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APPLICATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN GRADE 3 READING INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly entered school education, yet evidence-based accounts of how it can be integrated into primary reading lessons in pedagogically responsible ways remain limited. This study reports a classroom-based case study of an AI-integrated Grade 3 reading lesson, “My Favorite Book,” implemented in a technology-rich primary classroom in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The study was guided by the 2018 Vietnamese General Education Curriculum and informed by scholarship on AI literacy, multimodal learning, and formative assessment. Data sources included curriculum and lesson-plan analysis, classroom observation, students’ oral responses, digital learning products, self-assessment forms, and rubric-based performance data from 20 students. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize frequencies and percentages across four performance levels, while qualitative evidence was used to interpret the pedagogical roles of AI across lesson stages. The findings suggest that AI-supported tools strengthened four aspects of reading instruction: activation of prior reading experience, multimodal access to the text, differentiated classroom participation, and the collection of richer formative assessment evidence. Most student outcomes clustered at the Good and Very Good levels, especially in prediction, oral sharing, comprehension responses, and creative extension tasks. At the same time, the study indicates that AI did not function as an autonomous instructional agent; its educational value depended on careful teacher orchestration, explicit curricular alignment, and selective use of digital tools. The article contributes a theoretically grounded and practice-sensitive model for integrating AI into primary reading instruction while also clarifying the methodological limits of single-classroom evidence.

KEYWORDS: artificial intelligence, Grade 3, multimodal reading, formative assessment, primary education

1. INTRODUCTION

The growing presence of artificial intelligence (AI) in everyday life has transformed the conditions under which children learn, communicate, and interpret information. In education, AI is increasingly discussed not only as a topic to be learned, but also as a set of tools that can support teaching, assessment, feedback, and resource design (Holmes et al., 2019; Miao et al., 2021; UNESCO, 2023). Recent reviews show that school-level AI research has expanded rapidly, particularly after the public

spread of generative AI tools, yet empirical evidence from classroom practice remains uneven across grade levels and subject areas (Alfarwan, 2025; Yim & Su, 2025). This is especially true in primary education, where age-appropriate pedagogy, ethical use, teacher mediation, and curricular coherence are particularly important.

In the Vietnamese context, the 2018 General Education Curriculum repositions language and literature teaching toward the integrated development of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. At the primary level, Vietnamese is no longer understood as a set of isolated sub-subjects; rather, it is organized around communicative competence and literary competence through coherent learning activities and meaningful engagement with texts (Ministry of Education and Training [MOET], 2018). For Grade 3 students, reading instruction moves beyond basic decoding toward clearer comprehension of textual meaning, identification of relevant details, expression of personal responses, and the gradual development of reading habits. This curricular orientation creates a legitimate need to redesign reading lessons so that they are more interactive, multimodal, and responsive to students' emerging literacy abilities.

These demands intersect with broader educational discussions about AI. UNESCO (2023) has emphasized that generative AI should be used in human-centred, pedagogically justified ways rather than as an automatic substitute for teaching. Likewise, recent reviews of AI literacy in primary education show that the field still lacks stable curricular models, age-appropriate assessment practices, and robust classroom evidence concerning how teachers can integrate AI into learning tasks while maintaining their professional judgement (Yim & Su, 2025). In K-12 contexts, research on generative AI has also highlighted the need for teacher support, classroom-based exemplars, and more evidence on how AI tools are used in actual instruction rather than merely discussed at the policy level (Alfarwan, 2025).

Reading instruction is a particularly relevant site for this discussion. Contemporary literacy research has long argued that reading in school involves more than linear processing of printed words. Young learners increasingly encounter meaning through combinations of verbal, visual, auditory, spatial, and digital modes, which makes multimodal access to text an important pedagogical consideration (Callow, 2018; Serafini, 2012). In this regard, AI-supported tools may help teachers create illustrated texts, audio support, prediction prompts, interactive comprehension tasks, and diverse forms of assessment evidence. However, the pedagogical value of such tools depends on how they are embedded within the logic of the lesson, the characteristics of the learners, and the goals of curriculum-based reading instruction.

Despite these possibilities, many published discussions remain either broad policy reflections or technically oriented descriptions of AI. Fewer studies examine, in detail, how a single primary reading lesson can be designed, implemented, and interpreted when AI is positioned as a pedagogical support tool rather than as the centre of instruction. There is therefore a need for classroom-based studies that

connect AI integration to curriculum requirements, literacy pedagogy, and formative assessment in a way that is theoretically grounded and empirically transparent.

Responding to that need, this article reports a classroom-based case study of an AI-integrated Grade 3 reading lesson, “My Favorite Book,” from Vietnamese 3 (Creative Horizons series). The article does not claim causal proof of effectiveness; instead, it aims to provide a rigorous account of lesson design, implementation, and learning evidence in one specific classroom context. The study was guided by the following research questions: (1) How can AI be integrated into the design of a Grade 3 reading lesson in alignment with the 2018 General Education Curriculum? (2) What pedagogical roles did AI-supported tools play across the stages of the lesson? and (3) What learning evidence emerged from the classroom implementation of the lesson?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMING

2.1. AI in school education and primary learning contexts

AI in education has been described as a field concerned with the use of intelligent systems and data-driven tools to support teaching, learning, administration, and assessment (Holmes et al., 2019; Miao et al., 2021). More recent work has drawn attention to generative AI, which can produce text, images, audio, and other materials at speed, thereby reshaping how teachers prepare lessons and how students encounter information (UNESCO, 2023). Yet the educational implications of AI are not uniform across age groups. Primary schooling requires careful consideration of learner development, mediation, digital safety, and task design. As Yim and Su (2025) note in their review of AI literacy education in primary schools, evidence-based research at this level remains limited, and the field still needs age-appropriate pedagogical and assessment models.

A useful conceptual distinction is between teaching students about AI and using AI to support subject learning. Long and Magerko (2020) define AI literacy as a set of competencies that enable learners to critically evaluate AI technologies, communicate and collaborate effectively with AI, and use AI in context. While the present article is not an AI literacy intervention in the narrow sense, this definition remains useful because it highlights the need for critical and purposeful use rather than passive adoption. In the primary classroom, this implies that AI tools should be selected and adapted in ways that remain understandable, ethically responsible, and pedagogically necessary.

2.2. Multimodal reading and meaning-making in primary education

Literacy scholars have argued that contemporary reading involves meaning-making across multiple modes rather than print alone. The New London Group (1996) conceptualized this shift through multiliteracies, emphasizing the need to interpret and design meaning across linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial modes. In primary reading classrooms, this perspective is especially relevant because young learners often rely on illustrations, layout, oral support, gesture, and discussion to build comprehension. Serafini (2012) therefore argues that reading visual and multimodal texts should be treated as a legitimate extension of literacy pedagogy rather than a peripheral enrichment activity.

Assessment research also supports this view. Callow (2018) shows that young children's comprehension of picture books can be more accurately understood when teachers attend to students' interpretations of visual and written elements together. Such findings suggest that AI-supported illustrations, audio prompts, digital books, and interactive comprehension tasks may have pedagogical value if they deepen rather than distract from the construction of textual meaning. This article therefore treats AI-assisted materials as supports for multimodal reading, not as replacements for text or teacher explanation.

2.3. Formative assessment and teacher orchestration

A second theoretical strand underpinning this study is formative assessment. Black and Wiliam (2009) define formative assessment as a process in which evidence about student learning is elicited, interpreted, and used to decide next instructional steps. In primary reading instruction, such evidence may come from oral responses, reading fluency, question-and-answer exchanges, drawings, self-assessment, and other process-based artefacts. Digital tools can expand the range and speed of evidence collection, but they do not eliminate the need for interpretation. As recent work on technology-based formative assessment suggests, teachers still need to analyze results in relation to lesson goals and students' learning profiles, rather than accept digital outputs at face value.

This leads to the idea of teacher orchestration. In the present study, AI was conceptualized as a pedagogical support resource operating within teacher-led orchestration. Drawing on multimedia learning principles, Mayer (2021) argues that learning from words and pictures is enhanced when materials are carefully selected and aligned with cognitive processing rather than simply made more attractive. Combining this with formative assessment theory, the present article analyzes AI integration through four pedagogical functions: (1) activating prior reading experience, (2) expanding multimodal access to the text, (3) supporting differentiated participation and interaction, and (4) broadening formative assessment evidence. These functions provide the interpretive lens for the case study.

3. METHODS

3.1. Research design

This study adopted a classroom-based case study design with practice-based inquiry characteristics. The purpose was not to test the causal superiority of AI over non-AI instruction, but to examine, in depth, how AI-supported tools could be integrated into a Grade 3 reading lesson and what forms of learning evidence emerged during implementation. A case study design was appropriate because the lesson was bounded by a specific curriculum topic, a single class, a defined instructional sequence, and a clear set of data sources tied to one classroom event.

3.2. Setting and participants

The lesson was implemented in a Grade 3 class at Sedbergh Vietnam School, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The class consisted of 20 students. The learning context was a technology-rich classroom in which students routinely used iPads and digital platforms during instruction. The focal lesson, "My Favorite Book," belonged to the Grade 3 Vietnamese curriculum (Creative Horizons series) and was

selected because it allowed for the integration of pre-reading activation, reading aloud, comprehension work, personal response, and creative extension.

3.3. Data sources

Data were collected from six sources: (1) curriculum and policy documents used to establish instructional alignment; (2) the lesson plan and digital learning materials; (3) classroom observation notes recorded during implementation; (4) students' oral presentations and responses during activities; (5) students' digital products, including animated book-cover sharing tasks, comprehension responses, drawings, and self-assessment forms; and (6) rubric-based performance records for 20 students.

The documentary sources included the 2018 General Education Curriculum for Literature/Vietnamese, Circular No. 27/2020/TT-BGDĐT on the assessment of primary school students, and Official Dispatch No. 2345/BGDĐT-GDTH on developing primary school education plans (MOET, 2018, 2020, 2021). These documents were used to ensure that lesson objectives, learning activities, products, and assessment evidence remained consistent with formal curricular expectations.

3.4. Lesson design and implementation procedure

The lesson was designed in three stages: pre-class preparation, in-class reading activities, and post-reading reflection. During pre-class preparation, students selected a favorite book, used Pixverse AI to animate the book-cover image, and prepared a short oral sharing task on Google Classroom. In the opening stage of the lesson, the teacher used an AI-supported animated video and a short scenario to activate students' prior reading experiences and invite prediction about the target text. During the core reading phase, students accessed an illustrated e-book via QR code, listened to a model reading, practiced reading individually and collaboratively, and responded to comprehension prompts. In the post-reading phase, students completed an interactive comprehension game, created a drawing-based response product, and filled in a digital self-assessment form.

The tools used across the lesson included Google Classroom, Pixverse AI, Flow AI, Gemini AI, Heyzine, BeeClass, Wayground, Kidmons, and Google Excel. These tools were not treated as isolated technological novelties. Each one was linked to a specific pedagogical purpose: preparing multimodal materials, organizing interaction, supporting comprehension, or eliciting assessment evidence.

3.5. Assessment framework and data analysis

Student learning outcomes were assessed using a four-level rubric: Not Yet Achieved, Achieved, Good, and Very Good. The rubric addressed nine criteria aligned with lesson objectives, including oral sharing, prediction, reading clarity, reading fluency, pausing and phrasing, vocabulary explanation, comprehension responses, creative extension, and self-assessment. The rubric was used as an interpretive tool for classroom evidence rather than as a standardized psychometric measure.

Quantitative data were processed in Microsoft Excel to calculate frequencies and percentages for each performance level. These descriptive statistics were used to identify patterns in student performance across the class. Qualitative interpretation was based on triangulation of lesson materials, observation

notes, oral responses, and student products. This combination of descriptive and interpretive analysis was intended to capture both measurable classroom patterns and the pedagogical meanings associated with them.

3.6. Ethical considerations and scope

The study focused on routine classroom practice and used learning evidence generated during instruction. Student data were reported in aggregate form, and the class was anonymized as Grade 3.x in the performance table to avoid unnecessary identification. Because the study involved a single lesson in one class, its findings should be interpreted as context-specific rather than broadly generalizable.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Curricular and pedagogical alignment in lesson design

The first finding concerns the way AI integration was aligned with curriculum expectations rather than added as a technological layer. The lesson was designed to support the Grade 3 reading requirements of the Vietnamese curriculum: reading clearly and fluently, identifying relevant information, responding to the text, and expressing personal ideas through oral and written or visual forms (MOET, 2018). In line with Official Dispatch No. 2345, the lesson linked objectives, learning tasks, products, and assessment evidence in a coherent sequence (MOET, 2021). Circular No. 27 also provided the assessment logic for combining teacher observation, student products, oral participation, and self-assessment as evidence of progress (MOET, 2020).

Table 1 summarizes the alignment between lesson objectives, expected performance, and assessment evidence. The table illustrates that AI-supported tools were embedded in a pedagogical design that remained anchored in language development, literary response, and formative assessment.

Table 1. Alignment of objectives, expected performance, and assessment evidence

Objectives	Expected performance	Assessment evidence
Share a favorite book; predict the text; read clearly and fluently; respond to comprehension questions; express feelings and ideas about reading	Students introduce a favorite book, make one or two predictions from title and video cues, read with appropriate clarity and pacing, answer comprehension questions, and produce a personal response	Animated book-cover task, oral sharing, teacher observation, individual/group reading, responses on Wayground, drawing product on Kidmons, self-assessment form

Objectives	Expected performance	Assessment evidence
Develop general competencies: autonomy, communication, collaboration, problem solving, and creativity	Students participate actively, listen and respond to peers, collaborate in reading tasks, and complete digital activities responsibly	Observation notes, group interaction, learning products, completion of assigned tasks
Develop qualities: confidence, honesty, and responsibility	Students speak with confidence, reflect honestly on their own learning, and complete tasks conscientiously	Teacher notes, oral interaction, self-assessment evidence

4.2. Pedagogical roles of AI across lesson stages

The second finding is that AI supported the lesson through four interconnected pedagogical functions rather than through a single instructional mechanism. First, AI helped activate prior reading experience. Before class, students created animated versions of a favorite book cover and prepared a short sharing presentation. This task positioned them as readers with prior experiences rather than as passive recipients of a new text. During the opening activity, a short AI-generated video offered visual and affective cues that stimulated prediction. In a Grade 3 classroom, such pre-reading activation is pedagogically significant because it links textual comprehension to memory, personal preference, and anticipation.

Second, AI-supported tools expanded multimodal access to the text. The illustrated e-book, QR-based access, and model audio reading enabled students to encounter the text through visual, verbal, and auditory channels. This is consistent with multiliteracies and multimodal reading perspectives, which emphasize that meaning in classroom texts is often distributed across modes (Callow, 2018; Serafini, 2012). Importantly, the lesson did not reduce reading to visual entertainment; rather, multimodal support was used to scaffold entry into the text and sustain attention.

Third, AI contributed to differentiated participation and classroom interaction. Students could read one page or a longer segment depending on their readiness, and group allocation tools helped vary interactional patterns during practice. The pedagogical significance of this function lies in expanding participation opportunities without fragmenting the lesson into disconnected individual tasks. AI therefore operated as an organizational support for inclusive participation rather than as an individualized tutoring system.

Fourth, AI broadened the range of formative assessment evidence. Interactive comprehension questions, digital drawings, and self-assessment forms made it possible to collect evidence not only from oral recitation but also from response accuracy, imagination, reflection, and product completion. However, this evidence still required teacher interpretation. The lesson therefore confirmed a teacher-

in-the-loop model: AI accelerated access, response, and documentation, but the teacher remained responsible for explanation, pacing, feedback, and pedagogical judgement.

Table 2. AI-supported tools and their pedagogical functions in the lesson

Tool(s)	Instructional use	Pedagogical function
Google Classroom; Pixverse AI	Pre-class task assignment and animated book-cover sharing	Activation of prior reading experience and affective engagement
Flow AI	Short opening video for warm-up and prediction	Establishing reading context and stimulating anticipation
Gemini AI; Heyzine	Illustrated e-book and QR-based access to the text	Multimodal access to text and support for comprehension entry
Beeclass	Group formation and task organization during reading practice	Flexible classroom orchestration and differentiated participation
Wayground	Interactive comprehension questions	Rapid formative evidence and immediate checking of understanding
Kidmons	Drawing the “dream classroom” response product	Creative extension, personal expression, and transfer of textual ideas
Google Excel or digital forms	Student self-assessment after the lesson	Reflection, self-monitoring, and additional formative evidence

4.3. Learning evidence from classroom implementation

The third finding concerns the distribution of student outcomes. Table 3 presents the rubric-based results for 20 students across nine criteria. Across all criteria, no student was rated Not Yet Achieved. The distribution was concentrated mainly in the Good and Very Good categories. Stronger results appeared in oral book sharing, prediction, comprehension responses, and the creative extension product, while the technically demanding reading criteria - fluency, pausing, and vocabulary explanation - showed slightly greater variation, though still remained positive overall.

Table 3. Learning outcomes of Grade 3.x students (N = 20)

Assessment criteria	Not Yet Achieved		Achieved		Good		Very Good	
Assessment criteria	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Share a favorite book	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	40.0	12	60.0
2. Predict text content from the introductory video	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	50.0	10	50.0
3. Read loudly and clearly; pronounce words accurately	0	0.0	0	0.0	11	55.0	9	45.0
4. Read fluently	0	0.0	1	5.0	12	60.0	7	35.0
5. Pause and phrase appropriately	0	0.0	2	10.0	12	60.0	6	30.0
6. Note difficult words and explain some vocabulary items	0	0.0	2	10.0	11	55.0	7	35.0

Assessment criteria	Not Yet Achieved		Achieved		Good		Very Good	
Assessment criteria	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
7. Answer comprehension questions correctly	0	0.0	1	5.0	10	50.0	9	45.0
8. Produce the “dream classroom” drawing	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	45.0	11	55.0
9. Self-assess level of task completion	0	0.0	1	5.0	12	60.0	7	35.0

The distribution pattern suggests that the AI-integrated lesson created favorable conditions for engagement, response, and meaning-making. In particular, the highest concentrations at the Very Good level appeared in tasks where personal experience, prediction, and creative representation were central. By contrast, the comparatively wider spread across Good and Very Good in fluency, pausing, and vocabulary explanation suggests that core reading performance still depends on sustained teacher guidance and repeated practice rather than digital support alone.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that the educational contribution of AI in this lesson lay less in automation than in pedagogical mediation. This distinction is important. Much contemporary discussion of AI in education oscillates between inflated optimism and generalized concern. In contrast, the present case shows that AI can be educationally meaningful when it is subordinated to curricular aims and embedded in teacher-designed tasks. The lesson was effective not because AI was present, but because the tools were selected to support pre-reading activation, multimodal text access, interaction, and formative evidence in a coherent instructional sequence.

This pattern is consistent with the broader literature. Reviews of generative AI in K-12 education emphasize the need for concrete classroom examples and teacher guidance in order to move beyond

abstract claims about innovation (Alfarwan, 2025). Similarly, UNESCO (2023) argues that generative AI should be used to augment - not replace - human teaching. The present case supports that principle. At every major point in the lesson, the teacher remained central in selecting the text, framing the task, clarifying meaning, monitoring participation, and interpreting evidence. AI increased the flexibility and richness of the instructional environment, but it did not reduce the professional demands placed on the teacher.

The study also contributes to discussions of multimodal literacy in the primary grades. The illustrated e-book, audio support, animated pre-reading prompts, and drawing-based extension task created a learning environment in which students interpreted and expressed meaning across modes. This aligns with multiliteracies theory and with classroom assessment research on picture books and multimodal texts (Callow, 2018; New London Group, 1996; Serafini, 2012). For Grade 3 learners, such multimodal support is not merely decorative. It can provide entry points into comprehension, especially when linked to oral prediction, collaborative discussion, and personal response.

A further contribution lies in assessment. By combining oral participation, interactive questioning, digital products, and self-assessment, the lesson generated a richer evidence base than would be available through recitation alone. This reflects the formative assessment principle that learning evidence should be elicited from multiple sources and used to understand student progress in relation to explicit criteria (Black & Wiliam, 2009). At the same time, the case confirms that digital evidence must still be pedagogically interpreted. Quick-response platforms can show which answers students selected, but they cannot on their own explain why students hesitated, how they constructed meaning, or which scaffolds are needed next.

From a practical perspective, the article suggests three implications for primary teachers. First, AI tools should be chosen by function, not by novelty: a tool is valuable only when it solves a concrete instructional need. Second, AI integration in reading lessons should remain text-centred and age-appropriate, using multimodal supports to deepen comprehension rather than distract from it. Third, teachers need digital competence and assessment literacy together. It is insufficient to know how to operate a tool; teachers must also know what evidence the tool produces, what that evidence means, and how it should inform subsequent instruction.

6. LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. First, it examined only one Grade 3 class and one lesson, so the findings are context-specific. Second, the study used descriptive statistics and did not include a control group, pre-test/post-test design, or longitudinal follow-up. Third, the lesson took place in a relatively well-resourced technology-rich environment, which may not reflect conditions in all primary schools. Fourth, the performance rubric was designed for classroom assessment purposes and was not validated as a standardized research instrument. These limitations mean that the article should be read as a carefully documented case study rather than as a claim of general effectiveness.

Future research could extend this work by comparing AI-integrated and non-AI lesson designs, examining repeated implementation across a unit rather than a single lesson, or investigating how students' reading development changes over time when multimodal and AI-supported pedagogies are used in sustained ways. Comparative studies across different school contexts would also help clarify what kinds of infrastructure, teacher preparation, and curriculum conditions are necessary for responsible AI integration in primary literacy instruction.

7. CONCLUSION

This article examined the design and implementation of an AI-integrated Grade 3 reading lesson within the framework of the Vietnamese 2018 General Education Curriculum. Through a classroom-based case study of the lesson "My Favorite Book," the study showed that AI-supported tools can play a meaningful role in primary reading instruction when they are aligned with curricular goals, embedded in teacher-led pedagogy, and used to enrich rather than replace literacy practices.

The findings suggest that AI was pedagogically useful in four main ways: it activated students' prior reading experiences, expanded multimodal access to the text, supported differentiated participation, and broadened formative assessment evidence. Student performance was concentrated largely at the Good and Very Good levels, particularly in oral sharing, prediction, comprehension, and creative response tasks. At the same time, the study underscores that technology alone does not guarantee educational value. Teacher orchestration, task design, and assessment judgement remained central throughout the lesson.

Taken together, the article offers a modest but theoretically grounded contribution to the emerging literature on AI in primary education. Rather than presenting AI as a general solution, it provides a concrete example of how AI can be integrated into a reading lesson in a manner that is curriculum-based, multimodal, and formative. Such practice-sensitive evidence is important if future research and school policy are to move from broad enthusiasm toward more disciplined, pedagogically credible models of AI-supported teaching.

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