

THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN IMPROVING EFL STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS

Student of the Kimyo International Universitiy in Tashkent

Axmedova Nozila Rustamovna

Abstract. *This article examines the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in developing the writing skills of students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It analyses the use of AI for grammar correction, vocabulary development, text organisation, and written feedback, drawing on existing research and practical examples. The article also considers the pedagogical and ethical limitations of AI-assisted writing.*

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, English language teaching, EFL, writing skills, academic writing, ChatGPT, feedback, editing.*

Introduction. Developing writing skills is one of the most challenging aspects of learning English as a foreign language. When producing a written text, students must not only understand grammatical rules but also organise their ideas logically, select appropriate vocabulary, establish connections between sentences, and maintain a style suitable for the purpose and audience. These requirements become particularly demanding when students write academic essays, research articles, reports, and analytical texts. In traditional language teaching, instructors are expected to examine students' written work, identify errors, explain their causes, and provide recommendations for revision. However, providing detailed and individualised feedback can be difficult in classes with large numbers of students. As a result, some learners may repeat the same mistakes in subsequent assignments without fully understanding why they occur. The development of artificial intelligence has introduced new possibilities for addressing these difficulties. Generative language models such as ChatGPT, writing-assistance tools such as Grammarly, and automated writing evaluation systems can help identify

grammatical errors, suggest alternative expressions, improve vocabulary choices, and review text organisation. Nevertheless, the availability of these tools does not automatically lead to better writing. Their effectiveness depends on how students use them, how teachers integrate them into instruction, and whether the activities encourage genuine learning.

Writing cannot be reduced to the production of grammatically correct sentences. Writers must establish a purpose, plan their ideas, transform those ideas into text, reread their work, and make appropriate revisions. The complexity of these activities has long been recognised in language teaching and writing research.

L.Flower and J.Hayes describe writing as a cognitive process involving planning, translating ideas into written language, and reviewing the resulting text [1]. Their approach helps explain why writing should be understood as a process of developing and refining meaning rather than a task completed in a single attempt. From this perspective, AI is most useful when it supports particular stages of writing instead of replacing the writer. For example, a student preparing an essay on The Importance of Learning Foreign Languages may first develop an outline and identify the main arguments. An AI tool can then be used to generate questions for discussion or to check whether the outline follows a logical sequence. The student writes the first draft independently and subsequently asks the tool to explain grammatical errors, identify repeated expressions, or evaluate the connections between paragraphs. In this process, the student remains responsible for the ideas and final decisions.

Ferris emphasises the importance of error correction and feedback in second-language writing instruction [2]. Feedback should help learners improve their writing, while errors should be treated as a meaningful part of the learning process. AI can make feedback more readily available, but correcting an error and teaching a student to understand it are not the same thing. If learners simply copy corrected sentences without examining the reasons for the changes, they may continue making similar mistakes in later assignments.

K.Hyland and F.Hyland also draw attention to the content and delivery of

written feedback, as well as the relationship between the teacher and the learner [3]. Feedback should be understandable, relevant to the task, and encouraging of further improvement. AI-generated comments should meet similar criteria. Overly complicated explanations or revisions that exceed the learner's language proficiency may create confusion rather than support learning. These theoretical perspectives suggest that AI should be used as an assistant for planning, editing, and self-assessment rather than as a substitute for the student's own writing.

EFL students frequently experience difficulties with verb tenses, articles, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, word order, and complex sentence structures. AI tools can identify many of these errors, suggest corrections, and sometimes explain the relevant grammatical rules.

For example, a student may write:

"Many student thinks that online education are useful."

An AI-assisted correction could produce the following sentence:

"Many students think that online education is useful."

Simply receiving the corrected version, however, is not enough. The student should understand that many is followed by a plural countable noun, that students takes the verb form think, and that education is an uncountable noun used with is in this context. Teachers can therefore ask students to explain the reasons for each correction.

Repeated use of the same words can limit the clarity and variety of academic writing. AI tools can suggest synonyms, collocations, and alternative expressions. For instance, depending on the context, important may be replaced with essential, significant, or crucial. However, these words are not interchangeable in every situation. Students must consider their meanings, stylistic characteristics, and grammatical contexts.

Consider the following sentence:

"Reading is important for students because it gives them knowledge."

A more developed academic version might be:

"Reading plays an important role in students' academic development"

because it broadens their knowledge and exposes them to different perspectives.”

The second sentence expresses the idea in greater detail, but improvement does not simply involve replacing ordinary words with more sophisticated vocabulary. Students must also determine whether the additional information accurately reflects their intended meaning.

Academic writing requires a clear relationship between the introduction, supporting paragraphs, and conclusion. AI can help students examine whether each paragraph contains a central idea, whether examples support the main argument, and whether the conclusion introduces claims that have not been adequately discussed. For example, a student writing about the advantages of online education might organise the essay around time efficiency, access to learning materials, and independent learning. An AI tool can identify repeated points or suggest a more logical order for the paragraphs. However, selecting appropriate evidence and verifying its validity remain the student's responsibility.

Students need to develop the ability to evaluate their own writing critically. Analysing AI-generated feedback can help them recognise errors, consider alternative expressions, and understand why revisions may be necessary.

Instead of asking an AI tool to rewrite an entire essay, students can use a more focused instruction:

“Identify the grammatical errors in my paragraph. Explain why each error occurs, but do not rewrite the whole paragraph. Let me correct the sentences myself.”

This approach encourages learners to participate actively in the editing process. They examine the suggestions, propose their own corrections, and consult the teacher when further explanation is needed.

Research on AI in education has explored both its potential benefits and the limitations associated with the reliability of its output and its influence on independent thinking.

E.Kasneci et al. examine the opportunities and challenges of large language models in education, highlighting their potential to provide individualised

assistance, timely feedback, and adapted learning materials [4]. At the same time, the authors emphasise that these systems can generate inaccurate or biased information. Effective use therefore requires teacher guidance and critical evaluation. This observation is particularly important in writing instruction. Students should not automatically accept every correction suggested by an AI tool. A grammatically correct sentence may still be inappropriate for its context or may alter the writer's original meaning. Comparing the suggested revision with the original text is therefore essential.

Mahapatra's 2024 study, published in *Smart Learning Environments*, examines the use of ChatGPT as a formative feedback tool for improving ESL students' academic writing [5]. The study involved university students and used multiple assessment stages and focus-group discussions to examine the intervention. The author reported positive effects on students' academic writing. The findings suggest that ChatGPT-assisted feedback may help improve written work, particularly when students are taught how to use the tool as part of the writing process.

C.Lo et al. published a systematic review in 2024 examining empirical research on the application of ChatGPT in ESL/EFL education [6]. Their review considered language learning, writing tasks, feedback, and educational practices. Systematic reviews are valuable because they bring together findings from multiple studies and help identify broader patterns beyond the results of a single classroom or group of learners.

J.Meyer et al. discuss the opportunities and challenges of using large language models in academic work, including text generation and editing, factual inaccuracies, bias, and academic integrity [7]. Their analysis supports a balanced approach: rather than rejecting AI entirely or delegating all academic work to it, educators should establish responsible practices for its use.

A meta-analysis published in *System* in 2026 examined the effects of ChatGPT on EFL students' writing skills across empirical studies [8]. The authors reported an overall positive effect, while also considering variations associated

with educational level, intervention duration, the purpose of AI use, and research design. These findings suggest that AI assistance can be beneficial, but they do not establish that identical outcomes will occur in every educational setting.

Taken together, these studies indicate that the effectiveness of AI-assisted writing depends on more than the technical capabilities of the tools themselves. Task design, teacher guidance, students' involvement in revision, and the ability to evaluate suggestions critically are also important factors.

Conclusion. Artificial intelligence tools offer opportunities to improve EFL students' writing skills by identifying grammatical errors, refining vocabulary choices, examining text organisation, and supporting revision. Existing research suggests that purposeful use of these tools can improve aspects of written work and provide students with more opportunities to receive feedback. However, the results are not necessarily the same across all learners and educational settings.

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