Using AI Writing Tools in teaching law enforcement academic writing

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Abstract: *Although artificial intelligence (AI) technology has been proved by research to have positive impacts on students' writing skills, its influences on students' writing in the field of law enforcement have remained untouched. This paper investigates the benefits and shortcomings of using several AI writing tools in teaching ESP academic writing for non-English majors and gives recommendations for optimizing the use of these tools at the People's Security Academy.*

Incorporating evidence from students' writing samples and survey answers, this study demonstrates that AI writing assistants are beneficial in terms of grammar correction, idea organization, and context-specific language suggestions. However, these tools show their weaknesses in giving appropriate answers regarding law enforcement terminology and ensuring coherence throughout the whole writing. Additionally, it is revealed that the surveyed students were able to utilize only a part of AI's features in their writing practice. This study proposes that integrating AI writing tools in academic writing instruction might transform the way writing skills are developed. Nonetheless, it remains crucial for teachers to find a balance between employing these resources and keeping teachers' instructional role to sharpen students' writing skills.

Keywords: *AI writing tools, law enforcement, academic writing, ESP*

1. INTRODUCTION

The education sector is witnessing a surge in the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI), with the promise of personalized learning paths and engaging experiences. This wave of innovation is reaching the world of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) as well. Unlike general English learning, ESP caters to individuals with specific professional goals, requiring a deep understanding of industry jargon, communication styles, and cultural nuances. This nuanced field might present unique challenges for AI. While AI offers exciting possibilities for personalized practice and adaptive learning, concerns remain about its ability to replicate the effectiveness of human instructors with specialized knowledge, emotional intelligence, and the ability to adapt to real-world scenarios that require nuanced communication. Therefore, it is crucial to understand both the benefits and limitations of AI in ESP teaching, especially in academic writing to achieve the expected learning objectives.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE TERMS

2.1. ESP writing

According to Paltridge and Starfield (2013), ESP conceptions of writing aim at assisting students toward competence in particular target genres. For ESP courses, writing should be recognized as the vital procedure through which students comprehend not just the subject matter they come across in their studies, but also how they can personalize it to hold significance for themselves. Based on the demands of the modern workplace and university, ESP recognizes the specificity of writing done in different domains and in the instruction that leads to competence in such domains (Belcher, 2009). Successful writing does not occur in a vacuum but depends on an understanding of a professional context (Hyland & Rodrigo, 2007) so that texts produced in legal, medical, technical, and business fields differ enormously from each other. In the realm of law enforcement, teaching ESP writing is tailored to equip students with the essential skills needed for effective communication within the field.

2.2. ESP academic writing in the field of law enforcement

Given the demand of training police officers capable of performing professional tasks, teaching ESP writing in the People Security aim to equip the students with the relevant language while an understanding of academic writing style is developed as well. Within the context of teaching ESP writing in scientific and technological fields, including criminology, a significant emphasis is placed on cultivating activity-based skills. As Hyland (2010)

suggests, this entails honing abilities such as accurately describing procedures, defining complex objects, and strategizing solutions.

The curriculum prioritizes clear, concise, and professional writing, aligning with law enforcement demands. Structured tasks familiarize students with formal police communication, report writing, and documentation procedures. This fosters not only language skills but also logical organization, coherence, and paragraph unity. Through guided practice, students learn to craft effective narratives for clear and professional communication in diverse operational settings. Mastering ESP writing empowers students to navigate the complexities of police work.

2.3. Teaching ESP academic writing with the use of AI writing tools

AI writing tools can significantly enhance ESP writing instruction in law enforcement. They provide learners with targeted writing prompts that mirror real-world scenarios, analyze written work for language clarity and tone, and offer guidance on formatting documents according to professional law enforcement standards. This comprehensive approach fosters not only practical writing skills but also critical thinking about audience perception and adherence to industry style guides.

3. ACTIVITIES

Eighty-five intermediate Vietnamese EFL learners with no experience in using AI writing tools to edit their ESL writing were recruited from five English classes. Two instruments were used to collect data, namely writing samples from students and a questionnaire. Over 77 class periods, students completed writing tasks with and without AI support (Grammarly, Google Translate, QuillBot, ChatGPT), followed by instructor evaluation using a scoring rubric to analyze potential significant differences between the two versions. Additionally, a post-course questionnaire was used to investigate students' perspectives on those AI writing assistants for better implementation.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. From writing samples

With the students' original writings and their AI-assisted writing versions required for each writing topic, the process of comparison and contrast demonstrate the positive impact of AI writing tools on their writing skills, including vocabulary suggestions and word choice. However, some terminologies may not be appropriately suggested.

Regarding vocabulary suggestion, AI tools demonstrated a remarkable ability to suggest appropriate vocabulary within context in most cases. These tools can effectively identify ambiguous phrasings and recommend more precise synonyms or expressions, enhancing the overall clarity of the writing. For example, using "*polite clothers*" instead of "*tidy attire*" for patrol uniforms highlights AI's ability to capture nuanced descriptions. Furthermore, AI's influence extends to identifying and rectifying student misconceptions regarding vocabulary usage. For instance, a student expressing the need for police officers to thoroughly comprehend their duties might employ the verb "*master*" while AI could propose a more nuanced expression which is "*familiarize yourself with,*" to better reflect the ongoing process of acquiring knowledge and skills necessary for patrol work.

In the writing assignment on "*Issues in mass mobilization work*" when students had to describe a problem of government agencies which is "*failing to grasp the legitimate thoughts, aspirations, or needs of the people*", they resorted to the expression '*far from the people.*' However, this expression can be misleading as it implies a physical distance rather than a lack of understanding. AI, in this case, proposes an alternative "*disconnected from the people*", considering the specialized aspect, mass mobilization tasks are deemed crucial for police forces, in which they need to ensure close relations with the people.

However, certain terminologies of the public security forces' tasks appear to be a challenge for AI writing tools. For example, concerning the concept of "*gesture code,*" which has the meaning of "typically used in a specific community, making it challenging for outsiders to understand without knowledge of the code" (Cambridge, 2020), when students fail to use this term and use "*signal hiding*" instead, AI can only suggest "*code signal*" as an alternative. This suggestion does not fully reflect the operational aspect of secret communication activities using codes within specialized units.

In another writing topic about mass mobilization, the term referring to the specialized unit responsible for mass mobilization work should be described as "*mass mobilization functional unit.*" When the students encounter difficulty using a term and use the phrase "*specialized service delivery team*" for the concept, AI does not consider this a problematic expression needing modification. In fact, the student's awkward expression of "*delivery team*" has nothing to do with the theme "*mass mobilization*".

Besides law enforcement terminology, maintaining coherence across a piece of writing can pose another challenge to AI. Let's take this text as an example:

The clarity of the final sentence is compromised due to its resemblance to a Vietnamese-English translation which hinders understanding of the agent of responsibility. To eliminate this ambiguity, an alternative is proposed: "*In some specific cases, security personnel must have a proactive plan and anticipate situations in advance to engage with suspects*.". Additionally, it seems that both students and AI tools failed to understand the linking in "…*detecting individuals, suspicious activities to continue monitoring*." by the placement of the word "*suspicious*". Instead, the word should be put before "*individuals*" as it modifies both "*individuals*" and "*activities*".

The bold parts in the first two sentences in this paragraph convey the same message, which is seen as uneconomical in terms of writing, therefore, incoherent. This redundancy can be rectified by combining the sentences to emphasize the core issue: "*One pressing issue is the lack of access to quality education and healthcare services due to language barriers, cultural differences, and inadequate infrastructure in destination areas*."

4.2. From the survey's results

An analysis of student familiarity with four introduced writing tools revealed that ChatGPT led in usage (85%), followed by Google Translate (73.8%) and Grammarly (40%). However, QuillBot, a popular paraphrasing tool, was least used (16.3%). Interestingly, when being asked which funtions of AI writing they mainly use for, the most common answer is paraphrasing (59.3%). This suggests that either QuillBot is not well-suited to the students' paraphrasing needs or awareness of its capabilities may be limited within this population.

Notably, a significant disparity emerges from the survey data as it reveals most participants (55.6%) employed AI tools for basic mechanics (grammar, spelling, vocabulary), only 18.5% employed them for improving coherence which is crucial for academic writing.This finding suggests an opportunity for further exploration into how AI tools can be developed and utilized to specifically address the challenge of achieving coherence in academic writing.

Results on concerns regarding AI writing tools revealed that users prioritize factual accuracy (75.3% worried about fact-checking), followed by fears of overreliance (71.8%) and nonsensical content due to lack of context understanding (54.1%). These anxieties highlight a desire for tools that understand the nuances of language and can tailor the writing accordingly.

Students' desire for improvements in AI writing tools reveals a strong focus on factual accuracy, contextual understanding, and overall coherence. This suggests they want AI to be a reliable information source, capable of tailoring its writing to specific situations and avoiding irrelevant tangents. Beyond these core needs, users desire improved grammar, larger vocabularies, and offline functionality, with some seeking free access. Overall, these findings indicate that for AI writing tools to gain wider acceptance, developers need to prioritize advancements in factual accuracy and contextual understanding.

5. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Within the constraints of this article, many other findings regarding the shortcomings of AI-assisted writing tools have not been addressed. However, with some examples provided, it can be seen that using AI as a tool to support learners in ESP writing skills and academic orientation still has many limitations. For general writing skills, common topics with large data volumes written in English could be an ideal reference for AI tools. These existing limitations serve as important indicators for teachers when considering enhancing the role of AI in ESP writing classes. To effectively leverage these advanced tools, teachers need to plan the implementation of specific writing guidelines, particularly the proportion of using AI writing tools in the self-assessment step after writing practice. Immediately following this step, instructors need to take on a supportive role and guide learners in evaluating the effectiveness of both the writing and AI's involvement. Through this process, learners can better understand the strengths and limitations of these tools to actively reference them in self-directed writing practice.

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