University EFL Lecturers’ Perceptions toward GenAI in teaching English

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Abstract

As Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) continues to influence educational practices globally, understanding how EFL lecturers perceive its integration into language teaching is essential. This study investigates the perceptions of Vietnamese university EFL lecturers regarding the benefits and challenges of using GenAI tools in English language instruction. Six lecturers from both public and private universities participated in semi-structured interviews. The data collected were subsequently analyzed thematically. Findings indicate that participants recognized several benefits of GenAI, including time efficiency, support in designing assessment tools, lesson plans, and teaching materials, assistance with providing feedback on student work, and user accessibility. However, they also expressed concerns about its limitations, such as reliability, over-reliance, privacy risks, and unmet expectations. The study concludes that while GenAI holds transformative potential for EFL instruction, its effective implementation requires teacher readiness, attention to ethical concerns, and sensitivity to local teaching contexts. These insights underscore the importance of targeted professional development and policy initiatives that align with educators’ practical needs and values to fully harness the pedagogical advantages of GenAI.

***Keywords*:** benefits, drawbacks, EFL, English teaching, GenAI, perceptions

1. Introduction

In recent years, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in education has garnered increasing attention for its potential to revolutionize teaching and learning processes. Generative AI (GenAI), a subset of AI, is defined by Google to be able to “create new content, like text, images, music, audio, and videos”, using a machine learning model that “uses the learned patterns to generate new content” after “learning the patterns and relationships in a dataset of human-created content.” GenAI, a term coined to denote the fusion of AI technologies with educational practices, represents a promising avenue for enhancing educational outcomes (Law, 2024).

A paradigm change in language learning and teaching has begun with the launch of GenAI systems. Studies by Riedl et al. (2008) and Namestovski and Kovari (2022) mentioned the development of engaging and original course materials. Also, GenAI has shown the improvement of real-world experience and genuine evaluation in EFL classroom (Salinas-Navarro et al., 2024), and the support of global cooperation and interactive learning (Benmamoun, 2023). However, there are drawbacks to this integration as well, such as the requirement for human-AI cooperation and the possible effects on students (Benmamoun, 2023). Notwithstanding these obstacles, it is clear that GenAI has the ability to revolutionize EFL instruction.

Understanding EFL teachers' perceptions toward using GenAI in their language teaching endeavors is crucial for optimizing educational outcomes. Therefore, when it comes to embracing and integrating new technology into the classroom, teacher beliefs, along with expertise and knowledge, are crucial elements, according to Ertmer et al. (2012) and Chan and Lee (2023). Chan and Lee (2023) also highlight the moral considerations of employing these kinds of instruments. Holmes et al. (2022) urge for the creation of ethical frameworks and principles in order to further the conversation on the subject. Furthermore, Azpiazu et al. (2017) emphasize the necessity of technological advances devoted to precisely meeting the requirements of the students. The evaluation also looks at the efficacy of AI tools, as evidenced by Azpiazu et al.'s (2017) analysis of information search engines and Mosaiyebzadeh et al.’s (2023) insights into ChatGPT applications and problems.

Not many studies have explored teachers’ perceptions of this issue in Vietnam, especially, in universities. To bridge this research gap, this study adopts a qualitative approach. This would provide a nuanced understanding of how EFL lecturers' perceptions toward GenAI evolved. Addressing this gap will contribute not only to the ongoing discourse on AI in language education but also to the development of effective pedagogical strategies that harness the benefits of GenAI while addressing potential challenges in EFL learning environments. Therefore, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. How do EFL lecturers in Vietnam perceive the benefits of using Generative AI in English teaching?
2. How do EFL lecturers in Vietnam perceive the drawbacks of using Generative AI in English teaching?

2. Literature Review

The emergence of GenAI presents a transformative opportunity for education. Within the specialized field of language learning and teaching, GenAI is considered a particularly vital tool for both educators and students (Cantos et al., 2023). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, research indicates that AI-based mobile learning can enhance proficiency, foster motivation, and expand access to personalized learning (Hockly, 2023; Ma, 2021). For instance, Arini et al. (2022) find that NovoLearning, an AI-powered platform, significantly improved learners' English skills by offering tailored instruction. These student-centered outcomes suggest a parallel need to explore how teachers perceive and respond to these tools in their professional practice. Given that teachers are central to instructional design and AI mediation, understanding their perspectives is essential for effective implementation of GenAI in language classrooms.

To better understand educator perspectives on these tools, the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) offers a valuable analytical lens. The TPACK framework extends Shulman’s (1986) idea of pedagogical content knowledge by introducing technology as a third critical domain. TPACK emphasizes the importance of integrating technology in ways that are pedagogically sound and content-appropriate, making it particularly useful for evaluating teachers’ perceptions toward GenAI in the teaching process.

First, teachers’ technological knowledge (TK) includes their understanding of how to operate, evaluate, and troubleshoot AI tools. With GenAI, TK involves the ability to prompt AI tools effectively, recognize limitations such as hallucinations or biases, and evaluate outputs for quality and appropriateness. Recent studies suggest that many educators demonstrate emerging TK with GenAI but lack deeper critical awareness. For example, Adel et al. (2024) and Trust et al. (2023) find that while teachers are experimenting with tools like ChatGPT for lesson planning or feedback generation, they often lack training in the ethical use of AI or in understanding how algorithms work. As GenAI becomes more pervasive, improving teachers’ TK, including data privacy, prompt engineering, and critical AI literacy, is essential (Prilop et al., 2024).

Second, effective use of GenAI also demands sound pedagogical knowledge. GenAI tools can support differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and student engagement when integrated thoughtfully. For instance, GenAI can generate reading comprehension questions, simplify texts, or offer tailored writing feedback, which aligns with pedagogical goals such as scaffolding and learner autonomy (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). In a similar vein, another study by Ulla et al. (2023) reports three primary findings: first, teachers held positive perceptions and primarily used the tool for creating language lessons and answering questions. Second, they recognized its advantages as a powerful assistant for teaching English grammar, sentence construction, and writing. Third, the authors noted:

*Our participants in the study regarded ChatGPT as a valuable resource for language teaching, owing to its supportive and convenient nature, which facilitated prompt and helpful responses to language queries, lesson plan development, and other engaging language activities utilization in the classroom* (Ulla et al., 2023, p.10)

However, pedagogical challenges persist. Educators may not know how to integrate GenAI without fostering over-reliance or passive consumption (Bozkurt et al., 2024; Memon & Kwan, 2025), thereby undermining critical thinking or reinforce surface learning.

Third, GenAI also intersects with content knowledge, especially in disciplines requiring precision or domain-specific expertise. For example, in language education, GenAI tools can provide grammar explanations or vocabulary support. However, teachers must have strong content knowledge to evaluate AI-generated outputs for accuracy and depth (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Similarly, the study by Ulla et al. (2023) also stresses the importance of taking precautions regarding academic integrity and the factual accuracy of AI-generated content. This sentiment of cautious optimism is reflected across the literature, which indicates a broad consensus among educators who believe AI can positively enhance both instruction and student learning (Alhalangy & Abdalgane, 2023; Sumakul, et al., 2022). Moreover, GenAI often produces content that is generalized, overly simplified, or factually inaccurate — a phenomenon known as “AI hallucination”. Teachers need both content mastery and AI literacy to spot inaccuracies and contextualize AI outputs for students.

In summary, the existing literature establishes a clear consensus: educators are broadly optimistic about the potential of Generative AI to enhance language instruction, and their intention to adopt these tools. However, a notable gap exists between these positive perceptions and the actual experiences in Vietnamese classroom settings. While we understand the “why,” we know far less about the “how.” Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap by investigating the insights and lived experiences of EFL Vietnamese university teachers using GenAI.

3. Methodology

***3.1. Participants***

This study employed a purposeful sampling strategy to select participants who met the research objectives. Selection criteria included age range, prior experience in using GenAI, gender balance, and type of university attended (e.g., public or private) to ensure validity and efficiency (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Consequently, six EFL lecturers from two private and public universities were selected to participate in the study. These teachers were chosen because, over the past three years, they have been integrating a different range of AI-powered tools into their lessons depending on their age. Table 1 below demonstrates the demographic and professional background information of the six participants selected for this study. The sample included an equal number of male and female participants, with ages ranging from 24 to 59. Their teaching seniority varied from 2 to 30 years. While five participants held a master's degree in English language teaching, one held a bachelor's degree. Participants were also balanced in terms of institutional background, with three working at public universities and three working at private institutions.

**Table 1**

*Participants’ background information*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Pseudonyms | Gender | Age | Seniority (Years) | GenAI use in ELT(Years) | Level of education | Type of university |
| T1 | Male | 29 | 2 | 3 | MA | private |
| T2 | Male | 24 | 2 | 1 | BA | private |
| T3 | Male | 30 | 8 | 3 | MA | public |
| T4 | Female | 40 | 6 | 2 | MA | private |
| T5 | Female | 41 | 12 | 1 | MA | public |
| T6 | Female | 59 | 30 | 1 | MA | private |

***3.2. Research instruments***

This study used semi-structured interviews to gather the data required to address the research questions. Mackey and Gass (2005) assert that interviews can reveal phenomena that are not apparent from direct observation. Prior to officially collecting the data, the interview protocol was reviewed by an expert in the field of language education and research, and it was piloted with one participant to refine the questions and minimize the potential for researcher bias. In the main study, the interviews were conducted online via Zoom and Microsoft Teams, each lasting between 20 and 30 minutes. The benefits of conducting interviews via online platforms include the potential for richer data, flexibility in terms of time and location, and cost and time efficiency (Maeng et al., 2016; Opdenakker, 2006). The participants were asked for permission to record interviews.

***3.3. Data analysis***

After obtaining the teacher's consent, their voices were recorded, and the interview data were transcribed verbatim. A qualitative thematic analysis was then conducted. This involved identifying relevant codes and grouping them into themes, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) established stages: data transcription, initial code generation, theme identification, theme review, theme definition and naming, and finally, report production.

 4. Results

***4.1. Perceived benefits of Generative AI in English language teaching***

*4.1.1. Time saving*

One of the most consistently perceived benefits across six participants was the substantial time-saving advantage that generative AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, offered in lesson preparation and information processing.

Six out of six lecturers emphasized how GenAI drastically reduced the amount of time required for planning and research tasks. For instance, T1 remarked, “*Without it, lesson planning used to take a whole day. Now, with ChatGPT, it only takes 15 minutes.*” Similarly, T6 shared a detailed comparison between using Google and ChatGPT:

*“It organizes information and provides answers very quickly, which saves me a lot of time. For example, in the past, when I researched a topic using Google, it would show a bunch of websites, and I had to click on each one, often without finding what I needed. But with ChatGPT, I just type a short prompt, and it gives me the results immediately. I was honestly amazed. It saves me a great deal of time [...].”*

T3, T4, and T5 also echoed similar opinions, highlighting how GenAI helped them process large amounts of content efficiently. T3 noted its ability to “*identify and examine a huge pile of texts in a short period of time*,” while T5 stated, “*It saves a lot of time, instead of reading and searching through documents; it helps me process the information faster*.”

These experiences underscore how GenAI’s ability to generate quick and relevant responses made it a highly practical tool for everyday teaching tasks.

*4.1.2. Supporting lesson plans and teaching materials*

Another significant theme emphasized by all participants was the capability of GenAI to support lecturers in preparing upcoming teaching sessions, including lesson plans, teaching activities, and teaching materials.

For instance, T2 highlighted the comprehensiveness of GenAI, stating that it could generate “*a lesson outline on the present simple and not only gives a detailed structure but also suggests various activities*”. In contrast, T4 reported using GenAI merely as “*a reference*.” noting that they did not entirely rely entirely on it for lesson planning.

T1, T2, and T5 also shared the same sentiment that they employed GenAI to “*design teaching activities*”. T6, despite not having made use of this feature, anticipated doing so in the future, stating that “*I think I’ll soon use ChatGPT to suggest teaching activities and then select from them.*”

In terms of teaching materials, T1 noted using GenAI to “*create samples, cue cards for speaking practice, listening script, and listening files with various native-like voices and appropriate speed for different target learners*”. Similarly, T3 reported leveraging GenAI to “*identify and examine a huge pile of texts in a short period of time and provide potential outcomes for my better decision-making in choosing the appropriate teaching materials.*”

Overall, these perspectives highlight the instrumental role of GenAI in facilitating lecturers’ preparation processes, particularly in the development of lesson plans, instructional activities, and teaching resources.

*4.1.3. Designing quizzes, tests, and assignments*

Four out of six lecturers reported using GenAI to assist in designing assignments, quizzes, and tests. They expressed that the tool not only accelerated the question-generation process but also supported the creation of contextually appropriate items for language assessment.

For instance, T4 noted: “*When I need to create questions for assignments or tests, I can generate them quickly, which saves time though of course, I still double-check them.*” Similarly, T6 remarked on the usefulness of GenAI for generating test items, especially for grammar and reading skills: “*It helps design test questions. For example, with the passive voice, I can instruct it to generate realistic examples. I especially like how it formulates questions for reading skills.*”

T2 also confirmed: “*I use GenAI to create tests*,” while T5 commented on its utility in generating short assessments: “*It helps me generate [...] quizzes [...]*.”

These responses illustrate a shared perception among participants regarding the practicality of GenAI in test design, particularly in terms of efficiency and content generation.

*4.1.4. Facilitating feedback and assessment*

Half of the participants expressed that GenAI functioned as a virtual assistant in evaluating student work, particularly in grading and providing feedback. This role was perceived as beneficial in reducing teachers’ workload while ensuring timely responses for students.

As T2 shared, “*I often use it to grade and give feedback on students’ writing*.” Similarly, T3 highlighted both the efficiency and personalization offered by GenAI: “*Automate different tasks like grading as well as give personalized responses so that teachers can save lots of time and effort. It provides quick feedback to students, so they don’t have to wait long*.”

Collectively, these perspectives suggest that GenAI was viewed as a supportive tool for streamlining assessment tasks and enhancing the feedback process, benefiting both lecturers and students.

*4.1.5. Accessibility and usability features*

Finally, all six participants perceived the accessibility and usability of GenAI as one of its most valuable features. The tool was praised for being free, fast, and easy to navigate, which encouraged its frequent use in their teaching practices.

Several participants explicitly appreciated the fact that GenAI is “*free of charge*” (T4, T6, T2, T5) and highlighted its ability to generate “*quick responses*” (T4, T5, T2, T6), which helped them work more efficiently. It was described as “*user-friendly*” (T4, T6, T1, T2), requiring minimal effort to operate; for example, “*just log in with an email and enter a prompt*” (T4).

Participants also acknowledged GenAI's flexibility in handling multiple formats. T1 noted, “*drop in an image and transcribe it into editable text easily*,” while T5 emphasized its capability to “*upload pictures and videos*.” T3 further confirmed its versatility, stating that it “*can deal with texts, pics, videos or even codes*.”

These responses collectively underscore the perception of GenAI as an accessible and versatile tool that supports various instructional needs with minimal technical barriers.

***4.2. Perceived drawbacks of Generative AI in English language teaching***

Despite these upsides, six participants agreed that GenAI also brought them some problems regarding reliability, privacy and security, overreliance, unsatisfied demands, as well as low-quality feedback.

*4.2.1. Reliability problems*

Four out of six participants stated that GenAI should not be completely trusted due to its potential for fabricating information.

Some participants noted the inaccuracy in the information generated by GenAI, revealing that “*one drawback is that it can generate incorrect information*” (T6), or “*sometimes it makes up sources. When I click on them, they don’t exist*” (T1).

T2 and T4 echoed this opinion, stressing the importance of scrutinizing information from other sources before using the data.

“*It actually fabricates answers quite a lot, so I still have to check everything carefully before using it in my lessons*.” - T2

“*It still gives wrong answers sometimes. I always must double-check*.” - T4

In summary, participants expressed a cautious attitude toward the use of GenAI, recognizing its potential while underscoring the need for critical evaluation and cross-checking of the information it provides.

*4.2.2. Overdependence*

Half of the participants expressed concerns about excessive reliance on GenAI, suggesting that overdependence on the tool could negatively impact their professional autonomy and creativity.

T4 cautioned against the risk of becoming disengaged from core teaching responsibilities, stating: “*If teachers rely too much on AI, they may become passive and lazy, neglecting lesson planning or writing by themselves, and becoming overly dependent and inactive*.” Similarly, T2 and T3 acknowledged a decline in their own initiative, with T2 noting, “*I think I’ve become passive and dependent on it,” and T3 adding that this reliance had “reduced my own creativity*.”

These reflections revealed a perceived drawback that excessive use of GenAI could undermine lecturers’ sense of responsibility, autonomy, and creativity.

*4.2.3. Unmet expectations*

Despite offering multifaceted responses, GenAI was criticized by some participants for failing to fully meet their professional expectations or instructional needs. Specifically, the generated content was sometimes misaligned with personal teaching styles or lacked the depth required by experienced educators.

T1 pointed out a mismatch between GenAI-generated suggestions and his preferred teaching approach:

“*Some of the ideas it suggested didn’t quite suit my teaching, like interactive activities. I’m not that kind of teacher, so I didn’t use them*.”

Regarding assessment, T1 expressed his disappointment when GenAI did not fully analyze all the issues in student work as T1 expected, reporting that “*I didn’t use it much for assessment. I tried it with one writing task, but it couldn’t fully identify the issues in the paper.*”

T6, who emphasized the importance of disciplinary grounding, noted that GenAI often produced generalized responses lacking in conceptual rigor:

“*Someone with deep knowledge and experience would see that its answers are not complete or in-depth. It synthesizes many perspectives without following a particular school of thought.*”

She further added, “p*eople from other schools of thought might not find AI’s answers convincing*,” and emphasized the need for human discernment, stating: “*humans must apply judgment and selectivity*.”

These reflections suggest that while GenAI can provide broad and accessible content, it may fall short in offering pedagogically nuanced or theoretically grounded responses, especially for more experienced users.

*4.2.4. Privacy and security concerns*

Even though raised by a minority of the participants, concerns about privacy and security were worth noting.

T6, an experienced lecturer but a novice GenAI user, expressed hesitation in using the tool due to fears of personal information leakage. She admitted avoiding certain features and refraining from logging in altogether, revealing that

“*I'm afraid of personal information leaks. There are many features I haven't tried, like attaching files, because every time I try, it asks me to log in or enter my email, which makes me feel uneasy.*”

This reflection highlights the role of trust and digital literacy in shaping user engagement with GenAI tools, particularly among those who are less familiar or confident with emerging technologies.

5. Discussion

This study investigated Vietnamese EFL lecturers’ perceptions of the benefits and challenges of using GenAI in English language instruction. Drawing on the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), the findings reveal a nuanced and context-specific understanding of how educators are navigating this emerging technology.

***5.1. Perceived Benefits of GenAI Use***

The study revealed that GenAI tools were viewed by all participants as highly helpful in saving time, especially when generating materials or planning lessons. Participants said they used GenAI for the generation of lesson plans and also for teaching activities plus quizzes and even tests and assignments. Ulla et al. (2023) noted teachers often turn toward tools like ChatGPT. It matches their data that educators use ChatGPT to make language tasks and quickly arrange lessons. These practices show GenAI supporting instructional planning because they reflect technological knowledge integrated with pedagogical knowledge within the TPACK framework.

Even though it was less frequent, the generation of feedback as well as assessments with GenAI was also a noted benefit. Formative assessment support with AI, as stressed by Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019), echoes some earlier research. However, some participants expressed caution regarding the accuracy as well as the appropriateness of GenAI-generated feedback. Dwivedi et al. (2021) have stressed that there is a need for strong content knowledge in order to critically evaluate AI outputs. The convenience and accessibility for GenAI also contributed to its usability because it supported previous observations by Adel et al. (2024) regarding its potential to expand instructional reach and responsiveness.

***5.2. Perceived Challenges and Concerns***

While the perceived benefits were notable, the findings also highlight key drawbacks and concerns that limit GenAI’s pedagogical practice. The most frequently cited issue was information inaccuracy. Teachers expressed uncertainty about the factual correctness and contextual relevance of AI-generated content - a concern widely noted in the literature (Prilop et al., 2024). As several participants indicated, reliance on GenAI without proper check may lead to misinformation. This underscores the importance of content knowledge and AI literacy, both central to the effective application of TPACK in GenAI-integrated classrooms.

A second significant concern was overdependence. Lecturers noted the risk of relying too heavily on AI for preparing lessons, reducing opportunities for critical thinking. This aligns with the critiques of Bozkurt et al. (2024) and Memon & Kwan (2025), who warned that GenAI can undermine autonomy if not intervened by thoughtful pedagogy. From the TPACK perspective, this reflects an imbalance where technological knowledge may be overemphasized without sufficient pedagogical use.

Additionally, participants raised concerns about privacy and data security. This reflects a growing global discourse around ethical use and data governance in educational AI (Alhalangy & AbdAlgane, 2023). Other issues included limitations in feedback quality and misalignment between AI responses and actual teaching needs, highlighting the importance of contextually prompting GenAI inputs rather than using them uncritically.

***5.3. Implications***

The findings point to several key areas for teacher training and professional development. First, teacher education programs should not only introduce GenAI tools but also prioritize building integrated TPACK skills. This involves training on prompt engineering, understanding AI bias, using AI ethically, and designing teaching methods with AI. Second, institutions need to create communities of practice where educators can exchange GenAI strategies and discuss both successes and challenges.

For policy and institutional leaders, the study highlights the importance of establishing clear guidelines and protections for AI use in teaching, especially regarding data security and academic honesty. These supports can help ensure that GenAI is used responsibly and fairly.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on GenAI in education by capturing the lived experiences of Vietnamese EFL lecturers - voices that are often underrepresented in global AI-in-education discourse. The findings affirm many established benefits of GenAI, including its time-saving and content generation capacities, while also revealing persistent challenges related to accuracy, overdependence, and pedagogical alignment. The TPACK framework has proven valuable in understanding these experiences and offers a pathway for integrating GenAI more meaningfully into teaching practice. Furthermore, the reliance on AI tools may necessitate ongoing professional development and training for educators to effectively leverage these technologies and mitigate potential risks. Moreover, the need for interoperability, compatibility, and standardization in AI-powered educational systems requires collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, including educators, researchers, and policymakers.

While the present study could provide valuable insights into EFL teachers' positive perceptions of GenAI, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, most existing literature tends to focus on the immediate impact and benefits of AI applications, often overlooking the potential long-term consequences and evolving perceptions of teachers. As emphasized by Baig and Yadegaridehkordi (2025), there is a need for longitudinal studies that track lecturers' experiences with GenAI over an extended period. Such research would shed light on how EFL instructors' perceptions change as they gain more exposure to AI tools and how these evolving perceptions may impact their language instruction. Second, the study focuses on a small sample, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the research employs only the interview method, which, although appropriate for exploring nuanced perspectives, may have restricted the breadth of data.

Moving forward, several avenues for future research needed and development in GenAI can further advance its potential as a valuable complement to teaching. Continued efforts to enhance the accuracy, reliability, and interpretability of AI algorithms can improve the effectiveness and trustworthiness of AI-driven educational systems. Moreover, interdisciplinary collaborations between AI researchers, educators, cognitive scientists, and learning theorists can enrich our understanding of human learning processes and inform the design of more effective AI-powered learning environments. Additionally, research on the socio-cultural, ethical, and policy dimensions of GenAI can inform responsible and inclusive practices that promote equity, diversity, and social responsibility in education. Furthermore, longitudinal studies examining the long-term impacts of GenAI on teaching and learning outcomes can provide valuable insights into its efficacy, scalability, and sustainability in educational settings.

In conclusion, GenAI holds great promise as a valuable complement to teaching, offering a wide array of applications, benefits, and opportunities for enhancing educational experiences. By leveraging AI technologies to personalize learning, optimize assessment, and streamline administrative tasks, educators can create more engaging, effective, and inclusive learning environments. However, the integration of GenAI in education also presents challenges and considerations related to ethics, equity, and professional development. Moving forward, continued research, collaboration, and innovation in GenAI can contribute to the advancement of educational practices and the realization of the full potential of AI in education.

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