НАУЧНИ ТРУДОВЕ НА УНСС (2) 2026, АКАДЕМИЧНО ИЗДАТЕЛСТВО УНСС
ISSN (online): 2534-8957; ISSN (print): 0861-9344; http://unwe-research-papers.org/
DOI: https://doi.org/10.37075/RP.2026.2.04

INSTITUTIONAL READINESS FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: A REFLECTIVE-DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS OF MEXICAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into English Language Teaching (ELT) has gained increasing attention in higher education. However, its effective adoption depends not only on pedagogical innovation but also on institutional readiness. This study examines institutional readiness for AI integration in ELT at Mexican universities through an exploratory, qualitative, and reflective-documentary approach, drawing on academic literature, institutional reports, and practitioner-based reflection. The analysis identifies key dimensions of readiness, including technological infrastructure, faculty development, institutional policies, and organizational culture. It suggests that AI integration is often driven by individual instructor initiative rather than coordinated institutional strategies, while structural constraints continue to shape its implementation. This study contributes to current debates by offering a context-sensitive, institutionally focused perspective on AI readiness in Mexican higher education.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, English language teaching, institutional readiness, higher education, Mexican universities

JEL: I23, O33, I28

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly gained prominence in higher education, reshaping teaching, learning, and institutional practices across disciplines. In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), AI-powered tools such as automated feedback systems, adaptive learning platforms, and generative language models have opened new possibilities for personalized instruction and learner autonomy. Recent studies highlight AI's potential to enhance language practice, support assessment, and provide immediate feedback, particularly in large and diverse learning environments (Luckin et al., 2016; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

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However, the successful integration of AI in ELT extends beyond classroom innovation and requires a broader examination of institutional readiness.

Institutional readiness refers to the capacity of higher education institutions to adopt, implement, and sustain technological innovations through adequate infrastructure, policy frameworks, leadership support, and professional development opportunities (Aydin & Tasci, 2005; Porter & Graham, 2016). While much of the existing literature on AI in language education emphasizes pedagogical affordances and learner outcomes, fewer studies address the institutional conditions that enable or constrain AI integration, particularly in developing or middle-income contexts. Without institutional preparedness, the use of AI risks becoming fragmented, uneven, or ethically problematic (Selwyn, 2019).

In Mexico, universities face a complex educational landscape marked by institutional diversity, unequal access to digital resources, and varying levels of technological maturity. English language programs play a strategic role in internationalization efforts and graduate employability, making them a critical site for educational innovation. Nonetheless, Mexican higher education institutions differ significantly in terms of digital infrastructure, teacher training opportunities, and the existence of formal guidelines regulating the use of emerging technologies, including AI (OECD, 2020; SEP, 2023). These disparities raise important questions about how prepared institutions are to support AI-enhanced ELT in a sustainable and equitable manner.

This paper presents a reflective and documentary analysis of institutional readiness for integrating AI into English Language Teaching at Mexican universities. Drawing on recent literature, policy documents, and professional experience within higher education contexts, the study examines key dimensions of institutional readiness, including technological infrastructure, faculty development, institutional policies, and organizational culture. By focusing on the institutional level rather than classroom practices alone, this article aims to contribute to ongoing discussions about responsible and effective AI adoption in ELT and to offer recommendations for higher education institutions seeking to navigate the challenges of AI integration.

To guide the analysis, the study addresses the following research questions:

(1) What are the key dimensions of institutional readiness for AI integration in English Language Teaching in Mexican universities?

(2) How are these dimensions reflected in current institutional practices and conditions?

(3) What challenges and gaps affect the effective and sustainable integration of AI in ELT at the institutional level?

Theoretical framework

Artificial Intelligence and Institutional Readiness in Higher Education

Artificial Intelligence has become a central component of digital transformation in higher education, influencing institutional decision-making, teaching practices, and learning environments. In educational contexts, AI is commonly defined as the use of computational systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as language processing, pattern recognition, and adaptive feedback (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Within ELT, AI applications include automated writing evaluation, speech recognition tools, adaptive learning platforms, and generative language models that support language practice and assessment (Godwin-Jones, 2018). While these technologies offer pedagogical potential, their effective implementation depends largely on institutional readiness.

Institutional readiness is a multidimensional construct that describes an organization's preparedness to adopt and sustain technological innovations. Early models of readiness in educational technology emphasized access to infrastructure and technical resources (Aydin & Tasci, 2005). More recent frameworks, however, highlight the importance of organizational culture, leadership, policy alignment, and continuous professional development as critical components of readiness (Porter & Graham, 2016; Schrum & Levin, 2013). From this perspective, readiness is not limited to the availability of AI tools but also includes the institutional capacity to support faculty in meaningful and ethical technology integration.

For the purposes of this study, institutional readiness is operationalized through four interrelated analytical dimensions: technological infrastructure, faculty development, institutional policies, and organizational culture. These dimensions are not treated as quantitatively measurable variables, but as analytical categories that guide the thematic interpretation of the data. Their identification is informed by existing frameworks in the literature and refined through the comparative analysis of documentary sources and reflective observations.

While several studies identify professional development as a key factor in institutional readiness, there is limited consensus regarding how such training should be structured in the context of rapidly evolving AI technologies, particularly generative models. Faculty members often report limited understanding of AI functionalities, pedagogical applications, and ethical implications, which can hinder effective classroom implementation (Huang et al., 2020). Without structured training opportunities, instructors may rely on informal experimentation or personal initiative, leading to inconsistent practices across programs. In ELT specifically, teachers require not only technical knowledge but also pedagogical guidance on how AI tools align with communicative language teaching principles and learning outcomes (Kessler, 2018).

Institutional policies and governance structures also play a critical role in shaping AI readiness. Clear guidelines regarding data privacy, academic integrity, and ethical use are essential, particularly in language programs where student-generated data and automated assessment systems are frequently employed (Selwyn, 2019). The absence of institutional policies may result in uncertainty among faculty and students, limiting adoption or encouraging unregulated use of AI technologies. Conversely, institutions that articulate clear strategies and ethical frameworks are better positioned to integrate AI in a sustainable and responsible manner.

Finally, leadership and organizational culture influence how innovations such as AI are perceived and adopted within higher education institutions. Supportive leadership that promotes innovation, allocates resources, and encourages collaboration can foster a culture of experimentation and reflective practice (Schrum & Levin, 2013). In contrast, institutions characterized by rigid structures or limited strategic vision may struggle to move beyond isolated uses of AI. Therefore, institutional readiness for AI in ELT should be understood as a dynamic process that involves technological, pedagogical, and organizational dimensions working in alignment.

Context of Mexican Universities and Institutional Conditions for AI Integration

Mexican higher education is characterized by significant institutional diversity, encompassing public and private universities with varying missions, resources, and levels of technological development. This diversity has a direct impact on the capacity of institutions to adopt emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence. While some universities have invested in digital infrastructure and innovation-oriented policies, others continue to face structural challenges related to funding, access to technology, and faculty training (OECD, 2020). As a result, institutional readiness for AI integration in English Language Teaching cannot be understood as a uniform process across the Mexican higher education system.

English language programs occupy a strategic position within Mexican universities due to their role in internationalization, academic mobility, and graduate employability. National and institutional policies often emphasize the importance of English proficiency as a key competence for students in higher education (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016). However, ELT programs frequently operate under conditions of large class sizes, limited contact hours, and heavy teaching loads, which can constrain innovation and experimentation with new technologies. In this context, AI-based tools are often perceived as potential solutions to address issues such as individualized feedback and learner autonomy, yet their adoption remains uneven and largely dependent on institutional support.

Digital infrastructure constitutes a fundamental dimension of institutional readiness in Mexican universities. Although access to internet connectivity and learning management systems has expanded in recent years, disparities persist between institutions and regions, particularly between urban and rural contexts (INEGI, 2021; SEP, 2023). These infrastructural gaps affect not only students' access to AI-enhanced learning tools but also teachers' ability to integrate such technologies consistently into their courses. Moreover, the availability of institutional licenses for AI platforms and educational software remains limited, often requiring instructors to rely on freely available or trial-based tools with restricted functionality.

Faculty development and professional training represent another critical challenge for AI integration in ELT within Mexican higher education. While many English language teachers demonstrate a positive disposition toward educational technology, opportunities for formal training in AI-related pedagogical applications are still scarce (Sayer & Ban, 2014). Professional development initiatives tend to focus on general digital literacy or the use of learning management systems rather than on emerging technologies such as AI. Consequently, instructors frequently develop their understanding of AI through self-directed learning, which can lead to inconsistent practices and varying levels of pedagogical effectiveness.

Institutional policies and ethical frameworks regarding the use of AI in education are also in an early stage of development in many Mexican universities. Clear guidelines addressing data privacy, academic integrity, and the responsible use of generative AI tools are often absent or remain under discussion (Selwyn, 2019). This lack of formal regulation may generate uncertainty among faculty and students, particularly in ELT contexts where AI tools are increasingly used for writing support and assessment. Without coherent institutional policies, the integration of AI risks being driven by individual initiatives rather than coordinated strategies aligned with institutional goals.

Overall, the Mexican higher education context highlights the importance of examining institutional readiness as a prerequisite for the effective integration of AI in English Language Teaching. Structural inequalities, limited faculty training, and emerging policy frameworks shape how AI is adopted and perceived within universities. Understanding these contextual factors is essential for developing realistic and context-sensitive strategies that support sustainable and ethical AI integration in ELT programs.

Recent scholarship on generative AI in higher education highlights its transformative implications for teaching, assessment, and institutional governance, particularly with the rapid expansion of large language models and multimodal systems (Qian, 2025; OECD, 2023). These developments reinforce the need to revisit institutional readiness not only in terms of infrastructure, but also in relation to ethical regulation, pedagogical alignment, and strategic planning.

This study contributes to current debates on Artificial Intelligence in education by shifting the focus from predominantly pedagogical perspectives toward institutional readiness as a critical condition for sustainable integration. While recent research has emphasized the instructional potential of AI, this article highlights the organizational, policy, and structural dimensions that shape its implementation, particularly within the context of Mexican higher education. In this sense, the present study contributes to the literature by providing a context-sensitive, institutionally focused analysis that integrates these dimensions within the specific conditions of Mexican higher education, an area that remains underexplored in current research.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, reflective, and documentary research design, following Creswell and Poth (2018) aiming at examining institutional readiness for the integration of Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching (ELT) at Mexican universities. Given the exploratory nature of the topic and the emerging status of AI-related policies and practices in higher education, a reflective-documentary approach is considered appropriate to analyze institutional conditions, trends, and challenges (Bowen, 2009).

The analysis is informed by three primary sources of data. First, a review of recent academic literature on Artificial Intelligence in higher education and language teaching was conducted to identify key dimensions of institutional readiness, including infrastructure, faculty development, policy frameworks, and organizational culture. Peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and reports published between 2015 and 2024 were prioritized to ensure relevance to current educational contexts.

Second, institutional documents and policy reports from Mexican higher education bodies were examined. These documents included national and international reports on digital transformation, English language education, and educational technology, as well as publicly available institutional guidelines related to technology use in teaching and learning. This documentary analysis allowed for the identification of prevailing institutional discourses and structural conditions shaping AI adoption in ELT programs.

A total of 18 documents were analyzed, including national policy reports, institutional guidelines, and international frameworks published between 2015 and 2024. Documents were selected based on their relevance to digital transformation, Artificial Intelligence in education, and English language teaching in higher education. The selection followed purposive criteria, focusing on publicly available and policy-oriented materials that reflect institutional approaches to technology integration.

Third, the study incorporates the author's professional experience within English language programs at Mexican universities as a source of reflective insight. Reflective observations were systematically analyzed in relation to the themes emerging from the literature and documentary review. This form of practitioner-based reflection has been recognized as a valid methodological approach for examining complex educational phenomena situated within specific institutional contexts (Farrell, 2015).

The reflective component was delimited to documented professional experiences within English language programs in Mexican universities over a period of more than ten years. Reflections were recorded through analytical memos and systematically revisited during the research process to identify recurring patterns related to institutional conditions for AI integration.

Data analysis followed a thematic approach combining both deductive and inductive coding. Initial categories were derived from the literature on institutional readiness, while additional themes emerged from the analysis of documentary sources and reflective observations. The coding process involved iterative comparison across data sources to identify convergences and divergences. Triangulation was achieved by systematically cross-referencing insights from academic literature, institutional documents, and reflective data.

While this study does not aim to provide generalizable findings, it seeks to offer a context-sensitive analysis that contributes to understanding institutional readiness for AI integration in ELT within Mexican higher education. The methodological approach allows for a nuanced examination of institutional factors that may inform future empirical research and institutional decision-making.

Given the inclusion of practitioner-based reflection, the researcher's positionality is acknowledged as part of the analytical process. The author's professional involvement in English language teaching in Mexican higher education provides contextual insight, while also introducing a degree of subjectivity. To mitigate this, reflective interpretations were continuously contrasted with documentary and literature-based evidence.

Results

Evidence from Mexican Universities

The analysis presented in this section is based on the thematic interpretation of academic literature, institutional documents, and reflective observations related to English Language Teaching (ELT) programs in Mexican universities. Rather than offering generalizable empirical claims, this section synthesizes recurring institutional patterns identified across these sources. These insights should be interpreted as context-sensitive and analytically derived, rather than as statistically representative of all Mexican universities.

• *Technological Infrastructure and Access*

Across many Mexican higher education contexts, access to digital infrastructure represents a foundational yet uneven dimension of institutional readiness. Most higher education institutions have implemented learning management systems and expanded internet connectivity, particularly following the shift to remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2020). However, the availability of AI-specific tools, such as adaptive language learning platforms or automated assessment systems, remains limited. In many cases, access to AI technologies depends on individual faculty initiatives rather than institutionally supported resources.

Reflective observations suggest that English language teachers frequently rely on freely available AI-based tools or trial versions of commercial platforms to supplement instruction. While these tools offer short-term pedagogical benefits, their use raises concerns related to sustainability, data privacy, and consistency across programs. Institutions that lack centralized access to AI tools may inadvertently contribute to fragmented implementation, where students' learning experiences vary significantly depending on instructor preferences and technological familiarity.

• *Faculty Development and Professional Support*

Faculty training emerges as a critical area of limited readiness in the integration of AI in ELT. Although many universities offer professional development programs focused on digital teaching skills, explicit training on AI applications and their pedagogical implications is still uncommon (Huang et al., 2020). English language teachers often report uncertainty regarding the effective and ethical use of AI tools, particularly in areas such as automated writing feedback, assessment, and generative language models.

The analysis suggests that professional learning related to AI is frequently informal and self-directed. Teachers engage in experimentation and peer exchange without systematic institutional guidance, which can lead to uneven pedagogical practices. This situation underscores the need for structured professional development initiatives that address not only technical competencies but also pedagogical alignment with ELT methodologies and learning outcomes (Kessler, 2018).

• *Institutional Policies and Ethical Considerations*

Institutional policies governing the use of AI in teaching and learning are still emerging in Mexican higher education. Documentary evidence reveals that many universities have general guidelines on the use of digital technologies but lack specific policies addressing AI-related issues such as data protection, algorithmic transparency, and academic integrity (Selwyn, 2019). This policy gap is particularly relevant in ELT contexts, where AI tools are increasingly used for writing assistance and language assessment.

In the absence of clear institutional frameworks, responsibility for regulating AI use often falls on individual instructors or program coordinators. This decentralized approach may generate uncertainty among faculty and students regarding acceptable practices, potentially limiting innovation or encouraging uncritical adoption. Institutions that are in the process of developing ethical guidelines for AI use are better positioned to foster responsible integration aligned with academic values.

• *Organizational Culture and Leadership Support*

Organizational culture and leadership support play a significant role in shaping institutional readiness for AI integration. Evidence suggests that universities with strategic visions emphasizing digital innovation are more likely to encourage experimentation with emerging technologies, including AI. In such contexts, English language programs benefit from administrative support, access to resources, and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Conversely, institutions characterized by limited strategic planning or resistance to change may struggle to move beyond isolated uses of AI. Reflective observations indicate that in these settings, AI integration often depends on individual champions rather than coordinated institutional efforts. This reliance on personal initiative highlights the importance of leadership commitment in promoting sustainable and coherent approaches to AI-enhanced ELT.

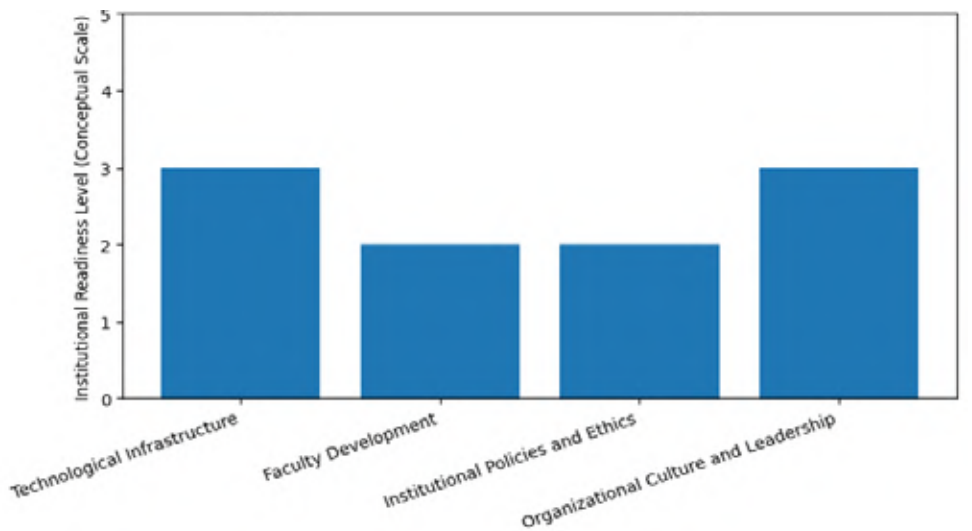
Table 1: Dimensions of Institutional Readiness for AI Integration in ELT at Mexican Universities

Dimension of readiness	Description	Evidence from Mexican universities
Technological infrastructure	Availability of digital platforms, internet connectivity, and access to AI-based tools for teaching and assessment	Uneven access across institutions; reliance on freely available or trial-based AI tools rather than institutionally licensed platforms
Faculty development	Professional training opportunities related to AI use, pedagogy, and ethics in ELT	Limited formal training on AI; professional learning often informal and self-directed
Institutional policies	Existence of guidelines regulating AI use, data privacy, assessment, and academic integrity	General digital policies common; specific AI-related frameworks largely absent or under development
Organizational culture	Institutional attitudes toward innovation, experimentation, and technology-enhanced teaching	Innovation often driven by individual instructors rather than coordinated institutional strategies
Leadership and strategic vision	Administrative support, resource allocation, and long-term planning for AI integration	Strategic vision present in some institutions; fragmented or unclear in others

Source: Author's reflective and documentary analysis

Discussion

The findings of this reflective-documentary analysis highlight that institutional readiness for integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English Language Teaching (ELT) at Mexican universities remains uneven and in an emergent stage. While AI-related tools are increasingly visible in teaching practices, their adoption is largely shaped by institutional conditions rather than pedagogical potential alone. This observation aligns with previous research suggesting that technological innovation in higher education is constrained or enabled by organizational structures, policies, and support systems (Porter & Graham, 2016).



Source: Author's reflective and documentary analysis

Figure 1: Conceptual representation of institutional readiness levels for AI integration in English Language Teaching

Figure 1 provides a conceptual overview of key dimensions influencing institutional readiness for AI integration in ELT, based on the reflective analysis presented in this study.

While these findings provide insight into institutional conditions in Mexican higher education, they should be interpreted as context-specific and not necessarily generalizable to other national or institutional settings.

One of the most salient issues emerging from the analysis is the gap between individual instructor initiative and institutional strategy. In many ELT programs, AI integration is driven by motivated teachers who experiment with available tools to enhance feedback, assessment, or learner engagement. However, without

centralized access to resources or formal guidance, these efforts tend to remain isolated and unsustainable. Similar patterns have been reported in other higher education contexts, where innovation depends heavily on individual agency rather than coordinated institutional planning (Schrum & Levin, 2013). This reliance on personal initiative may exacerbate inequalities across programs and limit the long-term impact of AI adoption.

Faculty development emerges as a critical dimension of institutional readiness that requires greater attention. Although digital competence has gained prominence in professional development agendas, explicit training related to AI pedagogy, ethics, and assessment remains limited. As Selwyn (2019) argues, the uncritical adoption of AI technologies without adequate pedagogical grounding may reinforce instrumental approaches to education and overlook broader ethical considerations. In ELT contexts, this risk is particularly relevant given the increasing use of generative AI tools for language production, which raises questions about authorship, feedback quality, and academic integrity.

The absence of comprehensive institutional policies further complicates AI integration in ELT. Without clear guidelines addressing data privacy, ethical use, and assessment practices, instructors and students may experience uncertainty regarding acceptable uses of AI. This finding resonates with international studies emphasizing the need for governance frameworks that balance innovation with accountability (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Institutions that delay the development of such policies risk reactive rather than proactive responses to emerging AI-related challenges.

Finally, the analysis underscores the importance of leadership and organizational culture in shaping institutional readiness. Universities that articulate a strategic vision for digital transformation and allocate resources accordingly are better positioned to support coherent and responsible AI integration. In contrast, institutions lacking such vision may struggle to move beyond fragmented practices. These findings suggest that institutional readiness for AI in ELT should be conceptualized as a dynamic and systemic process that requires alignment between technological infrastructure, faculty development, policy frameworks, and leadership commitment.

Conclusions and Implications

This article examined institutional readiness for the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English Language Teaching (ELT) at Mexican universities through a reflective and documentary approach. The analysis highlights that, although AI-related tools are increasingly present in ELT practices, institutional readiness remains uneven and largely underdeveloped. The effective integration of AI in ELT depends not only on technological availability but also on the

alignment of infrastructure, faculty development, institutional policies, and leadership support.

One of the main conclusions of this study is that AI integration in ELT is currently driven more by individual instructor initiative than by coherent institutional strategies. While this bottom-up adoption reflects teachers' willingness to innovate, it also exposes structural limitations related to sustainability, equity, and consistency across programs. Without institutional coordination, AI-enhanced practices risk remaining fragmented and dependent on personal expertise rather than being embedded within programmatic and curricular frameworks.

The findings also underscore the urgent need for structured professional development initiatives focused on AI in language education. English language teachers require not only technical training but also pedagogical and ethical guidance to integrate AI tools in ways that support communicative competence, learner autonomy, and academic integrity. Institutions that invest in continuous and context-sensitive faculty development are better positioned to foster responsible and effective AI adoption.

From an institutional perspective, the development of clear policies and ethical frameworks emerges as a critical implication. Universities must establish guidelines that address data privacy, assessment practices, and the responsible use of generative AI technologies. Such policies can provide clarity for both instructors and students, reducing uncertainty and supporting informed decision-making in ELT contexts.

Finally, this study suggests that institutional readiness for AI integration should be understood as an ongoing and dynamic process rather than a fixed condition. Leadership commitment and organizational culture play a decisive role in shaping how AI is perceived and implemented within universities. By adopting a strategic and holistic approach to AI integration, Mexican universities can better support English language programs in leveraging emerging technologies while addressing contextual challenges.

Future research may build on this reflective analysis by incorporating empirical data from specific institutions, including teacher and student perspectives, to further examine how institutional readiness influences AI adoption in ELT. Such studies would contribute to a deeper understanding of the conditions necessary for sustainable and ethical AI integration in higher education.

Strengths and Limitations

This study presents several strengths. It offers a timely analysis of Artificial Intelligence integration in English Language Teaching by focusing on institutional rather than purely pedagogical dimensions. It also provides a context-sensitive perspective on Mexican higher education, an area that remains underrepresented

in current research. Additionally, the study integrates multiple dimensions of institutional readiness, including technological infrastructure, faculty development, policy frameworks, and organizational culture, contributing to a more holistic understanding of AI adoption in ELT.

At the same time, the study has important limitations. The reflective-documentary design does not rely on a clearly delimited empirical dataset, which limits the generalizability of the findings. The inclusion of practitioner-based reflection introduces a degree of subjectivity, despite efforts to triangulate insights with documentary and literature-based sources. The documentary corpus, while relevant, does not fully capture the diversity of institutional contexts across Mexican universities. Furthermore, the study does not include direct data from teachers, administrators, or students, which would be necessary to provide a more comprehensive empirical perspective.

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