

CLASSROOM AVATAR AI GENERATED: A CHECKLIST FOR ANALYSIS

AVATAR DI CLASSE GENERATI CON L'INTELLIGENZA ARTIFICIALE: UNA CHECKLIST PER L'ANALISI



Double Blind Peer Review

Citation

di Padova, M., Basta, A. & De Martino, D. (2025). Classroom avatar ai generated: a checklist for analysis. *Giornale italiano di educazione alla salute, sport e didattica inclusiva*, 9(1).

Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.32043/gsd.v9i1.1355>

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gsdjournal.it

ISSN: 2532-3296

ISBN: 978-88-6022-509-2

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the use of AI in teacher education through the generation of classroom avatars. A specific checklist was developed to analyse prompts and avatars critically, aiming to foster authentic and inclusive representations of diversity. The study highlights the pedagogical potential of AI when mediated by rigorous analytical tools and reflective practices.

Il contributo analizza l'uso dell'IA nella formazione degli insegnanti attraverso la creazione di avatar di classe. È stata elaborata una checklist per analizzare criticamente prompt e avatar, promuovendo rappresentazioni autentiche e inclusive della diversità. Lo studio evidenzia il potenziale pedagogico dell'AI se mediato da strumenti analitici rigorosi e da pratiche riflessive.

KEYWORDS

Artificial Intelligence, teacher training, Avatar, inclusion, checklist
Intelligenza Artificiale, formazione docenti, Avatar, Inclusione, checklist

Received 30/04/2025

Accepted 27/05/2025

Published 20/06/2025

Introduction

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into initial teacher education today emerges as one of the most significant challenges to promoting inclusive, equitable, culturally aware, and technologically competent educational environments (Chen et al., 2020; Celik et al., 2022). In an era characterized by the convergence of educational practices and advanced digital tools, the ability to create school avatars through generative AI tools also represents a highly relevant methodological opportunity to explore the collective imaginations of future teachers with respect to the actual heterogeneity of school classrooms and to critically reflect on implicit representations of diversity, identity plurality, and inclusiveness (Baig & Yadegaridehkordi, 2025; Luckin, 2018).

Avatar production enables the investigation of how physical, cultural, emotional, and social characteristics are described and made visible through the language of prompts and generated images, providing valuable insights into the level of inclusive awareness of teachers-in-training (Larios & Zetlin, 2023). Moreover, the use of AI tools opens pedagogical, deontological, and epistemological questions, making it imperative to develop rigorous models of analysis that balance design creativity, respect for diversity, and educational responsibility (Williamson & Eynon, 2020).

This paper aims to articulate an analysis of the activity carried out at the Laboratory of Educational Technology at the University of Foggia, where 186 students were involved in a project to create AI prompts and avatars to represent heterogeneous school classes. The observation of the results that emerged, which were characterized by stereotypical recurrences and limited cultural and social variety, made clear the need for a rigorous analytical tool. To continue the analysis in a systematic way and reduce interpretive subjectivity, it was therefore essential to design and implement two specific analytical checklists: one for the analysis of prompts and one for the analysis of generated avatars, making use of principles of valential linguistic analysis (Tesnière, 1959), inclusive pedagogy and critical representation theory.

1. Theoretical Framework

The advent of AI-driven tools has profoundly reshaped the educational landscape, offering new pathways for teaching and learning that align with the demands of increasingly heterogeneous and digitalized classrooms. AI systems, particularly those enabling personalized learning experiences, support predictive analyses of

students' educational needs, allowing teachers to dynamically adapt their instructional strategies (Fissore et al., 2024; Pratama, Sampelolo & Lura, 2023). The integration of AI into teacher training enriches pedagogical practices, enhancing student engagement and learning effectiveness while simultaneously fostering critical thinking about the ethical and cultural implications of these technologies (Sajja et al., 2024).

A crucial aspect of contemporary teacher education concerns the perception and management of classroom heterogeneity (Stunell, 2020). Cultural competence has become an indispensable skill for educators (Garneau & Pepin, 2014), who must now be capable of recognizing and valuing the diverse cultural, social, and individual backgrounds of their students. Promoting inclusiveness means creating learning environments that not only respect but actively celebrate diversity as an educational resource (Riedel et al., 2023).

In this context, the use of avatars generated by AI on virtual and immersive platforms represents a powerful pedagogical innovation. As Gualano et al. (2024) demonstrate, personalized avatars can improve self-representation among students, particularly those facing physical, psychological, or cultural barriers, enhancing their participation and sense of belonging. Avatar creation allows future teachers to reflect on the dynamics of diversity representation, offering a practical opportunity to design inclusive and individualized educational scenarios (Alam & Mohanty, 2022). Nevertheless, integrating AI into education also entails significant risks. Without critical mediation, AI tools can reinforce aesthetic standardization, reproduce implicit stereotypes, and simplify cultural and identity complexity (Dimitriadou & Lanitis, 2023; Selwyn, 2019). The tendency of generative AI to propose normative and homogenized representations highlights the urgent need for rigorous analytical frameworks that guide students in developing sensitive and critically aware digital content. The exploratory activities conducted within the Educational Technology Laboratory at the University of Foggia confirmed these tensions. While students demonstrated growing awareness toward inclusive representation by incorporating avatars depicting students of different ethnicities or with special educational needs, the analysis also revealed recurrent stereotypes and limited symbolic richness. This dual evidence underscores the necessity of designing specific analytical tools, such as checklists, capable of systematically supporting reflective practices and enhancing the educational potential of AI.

Building on valency grammar principles (Tesnière, 1959), inclusive pedagogy (Cabero Almenara & Martínez Gimeno, 2019), and cultural responsiveness theories (Eden et al., 2024), this framework aims to foster a pedagogical paradigm that critically interrogates AI outputs. Avatars, when consciously designed and critically

analysed, can serve not merely as digital artefacts but as catalysts for intercultural dialogue, empathy development, and the promotion of authentic diversity within education (Bowman et al., 2021).

The integration of AI in teacher training must be accompanied by constant critical reflection, methodological rigor, and cultural sensitivity. Only through these lenses technology can be transformed from a mere functional tool into a profound educational lever, capable of recognizing, valuing and celebrating the richness of human differences in the digital era.

2. A pilot study

The pilot study was conducted during the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year at the University of Foggia, as part of the "Educational Technology" laboratory within the Degree Course in Primary Education (LM-85 bis). The lab involved 186 out of 230 enrolled students, organized into 29 working groups. The objective was to explore the pedagogical potential of AI in developing inclusive and culturally aware digital representations of school classrooms. The activity was structured into a six-session format, each lasting six hours. Students were asked to create avatars of a hypothetical primary school class, composed of nine pupils and one teacher. This process involved the use of ChatGPT to generate prompts and LensGo AI to produce the visual avatars. Each group then included their work in an individual e-portfolio, which was not subject to formal examination but served as an integrative evaluation artifact. The analysis of the student-generated data was conducted using Voyant Tools, a software for textual analysis that enabled the researchers to examine 262 prompts across 29 classes. A secondary dataset focused specifically on prompts that included references to ethnic diversity or special educational needs, revealing patterns of representation and potential biases. This dual-layered analysis provided insight into both prevailing tendencies and areas needing pedagogical attention. The analysis of the prompts revealed, in relation to the teacher figure, a marked prevalence of female representations (28 out of 30) characterised by recurring physical traits such as brown and curly hair, spectacles and slender build, outlining a rather standardised educational imaginary. Similarly, in the description of the pupils, two prevalent types emerged: the blond girl with light eyes and the brown boy with dark eyes, indicating a limited variety in the representation of heterogeneity (di Padova & Basta, 2024). One aspect of particular interest concerns the representation of diversity: 83% of the groups included students with differentiated cultural backgrounds or with Special Educational Needs (SEN). However, these representations, while denoting a growing sensitivity

towards inclusion, were sometimes simplified or conveyed through stereotypes, confirming the need for critical tools for a more conscious and articulate design (Basta & di Padova, *in press*). The pilot study underscored the importance of integrating hands-on experimentation with AI tools and a structured, critical approach to their analysis. This dual strategy proved essential not only for uncovering implicit patterns and biases in the representations created by students, but also for fostering greater self-awareness and pedagogical responsibility. The use of the checklist developed for this study emerged as a key support tool—not only for assessing the outputs, but also for guiding reflective and inclusive thinking during the design process. It thus served both evaluative and formative purposes, helping future teachers develop a critical and culturally responsive mindset.

3. A Checklist for analysing prompts and avatar

The absence of consolidated tools for analysing the prompts and avatars generated has highlighted the urgency of introducing systematic evaluative devices capable of reducing interpretative subjectivity and promoting critical reflection on the representation of diversity. The design of a checklist is therefore an indispensable operation to support students' design self-awareness and guide the construction of authentically inclusive learning environments (Kaliisa et al., 2023).

The literature emphasises how metareflexive tools such as checklists and rubrics can not only observe emerging educational phenomena but also positively affect the quality of instructional design by fostering the formation of a critical consciousness in trainee teachers (Theophilou et al., 2023). If built on solid theoretical foundations, checklists become transformative devices, capable of directing educational practice towards overcoming implicit stereotypes and towards a fuller appreciation of cultural and identity pluralities (Ponterotto et al., 1995).

In response to these requirements, a checklist was drawn up divided into two areas of investigation. With regard to prompts, the analysis focuses on syntactic and semantic structure, lexical richness, the presence of cultural and symbolic elements and the inclusiveness of representations. The clarity of the subject, the articulated attribution of physical, emotional and social properties, the use of complements that enrich the narrative and the avoidance of stereotypical or medicalising formulae are emphasised.

As far as avatars are concerned, the checklist assesses the coherence between the prompt and the generated image, the effective representation of diversity (considering ethnicities, genders, physical characteristics and special educational

needs), emotional expressiveness, stylistic and aesthetic variety and the ability to avoid phenomena of excessive homologation or caricaturisation.

The construction of the checklist made use of the principles of valential grammar (Tesnière, 1959) for the linguistic analysis of prompts, the theories of cultural responsiveness (Eden et al., 2024) and the foundations of inclusive pedagogy (Cabero Almenara & Martínez Gimeno, 2019), taking shape as an operational tool to promote conscious, critical and culturally sensitive instructional design.

Checklist for Prompt Analysis	Checklist for Avatar Analysis
1. Explicit identification of the subject <i>The prompt clearly specifies who the subject (student/teacher) is, including details such as age, gender and role.</i>	1. Consistency with the prompt <i>The avatar faithfully reflects the characteristics described in the prompt, without significant discrepancies.</i>
2. Attribution of detailed physical properties <i>Specific physical characteristics (e.g. height, hair colour, distinguishing features) that make the subject visually recognisable are described.</i>	2. Accurate representation of physical characteristics <i>The avatar's physical features (e.g. skin colour, hairstyle, build) are detailed and realistic.</i>
3. Description of emotional and behavioural states <i>The prompt includes emotions, attitudes or behaviour that delineate the subject's personality.</i>	3. Expression of emotions and attitudes <i>The avatar displays facial expressions and postures that clearly communicate emotions or moods.</i>
4. Spatial and temporal contextualisation <i>The environment (e.g. classroom, park) and/or the time (e.g. morning, recreation) in which the subject is present is indicated.</i>	4. Environmental contextualisation <i>The avatar's setting is consistent with that described in the prompt, enriching the visual narrative.</i>
5. Use of modal complements <i>Modes of action or interaction are present (e.g. "speak enthusiastically", "walk slowly") that enrich the</i>	5. Aesthetic variety and originality <i>The avatar presents distinctive aesthetic elements, avoiding uniformity or excessive</i>

<i>description.</i>	<i>standardisation.</i>
6. Lexical richness and semantic variety <i>The language used is varied and precise, avoiding repetition and generic terms.</i>	6. Inclusion of cultural and symbolic elements <i>Details (e.g. clothing, accessories) that reflect the subject's culture, traditions or personal preferences are present.</i>
7. Inclusion of cultural and symbolic elements <i>The prompt incorporates references to cultural, symbolic or personal elements that characterise the subject.</i>	7. Respectful representation of diversity <i>The avatar includes features that represent cultural, linguistic, skill or gender diversity, without falling into stereotyping.</i>
8. Respectful representation of diversity <i>References to cultural, linguistic, skill or gender diversity are present, avoiding stereotypes or stigmatising descriptions.</i>	8. Significant customisation <i>The avatar displays customised elements that highlight the individuality of the subject, such as accessories or unique details.</i>
9. Coherence and internal cohesion <i>The description is logically coherent, without contradictions between the different information provided.</i>	9. Absence of caricature or stigmatising elements <i>The avatar avoids exaggerated or offensive representations that could ridicule or stigmatise the subject.</i>
10. Clarity and specificity of the prompt's objective <i>The prompt has a clear and specific objective, effectively guiding the generation of the desired avatar.</i>	10. Overall communicative impact <i>The avatar effectively conveys the personality, emotions and context of the subject, facilitating empathy and understanding.</i>

Table n. 1 Checklist for Prompt Analysis and Checklist for Avatar Analysis.

Taking the following two prompts and their avatars realised, analysis will be carried out using the designed checklists

Student Prompt

MATTEO: An 8-year-old boy with Down syndrome, with a round and flat face, almond-shaped eyes, a flat root of the nose, a voluminous tongue with a tendency

to protrude, disheveled light brown short hair, brown eyes, a small nose, small ears, smiling, thin lips, carrying a backpack on his shoulders, with school desks in the background.



Figure n. 1. Student Avatar.

Teacher Prompt

ILENIA: A woman around 35 years old, with long and curly brown hair, fair skin, brown eyes with round aqua green glasses, red lipstick, holding a red book in her hand, with a blackboard in the background.



Figure n. 2. Teacher Avatar.

The prompts and avatars were analysed using the designed checklists. Table n. 2 and n. 3 show the result of the analysis

Prompt Checklist	Matteo	Ilenia
Explicit identification of the subject	X	X
Attribution of detailed physical properties	X	X
Description of emotional and behavioural states	X	-
Spatial and temporal	X	X

contextualisation		
Use of modal complements	-	-
Lexical richness and semantic variety	X	X
Inclusion of cultural and symbolic elements	-	X
Respectful representation of diversity	X	-
Coherence and internal cohesion	X	X
Clarity and specificity of the objective	X	X

Table n. 2 Comparative analysis with the prompt checklist.

Avatar Checklist	Matteo	Ilenia
Consistency with the prompt	X	X
Accurate depiction of physical characteristics	X	X
Expression of emotions and attitudes	X	X
Environmental contextualisation	X	X
Aesthetic variety and originality	X	X
Inclusion of cultural and	-	X

symbolic elements		
Respectful depiction of diversity	X	-
Meaningful personalisation	-	X
Absence of caricature or stigmatising elements	X	X
Overall communicative impact	X	X

Table n. 3 Comparative analysis with the avatar checklist.

4. Discussion

The pilot study carried out at the University of Foggia offers a fertile ground for reflecting on the actual effectiveness of using analytical checklists in guiding future teachers toward a more conscious and inclusive use of Artificial Intelligence. The results obtained, through both qualitative observation and quantitative analysis with Voyant Tools, highlight a dual trend: on the one hand, the growing sensitivity of students towards the representation of diversity; on the other, the persistence of aesthetic and cultural standardizations that risk flattening the complexity of heterogeneity (Åberg, 2020). The checklist developed for the project proved to be a valuable device for making implicit biases explicit and fostering more rigorous observation of AI-generated products. Its application enabled the identification of recurrent shortcomings, such as the absence of modal complements in the prompts and a limited symbolic richness in the avatars, confirming that even when students attempted to include markers of diversity (e.g., references to BES or different ethnicities), these were often expressed through stereotypical or simplified descriptors (Markina, 2021). The structure of the checklist—dividing the analysis between prompts and avatars and detailing specific dimensions such as lexical richness, emotional attribution, cultural references, and aesthetic originality—allowed a more systematic mapping of critical areas. As Lindner et al. (2021) point out, the availability of structured, transparent tools enhances not only the quality of evaluative processes but also metacognitive growth in trainees.

Nevertheless, the frequent recurrence of normalized figures, particularly regarding the portrayal of teachers and pupils, suggests the need for even deeper preparatory work on critical literacy and cultural awareness before the use of technological instruments (Holmes et al., 2022). Furthermore, the lack of modal complements and nuanced emotional descriptions in many prompts reveals that the linguistic dimensions of diversity representation are often underestimated by students. This confirms the importance of grounding educational interventions not only on operational tools such as checklists but also on explicit linguistic and semiotic training (Cachat-Rosset & Klarsfeld, 2023). Overall, the checklist proved adequate for achieving its immediate goals: enhancing critical attention, facilitating the detection of implicit biases, and structuring the evaluation of both textual and visual productions. However, its effectiveness as a transformative tool depends on its integration within a broader pedagogical strategy that includes direct discussions on the ethics of AI, the semiotics of representation, and the social construction of diversity (Usher & Barak, 2024). This experience supports the idea that analytical tools such as checklists should not be seen as endpoints, but as catalysts within a reflective educational journey. Only by continuously embedding critical dialogue around diversity and technology into teacher education programs can we aspire to truly prepare future educators to create inclusive, culturally rich, and ethically aware learning environments (Roberts et al., 2021).

However, the research also presents some significant limitations that must be considered. First, the checklist is currently being tested exclusively on the sample of prompts and avatars created during this pilot phase. A more extensive *ex post* analysis is planned, aimed at validating its effectiveness across different contexts and samples. Second, the sample itself, although numerous, is composed of students who are still at the beginning of their professional and technological training path and who have limited experience in the conscious use of AI tools. This novice status may have influenced the quality and depth of the outputs generated. Third, it is important to emphasize that the scientific literature on methodologies for analysing AI-generated educational data is in rapid evolution. The analytical models available today are still being refined and expanded, and future contributions will likely enrich and transform the theoretical and operational frameworks applied (Tian et al., 2024). These limitations highlight the necessity of interpreting the results cautiously and encourage further research to test, adapt, and deepen the proposed analytical tools. Only through continuous dialogue between empirical evidence, theoretical development, and pedagogical practice will it be possible to consolidate effective and ethically aware methodologies for integrating Artificial Intelligence into inclusive teacher education.

Conclusions

The analysis of the tables relating to the prompts and avatars confirms how the use of checklists is a valuable tool to make the critical observation of AI-generated products systematic, transparent and replicable. The checklist proved useful in guiding attention towards specific dimensions, making evident both strengths and weaknesses in the construction of prompts and avatars. The possibility of having explicit criteria made it possible to recognise recurrent shortcomings such as the absence of modal complements in the textual description or the limited cultural and aesthetic variety in the visual representation (Liu & Chilton, 2022). At the same time, the checklist facilitated in-depth metacognitive reflection on the quality of representations, highlighting elements that might have gone unnoticed without a rigorous instrument, such as emotional flattening or standardisation of aesthetic models. From the point of view of effectiveness, the application of the checklist enabled a punctual comparative evaluation between different subjects and between different types of output (text and image), showing how the absence of certain fundamental criteria - such as symbolic variety or meaningful personalisation - can reduce the educational and inclusive impact of the AI-generated learning experience. The possibility of consistently measuring the levels of complexity, authenticity and diversity in students' productions represents an element of strong added value, confirming the checklist's role as a formative as well as evaluative device. The experience conducted shows how the integration of Artificial Intelligence in teacher training can represent a powerful pedagogical lever, provided it is accompanied by rigorous analytical tools and a constant exercise in critical reflection (Park et al., 2023). Without adequate theoretical and evaluative tools, in fact, the risk is to rely on superficial or standardised technological productions, incapable of intercepting the real complexity of human differences. In this scenario, the checklist proposal - based on linguistic, pedagogical and semiotic principles - intends to offer a replicable methodology, capable of fostering an authentic, articulate and culturally sensitive representation of heterogeneity. The adoption of clear criteria, anchored in consolidated theories, makes it possible to translate the creative act into a profound formative opportunity, in which artificial intelligence becomes a stimulus for refining awareness, empathy and critical sense. It remains crucial to promote training paths that educate future teachers to critically read the dynamics of digital representation. It is only through this lens of awareness that simplifying and reductionist drifts can be avoided, recognising and celebrating the richness of human differences in their symbolic and relational fullness. Artificial intelligence, guided by critical tools such as the

checklist, can thus be transformed from a simple application technology into a true laboratory of intercultural and inclusive education.

Author contributions

The paper was conceptualized and developed collaboratively by all authors, with each contributing to specific sections based on their expertise. M.d.P. was responsible for writing sections 3 and 4, A.B. authored section 1 and 2, D.D.M. authored section Introduction and Conclusion.

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