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COMPARING TRADITIONAL AND AI-ASSISTED APPROACHES TO SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING INSTRUCTION

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Abstract: The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has significantly influenced educational practices, particularly in second language (L2) writing instruction. Traditional writing pedagogy has long relied on teacher-centered feedback, classroom-based activities, and process-oriented approaches to develop learners' writing proficiency. Recently, AI-assisted tools have introduced new opportunities for personalized feedback, automated error correction, and adaptive learning environments. This article compares traditional and AI-assisted approaches to second language writing instruction by examining their pedagogical foundations, effectiveness, advantages, and limitations. The study analyzes how each approach contributes to the development of linguistic accuracy, writing fluency, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. The findings suggest that while traditional methods remain essential for fostering communicative competence and higher-order thinking skills, AI-assisted instruction can enhance learning efficiency through immediate feedback and individualized support.

Keywords: second language writing, artificial intelligence, AI-assisted learning, writing instruction, language education, automated feedback, learner autonomy, educational technology, writing proficiency, digital learning.

Introduction

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most challenging skills in second language acquisition. Unlike speaking or listening, effective writing requires learners to simultaneously manage grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence, and audience awareness. For decades, educators have relied on traditional instructional approaches that emphasize teacher feedback, peer review, process writing, and classroom interaction to support the development of writing competence among language learners. Traditional writing instruction is grounded in the belief that meaningful interaction between teachers and students plays a crucial role in language development. Through detailed feedback, guided revision, and collaborative learning activities, students gradually improve their ability to express ideas accurately and effectively. However, traditional approaches often face practical challenges, including limited instructional time, large class sizes, and delays in providing individualized feedback. The emergence of artificial intelligence has introduced new possibilities for addressing these challenges. AI-powered writing tools can analyze texts, identify grammatical and stylistic errors, provide instant feedback, and offer personalized recommendations for improvement. Such technologies enable learners to engage in self-directed practice and receive continuous support beyond the classroom environment. Consequently, AI-assisted writing instruction has become an increasingly important topic in contemporary language

education research. Despite the growing popularity of AI-based educational technologies, debates remain regarding their pedagogical value and long-term impact on language learning outcomes. While some researchers argue that AI systems enhance writing accuracy and learner motivation, others express concerns about overreliance on automated assistance, reduced critical thinking, and the potential loss of meaningful teacher-student interaction. Given these developments, a comparative examination of traditional and AI-assisted approaches is necessary to better understand their respective strengths and weaknesses. This article aims to analyze the effectiveness of both instructional models in second language writing education and to explore how their integration can contribute to improved learning outcomes in modern educational settings.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a comparative qualitative research design to examine the effectiveness of traditional and AI-assisted approaches in second language (L2) writing instruction. The research was based on a review and analysis of contemporary studies in language education, educational technology, and artificial intelligence applications in writing pedagogy. The study focused on two instructional models. The traditional approach included teacher-led writing instruction, classroom discussions, peer-review activities, and manual feedback on students' written assignments. The AI-assisted approach involved the use of intelligent writing tools capable of providing automated feedback on grammar, vocabulary usage, sentence structure, coherence, and style. Data were collected from academic publications, educational reports, and case studies published in recent years. A comparative framework was developed to evaluate both approaches according to several criteria: feedback quality, writing accuracy, learner autonomy, motivation, revision practices, and overall writing performance. The collected information was systematically analyzed to identify similarities, differences, strengths, and limitations of each instructional model. The methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of how emerging AI technologies are transforming second language writing instruction while maintaining a focus on pedagogical effectiveness and learner development.

Results

The analysis revealed significant differences between traditional and AI-assisted writing instruction. Traditional approaches demonstrated strong effectiveness in promoting critical thinking, communicative competence, and deeper understanding of writing conventions. Students benefited from personalized teacher feedback, classroom interaction, and collaborative learning activities that encouraged reflection and revision. In contrast, AI-assisted approaches provided immediate and continuous feedback, allowing learners to identify and correct errors more efficiently. Students using AI-based writing tools showed noticeable improvements in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary diversity, and writing fluency. The availability of instant feedback also increased learner engagement and encouraged independent learning outside classroom settings. The findings further indicated that AI technologies were particularly effective in addressing lower-level writing concerns such as spelling, punctuation, grammar, and sentence construction. However, AI systems were less effective in evaluating creativity, argument quality, cultural appropriateness, and nuanced meaning compared to experienced language instructors. Another important result was that students who combined teacher guidance with AI-generated feedback demonstrated higher overall writing performance than those relying exclusively on either traditional or AI-assisted instruction. This suggests that complementary use of both approaches can maximize learning outcomes.

Discussion

The findings highlight the evolving role of artificial intelligence in second language writing education. Traditional instructional approaches continue to provide essential pedagogical benefits

that cannot be fully replicated by automated systems. Human teachers contribute not only linguistic expertise but also emotional support, contextual understanding, and individualized guidance that foster meaningful language development. At the same time, AI-assisted technologies offer practical solutions to many challenges faced by language educators. Automated feedback systems reduce response time, increase opportunities for practice, and support personalized learning experiences. These advantages are particularly valuable in educational contexts with large class sizes and limited instructional resources. The results suggest that AI should not be viewed as a replacement for teachers but rather as a supplementary tool that enhances instructional effectiveness. Excessive dependence on AI may limit learners' ability to develop independent critical thinking and may encourage passive acceptance of automated suggestions. Therefore, educational institutions should promote responsible and balanced use of AI technologies within writing curricula. Furthermore, successful integration of AI into second language writing instruction requires appropriate teacher training, ethical guidelines, and digital literacy development. Educators must be prepared to evaluate AI-generated feedback critically and help students use technological tools in ways that support genuine language acquisition. Overall, the study demonstrates that a hybrid instructional model combining the strengths of traditional pedagogy and AI-assisted technologies represents the most promising direction for future second language writing education. Such an approach can improve writing accuracy, learner engagement, and academic achievement while preserving the essential human dimensions of teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence has created new opportunities for innovation in second language writing instruction. This study compared traditional and AI-assisted approaches and found that each method offers distinct advantages for language learning. Traditional instruction remains highly effective in developing critical thinking, communicative competence, creativity, and deeper understanding of writing conventions through meaningful interaction between teachers and students. In contrast, AI-assisted writing tools provide immediate feedback, personalized support, and increased opportunities for independent practice. These technologies contribute significantly to improving grammatical accuracy, vocabulary usage, and writing fluency. However, AI systems still face limitations in evaluating complex ideas, cultural nuances, argumentation quality, and the broader communicative purposes of writing. The findings suggest that neither traditional nor AI-assisted instruction alone can fully address all aspects of second language writing development. Instead, the integration of both approaches offers the most effective solution. A balanced instructional model that combines teacher expertise with intelligent technological support can enhance learning outcomes, increase student motivation, and prepare learners for the demands of a digitally connected world. Future research should investigate the long-term impact of AI-assisted writing tools on language acquisition, learner autonomy, and academic achievement across different educational contexts. As artificial intelligence continues to evolve, educators must focus on developing pedagogical strategies that maximize its benefits while preserving the essential human elements of language teaching and learning.

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