

New scoping review explores the role of ChatGPT in helping EFL learners write and evaluate their content

A new scoping review of 16 studies explores the role of ChatGPT in writing instruction in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- We are currently living in the AI era. AI is a technology which enables machines to perform tasks that require human intelligence. LLMs like ChatGPT have had significantly impacted on our daily lives. In this context, evaluating its influence can help improve the technology by addressing limitations encountered during real-world application.



Scoping review explores the role of ChatGPT in helping EFL learners

A new comprehensive scoping review analyzing 16 empirical studies published before December 2023 sheds light on the current landscape and future potential of ChatGPT in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instruction. The research, titled "Exploring the Landscape of Generative AI (ChatGPT)-Powered Writing Instruction in English as a Foreign Language Education: A Scoping Review," explores the dual role of ChatGPT as both a writing assistant and an assessment tool, highlighting benefits and prevalent challenges. The study was conducted by Feiwen Xiao from The Pennsylvania State University, Siyu Zhu from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Xin Wen from the University of Kansas. Their work was published in [ECNU Review of Education](#) on January 17, 2025.

"The study reveals that ChatGPT is widely acknowledged for its ability to provide real-time feedback, which can enhance writing quality and efficiency for EFL learners," explain Xiao et al. Students have utilized the AI tool for brainstorming, improving coherence, enhancing grammar, and increasing lexical diversity. Research indicates that learners often use ChatGPT iteratively, generating ideas and then critically evaluating and refining the AI's output, especially when

provided with specific and structured prompts.

The review also explores ChatGPT's application as a writing assessment tool, noting its potential to streamline feedback by offering real-time error detection and grammar checking. While effective at identifying superficial errors and outperforming human instructors in the sheer number of errors flagged in some instances, ChatGPT struggles with deeper structural, pragmatic, and contextual issues where human insight remains superior. Fine-tuning models with specific linguistic features, particularly lexical ones, has shown promise in enhancing assessment accuracy and consistency.

However, the review also underscores significant challenges. Concerns about over-reliance on the tool, potential negative impacts on language skill development and self-regulation, risks of plagiarism, misinformation, and ethical issues related to biased content are prevalent among both educators and students. Diminished authorship, where students feel disconnected from their AI-altered work, is another critical concern. Furthermore, the suitability of ChatGPT for lower-intermediate learners and the complexity of its feedback have been questioned.

Key findings from the review indicate:

1. A surge in research on ChatGPT in EFL writing in 2023, primarily focusing on higher education settings and utilizing mixed-methods or explanatory study designs.
2. Teachers and students generally recognize ChatGPT's potential benefits but also express caution regarding its educational implications. While teachers see value in AI for lesson planning and material generation, they are wary of its role in assessment. Students appreciate its support for vocabulary and grammar but acknowledge limitations in advanced writing skills.
3. ChatGPT offers benefits such as accessibility, personalized learning, instant feedback, and increased student engagement and motivation. It can also reduce teacher workload in assessment and material design.

The scoping review identifies critical gaps in the current literature, including the need for more interdisciplinary research, the adaptation of AI models to meet EFL learners' specific linguistic and cultural needs, and the integration of multimodal AI tools. It emphasizes the crucial importance of fostering critical thinking and information literacy skills for both educators and students to navigate AI-generated content effectively and ethically. The review also calls for professional development in prompt engineering for educators and students to maximize the benefits of tools like ChatGPT.

"This research provides a valuable roadmap for future studies and the practical implementation of AI in language education. It calls for a balanced approach that integrates human oversight with AI assistance, alongside collaborative efforts between educators and policymakers to ensure the ethical and effective use of these evolving technologies in EFL writing education," concludes Xiao.

Reference

Titles of original papers: Exploring the Landscape of Generative AI (ChatGPT)-Powered Writing Instruction in English as a Foreign Language Education: A Scoping Review

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