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A Comparative Study of English Major and Non-English Major Thai Tertiary EFL Students' Attitudes toward ChatGPT in English Language Learning

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Abstract
This study aimed to examine Thai tertiary-level EFL students' attitudes toward using ChatGPT in English language learning and to compare attitudes between English majors and non-English majors. The sample comprised 70 university students enrolled in a Fundamental English course at a public university in northern Thailand, selected through convenience sampling. The research instrument was a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire adapted from Liu (2023), with content validity confirmed by experts (IOC=1.00) and reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.93). Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to obtain deeper insights. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and thematic content analysis. The findings revealed that students' overall attitudes toward ChatGPT were at a moderate level (M=2.72, SD=0.52). Students perceived ChatGPT as easy and convenient to use and helpful for vocabulary learning, grammar explanation, and language practice. The comparison between groups showed no statistically significant difference in overall attitudes. However, a statistically significant difference was found in perceived ease of use, with English majors reporting higher scores than non-English majors ($p < .05$). In addition, qualitative findings indicated concerns regarding the accuracy of AI-generated information and the risk of over-reliance. These results indicate that ChatGPT can be used appropriately as a supportive tool in English language learning; however, it should not replace traditional instructional practices. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples, employ longitudinal designs, and investigate the impact of ChatGPT on specific language skills, such as speaking, writing, and critical thinking.

Keywords: ChatGPT, English Language Learning, Artificial Intelligence, Educational Technology, Student Attitudes

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has increasingly influenced educational practices, particularly in language learning contexts, and has been widely discussed for its potential in education (Holmes, 2022). Among these technologies, ChatGPT, introduced in 2022, represents a significant advancement because of its natural language processing (NLP) capabilities and its ability to generate contextually appropriate responses (Kohnke et al., 2023). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, these features support interactive practice, immediate feedback, and individualised learning (Kasneci et al., 2023).

In Thailand, the integration of AI into English language classrooms has been associated with increased engagement and expanded learning opportunities (Phieanchang 2024). However, concerns remain regarding accuracy, overreliance, and unequal access to AI tools (Songsiengchai et al., 2023). Although previous studies (e.g. Phieanchang, 2024; Songsiengchai et al., 2023; Liu, 2023) have emphasised the usefulness of AI tools, limited research has examined students' attitudes in specific national contexts, particularly in Thai tertiary EFL settings.

The technology acceptance model (TAM) explains how perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence users' attitudes and intentions toward technology adoption (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). In the context of ChatGPT, students' attitudes may vary depending on their disciplinary background. English majors may demonstrate higher confidence due to greater language proficiency, while empirical evidence comparing these groups remains limited in Thai tertiary education (Chatterjee & Bhattacharjee, 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2023). Therefore, this study investigates students' attitudes toward ChatGPT and explores the differences between English majors and non-English majors. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the attitudes of Thai tertiary-level EFL students toward the use of ChatGPT for English language learning?
2. How do attitudes toward ChatGPT differ between English majors and students from other disciplines?

Literature Review

ChatGPT in Language Learning

AI technologies in education enable personalised learning and interactive language practice through natural language processing (Holmes, 2022; Kohnke et al., 2023). These technologies allow learners to receive immediate feedback and engage in interactive language practice. Previous studies have shown that AI-generated feedback can support second-language writing and grammatical accuracy (Warschauer et al., 2023; Phieanchang, 2024), whereas AI-supported learning environments in Thailand have been found to improve students' reading comprehension and conversational interactions (Songsiengchai et al., 2023).

Among recent developments, ChatGPT has emerged as one of the most widely discussed generative AI tools in education. It is a conversational AI model that generates human-like responses based on user prompts (Radford et al., 2019). It can also assist teachers in creating learning materials and assessment tasks (Kohnke et al., 2023). However, concerns remain regarding the accuracy of AI-generated information and the potential for over-reliance on such tools. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions of ChatGPT is important for its responsible integration into language learning environments.

Students' Attitudes toward AI and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Learners' attitudes toward technology play an important role in determining whether educational technologies are successfully adopted. In educational technology research, attitudes are often examined through the technology acceptance model (TAM), which proposes that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence users' acceptance of technology (Davis, 1989), as shown in Figure 1.

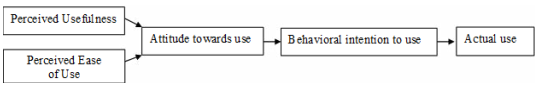

Figure 1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989)

Previous Studies

Several studies (Wang, 2025; Mahapatra, 2024; Liu, 2023; Ulla et al., 2023) have investigated the role of ChatGPT and generative AI tools in English language education. Experimental studies have shown that ChatGPT can enhance learners' linguistic performance and engagement. For example, previous studies have indicated that ChatGPT can enhance learners' communication and writing performance (Mahapatra, 2024; Wang, 2025). Studies focusing on learner perceptions have also reported generally positive attitudes toward ChatGPT. Liu (2023) found that students appreciated the convenience and accessibility of the tool, although some expressed concerns about accuracy and over-reliance. In the Thai context, Ulla et al. (2023) reported that EFL instructors viewed ChatGPT as useful for lesson planning and material development, while also acknowledging potential limitations related to reliability.

Overall, previous studies suggest that ChatGPT offers several pedagogical benefits, including flexible language practice, personalised feedback, and increased learner engagement. However, researchers have also emphasised the importance of integrating AI tools responsibly to avoid excessive dependence on technology. Despite these growing

research efforts, several gaps remain. Many studies focus on a single group of learners and primarily rely on quantitative survey data. Consequently, limited research has examined whether attitudes toward ChatGPT differ across academic disciplines or explored students' perspectives using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

To address these gaps, this study investigates Thai tertiary EFL students' attitudes toward ChatGPT and compares attitudes between English majors and non-English majors. By employing a mixed-methods design, this study aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how students perceive the role of ChatGPT in English language learning.

Methodology

This section presents the participants, instruments, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Participants

The participants in the present study were Thai tertiary students from a government university in northern Thailand. The participants consisted of English major students (EM) and non-English major students (NEM) enrolled in a General Education Fundamental English course. They were selected using convenience sampling, which was necessary due to administrative constraints at the institutional level, as the researcher could not influence the selection or enrolment of students into the course. Similarly, the questionnaire was distributed to approximately 160 students enrolled in this course. However, 70 participants returned the online questionnaire, meeting the minimum requirement of recruiting participants, which is at least 10% (Woodrow, 2014)

Instruments

In this study, a questionnaire was used as the primary instrument to collect quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into students' attitudes and experiences.

The questionnaire was adapted from Liu (2023) and comprised two parts. The first part collected demographic information, including gender and field of study (EM or NEM). The second part included 16 items measuring students' attitudes toward ChatGPT in English language learning. These items were categorised into four dimensions: attitudes and understanding of ChatGPT (6 items), attitudes toward actual use (4 items), perceived advantages (3 items), and perceived disadvantages (3 items). These dimensions aligned with the key constructs of the technology acceptance model (TAM), particularly perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Pallant, 2005).

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by two experts in English language teaching and assessment, and the item–objective congruence (IOC) index was calculated (Rovinelli & Hambleton, 1977). The IOC value was 1.00, indicating high content validity. Moreover, reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.93, which indicates excellent internal consistency.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to further explore their experiences using ChatGPT. The interview questions focused on perceptions of the usefulness, convenience, accuracy, and limitations of ChatGPT as a learning tool.

Data Collection

Before data collection, all participants received brief training on how to formulate effective prompts when interacting with ChatGPT. The training introduced basic prompt construction strategies and example prompts to ensure that students used the system consistently and to reduce arbitrariness in responses (Kasneci et al., 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023). The reason for the training was that NEM students might not encounter English in everyday life, which could create a potential confounding variable when compared to EM students.

The questionnaire was administered using Google Forms. Participants' personal information was not collected to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, and they were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any consequences.

After collection, the responses were exported to a spreadsheet and checked for analysis. In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted to further explore students' experiences with ChatGPT. Interview participants were selected through purposive sampling from those who completed the questionnaire, resulting in 20 participants. The number of interviews was determined based on data saturation (Guest et al., 2006).

Data Analysis

For quantitative data analysis, descriptive statistics, including mean (M), standard deviation (SD), and percentage, were employed. The Likert scale responses were interpreted based on predefined mean score ranges adapted from Pallant (2005), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Five-point Likert Scale Interpretation

Point	Interval	Description	Interpretation
1	1.00-1.80	strongly disagree	Very low
2	1.81-2.60	disagree	Low
3	2.61-3.40	neutral	Moderate
4	3.41-4.20	agree	High
5	4.21-5.00	strongly agree	Very high

To address the second research question, an independent samples t-test was conducted to examine the differences between the two groups.

In addition to the quantitative data, qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with both EM and NEM to obtain diverse perspectives. The data were analysed using thematic content analysis based on Braun and Clarke (2006), including data familiarisation, initial coding, theme identification, theme review and refinement, and interpretation. This analysis provided deeper insights into students' attitudes, experiences, and concerns regarding the use of ChatGPT in English language learning.

Results

Attitudes Toward Using ChatGPT in English Language Learning between EM and NEM

This section reveals the learners' attitudes toward using ChatGPT for English language learning. To answer the research questions, descriptive statistics, including mean (M) and standard deviation (SD), were calculated, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Attitudes toward Using ChatGPT in English Learning between EM and NEM

	Item	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	I think using ChatGPT is easy and convenient.	3.10	0.64	Moderate
2	I believe that using ChatGPT helps me learn English more effectively.	2.80	0.77	Moderate
3	Learning with ChatGPT is enjoyable.	2.87	0.74	Moderate
4	I can easily understand the meaning conveyed through ChatGPT.	2.80	0.73	Moderate
5	I try to spend time and make the most of ChatGPT in learning/teaching English.	2.84	0.71	Moderate
6	I expect to use ChatGPT more for English learning in the future.	2.97	0.72	Moderate
7	I use ChatGPT to generate interest and motivation in English learning and teaching.	2.71	0.74	Moderate
8	I use ChatGPT to develop my English communication skills (speaking and listening).	2.79	0.78	Moderate
9	I use ChatGPT to develop my English communication skills (reading and writing).	2.79	0.78	Moderate
10	I use ChatGPT to help me understand English and its culture more deeply.	2.74	0.79	Moderate
11	I think ChatGPT can enhance the quality of my English learning and teaching.	2.77	0.76	Moderate
12	I believe ChatGPT enhances learning.	2.71	0.76	Moderate
13	I think ChatGPT improves my learning ability.	2.71	0.82	Moderate

14	I think ChatGPT may lead to plagiarism issues or data leaks.	2.47	0.91	Low
15	I think ChatGPT may provide inaccurate information.	2.43	0.81	Low
16	I think ChatGPT is not useful for English learning and teaching.	1.99	0.06	Low
	Overall Mean	2.72	0.52	Moderate

Table 2 presents students' attitudes toward using ChatGPT in English language learning. The highest mean score was for the item, "I think using ChatGPT is easy and convenient" (M=3.10, SD=0.64), indicating that perceived ease of use played a crucial role in students' acceptance of ChatGPT and contributed to students' initial acceptance of AI tools in language learning contexts. This was followed by, "I expect to use ChatGPT more for English learning in the future" (M=2.97, SD=0.72), suggesting that students' positive experience with the tool might translate into continued behavioural intention to use it, reflecting emerging reliance on AI-assisted learning. Next, "Learning with ChatGPT is enjoyable" (M=2.87, SD=0.74), which implied that ChatGPT contributes to learners' affective engagement and may help reduce anxiety often associated with language learning. Another highly rated item was, "I try to spend time and make the most of ChatGPT in learning English" (M=2.84, SD=0.71), signifying that students were willing to actively invest effort in using the tool, although the moderate level suggested that such engagement was not yet fully sustained or habitual. In addition, two items shared the same mean score (M=2.80): "I believe that using ChatGPT helps me learn English more effectively" and "I can easily understand the meaning conveyed through ChatGPT.", which reflected that while students recognized its supportive role in comprehension and learning, they might still be uncertain about its overall effectiveness in significantly improving their language proficiency.

Therefore, the mean score of students' attitudes toward using ChatGPT in English language learning was 2.72 (SD=0.52), which falls within the moderate level, indicating that students held cautiously positive attitudes rather than strong endorsement, possibly due to limited experience or partial trust in AI-generated content.

Table 3 Comparison of Attitudes toward Using ChatGPT for Learning English between EM and NEM

No.	Item	EM		NEM		t-test	Sig.
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1.	I think using ChatGPT is easy and convenient.	3.33	0.66	3.00	0.61	2.041	0.045
2.	I believe using ChatGPT helps me learn English more effectively.	2.71	0.78	2.84	0.77	-0.605	0.547
3.	Learning with ChatGPT is enjoyable and engaging.	2.90	0.77	2.86	0.74	0.245	0.807
4.	I find it easy to understand the meaning conveyed by ChatGPT.	2.67	0.91	2.86	0.65	-0.995	0.323
5.	I try to invest time and make use of ChatGPT to enhance my English learning/teaching.	2.95	0.74	2.80	0.71	0.837	0.405
6.	I expect to use ChatGPT more in my English learning in the future.	2.90	0.89	3.00	0.65	-0.503	0.616
7.	I use ChatGPT to spark interest and inspiration in learning English.	2.71	0.96	2.71	0.65	0.000	1.000
8.	I use ChatGPT to develop my English communication skills (speaking and listening).	2.71	0.90	2.82	0.73	-0.458	0.650
9.	I use ChatGPT to develop my English communication skills (reading and writing).	2.90	0.77	2.73	0.78	0.836	0.406

10.	I use ChatGPT to gain a deeper understanding of English language and culture.	2.52	0.98	2.84	0.69	-1.528	0.131
11.	I think ChatGPT can improve the quality of my English learning and teaching.	2.67	0.91	2.82	0.70	-0.748	0.457
12.	I believe ChatGPT enhances learning.	2.57	0.93	2.78	0.69	-1.024	0.309
13.	I think ChatGPT helps improve my learning abilities.	2.62	0.92	2.76	0.78	-0.634	0.528
14.	I think ChatGPT may lead to plagiarism or information leakage.	2.67	0.91	2.39	0.91	1.175	0.244
15.	I think ChatGPT responses may provide incorrect information.	2.57	0.87	2.37	0.78	0.967	0.337
16.	I think ChatGPT is not beneficial for English learning and teaching.	1.62	0.97	2.14	1.06	-1.939	0.057
	Overall Mean	2.69	0.53	2.73	0.52	-0.295	0.769

Note: Statistically significant at the .05 level

Table 3 presents a comparison of attitudes toward using ChatGPT in English language learning between the EM and NEM groups. The results of the independent samples t-test indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups in most questionnaire items, suggesting that students' academic background did not substantially influence their attitudes toward ChatGPT. However, a statistically significant difference was found in one item: "I think using ChatGPT is easy and convenient." EM reported a higher mean score (M=3.33, SD=0.66) than NEM (M=3.00, SD=0.61), and this difference was statistically significant (t=2.041, p=.045), indicating that EM, due to their greater exposure to language learning tools and digital resources, perceive ChatGPT as more user-friendly and easier to integrate into their learning.

For the remaining items, the differences between the two groups were not significant, implying that both groups shared similar attitudes toward the usefulness, enjoyment, and impact of ChatGPT on language learning.

In addition, the qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed to further explore students' attitudes. The next section presents the qualitative results and focuses on the emerging themes identified from the semi-structured interviews.

The Emerging Themes from Semi-Structured Interviews

This section reports the qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews. The analysis revealed recurring themes related to students' experiences of using ChatGPT in English language learning. The emerging themes identified through thematic content analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 The Emerging Themes from Semi-Structured Interviews

Themes	Statements (Extraction from Participants)
1. ChatGPT is easy and convenient to use.	"ChatGPT is very easy to use. I can ask questions anytime when I study English." (P1) "It is convenient because I can use it on my phone when I do my homework." (P3) "Compared with searching on Google, ChatGPT gives answers quickly and clearly." (P5)
2. ChatGPT supports English learning.	"ChatGPT helps me understand grammar and vocabulary that I do not understand in class." (P2) "Sometimes I ask ChatGPT to explain difficult sentences, and it makes the meaning clearer." (P4) "It helps me review lessons and understand the content better." (P6)

3. ChatGPT helps develop English communication skills.	"I use ChatGPT to practice communicating in English and improve how I express my ideas." (P8) "Sometimes I ask ChatGPT to create dialogues so I can practice speaking." (P11) "It helps me learn how to use new vocabulary in communication." (P13)
4. ChatGPT raises concerns about the accuracy of information.	"Sometimes I am not sure whether the information from ChatGPT is correct." (P15) "Students should double-check the information because ChatGPT may give incorrect answers." (P19) "It is helpful, but we should not completely trust everything it says." (P16)
5. ChatGPT should be used responsibly in learning.	"ChatGPT is helpful, but students should not depend on it too much." (P11) "It should be used as a learning assistant, not to do all the work for students." (P5) "Teachers should guide students on how to use ChatGPT properly." (P14)

Table 4 presents the emerging themes from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews (n=20). Five main themes were identified, reflecting students' attitudes and experiences of using ChatGPT for English learning. The first theme, "ChatGPT is easy and convenient to use" was the most frequently mentioned. Many students described ChatGPT as an accessible tool that allowed them to ask questions and receive immediate explanations when learning English. This theme is supported by six statements, indicating that students generally perceive ChatGPT as a convenient learning assistant. The second theme, "ChatGPT supports English learning." presented students' views that ChatGPT helped them to understand vocabulary, grammar, and lesson content. This theme emerged from four statements, suggesting that students consider ChatGPT a useful supplementary learning resource. The third theme, "ChatGPT helps develop English communication skills." reflected students' use of ChatGPT for practicing writing, generating dialogues, and improving vocabulary usage. This theme emerged from four statements, suggesting that students use ChatGPT as a tool to practice communication and express their ideas in English more effectively. Despite these positive attitudes, the fourth theme, "ChatGPT raises concerns about the accuracy of information." indicated that some students questioned the reliability of AI-generated responses. This theme emerged from three statements, suggesting that students recognise the importance of verifying information from other sources when using ChatGPT. The fifth theme, "ChatGPT should be used responsibly in learning." indicated students' awareness of the importance of using AI tools critically. This theme emerged from three statements, indicating that students believe ChatGPT should support learning rather than replace independent thinking or teacher guidance. Therefore, the qualitative findings triangulated with the quantitative results, indicating students' moderate acceptance of ChatGPT, recognition of its usefulness for English language learning, and concerns regarding the accuracy of AI-generated information and potential over-reliance.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined Thai tertiary-level EFL students' attitudes toward using ChatGPT in English language learning and compared attitudes between English majors and non-English majors. Both quantitative and qualitative results indicated that students demonstrated moderate attitudes toward ChatGPT, suggesting cautious acceptance rather than strong endorsement. Students recognised the usefulness of ChatGPT while also being aware of its limitations.

One notable finding was that students perceived ChatGPT as easy and convenient to use, which received the highest mean score among all questionnaire items. This result aligns with the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), which emphasises the role of perceived ease of use in shaping users' attitudes toward adopting new technologies. The qualitative findings support this result, as interview data describe ChatGPT as a convenient and accessible tool that allows students to ask questions and receive explanations during self-study (Theme 1). These responses suggest that accessibility and convenience contribute to students' willingness to use AI tools in language learning.

In addition to convenience, students perceived ChatGPT as supportive of English learning, particularly for understanding vocabulary, grammar, and difficult sentences (Theme 2). The qualitative results further indicate that students used ChatGPT to clarify lesson content and review materials outside the classroom (Theme 3). These findings are consistent with those of previous studies suggesting that generative AI tools can provide immediate explanations and personalised support for language learners (Kohnke et al., 2023; Liu, 2023), which is particularly beneficial in EFL contexts where additional opportunities for language practice are needed.

Despite these positive attitudes, students also expressed concerns about the reliability of AI-generated information (Theme 4). Some interview participants emphasised the need to verify ChatGPT responses, recognising that the information may not always be accurate. These concerns are consistent with previous research highlighting issues related to accuracy and potential over-reliance on AI tools in academic contexts (Meniado et al., 2024; Kasneci et al., 2023). Therefore, while students view ChatGPT as a useful learning tool, they also acknowledge the importance of using it critically. Another emerging theme highlights students' awareness of the appropriate use of ChatGPT in learning (Theme 5). Some participants stated that ChatGPT should be used as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for teachers or traditional learning materials. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that AI tools should support, rather than replace, human instruction in educational contexts (Kasneci et al., 2023).

A comparison between English and non-English majors revealed no statistically significant difference in their overall attitudes. Both groups reported similar perceptions of usefulness. However, English majors reported a slightly higher agreement regarding the ease of use of ChatGPT. This difference may be explained by the fact that English majors are generally more familiar with using English, whereas non-English majors may have fewer opportunities to use English in their daily lives.

In conclusion, the results suggest that Thai tertiary-level EFL students view ChatGPT as a supportive learning resource rather than a replacement for traditional learning methods. Although students appreciate its convenience and usefulness, they also recognise the importance of verifying information and maintaining independent learning practices. These findings highlight the potential for the responsible integration of generative AI tools in EFL learning.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, the participants were selected from a single public university in northern Thailand using convenience sampling, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other educational contexts or student populations. Second, this study relied on self-reported data collected through questionnaires and interviews. Such data may be influenced by subjective attitudes, social desirability bias, and different levels of familiarity with the ChatGPT, potentially affecting the accuracy of the results. Third, this study adopted a cross-sectional design to examine students' attitudes at a single point in time. Given the rapid development of AI technologies, students' attitudes may shift as they gain experience using such tools. Finally, the study focused primarily on students' attitudes rather than examining actual learning outcomes, making it difficult to determine the extent to which the ChatGPT contributes to measurable improvements in English language skills.

Suggestions for Future Studies

Given these limitations, several recommendations are suggested. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples across multiple institutions to enhance the generalisability of the findings. In addition, the use of more robust research designs, such as experimental or observational approaches, would help generate more objective data on students' actual use of ChatGPT in learning contexts. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to examine how students' attitudes evolve over time as they become more familiar with AI technologies. Furthermore, future studies should move beyond attitudes and investigate the effects of ChatGPT on specific language skills to better understand its pedagogical value.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of this study have several implications for English language teaching in higher education. Students generally perceive ChatGPT as a convenient and supportive learning tool; therefore, instructors may integrate it as a supplementary resource for activities such as vocabulary learning, grammar explanation, idea generation, and writing practice. As both EM and NEM demonstrated similar attitudes toward ChatGPT, AI-supported learning activities can be applied across different academic disciplines. However, the results also highlight the importance of guiding students to use AI tools responsibly. Teachers should encourage students to verify information from multiple sources, critically evaluate AI-generated responses, and use ChatGPT as a learning assistant rather than a substitute for independent learning. When used thoughtfully within structured learning activities, ChatGPT can enhance language learning while promoting student autonomy and critical thinking.

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