empirical Finding	Emerging Principle	Institutional Recommendation
Academic integrity depends on responsible AI use rather than AI avoidance.	Ethical AI use requires transparency and accountability.	Establish institutional guidelines for disclosure and verification of AI-assisted work.
Lecturers require support to redesign teaching and assessment.	AI integration demands pedagogical adaptation.	Provide continuous professional development on AI-supported teaching and assessment.
Leaders emphasize governance and institutional readiness.	Sustainable AI adoption requires coordinated institutional leadership.	Develop evidence-based AI governance involving lecturers, students, and institutional leaders.

Importantly, these recommendations are not intended to serve as a universal policy model applicable to all higher education institutions. Rather, they provide an evidence-informed framework that institutions may adapt according to their disciplinary contexts, organizational cultures, and existing governance structures. By connecting phenomenological insights with institutional policy considerations, the study demonstrates how qualitative inquiry can contribute not only to understanding educational experiences but also to informing responsible AI governance in higher education.

Conclusion

This study used IPA to examine how lecturers, students, and institutional leaders made sense of AI in ELT within Indonesian higher education. The findings show that participants experienced AI as an accessible learning partner rather than only a technological tool, and that its educational value was negotiated through learner autonomy, academic ethics, and human judgment. These lived experiences indicate that AI integration depends on how educational communities interpret and enact its use in their everyday academic practices, alongside its technological capabilities.

The findings should be interpreted within the context of ELT programs in South Kalimantan and are intended for analytical rather than statistical generalization. Two limitations apply. First, data depth was asymmetrical: lecturers and institutional leaders were interviewed, whereas students provided experiential accounts through an open-ended questionnaire, which limited the depth of student-specific phenomenological exploration. Second, document analysis covered only one of the nine participating institutions, the only one with formal AI guidelines at the time of data collection, so the document cannot represent institutional policy across the region. Future research could address these limitations through in-depth student interviews and a broader examination of institutional AI policies across disciplines and settings.

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