

Adapting written assignments for EFL classrooms with ChatGPT at universities

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Abstract: In the era of Generative AI with thousands being introduced each year, ChatGPT adoption has become mainstream. Making use of this tool for learning, particularly as a writing assistant in EFL classes is of significant importance. The paper attempts to elaborate on how written assignments in EFL classes can be adapted to the ChatGPT use among students and how they are instructed to maximise their learning with this tool. The library-based approach was adopted to gather evidence for the relevant discussions and evaluations for each method introduced.

Keywords: Written assignments, EFL classrooms, EFL students, EFL teachers, educators, ChatGPT, use, assessment, universities, higher education

1. Introduction

Since its inception in November 2022, ChatGPT, a language model created by Open AI, has been changing the educational landscape across the globe. With a very large database of texts gathered from the Internet, ChatGPT can generate different text genres of different lengths and even computer codes within seconds upon users' prompt. Their magical power has delivered a big blow to academia circles and raised more issues for academic integrity in higher education institutions where essays are a dominant form of assessment.

Responses to Generative AI use for study has shifted from rejection to adaptation (altering assessments basing on the limitations of AI) and integration (developing students' AI literacy skills to foster their learning) (Maloney, 2023). In the age of Generative AI, it is important for teachers to instruct students to use ChatGPT properly and create learning opportunities for them, especially in EFL classrooms where the AI-driven chatbot serves as a powerful writing assistant and few relevant studies have been conducted. Thus, the paper aims to discuss how written assignments in the EFL context can be adjusted to optimize students' learning experience regarding their use of ChatGPT as an assistant.

2. Reasons for the acceptance of EFL students' ChatGPT use in written assignments

The term "English written assignments" in this article is used to refer to the open-ended ones

done by group or individual that can have different lengths and belong to summative assessment (midterm or final projects), not exclusive to English writing classes.

Various factors can be held accountable for rendering the idea of Generative AI rejection less tempting. First and foremost, Microsoft is planning to infuse ChatGPT into its Office tools including Word, Excel and the like (Metz & Weise, 2023, as cited in Rudolph et al., p.353, 2023), which means it is impossible to impose a blanket ban on students' access to this language model. Aside from this fact, technology is ever-changing at a breakneck speed, and Generative AI's limitations have been gradually lifted. The improvements in this field will be non-stop, making it harder to educators to reduce students' cheating with AI.

To deal with such issues, some institutions may attempt to return to close-ended exams. Sadly enough, this solution tends to place more pressure on students (Trust, 2023) and may go derailed from meeting the demand of the workplace (Rudolph et al., p.354, 2023). For example, in light of AI mainstream adoption, a future employer may expect potential candidates to possess AI literacy skills (Watkins, 2022). Thus, barring students from using Generative AI and leaving them ignorant of the limitations of such an AI tool may adversely do students more harm than good. Especially, when teachers always centre on detecting plagiarism with AI, the meaning of the teaching job may be lost,

jeopardising the teacher-student rapport (Watkins, 2023).

Meanwhile, ChatGPT, the current most robust AI language model, can create human-like texts at different vocabulary levels and varying writing styles, serving a rich authentic source of English language use for EFL learners. It can also provide instant feedback and revised versions on an English writing paper on a range of aspects upon requests. Apart from that, providing ideas, theories, methodologies, summaries of research, book/article recommendations is ChatGPT's forte (Peachey, p.10, 2023; Rudolph et al., p.355, 2023). Therefore, EFL students can save much time in doing challenging research projects and learn from faulty versions if they do not simply copy and paste. Accordingly, EFL teachers can prove their values as human assistants by helping students to take advantages of the tool's strengths as well as improve the limitations of Generative AI responses.

3. Ways to adapt written assignments in EFL classes

3.1. How to integrate the use of ChatGPT into the assignment and guide students along the way

Kleiman (2023) develops the comprehensive SPACE framework on the guidance of students with the use of AI tools in writing. SPACE refers to “*set directions, prompt the AI, assess the AI responses, curate and edit the AI-generated texts*”. Basing on this framework, the following steps of completing an English written assignment with the help of ChatGPT are explored herein.

a. *Setting directions*

First, ask the institution for permission of the integration of ChatGPT in the course. Next comes with the syllabus. It is recommended to include ChatGPT use in course learning outcomes (CLOs) which enables EFL students to learn about the role of ChatGPT in their learning as well as expectations for them. To align with CLOs, the syllabus needs to state clearly how ChatGPT is used for writing English assignments.

Concerning this respect, the Sentient Syllabus Project (Steipe, 2023, as cited in Trust, 2023) and Syllabi Policies for Generative AI Tools (Eaton, 2023, as cited in Trust, 2023) are typical references. Such information should be discussed in class to clear misunderstanding and ambiguity. A further

suggestion that could grant more learner agency is diversifying assignment options. One creative example is asking students to produce a multimodal product such as building a website (Trust, 2023) or letting them choose whether to use ChatGPT or not (Watkins, 2022).

b. *Prompting the AI*

Instruct students to use effective prompts for ChatGPT. As a matter of fact, the AI model's answers are different in terms of quality (Rudolph et al., p.349, 2023) and studies have shown that a well-crafted prompt can yield better output (UNESCO, 2023). Let's consider the following innovative prompt suggested by Peachey (2023).

Let's discuss a topic or concept that I want to know more about.

You'll ask me questions to help me explore it further.

We'll work together to build a deeper understanding of the topic.

You'll provide feedback to help me identify any misconceptions or gaps in my understanding in the style of the Socratic technique.

We'll approach this with an open mind, and we'll be curious and inquisitive as we explore the topic.

I want you to ask specific questions that will push my understanding of the topic.

Only ask one question per turn. Let's begin with the topic of {enter topic}

Prompting ChatGPT in this way is switching the role of ChatGPT as it will act as a prompter and “the Socratic Teacher”. Such a kind of prompt may be really useful to those getting stuck with finding a feasible topic for a research project. Further, students would become active users, then.

c. *Ving the AI responses sủa thành c. Assessing the AI responses*

The University of British Columbia (n.d.) outlines an overarching framework of 8 dimensions for evaluating AI output. The first thing to do is to deal with how (1) *accurate* the text is. One of the drawbacks ChatGPT has is its responses are not for facts. Thus, users need to verify whether the information provided is true or not. Secondly, one should check if the response is (2) *pertaining* to the prompt. The text should be (3) *coherently organised* together with (4) *comprehensive* ideas that include key areas of the topic. The fact is that sometime

ChatGPT offer shallow ideas if the prompt is not detailed as earlier mentioned. The next aspect to look at is whether the answer addresses the specific (5) *context* given in the prompt. Equally important, does the AI offer any (6) *new and authentic* ideas? Alternatively, the ideas presented should not be subject to (7) *bias*. The final task is to verify any (8) *sources and citations* provided as AI may create fictions here.

Such a framework can foster students' critical thinking and reasoning skills at the same time. To language learners, one step further is to identify differences between the original version of writing and the revised one and give reflective thoughts on what they learn from the linguistic support.

d. Ving the AI responses đổi thành d. Curating and editing the AI responses

At this stage, students have to organise the AI responses and record them for later use. Basing on the assessment in the previous step, they improve the final version with the "Track Changes" function of Microsoft Word, for example, as a way to record altered texts.

3.2. How to assess the final assignments

There are two main approaches to the assessment of English written assignments with the aid of ChatGPT. One way is to use a rubric that includes the assessment of performance in addition to academic integrity. This means credit is also given to the reflections on barriers confronted and lessons learned, the improvements as well as documentation of prompts, AI responses, ways of using AI responses and time in use. Such resources can show that students do have a learning experience. Another alternative method is not grading the assignment. The belief is that grades do not tell students about what area they are good at and vice versa. The focus is to ask students to give reflections on their own learning and give detailed feedback for their improvements.

4. Conclusion

Taking all into consideration, challenges that ChatGPT pose to EFL educators can be turned into opportunities through instructing EFL students to use ChatGPT ethically as a valuable tool for learning. The aforementioned ideas are simply pedagogically based and there is a need for an empirical research to validate them. What also matter are missing snapshots of ChatGPT responses to different prompting strategies as well as concrete

examples of AI responses assessed. Accordingly, some areas of further studies could be examining a specific EFL context in which ChatGPT can be used for assignments or investigating the difficulties EFL students face in dealing with the assessment of the AI responses. Like it or not, the AI tool is here to play. Embracing it and exploiting it to the full will be a sound decision to make, after all.

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