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Artificial Intelligence in English Classrooms: Ethical Pathways in Indian Higher Education

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Abstract
Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping higher education worldwide, with India emerging as a particularly dynamic context. Undergraduate English classrooms have become key sites for experimenting with grammar checkers, paraphrasing platforms, and generative Chabot's. While these tools offer efficiency, personalization, and linguistic support, they also raise ethical and pedagogical concerns. This paper examines pathways for responsibly integrating AI into English classrooms, with a focus on degree colleges in Bangalore. Drawing on literature review, classroom reflections, and teacher discussions, the study finds that AI can enhance feedback, multilingual assistance, and student engagement but risks promoting academic dishonesty, bias, privacy violations, and teacher deskilling. The paper argues for shifting from automation to augmentation, positioning AI as a complement to teachers. Ethical integration requires teacher mediation, critical digital literacy, and culturally sensitive practices that honour India's multilingual realities. Ultimately, AI can accelerate learning but cannot replace human intelligence, creativity, or the relational bonds central to education.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, English language teaching, ethics, Indian higher education, pedagogy, Bangalore

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has become a central force in education over the past decade, with governments, institutions, and corporations endorsing it as a transformative solution to longstanding challenges of scale, efficiency, and personalization. In India, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 explicitly emphasizes the role of digital tools, urging institutions to embrace AI-driven platforms for teaching, learning, and assessment. While such initiatives reflect a growing enthusiasm for technology's potential, they also raise profound questions about pedagogy, culture, and ethics.

English classrooms occupy a particularly significant position within this discourse. Unlike technical subjects that emphasize quantifiable skills, English education demands interpretation, creativity, and dialogue. It is deeply humanistic, requiring engagement with culture, ethics, and personal expression. These qualities resist automation and expose the limitations of AI, which excels at recognizing patterns but struggles to cultivate originality or critical reasoning.

In Bangalore, India's educational and technological hub, AI integration into English classrooms has become increasingly visible. Students commonly use Grammarly to refine essays, Quill Bot to rephrase notes, and Chat GPT to generate drafts of assignments. Teachers, however, have observed that while these tools improve grammar and fluency, they cannot substitute for nuanced literary interpretation or culturally rooted creativity. Some students have

gone as far as submitting AI-generated stories or essays, which, though polished in language, lacked individuality and contextual sensitivity. At the same time, when mediated ethically, AI has been shown to support inclusivity, such as when students from non-English-medium schools use translation or speech-to-text tools to express themselves more confidently. The central question that arises, therefore, is not whether AI should be present in English classrooms, but how it can be integrated in ways that preserve academic integrity, foster inclusivity, and uphold human-centred pedagogy.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, combining three sources of insight to examine the ethical and pedagogical implications of AI in Indian higher education. A review of existing scholarship, including works by Luckin, Selwyn, Holmes, and Williamson & Piattoeva, provides a theoretical framework for analyzing both the promises and risks of AI adoption. These studies emphasize issues such as personalization, surveillance, and the shifting role of teachers, all of which are relevant to the Indian context.

The second strand of evidence is drawn from classroom reflections in a Bangalore degree college where students actively experimented with AI platforms. Observations revealed that while Grammarly improved grammatical accuracy, students struggled to interpret literary themes without teacher guidance. Similarly, while Quill Bot helped them rephrase academic prose, it offered no understanding of stylistic or rhetorical choices.

Finally, informal discussions with educators across Bangalore highlight a spectrum of attitudes toward AI. Some teachers welcomed its ability to provide instant feedback to large groups of students, while others expressed concern about plagiarism, cultural bias, and student overreliance on automated tools. Collectively, these insights create a holistic picture of AI's complex role in contemporary English education in India.

Findings

The findings reveal both significant opportunities and serious challenges in the integration of AI into Indian English classrooms. On the one hand, AI enables forms of personalized feedback that are difficult to achieve in overcrowded classrooms. Grammar checkers and automated platforms allow weaker students to revise their work independently, increasing their confidence in writing. AI also supports student engagement by providing interactive platforms such as chat bots, which simulate conversation and help hesitant speakers practice English in low-stakes contexts. Furthermore, AI can foster inclusivity in multilingual classrooms by enabling students to translate or transcribe their thoughts across languages, thereby bridging linguistic divides.

On the other hand, these opportunities are offset by pressing challenges. A major concern is academic dishonesty, as students increasingly submit AI-generated assignments that are grammatically correct but devoid of original thought or personal engagement. Equally problematic is the issue of cultural bias. Because most AI systems are trained on Western data, their outputs often privilege Western texts and frameworks while ignoring Indian realities. Teachers have noted instances where AI-generated material failed to reference Indian authors or contexts, thereby marginalizing local knowledge systems. Another challenge lies in the potential deskilling of teachers. As students rely heavily on automated feedback, the teacher's role as evaluator and mentor risks being diminished. Finally, corporate interests loom large, since most AI platforms operate on subscription-based models and engage in extensive data collection. This raises ethical concerns about inequality, commodification, and the loss of academic autonomy.

Discussion

These findings confirm that AI in education is a double-edged sword. Its role in English classrooms cannot be reduced to questions of efficiency; it must be interrogated within ethical, cultural, and pedagogical frameworks.

First, it is crucial to acknowledge that AI is not neutral. Its outputs reflect the values and biases of its developers as well as the datasets on which it is trained. Indian students who turn to Chat GPT for examples of classroom pedagogy frequently encounter references to Western institutions and literary traditions, leaving their own cultural contexts unacknowledged. Without teacher intervention, such tendencies risk displacing local knowledge and privileging foreign perspectives.

Second, teachers remain indispensable. AI can correct grammar or generate paraphrases, but it cannot interpret Indian idioms, explain culturally specific metaphors, or guide students in developing critical arguments. Teachers are the ones who help students understand why certain stylistic choices matter, why cultural nuance cannot be flattened into standardized English, and why creativity is rooted in lived experiences.

Third, the corporate logic underlying AI tools cannot be ignored. With most platforms relying on subscription models, access is uneven. Students in urban, affluent institutions may afford premium versions, while those in rural or under-resourced colleges are left with limited features. This exacerbates existing inequalities in Indian education and raises questions about whether technology is truly democratizing access.

Fourth, English education is inherently social. It thrives on dialogue, debate, and peer exchange—dimensions of learning that no chat bot can authentically replicate. When students discuss Dalit literature or share personal histories, they engage in acts of meaning-making that deepen their collective understanding. AI can simulate conversation, but it cannot offer empathy, memory, or cultural rootedness.

Finally, human intelligence surpasses AI in critical ways. While machines excel at pattern recognition, they lack imagination, ethical reasoning, and moral judgment. For example, AI may summarize a novel such as *The God of Small Things* but cannot facilitate the ethical reflection on caste, trauma, or social justice that such texts demand. Education in the humanities is not about producing flawless sentences but about nurturing empathy, responsibility, and creativity—capacities only humans possess.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that AI strengthens rather than weakens education, its integration must follow ethical pathways rooted in pedagogy and cultural sensitivity. Teacher mediation is essential. Students should not simply accept AI outputs but should be guided in critically evaluating them. By framing AI-generated suggestions as starting points for discussion, teachers can ensure that students remain active learners rather than passive recipients.

Equally important is the cultivation of critical literacy. Students must learn to interrogate AI outputs, identify their limitations, and compare them with human interpretations. Such practices would prevent blind dependence and nurture independent thinking.

Policy awareness is another urgent need. Institutions should establish guidelines for responsible AI use, requiring students to disclose the extent of AI assistance in assignments while also offering training in ethical digital practices. These policies must be context-sensitive, acknowledging both the capacities of urban universities and the constraints of rural colleges.

Cultural sensitivity is crucial in a country as multilingual and diverse as India. Teachers must ensure that AI tools do not erase local languages or homogenize expression. Instead, AI should be adapted to support regional and cultural diversity, helping students negotiate between global English and local identities.

Finally, balanced innovation is necessary. In technologically advanced urban centres, AI can be used to encourage collaborative critique, while in rural areas, simpler tools such as speech-to-text software can be employed to support first-generation learners. The balance lies in welcoming technological progress without allowing it to overshadow human creativity or ethical reasoning.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is transforming higher education in India, with English classrooms emerging as prominent sites of experimentation. From metropolitan hubs like Bangalore to rural colleges in states such as Bihar and Odisha, students are increasingly exposed to AI tools that promise efficiency and support. Yet, these opportunities are accompanied by serious concerns. The greatest danger lies in treating AI as a replacement for teachers, thereby undermining originality, critical inquiry, and the relational dimensions of education. This study has shown that AI is not neutral. It reflects cultural biases, corporate interests, and economic inequalities. Students in well-resourced institutions may access advanced features, while those in underprivileged contexts are left behind. Moreover, AI often privileges Western frameworks at the expense of Indian realities, making teacher intervention indispensable. The way forward lies in repositioning AI as an aid rather than a substitute. Teachers must remain central as mediators who nurture creativity, critical thinking, and cultural sensitivity. Institutions must cultivate critical literacy, design policies that protect academic integrity, and promote practices that respect India's multilingual diversity. Balanced innovation should ensure that both urban and rural students can benefit from AI without losing sight of originality and human-centred pedagogy. Ultimately, while AI may assist with the mechanics of writing or translation, it is human intelligence—with its empathy, ethical judgment, and imagination—that must guide the future of education in India. Only by embedding AI within a pedagogy of inclusivity, fairness, and creativity can Indian higher education harness its potential while safeguarding its humanistic foundations.

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