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Integrating generative AI in English as an additional language or dialect education: Teacher prioritisation in curriculum support for indigenous and L2 learners

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Abstract

This study examines how secondary English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) teachers prioritise pedagogical, ethical, and contextual considerations when integrating Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) into student support planning. Adopting a mixed-methods multiple-case study design, the study focuses on two teachers supporting EAL/D learners with distinct linguistic and cultural profiles (Indigenous; low-proficiency L2). Data were collected through Maximum Difference (MaxDiff) scaling tasks to elicit teachers' prioritisation of key considerations, alongside a joint semi-structured interview, student support plans, and logs of GenAI prompts and outputs. The findings reveal that teachers consistently prioritised student-centred pedagogical goals and cultural responsiveness when developing their support plans, prior to any GenAI considerations. Analysis of prompt logs and interview data shows how these priorities were enacted in practice through GenAI, particularly via iterative prompt refinement and meta-prompting strategies. The data also highlight how teachers' GenAI practices were shaped by contextual and institutional factors while they navigated ongoing tensions around their own knowledge limitations and the affordances and constraints of GenAI tools. The findings offer a unique, on-the-ground perspective on the practical and ethical integration of GenAI in pre-tertiary EAL/D education, providing actionable insights for educators to advance personalised learning through GenAI.

Keywords: Generative AI, EAL/D, teacher decision-making, MaxDiff scaling, AI prompting, Indigenous education

Introduction

The integration of technology into language education has a well-established history, evolving from early computer-assisted language learning (CALL) focused primarily on drill-and-practice and form-focused instruction (Warschauer & Kern, 2000), through network-based and communicative CALL applications that foregrounded interaction and authentic language use, to more recent adaptive and intelligent systems capable of responding to individual learner performance in real time (Godwin-Jones, 2024). Each successive wave has renewed debate about what technology can and cannot contribute to language learning, and has raised persistent questions about the role of the teacher in mediating technological affordances for diverse learner populations. The emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) represents the latest and arguably most disruptive development in this trajectory, distinguished from earlier technologies by its capacity to generate novel, contextually responsive language at scale and to simulate the kind of personalised interaction previously available only through human interlocutors. Recent reviews and position pieces have begun mapping the landscape of this evaluation, identifying equity and inclusion, ethical sustainability, and pedagogically sound instructional design as the central challenges facing the field as GenAI becomes increasingly embedded in educational contexts (Allison et al., 2025; Tu & Lu, 2025).

Since the introduction and subsequent integration of GenAI technologies into language education, much has been made of GenAI's affordances (or lack thereof) for "personalised learning" (e.g., Kohnke et al., 2025; Laak & Aru, 2025; Pegrum, 2025). Claims as to how GenAI supports personalised learning include Kohnke et al. (2025) with GenAI "customising conversations and study materials to align with individual learners' diverse needs, preferences and objectives" (p. 1), while Barrot (2023) suggests GenAI can provide "personalised and timely feedback that enhances student learning" (p. 5). However, critics such as Pegrum (2025)—favouring the term "individualised learning" over "personalised learning"—suggest AI limits personal connection with human interlocutors, limits personal agency via presenting limited options as output, and limits personal integrity by treating people as data, at least from the student-facing perspective. Issues of bias and cultural/linguistic discrimination are also noted by Pegrum (2025) and several others (e.g. Dobinson et al., 2024; Tran & Stell, 2024), effectively limiting the potential of GenAI for truly personalised learning.

While these criticisms are well-founded and now supported by plentiful empirical evidence, it is possible they are addressing only one dimension of what "personalisation" entails, namely, the learner-facing experience of adaptation and agency. Certainly, prompting for personalisation based on students' individual differences, i.e., race, culture, gender, etc., limits these (very human) characteristics to simple variables, overlooking the complexity of identity and lived experience (Godwin-Jones, 2024). Taken together, there is an ongoing tension in the literature between the promise of GenAI-enabled personalisation and the constraints imposed by its design and deployment, raising questions not only about what GenAI can do, but about how it is taken up, adapted, and evaluated within specific educational contexts. While existing discussions tend to position GenAI either as enabling or constraining personalisation, they rarely examine the situated decision-making processes through which teachers navigate these possibilities in practice. In other words, if teachers truly *know* their students, can they create the conditions for meaningful GenAI-assisted personalisation?

A more immediate question, then, is how teachers decide which aspects of student need, curriculum demands, and technological affordances to prioritise when working with GenAI tools. Can GenAI help such teachers extend and enhance their capacity to differentiate instruction, reflecting both individual learner needs and broader curricular goals? Addressing this requires examining how such decisions are made in context rather than assuming instructional outcomes. Such a perspective would shift the focus from GenAI as an autonomous agent of "personalisation", to GenAI as a "co-agent" or "pedagogical partner" whose effectiveness depends on how teachers prioritise and enact different considerations in practice, often under conditions of uncertainty and constraint.

The present study explores this issue via a case study of two Australian secondary school teachers' decision-making processes, experiences, beliefs, and practices when integrating GenAI into student support planning for two English as an additional language/dialect (EAL/D) learners, as the teachers use GenAI to assist with implementing (but not designing) detailed student curriculum support plans. We analysed these individual support plans together with teachers' GenAI prompt logs, the results of a Maximum Difference (MaxDiff) scaling activity, and joint interview data. These data sources were used to examine how teachers prioritised competing pedagogical, ethical, and contextual considerations, and how these priorities were enacted in practice through planning and prompting. The study's research questions are as follows:

(RQ1) How do teachers prioritise key pedagogical, ethical, and contextual considerations when using GenAI to support EAL/D students?
(RQ2) How are these priorities reflected in teachers' planning and prompting practices when using GenAI for EAL/D student support?

Teacher Decision-Making in Technology Integration for Language Teaching

The integration of digital technologies into language teaching has increasingly been understood as a complex, context-sensitive process shaped not only by teachers' knowledge and skills, but also by their pedagogical reasoning and decision-making in practice, also considered as a form of teacher cognition (Borg, 2003). Teacher decision-making in technology integration refers to the situated and ongoing judgments teachers make about how, when, and why to use digital tools in relation to pedagogical goals, learner needs, and contextual constraints (Forkosh-Baruch et al., 2021). In language education research, such decision-making has been shown to be shaped not only by teachers' knowledge and beliefs, but also by classroom realities such as time, institutional expectations, and the perceived pedagogical value of particular technologies (Bui, 2022; Park & Son, 2022). Rather than being a linear process of selecting appropriate tools, technology-related decision-making is understood as iterative and responsive, involving the weighing of competing considerations in real time (Lan, 2025). In the present study, teacher decision-making is understood specifically as the process through which EAL/D teachers prioritise pedagogical, ethical, and contextual factors when determining how GenAI tools are used in student support planning and instructional design.

Research in language education has shown that teachers bring strong pedagogical and content knowledge to their practice, although they may vary in how they engage with new technologies. Previous work has often framed technology integration in language teaching through the TPACK framework (Kohnke & Zou, 2025; Mishra & Koehler, 2006), and professional development has frequently focused on supporting teachers to design technology-mediated tasks, evaluate digital tools, and align them with instructional goals (e.g., Ma et al., 2025). While this work has been valuable in conceptualising the knowledge required for technology integration, it has tended to foreground a knowledge-oriented account of teaching with technology rather than the situated processes through which teachers enact technology use in classrooms (Max et al., 2022; Park & Son, 2022). Consequently, less is known about how teachers navigate competing considerations such as pedagogical effectiveness, learner needs, ethical concerns, and practical constraints when integrating emerging technologies into their teaching.

This challenge becomes even more pronounced in emerging contexts such as GenAI integration, where pedagogical norms and boundaries are still in flux. Recent studies have begun to explore how GenAI tools can support text generation, feedback provision, and adaptive learning experiences (e.g., Crosthwaite & Sun, 2025). However, much of this emerging work has focused on higher education or pre-service teacher contexts, with comparatively less attention to how in-service secondary teachers navigate the use of GenAI in everyday language classroom practice (Blundell et al., 2025). Moreover, existing research has tended to emphasise what GenAI can do, rather than how teachers decide which uses are appropriate, effective, or ethically justifiable in specific contexts (Barrott, 2023). However, studies are now beginning to consider how educators demonstrate the capacity for context-sensitive, ethically grounded professional judgment in the kind of complex, uncertain educational contexts now caused by GenAI (Henriksen & Mishra, 2024).

Understanding teacher decision-making is particularly important in linguistically diverse settings such as EAL/D education, where instructional choices must account for variation in language proficiency, cultural background, and educational experience (Godwin-Jones, 2024; Hammond, 2014; Warschauer, 2003). The use of GenAI in such contexts introduces additional considerations, including the risk of cultural bias, the limitations of AI-generated representations of learner identity, and the need for contextually responsive support (Dobinson et al., 2024; Pegrum, 2025; Tran & Stell, 2024). Therefore, as teachers begin to explore GenAI's potential for supporting diverse learners, there is a need to examine how they prioritise and enact pedagogical, ethical, and contextual considerations in practice.

Figure 1 summarises the conceptual framework underpinning the study, showing how teacher cognition (Borg, 2003) and EAL/D contextual factors jointly shape teachers' decision-making and prioritisation processes, which in turn determine how GenAI tools are drawn upon in practice. This framework captures the bidirectional relationship between GenAI use and teacher decision-making, reflecting the reflective and validating function of GenAI identified in the literature (Blundell et al., 2025; Henriksen & Mishra, 2024) and foregrounded in the findings of the present study.

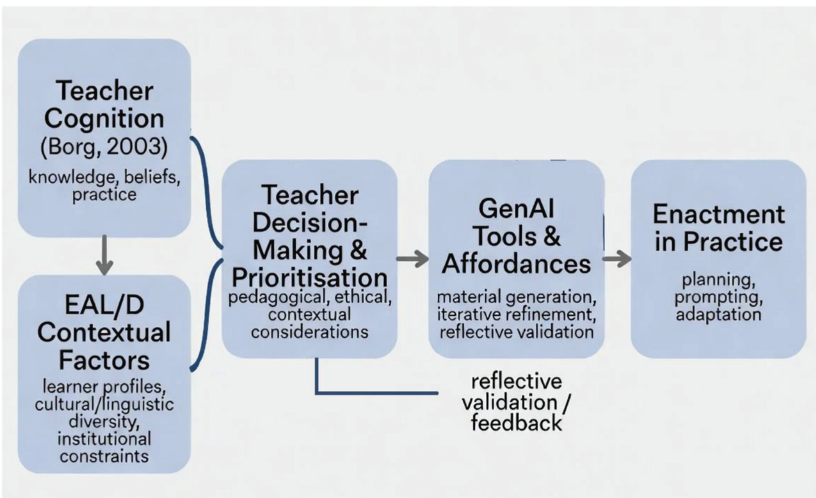

Figure 1. *Conceptual framework illustrating the relationships among teacher cognition, EAL/D contextual factors, GenAI tools and affordances, and teacher decision-making and enactment in practice*

The present study addresses this need with relation to secondary EAL/D teachers' use of GenAI for student support. The following section outlines the EAL/D context in Australia in more detail.

English as an Additional Language/Dialect Instruction in Australia

Australia, as a country in the Inner Circle of Kachru's (1982) three-circle model of World Englishes, requires strong English proficiency to function effectively in nearly every domain of public and private life. English is the de facto national language, the medium of government, law, and education, and the primary language of social interaction across its diverse population.

Over a decade ago, Hammond (2014) suggested between 20–25% of Australian school students came from EAL/D backgrounds, and while there is no mandatory national reporting of EAL/D status, current estimates against the Australian population would place this at between 700,000–1,000,000 students. EAL/D students are from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including refugees, those born in Australia but where home heritage language (e.g. Korean, Vietnamese) is dominant over English, those from Australian Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds where English may be spoken in addition to Indigenous languages, and immigrants and international students from non-English speaking countries. The Australian National Curriculum (ACARA, 2025) is delivered entirely in English from Foundation to Year 12. NAPLAN assessments in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 test reading, writing, language conventions, and numeracy, all in English. Success in this endeavour is "uneven, and often correlates with students' socioeconomic backgrounds and previous educational experiences" (Hammond, 2014, p. 507), yet even those from high-SES backgrounds are not guaranteed success (Hammond et al., 2024).

In terms of EAL/D teacher development, a large body of work has focused on scaffolded support between EAL/D students, EAL/D professionals and mainstream disciplinary content teachers (e.g. Godson & Parkin, 2021; Harper & Feez, 2021). This includes creating culturally safe, positive and inclusive learning environments particularly for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander students (Rushton, 2022), and school leadership for EAL/D support (Hammond et al., 2024). However, an audit of initial teacher education degrees in Australian tertiary institutions found many such degrees do not provide explicit training for EAL/D support (Steele et al., 2025) as well as hold a deficit view of EAL/D students, sometimes also found within developing EAL/D teachers themselves ("language as a problem" rather than "language as a resource"; Vo & Choi, 2025).

Worryingly, relatively little is known about how Australian EAL/D teachers use technology to enhance pedagogy, with a recent systematic review (Bui et al., 2026) reporting only 16 representative publications (with several drawn from the same project, leaving only individual 12 empirical studies) investigating digital technologies for Australian EAL/D between 2015–2025 at both primary and secondary levels of education. Most studies (7/16) reported on digital multimedia composing (e.g. Barnes & Tour, 2023), with others covering information seeking (Alford, 2019), translation (Turner et al., 2022) and virtual reality games for vocabulary (Albayrak et al., 2023). 50% of studies reported involved researcher-teacher collaborative pedagogical interventions based on the outcome of research-led workshops on educational technologies (e.g. Barnes & Tour, 2023; Unsworth & Mills, 2020). However, the authors of the review are careful to note such intervention-based studies report over-positive outcomes while reflecting teachers' use of technology "in [researcher] *supported* rather than *everyday*" contexts (p. 17, emphasis in the original). Challenges for EAL/D teachers reported in the review include a lack of training in pedagogical technologies during initial teacher education (Veliz & Véliz-Campos, 2023), an overcrowded curriculum (Alford & Jetnikoff, 2016), and lack of student access and digital literacy (Tour & Barnes, 2022). Bui et al. (2026) conclude their review by calling for future EAL/D educational technology research to move beyond the "state of the art" and instead focus on follow-up studies exploring the "state of the actual." (p. 4).

While there have been studies of Australian K–12 teachers' perceptions of GenAI (Blundell et al., 2025), the only study to date investigating EAL/D support involving GenAI is found in Crosthwaite et al. (2024), involving K–12 teachers across the curriculum at several public and independent secondary schools in Queensland. The study focused on teachers' use cases for GenAI prompting, with teachers invited to submit prompts to the researchers via a web portal together with a rating of the resulting GenAI output for "pedagogical usefulness". Several EAL/D teachers joined the project, submitting 32 prompts designed to aid differentiation of feedback, assessment and instruction, including prompts for creating more accessible activities or content, explaining difficult concepts for EAL/D students, simplifying disciplinary texts, and tailoring instructions for special needs or disability support. However, given the above, there remains a timely need to investigate how EAL/D teachers prioritise and enact pedagogical, ethical, and contextual considerations when using GenAI to support linguistically diverse learners in classroom practice.

Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods multiple-case study design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), combining complementary quantitative and qualitative approaches to generate both structured and contextualised understandings of teachers' GenAI-related decision-making in EAL/D contexts. The quantitative strand employs a Maximum Difference (MaxDiff) (best–worst scaling) task as a case-level preference elicitation method to capture participants' relative prioritisation of key pedagogical, ethical, and contextual considerations, without aiming for population-level generalisation (Orme, 2010). This is complemented by qualitative interviews analysed thematically to capture situated experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2021), and directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) of two de-identified EAL/D student support plans (including Indigenous and low-proficiency L2 learners) and teachers' reflective prompt logs. Integration of findings follows a convergent approach, allowing triangulation and elaboration of how teachers' stated priorities are reflected in their planning and prompting practices.

Participants

In this study, each case is defined as a teacher-student planning episode: Case 1 comprises Teacher L's planning and GenAI-supported enactment for the Indigenous EAL/D student; Case 2 comprises Teacher E's planning and GenAI-supported enactment for the low-proficiency L2 learner. Both support plans were authored by Teacher L in her role as Head of Extension and Intervention, drawing on her professional knowledge of both students. Teacher E's decision-making is therefore captured primarily through her MaxDiff responses, interview contributions, and GenAI prompt log, with the support plans serving as shared contextual resources that informed the goals and learner profiles against which both teachers' GenAI use was enacted. Both teachers participated jointly in the MaxDiff task and interview, and each contributed an independent GenAI prompt log focused on their respective focal student.

The study context is an independent girls' secondary school in Queensland, Australia. The school has approximately 6.24% EAL/D students, with provision including quality differentiated teaching practices within the classroom. Where required, students have access to support staff in the classroom. Students in Years 7 and 8 may receive targeted literacy and numeracy intervention in small groups to remediate and improve these skills. Students in Year 9 and 10 may choose a subject elective whereby they receive targeted support to improve their language proficiency skills. During timed assessments, some students receive additional time to read, process, and produce written responses.

Teacher L is an experienced EAL/D teacher currently serving as the Head of Extension and Intervention, responsible for supporting student diversity across Years 7–12. She has been teaching for over 25 years, including 10 years working with EAL/D students in both the UK and Australia. Over the past four years, her training and experience with CALL and GenAI has evolved through experimentation, collaboration, and continuous self-directed learning. She has worked closely with colleagues to integrate AI into EAL/D contexts for multiple purposes e.g., scaffolding academic language, supporting writing development, deepening understanding of cognitive verbs, creating personalised learning materials, and enhancing student engagement.

Teacher E has been teaching for two and a half years across both the English and Humanities departments and has spent one year with an EAL/D class. As with Teacher L, most of Teacher E's development in the GenAI space has been self-led, notably through independent research into using GenAI to enhance student learning whilst maintaining teacher autonomy. She has also attended several professional development seminars which incorporate GenAI into teaching and learning, although not specific to the EAL/D space.

Materials and Procedures

Maximum Difference Scaling (MaxDiff)

A Maximum Difference Scaling (MaxDiff) exercise (see Appendix C) was conducted to elicit participants' prioritisation of key pedagogical, ethical, and contextual considerations when using GenAI in EAL/D support planning. MaxDiff, also known as best-worst scaling, asks participants to identify the most and least important items within a series of choice sets, producing fine-grained comparative data on relative priorities (Louviere et al., 2015). In this study, eight considerations were organised into six sets of four items, with participants selecting the most and least important consideration in each set. Rather than being used to generate population-level estimates, MaxDiff was employed as a structured elicitation tool to capture within-case patterns of prioritisation in teacher decision-making (Orme, 2010). This approach reduces scale-use bias and enables clearer identification of relative importance among competing considerations. In the present study, the MaxDiff results are used to examine how teachers prioritise pedagogical, ethical, and contextual factors when making decisions about GenAI-supported EAL/D instruction.

Content Analysis: EAL/D Student Support Plans

Teacher L provided two de-identified EAL/D student support plans (see Appendix A/B), including a plan in support of an Indigenous EAL/D student, and a plan in support of a Chinese L1 background student with low L2 English proficiency for her age group. Both plans were created by Teacher L, drawing on student input about their background, strengths, and competencies to ensure they remain student-centred, as well as classroom observations, relevant academic and language assessment data, parent input (where appropriate), and informal interviews.

The description of the Indigenous student identifies them as "a proud Torres Strait Islander student whose first/home language is Torres Strait Creole (Broken). She is currently working below Year Level Standards and receives Tier 1 Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice (QDTP) along with in-class support from a Teacher Aide. She has completed two cycles of Tier 2 intervention in Mathematics and Literacy, with small gains noted; however, it is difficult to determine progress due to periods of absenteeism. Ongoing support will prioritise explicit teaching of Standard Australian English (SAE), scaffolded tasks, visual supports, and targeted literacy and numeracy development, with progress monitored closely through teacher observations and assessment reviews". They are assessed to be below target *Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners: Middle Primary and Middle Schooling* (Hudson et al., 2014) based on the *National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) ESL Bandscale Level* (McKay et al., 1994) for their age, namely Level 5 for reading, writing, speaking and listening, with reading and writing significantly under-level (Level 2, emerging Level 3).

The description of the low proficiency L2 learner identifies them as "born in China and her first language is Chinese. She has been enrolled at the school for six years and is an international student who is currently working below Year Level proficiency standards. At this stage of her educational journey, it is desirable for her to be operating at CEFR Level B2; however, she is currently demonstrating mid-range B1 proficiency. She can manage everyday English in familiar contexts but experiences difficulty with the complex and abstract language required at B2, particularly in areas such as grammar (conditionals, passive voice, relative clauses), vocabulary range (synonyms, idiomatic and subject-specific terms), listening to extended speech, coherence and cohesion in formal writing, and fluency in speaking on unfamiliar or abstract topics. Targeted strategies will prioritise scaffolding academic language, explicit grammar teaching, vocabulary development, and structured opportunities for extended speaking and writing to support progression towards B2 proficiency".

The remainder of the support plans as well as the teachers' GenAI prompt logs were analysed using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The coding framework is informed by a teacher cognition perspective (Borg, 2003) in which teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and thinking are understood to be reflected in their instructional decisions and classroom practices. Rather than eliciting cognition directly, the present analysis examines how these are enacted through teachers' design, adaptation, and evaluation of GenAI-supported materials within specific pedagogical and contextual conditions. Specifically, elements of the study plans were coded according to how differentiated forms of instruction allow learner needs to be addressed with respect to practical and ethical considerations, while also being culturally and contextually responsive. The GenAI usage logs reveal how GenAI tools were integrated into task design, presenting a snapshot of how elements of the broader plans may be enacted in practice. The coding scheme used for both plans and logs are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Decision-making and enactment coding scheme

Category	Description	Example from Data
Prompt design	How teachers structure GenAI input to achieve pedagogical goals	"Create a scaffolded writing activity for a B1 learner..."
Pedagogical decision-making	Instructional choices and sequencing	"Jointly construct sentences before independent writing"
Evaluation and adaptation	How AI outputs are modified or rejected	"Rewrote text to reflect local cultural context"
Learner-centred differentiation	Alignment to proficiency, needs, identity	"Targeting CEFR B1 → B2 progression"
Cultural/contextual responsiveness	Localisation and cultural alignment	"Included Country and community references"
Practical/ethical considerations	Time, workload, bias, appropriateness	"Reviewed outputs for cultural safety"

The resulting codes were discussed in collaboration with the senior EAL/D teacher for validity and triangulation before finalisation.

Content Analysis: Teachers' Prompts Logs

It is important to note that in both cases documented in this study, GenAI was used in a teacher-facing capacity. That is, teachers used GenAI to generate and refine instructional materials which were then critically adapted and delivered to students; students did not interact directly with GenAI tools as part of the study activities documented here. This distinction between teacher-facing GenAI use for planning and material generation, and student-facing GenAI use for learning, is an important boundary condition of the present study's claims and is reflected in the procedural flowchart presented in Figure 2. As mentioned, teachers' reflective prompt logs were examined through a directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), guided by the study's focus on teacher decision-making in GenAI-supported EAL/D instruction. Logs (see Appendix D) followed a semi-structured template including "context of use", "AI prompts", "AI output", "what you kept/changed", "impact on practice", "impact on student learning", "challenges/ethical considerations", and an overall usefulness rating (1 = not useful; 5 = very useful). For analysis, each log entry was segmented into meaning units based on these headings and coded according to the scheme presented in Table 1. This enabled systematic identification of how teachers articulated and enacted pedagogical, ethical, contextual, and GenAI-related considerations in their prompting and revision practices.

Interviews

A joint online semi-structured interview (via Microsoft Teams) was conducted with both teachers simultaneously, immediately following the MaxDiff task to explore teachers' reasoning behind their prioritisation choices and to further examine their use of GenAI in relation to the two students' support plans. Interviews followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive approach to thematic analysis. Transcripts were first read for familiarisation, then coded inductively and deductively to capture both emergent themes and patterns related to teachers' pedagogical, ethical, and contextual decision-making in GenAI-supported EAL/D instruction. Codes were iteratively reviewed and refined into higher-order themes reflecting teachers' reasoning, challenges, and enacted practices when using GenAI for student support. It is acknowledged that data collected through a joint interview involve interactional dynamics between participants, including the potential for one participant's responses to shape the other's, that differ from individually conducted interviews. In the present study, this is understood as a contextual feature of the data reflecting the teachers' established professional relationship and shared institutional context, rather than as a methodological limitation per se.

Summary

Figure 2 summarises the sequence and relationship among the four data sources employed in the study. As the flowchart illustrates, the student support plans were created as part of routine professional practice prior to and independently of any GenAI use, establishing the pedagogical and learner-profile parameters that subsequently shaped how GenAI was employed. The MaxDiff task and interview were then administered together, eliciting teachers' stated prioritisation of key considerations and their reasoning. The GenAI prompt logs represent teacher-initiated enactment drawing on the priorities and learner profiles established in the support plans. Importantly, as indicated in the flowchart, GenAI was used in a teacher-facing capacity throughout; students interacted with teacher-adapted materials rather than directly

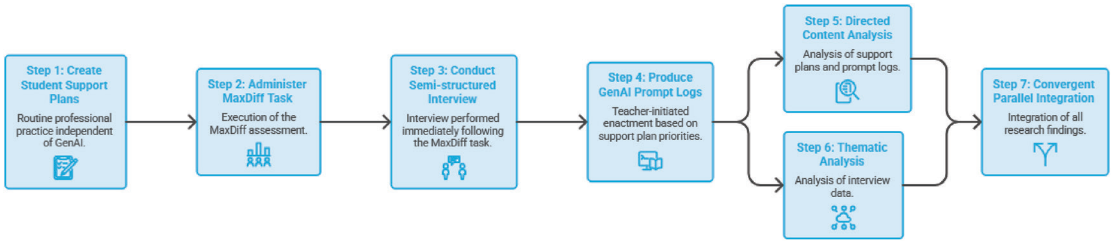

Figure 2. *Procedural flowchart showing the sequence of data collection and analysis, and the relationship among the four data sources: student support plans, maxdiff task, semi-structured interview, and GenAI prompt logs*

with GenAI tools. Integration of findings followed a convergent parallel design, with content analysis of plans and logs and thematic analysis of interview data brought together to address the two research questions.

Results

RQ1 – How Do Teachers Prioritise Key Pedagogical, Ethical, and Contextual Considerations When Using GenAI to Support EAL/D Students?

Maximum Difference Scaling (MaxDiff)

Figure 3 describes the individual and aggregated results for the MaxDiff task, also presented as normalised percentages.

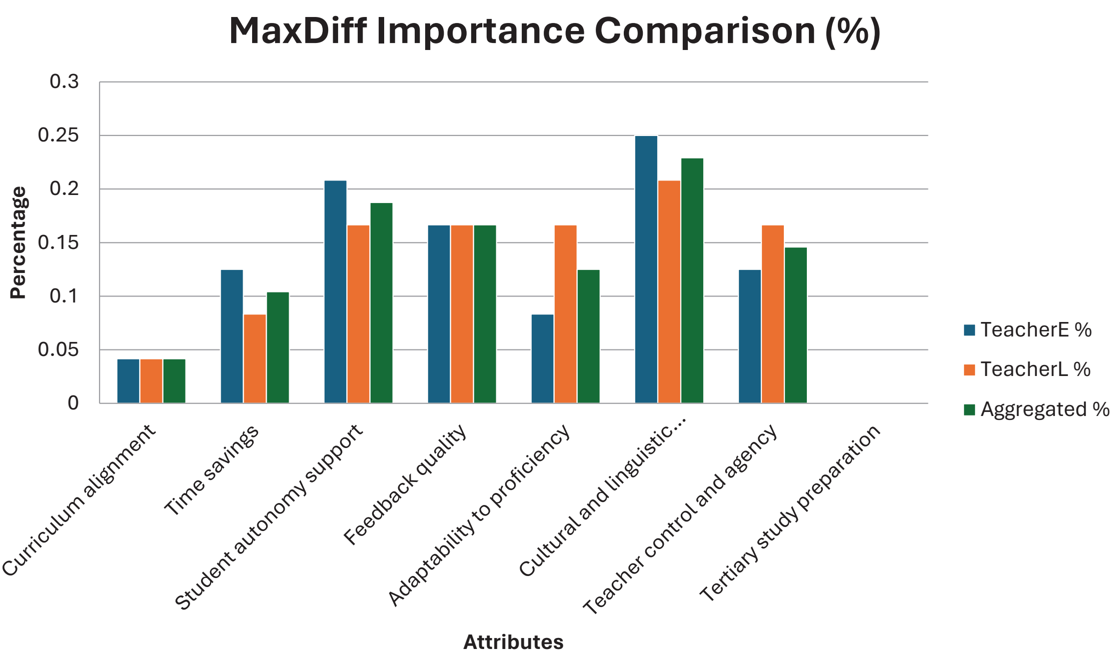

Figure 3. *MaxDiff importance comparison*

Table 2. MaxDiff best-worst

Attribute	Best-worst Teacher E	Best-worst Teacher L
Curriculum alignment	−2	−2
Time savings	0	−1
Student autonomy support	2	1
Feedback quality	1	1
Adaptability to proficiency	−1	1
Cultural and linguistic responsiveness	3	2
Teacher control and agency	0	1
Tertiary Study preparation	−3	−3

Table 2 compares both teachers' best/worst scores for each criterion.

Across both participants, cultural and linguistic responsiveness emerged as the most highly prioritised attribute, with the strongest positive best-worst scores overall, followed by student autonomy support and feedback quality. Teacher E demonstrated a strong preference for cultural and linguistic responsiveness (+3) and student autonomy support (+2). Teacher L's corrected scores show cultural and linguistic responsiveness as her highest-ranked attribute (+2), followed by student autonomy support, feedback quality, adaptability to proficiency, and teacher control and agency (+1 each). Both teachers recorded a minimum best-worst score of −3 for tertiary study preparation, identifying this as the least preferred consideration. Curriculum alignment was consistently de-emphasised, with both teachers scoring −2. Time savings was rated neutrally by Teacher E (0) but negatively by Teacher L (−1), suggesting a degree of resistance to efficiency-oriented framings of GenAI use among more experienced practitioners. Taken together, this pattern reflects a shared prioritisation of culturally responsive, student-centred uses of GenAI, alongside a consistent de-emphasis on more distal or standardised goals such as tertiary preparation and curriculum alignment. We remind the reader here that we use MaxDiff as a case-level elicitation method with only two expert participants, to be interpreted descriptively rather than used for population inference (Louviere et al., 2015; Orme, 2010).

RQ2 – How are these Priorities Reflected in Teachers' Planning and Prompting Practices When Using GenAI for EAL/D Student Support?

Student Support Plans

Before presenting the findings, it is worth clarifying the nature of the GenAI use documented in this section. The present study focuses primarily on teacher-facing GenAI use, that is, teachers using GenAI to generate, evaluate, and adapt instructional materials, rather than student-facing GenAI use in which learners interact directly with AI tools. Students in both cases interacted with teacher-adapted materials rather than with GenAI directly, and the findings below should be interpreted with this boundary condition in mind. Analysis of the two student support plans, both authored by Teacher L in her role as Head of Extension and Intervention, indicates that both are underpinned by coherent and well-developed patterns of teacher decision-making, with strong alignment between learner needs, pedagogical design, and contextual considerations. As noted prior, the plans served as shared contextual resources informing both teachers' subsequent GenAI use rather than as direct products of both teachers' planning practices. There was no evidence of potential GenAI use, evaluation, or prompting strategies in either plan, indicating all instructional decisions were enacted independently of AI mediation at the planning stage. Both plans may therefore be considered as artefacts of Teacher L's contextual decision-making, against which both teachers' GenAI-supported enactment was subsequently oriented.

Indigenous Support

Analysis of this support plan indicates a strong emphasis on additive bilingual pedagogy, multimodal scaffolding, and explicit instruction across reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Teacher decision-making is primarily driven by responsiveness to learner needs, with consistent attention to the student's linguistic background, proficiency level, and cultural identity (e.g., "Build background knowledge in Home Language (HL) first, then Standard Australian English (SAE)"; "Allow stories in HL as a bridge to SAE").

Pedagogical decisions are characterised by highly structured and explicit instructional approaches, including scaffolded task design, modelling, and guided practice (e.g., "Pre-teach vocabulary and cultural references before reading"; "Scaffold writing with templates and model texts"; "Deliver instructions in clear, logical steps with repetition"). These decisions are closely integrated with contextual considerations such as institutional support structures, intervention tiers, and learner variability (e.g., absenteeism, need for Tier 3 intervention). Ethical and culturally responsive considerations are present at a conceptual level with pedagogical, linguistic, and contextual considerations consistently aligned across tasks (e.g., combining bilingual support, visual scaffolding, and gradual release of responsibility).

Low Proficiency L2 Support

The support strategies in this plan reflect teacher decision-making as strongly oriented toward structured pedagogical support and incremental language development. Learner needs are the primary driver of instructional design, with repeated attention to vocabulary limitations, sentence construction, and comprehension challenges (e.g., "Pre-teach vocabulary for each unit (academic + subject-specific)"; "Jointly construct sentences in class before independent use"). Pedagogical decisions are characterised by scaffolded instruction, guided practice, and explicit modelling, reflecting a systematic approach to supporting progression (e.g., "Provide sentence starters and writing frames"; "Model responses before independent work"; "Break tasks into smaller steps"). While there is some evidence of technology use in practice primarily to reinforce learning and increase accessibility (e.g., "Use Quizlet/flashcards to practise"; "Record teacher explanations for replay"), this integration is primarily focused on linguistic remediation rather than incorporating broader cultural or identity-based considerations. Teacher decisions are closely aligned with contextual constraints including the learner's previous below-level performance and the need for ongoing support with clear alignment of pedagogical strategies, learner needs, and contextual constraints, particularly through the sequencing of scaffolded activities from supported to independent production.

Table 3 summarises the distribution of coded categories across the two student support plans and the two GenAI prompt logs, illustrating how teacher decision-making priorities evident in the plans were subsequently enacted through GenAI use.

Table 3. Summary of content analysis findings across support plans and GenAI prompt Logs

Category	Indigenous Support Plan	L2 Support Plan	Teacher L Prompt Log	Teacher E Prompt Log
Prompt design	N/A — plan created independently of GenAI	N/A — plan created independently of GenAI	GCSE structured format; goal, context, steps, example specified	Learner level (CEFR B1), target feature, and instructional sequence specified
Pedagogical decision-making	Explicit instruction, scaffolded tasks, modelling, guided practice	Scaffolded instruction, guided practice, explicit modelling	Sequenced from oral discussion to written response	Scaffolded progression from controlled to independent production
Evaluation and adaptation	N/A — plan created independently of GenAI	N/A — plan created independently of GenAI	Cultural references localised to Thupinul/Peidu Country; language modified for cultural accuracy	Content localised; visual supports added; colour-coding and self-monitoring tools added
Learner-centred differentiation	Bandscales Level 2–5 progression; oral learning preference; cultural identity	CEFR B1–B2 progression; vocabulary, grammar, writing targets	Aligned to Bandscales Level 3–5 indicators; oral and cultural preferences foregrounded	Aligned to CEFR B1–B2; specific linguistic targets (run-on sentences, conjunctions)
Cultural/ contextual responsiveness	Strong; additive bilingual pedagogy; HL as bridge to SAE; community references	Limited; primarily linguistic remediation focus	Strong; yarning-style prompts; Country and totem references	Moderate; cultural references replaced with locally familiar content
Practical/ethical considerations	Absenteeism; Tier 3 intervention needs; institutional support structures	Below-level performance; ongoing QDTP; exam access arrangements	Efficiency noted; cultural safety review of outputs required	~40 minutes planning time saved; outputs reviewed for learner appropriateness

Reflective GenAI Usage Logs

Teacher L

While the support plans did not contain evidence of AI, the teachers' GenAI usage logs each describe a sample integration of GenAI to achieve one or more of plans stated goals. Teacher L's reflective log illustrates how GenAI was used to support the design of a reading activity for the Indigenous student, with a focus on progression from Bandscale Level 2 (emerging Level 3) toward Level 5. The prompt (Excerpt 1) follows a structured Goal–Context–Steps–Example (GCSE) format, indicating a deliberate prompting strategy designed to shape both the content and pedagogical sequencing of the AI-generated output.

Excerpt 1:

Goal:
Develop a culturally responsive reading lesson that supports an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student to progress from *Bandscales* Level 2 (emerging Level 3) to Level 5 in Reading.

Context:
The student is in middle school, enjoys storytelling and oral learning, and engages best with texts that reflect community, environment, and cultural connection. She needs scaffolding to identify main ideas, interpret meaning across sentences, and make inferences.

Steps:
1. Generate a short, age-appropriate reading text featuring a familiar setting and relatable characters.
2. Create literal and inferential comprehension questions aligned with Bandscales Level 3–5 indicators.
3. Provide vocabulary and visual support for new words.
4. Include oral discussion and yarning-style prompts before written tasks.
5. Suggest an extension activity that connects the text to the student's own experiences.

Example:
Create a short text featuring Country, family, or community connections with guided questions that move from literal to inferential comprehension.

The prompt reflects strong alignment with learner needs including attention to the student's preference for oral learning, cultural connection, and the need for scaffolding in comprehension and inference (e.g., "Include oral discussion and yarning-style prompts"; "Provide vocabulary and visual support"). It also demonstrates clear pedagogical decision-making in sequencing activities from supported comprehension toward independent and reflective engagement. The AI-generated output included a culturally oriented reading text, comprehension questions, vocabulary support, and a sequenced set of activities moving from oral discussion to written response.

However, Teacher L did not adopt this output uncritically. Instead, the log shows substantial adaptation of the material to align with the student's specific cultural and linguistic context (e.g., references to Thupinul and Peidu Country and the Frill-Necked Lizard totem). This illustrates the enactment of ethical and culturally responsive considerations in reviewing and modifying AI-generated content for cultural accuracy and relevance. The log further demonstrates iterative evaluation and refinement of AI use with Teacher L using structured prompting to generate initial materials and then reshaping them to better reflect local knowledge, appropriate language use, and learner identity. Teacher L's reflective log records an overall usefulness rating of 5/5 for this GenAI interaction, noting efficiency gains and the need for critical cultural oversight as the primary practical considerations arising from the activity.

Teacher E

Teacher E's reflective log focuses on the use of GenAI to support the low-proficiency L2 learner's development of sentence-level writing skills, particularly in addressing run-on sentences and improving control of conjunctions and punctuation. The prompt (Excerpt 2) demonstrates a structured approach to task design specifying learner level (CEFR B1), target feature (run-on sentences), and a sequenced set of instructional components (model text, identification, guided practice, independent writing).

Excerpt 2:

> "Create a short, scaffolded writing activity for a Year 9 EAL/D student at CEFR B1 level to help improve control of run-on sentences and move toward B2. Include a clear learning goal, model text, identification task, guided practice, and independent writing extension."

The prompt reflects strong learner needs orientation in targeting specific linguistic challenges, and clear pedagogical decision-making through the inclusion of scaffolded progression from controlled to independent production. While the AI-generated output provided a structured lesson sequence aligned with these goals, as with Teacher L, the log showed that Teacher E critically adapted the AI output rather than using it directly. Modifications included localisation of content (e.g., replacing unfamiliar cultural references), addition of visual supports, and simplification of tasks through colour-coding and self-monitoring tools. These adaptations reflect the influence of contextual considerations and demonstrate how teachers mediate AI outputs to better align with classroom realities and learner profiles.

Teacher E's reflection on GenAI use in this case was primarily functional and pedagogically focused in terms of supporting the generation of scaffolded materials and reducing preparation time, with Teacher E reporting this approach saved approximately 40 minutes of planning time and enabled more targeted support. Teacher E's reflective log records teacher-reported observations of student task performance, including developing sentence boundary control, increased punctuation awareness, and greater syntactic variety.

Across both cases, the teachers' reflective logs show GenAI is not used as a resource embedded within broader teacher decision-making processes. Teachers prioritised learner needs and pedagogical structure when prompting GenAI to generate initial materials, which are then critically evaluated and adapted. The key distinction between the two cases lies in the nature of these priorities: Teacher L foregrounded cultural and contextual responsiveness, while Teacher E emphasised linguistic remediation and structural accuracy, suggesting GenAI integration is shaped less by the technology itself and more by how the teachers prioritised and enacted the goals of the student support plans in practice. These observations are based solely on teacher reflection within the prompt log rather than independent assessment of student work, a limitation acknowledged more fully in the Conclusion.

Interviews

Table 4 summarises the results of the thematic analysis conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-step procedure. Each theme is interpreted in relation to teachers' priority patterns as identified in the MaxDiff results.

Theme 1: AI as a Reflective and Validation Tool

Both teachers described using GenAI not to automate teaching, but to support and interrogate their own professional judgments when enacting the student support plans. Teacher L framed this as "cross-checking" existing decisions, while Teacher E described AI as a "sounding board" (Excerpts 1–3). In this sense, GenAI functions as a reflective partner within teacher decision-making processes, enabling teachers to identify potential gaps, reconsider assumptions, and refine instructional strategies.

Table 4. Themes underlying decision-making processes in interview data

Theme	Representative Quote	Relation to MaxDiff Prioritisation
AI as Reflective and Validation Tool	"We've gone from using it to produce things to actually using it as a reflective tool."	Feedback quality / instructional effectiveness
Cultural Responsiveness and Localisation	"We wanted to make sure what we believe is culturally responsive is still timely."	Cultural responsiveness
Meta-Prompting and Professional Learning	"The more concise the prompt, the better the output."	Adaptability / innovation
Efficiency and Constraints	"We are a busy profession… those stories are being lost."	Efficiency
Student Voice and Autonomy	"We still want to have a student voice… not just a standardised response."	Student autonomy

> (1, Teacher L) "I've seen a big change in the way that we use AI, and I think we've gone from using it to produce things to actually using it as a reflective tool. […] We wanted to make sure there weren't any gaps in what we were thinking, so we were looking to cross-check [our thoughts] as well as being a reflective practitioner."
>
> (2, Teacher E) "It's not using it like, 'oh well this is what AI has told me'… [rather] it's this kind of sounding board."
>
> (3, Teacher L) "Research I have read keeps saying that 'AI now should be the coach on the side', and I guess that's what we've been exploring - that notion of it being that coach, and also just, you know, making us question our choices and our strategies as well, to see if they are the most effective [ones] that can be used for a student at a certain level."

Here, a clear shift is from product-oriented use (generating materials) to process-oriented use (evaluating decisions). Rather than replacing teacher input, GenAI is instead positioned as augmenting pedagogical reasoning in relation to differentiating learner needs and instructional effectiveness. This finding aligns with those observed in the prompt logs where AI-generated outputs are consistently reviewed, compared against teacher expectations, and selectively adapted. This finding also helps explain why teachers prioritised pedagogical reasoning rather than other factors e.g., time-saving in the MaxDiff results.

Theme 2: Cultural Responsiveness and Localisation

Cultural responsiveness emerged as a central consideration in teachers' decision-making, reinforcing its prominence in the MaxDiff results. Both teachers emphasised the need to ensure that instructional materials remain contextually relevant, culturally appropriate, and responsive to individual learner identities, particularly in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Excerpts 4–5).

> (4, Teacher L) "We just wanted to make sure that we *were* being culturally responsive, that we *were* being inclusive, and that we *were* personalising the experience [...] to make sure that what *we* believe is culturally responsive is still timely and relevant, so I guess it was that double checking and cross-checking of where we are as practitioners and what is best practice currently. [...] I don't think it can ever replace us; what it's actually doing is validating the work and the knowledge that we have, and it's just deepening our understanding of our own practice."

> (5, Teacher E) "I think especially for our First Nations students, there's such a variety in terms of what is culturally responsive? Our students are from both Torres Strait Islander (we have a boarding house) or an Aboriginal context, or both, so it's kind of that cultural responsiveness for each of our students' unique contexts as well, because they *are* so unique."

GenAI was used here primarily as a verification and extension tool allowing teachers to cross-check their understanding of culturally responsive practices and refine them in light of broader perspectives. Notably, both teachers also highlighted the limitations of generic AI outputs, particularly in capturing localised cultural practice. This led to a consistent pattern of adaptation where AI-generated content was modified to better reflect community-specific knowledge and student backgrounds based on teachers' experiences and expertise.

Teacher L's discussion of a potential "community bot" (Excerpt 6) further illustrates how ethical and contextual considerations shape future-oriented decision-making around GenAI use. Rather than relying on general AI platforms, the emphasis is on developing tools grounded in local data and institutional values, highlighting an awareness of both the affordances and limitations of GenAI in culturally diverse contexts.

> (6, Teacher L) "Where [AI] could probably go to for us next is making that AI bot, a bot that has our tone, and it has our language, and our community, and knows where we are, and we can continue then to build on that. [...] For our school, I would want this approach to also reflect and uphold our core values, ensuring that our AI use enhances teaching, learning, and community engagement in culturally respectful and ethical ways, so not just using it for this little project, use it to keep building and build your own community in a bot."

Theme 3: Prompt Design and Professional Learning

Both teachers described developing more deliberate prompting strategies over time, reflecting an emerging awareness of how prompt design eventually influences AI output. In particular, both teachers consider the use of *meta-prompting*, an advanced prompt engineering technique in which a large language model is instructed to generate, refine, or optimise prompts rather than directly solving the task. Meta-prompting involves specifying learner characteristics, instructional goals, and task structures as well as experimenting with structured formats such as the GCSE approach, with the teachers then actively involved in using AI to evaluate and refine prompts and outputs (Excerpts 7–8).

> (7, Teacher L) I really started to understand the more concise [information] that you put in that meta-prompt, the better the output is. I was using the GCSE framework, giving it the general concept as well as all that information about the child to see then what strategies that we would actually get. And then, I was hoping to compare that, then, to what I would have naturally organically written. [...] I've become increasingly aware that if I don't learn to think with AI, then AI will end up thinking for me. [...] For that student, I actually did create a study plan as well for the boarding staff in the evening to be able to support the student. So obviously, short little texts for them to read what we've done in class, to consolidate that understanding, some guidelines for the tutor to understand what I needed the student to do; but to explain, not to do the task for them. So, I created all of that through AI."

> (8, Teacher E) "I think quality of prompts, like, I think I'm starting to get into this meta-prompting thing? So, I was just talking about starting to incorporate these ideas of meta-prompting even further, and working out what is going to be useful for those students, what is going to work best in terms of our prompts, with what we can give and what we can't give, and working out how to toe that line as effectively and efficiently as possible."

These practices indicate meta-prompting is treated as part of a broader process of pedagogical decision-making and professional learning. As Teacher L notes, this involves "testing" whether AI-generated strategies align with their existing practice, while Teacher E highlights the need to balance detail and efficiency in prompt design. Overall, meta-prompting functions as a mechanism for iterative refinement, linking teacher priorities (e.g., scaffolding, learner appropriateness) with the practical use of GenAI tools. This focus on refining prompts aligns with the relatively high prioritisation of adaptability and feedback quality in the MaxDiff results, suggesting these teachers value GenAI primarily for its capacity to support iterative pedagogical design.

Theme 4: Efficiency, Constraints, and Professional Workload

Both teachers identified time pressure and workload as significant contextual factors shaping their use of GenAI (Excerpts 9–10). GenAI was consistently described as supporting efficiency in the interview data, particularly in generating initial materials or reducing planning time. However, this efficiency is not presented as an end in itself, but as part of a broader tension between productivity and pedagogical quality, a finding supported rather than contrasted by its relatively lower prioritisation in the MaxDiff results.

> (9, Teacher L) "And it is faster for [GenAI] to give me that output than it is for me to be sitting, maybe, for two, three hours, really deep thinking about the student, whereas being able to just do that instantly within a couple of minutes and go 'that's exactly what I would have said' is great. We are a busy profession and we are just being pulled in so many directions, that those [individual] stories are being lost, and what is being produced instead is just this generalised support plan.

> (10, Teacher E) "Yeah and I think the demands on the profession just keep getting more and more in terms of administration. Like, I think I did rank 'saving

> teacher time' [on the MaxDiff] quite low I guess in comparison, but I think for the profession [...] like if it's not going to save teacher time I have concerns for its usage on the whole, because like when I'm sitting down there and thinking about it, like I can go 'oh yeah 'saves time'' isn't my biggest priority', but then when I'm in the thick of exam period-like situations and like, you know, assessment time, like then I'm kind of like 'I need something that's saving time'."

Teacher L highlights concerns that increasing reliance on efficiency-driven processes may reduce opportunities for engaging with student voice and individual narratives, particularly in culturally responsive planning. Similarly, Teacher E notes that while efficiency may not always be prioritised in principle, it becomes critical under conditions of high workload, demonstrating how contextual constraints (e.g., time, administrative demands) shape decision-making, influencing when and how GenAI is used, and reinforcing the need to balance efficiency with responsiveness to learner needs.

Theme 5: Preserving Student Voice and Autonomy

The final theme reflects teachers' concern with maintaining student voice, agency, and authenticity in the context of increasing GenAI use (Excerpts 12–13). Both teachers emphasised that instructional decisions should continue to be grounded in student perspectives and lived experiences, rather than being driven by standardised or generic outputs.

> (12, Teacher L) "In the past, when creating Personal Support Plans for our First Nations students, we would sit down with the student and have a yarn, taking time to hear their story, learn about their background, traditions, and totems. These conversations were rich and deeply important for building trust and understanding. A similar approach was taken with EAL/D students, where we valued their cultural and linguistic identity and ensured their voice shaped the plan. However, as time pressures increase, I'm concerned that student voice is being lost, and instead of authentic stories, we could end up with standardised support plans that feel generic. Our challenge is finding the right balance; we want to leverage data and technology without replacing the personal connection, ensuring that every plan still reflects the student's voice and identity, not just an automated response. AI can never just draw on what it's like to come from that community; we're basing that on the two-way interaction with the student having a voice in that plan. So, if we're using that voice to create our *own* bot, then we're only going to be able to get better at creating responsive culturally appropriate plans, because we're using our own data."

> (13, Teacher E) Yeah, I think when I was doing the [prioritisation task[1]], I kept coming back to that 'student autonomy', so I think I ranked it as pretty important, because it feels like so much of the worry of AI is based around like students losing autonomy, and not having their critical thinking, and losing those abilities. And so, I think the possibility that this [AI] will be able

[1] The participant's reference to a specific instrument reflects an earlier phase of the study design. The prioritisation task administered in the finalised study was the MaxDiff procedure. The substantive content of the participant's recollection - consistent prioritisation of student autonomy - is directly corroborated by her MaxDiff Best-Worst score of +2 for student autonomy support.

> to uplift and support those abilities, rather than be a 'get quick tool', keeping that autonomy, and that student voice and feeling seen. Absolutely. That is so important."

GenAI is therefore positioned as a mediating tool which can support but not replace student-centred practices. Teacher L's discussion of developing a localised AI system reflects an attempt to align technological use with institutional values and student identity, while Teacher E highlights the importance of maintaining autonomy and critical thinking in learners. Across both cases, this theme reinforces the broader finding that ethical and learner-centred considerations remain central to these teachers' decision-making, shaping both their current practices and future orientations toward GenAI integration.

Discussion

The present study set out to examine how two EAL/D teachers prioritised key principles and challenges when using GenAI to support personalised learning (RQ1), and how these priorities are enacted in their classroom-oriented practices including planning, prompting, and material design (RQ2). Taken together, the findings provide an on-the-ground account of how teachers engage with GenAI as part of their existing pedagogical decision-making processes.

Regarding RQ1, the MaxDiff findings indicate the teachers' use of GenAI was primarily guided by learner-centred and ethical considerations, particularly cultural responsiveness, differentiation, and feedback quality. Across both participants, these factors were consistently prioritised over efficiency or automation, suggesting GenAI is valued less for its capacity to generate content quickly and more for its potential to support contextually appropriate and pedagogically meaningful adaptation. For example, both teachers emphasised the importance of aligning outputs with students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as tailoring support to proficiency level and learning needs. At the same time, some variation was observed in how consistently these priorities were expressed, which reflects differences in how the teachers articulated and negotiated competing demands, although this variation did not fundamentally alter the overall orientation toward pedagogical and ethical decision-making.

These findings support and extend emerging work suggesting teachers' engagement with GenAI is often values-driven and pedagogically anchored rather than only motivated by technological affordances or efficiency gains (Blundell et al., 2025; Kamali et al., 2024). Whereas Blundell et al. (2025) document Australian teachers' GenAI adoption attitudes at the level of reported belief and intention, the present study extends this work by providing an on-the-ground account of how pedagogical priorities are actually enacted through prompting, material adaptation, and iterative refinement, moving the conversation from what teachers say they value to what they demonstrably do when using GenAI in practice. Similarly, while Kamali et al. (2024) identify ethical reasoning as a central dimension of educator AI engagement, the present findings show how ethical considerations around cultural responsiveness and student identity are operationalised in specific instructional decisions rather than remaining at the level of abstract principle. In this sense, GenAI adoption appears to be shaped by existing professional commitments, with teachers integrating new tools in ways that align with their instructional priorities and responsibilities.

Taken together, the MaxDiff results provide a structured point of reference for interpreting the qualitative data (RQ2), showing how these teachers' prioritisation of cultural responsiveness, differentiation, and feedback quality was grounded in their broader pedagogical reasoning, with factors such as efficiency framed as secondary or conditional considerations. At the same time, several alternative interpretations of these findings warrant acknowledgement.

First, the MaxDiff prioritisation of cultural responsiveness and student-centred values over efficiency may partly reflect the professional and social context of the elicitation task itself. Expert EAL/D teachers with strong professional identities and a history of advocacy for linguistically diverse learners may be more likely to foreground these values in a structured prioritisation instrument, regardless of their relative influence on everyday practice. Teacher E's own interview comments acknowledging that efficiency becomes critical under high workload conditions despite its low MaxDiff ranking lend some support to this interpretation, suggesting that stated priorities and operative priorities may diverge under pressure. Second, the convergence of priorities between the two teachers may reflect shared institutional context as much as it reflects a broader professional orientation shared across EAL/D teachers generally: both work at the same school, with the same student population and the same senior EAL/D colleague. Future research involving a wider range of teachers across different institutional settings would help disentangle these possibilities.

Regarding RQ2, analysis of interviews, prompt logs, and support plans shows how these priorities are translated into practice through a series of interrelated decision-making processes. Although the support plans themselves did not explicitly incorporate GenAI, they established the pedagogical and contextual parameters such as learner profiles, instructional goals, and culturally responsive priorities that later shaped how GenAI was used. In this sense, the plans created the conditions for human-AI collaboration by providing a structured foundation against which AI-generated materials could be evaluated and adapted. Across both cases, GenAI was then used as a resource for generating initial materials, which were critically evaluated, adapted, and contextualised.

This pattern was evident in the teachers' prompting strategies, where both participants increasingly specified learner characteristics, instructional goals, and task structures in order to shape outputs more effectively. Prompting, therefore, functioned as part of a broader process of pedagogical reasoning and iterative refinement. This finding complements existing studies on teacher prompting (e.g. Crosthwaite et al., 2024) by exploring the cognition underlying teachers' prompting practices. Across both cases, teacher-reported outcomes from the prompt log activities including developing comprehension skills and sentence boundary awareness for the Indigenous and L2 learners respectively, suggest that the instructional priorities enacted through GenAI were perceived by teachers as having positive effects on student engagement and task performance, though these observations are necessarily limited to teacher reflection rather than independent measures of student learning.

A second consistent pattern concerns the use of GenAI as a reflective and validation tool, rather than a source of authoritative answers. The teachers described using AI outputs to "cross-check" their own thinking, test alternative approaches, and identify potential gaps in their planning. This aligns with recent work highlighting the role of GenAI in supporting reflective practice and teacher-led experimentation, particularly in early stages of adoption (Blundell et al., 2025). In the context of this study, rather than displacing professional judgment, GenAI appears to extend it, providing an additional layer of feedback within the decision-making process.

A third and related key finding relates to cultural and contextual adaptation, particularly in the case of the Indigenous student. Here, both teachers consistently identified limitations in AI-generated content in relation to cultural nuance and local relevance, and responded by modifying outputs to better reflect student identity and community context. This highlights the importance of teacher mediation in ensuring GenAI-supported materials remain appropriate and meaningful, and reinforces concerns raised in the literature regarding bias and generalisation in AI systems (Dobinson et al., 2024; Pegrum, 2025; Tran & Stell, 2024). It also suggests that effective GenAI use in EAL/D contexts depends not only on what the technology can produce, but on how teachers interpret and reshape those outputs in relation to specific learners. These findings speak to the transparency dimensions foregrounded in the recently proposed TEP-AIED model (Hwang et al., 2026), which advocates for explicit documentation of AI system characteristics and teacher-AI and learner-AI interaction processes to improve the interpretability and reproducibility of educational AI research. While the present study predates the model's publication and was not designed with its transparency dimensions in mind, the prompt logs and reflective documentation employed here represent a preliminary step toward the kind of process transparency the model advocates. Future studies in this area would benefit from designing data collection explicitly around the TEP-AIED framework from the outset.

At the same time, contextual constraints (e.g., time pressure and workload) were shown to influence how GenAI is used in practice. While efficiency was not always prioritised in principle, it became more salient under conditions of high demand, with teachers using GenAI to streamline aspects of materials development while attempting to preserve student voice and pedagogical quality. This tension reflects broader dynamics in technology integration where practical constraints interact with pedagogical goals to shape instructional decisions (Bui, 2022; Park & Son, 2022). Across both cases (Indigenous/L2), the findings point to a model of GenAI integration that is incremental, mediated, and teacher-driven. GenAI was incorporated into existing practices, supporting tasks such as scaffolding, differentiation, and material adaptation, in alignment with recent research suggesting early-stage GenAI use in education tends to develop through targeted, practice-based experimentation rather than wholesale shifts in instructional design (Lan et al., 2025). Overall, the findings suggest the effectiveness of GenAI in EAL/D contexts depends less on the technology itself and more on how teachers prioritise, interpret, and enact its use within specific pedagogical and contextual conditions.

Conclusion

This study makes two interrelated contributions to the literature on AI in education. Theoretically, it extends Borg's (2003) teacher cognition framework into the emerging domain of GenAI-mediated EAL/D practice, demonstrating how teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and professional values shape not only their stated priorities but their enacted prompting and adaptation practices when working with GenAI tools. Methodologically, it contributes a precedent for using Maximum Difference scaling as a structured, low-inference elicitation instrument in small sample professional decision-making research, offering a replicable approach for future studies seeking to capture within-case prioritisation patterns without relying solely on self-report or interview data. Together, these contributions advance a practice-oriented account of how two EAL/D teachers engaged with GenAI to support personalised learning. By focusing on teacher prioritisation and decision-making, the findings show how GenAI was incorporated into existing pedagogical practices as a mediated, rather than autonomous, resource. Across both cases, teachers used GenAI to generate, evaluate, and adapt instructional materials, with consistent emphasis on cultural responsiveness, differentiation, and alignment with learner needs, and functioning as an iterative, reflective form of support within teacher-led decision-making processes.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the small sample size and highly specific learner profiles limit the transferability of findings beyond the immediate school context. The MaxDiff results obviously reflect individual-level priorities rather than broader trends across the EAL/D teaching profession. Second, teachers' practices were shaped by local curriculum requirements, Indigenous education protocols, and institutional conditions, which may differ substantially across contexts. Third, while the analysis draws on multiple data sources (interviews, prompt logs, and support plans), interpretations remain necessarily selective and context-bound. Additionally, the use of a joint interview format, while appropriate given the teachers' collaborative professional relationship, means that individual interview responses may have been influenced by interactional dynamics between participants, and should be interpreted with this in mind. Finally, evidence of student outcomes is based solely on teacher-reported observations within the reflective prompt logs rather than direct classroom data, independent assessment of student work, or longitudinal measures. While the inclusion of student-produced artefacts would have strengthened outcome-related claims, this was not possible within the scope of the present ethics approval, which was designed to capture teacher practice rather than student performance data. Accordingly, the outcome-related observations reported in the Results section should be understood as reflecting teacher perception rather than demonstrated learning impact, and future studies would benefit from incorporating direct measures of student learning alongside teacher decision-making data. Future research should also extend this work by examining a broader range of teachers, learner profiles, and institutional contexts to better understand variation in GenAI-supported practices. Longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable in tracing how teachers' use of GenAI evolves over time, especially as professional learning, policy frameworks, and technological capabilities develop. There is also a need to explore collaborative dimensions of GenAI use, including how teachers co-construct prompts, share resources, and negotiate ethical considerations in culturally and linguistically diverse settings. In addition, future studies could incorporate classroom observation and direct measures of student learning to more fully capture the relationship between teacher decision-making and learner outcomes. As GenAI tools continue to evolve, ongoing research will be needed to examine how issues such as data privacy, institutional policy, and infrastructure shape teachers' capacity to use these technologies in responsible and contextually appropriate ways.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a fine-grained account of how GenAI is being taken up in everyday EAL/D practice; an area that remains under-documented despite widespread claims about the potential of AI for personalised learning. By foregrounding teacher decision-making, this study highlights the central role of professional judgment in shaping how GenAI is used and identifies practical pathways through which AI can be integrated into language education in ways that are pedagogically meaningful, ethically grounded, and responsive to learner diversity. In doing so, it responds to calls in the field for research that moves beyond documenting what GenAI can do, toward understanding how educators navigate its integration within the complex, equity-oriented, and contextually situated conditions of real classroom practice (Allison et al., 2025; Bui et al., 2026; Tu & Lu, 2025).

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Generative AI Statement

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used during the preparation of this manuscript to support language editing, structural revision, and clarity of expression, particularly in response to previous peer review feedback. AI assistance was limited to improving the presentation and organisation of the text and reducing word count.

Appendix A

Indigenous Personal Support Plan

<table>
<tr><td colspan="10">CONFIDENTIAL - Personal Support Plan</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN
IPSWICH GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL
Office Use:
☒ Personalised Learning
☒ SWD
☐ Imputed Disability
☒ EAL/D
☐ International Visa
☐ High Potential/ Achieving</td><td></td><td>Name</td><td>Age</td><td>D.O.B.</td><td>Year Level</td><td>Case Manager</td><td>Start Date</td><td>Review Date</td><td>Finish Date</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>7</td><td></td><td>Week 1 T1 2025</td><td>Week 8 T4 2025</td><td>Term 1 2026</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Critical Information:</td><td colspan="4">Standardised Data:</td><td>SPA/AARA</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="4">X is a proud Torres Strait Islander student whose first/ home language is Torres Strait Creole (Broken).

She is currently working below Year Level Standards and receives Tier 1 Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice (QDTP) along with in-class support from a Teacher Aide.

She has completed two cycles of Tier 2 intervention in Mathematics and Literacy, with small gains noted; however, it is difficult to determine progress due to periods of absenteeism.

She will commence an individualised Tier 3 cycle in Term 4 to address identified gaps. Ongoing support will prioritise explicit teaching of Standard Australian English (SAE), scaffolded tasks, visual supports, and targeted literacy and numeracy development, with progress monitored closely through teacher observations and assessment reviews.</td><td colspan="4">Band Scales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Learner: Middle primary and Middle Schooling* Reading: L2 showing some emerging features of Level 3 Writing: L2 showing some emerging features of Level 3 Speaking: L4 showing some emerging features of L5 Listening: L4 showing some emerging features of L5

PAT Maths Adaptive: Scale score: 106.0, 2nd %tile PAT Reading Adaptive: Scale score: 103.6, 1st %tile AGAT: Scale score: 116.2, 6.7%tile

Maths Basic 1: E, 2:D+, 3: D-</td><td>X is to remain the main venue and is permitted to access extra time of 5 minutes per 30 minutes. She may have access to a dictionary.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="10">Strengths/Competencies
(including self-management, social, communicative skills):</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="10">X is a friendly and bubbly student who is well liked by her peers, staff, and the boarding community. She brings warmth and positivity to her interactions and is developing her independence as a learner, showing a strong desire to take responsibility for her own progress. With continued encouragement to actively listen to advice and make use of the supports available to her, she will further strengthen her skills and confidence as an independent learner.</td></tr>
</table>

(*Continued*)

Domain	Current Level	Target (Level 5)	Support Strategies for Language and Learning Growth
Reading	L2 (emerging L3)	Read a wide range of texts, including subject-specific, with some depth of comprehension	☒ Pre-teach vocabulary and cultural references before reading. ☒ Use context-enhanced texts (pictures, diagrams, glossaries). ☒ Model and practise strategies: skimming, scanning, inferencing. ☒ Build background knowledge in Home Language (HL) first, then Standard Australian English (SAE). ☒ Provide bilingual support for academic texts. ☒ Pre-teach key mathematical terms with visuals and HL explanations. ☒ Model scanning word problems for numbers, key words, and relationships. ☒ Pre-teach science vocabulary with diagrams/real-life examples. ☒ Provide bilingual glossaries with key terms. ☒ Use scaffolded worksheets with visuals.
Writing	L2 (emerging L3)	Write recounts, narratives, informational texts with growing independence; experiment with complex clauses and cohesive devices	☒ Scaffold writing with templates and model texts. ☒ Encourage risk-taking with complex sentences, even with errors. ☒ Provide explicit teaching of cohesion (connectors, paragraphing). ☒ Support with task clarification and guided drafting. ☒ Encourage reflection on writing process (editing, self-checklists). ☒ Co-create texts, use model texts, brainstorm ideas orally (including HL), jointly construct sentences scaffolding for SAE grammar and vocabulary, reread together, and transition to guided independent writing with sentence starters and word banks.
Speaking	L4 (emerging L5)	Sustain participation in academic discussions; contribute to topic-specific talk with support	☒ Use visuals and key vocabulary lists to support topic-specific talk. ☒ Allow planning/rehearsal time before oral contributions. ☒ Encourage collaborative group work with SAE-speaking peers. ☒ Respect HL narrative forms; allow stories in HL as a bridge to SAE. ☒ Focus on pragmatics (turn-taking, role of silence, questioning styles).
Listening	L4 (emerging L5)	Comprehend extended teacher/ peer talk on familiar topics with contextual support	☒ Deliver instructions in clear, logical steps with repetition. ☒ Pair spoken explanations with visuals and demonstrations. ☒ Allow processing time before requiring responses. ☒ Check for comprehension through paraphrasing rather than yes/no. ☒ Advocate for HL-speaking support person/teacher in high-stakes contexts. ☒ Use demonstrations with manipulatives (maths).
Monitor and Review:			

Appendix B

Low Proficiency L2 Support Plan

<table>
<tr><td colspan="10">CONFIDENTIAL - Personal Support Plan</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Ipswich Girls' Grammar School</td><td rowspan="2"></td><td>Name</td><td>Age</td><td>D.O.B.</td><td>Year Level</td><td>Case Manager</td><td>Start Date</td><td>Review Date</td><td>Finish Date</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>16. 5 years</td><td></td><td>11</td><td>Lou Grosvenor</td><td>Term 1 2025</td><td>Term 3 2025</td><td>Term 4 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="4">Critical Information:</td><td colspan="4">Standardised Data:</td><td>SPA/AARA</td></tr>
<tr><td>PERSONAL SUPPORT PLAN

Office Use:
☒ Personalised Learning
☐ SWD
☐ Imputed Disability
☒ EAL/D
☐ International Visa
☐ High Potential/Achieving</td><td colspan="4">X (known as X), was born in China and her first language is Chinese. She has been enrolled at the school for six years and is an international student who is currently working below year-level proficiency standards. At this stage of her educational journey, it is desirable for A to be operating at CEFR Level B2; however, she is currently demonstrating mid-range B1 proficiency.

She can manage everyday English in familiar contexts but experiences difficulty with the complex and abstract language required at B2, particularly in areas such as grammar (conditionals, passive voice, relative clauses), vocabulary range (synonyms, idiomatic and subject-specific terms), listening to extended speech, coherence and cohesion in formal writing, and fluency in speaking on unfamiliar or abstract topics.

Targeted strategies will prioritise scaffolding academic language, explicit grammar teaching, vocabulary development, and structured opportunities for extended speaking and writing to support progression towards B2 proficiency.</td><td colspan="4">Cambridge Placement Test: 38/50

Level Proficiency: Mid-range B1</td><td>X is to remain the main venue and is permitted to access extra time of 5 minutes per 30 minutes. She may have access to a bi-lingual dictionary.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Supportive strategies</td><td colspan="5">Strengths/Competencies
(including self-management, social, communicative skills):</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">To support X in meeting Year 11 language proficiency expectations and succeeding academically, provide ongoing Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice (QDTP) and High Impact Teaching Strategies (HITS). These approaches will enable A to leverage her current strengths, address identified learning gaps, and progress toward the B2 level required for her year level.</td><td colspan="5">X is a headstrong and independent learner who demonstrates strong time management skills and commitment to her studies. She is motivated and driven when engaged in areas of interest and balances her academic responsibilities with personal pursuits, including her enjoyment of badminton.</td></tr>
</table>

(Continued)

Domain	**Current B1 Features**	**Target B2 Features**	**Support Strategies for Language and Learning Growth**
Grammar & Sentence Structure	Uses mostly simple sentences, limited use of conditionals, passive voice, relative clauses.	Can use a wider range of complex structures with more control.	☒ Provide explicit teaching of target structures (conditionals, passive voice, relative clauses) using model sentences. ☒ Jointly construct sentences in class before independent use. ☒ Encourage grammar notebooks or visual grammar charts. ☒ Focus feedback on 1–2 grammar goals at a time.
Vocabulary Development	Relies on high frequency/basic vocabulary; struggles with idioms and academic terms.	Uses a wider range of precise, topic-specific and idiomatic vocabulary	☒ Pre-teach vocabulary for each unit (academic + subject-specific). ☒ Build a personal **“Word Bank”** with synonyms and collocations. ☒ Use Quizlet/flashcards to practise. ☒ Encourage use of new vocabulary in speaking and writing tasks.
Listening Comprehension	Understands everyday conversations and simple structured input; struggles with extended or less structured speech.	Can understand extended speech and lectures if well-structured.	☒ Record teacher conferences, or key explanations for replay. ☒ Enable subtitles on videos and provide transcripts. ☒ Teach note-taking strategies (key words, abbreviations) using guided templates (cloze procedure). ☒ Provide visuals (diagrams, slides) alongside oral input. ☒ Ask student to paraphrase instructions or summaries.
Writing	Can write simple texts but struggles with cohesion, coherence, and formal register.	Can write clear, detailed texts with appropriate organisation and register.	☒ Scaffold extended writing with outlines, paragraph frames, and model texts. ☒ Teach cohesive devices explicitly (however, therefore, as a result). ☒ Provide checklists for coherence and register. ☒ Use **joint construction writing** before independent tasks.
Speaking Fluency	Can speak about familiar topics but hesitates with abstract or unfamiliar content.	Can maintain interaction on a wide range of subjects, including abstract ideas.	☒ Use “think–pair–share” before discussions. ☒ Provide prompts and sentence starters for debates and discussions. ☒ Encourage oral rehearsal before presentations. ☒ Record short oral tasks for self-reflection. ☒ Build confidence through structured group/pair speaking tasks. ☒ Increase opportunities for grouping and interaction with native English-speaking peers.

Appendix C

MaxDiff Protocol

MaxDiff Interview Sheet
Using GenAI for Differentiated Learning – Teacher Priorities
You will see six sets of **four attributes** about using GenAI for personalised study plans. For each set, please tick:

- the **MOST** important/helpful attribute
- the **LEAST** important/helpful attribute

There are no right or wrong answers — we are interested in your professional judgement.

Set 1

Attribute	**Most (✓)**	**Least (✗)**
Aligns with curriculum requirements	■	■
Saves teacher time	■	■
Provides culturally and linguistically responsive suggestions	■	■
Supports student autonomy	■	■

Set 2

Attribute	**Most (✓)**	**Least (✗)**
Saves teacher time	■	■
Adapts to different student proficiency levels	■	■
Offers accurate and useful feedback	■	■
Prepares students for tertiary study pathways	■	■

Set 3

Attribute	**Most (✓)**	**Least (✗)**
Provides culturally and linguistically responsive suggestions	■	■
Maintains teacher control and agency	■	■
Aligns with curriculum requirements	■	■
Offers accurate and useful feedback	■	■

Set 4

Attribute	Most (✓)	Least (✗)
Adapts to different student proficiency levels	■	■
Supports student autonomy	■	■
Saves teacher time	■	■
Maintains teacher control and agency	■	■

Set 5

Attribute	Most (✓)	Least (✗)
Prepares students for tertiary study pathways	■	■
Aligns with curriculum requirements	■	■
Supports student autonomy	■	■
Offers accurate and useful feedback	■	■

Set 6

Attribute	Most (✓)	Least (✗)
Provides culturally and linguistically responsive suggestions	■	■
Adapts to different student proficiency levels	■	■
Maintains teacher control and agency	■	■
Prepares students for tertiary study pathways	■	■

Appendix D

GenAI Prompt Reflection Log

Project Title: *Using Generative AI to Enhance Personalised Learning for EAL/D Students*
Support Plan Focus (e.g. Indigenous, CEFR A2-B1, etc.): ____________________

1. Context of Use

What were you working on?
(e.g., Writing a support plan, creating adaptive tasks, rewriting an assessment scaffold)

____

____

____

2. Prompt(s) Used in AI Tool

What prompt(s) did you enter into the AI?
(e.g., "Create a learning goal for a Year 9 EAL/D student at Level 2 Writing strand.")

____

____

____

3. Output from AI (summary)
What did the AI generate?
(Optional: Copy and paste a short excerpt if useful)

____

____

____

4. What You Kept / Changed

How did you use or edit the AI's response in your final task or plan?
(e.g., Rewrote goal to be more culturally appropriate; kept vocabulary activity as-is)

____

____

____

5. Impact on Practice

Did it save you time? Improve clarity? Increase differentiation?
☐ Yes — helped save time
☐ Yes — helped personalise support
☐ Somewhat helpful, but needed lots of editing
☐ Not helpful — explain below
Notes: ____

6. Impact on Student Learning *(if applicable)*

Did the student engage better, show improved output, or respond to feedback more confidently?

____

____

____

7. Challenges / Ethical Considerations

Any limitations, concerns, or equity issues you observed?
(e.g., AI lacked cultural nuance, overused academic vocabulary, unsure about data privacy)

____

____

____

8. Overall Usefulness

On a scale from 1 (not useful) to 5 (very useful), how useful was the AI for this task?
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

____