

# The Use of AI Agents to Help Teach IELTS Writing Task 2: A Narrative Inquiry

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Rizki, <sup>2</sup> Harwintha Yuhria Anjarningsih \*

Faculty of Humanities, University of Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author e-mail: muhammad.rizki17@ui.ac.id

## Article History

Received: October

Revised: October

Published: November

## Key Words:

AI Agents, IELTS

Preparation,

Narrative Inquiry,

Autonomous

Learning,

Academic Integrity.

**Abstract:** This study explores the experience of an English teacher using AI agents to teach IELTS Writing Task 2. Using a narrative inquiry approach, it delves into how AI agents enhance students' writing skills, specifically in IELTS preparation classes, and the challenges faced by the instructor in the process. Findings indicate that AI agents, such as ChatGPT, play a significant role in providing personalized feedback, supporting autonomous learning, and optimizing class time. However, AI use also presents challenges, including risks of over-reliance, academic integrity concerns, and feedback accuracy. The study highlights the importance of careful guidance and institutional policies to ensure ethical and effective AI usage in education. The research implications include a need for further investigation into AI's specific applications for test preparation, which could enhance instructional strategies for high-stakes exam preparation like IELTS.

## Kata Kunci:

Agen AI, Persiapan

IELTS, Kajian Naratif,

Pembelajaran Mandiri,

Integritas Akademik.

**Abstrack:** Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengalaman seorang pengajar bahasa Inggris dalam memanfaatkan agen AI untuk mengajar IELTS Writing Task 2. Melalui metode naratif, studi ini menggali pemanfaatan agen AI dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa, khususnya dalam konteks kelas persiapan IELTS, serta tantangan yang dihadapi pengajar dalam proses tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa agen AI, seperti ChatGPT, berperan penting dalam memberikan umpan balik personal, mendukung pembelajaran mandiri, dan mengoptimalkan waktu kelas. Meskipun demikian, penggunaan AI juga menghadirkan tantangan, seperti risiko ketergantungan berlebihan, integritas akademik, dan ketepatan umpan balik. Studi ini menyoroti pentingnya panduan yang hati-hati dan kebijakan kelembagaan untuk memastikan penggunaan AI yang etis dan efektif dalam pembelajaran. Implikasi penelitian ini mencakup kebutuhan untuk riset lebih lanjut dalam pemanfaatan AI khusus untuk konteks persiapan ujian, yang berpotensi meningkatkan efektivitas strategi pengajaran dalam persiapan tes berisiko tinggi seperti IELTS.

## Introduction

The advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has arguably impacted the way L2 is taught. AI-facilitated learning has proven to have offered solutions to problems faced by students learning L2. As de Vries et al. (2015) reported, AI-driven platforms are the solution for students when they are faced with insufficient speaking practice opportunities and limited class time. In addition, it is also a helpful solution when dealing with situations such as a lack of personalized feedback to every student (e.g., Luo, 2016) and unwillingness to speak (e.g., Tai & Chen, 2023).

Currently, AI provides language educators with tools called AI agents, which augment traditional, old-school L2 teaching methods. According to Lee & Jeon, (2024), there are two types of AI agents: 1) embodied AI agents, which include physical robots and virtual agents such as robots or virtual assistants; 2) disembodied agents, which are often invisible and delivered through smart devices such as ChatGPT and Google Assistants.

In this study, AI agents refer to, borrowed from Wang et al., (2024), entities that, to a certain extent, are capable of performing tasks related to intelligent beings through learning, reasoning, and expressing themselves. In the current educational field of L2, AI agents are



increasingly applied to support the learning process in natural language processing techniques and speech recognition (Engwall & Lopes, 2020; Natale & Cooke, 2021).

Although many of the prior studies that support the belief of the value of AI agents for L2 teachers are merely in the form of a short intervention (Engwall & Lopes, 2020; Ye et al., 2020), it is safe to think that in general, AI agents have been supportive of improving learners' overall L2 competence. Based on our teaching experience, they have taken the position of instructive collaborators, capable of providing students with personalized learning experiences, adaptive feedback, and automated essay assessments. In teaching writing, AI agents can be used to help learners improve various aspects of their writing, including grammar, structure, and argumentation.

English teachers' perspectives on using AI agents in teaching writing generally highlight a blend of excitement and caution. Many teachers see them as valuable resources for enhancing instruction, especially in automating routine tasks and providing individualized student support. Teachers also note that these tools lower the technical threshold, allowing learners to access supportive resources anytime, which aligns well with flipped and self-paced learning approaches (Oxford University Press, Cambridge English). Sullivan and McLaughlan (2023) report that teachers emphasize the importance of a balanced, ethical approach. They advocate for integrating AI as a supplement to—rather than a substitute for—teacher-led instruction, ensuring that AI complements the writing process without compromising student independence or skill development.

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is one of the most widely used standardized English language tests for education and immigration purposes, designed to assess the language abilities of individuals who need to study or work in environments where English is the primary language of communication. In recent years, the test has been recognized by more than 11,000 institutions, including universities, schools, and immigration agencies. IELTS is also commonly used as an English language exam for those migrating to Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. (IELTS, 2024).

The growing need for the IELTS test opens up opportunities for English teachers and English language teaching institutions to provide IELTS preparation teaching programs. Yang and Badger (2015), in their study on how IELTS preparation classes support students majoring in Economics in China, reported that the participants believed that attending IELTS preparation classes helped expand their vocabulary, improve their reading skills, and make them more confident in speaking English.

The growing number of programs that specialize in IELTS preparation has resulted in a paradigm shift in language teaching. As Quaid (2018) explains, teachers at IELTS preparation programs are perceived to prefer a teaching-to-the-test approach rather than an approach to improving their students' proficiency in general. This can be done by choosing materials, methods, and instruction that they think can fulfill what is required in the test. The study by Khoshima et al (2018) found that teaching applicable and functional strategies can have a positive impact on students as it develops students' autonomy in learning and test-taking.

The increasing globalization of education and work has made proficiency in academic and formal writing a critical skill. For non-native speakers, mastering the intricacies of IELTS Writing Task 2 is crucial for achieving high scores, and opening doors to international education and career opportunities.

The IELTS test tests four language skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. For writing skills, two types of tasks must be completed: Task 1 (short report writing) and Task 2 (essay writing). Both tasks are assessed with separate scoring criteria and with different weights and instructions. Of the two writing tasks, Task 2 is particularly challenging, requiring candidates to develop well-structured essays on a variety of topics. The test takers need to show not only their linguistic accuracy but also on coherent argumentation, organization, and the ability to express complex ideas clearly.

Writing skills are generally considered the most difficult to perform in the IELTS test. One of the reasons, according to Jakeman and McDowell (2008), is that most test takers do not know clearly what to do and end up writing without understanding what each task requires. In addition, to get a good score, test takers are required to show outstanding performance in four assessment criteria: task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resources, and grammatical range and accuracy.

Task 2 writing skills, apart from being part of the IELTS test, are also a support for academic success. An extension of this idea can be found in Lewthwaite (2007), arguing that essay writing skills, which involve critical and logical thinking processes, are important to master to produce good academic papers. In addition, an understanding of structure, coherence and cohesion, diction selection, and grammar determine the quality of essays.

Such complex teaching materials and the relatively limited duration of IELTS preparation classes require teachers to prepare effective learning materials and methods. However, traditional teaching methods, typically characterized by classroom instruction and feedback from teachers, have faced challenges in effectively preparing students for this particular task, leading them to explore innovative tools and techniques, including employing AI agents in the teaching process.

Undoubtedly, AI agents have a huge potential to enhance the teaching and learning processes in the language classroom. However, to unlock their potential, teachers should understand their impacts, the benefits and drawbacks, and, more importantly, how to utilize them properly. In addition, the impact of these tools on the learning process should also be critically analyzed.

While there is a relatively extensive body of literature on how AI agents can help teach writing in foreign language classes, studies specifically addressing its application to IELTS Writing Task 2 are arguably rare. Existing research namely from Alharbi (2023); Ranalli (2021); and Dodigovic & Tovmasyan (2021) often focuses on general writing improvement tools or broader applications of AI agents in language learning, but little attention has been given to the technical ways where they can help prospective IELTS test-takers master the specific demands of academic essay writing as required by the exam.

This study aims to exploit a teacher's story and experience using AI agents to teach Writing Task 2. We look at how the observed teacher incorporates AI agents into their IELTS preparation teaching activities, providing valuable insights into the opportunities and limitations of using AI agents to teach such high-level writing skills as IELTS Writing Task 2.

This is a qualitative study using narrative inquiry as a way of collecting, interpreting, and serving the data. Narrative inquiry in applied linguistics has gained legitimacy and significant visibility in recent decades, particularly in the field of language teaching and learning (Barkhuizen, Benson & Chik, 2013). It is particularly well-suited for this study as this method can be specifically utilized to delve into how a particular teacher or group of teachers use certain learning methods in L2 teaching (Johnson & Golombek, 2002, p.6), in this case in test preparation classes.

Narrative inquiry focuses on the 'story' and how it can be used for research purposes. Stories can come from many sources and contexts, including interviews or digital environments. Life stories, according to Kramp (2003) narrate experiences from the past or the imagined future. They tell about something that happened and will happen in the life of the person telling the story. Stories include reflective and evaluative commentary on those experiences. Emotions and beliefs related to the given experiences should be portrayed in those comments.

Cresswell (2015) summarizes seven major characteristics of narrative research as follows: experiences of an individual (social and personal interactions); chronology of experiences (past, present, and future experiences; life stories (first person, oral accounts of actions obtained through field texts (data); restorying (or retelling or developing a meta-story) from the field texts; coding the field texts for themes or categories; incorporating the context or place into the story or themes; collaboration between the researcher and the participants in the study, such as negotiating field texts.

This approach will not only offer insights into the effectiveness of AI agents but also reveal the emotional and cognitive experiences of the participant as a user, capturing both the benefits and challenges of incorporating AI into writing instruction. We make sure that the mentioned seven characteristics are intact and incorporated into this study to maintain its academic credibility. However, because it derives from such small-scale research, we do not make grand claims for our findings nonetheless this data is entirely valid research.

The research is important to address the following research questions:

1. What AI agents does the participant commonly use in teaching IELTS Writing Task 2?
2. How does the participant perceive the use of AI agents in teaching IELTS Writing Task 2?
3. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using AI agents in teaching IELTS Writing Task 2?

## **Research Method**

### **Research Context**

In this study, we examine the experiences of one English teacher who incorporates AI agents in his IELTS test preparation class. We explore what AI agents the participant regularly uses in teaching his students IELTS Writing Task 2 and how he balances the use of the AI agents with so-called ‘conventional’ teaching methods and resources. We also focus on the participant’s perception of and motivation for the use of such agents for teaching. We also examine how this phenomenon changes the way he develops himself in terms of teaching resources and skills. We also explore the positive and negative uses of AI agents from the participant’s perspective, and whether or not he prescribes it to other teachers.

We believe that this body of work has practical implications, particularly for English teachers who are responsible for teaching IELTS preparation classes. It is widely accepted that they often face difficulties in delivering their best in such classes due to the complexity of the materials as well as limited time and resources. AI agents, that continue to thrive, may come in handy to assist the teachers to overcome those problems. This study will hopefully provide clear insights from the practitioner’s experiences that can help other teachers facing the same problems.

### **Data Collection and the Participant**

Building on the work of Cresswell (2015), narrative inquiry is described as a specific form of qualitative research and typically focuses on “studying a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual” (p.504). When designing narrative inquiry, researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people's lives, and write narratives of individual experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Riessman, 2008).

Utilizing all those mentioned principles, our research begins with identifying a phenomenon that addresses a specific educational problem, which is the use of AI in teaching IELTS Writing Task 2. The next step involves the purposeful selection of a participant whom we consider knowledgeable and experienced enough to provide insights into the phenomenon. This factor is especially relevant in education research as educators or learners have been the focus of many narrative studies (e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Hayes, 2013; Mason & Chik, 2020).

We selected Zack (pseudonym, 39 years old, male) as the only participant for the study. Zack is an English teacher from Indonesia with 15 years of ELT experience, all in his home country. Zack has a bachelor's degree in the English Department, an M.Pd in English Studies, and a TESOL certificate. He first taught English at age 22 at a private education institute, which he did for four years. Later, he became a senior English teacher in a bigger institution (for 5 years) and subsequently taught English for 10 years as an English tutor at a prominent English course institution in Depok, West Java.

We chose Zack's case here because we understand that he has been using AI agents for teaching for quite some time. He is an active member of a language teacher association focusing on the use of technology for teaching. He also works in an agency specializing in AI-assisted teaching. We also consider him a tech enthusiast as he almost always incorporates AI in his work, including in his job as a translator. We believe that with such experience and knowledge, Zack can be a reliable narrator for this topic.

Our data gathering process centers on collecting stories using a variety of methods, with interviews serving as a primary source. For some time during July-September, 2024 we also observed Zack's classes and gathered descriptive fieldnotes that later used to be part of the discussion, as suggested by Clandinin & Connelly (2000). During the observations, we conducted in-depth interviews as well as non-formal conversations. In addition, we also asked Zack to demonstrate how he used AI agents and collected some necessary field texts in the form of digital texts from Zack's classes to give a more thorough understanding of the narrated stories, which offered an immersive point of view of the participant's experiences.

Once data were collected, the researcher proceeds to “restory” or retell Zack's narrative, organizing it coherently to communicate the experiences effectively. The data were selected to capture the participant's reflections on AI's impact on class preparation, teaching methodology and feedback and scoring. This involves arranging events thematically so that the story can be conveyed meaningfully. In this study, Zack's journey with AI—from the introduction period to practical implementation—is presented in a structured narrative to highlight critical insights and developments.

The final step involves writing and validating the narrative report, integrating thematic analyses and contextual insights into the narrative. The stories, the field texts, and the field notes were set into context and presented in the ‘Results and Discussion’ chapter. To maintain rigor, narrative inquiry research employs validation techniques, such as triangulation, member checking, and seeking disconfirming evidence. These practices confirm this study's reliability and reinforce its contribution to the broader educational discourse.

## **Results and Discussion**

After countless informal conversations and three in-depth interview sessions, we present the whole story of how Zack, the participant, utilizes AI agents to teach English in general, and IELTS Writing Task 2 in specific. Included in the story are Zack's initial introduction to the AI agents in teaching, how Zack utilizes them in teaching, Zack's belief in AI-supported teaching, guidance & ethics, and the problems and potential of using AI agents in teaching.

### **1. Using AI Agents to teach writing classes: “It started two years ago”**

Since 2018, Zack has been a member of ITELL (Indonesia Technology-Enhanced Language Learning), a home to Indonesian language scholars, practitioners, and more importantly educators passionate about the potential use of digital technology to transform and innovate language teaching and learning. From then on, Zack continued to learn more about AI, leading him to attend several trainings and workshops to understand more about how AI agents work.

Zack is also a member of an agency that localizes AI prompts to teach machine learning to recognize prompts in Bahasa Indonesia. Understanding prompting is significant in using AI, as it only works best with proper inputs (prompts). Acquiring plenty of knowledge and skills about AI agents, Zack slowly incorporated AI tools into his teaching English activities. In addition to that, the use of AI in the educational field has been a hot issue since its emergence. Zack recalled that the first time he used AI agents to teach was two years ago, using them to help analyze his students' writing assignments. He explains:

“I am a member of ITELL, which is a professional organization for the use of edtech. It's interesting because it examines how we use AI and what are the ethical boundaries of using AI. Initially, I was interested in using AI to learn whether students can be detected if they use AI to do their assignments. And that's the starting point.” (Fieldnotes, August, 2024)

## **2. AI Agents in language teaching and learning: The machine for many things**

In language teaching contexts, Zack believes that AI agents can be utilized not only to build students' literacy in the subject but also to introduce them to AI's capabilities in a broader sense. Though not always directly focused on language mastery, AI agents have uncapped potential to foster independent learning, especially in areas that students find challenging, such as productive skills. In many instances, AI agents help students improve their speaking and writing abilities independently by offering strategies they can practice on their own.

Zack has been using AI agents to support his teaching activities in many ways possible. For example, he sometimes, but not often, uses AI agents in lesson planning for his English classes, including teaching IELTS Writing Task 2. What Zack does is to start by defining the objectives for each class session, then use AI agents namely ChatGPT or Gemini to generate an initial lesson plan, which is later customized to fit the class's specific needs. AI agents are also commonly employed to plan classroom activities, allowing him to access ideas quickly and efficiently. However, Zack rarely implements this as he believes that each class is unique and has differences that machines cannot capture, therefore, are not suitable to help design lesson plans in detail.

In using AI agents, what Zack always practices in his writing classes is to brainstorm ideas. For his students who are not accustomed to writing, Zack scaffolds them by providing a topic and asking them to input it into chosen AI agents, mostly ChatGPT, as a way of generating initial ideas. Zack believes this process helps his students to gather and organize their thoughts, after which they proceed to outline and expand upon these ideas. In this way, AI agents assist with brainstorming, outlining, and even refining ideas, with their specific use adapted to the learning objectives of each class. In Zack's IELTS preparation classes, particularly for Task 1, AI agents are in use to support students in identifying and describing the main features of given charts or graphs. In many instances, Zack encourages his students to brainstorm independently before comparing their observations with AI-generated interpretations of the same data.

When teaching IELTS Writing Task 2, Zack optimizes AI agents as a helping tool that guides students toward the main learning activities. Much of this involves scaffolding, where language skills are less prioritized. Based on Zack's long observation, when it comes to writing an essay, students frequently struggle more with organization, particularly cohesion and coherence. To address this, Zack teaches his students to utilize AI for structuring their ideas,

such as creating outlines that help them flesh out ideas more clearly. This approach not only teaches them how to outline effectively but also facilitates a gradual progression from structured, guided tasks to more independent activities. Zack explains:

“... starting (such activities) with controlled activities using AI aiming that students gain confidence and understanding before moving on to less-controlled tasks, where they independently create outlines using different prompts. This method has proven more time-efficient and allows students to explore on their own, promoting active learning.” (Fieldnotes, August, 2024).

Additionally, AI agents serve as a learning resource for various skills, such as developing an outline, which might otherwise require extensive teacher explanation. Rather than relying solely on peer feedback—which can be challenging for lower-level students or those less confident in their English proficiency—students write their initial drafts, revise them with the selected AI agent, and then analyze the feedback. This process allows them to identify frequent errors, particularly in lexical variety, as AI agents highlight areas where vocabulary could be varied and expanded. Students can then choose to make further revisions or simply learn from the feedback received.

Zack also uses AI agents as a modeling tool to address time limitations in the classroom. Given the extensive content to cover and the limited class time for individualized feedback, AI agents are helpful in the way they provide immediate, targeted suggestions, allowing students to understand and internalize common errors promptly.

One of the many uses of AI agents that Zack takes advantage of is in grading and giving feedback processes. Zack inputs the IELTS scoring rubric into ChatGPT, which then evaluates his students' work based on these criteria. However, while the scoring provided by ChatGPT is generally close to those given by teachers, Zack believes that teachers should be really careful not to rely entirely on AI's assessment. For final grading, Zack always uses AI-generated scores as a reference and ultimately relies on his objective judgment to provide the final grade.

In addition to scoring, the most valuable benefit of AI agents, according to Zack, lies in their capacity to provide feedback for students writing assignments instantaneously. In Zack's common practice, he often drafts preliminary feedback, which AI agents then paraphrase to make it more positive and encouraging. This approach saves time and ensures that feedback remains constructive and motivational without requiring extensive rewording from him.

In addition, AI agents are useful to Zack in addressing mechanical errors in students' writing, such as grammar and spelling, which AI can identify and highlight efficiently. This feature provides essential support to teachers, enabling them to focus more on higher-level writing concerns while AI handles basic corrections. Zack sometimes asks students to check their work for grammar errors using Grammarly and for summary reference using QuillBot.

### **3. Teachers should not rely on AI Agents too much: Zack's belief**

Zack sees that many English teachers perceive AI-based learning as a threat, fearing it will encourage students to engage in academic dishonesty. One of the contributing factors leading to the emergence of this belief, according to Zack, is the growing skepticism toward



the practice of e-learning and AI use in Indonesia particularly during the pandemic found in many studies he read. Zack concludes that many studies' biases likely stem from researchers' initial antipathy toward online learning and AI, leading to reluctance to fully explore their advantages. This negative tone may also influence the research outcomes, with some studies seemingly pre-determined to highlight the drawbacks.

“Observing studies about the practices in some local journals, even high-ranking SINTA journals, I noted that research conclusions often appear biased, with data cherry-picked to align with preconceived results. This approach contrasts with research abroad, where studies on e-learning and AI include both positive and negative findings, often emphasizing ways to optimize online learning rather than outright rejection.” (Fieldnotes, September, 2024).

Zack then makes a simple analogy of the common online learning practice in Indonesia: Universitas Terbuka (UT, Open University). The teaching practices at UT have long relied on online learning without encountering significant issues. If online learning were truly ineffective, they argued, institutions like UT would not have successfully maintained their teaching model for so many years.

In contrast to the mentioned belief, Zack shares a strong belief in the potential of AI agents as an effective tool for education. He believes that they can enhance students' academic skills, particularly by helping them become more resourceful. Zack emphasizes the importance of students learning to use available resources effectively. Rather than relying solely on the conventional ways of textbooks, worksheets, or lecturers, students are encouraged to seek additional sources to deepen their understanding. And AI agents are one of these potential resources. Zack believes that with proper guidance, AI agents could serve as a valuable learning tool, both for teachers and students.

Nonetheless, Zack voices his cautions that misuse of AI is possible if not carefully managed. “Teachers might irresponsibly rely on AI by copying and pasting student work for automated grading without further input. Therefore, while AI offers valuable support for teaching, it must be used with accountability and thoughtful guidance.”

#### **4. Teaching using AI Agents: Problems and Potentials**

During a class, Zack caught a student using AI to complete their assignment. In the instructions, Zack has made it clear that AI use was prohibited. However, some students did not go along with the rules. Zack described one example in which a student's writing seemed suspiciously advanced for their proficiency level. He then checked the writing through GPTZero, an AI detection tool, which initially returned a “human” result. However, by correcting unnatural typos, Zack managed to detect AI involvement upon a second analysis. In the end, the student was proven guilty of using AI agents with some twists here and there.

This situation served as an important teaching moment for Zack. He subsequently revealed the incident to the class, not to embarrass the student but to illustrate that AI use can be detected. This is important for him as he wanted to send the message to the students that cheating using AI agents is easy to anticipate. For his IELTS-specific classes, students were reminded that their goal is to pass the IELTS test, which prohibits AI use. Zack emphasizes

that relying on AI during preparation would ultimately be counterproductive, as students would not have AI assistance during the actual test.

A notable drawback of AI use is that students tend to trust AI implicitly. Even without being encouraged, they often rely on AI for assignments since it has become an integral part of their lives. Zack notes that the emphasis, therefore, shifts to ensuring that students understand ethical AI use rather than attempting to restrict it altogether. While AI use can be controlled during in-class activities, it is virtually impossible to enforce these restrictions on take-home assignments. The teacher shared that students can use AI for assignments as long as they openly disclose their use, providing details about their prompts and the specific assistance AI offers.

From Zack's point of view, encouraging responsible AI use requires clear institutional guidelines. Without such policies, students and teachers alike may become overly reliant on AI, potentially disrupting the learning process. Zack highlights that institutions could harness AI for certain tasks, such as developing materials or generating listening exercises. With AI's advanced capabilities, teachers could create scripts or even use AI-generated voices, which often sound more natural than non-native speakers. This could improve tone and intonation, enhancing the learning experience for students.

However, Zack stresses that institutions should set boundaries to preserve the authenticity and credibility of their content. While AI agents could be used for brainstorming or creating voiceovers, institutions must develop some materials independently to maintain academic standards and institutional integrity.

## **Discussions**

This study explored the use of AI agents, particularly ChatGPT, in teaching IELTS Writing Task 2. Focusing on one educator's narrative, the research examined how AI supports specific teaching functions, enhances learning experiences, and presents challenges. This section discusses the main findings with the research questions, addressing the types of AI agents used, the perceived benefits, and the drawbacks in educational settings. The insights gathered align with emerging discussions on AI's role in language instruction, contributing to a nuanced understanding of its potential and limitations.

### **1. AI Agents Used in Teaching IELTS Writing Task 2 Classes**

Zack's story confirms what previous studies have found: AI agents can be and have been integrated into the classroom setting to support the language learning process, or learning experts call it Artificial Intelligence-Assisted Language Learning (AIALL). AIALL is the modern, most common assisted language learning since previously we had Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), emerging in the second half of the twentieth century; Web-based Language Learning (WELL) with the rise of the internet in the 90s; and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), years after.

An extension of Zack's practice can be found in (Jeon & Lee, 2023) where ChatGPT's interactive and engaging qualities make it particularly effective for student interaction and task completion. Unlike more static AI tools, ChatGPT not only provides responsive feedback but

also contextualizes answers based on previous interactions, creating a dynamic learning environment (Lund & Wang, 2023). This responsiveness enables Zack to guide students through the complexities of IELTS Writing Task 2, including scaffolding their argument, structuring their essay, and paying attention to the coherence of the writing.

ChatGPT's utility extends beyond basic feedback to useful support for language tasks, making it suitable for various aspects of IELTS preparation. Its ability to adapt to prompts and provide examples across diverse topics allows Zack to address his students' individual needs. This adaptability is especially beneficial for teaching writing, as ChatGPT can generate sample responses, suggest structural improvements, and reinforce lexical variety—a crucial element for achieving higher IELTS band scores (Fitria, 2023). These affordances align with findings by Renz and Hilbig (2020), who argue that AI technology offers expansive possibilities in education, enriching traditional teaching practices with enhanced tools for engagement and feedback.

## **2. Benefits of AI Agents in Teaching Writing**

The study highlighted several benefits of using AI agents in language instruction, notably in enhancing personalized learning, streamlining feedback, and fostering student autonomy. Zack observed that AI tools like ChatGPT facilitate individualized learning by offering tailored support to students, addressing their unique challenges in writing (Niu et al., 2022). Personalized feedback, a feature especially valued in the context of IELTS Writing Task 2, helps Zack address each student's specific areas for improvement, such as grammatical accuracy, vocabulary selection, and argumentative cohesion.

The AI tool also supports Zack in overcoming common instructional constraints, such as limited class time and large student numbers. Cotton et al. (2023) suggest that AI increases the pace and efficiency of daily tasks, a notion reflected in Zack's use of ChatGPT for rapid feedback generation and revision suggestions. This time-saving quality is vital in preparation courses, where students require frequent feedback on complex writing tasks. By assisting with grammar and coherence, ChatGPT enables Zack to focus on higher-order concerns, such as critical thinking and argument structure, effectively optimizing instructional time.

Another benefit lies in AI's role in fostering student autonomy. Zack encourages students to use AI for brainstorming and initial drafting, helping them engage with writing as a structured process rather than a one-time task. This aligns with Hockly's (2023) suggestion that AI agents are particularly suitable for lower-proficiency learners, who may benefit from AI's guided support outside of class. Through AI-facilitated self-study, students gain confidence in their ability to draft, revise, and refine their work, fostering a sense of independence crucial for developing advanced writing skills.

## **3. Challenges and Drawbacks of AI Use in Language Teaching**

Despite its advantages, AI use in language teaching presents notable challenges, primarily related to academic integrity, technological limitations, and over-reliance. One of Zack's key concerns involves the potential for academic dishonesty, as some students may use AI to complete assignments without fully engaging in the learning process. This risk is exacerbated by AI's capacity to generate near-instant responses, which may lead students to substitute AI-generated content for their original work. As Massimo Soranzio argues, AI's role

in education must be mediated by educators to prevent it from becoming a "new frontier of cheating" (Oxford University Press, 2023).

Moreover, while ChatGPT is highly effective, it has limitations in accuracy and relevancy. Su, et al (2023) points out that ChatGPT can sometimes provide outdated or incorrect information, which may hinder learning when students rely on its guidance. Zack has observed instances where ChatGPT's suggestions did not align with IELTS task requirements, highlighting the need for teachers to verify AI feedback before students implement it in their work. This drawback underscores the importance of teacher intervention in guiding AI use, ensuring that students do not internalize erroneous feedback.

The study also found that over-reliance on AI might impede students' critical thinking and self-reliance. If students depend heavily on AI for drafting and editing, they risk missing opportunities to develop their analytical and problem-solving skills. Hockly (2023) advocates for balance, suggesting that AI tools should complement rather than replace traditional learning activities. By selectively using AI for initial brainstorming or draft revision, Zack aims to encourage students to actively engage in the writing process, allowing AI to serve as a support rather than a substitute.

#### **4. Implications for Language Teaching Practices**

Zack's experiences with ChatGPT offer valuable insights into the broader implications of AI in language education, particularly the importance of guidance and ethical use. As AI becomes a more prominent educational tool, educators must navigate its benefits and challenges carefully. Zack emphasizes the need for institutional guidelines to prevent misuse, recommending that schools develop policies for ethical AI use in classrooms. By establishing standards for AI disclosure in assignments, educational institutions can foster transparency and help students view AI as a learning aid rather than a shortcut.

The study also highlights the potential for AI to reshape curricula, a perspective echoed by Hockly (2023), who predicts that generative AI will prompt shifts in instruction and assessment. Language educators, therefore, must adapt their teaching strategies to integrate AI effectively, ensuring that its use aligns with pedagogical goals. By incorporating AI training into curricula, institutions can equip both students and teachers with the skills needed to navigate this evolving technological landscape.

#### **Conclusion**

This study provides valuable insights into the integration of AI in language teaching, specifically through ChatGPT for IELTS Writing Task 2. The findings illustrate how AI can enhance the educational experience by supporting personalized feedback, encouraging autonomous learning, and improving time management. At the same time, challenges such as academic integrity, potential over-reliance, and occasional inaccuracies highlight the need for responsible and guided use. Educators, therefore, must carefully balance AI's capabilities with traditional pedagogical methods, using AI as a tool to support rather than replace essential aspects of learning.

It is also important to note that there is limited research specifically focused on using AI agents in test preparation settings, such as IELTS classes. Most studies on AI in language learning explore its role in general writing or language skill development rather than in targeted exam preparation contexts. This gap presents a promising area for future research to further explore how AI agents might be optimized for test-specific needs and assess their impact on student performance and exam readiness. Expanding research in this area could provide more tailored insights, ultimately contributing to enhanced teaching strategies in high-stakes test preparation.

## References

- Alharbi, W. (2023). AI in the foreign language classroom: A pedagogical overview of automated writing assistance tools. *Education Research International*, 2023(1), 4253331.
- Barkhuizen, G., Benson, P., & Chik, A. (2013). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. Routledge.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14
- Cotton, D. R., Cotton, P. A., & Shipway, J. R. (2023). Chatting and cheating: Ensuring academic integrity in the era of ChatGPT. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2023.2190148>
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson.
- de Vries, B. P., Cucchiarini, C., Bodnar, S., Strik, H., & van Hout, R. (2015). Spoken grammar practice and feedback in an ASR-based CALL system. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 28(6), 550-576.
- Dodigovic, M., & Tovmasyan, A. (2021). Automated writing evaluation: The accuracy of Grammarly's feedback on form. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, 3(2), 71-87.
- Engwall, O., & Lopes, J. (2022). Interaction and collaboration in robot-assisted language learning for adults. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 35(5-6), 1273-1309.
- Fitria, T. N. (2023). Artificial intelligence (AI) technology in OpenAI ChatGPT application: A review of ChatGPT in writing English essay. *ELT Forum: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 12(1), 44–58. <https://doi.org/10.15294/elt.v12i1.64069>
- Golombek, P. R., & Johnson, K. E. (2017). Re-conceptualizing teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development. *Profil*, 19, 15–28.
- Hayes, D. (2013). Narratives of experience: Teaching English in Sri Lanka and Thailand. In G. Narrative research in applied linguistics (pp. 62–82). Cambridge University Press.
- Hockly, N. (2023). Artificial intelligence in English language teaching: The good, the bad and the ugly. *RELJ Journal*, 54(2).
- IELTS (2024). IELTS. Available Aug 20, 2024, from <https://www.ielts.org/about-ielts/what-is-ielts>

- Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C. (2008). *New Insight into IELTS Workbook Pack*. Cambridge university press.
- Jeon, J. and Lee, S. (2023), "Large language models in education: a focus on the complementary relationship between human teachers and ChatGPT", *Education and Information Technologies*. doi: 10.1007/s10639-023-11834-1.
- Johnson, K., & Golombek, P (Eds.). (2002). *Teachers' narrative inquiry as professional development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kartal, G. (2023), "Contemporary language teaching and learning with ChatGPT", *Contemporary Research in Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 59-70.
- Khoshsima, H., Saed, A., & Mousaei, F. (2018). Exploring the effect of teaching test-taking strategies on intermediate level learners on reading section of ielts; learners' attitude in focus. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 9(2), 4-9. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.all.v.9n.2p.4>
- Kramp, M. K. (2003). Exploring life and experience through narrative inquiry. In *Foundations for research* (pp. 119-138). Routledge.
- Lee, S., & Jeon, J. (2024). Visualizing a disembodied agent: Young EFL learners' perceptions of voice-controlled conversational agents as language partners. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 37(5-6), 1048-1073.
- Lewthwaite, M. D. (2007). Teacher and Student Attitudes to IELTS writing tasks: positive or negative washback? *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives*, 4(2), 11-30.
- Lund, B. D., & Wang, T. (2023). Chatting about ChatGPT: How may AI and GPT impact academia and libraries? *Library Hi Tech News*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4333415>
- Luo, T. (2016). Enabling microblogging-based peer feedback in face-to-face classrooms. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 53(2), 156-166.
- Mason, S. L., & Chik, A. (2020). Age, gender and language teacher identity: Narratives from higher education. *Sexuality & Culture*, 24, 1028–1045. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-02009749-x>.
- Natale, S., & Cooke, H. (2021). Browsing with Alexa: Interrogating the impact of voice assistants as web interfaces. *Media, Culture & Society*, 43(6), 1000-1016.
- Niu, S.J.; Luo, J.; Niemi, H.; Li, X.; Lu, Y. Teachers' and Students' Views of Using an AI-Aided Educational Platform for Supporting Teaching and Learning at Chinese Schools. *Educ. Sci.* 2022, 12, 858. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12120858>
- Oxford University Press. (2023). *Teacher perspectives on AI in the classroom: AI in education—where we are and what happens next*. Retrieved from <https://corp.oup.com>
- Quaid, E.D. Reviewing the IELTS speaking test in East Asia: theoretical and practice-based insights. *Lang Test Asia* 8, 2 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-018-0056-5>
- Ranalli, J. (2021). L2 student engagement with automated feedback on writing: Potential for learning and issues of trust. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 52, 100816.
- Renz, A.; Hilbig, R. Prerequisites for artificial intelligence in further education: Identification of drivers, barriers, and business models of educational technology companies. *Int. J. Educ. Technol. High. Educ.* 2020, 17, 121.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage
- Su, Y., Lin, Y., & Lai, C. (2023). Collaborating with ChatGPT in argumentative writing classrooms. *Assessing Writing*, 57, 100752. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2023.100752>
- Suaverdez, J. B., & Suaverdez, U. V. (2023). Chatbots impact on academic writing. *Global Journal of Business and Integral Security*.
- Sullivan, M., Kelly, A., & McLaughlan, P. (2023). ChatGPT in higher education: Considerations for academic integrity an student learning Tai, T. Y., & Chen, H. H. J.

- (2023). The impact of Google Assistant on adolescent EFL learners' willingness to communicate. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 31(3), 1485-1502.
- Wang, X., Pang, H., Wallace, M. P., Wang, Q., & Chen, W. (2024). Learners' perceived AI presences in AI-supported language learning: A study of AI as a humanized agent from community of inquiry. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 37(4), 814-840.
- Yanxian Yang & Richard Badger (2015) How IELTS preparation courses support students: IELTS and academic socialisation. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 39:4, 438-465, DOI: 10.1080/0309877X.2014.953463
- Ye, D., Chen, G., Zhang, W., Chen, S., Yuan, B., Liu, B., ... & Liu, W. (2020). Towards playing full moba games with deep reinforcement learning. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, 33, 621-632.