[How IELTS Teachers Integrate ChatGPT in Developing Students’ Writing Skills: Potential and Limitations](https://tesol.huflit.edu.vn/event/1/abstracts/103/)

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**Abstract**

The role of ChatGPT in foreign language learning has been growing rapidly, particularly in providing feedback and correction to language learners. Its impact is especially evident in the teaching profession, as more and more IELTS teachers consider this tool as an approachable partner in reducing heavy workloads and delivering consistent writing feedback to students. This study aimed to collect data on IELTS teachers, who were pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at Open University, Ho Chi Minh City. The study investigated how teachers apply ChatGPT and AI-generated feedback in improving student’s writing abilities, such as paraphrasing or correcting, and their beliefs toward AI-generated feedback compared to their own. The study employed a qualitative approach, interviewing 10 different ESL teachers to gain a deeper insight into how they leverage ChatGPT in giving feedback for writing tasks. Findings revealed that most teachers perceive ChatGPT as an effective tool in speeding up their feedback processes, maintaining standardized responses based on the given criteria, which are free from fatigue or mood bias, and helping them figure out grammatical errors; nevertheless, the study still presents certain limitations, since some participants reported that the tool was unable to generate personalized feedback which is specific to some target learners. Additionally, its The study hopes to contribute valuable insights into the world of AI Integration in TESOL, providing a deeper understanding of how teachers adapt to technological advancements, and how they apply AI in TESOL to support other pedagogical practices in the future.

*Keywords:* chatgpt, AI-generated feedback, writing feedback

Introduction

In recent years, the role of ChatGPT in language teaching has attracted growing interest among researchers. Recognized by many language educators as an effective assistant, ChatGPT has been considered as a way to ease the burden of administrative tasks beside classrooms. On top of that, its potential in providing constant feedback, especially in evaluating students’ writing skills has also been increasingly noticed. In the context of foreign language education, Polakova. P & Ivenz. P (2024) carried out a quasi-experimental study with 110 university students, from 19 to 23 years old, learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to investigate the influence of ChatGPT feedback in enhancing the writing skills of Gen Z students. In addition, Jacob Steiss et al. (2024) also compared the quality of formative feedback generated by ChatGPT and human instructors on argumentative essays written by secondary students (Grades 6–12) from 26 classrooms across two school districts in Southern California. In a different context, Kai Zhang (2025) implemented a randomized controlled study among 259 undergraduate students at a university in China to evaluate the effects of artificial intelligence-generated content (AIGC) systems on enhancement in students’ academic writing performance.

However, to date, inadequate research attention has been paid in recognizing its roles in providing feedback, and whether its function proves to be effective or presents certain downsides, despite the constant provision ChatGPT offers. In light of these tendencies, by introducing qualitative methods, the aim of this study is to discover both the benefits and limitations of AI-generated feedback. Additionally, the focus of the research is to gain deeper insights into aspects of students’ writing skills that teachers rely on ChatGPT to help correct or provide feedback on. By gaining clearer understandings into how ChatGPT provides writing feedback, teachers can leverage this tool to assist with post-teaching tasks. At the same time, perceiving its current limitations also allows educators to use it in a more critical and effective manner, ultimately working toward creating more accurate and pedagogically sound feedback for students.

2. Literature Review

**2. 1. Definition and importance of feedback in the learning process**

**2.1.1. Definition of feedback in the learning process**

Feedback plays a vital role in the learning process since it helps close the gap between learners’ current performance and their desired goals. Ramaprasad (1983) defines feedback as “information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way” (p.4), emphasizing its corrective function. In professional education contexts, field instructors provide feedback about the expected skills or behaviors students should demonstrate to bridge their performance gaps, which are defined as discrepancies between desired outcomes and actual observed behaviors. (Goodyear, 2014; Eppich & Cheng, 2015). Additionally, Hattie and Timperley (2007) further conceptualize feedback as “information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (p.81). Overall, these definitions capture the variety of feedback as being corrective, developmental, and even motivational within various educational contexts. Among the perspectives outlined, Ramaprasad’s (1983) conceptualization is aligned with this study because it concentrates on the central function of feedback, which is the recognition and responsive action to the gap between the existing and target levels of performance. This viewpoint is quite consistent with the teaching strategies utilized in formative evaluation and in skill enhancement, which makes it a useful theoretical foundation for exploring the role of feedback in learning, particularly in writing.

**2.1.2. The importance of feedback in the learning process**

Ferguson (2011) further highlights that feedback not only promotes students’ awareness but also nurtures their independence and self-regulation, leading to long-term improvement.  Furthermore, Perrenoud (1998) claims feedback as a powerful message which helps to develop the learning process “because students take it into account, because it affects their cognition” (p. 86). In other words, effective feedback not only deals with linguistic inaccuracies but also boosts cognitive engagement, which can encourage learners to reflect and adjust.

2.2. The roles of AI-assisted feedback for struggling writers

With the emergence and development of artificial intelligence (AI), the potential of AI-assisted feedback to support struggling writers has gained increasing academic attention. Automated writing evaluation (AWE) systems may provide instant feedback on students’ writing, which is the main advantage of machine feedback in comparison with teacher and peer feedback (Shermis & Burstein, 2013). Empirical studies reveal that integrating AWE with teacher feedback allows teachers to be more selective about the feedback they give, which in turn improves students’ writing motivation, perseverance, and quality. (Grimes & Warschauer, 2010; Link et al., 2022; Wilson & Czik, 2016). According to Trust et al. (2023), students can get help from AI-powered tools like ChatGPT with topic selection, brainstorming, outlining, drafting, getting feedback, editing, and proofreading. Despite growing concerns that AI reduces students’ engagement in the writing process, several researchers have also highlighted its possible advantages. To be more specific, ChatGPT could “support bottom-up writing skills, thus leaving more time, space, and energy to be devoted to the higher pursuits of composition” (Daniel et al., 2023, p. 37) or Kleiman (2022) demonstrates this tool as a writing coach or source of inspiration.

2.3. The roles of AI-assisted feedback on improving students’ writing skills

Providing feedback to students in educational settings has attracted significant attention from researchers over the years. According to Ivenz and Polakova (2024), among 4 language skills, writing skills show the most significant development when assisted by technology. With the unstoppable advancement of artificial intelligence, especially ChatGPT, feedback processes in the higher education system have been significantly impacted (Guo & Wang, 2023; Munshi & Deneen, 2018). A quasi-experimental study conducted by Liu et al. (2021) showed considerable improvements in EFL students’ writing abilities when educators adopt an AI-supported learning approach, compared to traditional assessment. Similarly, Yan (2023) also reported that teachers witnessed improvements in students’ writing performance as a result of using AI-generated tools.

By submitting their written texts to ChatGPT, students can receive instant feedback, suggestions for improvement, clarification, enhancement of any ambiguous expressions, and rephrasings (Nafea et al., 2024). Moreover, Su, Lin, and Lai (2023) analyzed the application of ChatGPT in giving feedback for argumentative essays.  Their research highlighted that although the feedback process became much more convenient, the quality of the feedback is still highly dependent on prompts given by educators. While AI-assisted feedback offers numerous benefits to both teachers and learners, Rudolph, Tan, and Tan (2023) suggest that future courses should be strictly designed with an aim of preventing cheating or plagiarism interfered by AI. Therefore, they proposed that traditional assessment methods must introduce significant changes to adapt to this on-going technological development.

2.4. Research gap

Although the use of AI-assisted feedback has recently attracted attention in both education and language teaching due to the rise of artificial intelligence, existing papers on its application in the context of IELTS writing feedback remain insufficient. In addition, while current literatures mainly employ quantitative approaches, which offer numerical data, few studies have adopted qualitative methods to understand how IELTS teachers react towards the use of ChatGPT in giving writing comments and to figure out its beneficial uses and drawbacks for future improvements. Addressing these gaps, the present study investigates the perceptions of postgraduate students, who are IELTS teachers working at Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam regarding the use of AI-generated feedback. The study aims to provide clearer insights into the perception of IELTS teachers nowadays of using ChatGPT to enhance their students’ writing skills. With the help of qualitative approaches, their personal experiences and reflective opinions will be gathered to understand how they leverage ChatGPT as an effective tool in streamlining their post-teaching tasks and reducing the overall workload.

2.5. Research Questions

To better understand the role of ChatGPT in generating IELTS writing feedback, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What aspects of students' essays do teachers commonly use ChatGPT to correct or assist with?

2. What are the benefits and limitations of ChatGPT in providing IELTS writing feedback?

3. Methods

3.1. Research settings

The study was conducted at Ho Chi Minh City Open University (HCMCOU), a public institution established in 1990. HCMCOU offers a diverse range of undergraduate and postgraduate programs across 13 faculties. This research was specifically carried out within the Postgraduate Programs, focusing on the Master of Education in TESOL in collaboration with Edith Cowan University (Australia). The program aims at promoting teaching professionals which is quite practice-oriented. Despite its growing academic reputation, the university still faces some infrastructural challenges, including limited campus space and shared learning facilities.

3.2. Participants

The participants in the study are postgraduate students enrolled in the Master of Education (TESOL) program at Open University, Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. A total of 100 students were accepted to be involved in the first enrollment in 2025. They come from diverse teaching backgrounds, including professionals of different International examinations like IELTS, TOEIC, or APTIS, and those with formal English instruction within the national education system from Grade 1 to Grade 12. All participants are majored in English and are currently pursuing their career development in the field of English language teaching.

Students of the program are required to participate in two phases:

**Phase 1**: Conducted and taught domestically, learners are obliged to complete the *Graduate Diploma of TESOL*, which includes 7 advanced subjects.

**Phase 2**: Conducted and instructed by lecturers from Edith Cowan University, Australia, participants head to the *Master of Education (TESOL)*, including 6 additional specialized subjects.

In addition to the goal of obtaining a Master’s degree in English language teaching, learners also hope to equip themselves with up-to-date methodologies and pedagogical skills that meet the demands of the current English language education.

3.3. Research Design

This study adopted a **qualitative research design** with **structured interviews** to gather data. This type of interview includes a list of questions created to elicit specific response from participants (Fraenkel et al. 2006). The questions involved in the interviews were ensured to be fixed with similar time frame, context, and order (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2012).

In addition, Moser and Korstjens (2017) noted that qualitative research is specifically valuable for attaining deeper insights into real-world issues, without the need to gather and analyze complicated numerical data. Similarly, Cleland (2017) stated that qualitative methods are an effective way in investigating intangible factors, including social norms and cultural identities, things that may not be immediately visible and transparent in the research process.

To gather the data, ten participants were invited to participate in the interviews, which were conducted face-to-face at the main campus of the Open University. The interviews consisted of a list of seven questions, focusing on identifying teachers’ habits in using ChatGPT to generate writing feedback, the perceived benefits, and the existing limitations of using the tool in their pedagogical practice.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

The researchers spent the first two weeks of June 2025 (from June 1st to June 7th) reviewing relevant and previous papers to strengthen prior knowledge and build the foundation for the literature review. Because of time constraints, qualitative data were collected via semi-structured interviews. A total of ten students from the TESOL program, who are currently pursuing the IELTS teaching career, were invited to participate in the interviews. The setting of an interview was approved by researchers and participants, ten participants were conducted in a direct interview at the Open University, during the break time of two subjects. Before confirming to take part in, they are informed of the research and academic purposes, also including the guarantee of anonymity. Upon agreeing to participate, each individual engaged in a 10-minute interview with one of the researchers. A list of open-ended questions was asked in order, which meant participants answered freely based on their teaching experience, thoughts, and expertise rather than choosing suggested answers. During the interviews, researchers clarify and give out constant explanations that they had to ease their worries and confusion. All interviews were audio-recorded, which had been approved by participants, to allow for more accurate data recording and analysis.

Once the data were collected, the researchers familiarized themselves with the responses by reading the interview transcripts several times to understand the content, common patterns, and existing ideas. The researchers analyzed the data by adopting the six-phase framework of thematic analysis proposed by Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). These phases include 6 separate steps: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) looking for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the report. This systematic approach played a pivotal role in helping the researchers identify and organize meaningful patterns and tendencies in participants’ responses.

For example, key themes of AI-generated feedback can be generated as follows:

Theme 1: Time efficiency

Theme 2: Accuracy and Error Detection

Theme 3: Detailed and Helpful Feedback

Theme 4: Ideas and Structure Support



Adapted from Adapted from Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006).

4. Results

4.1 Aspects of students’ essays that teachers commonly use ChatGPT to assist with

**Theme 1: Grammar**

Many participants claimed that ChatGPT is a valuable tool for identifying and correcting grammatical mistakes. It is particularly useful in pointing out common errors that students frequently make such as tense usage, subject-verb agreement. As reflected in their responses belobelow:

“I usually use ChatGPT to detect and correct grammatical mistakes in students’ essays.”
“ChatGPT helps me check for errors in tense, subject and verb quickly and accurately”
“I mainly use ChatGPT to double-check the grammar in students’ writing after my first check.”

**Theme 2: Vocabulary and Word Choice**

Beyond grammar correction, participants frequently turn to ChatGPT to address issues related to vocabulary usage and word choice in students’ writing. They noted that ChatGPT is helpful in detecting inappropriate word combinations, improving lexical accuracy, and refining word selection to better suit the context.
“I also use ChatGPT to correct vocabulary mistakes in students’ essays.”
“Students’ vocabulary is not advanced yet, word choice is not appropriate so I often use ChatGPT to correct and improve them”

**Theme 3: Sentence Structure and Idea Development**

Participants emphasized how ChatGPT serves as a tool to enhance both the variety of structures and the logical flow of students’ writing. It was commonly used not only to restructure sentences for clarity and fluency, but also to enrich content and support idea organization.
“I use ChatGPT to improve sentences and give them more useful structures because students often don't have a variety of structures”

“I use ChatGPT to provide or suggest ideas to improve content and coherence in students’ writing.”

**Theme 4: Scoring and Feedback Based on Criteria**

Several participants noted that they use ChatGPT to assist in evaluating students’ writing based on standardized criteria in IELTS. This approach helps them generate reference scores and provide more structured, criterion-based feedback.

“Using ChatGPT to score based on criteria in IELTS is a good way to help me reference students’ abilities.”

“I often provide a set of IELTS criteria and let ChatGPT mark my students’ essay based on this standard.”

4.2. Benefits of ChatGPT in generating IELTS writing feedback
Theme 1: Time Efficiency.

Participants noted certain improvements in saving teachers’ time. Besides time in classes, teachers often dedicate considerable hours to marking and grading students’ essays. With ChatGPT’s instant responses, teachers no longer need to spend a long time at home to check their assignments, thereby reducing their overall workload.

“I think that ChatGPT gives the opportunity to save time for teachers so they can have time to do other important things.”

“Using ChatGPT to give writing feedback is so convenient and time-saving.”

“There are many benefits of using ChatGPT. First of all, it helps me save a lot of time.”

**Theme 2: Accuracy and Error Detection**

Another noticeable function is that some participants pointed out the role of ChatGPT in detecting grammatical or lexical errors. One participant also argued that this function of ChatGPT is far more effective than human teachers.

“ChatGPT can provide quick and personal corrections on grammar, vocabulary, structures.”

“It can increase the accuracy of students’ writing essays because teachers may miss some errors while grading a wide range of essays.”

“ChatGPT can detect grammar errors faster and more accurately than human teachers.”

**Theme 3: Detailed and Helpful Feedback**

Besides pointing out certain mistakes in essays, ChatGPT is also believed to provide some useful advice, which helps learners to change and improve essays’ quality in a positive manner.

“ChatGPT offers detailed feedback and model texts after I ask it to grade the essays.”

“It gives clear and diverse versions for feedback, which is helpful to develop writing skills for students.”

“ChatGPT not only provides helpful feedback but it also gives some useful recommendations to improve the essays.

**Theme 4: Idea and Structure Support**

Last but not least, it is acknowledged by some that ChatGPT helps users brainstorm or give out the essay’s topic. Moreover, if users already have ideas but do not know how to express it smoothly, ChatGPT can assist in their thoughts and enhance the overall ideas of the topic.

“I see that teachers do not need to generate a ton of ideas by themselves as ChatGPT can give them a lot of ideas and also help them brainstorm for clearer thoughts.”

“ChatGPT can suggest many ideas and structures to help reduce burdens on teachers.”

4.3. The perceptions towards ChatGPT’s limitations in providing IELTS writing feedback

**Theme 1: Overreliance and Misuse**

While ChatGPT offers valuable support in developing students’ writing, several participants expressed concerns about the potential for overreliance. They shared that excessive dependence on ChatGPT may hinder teachers’ professional judgment, reduce critical thinking, and weaken core skills such as grading and creativity.

“I believe that if you overuse functions of ChatGPT, teachers may lose their creativity and it can also deteriorate their grading skills.

“Some teachers can be easily dependent on ChatGPT, which requires less critical thinking time.”

**Theme 2: Lack of Personalization**

Another limitation highlighted by participants is ChatGPT's lack of personalized feedback to individual students. They noted that the tool often generates general comments or applies standard rubrics without accounting for learners’ specific language proficiency levels or unique needs.

“Sometimes, ChatGPT only provides general comments, which are not always suitable for students’ English proficiency, especially those with low academic performances.”

“It lacks personalization, since it does not provide specific feedback for one student and just marks their essays based on a general rubric.”

**Theme 3: Lack of consistency**

Participants also pointed out that ChatGPT may produce inconsistent or inaccurate responses, which can affect the reliability of the tool in classroom settings. They emphasized the importance of teacher supervision, noting that without careful review, misleading information may be passed on to students.

“Sometimes, there is still misinformation that can be misleading to students if teachers do not check carefully before providing it to students.”

“The response from ChatGPT is not always consistent, and I need to provide sample texts to get the exact response.”

5. Discussion

The findings from the research offer a clearer view toward the use of ChatGPT in generating IELTS Writing Feedback. Most participants noted that they turn to ChatGPT when they need to detect their students’ grammatical or lexical errors. These functions were seen as time-saving and convenient, which reduce teachers’ workload significantly. Interestingly, this finding is aligned with what Toncic (2020) proved before, as he believed that AI grammar checkers are beneficial not only for learners but also for instructors, because they help reduce the time and effort required for marking and providing feedback. Similarly, by saving up a considerable time for post-teaching tasks, teachers can spend more time to focus on other important parts of teaching, which is also what Kasneci et al. (2023) claimed. In today’s educational environment, where teachers are often required to manage many different tasks beyond their classrooms, ChatGPT is considered by some as an effective assistant in detecting students’ mistakes and offering timely correction.

Another benefit emphasized by participants is that ChatGPT is able to provide detailed and constructive feedback. The tool does not only deliver simple corrections, it is also beneficial in delivering helpful recommendations, which foster students’ improvement from their own mistakes. Last but not least, the participants also showed an agreement towards its ability to generating further ideas. It means that the tool could significantly reduce the cognitive load related to brainstorming, creative thinking and serves as a helpful guide for students who are struggling with clarity and cohension.

Regarding limitations from the application of ChatGPT, the finding is consistent with Khoso et al. (2023) in stressing the concern of overreliance and causing laziness, which gradually deteriorate teachers’ grading skills. Since every response can be received within a second, some researchers expressed their concerns towards its convenience, which  partly discourage teachers from engaging deeply with students’ assignments. Another drawback founded from the research is its lack of generating personalized feedback. As an AI-based tool, ChatGPT provides responses and recommendations based on pre-existing data and general information, which are not designed for any particular individual. Another drawback is ChatGPT's limited ability  to provide in-depth and  personalized feedback. As an AI-based tool, ChatGPT provides responses based on pre-existing patterns and data, which are often generic and not tailored to students' individual needs. This characteristic is consistent with Farrokhnia et al. (2023), who noted that ChatGPT’s feedback often lacks personalization, which is not suitable for every learner’s profile and educational context. Therefore, ChatGPT has the potential to reduce the relationship between teachers and students in the learning process. Another limitation in applying ChatGPT in providing feedback is the inconsistency and inaccuracy in its responses. While useful, the tool does not always produce consistent and uniform feedback, which is likely to generate misinformation in giving feedback. These observations underline the important role of teachers in the feedback process, as outputs should be carefully evaluated and reviewed by educators before being shared with students.

6. Conclusion

The authors offer several recommendations for the future use of AI in providing writing feedback. Despite its speedy and generalized responses, teachers are encouraged not to rely entirely on it. As students vary in academic performance and learning needs, and because teachers are the ones who accompany and support them throughout their learning journey - not AI, it is essential that educators carefully review those feedback before accepting and sending to their students. Instead of waiting for an immediate response, teachers should guide the AI by providing clear prompts, including important general information about the class, the context, and students’ abilities to produce more accurate and relevant outcomes. Furthermore, up to date, AI still fails to replicate humans’ emotion and feeling; therefore, teachers should not totally depend on AI feedback. Instead, personalized encouragement and advice provided by teachers remain important since such comments serve as powerful and sentimental sources of motivation and inspiration for students’ improvement.

In addition, by recognizing certain drawbacks of the paper, the researchers suggest that future research should involve a larger sample of participants, including teachers who work with different age groups, educational background, and exam types, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of AI-generated feedback and represent for a larger population. Studies should also be conducted over longer periods by using controlled experimental designs where students receive AI-generated writing feedback throughout a semester or course, to better assess its long-term effectiveness.

We also encourage future teachers and researchers to reflect on the following questions:
What aspects of the language learning process are best handled by ChatGPT now and in the future?
What skills should be equipped by future educators to catch up with the strong development of AI?

With the emerging advancement of technology and AI, the future of education remains an exciting field for continued investigation. While no one can precisely predict the role of AI in the coming decades, teachers must remain adaptable and open to integrating new technological tools that support and enhance their instructional practices.

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