

When AI meets the classroom

The rapid spread of AI in education raises new questions for us teachers. These questions involve methodological, psychological and ethical concerns that our professional community should address. In this article, I will consider some of these challenges.

Many educators claim that more writing tasks should be completed in class under teacher supervision to prevent the use of AI. However, this is not always easy to achieve. What does this in-class writing mean for teachers and students? New formats? Collaborative writing? Writing in pairs? Will it entail recreating a home-like atmosphere with sufficient time for solo writing, procrastination and moments of silence? If a communicative approach to teaching assumes interaction in class, will it be possible? How will our students react to having writing time in class? Another issue with offline, in-class writing is that not all of our students can afford laptops, so they write by hand. In this case, grading and providing feedback becomes more time-consuming as it can be difficult to decipher what the students have written.

Secondly, in my opinion, since some teachers give AI-generated feedback on their learners' written work, ethical permission to use AI should be obtained not only by the student, but also by the teacher. The process of discussing what can and cannot be done should be a two-way conversation. As a student, I also have the right to tell the teacher:

I see that this feedback and the comments are AI-generated, the fact that you don't want to give me feedback personally offends me. This shows disrespect for my work.

Alternatively, a student could say, 'I don't mind the use of AI by my teachers'.

I believe it is time to stop pretending that nobody realises the teacher has used AI to generate their feedback. Teachers and students should feel entitled to openly tell each other how they feel when they see AI being used, whether it is a student's essay or a teacher's feedback on it. Feelings must be discussed. Having an open conversation about the rules for using AI, with buy-in for both students and teachers, can help to retain students and avoid demotivation. For example, I know people who dropped out of graduate school because their teachers provided feedback generated by AI. In fact, I was on the verge of dropping out of my PhD because my supervisor kept giving me AI-generated feedback. I was livid and irritated, but I was afraid to discuss this issue with him because I was ashamed to confront him about this 'elephant in the room'. Students should not be afraid to tell their teachers when they see that AI has been used, and teachers should not perceive it as though they have been caught and 'lost face'.

Apart from the abovementioned issues of the 'deterritorialisation' of writing (i.e. doing more writing activities in class, rather than at home) and the implementation of AI on a negotiated basis by all parties, a third challenge for teachers arises. The nature of the knowledge produced will gradually change. Rather than an essay, students will produce a physical object such as a poster, leaflet or playbill. In other words, it will be something that the student makes with their own hands. Additionally, the learning process and feedback will increasingly take an oral form. For example, my PhD supervisor provided a lot of useful

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navigates through the issues surrounding AI.

information during personal meetings, but his feedback on written work was poor and generated using AI. This transition from written to oral feedback, which can be quite time-consuming, raises questions: where will the time for this come from? How can this be organised?

Finally, the task format should be changed. 'Write an essay' is an easy task for AI, so it should be replaced with something more sophisticated. For example, let's compare the task I set my MA students on a course about teaching English to learners with special educational needs (SEN):

- **Before:** Write a short essay (about 700 words) on the following topic: Schools should involve the parents of children with SEN in their daily life.
- **After:** Imagine that you are a school principal. You want to inform all teachers in your school about dyslexia and autism. You need to choose the materials that will be used for this campaign. You can choose from a video, extracts from fiction books about people with autism, a leaflet or a newspaper article. Describe each one, **explain why you chose it** as well as **how it is connected to the ideas we discussed in Lectures 5 and 6.**

The second task involves working with concrete resources rather than merely writing an essay. It provides room for personal reflections, which are harder to generate with the help of AI. It also has an embedded 'blind spot', i.e. a reference to previous lectures whose content is not known to AI. Of course, AI can effectively deal with all these 'hindrances', however, this makes the task trickier and requires a human brain to execute it.

Here's another example of the task from the course for EFL teachers:

- **Before:** Write an essay on the following topic: An effective teacher should (not) have good leadership skills.
- **After:** Watch a short episode from a film about a headteacher in an orphanage. In this episode she is talking to Olya, one of the teenage girls from this orphanage, who brought some clothes belonging to her friend. The friend comes from a well-off family and gave these things to Olya as a gift. However, the friend's parents made a complaint to the orphanage and blamed Olya for stealing these items. Answer these questions: What do you notice about the style of their communication? The director's posture and gestures? What effect does it have on the girl? What are some other ways this conversation could be arranged? **Explain any connections to the ideas we discussed in Lecture 9 about teacher leadership.**

As you can see, instead of writing an essay the students are to analyse the video, write

up their observations and explain how the scene makes them feel, as well as trace back the connection with the previous lecture ('a blind spot' for AI).

Here's another example of replacing a task.

- **Before:** Write an essay about the advantages and disadvantages of inclusive education.
- **After:** Analyse **your own educational experience** as a student and as a teacher in situations involving learners with special educational needs. Describe your interactions with these learners and/or their parents and explain how these interactions impacted you as a student or teacher with respect to your personality. **Compare this with the case we discussed in Lecture 4.**

To sum up, we need to reconsider in-class writing as both a solo and a collaborative activity involving new interaction modes and new tasks that provide fewer opportunities for AI-generated texts. The 'knowledge outcome' could be anything from a poster to a video shot by the

students – something 'tangible' rather than a written text. The new AI era also requires mutual agreement between students and teachers, as well as open conversations about what is (not) appropriate in the modern classroom in terms of AI, for both teachers and students. Finally, assessment and feedback are moving from written to spoken form. This makes it easier to avoid the use of AI, but poses new challenges, such as requiring more face-to-face time with students and presenting teachers with more challenging assessments, for example, being an assessor and interlocutor at the same time.



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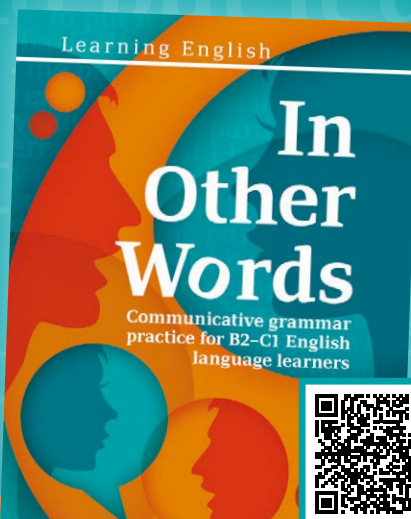
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