IMPROVING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS AT UNIVERSITIES THROUGH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND BLENDED LEARNING

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19664410

ABSTRACT

This article examines how AI-supported and blended learning approaches enhance academic writing proficiency among university students. Based on a synthesis of empirical studies and key pedagogical theories, the paper proposes an effective instructional model. The context of Uzbekistan's higher education is discussed as a relevant case study.

Keywords: academic writing, artificial intelligence, blended learning, higher education, personalized feedback, writing self-efficacy, Uzbekistan, generative AI, cognitive load, critical thinking.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary higher education, academic writing is considered the primary criterion of intellectual competence and interdisciplinary communication. In traditional teaching models, instructors face significant challenges in providing timely, individualized feedback to large audiences. This situation leads to problems such as writing anxiety and lack of self-confidence among students, particularly for those writing in a foreign language. The development of artificial intelligence (AI) tools offers technological solutions to these pedagogical challenges. When combined with blended learning — an approach that integrates traditional instruction with digital resources — AI creates opportunities to assist students in real time at every stage of the writing process. In the current context of Uzbekistan's accelerating higher education internationalization, the proper use of these technologies is of critical relevance.

METHODS

The effectiveness of AI-assisted instruction is grounded in several interrelated theoretical models. According to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), learning occurs most effectively when a student performs tasks that they cannot complete independently but can achieve with the help of a knowledgeable partner. Modern AI models such as ChatGPT and Claude serve as virtual partners, helping students progress from simple sentence construction to complex academic discourse. From the perspective of cognitive load theory, academic writing demands a range of simultaneous cognitive tasks: generating content, ensuring linguistic accuracy, and constructing rhetorical structure. As a country undergoing economic transition and pursuing the rapid internationalization of its higher education system,

Uzbekistan represents a characteristic example of AI technology adoption. The study analyzes the rate of AI usage among university students which was 31% in 2024, with projections reaching 57% by 2025.

RESULTS

Recent empirical studies show that students using AI tools achieve higher writing scores compared to their peers in traditional learning environments. A controlled experiment conducted in China recorded an increase in average academic writing scores from 65.3 to 81.2 — with the greatest gains observed in sentence structure and formal vocabulary selection. A study comparing models such as Claude and ChatGPT confirmed that these tools showed statistically significant advantages over traditional instruction in terms of organization, coherence, and lexical richness. From an affective standpoint, blended learning also offers significant benefits. Research indicates that AI environments are perceived by students as 'non-judgmental' spaces. This considerably reduces writing anxiety and creates a safe space for experimentation.

DISCUSSION

By automating technical aspects such as grammar and spelling, AI tools redirect students' cognitive resources toward higher-order thinking processes such as argument construction, analysis, and synthesis. However, broad-scale integration is still constrained by several systemic barriers in Uzbekistan. Low levels of digital literacy among faculty members and the absence of adequate institutional ethical norms are main challenges. One of the most pressing challenges is the phenomenon of 'hallucination' where LLM models generate non-existent sources. The 'dependency trap' also raises concerns from an academic integrity perspective. An effective hybrid model includes combined feedback, metacognitive self-monitoring, and the principle of 'productive friction' where students critically evaluate AI outputs.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of AI-assisted blended learning approaches should be regarded as a fundamental transformation in teaching academic writing. When grounded in robust pedagogical frameworks, these technologies significantly improve students' writing competence, motivation, and psychological resilience. It requires strategic and ethical reconsideration of authorship and academic integrity. The most effective writing instruction of the future will be built on hybrid intelligence — the collaboration between student, AI, and human mentor, cultivating active authors who use AI to amplify their own voices.

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