Castledown

OPEN ACCESS

Technology in Language Teaching & Learning
ISSN 2652-1687
https://www.castledown.com/journals/tltl/

Technology in Language Teaching & Learning, 8, 105040 (2026)
https://doi.org/10.29140/tltl.2026.105040

Generative Artificial Intelligence and Professional Identity Reconstruction among Language Teachers: A Figured Worlds Perspective

ISMAIL XODABANDE[a,b*]
AKHRAROVA RUZIKHON USMANOVNA[b]
ABDULXAY QOSIMOV[b]

[a]*Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran*
ismail.kh.tefl@gmail.com

[b]*Fergana State University, Fergana Region, Uzbekistan*
axrorova.prof@gmail.com
a.qosimov@pf.fdu.uz

Abstract

Drawing on figured worlds theory, this qualitative multiple-case study examined how 15 Uzbek teachers of English as a foreign language negotiated professional identity during a 12-week AI-supported pedagogical mentoring programme. Data were generated through pre- and post-programme interviews, 90 reflective journal entries, 30 AI-assisted lesson plans and associated prompt–output records, six classroom observations and stimulated recall sessions, and two focus-group discussions. Reflexive thematic analysis generated three themes: entering AI-mediated teaching through unequal AI literacy and new identity positions, reclaiming pedagogical agency through critical adaptation under technological constraints, and renegotiating professional authority when AI challenged established linguistic and pedagogical capital. The findings showed that generative AI functioned not simply as an instructional tool but as a cultural artefact around which teachers reconsidered expertise, professional recognition, authorship, and responsibility. Practical AI literacy enabled several novice teachers to participate more visibly in professional interaction, whereas some highly experienced teachers initially experienced technological uncertainty as a disruption of their established expert positioning. Across career stages, however, teachers increasingly reconstructed expertise as the capacity to evaluate, contextualize, adapt, reject, and justify AI-mediated pedagogical decisions. Teacher authority was similarly re-authored around mediation, situated knowledge, and accountability rather than exclusive possession of linguistic information. The findings suggest that AI-related teacher education should

Copyright: *© 2026 Ismail Xodabande, Akhrorova Ruzikhon Usmanovna & Abdulxay Qosimov. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.*

extend beyond technical training to address the identity, authority, authorship, and professional agency implications of AI-mediated language teaching.

Keywords: generative artificial intelligence; language teacher identity; figured worlds; teacher agency; professional authority; AI literacy; mentoring

Introduction

The growing integration of generative artificial intelligence into language education has expanded the pedagogical resources available to teachers by enabling the rapid production of lesson plans, classroom activities, model texts, assessment materials, explanations, translations, and feedback (Ghafouri et al., 2026; Jeon & Lee, 2023; Kohnke & Zou, 2025; Korucu-Kış, 2024; Moorhouse et al., 2024). Research has accordingly examined language teachers' perceptions, acceptance, readiness, and use of generative AI, showing that teachers value its efficiency and ideational support while remaining concerned about inaccurate or generic output, privacy, academic integrity, contextual inappropriateness, and professional or learner overdependence (Al-khresheh, 2024; Dehghani & Mashhadi, 2024; Mohamed, 2024; Omidvar & Meihami, 2025; Parviz & Arthur, 2025; Tarannum et al., 2025). While this body of work has productively developed understanding of AI-related competence, generative AI does not merely add new instructional techniques to an otherwise stable professional role; it may also reshape how teachers understand expertise, creativity, authorship, authority, and responsibility. Language teacher identity is continuously formed and re-formed through the interplay of professional histories, pedagogical knowledge, institutional contexts, relationships, and socially valued resources (Barkhuizen, 2017; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006; Varghese et al., 2005). Generative AI may disturb this interplay because teachers can obtain extensive pedagogical content through prompting, learners can independently access explanations and feedback, and digitally confident novice teachers may possess practical knowledge that some experienced colleagues do not initially have. Although emerging studies have begun to examine AI-mediated reflection, teacher identity reconstruction, transformative agency, and professional becoming (Arefian et al., 2026; Ghiasvand & Seyri, 2025; Yang & Markauskaite, 2025; Zhang et al., 2025), little research has closely traced how in-service language teachers at different career stages reconstruct professional identity through sustained engagement with AI-generated pedagogical artefacts. Addressing this gap, the present study draws on figured worlds theory (Holland et al., 1998) to examine EFL teachers' participation in a 12-week AI-supported pedagogical mentoring programme.

Literature Review

Language Teacher Identity and Figured Worlds

Professional identity concerns the meanings through which teachers understand themselves and are recognized within educational practice. These meanings draw on personal histories and beliefs but are produced relationally through interaction with learners, colleagues, institutional policies, professional discourses, and changing conditions of work. Teachers may claim identities for themselves, have identities attributed to them by others, resist available positions, or construct alternative ways of being professional. Their identities may therefore fluctuate when familiar resources lose value, when new expectations emerge, or when participation in a new professional environment makes previously peripheral competencies important (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006). Language teacher identity is especially sensitive to such processes because language teachers are evaluated not only through instructional performance but also through linguistic proficiency,

cultural legitimacy, pedagogical knowledge, experience, qualifications, institutional status, emotional conduct, and relationships with learners (Barkhuizen, 2017; Varghese et al., 2005).

Figured worlds theory provides a productive basis for analysing how these identity processes operate in AI-mediated teaching. Figured worlds are socially and culturally produced realms of interpretation in which particular actors, activities, artefacts, values, and outcomes acquire recognizable meanings (Holland et al., 1998). Participants learn who belongs within a figured world, what legitimate members are expected to do, which resources carry value, and what forms of identity are available. Schools, classrooms, professional communities, and teacher-education programmes can consequently function as figured worlds in which teachers are positioned and learn to position themselves. These worlds are neither entirely stable nor uniformly experienced. They are shaped by dominant narratives and institutional arrangements, but participants may also improvise, appropriate resources, and author alternative positions.

Generative AI-mediated language teaching can be understood as an emerging figured world populated by teachers, learners, mentors, colleagues, institutions, AI systems, and technology providers. Its cultural artefacts include prompts, generated lesson plans, model texts, translations, feedback, rubrics, explanations, and revised teaching materials. Its circulating narratives include claims that AI saves time, expands creativity, democratizes expertise, improves efficiency, threatens teacher roles, encourages dependence, or makes established forms of instruction obsolete. Within this world, teachers may be positioned as digitally confident innovators, hesitant adopters, dependent users, critical evaluators, threatened experts, pedagogical designers, or ethical mediators. These positions are not determined solely by career stage because the practical ability to use AI may not correspond to years of teaching.

Positioning is therefore a central concept. Teachers do not enter AI-mediated teaching from equivalent professional locations. Their previous experiences, confidence, institutional support, technological access, pedagogical knowledge, beliefs about teaching, and relationships with learners affect what they can do and how their actions are interpreted. A novice teacher who can formulate prompts and compare outputs may gain recognition in a professional-development setting, whereas an experienced teacher may experience discomfort when receiving technical support from a less experienced colleague. At the same time, an experienced teacher may possess contextual knowledge that enables more critical evaluation of generated content. AI-mediated practice can thus destabilize conventional career hierarchies without removing the value of experience. The concept of capital further clarifies this redistribution. Bourdieu (1986) conceptualized capital as socially valued resources that provide recognition, status, and access within particular social fields. In language teaching, linguistic proficiency, qualifications, pedagogical experience, curriculum knowledge, institutional seniority, and assessment expertise may function as forms of cultural capital and, when recognized as legitimate within a professional field, acquire symbolic value. Generative AI may redistribute access to some resources by allowing teachers and learners to generate fluent texts, explanations, and examples rapidly. Practical AI literacy can consequently become a newly valued form of cultural capital whose professional significance depends on recognition. Yet generated fluency does not necessarily constitute pedagogical adequacy. Knowledge of particular learners, sociocultural context, classroom history, curriculum demands, emotional climate, and ethical consequences remains situated. The emerging AI-mediated world therefore produces tension among technological, linguistic, experiential, and pedagogical resources rather than simply replacing one form of expertise with another.

Figured worlds also emphasize authoring and agency. Participants are not merely assigned positions; they can use cultural resources to author alternative identities and practices (Holland et al., 1998). Authoring in AI-mediated teaching occurs when teachers select, modify, combine, localize, reject, or justify AI-generated content. Such decisions are identity-relevant because they establish the relationship

between machine output and professional judgment. Teacher agency similarly concerns the capacity to act purposefully within temporal, relational, institutional, and sociocultural conditions rather than unrestricted individual choice (Priestley et al., 2015; Tao & Gao, 2017). Agency is therefore not equivalent to using AI frequently. A teacher who directly transfers generated content may exercise less agency than one who rejects an apparently polished response because it conflicts with learner needs or professional values.

In the present study, professional identity reconstruction was operationalized as change in how teachers positioned themselves and others in relation to AI, what they regarded as legitimate professional expertise, how they claimed authorship, how they interpreted authority, and how they justified pedagogical responsibility. Increased AI use or confidence alone was not treated as sufficient evidence. Identity reconstruction required evidence of altered professional meaning or action across interviews, journals, lesson artefacts, observations, or stimulated recall.

Language Teachers' Perceptions, Acceptance, and Readiness for Generative AI

A substantial strand of research has examined language teachers' perceptions, acceptance, readiness, and behavioural intentions concerning generative AI. Teachers across different contexts have generally recognized the potential of ChatGPT and related systems to accelerate lesson preparation, generate examples and activities, support feedback, and reduce workload, while simultaneously expressing concerns about unreliable information, academic dishonesty, privacy, learner dependency, and the possible erosion of human interaction (Al-khresheh, 2024; Dehghani & Mashhadi, 2024; Mohamed, 2024; Parviz & Arthur, 2025; Tarannum et al., 2025). These studies show that perceived usefulness alone does not determine adoption. Trust, confidence, ease of use, ethical beliefs, institutional expectations, and access conditions influence teachers' willingness to integrate AI. Survey and qualitative studies further show that language teachers' engagement with generative AI is shaped by perceived pedagogical benefits, institutional conditions, and concerns about reliability, ethics, and professional preparedness (Alm & Ohashi, 2024; Chan, 2025; Choi et al., 2025). Reviews and conceptual analyses accordingly emphasize AI literacy, critical discernment, and sustained teacher education as conditions for pedagogically responsible integration (Karakaya et al., 2025; Mavridi, 2025).

Jeon and Lee (2023) conceptualized the relationship between ChatGPT and human teachers as complementary rather than substitutive. Their argument is important because it rejects technologically deterministic assumptions that generative AI will either replace teachers or leave professional practice unchanged. Human teachers possess relational, contextual, emotional, and ethical capacities that differ from automated text generation. Nevertheless, complementarity is not automatically produced by the existence of different capabilities. It must be negotiated through practice. When generated output appears fluent, comprehensive, and immediately available, teachers must determine how to position it relative to their own expertise and responsibility.

Research on AI readiness and literacy has further demonstrated that responsible engagement involves more than operational familiarity. Li and Liang (2025) developed and validated a scale of teacher AI readiness in Chinese as a foreign language education, while Wang et al. (2025) developed a generative AI literacy scale for EFL teachers. Moorhouse et al. (2024) provided intervention-based evidence that initial language teacher education can develop professional generative AI competence encompassing technological, pedagogical, social, critical, and ethical dimensions. This work is significant because it situates AI competence within professional education rather than treating it as an informal individual skill. However, readiness and literacy are also socially interpreted resources. Teachers who possess practical AI confidence may gain recognition, while those who lack it may feel professionally displaced. AI literacy can therefore become an identity-relevant form of cultural capital when it is recognized as professionally valuable.

Pedagogical Appropriation and AI-mediated Professional Learning

A second major line of research has examined concrete pedagogical uses of generative AI. Language teachers have employed AI for lesson planning, materials design, writing instruction, feedback, assessment, differentiated support, and inclusive pedagogy (Ghafouri et al., 2026; Kohnke & Zou, 2025; Korucu-Kış, 2024; Ulla et al., 2024). Korucu-Kış (2024) described teachers' interaction with ChatGPT as creating a zone of proximal creativity, but the productive value of AI depended on iterative interaction and critical engagement rather than direct acceptance. Kohnke and Zou (2025) similarly showed that ChatGPT could influence lesson planning and instructional practices by expanding access to ideas and alternatives. Ghafouri et al. (2026) reported that a structured ChatGPT-based writing instruction protocol supported EFL teachers' self-efficacy and learners' writing development, while Ulla et al. (2024) emphasized that inclusive use required critical adaptation in relation to learner diversity and context.

Collectively, these studies indicate that AI-generated content does not become pedagogy automatically. Teachers must relate it to objectives, learner proficiency, curriculum, classroom time, sociocultural expectations, and institutional requirements. Pedagogical appropriation is therefore more analytically useful than simple use. Use identifies whether a tool was employed; appropriation concerns how an artefact was interpreted, transformed, and made part of situated activity. An AI-generated task may be accepted, simplified, reordered, translated, localized, supplemented, or rejected, and each decision implies a different relationship between teacher judgment and machine output. Appropriation develops through iterative human regulation of generated material, with direction, evaluation, and accountability remaining with the human user rather than the system (Stockwell & Wang, 2025; Xodabande et al., 2026).

Generative AI has also been examined as a resource for teacher reflection and professional learning. Arefian et al. (2026) explored ChatGPT-mediated collaborative reflective practice through a community-of-practice lens and showed that AI could support professional dialogue and shared reflection. Omidvar and Meihami (2025) identified both opportunities and challenges in EFL teacher education, including innovation, workload support, professional learning, hallucination, generic output, and inadequate preparation. Such research suggests that structured, dialogic professional development is more likely to support responsible use than isolated tool demonstrations. Mentoring can provide a space in which teachers compare interpretations, examine assumptions, articulate uncertainty, and connect generated suggestions with concrete pedagogical problems (Hobson et al., 2009; Wenger, 1998). Reviews of this emerging literature identify teacher mediation, AI literacy, materials development, reflective practice, and ethical evaluation as recurring dimensions of ChatGPT-related language teacher education (Ebrahimi et al., 2025; Xodabande, 2026a).

Generative AI, Teacher Identity, and Agency

A smaller but growing body of work has focused directly on identity and agency. Ghiasvand and Seyri (2025) examined collaborative reflection and language teacher identity reconstruction and showed that engagement with AI could influence professional roles, pedagogical knowledge, reflectivity, and AI literacy. Yang and Markauskaite (2025) demonstrated that a formative intervention could foster transformative agency among language student teachers engaging with generative AI. Zhang et al. (2025) connected pre-service teachers' investment in AI-facilitated learning-to-teach practices with access, ideology, identity, and professional becoming. These studies represent an important move from asking whether teachers will adopt AI toward examining how they become particular kinds of professionals through AI-mediated practice. Despite this development, three issues remain underexplored. First, much existing research concerns pre-service teachers, perceptions, or relatively bounded interventions, leaving fewer accounts of in-service teachers' sustained identity negotiation through pedagogical

practice. Second, many studies in this emerging literature rely primarily on interview or survey accounts, leaving fewer analyses that connect narrated identity to the artefacts teachers produce, the revisions they make, and classroom action. Third, the relationship between career experience and AI literacy remains comparatively underexamined. Because practical technological confidence may not correspond to years of teaching, AI-mediated professional learning may redistribute authority and recognition in ways that conventional novice–expert models do not anticipate.

The Present Study

The reviewed literature establishes that generative AI is increasingly used by language teachers, that professional competence involves technological, pedagogical, critical, social, and ethical dimensions, and that AI may contribute to professional learning, identity, and agency (Arefian et al., 2026; Ghiasvand & Seyri, 2025; Moorhouse et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025; Yang & Markauskaite, 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). However, less is known about how in-service teachers at different career stages negotiate identity through sustained engagement with AI-generated pedagogical artefacts and how narrated identity relates to actual planning, revision, and classroom decision-making. The present study addresses this gap through a qualitative multiple-case examination of Uzbek EFL teachers participating in a 12-week AI-supported pedagogical mentoring programme. It addresses the following questions:

1. How did Uzbek EFL teachers appropriate generative AI during a structured AI-supported pedagogical mentoring programme?
2. How did participation in the programme shape teachers' professional identity positioning, pedagogical agency, authorship, and understandings of expertise and authority?

Method

Research Design and Positionality

The study employed a qualitative multiple-case design because it sought an in-depth understanding of professional identity negotiation within teachers' individual histories and institutional circumstances rather than a measurement of predetermined changes in AI competence. Each of the 15 teachers was treated as a case whose pre-existing professional positioning, AI engagement, artefacts, reflections, and classroom decisions could be examined over the 12-week programme. Comparison across cases enabled the study to identify shared patterns and career-stage differences while retaining attention to variation among teachers with similar experience. The study was theoretically informed by figured worlds theory, and data generation and analysis therefore focused on cultural artefacts, identity positions, professional narratives, forms of recognition, acts of authoring, and changes in how teachers interpreted expertise. The 15-case design provided five cases at each career stage, enabling balanced comparison while retaining longitudinal, source-rich attention to individual cases. Sample adequacy was judged in relation to the focused research questions, repeated engagement over 12 weeks, and multiple data sources available for each case. The aim was analytic depth and cross-case comparison rather than population representativeness. The study does not claim data saturation, because reflexive thematic analysis treats themes as interpretive constructions rather than as fixed units awaiting exhaustion.

The researcher facilitated the mentoring programme and was therefore involved in the professional world under examination rather than positioned as a detached observer. This role provided sustained access to participants' discussions, developing artefacts, and interpretations, but it also created the possibility that teachers would report development in ways they considered desirable. Several procedures were used to address this concern. Claims made in interviews and journals were compared

with prompt–output records, lesson-plan revisions, classroom observations, and stimulated recall. Analytic memos documented interpretations that contradicted emerging patterns, including continued dependence on AI, resistance, uncertainty, and limited revision. Two applied linguistics researchers with qualitative research experience also examined selected extracts and preliminary themes, questioned conceptual claims, and suggested alternative interpretations. Their involvement was intended to strengthen analytic reflexivity rather than calculate inter-coder reliability, which would be inconsistent with the reflexive thematic approach adopted in the study. To extend this reflexive checking, the two external researchers were explicitly informed of the facilitator role and contributed critical dialogue rather than independent reliability coding. They questioned interpretations that exceeded the evidence and proposed alternative readings. Interpretive differences were addressed through discussion and revision of theme boundaries or wording, while responsibility for the final reflexive analysis remained with the facilitator-researcher.

Context and Participants

The study was conducted with EFL teachers working in Uzbekistan, where English is taught across universities, schools, private institutes, and language-training centres. The participating teachers worked in settings differing in learner age, proficiency, curriculum, class size, available resources, and instructional purpose. Their teaching included general English, academic English, English for specific purposes, exam preparation, writing, speaking, and mixed-skills instruction. These contextual dimensions informed case-level interpretation; the study does not infer sector-specific patterns from the findings.

Fifteen teachers were selected purposively to represent varied career experience. Five novice teachers had one to three years of teaching experience, five experienced teachers had five to ten years, and five highly experienced teachers had 12 to 22 years. These categories supported cross-case comparison but were not treated as fixed or universal developmental stages. Participants ranged from 24 to 49 years of age; ten were women and five were men. Their qualifications ranged from bachelor's degrees to doctorates in TEFL, TESOL, applied linguistics, English philology, English language teaching, or translation. Prior experience with generative AI ranged from no use to frequent informal use for lesson preparation or text generation. Six teachers were selected purposively as focal observation cases, with two participants from each career group. This balanced selection supported comparison of classroom enactment across career stages. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Fergana State University (reference REC-FSU-26/2025; approved 10 December 2025). Participation was voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained from all participants before data generation. Participants were informed of the study purpose, procedures, recording, confidentiality provisions, and right to withdraw without penalty. Pseudonymous teacher codes were used throughout the analysis, and identifying information concerning institutions, colleagues, and learners was removed.

Table 1 *Participant Profile*

Group	Codes	Number	Age range	Teaching experience	Main qualifications
Novice	T1–T5	5	24–27	1–3 years	BA/MA student
Experienced	T6–T10	5	31–37	5–10 years	Mainly MA
Highly experienced	T11–T15	5	41–49	12–22 years	MA/PhD
Total	T1–T15	15	24–49	1–22 years	BA–PhD

Note. The sample included teachers from universities, schools, and private language institutes/training centres working with adolescent and adult learners at varied proficiency levels.

AI-supported Pedagogical mentoring programme

The programme lasted 12 weeks and consisted of six 60–90-minute mentoring sessions held at two-week intervals. It was designed as guided participation in responsible AI-mediated pedagogical work rather than as training in rapid content generation. Participants were repeatedly encouraged to treat generated output as provisional, evaluate its assumptions, relate it to their instructional context, and retain evidence of prompts, generated responses, revisions, deletions, and reasons for accepting or rejecting particular recommendations. The programme centred on the free-access ChatGPT web interface, and participants retained the prompts and outputs associated with their two submitted lesson plans. All participants used this interface for programme tasks, although reflections could draw on prior experience with other generative AI services. Paid subscriptions were neither required nor provided. Because the submitted records did not consistently preserve a stable backend model identifier, the analysis refers to the free-access ChatGPT service used during the 12-week programme rather than to a specific model version. Reports of interrupted access, repetition, shallow output, and inaccuracy are interpreted as experiences under these access conditions, not as comparative claims about a named model.

The first session introduced generative AI in language education and addressed hallucination, bias, privacy, ethical use, dependence, and limitations of free-access systems. The second focused on prompting for lesson planning and materials development. The third addressed evaluation and adaptation in relation to learner proficiency, objectives, curriculum, sociocultural appropriateness, and classroom constraints. The fourth focused on feedback, assessment, rubric development, and differentiated learner support. The fifth involved preparing and implementing AI-assisted lesson components. The final session addressed professional identity, authorship, authority, learner use of AI, and future professional roles.

Table 2 *Structure of the Mentoring Programme*

Week	Mentoring focus	Main teacher activity	Data generated
1	Orientation and baseline	Background form and pre-programme interview	15 pre-interviews
2	Responsible AI use	Initial AI-supported pedagogical task	Journal 1
4	Prompting and planning	First AI-assisted lesson plan	Journal 2; lesson plan 1; prompt–output record
6	Evaluation and contextual adaptation	Revision for learner and contextual needs	Journal 3
8	Feedback, assessment, and differentiation	Feedback, rubric, or learner-support task	Journal 4
10	Classroom implementation	Second lesson plan and classroom implementation	Journal 5; lesson plan 2; observations
12	Identity, authority, and future practice	Final reflection and collective discussion	Journal 6; post-interviews; focus groups

Data Generation

Data were generated through sources selected to capture narrated, longitudinal, artefact-based, enacted, and collectively negotiated dimensions of identity. Pre-programme interviews established teachers' professional histories, existing self-understandings, prior AI use, expectations, and initial views of expertise and authority. Post-programme interviews examined changes in AI practice, pedagogical judgment, authorship, confidence, responsibility, dependence, and anticipated future use. Fifteen interviews were conducted at each stage. Interviews, stimulated recall sessions, and focus groups were conducted in the

participants' first language to support precise reflection on professional experience. Relevant extracts were translated into English for reporting. Translation prioritized semantic meaning, and syntax was lightly edited where necessary for readability without changing the substantive claim, evaluative stance, or degree of certainty. Quotations were also de-identified and were not treated as evidence of English proficiency. The complete pre- and post-programme interview guides are provided in Appendix A.

Each teacher completed six reflective journal entries, producing 90 entries. The written prompts were administered at Weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12. They elicited specific AI-mediated teaching episodes, decisions to retain, modify, or reject generated content, contextual adaptation, classroom enactment, and changes in perceived expertise, authority, and authorship. Because the entries were completed throughout the programme, they documented developing rather than exclusively retrospective accounts. The complete prompts are provided in Appendix A. Participants also submitted two AI-assisted lesson plans, producing 30 artefact sets with selected prompts, generated outputs, modifications, and brief rationales. Comparison focused on prompt specificity, output modification, contextualization, and the visibility of pedagogical reasoning across the first and second plans.

Six focal teachers, two from each career group, were observed while teaching an AI-supported lesson or lesson component. Observations examined how AI-assisted plans were enacted, whether teachers departed from them, and how they responded to learner needs, participation, and time constraints. Each observation was followed immediately by stimulated recall, during which teachers explained selected decisions and interpreted what the events revealed about AI, teacher judgment, authorship, and authority. Two focus-group discussions were held at the end of the programme to examine collectively negotiated meanings of AI-mediated teaching, including creativity, professional dependence, responsibility, learner use, human–AI boundaries, and the future basis of teacher authority. The facilitator-researcher conducted the observations as a non-participant observer and used structured field notes rather than audio or video recording. The observation record placed the submitted AI-assisted plan beside the enacted lesson and documented the planned sequence, AI-derived or AI-revised component, observable teacher modification, learner response prompting the modification, timing, and the episode selected for immediate stimulated recall. Observation covered the relevant AI-supported lesson or lesson component from its introduction through completion. Stimulated recall began immediately after the lesson; the teacher first described the episode in their own terms before follow-up questions addressed the relationship among the plan, the classroom event, authorship, and professional judgment. The classroom observation and stimulated-recall protocol and the focus-group guide are provided in Appendix A.

Table 3 *Dataset and Analytical Function*

Source	Dataset	Main analytical function
Pre-programme interviews	15	Baseline positioning, expertise narratives, AI expectations
Reflective journals	90	Longitudinal identity negotiation and critical incidents
AI-assisted lesson plans	30	Appropriation, modification, rejection, and authorship
Prompt–output records	30 record sets accompanying the 30 lesson plans	Relationship between generated content and teacher decisions
Classroom observations	6	Enacted agency and contextual responsiveness
Stimulated recalls	6	Interpretation of observed decisions
Post-programme interviews	15	Reconstructed professional positioning and authority
Focus groups	2	Collective narratives and contested professional meanings

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

The data were analysed through reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021), combining data-led coding with abductive interpretation through figured worlds theory. The analysis was also elicitation-aware. The interview, journal, stimulated-recall, and focus-group activities directly addressed AI use and adaptation, lesson ownership and authorship, professional expertise and authority, learner AI use, and teacher judgment. These areas were therefore treated as prompted sensitizing domains rather than wholly unprompted discoveries. Repeated reading of interviews, journals, lesson artefacts, prompt-output records, observation notes, stimulated recalls, and focus-group transcripts nevertheless remained open to processes not specified in the instruments. Initial process-oriented codes included testing prompts, accepting plausible output, revising learner level, localizing examples, rejecting generic activity, saving preparation time, feeling technologically behind, claiming digital competence, questioning authorship, losing linguistic exclusivity, and redefining authority. Figured-worlds concepts were subsequently used to interpret relations among codes.

The second stage involved comparison across time and sources. Particular attention was paid to changes between pre- and post-programme interviews, differences between first and second lesson plans, increasingly explicit rationales for revision, classroom departures from AI-assisted plans, and changes in accounts of expertise. Cross-case analysis considered similarities and differences among career groups without assuming that experience caused particular orientations or that each group was internally homogeneous. Claims of critical use were checked against actual lesson-plan revisions and, where available, classroom enactment. Analytic memos documented negative and divergent cases, including continued reliance on apparently polished output, resistance to AI, and the prioritization of efficiency over extensive adaptation. Participants received concise summaries of the emerging interpretations and were invited to comment on whether the accounts represented their experiences adequately. Three themes were developed: entering AI-mediated teaching through unequal AI literacy and new identity positions, reclaiming pedagogical agency through critical adaptation under technological constraints, and renegotiating teacher authority when AI challenged linguistic and pedagogical capital. Artifact coding was conducted at the level of the prompt–output–revision sequence. For each plan, the analysis recorded contextual specifications in the prompt, the AI-proposed objective and sequence, retained elements, deletions, reordering, linguistic or cultural localization, level adjustment, added teacher material, and the participant rationale. First and second plans were then compared within each case before patterns were examined across cases. The comparison was qualitative and process-oriented; it did not treat numbers of edits as equivalent to pedagogical quality. Participant feedback was used to check experiential adequacy and contextual accuracy rather than to certify a single correct interpretation. The feedback did not require removal of any theme, but it prompted clarification that movement toward critical adaptation was uneven and that workload sometimes sustained minimal revision. These qualifications were incorporated into the negative-case analysis.

Table 4 *Structured Comparison of First and Second AI-assisted Lesson Plans*

Analytical dimension	Earlier plan pattern	Later plan pattern
Prompt specification	Broad request; limited learner or curriculum detail	More learner-level, objective, timing, and contextual constraints
Treatment of output	Longer sequences retained with limited alteration	More selective retention, deletion, reordering, and supplementation
Contextualization	Generic examples and assumed background knowledge	Localized examples and closer alignment with learners and curriculum

(Continued)

Analytical dimension	Earlier plan pattern	Later plan pattern
Visible reasoning	Acceptance often justified by fluency or completeness	Choices more often justified through feasibility, learner needs, and responsibility
Divergent pattern	Some polished output accepted under time pressure	Critical adaptation remained uneven rather than universal

Findings

Participation in the mentoring programme did not produce a uniform movement from low to high AI competence. Within the programme, participants engaged in an emerging AI-mediated figured world in which they encountered new artefacts, narratives, forms of recognition, and professional positions. Identity reconstruction occurred through tensions between digital agility and pedagogical experience, generated possibility and classroom reality, and distributed access to linguistic information and established teacher authority. Figure 1 represents the interaction among AI artefacts and mentoring, the three identity processes, and the mediating influences of career history, technological access, learner needs, and institutional conditions.

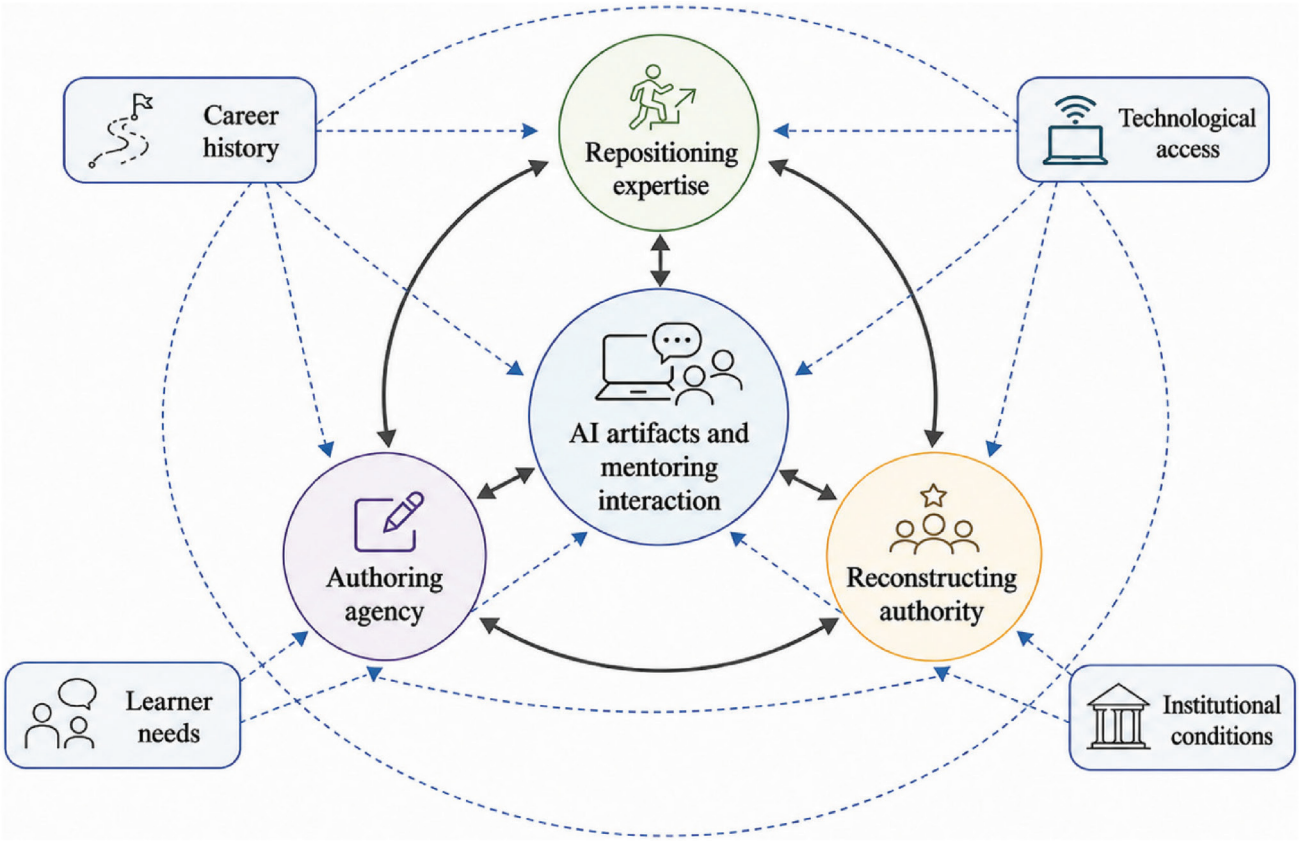


Figure 1 *Professional identity reconstruction in the AI-mediated figured world.*

Entering AI-mediated Teaching Through Unequal AI Literacy and New Identity Positions

Teachers entered the programme with unequal practical AI literacy and consequently occupied different professional positions. Career experience did not correspond directly to confidence with generative AI. Several novice teachers were willing to experiment repeatedly with prompts, compare responses,

reformulate instructions, and test alternatives, whereas some highly experienced teachers initially approached AI more cautiously because its use placed them in the unfamiliar position of learner.

For several novice teachers, digital agility became a source of professional participation and recognition. Novice teacher T3 explained:

> *I am younger, so maybe I am less afraid of trying these tools. But during the programme I understood that knowing how to use AI can also give me a professional voice, even if I am not very experienced. I could show some ideas to older colleagues and explain how I got them. (T3, reflective journal 4)*

T3 did not claim greater pedagogical knowledge than her experienced colleagues. She treated AI literacy as a resource that enabled her to contribute and reduced the silence associated with novice status. Novice teacher T2 similarly contrasted her initial expectations with the interactions that developed during mentoring:

> *At first, I thought experienced teachers would use AI better because they know teaching better. But sometimes they were careful or even suspicious. I tried more prompts and learned by mistakes. This made me feel that I have something valuable, although I am still a novice teacher. (T2, post-programme interview)*

Novice teacher T5 described being able to "test tools quickly," alter prompts, compare answers, and use alternative versions. This ability made her "less silent" during mentoring discussions. Practical AI literacy consequently allowed some novice teachers to become more visible contributors in mentoring discussions.

Experienced teachers generally adopted a pragmatic stance in which AI expanded possibilities but did not determine instructional decisions. Experienced teacher T7 explained:

> *I do not think AI makes me a better teacher automatically. But it gives me more possibilities in less time. The important point is that I already know my class, so I can choose from those possibilities. (T7, post-programme interview)*

For T7, professional value lay in combining rapid generation with knowledge of learners. T8 reported that the tool became more useful when she stopped requesting a complete lesson and instead asked for alternatives from which she could select. T10 similarly distinguished speed from judgment, explaining that novice teachers sometimes explored AI more rapidly but experienced teachers could identify pedagogical weaknesses in apparently polished output.

Some highly experienced teachers experienced the early stages more personally because they were accustomed to occupying the position of the person who assisted others. Highly experienced teacher T12 stated:

> *I have many years of teaching, but I cannot say I was confident with AI at first. Some younger teachers were much faster. At first this was uncomfortable because normally I am the person who helps others. Later I understood that speed is not the same as judgment. I could evaluate whether the idea was suitable. (T12, post-programme interview)*

The difficulty involved recognition rather than technical operation alone. Receiving technological assistance from novice colleagues disturbed the relationship between experience and expertise on which T12's established identity partly rested. Over time, she reconstructed expertise by distinguishing operational speed from evaluative judgment. T14 made a similar distinction between "knowing the technology" and "knowing what will happen in class," arguing that extensive experience enabled her to anticipate learner confusion, timing problems, and inappropriate task demands even when less experienced colleagues generated alternatives more efficiently.

Across the cases, professional positioning shifted without eliminating the importance of experience. Novice teachers gained recognition through experimentation, experienced teachers combined generative possibilities with contextual knowledge, and highly experienced teachers increasingly positioned themselves as evaluators responsible for judging pedagogical and ethical suitability.

Reclaiming Pedagogical Agency Through Critical Adaptation Under Technological Constraints

The second theme concerned teachers' movement from accepting AI-generated output toward critically adapting it. At the beginning of the programme, several participants, particularly novices, treated fluent and professionally formatted output as evidence of pedagogical authority. They were reluctant to alter generated material because they believed their changes might weaken it.

T1 described how this relationship changed:

> *Before, I was shy to change the AI output because I thought maybe I would make it weaker. Later I understood that my changes are not damage. They are the teaching part. (T1, post-programme interview)*

The expression "the teaching part" marked a shift in professional self-understanding. AI output did not constitute a pedagogically complete lesson; teaching became visible through the decisions that transformed generated content into situated classroom activity.

The lesson artefacts supported this interpretation. Early plans more often retained AI-generated sequencing, generic examples, and ambitious numbers of activities. Later plans contained more deletion, simplification, localization, reordering, and explanation of decisions. T4's prompt–output–revision record illustrates the artefact analysis. The first plan retained the broad sequence and generic examples generated in response to a request for a complete speaking lesson. In the second plan, T4 removed two proposed activities, replaced generic examples with situations from Uzbek university life, and retained only the elements considered feasible for the class. Reading the output, revisions, and journal rationale together showed a shift from accepting a complete generated product toward accountable selection and contextualization:

> *In the second lesson plan, I deleted two activities and changed the examples to Uzbek university life. I felt more like the teacher because I was not just copying.(T4, reflective journal 5)*

T5 similarly argued that rejecting a generated activity was itself a meaningful form of AI use because rejection required a pedagogical reason. She described one speaking activity as attractive in format but unsuitable for learners who lacked the cultural and linguistic background knowledge presupposed by the task. Experienced and highly experienced teachers also treated adaptation as a way to preserve professional ownership. T8 changed an entire sequence because AI had assumed that learners could move directly from language input to free production, while T13 identified a grammar task as linguistically accurate but pedagogically repetitive.

Limitations of free-access systems contributed to this development. Participants reported interrupted access, repetitive answers, limited conversational continuity, shallow recommendations, and occasional inaccuracies. T9 explained:

> *The free version was sometimes useful and sometimes frustrating. It stopped, repeated itself, or gave shallow ideas. This made me see that the teacher should not depend on the tool. We should know how to repair and complete what it gives. (T9, post-programme interview)*

Such constraints did more than obstruct use. They exposed the need for professional resources the system could not guarantee, including continuity across lessons, knowledge of previous classroom events, alignment with a local curriculum, sociocultural relevance, and responsibility for consequences. Teachers increasingly treated generated output as a provisional proposal rather than a finished instructional product.

The T13 record illustrates how artefact analysis was connected with classroom evidence. The submitted plan placed an AI-generated vocabulary activity before extended practice. Field notes recorded learner hesitation and incomplete responses; T13 then shortened the activity and added controlled practice. In the immediate stimulated recall, T13 linked this departure to the observed need for support rather than to a change in the lesson objective. Comparable plan-versus-enactment departures were documented for T7, who reordered speaking prompts after learners responded more confidently to personal questions, and T3, who removed a feedback stage when an earlier activity exceeded the planned time. Referring to the observed adjustment, T13 explained:

> *I changed the sequence during the lesson because I saw that students needed more support. The AI plan looked logical, but the classroom showed me another logic. (T13, stimulated recall)*

T7 similarly stated:

> *I did not follow the plan exactly. I started with easier personal questions because the students were quiet. This is something AI cannot see before the lesson. (T7, stimulated recall)*

These accounts contrasted the textual logic of a generated plan with the emergent logic of classroom interaction. Because the system had no access to the unfolding classroom interaction, the generated plan could not respond to learner silence, confidence, emotional climate, time pressure, or the instructional history of a particular class. Teachers enacted agency through responsiveness to these conditions rather than fidelity to an AI-assisted plan.

The movement toward critical adaptation was not uniform or complete. Some participants continued to accept generated output when it appeared sufficiently polished, particularly when facing workload or time pressure. One teacher reported using an AI-generated worksheet with minimal modification because it was “good enough” for the immediate purpose. Such cases showed that efficiency and professional agency remained in tension. Nevertheless, later artefacts and reflections generally contained stronger evidence of teacher selection, repair, contextualization, and rejection than early work.

Renegotiating Teacher Authority when AI Challenges Linguistic and Pedagogical Capital

The third theme concerned teacher authority when learners could independently access explanations, translations, corrections, model essays, vocabulary examples, and feedback. Participants generally

welcomed AI as a planning resource for themselves, but learner access produced a more direct challenge to traditional professional positioning.

Experienced teacher T10 described a transition from being the source of correction to evaluating another source:

> *Sometimes students bring AI answers and ask whether I agree. This is a new situation. In the past, I was the source of correction. Now I become the judge of another source. This changes my role. (T10, post-programme interview)*

Her authority did not disappear, but it no longer depended exclusively on supplying the first answer. It increasingly involved evaluating an existing answer and explaining why it was accurate, incomplete, misleading, or pedagogically inappropriate.

For some highly experienced teachers, comparison with AI produced emotional discomfort because linguistic expertise had been central to professional legitimacy. Highly experienced teacher T14 wrote:

> *I felt uncomfortable when one student said that AI explained the grammar more clearly. It was not a big problem, but emotionally I felt that my knowledge was being compared with a machine. Then I thought that my job is not only explanation. It is guiding learning. (T14, reflective journal 6)*

The account moved from perceived comparison toward reconstruction. T14 did not deny the quality of the explanation but distinguished isolated explanation from guidance across a learning process. T12 similarly argued:

> *Before, students usually came to me for examples or correction. Now they can ask AI first. This can reduce the old authority of the teacher, but it also means I must show a different authority: why something is suitable, ethical, and useful for learning. (T12, focus group)*

This "different authority" was evaluative, ethical, and pedagogical. It depended less on exclusive possession of language information and more on explaining how information should be interpreted and used.

Novice teachers generally discussed learner use less defensively. Novice teacher T2 regarded prohibition as unrealistic:

> *I do not think we can stop students from using AI. They will use it anyway. So maybe our authority should be to teach them how to ask, how to check, and how not to copy. (T2, focus group)*

T5 similarly stated:

> *I think teacher authority is changing. Maybe before authority was knowing the answer. Now it is knowing how to evaluate the answer. (T5, reflective journal 6)*

AI literacy consequently became a potential source of classroom authority as well as professional participation. Teachers could establish legitimacy by helping learners formulate questions, verify information, recognize uncertainty, revise generated writing, and use AI ethically rather than by attempting to compete with the speed of generation.

The changing basis of authority was closely connected to authorship. Participants initially questioned whether an AI-assisted lesson could genuinely be called their own. By the end of the programme, several reconstructed authorship around responsibility rather than sole production. Experienced teacher T8 explained:

> *I do not think the lesson is completely mine in the old way, because AI helped me. But it is still my lesson because I selected, changed, removed, and explained the parts. The responsibility is mine. (T8, post-programme interview)*

Highly experienced teacher T13 distinguished assistance from professional accountability:

> *AI can be a co-helper, but not a co-teacher. It does not face the students. I face them, so I must own the lesson. (T13, stimulated recall)*

Highly experienced teacher T11 summarized the reconstructed position:

> *Authorship changed for me. Before, I thought authorship means writing everything myself. Now I think authorship means taking responsibility for the final pedagogical decision. (T11, focus group)*

Across the accounts, authorship became associated with accountable orchestration. AI contributed language, ideas, or structure, but teachers selected and enacted the material, responded to learners, and remained answerable for educational outcomes. Their authority and authorship therefore rested increasingly on judgment and accountability.

Discussion

The study examined how Uzbek EFL teachers appropriated generative AI during sustained pedagogical mentoring and how participation contributed to professional identity reconstruction. The findings showed that AI functioned as more than an instructional resource. It became a cultural artefact around which professional participation, expertise, authorship, authority, and responsibility were renegotiated. Considered together, the three findings indicate that identity reconstruction occurred neither through automatic technological empowerment nor through uniform resistance. It developed through teachers' efforts to interpret the value of new resources, protect or revise established positions, and make generated content pedagogically accountable.

The first finding showed that AI literacy redistributed professional positioning by introducing a resource that did not correspond directly to years of experience. This extends existing research on AI readiness and generative AI competence, which has demonstrated the multidimensional nature of teachers' technological, pedagogical, critical, social, and ethical capacities (Li & Liang, 2025; Moorhouse et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). In the present study, these capacities also operated relationally. Practical confidence with prompting, comparison, and experimentation affected whose ideas became visible and who could assist others. AI literacy was therefore not simply possessed; it was recognized and converted into participation. From a figured-worlds perspective, this redistribution is understandable because the value of a resource depends on the social world in which it becomes meaningful (Holland et al., 1998). Prompt experimentation had limited professional significance before generative AI entered teachers' work, but within the mentoring programme it became a valued competence that enabled some novices to occupy positions not normally available to them. Viewed through Bourdieu's (1986) framework, practical AI literacy operated as cultural capital that acquired symbolic value when colleagues recognized it as a legitimate professional contribution. Digital agility enabled novice

teachers to participate more visibly, but its value remained conditional on pedagogical judgment and collective recognition within the AI-mediated figured world (Holland et al., 1998).

The greater visibility of novice teachers did not eliminate the importance of professional experience. Their accounts repeatedly acknowledged that technological agility did not guarantee knowledge of learners, curriculum, timing, or classroom consequences. Experienced and highly experienced teachers possessed resources that became especially important when generated material required evaluation. The AI-mediated figured world consequently made multiple forms of expertise visible rather than establishing a simple reversal in which novices became experts and experienced teachers became deficient. This finding complements Jeon and Lee's (2023) argument that the relationship between teachers and ChatGPT is potentially complementary, but it extends complementarity to relations among teachers. AI-related professional development may create reciprocal mentoring arrangements in which novice teachers contribute digital agility and experienced teachers contribute pedagogical and contextual judgment. The discomfort experienced by some highly experienced teachers further demonstrates that technological change is identity-laden. Receiving assistance from less experienced colleagues unsettled continuity between established expert positions and present participation. T12's distinction between speed and judgment constituted an act of authoring: she acknowledged the value of AI literacy while reconstructing expertise around evaluative responsibility. The pattern resembles identity negotiation during curricular change, but generative AI is distinctive because it appears to perform elements of professional work (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Flores & Day, 2006; Tao & Gao, 2017). Experienced teachers therefore incorporated digital learning into identities organized around evaluation, anticipation, and responsibility rather than abandoning established expertise.

The second finding showed that professional agency became visible through critical appropriation. Early in the programme, the fluency and organization of AI output led some participants to treat it as professionally authoritative, but later artefacts contained more revision, localization, deletion, and rejection. This pattern supports studies showing that productive generative AI use depends on iterative interaction and teacher mediation rather than direct transfer (Kohnke & Zou, 2025; Korucu-Kış, 2024; Ulla et al., 2024). The present study extends that literature by conceptualizing adaptation as identity authoring. Teachers did not simply improve materials; through adaptation they established themselves as professionals entitled and obligated to determine what entered their classrooms. T1's realization that her changes were "the teaching part" captured a movement from epistemic deference toward professional ownership. Generated text can appear authoritative through fluency and completeness while obscuring assumptions about learner proficiency, time, culture, interaction, or curriculum. Later artefacts showed growing recognition that linguistic coherence did not guarantee pedagogical adequacy. In figured-worlds terms, the plan was a cultural artefact whose professional meaning was completed through teacher evaluation and situated use rather than fixed at generation (Holland et al., 1998).

The findings also support an ecological understanding of agency. Priestley et al. (2015) argued that teacher agency is achieved through interaction among prior experience, present conditions, and future orientations rather than residing as a stable internal capacity. Participants' ability to evaluate AI depended on accumulated pedagogical knowledge, familiarity with particular learners, technological access, institutional demands, and the practical limitations of free systems. Their agency therefore arose inside constraint. Participants' reports of repetition, shallow output, interrupted access, and limited conversational continuity showed that nominal access to the service did not guarantee equivalent conditions for sustained pedagogical work.

Classroom observations strengthened this interpretation by showing that appropriation continued beyond planning. Teachers modified sequences and activities in response to learner silence, confusion, participation, and time pressure. The contrast between the apparent logic of a generated plan and the

emergent logic of classroom interaction demonstrates why pedagogical judgment cannot be reduced to prior content generation. The system-generated plan could be plausible, but the system had no access to the unfolding classroom and bore no responsibility for adaptation. This provides practice-based evidence beyond studies focused primarily on perceptions or planning products and complicates binary claims that AI necessarily empowers or deskills teachers. Participants enacted agency most clearly when generated output became an object of evaluation and transformation; agency was less visible when polished output was transferred with limited scrutiny. The professional significance therefore depended on appropriation rather than use alone.

The observed negative cases are equally important. Some teachers accepted materials with limited revision because workload and time made efficiency professionally valuable. These instances show that critical appropriation cannot be idealized as a constant or purely individual choice. Teachers operate under conditions that may reward rapid production and make extensive evaluation difficult. A professional-development programme can raise awareness and provide strategies, but it cannot remove institutional workload or unequal access. This observation reinforces Omidvar and Meihami's (2025) argument that the opportunities and challenges of AI in teacher education are inseparable from the conditions under which teachers are expected to use it.

The third finding concerned changes in authority as learners gained independent access to linguistic information. Participants described prior authority partly in terms of being a primary source of explanations, corrections, examples, and feedback; generative AI altered that relation by giving learners another immediately available source. Participants did not experience this change uniformly. Some highly experienced teachers initially interpreted learner comparison with AI as a threat, whereas novice teachers were generally more likely to treat learner use as inevitable and emphasize guidance. Across groups, however, authority increasingly shifted from possessing answers toward evaluating them, explaining their limitations, and connecting them with sustained learning. This finding develops Jeon and Lee's (2023) account of human–AI complementarity by suggesting that complementarity may involve a reconfiguration of authority. Human teachers cannot preserve their role merely by asserting that they possess knowledge AI lacks, especially when learners experience AI explanations as immediate and persuasive. In these accounts, professional legitimacy became visible in the capacity to interpret information, diagnose learner needs, sequence learning, address ethical concerns, and assume responsibility. The finding also aligns with Ghiasvand and Seyri's (2025) account of AI-related identity reconstruction, but adds the relational dimension of learner access. Authority changes not only because teachers use AI, but because learners can use it independently and can introduce AI-generated information into classroom interaction.

Bourdieu's distinction between resources and their recognized value further clarifies this redistribution. Generative AI made fluent language generation and basic explanations less exclusive, but it did not replace knowledge of learners, curriculum, classroom history, emotional dynamics, or the consequences of pedagogical decisions. Participants reconstructed authority by foregrounding judgment, contextualization, ethical mediation, and responsibility. Professional capital was therefore revalued rather than erased: digital agility gained recognition, some linguistic resources lost exclusivity, and situated pedagogical judgment became a more explicit basis of legitimacy (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Bourdieu, 1986; Holland et al., 1998).

Participants' accounts of authorship further clarify this reconstruction. Initially, some associated authorship with producing every component personally and therefore questioned whether an AI-assisted lesson could be called their own. Later, they increasingly defined authorship through selection, revision, and accountability. This should not be interpreted merely as a rhetorical strategy for preserving teacher status. Professional artefacts have always been produced through interaction with textbooks,

colleagues, websites, institutional materials, and previous experiences. Generative AI intensifies and makes this distributed production more visible because it can generate extended content in response to conversational prompts. The teachers' distinction between contribution and accountability provides a more defensible basis for professional authorship. AI contributed text and possibilities, but teachers decided what would be used, enacted the material with learners, repaired problems, and remained answerable for consequences (Stockwell & Wang, 2025; Xodabande et al., 2026).

T13's description of AI as a "co-helper" rather than a "co-teacher" is especially significant. The metaphor of AI as a co-teacher may obscure asymmetries in responsibility. An AI system does not occupy the ethical and relational position of a teacher, know learners through sustained interaction, or bear accountability for harm or failure. Teachers may collaborate instrumentally with AI, but professional responsibility cannot be delegated to the system. Their reconstructed authorship therefore centred on accountable orchestration rather than sole origination or equal human–machine partnership (Stockwell & Wang, 2025). This interpretation is consistent with the view that human–AI interaction can involve asymmetrical task interdependence without shared purpose, reciprocal understanding, or distributed accountability (Stockwell & Wang, 2025). It also supports pedagogically grounded evaluation in which generated performance remains subordinate to learning goals, contextual requirements, and human oversight (Xodabande, 2026b).

Taken together, the findings indicate that the mentoring programme functioned as an identity space as well as a competence intervention because it repeatedly linked generation, dialogue, artefact revision, classroom enactment, and reflection. These cycles made tensions between generated plausibility and classroom reality, and between learner access and teacher authority, available for professional reflection. The cross-career interactions also caution against deficit framings of AI professional development: experienced teachers contributed contextual and pedagogical judgment, while novice teachers often contributed technological experimentation. Professional-development designs that recognize both resources may support reciprocal learning without equating technological speed with pedagogical expertise (Karakaya et al., 2025; Mavridi, 2025; Moorhouse et al., 2024; Xodabande, 2026a).

Conclusion

This study showed that AI-supported pedagogical mentoring functioned as an identity space in which expertise, agency, authorship, and authority were negotiated through artefacts and practice. Practical AI literacy enabled some novice teachers to participate more visibly without displacing the value of pedagogical experience. Critical appropriation made agency visible through revision, localization, rejection, and classroom adaptation, while teacher authority and authorship were increasingly grounded in contextual judgment, ethical mediation, and accountability. Figured worlds theory therefore explained identity reconstruction as a relational process of positioning, recognition, and authoring rather than an automatic consequence of technology use.

These findings suggest that AI-related teacher education may benefit from moving beyond tool demonstrations and isolated prompt lists toward repeated cycles of generation, comparison, contextual adaptation, implementation, and reflection. Retaining outputs and revisions and requiring teachers to justify acceptance or rejection can make professional judgment visible. Teacher education may also need to address identity explicitly: novice teachers may need support in connecting technological confidence with learner and curriculum knowledge, while experienced teachers may benefit from spaces in which becoming learners does not devalue established expertise. The findings further support preparing teachers to guide learners' independent AI use through prompting, verification, attribution, revision, and ethical evaluation. At the institutional level, participants' experiences with free-access ChatGPT—including interrupted service and shallow or repetitive output—suggest that nominal tool access should

not be equated with stable professional support. Clear guidance on privacy, acceptable use, authorship, and responsibility should therefore be paired with teacher discretion to reject unsuitable output.

The study has several limitations. It involved 15 teachers in one national context and one mentoring programme, and only six participants were observed. The facilitator-researcher role, possible self-selection, unequal access conditions, and the absence of gender- or sector-focused sampling limit broader inference. Because data were generated around specified professional-identity domains, the themes should be understood as theoretically informed and elicitation-aware rather than wholly unprompted. The 12-week period also does not establish whether reconstructed identities persisted. Future research should use longer follow-up, include learner and institutional perspectives, compare organizational and national contexts, and examine how gender, workload, access, and policy shape appropriation.

References

Alm, A., & Ohashi, L. (2024). A worldwide study on language educators' initial response to ChatGPT. *Technology in Language Teaching & Learning*, *6*(1), 1141. https://doi.org/10.29140/tltl.v6n1.1141

Al-khresheh, M. H. (2024). Bridging technology and pedagogy from a global lens: Teachers' perspectives on integrating ChatGPT in English language teaching. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 6*, Article 100218. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100218

Arefian, M. H., Çomoğlu, İ., & Dikilitaş, K. (2026). Understanding EFL teachers' experiences of ChatGPT-driven collaborative reflective practice through a community of practice lens. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 20*(2), 318–333. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2024.2412769

Barkhuizen, G. (Ed.). (2017). *Reflections on language teacher identity research*. Routledge.

Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 39*(2), 175–189. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057640902902252

Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(2), 107–128. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2003.07.001

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE.

Chan, K. L. R. (2025). Exploring generative artificial intelligence-aided language learning tools in language classrooms: Insights from language teachers of English in Hong Kong. *Technology in Language Teaching & Learning*, *7*(2), 103217. https://doi.org/10.29140/tltl.v7n2.103217

Choi, K. Y., Wu, C., & Moorhouse, B. L. (2025). Exploring the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in English language teaching: Voices from in-service teachers at an early-adopting Hong Kong secondary school. *Technology in Language Teaching & Learning*, *7*(3), 102516. https://doi.org/10.29140/tltl.v7n3.102516

Dehghani, H., & Mashhadi, A. (2024). Exploring Iranian English as a foreign language teachers' acceptance of ChatGPT in English language teaching: Extending the technology acceptance model. *Education and Information Technologies, 29*(15), 19813–19834. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-12660-9

Ebrahimi, Z., Shakib Kotamjani, S., Qosimov, A., & Xodabande, I. (2025). Mapping the emerging research landscape on applications of ChatGPT in language teacher education: A systematic narrative literature review. *Discover Artificial Intelligence*, *5*, Article 349. https://doi.org/10.1007/s44163-025-00631-z

Flores, M. A., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 22*(2), 219–232. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.09.002

Ghafouri, M., Hassaskhah, J., & Mahdavi-Zafarghandi, A. (2026). From virtual assistant to writing mentor: Exploring the impact of a ChatGPT-based writing instruction protocol on EFL teachers' self-efficacy and learners' writing skill. *Language Teaching Research, 30*(8), 4217–4239. https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688241239764

Ghiasvand, F., & Seyri, H. (2025). A collaborative reflection on the synergy of artificial intelligence and language teacher identity reconstruction. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 160*, Article 105022. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2025.105022

Hobson, A. J., Ashby, P., Malderez, A., & Tomlinson, P. D. (2009). Mentoring beginning teachers: What we know and what we don't. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(1), 207–216. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.09.001

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Jr., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Harvard University Press.

Jeon, J., & Lee, S. (2023). Large language models in education: A focus on the complementary relationship between human teachers and ChatGPT. *Education and Information Technologies, 28*(12), 15873–15892. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11834-1

Karakaya, K., Alpat, M. F., Uçar, H., Karakaya, Ö., & Bozkurt, A. (2025). Preparing teachers for the algorithmic educational landscape: A critical mapping of generative AI integration in language teacher education. *Technology in Language Teaching & Learning*, *7*(2), 102841. https://doi.org/10.29140/tltl.v7n2.102841

Kohnke, L., & Zou, D. (2025). The role of ChatGPT in enhancing English teaching: A paradigm shift in lesson planning and instructional practices. *Educational Technology & Society, 28*(3), 4–20. https://doi.org/10.30191/ETS.202507_28(3).SP02

Korucu-Kış, S. (2024). Zone of proximal creativity: An empirical study on EFL teachers' use of ChatGPT for enhanced practice. *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 54*, Article 101639. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2024.101639

Li, N., & Liang, Y. (2025). Teachers' AI readiness in Chinese as a foreign language education: Scale development and validation. *System, 129*, Article 103597. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103597

Mavridi, S. (2025). Hype, fear, and everything in between: A critical typology of responses to AI and their implications for language teacher education. *Technology in Language Teaching & Learning*, *7*(2), 103219. https://doi.org/10.29140/tltl.v7n2.103219

Mohamed, A. M. (2024). Exploring the potential of an AI-based chatbot ChatGPT in enhancing English as a foreign language teaching: Perceptions of EFL faculty members. *Education and Information Technologies, 29*(3), 3195–3217. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11917-z

Moorhouse, B. L., Wan, Y., Wu, C., Kohnke, L., Ho, T. Y., & Kwong, T. (2024). Developing language teachers' professional generative AI competence: An intervention study in an initial language teacher education course. *System, 125*, Article 103399. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103399

Omidvar, H., & Meihami, H. (2025). Exploring the "what" and "how" of opportunities and challenges of AI in EFL teacher education. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 9*, Article 100443. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2025.100443

Parviz, M., & Arthur, F. (2025). Exploring EFL teachers' behavioral intentions to integrate GenAI applications: Insights from PLS-SEM and fsQCA. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies, 2025*, Article 5582099. https://doi.org/10.1155/hbe2/5582099

Priestley, M., Biesta, G., & Robinson, S. (2015). *Teacher agency: An ecological approach*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Stockwell, G., & Wang, Y. (2025). Framing human-AI collaboration in language education. *Technology in Language Teaching & Learning*, *7*(4), 103824. https://doi.org/10.29140/tltl.v7n4.103824

Tao, J., & Gao, X. (2017). Teacher agency and identity commitment in curricular reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 63*, 346–355. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.01.010

Tarannum, T., Ahmed, R., Seraj, P. M. I., & Khan, T. S. (2025). ELT teachers' perception and usage of ChatGPT as a teaching tool in the Bangladeshi EFL context. *Education and Information Technologies, 30*(13), 19269–19295. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-025-13515-7

Ulla, M. B., Advincula, M. J. C., Mombay, C. D. S., Mercullo, H. M. A., Nacionales, J. P., & Entino-Señorita, A. D. (2024). How can GenAI foster an inclusive language classroom? A critical language pedagogy perspective from Philippine university teachers. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, 7*, Article 100314. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100314

Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. A. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 4*(1), 21–44. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327701jlie0401_2

Wang, Y., Derakhshan, A., & Ghiasvand, F. (2025). EFL teachers' generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) literacy: A scale development and validation study. *System, 133*, Article 103791. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103791

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511803932

Xodabande, I. (2026a). A thematic synthesis of emerging research on English language teachers' use of ChatGPT for language teaching. *Discover Education*, *5*, Article 477. https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-026-01520-y

Xodabande, I. (2026b). Toward pedagogically grounded design and evaluation of generative artificial intelligence speaking tools in English as a foreign language education. *Applied Linguistics Compass*, *2*(1), 16–26. https://doi.org/10.83404/alc.v2i1.25

Xodabande, I., Qosimov, A., & Umarova, K. (2026). From assistance toward appropriation: An activity-theoretical perspective on ChatGPT-mediated academic writing among university students. *Technology in Language Teaching & Learning*, *8*, 104746. https://doi.org/10.29140/tltl.2026.104746

Yang, H., & Markauskaite, L. (2025). Fostering language student teachers' transformative agency for embracing GenAI: A formative intervention. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 159*, Article 104980. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2025.104980

Zhang, Y., Lai, C., & Gu, M. M. Y. (2025). Becoming a teacher in the era of AI: A multiple-case study of pre-service teachers' investment in AI-facilitated learning-to-teach practices. *System, 133*, Article 103746. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103746

Appendix A

Data Collection Instruments

A1. Reflective Journal Prompts

Week 2. Describe one specific moment this week when you used (or seriously considered using) AI for a teaching task. What did you ask for, what did you get, and what did you do with it?

Week 4. Describe how you approached writing your first AI-assisted lesson plan. What did you keep from the AI's output, and what, if anything, did you already feel unsure about?

Week 6. Think of a time you changed, added to, or rejected something AI generated because it did not fit your learners or your context. Describe what happened and why you made that decision.

Week 8. Describe a moment involving AI-generated feedback, a rubric, or support for a specific learner. What worked, what did not, and what did you have to adjust yourself?

Week 10. Reflect on a classroom moment (this week or recently) where something you had planned with AI worked differently in practice. What did you notice, and what does it tell you about your own role as a teacher?

Week 12. Looking back across the whole programme, how has your understanding of your own expertise, authority, or authorship as a teacher changed, if at all?

A2. Pre-programme Interview Guide

1. Could you tell me about your teaching background and your current position?
2. How do you usually go about planning a lesson at the moment?
3. What has your experience been with AI tools such as ChatGPT before this programme, if any?
4. What do you expect or hope to gain from this mentoring programme?
5. In your view, what makes someone a 'good' or an 'expert' English teacher?
6. Where do you feel your own professional knowledge mainly comes from?
7. How do you feel about your learners using AI tools themselves?
8. What concerns, if any, do you have about using AI in your teaching?
9. How confident do you feel using digital tools in general?
10. Is there anything else about your expectations for this programme you'd like to share?

A3. Post-programme Interview Guide

1. Looking back over the twelve weeks, how would you describe your use of AI in lesson preparation?
2. Can you describe a specific moment when you changed or rejected something AI produced?
3. How, if at all, has your sense of what makes a lesson 'yours' changed?
4. How do you feel your professional confidence has changed, if at all?
5. How has your view of learners using AI independently changed, if it has?
6. Where do you think your authority as a teacher comes from now?
7. What was the most useful part of the mentoring programme for you?
8. What was most difficult or frustrating about the programme?

9. What would you tell a colleague who was nervous about using AI in their teaching?
10. Looking ahead, how do you expect to use AI in your teaching next year?

Administration note. Questions were asked flexibly and adapted to each teacher's responses; follow-up probes (e.g. 'Can you give me a concrete example?' / 'What made you decide that?') were used throughout both interviews to move participants from general statements toward specific, describable incidents.

A4. Classroom Observation and Stimulated-recall Protocol

Observation focus

1. Whether the lesson follows the submitted AI-assisted plan, stage by stage.
2. Moments where the teacher departs from the plan (reorders, shortens, extends, replaces, or drops a stage).
3. The learner behaviour or response that appears to prompt each departure.
4. Timing: how actual pacing compares with the plan's intended timing.
5. How AI-derived material (activities, questions, texts) is actually used or adapted in real time.

Stimulated-recall questions

1. I noticed you [specific observed moment] — can you tell me what was happening for you at that point?
2. How does this compare with what you had planned?
3. What role did the AI-generated material play in this decision?
4. What does this moment tell you about your own judgement as a teacher?

Procedure. The researcher observed as a non-participant, taking structured field notes (no audio/video recording). Stimulated recall began immediately after the lesson; the teacher first described the selected episode in their own words before the core questions above were used as follow-up.

A5. Focus-group guide

Opening. Brief introductions / warm-up: each participant names one word that captures how they currently feel about AI in their teaching.

Q1. How would you each describe the role AI has come to play in your teaching now, compared with twelve weeks ago?
Q2. Has anything changed in how you think about what makes a lesson, or a piece of feedback, genuinely 'yours'?
Q3. How do you feel about your students using AI tools independently?
Q4. Where do you think teacher authority comes from now, compared with before the programme?
Q5. What tensions or disagreements do you notice between yourselves on these questions?
Q6. What would you want future teacher training on AI to include?
Closing. Any final reflections participants would like to add.