

Chapter 25:

University EFL Instructors' Teaching Current Challenges

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A. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, university EFL instructors have encountered swiftly evolving demands that redefine good academic English instruction. The expansion of higher education has resulted in increasingly diverse groups characterized by varying linguistic abilities, academic disciplines, and socio-cultural experiences, compelling educators to abandon uniform teaching methods in favor of differentiated and inclusive pedagogies (Fajariyah, Retnawati, & Madya, 2023; Putra & Musigrungsi, 2022). Simultaneously, globalization and internationalization policies necessitate English medium literacy practices that equip students for both local academic environments and multilingual, multicultural communication across global knowledge networks (Setyono & Widodo, 2019).

Concurrently with these demographic and policy alterations, technological transformation has escalated. The COVID-19 pandemic hastened the widespread implementation of online and blended learning in Indonesian universities and other EFL settings, exposing disparities in instructors' access to infrastructure, digital literacy, and pedagogical support (Nugroho, Ilmiani, & Rekha, 2020; Syauqi, Munadi, & Triyono, 2020). Despite the resumption of in-person instruction, institutional demands for learning management systems, flipped classrooms, and hybrid delivery continue to be elevated, whilst

professional development and acknowledgment of burden sometimes fall short (Bai, 2021; Kessler, 2018).

The recent introduction of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools, such as ChatGPT, has introduced an additional layer of complexity. These tools provide opportunities for personalized feedback and language practice; yet, they also pose challenges regarding academic integrity, assessment validity, and the diminishing authority of instructors (Andreou & Christani, 2025; Uyar & Büyükahıska, 2025). Collectively, these factors create a set of contemporary problems for university EFL instructors: managing multifaceted classroom diversity, using digital technology sustainably, and reconfiguring evaluation in the age of AI-mediated language production. This chapter examines each obstacle and suggests context-specific solutions based on recent research.

B. DISCUSSION

Challenge #1: Managing Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in University EFL Classrooms

University EFL classes are increasingly marked by significant diversity in learners' competence levels, disciplinary literacy requirements, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Studies in Indonesian and regional EFL contexts indicate that students exhibit considerable variation in their objectives for learning English, preferred media, assignment kinds, and anticipated roles of teachers (Fajariyah et al., 2023). These distinctions converge with the realities of multilingual and multicultural classrooms, where English serves not merely as a foreign language but also as a medium for articulating local, national, and international identities (Hasbi et al., 2025; Putra & Musigrungsi, 2022; Setyono & Widodo, 2019). For educators, this indicates that the conventional presumption of relatively uniform cohorts—linguistically and culturally—is no longer viable. Diversity can be cognitively interesting yet practically hard from a teaching

standpoint. Mixed-ability groupings can result in participation disparities when more competent students dominate, and less proficient peers disengage (Bhandari, 2020). Instructors may encounter conflicts when determining which cultures to emphasize: British or American "target" cultures, Indonesian local cultures, or more expansive global cultures (Putra & Musigrungsi, 2022). In the absence of stated frameworks, such actions may create concealed hierarchies of prestige and hinder inclusive objectives. Moreover, substantial class numbers and excessive teaching responsibilities constrain educators' ability to create assignments tailored to individual preparation, interests, and learning profiles (Fajariyah et al., 2023).

Proposed Resolution #1: Differentiated and Interculturally Responsive Pedagogy

Adopting differentiated instruction and interculturally responsive teaching as core design principles is a solution that is based on research. By changing the material, process, product, and learning environment based on the student's readiness, interest, and learning profile (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010, as cited in Fajariyah et al., 2023), Tomlinson and his colleagues came up with differentiated instruction. Empirical work in Indonesian EFL classrooms demonstrates that when students are offered options in task products (e.g., texts, infographics, digital stories), media (animation, infographics, texts), and grouping (individual, pair, small group), they report higher engagement and perceive teachers more as facilitators and motivators than as sole knowledge transmitters (Fajariyah et al., 2023). At the same time, interculturally responsive pedagogy asks teachers to make sure that EFL materials and tasks balance how they show local, national, and foreign cultures (Hasbi, 2025). According to the 3L-indexed study by Putra and Musigrungsi (2022), Indonesian EFL teachers tend to value target-language cultures as motivational tools, but they also value

local cultures to protect diversity and multilingualism. Based on this information, college teachers can:

1. At the start of a course, make a language and cultural profile of each student by using short tests or diagnostic exercises to find out their heritage languages, what they've already learned, and their intercultural interests.
2. Create "glocalized" tasks that ask students to think about global problems like climate change, academic honesty, and digital ethics using local examples and stories. This will help them understand what they know in their own communities while also developing their global literacy (Setyono & Widodo, 2019).
3. Use flexible groupings, sometimes with students of the same level of skill to provide focused support and sometimes with students of different levels to encourage peer scaffolding. This is based on research that shows strategic grouping can help close skill gaps in mixed-ability classes (Bhandari, 2020).

These techniques change the way diversity is seen from an issue that needs to be avoided to one that can be used to improve teaching. They also fit with the goals of the institutions involved in internationalization and inclusion.

Challenge #2: Sustainable Technology Integration and Digital Workload

The second major challenge concerns the integration of digital technologies into EFL teaching in a manner that is pedagogically meaningful and sustainable in terms of workload. Studies conducted during and after the COVID-19 pandemic highlight that many Indonesian EFL lecturers experienced online teaching as demanding, stressful, and time-consuming due to unstable internet, limited student participation, and the need to re-design materials for digital platforms (Nugroho et al., 2020; Kurniawan & Fitria, 2022). While students often appreciated the flexibility of asynchronous access, instructors

reported challenges in monitoring engagement, ensuring academic integrity, and maintaining interaction in large classes. Beyond infrastructural issues, a recurrent finding is the gap in instructors' technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK). Rahmadi & Hidayati (2022) reveal that teachers in flipped classrooms found that teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge were relatively strong, but their technological knowledge and confidence varied considerably, affecting the quality of technology-enhanced tasks and feedback. Instructors who perceived institutional pressure to "use technology" without adequate training tended to rely on low-level uses (uploading slides, assigning quizzes), while more integrated uses (collaborative writing platforms, multimodal projects, analytics-informed feedback) remained less common (Bai, 2021).

Proposed Resolution #2: TPACK-Informed, Workload-Sensitive Technology Integration

To turn technology from a burden into a sustainable affordance, integration should be guided by TPACK and grounded in realistic workload calculations. First, empirical studies recommend that professional development focus not only on "how to use" particular tools, but on helping EFL instructors design tasks where technology enhances specific language-learning outcomes (Rahmadi & Hidayati, 2022). For instance, learning management systems can be used to stage genre-based writing processes, where students submit drafts, receive peer and teacher feedback, and track revisions across multiple cycles. A study shows that lecturers who re-designed their online courses around clear interaction patterns (e.g., pre-class videos, in-class problem-solving, post-class reflection) reported higher student participation and felt more able to manage their workload (Hasbi & Sari, 2021; Kurniawan & Fitria, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2020). Building on these findings, universities can support instructors through:

1. Structured Professional Development on course (re)design using backward design and TPACK, where teachers collectively create technology-enhanced units rather than isolated activities.
2. Template-based course shells in institutional LMSs that embed core interaction patterns (pre-task input, in-task collaboration, post-task reflection) and assessment rubrics, reducing repetitive design work.
3. Recognition of digital workload in teaching allocations, acknowledging that developing high-quality online materials requires substantial up-front investment but may reduce workload in subsequent iterations (Bai, 2021).

By aligning technology use with explicit language-learning goals and institutional workload policies, university EFL instructors can move from emergency remote teaching to more sustainable, pedagogically principled digital practice.

Challenge #3: Assessment, Academic Integrity, and Generative AI

The third emerging challenge for university EFL instructors is rethinking assessment in an era when students can easily access GenAI tools for drafting, translating, and polishing their writing. Recent systematic and empirical studies document both the potential and limitations of GenAI in EFL contexts. A 2025 systematic analysis of GenAI tools for productive skills in EFL concluded that such tools can provide timely, individualized feedback and low-anxiety practice opportunities, but cannot replace human teachers in designing learning trajectories and addressing affective and ethical dimensions (Andreou & Christani, 2025).

With respect to writing assessment, Uyar and Büyükahıska (2025) compared scores generated by ChatGPT-4o mini with those assigned by experienced EFL instructors on IELTS-style essays. They found statistically significant differences in level, with ChatGPT systematically scoring essays more strictly than human raters and

showing only moderate correlation with human judgments ($\rho \approx .5$). Similar research on AI-mediated automated essay scoring indicates that while large language models can approximate holistic scores and provide detailed feedback, they struggle to evaluate higher-order features such as argumentation quality, audience awareness, and subtle discourse organization (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2023).

For university EFL instructors, these findings create at least three dilemmas: (1) how to design writing tasks that remain educationally meaningful when students can generate drafts with GenAI; (2) how to evaluate student performance fairly when the actual authorship of texts is uncertain; and (3) how to use AI tools to support, rather than replace, their professional judgment.

Proposed Resolution #3: Assessment Redesign and Critical AI Literacy

Current research suggests that rather than attempting to ban GenAI outright—an approach that is difficult to enforce and may disadvantage students who already rely on assistive technologies—EFL instructors should redesign assessment to foreground process, reflection, and higher-order thinking (Andreou & Christani, 2025; Uyar & Büyükahıska, 2025). Practical directions include:

1. **Process-oriented assessment:** Requires multiple artefacts (brainstorming notes, outlines, draft versions with tracked changes, peer-feedback exchanges, and reflective commentaries) so that the assessed object is not only the final text but also the learner's trajectory. This aligns with evidence that GenAI tools are most effective when used to support drafting and revision under teacher guidance (Andreou & Christani, 2025).
2. **Critical AI literacy tasks:** Design assignments that explicitly ask students to interrogate GenAI outputs—for example, to compare a ChatGPT-generated essay with their own draft, identify strengths and weaknesses, and justify which elements they would keep or

modify. Such tasks position AI as an object of analysis and a tool to be used critically, not as an invisible ghostwriter (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2023).

3. Transparent assessment policies: Develop and communicate clear course-level guidelines about acceptable and unacceptable uses of GenAI (e.g., allowed for brainstorming and language polishing with disclosure; not allowed for full essay generation), and align these with university academic integrity regulations (Uyar & Büyükahıska, 2025).

In this configuration, GenAI becomes one component of a broader assessment ecology where human instructors retain responsibility for evaluating complex communicative performance, while students are guided to develop ethical and strategic uses of emerging technologies.

C. REFLECTION

The problems discussed to this point are linked, not separate. Efforts to manage classroom diversity inevitably intersect with technology integration—for example, when teachers use digital tools to provide differentiated tasks or multimodal materials tailored to varied proficiency levels (Fajariyah et al., 2023). Likewise, the integration of GenAI into assessment practices cannot be separated from broader questions of equity: students with stronger digital literacies or better access to devices and connectivity are more likely to benefit from AI-based support, potentially widening existing gaps unless instructors intentionally design inclusive scaffolding (Andreou & Christani, 2025; Trinovita et al., 2025). So, the big arguments right now in applied linguistics and language teacher education are about how to help university EFL teachers become more than just content providers and start designing complex learning ecosystems. Differentiated and culturally responsive teaching, TPACK-informed technology integration, and critical AI literacy are all good ways to

build a strong foundation, but they take a lot of time, support from institutions, and ongoing professional development for teachers. Without adjustments to workload models, recognition in promotion criteria, and investment in locally relevant research (including SINTA-indexed studies that foreground Indonesian realities), there is a risk that these frameworks remain rhetorical rather than transformative (Putra & Musigrungsi, 2022; Nugroho et al., 2020).

To sum up, solving the problems university EFL teachers are facing on many levels is needed. Teachers need to develop practices that are reflective and based on research, departments need to set up spaces where teachers can work together to redesign courses and tests, and institutions need to make rules that support inclusive, technology-rich, and morally sound teaching. Rather than viewing diversity, digitalization, and GenAI as external pressures, colleges can reframe them as catalysts for re-imagining EFL teaching in ways that better serve students' academic, professional, and civic futures.

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