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Second Language Acquisition and Teaching (SLAT)

Abstract

Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are reshaping conventional approaches to second language (L2) acquisition and pedagogy. However, due to the novelty of this technology, research on effective practices for integrating generative AI in the L2 classroom is still emerging. This qualitative study investigates how ChatGPT impacts L2 writers' metacognitive development, focusing on how genre-based AI feedback and interactive exchanges with the tool influence self-assessment and self-regulation in writing.

Specifically, this research examines how ChatGPT's genre-based feedback enables novice L2 writers to make metacognitive judgments about their writing competence and how these judgments affect their ability to self-regulate their writing process. Nine participants, recruited from a first-year composition course for international students at a major U.S. university, engaged with ChatGPT over the course of a semester. The data collected includes participants' reflections on ChatGPT's feedback and interactions, ChatGPT interaction logs, final course reflections on AI, and post-semester semi-structured interviews with five of the participants.

Preliminary findings suggest that L2 writers' metacognitive judgments arise from a combination of factors: their existing metacognitive knowledge, their affective and motivational responses to AI feedback, and their contextual understanding of the writing task. The study reveals that L2 writers critically evaluate AI feedback, engage with AI tools strategically, and demonstrate increased confidence, self-efficacy, and autonomy in their writing. These findings suggest that AI can effectively scaffold the development of metacognitive awareness, provided that students are guided on how to use such tools to enhance their understanding of both the writing process and their personal writing abilities.