

**INTEGRATING GENERATIVE AI TOOLS INTO EFL WRITING
INSTRUCTION: DEVELOPING DIGITAL LITERACY AND CRITICAL
THINKING AMONG UZBEK SECONDARY SCHOOL LEARNERS**

Eshqulova Zarnigor

**MAQOLA
MALUMOTI**

ANNOTATSIYA:

MAQOLA TARIXI:

Received: 03.11.2025

Revised: 04.11.2025

Accepted: 05.11.2025

KALIT SO'ZLAR:

*generative AI, EFL
writing instruction,
digital literacy, critical
thinking, secondary
education, Uzbekistan,
ChatGPT, pedagogical
integration*

This article examines the integration of generative artificial intelligence tools into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instruction within Uzbek secondary schools, focusing on the development of digital literacy and critical thinking skills. Through comprehensive literature analysis and pedagogical examination, this study explores how AI technologies such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and other generative tools can be effectively incorporated into writing curricula while maintaining educational integrity.

Introduction

The quick rise of generative artificial intelligence technologies has completely changed the educational environments of different countries and brought in the language teaching field both chances never seen before and hurdles of great magnitude. In the case of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, especially in the developing region of Uzbekistan, the coming together of AI tools with writing instruction indicates a crucial point where technological innovation meets teaching tradition and their respective infrastructures [1]. Generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT, Google Bard, and specific writing aides like Grammarly and QuillBot are able to not only produce texts that are very similar to human outputs but also give instant feedback and help with the writing process at various stages.

Yet, when educational institutions incorporate such platforms, it compels one to consider the authenticity of learning, the development of new skills, and the changing teacher's role in a technologically mediated environment [2]. In Uzbekistan's secondary education system, which has prioritized English language proficiency as a national strategic goal, the use of AI tools to overcome the challenges of limited resources and high teacher-student ratios is particularly attractive.

Methodology and literature review

The current research adopts a wide-ranging literature review method, blending studies from different countries and academia in Russia and Uzbekistan to come up with a theoretical framework that allows teaching with AI in EFL writing. The input of Warschauer and Healey indicates that AI writing tools are standing in between the computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and the fully automated intelligent tutoring systems, providing user-driven feedback yet necessitating the highest level of user literacy to reap benefits [3]. Fitria and Mohammad's works show how AI can be effectively used in the EFL writing process, especially in brainstorming, outlining, and revising, which are usually difficult areas for the learners having problems with vocabulary range and grammar accuracy [4][5]. Still, criticizing authors like Baskara and Mukarto argue for a careful approach and point to the already outlined consequences of language uniformity, less student control, and the continuous cycle of mechanical writing that happen when AI is not properly used in conjunction with teaching methods [6]. Eshet-Alkalai's digital literacy model, whose dimensions have been redefined by Ng to fit present-day realities, comprises several facets e.g. photo-visual, reproduction, branching, information, and socio-emotional literacy, all of which are essential for AI-aided writing [7].

Particularly in Central Asian countries, the research dedicated to this area, among the others, showed by Djumabaeva the integration of technology in Uzbek schools, indicated that there are infrastructural limitations, untrained teachers in the use of digital pedagogies, and inconsistencies in access to internet connectivity which are all factors forbidding the best-case scenario to exist in [8]. The cognitive skills framework of Facione defines the skills involved in understanding, analyzing, judging, reasoning, and explaining; moreover, it shows self-regulation as the last step of this process. It then suggests the activities around AI-assisted writing structure [9]. When the learners do critical thinking through AI-generated content, they do it by evaluating, comparing the AI outputs with their own drafts, spotting and pinpointing the biases or inaccuracies, and making up their minds based on the

=====

suggestions provided. The teacher is faced with the problem, as claimed by Selwyn, that the students have to be placed in situations where AI is the tool for thinking rather than the thinking itself, the students are slowly brought into the intellectual engagement rather than replaced by the AI [10].

Results and discussion

Analysis of the literature reveals several key findings regarding the integration of generative AI tools into EFL writing instruction within contexts similar to Uzbekistan's educational environment. First, successful AI integration depends critically on explicit instructional frameworks that position AI as a collaborative tool rather than an autonomous solution. When learners are taught to use AI tools strategically—for generating ideas, exploring alternative phrasings, or receiving immediate grammatical feedback—while maintaining ownership of their writing process, outcomes demonstrate enhanced linguistic accuracy without compromising voice or critical engagement [4]. Conversely, unrestricted AI access without pedagogical mediation correlates with surface-level engagement, reduced revision effort, and limited transfer of skills to non-AI contexts. Second, digital literacy development requires intentional curriculum design that makes AI functionality transparent and subject to critical examination.

Effective approaches include comparative analysis activities where learners evaluate AI-generated texts against human-authored samples, identify limitations in AI understanding of context or cultural nuance, and develop criteria for assessing output quality. These metacognitive activities simultaneously develop writing skills and digital literacy competencies, preparing learners for technology-saturated professional environments. For Uzbek secondary learners, such instruction must account for varying levels of prior technological exposure and ensure equitable access to AI tools, potentially through school-based computer laboratories or mobile-optimized platforms that accommodate bandwidth limitations. Third, critical thinking integration emerges most effectively when AI tools are positioned as objects of inquiry rather than infallible authorities.

The discussion of these findings within the Uzbek context reveals both opportunities and challenges. Uzbekistan's national curriculum reforms, emphasizing communicative competence and learner-centered pedagogies, create conceptual space for innovative AI integration [2]. The country's young, digitally engaged population demonstrates readiness for technology-enhanced learning. However, significant implementation barriers persist, including insufficient technological infrastructure in rural schools, limited English

proficiency among teachers that constrains their ability to model sophisticated AI usage, and assessment systems that may not adequately capture the complex competencies developed through AI-mediated instruction [8].

Conclusion

The integration of generative AI tools into EFL writing instruction for Uzbek secondary school learners presents significant potential for developing both digital literacy and critical thinking skills when approached through carefully designed pedagogical frameworks. This analysis demonstrates that AI technologies should be positioned as cognitive tools that scaffold learning rather than replace genuine intellectual engagement, requiring explicit instruction in critical evaluation, strategic usage, and ethical considerations. For the Uzbek educational context, successful implementation necessitates addressing infrastructural constraints, investing in comprehensive teacher professional development, and adapting international best practices to local cultural-pedagogical realities. The development of digital literacy through AI-mediated writing instruction extends beyond technical competence to encompass critical evaluation of algorithmic outputs, understanding of AI limitations, and ethical reasoning about appropriate usage contexts. Similarly, critical thinking development requires pedagogical designs that position AI-generated content as objects of analysis rather than authoritative sources, encouraging learners to question, verify, and make informed decisions about incorporating AI assistance into their writing processes. Moving forward, Uzbek educational stakeholders should prioritize pilot programs that test various integration models, develop locally appropriate guidelines for AI usage in academic contexts, and create assessment frameworks that recognize the complex competencies developed through thoughtful AI engagement.

References

1. Kasneci, E., Sessler, and others, (2023). ChatGPT for good? On opportunities and challenges of large language models for education. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 103, 102274.
2. Hasanova, D., & Shadieva, T. (2021). Current issues of teaching English in Uzbekistan. *International Journal of Discourse on Innovation, Integration and Education*, 2(2), 136-141.

-
3. Warschauer, M., & Healey, D. (2023). AI-enhanced language learning. *Language Teaching*, 56(3), 341-358.
 4. Fitria, T. N. (2023). Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education: Using AI tools for teaching and learning process. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional & Call for Paper*, 3(1), 1-14.
 5. Mohammad, B. (2024). The impact of AI writing tools on EFL learners' writing proficiency and motivation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 58(1), 88-112.
 6. Baskara, R., & Mukarto, M. (2023). Integrating ChatGPT into EFL writing instruction: Opportunities and challenges. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 13(2), 293-306.
 7. Ng, W. (2012). Can we teach digital natives digital literacy? *Computers & Education*, 59(3), 1065-1078.
 8. Djumabaeva, J. (2022). Digital transformation of education in Uzbekistan: Challenges and prospects. *Central Asian Journal of Education*, 7(1), 45-59.
 9. Facione, P. A. (2011). Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts. *Insight Assessment*, 1(1), 1-28.
 10. Selwyn, N. (2024). Generative AI and education: Possibilities, problems, and propositions. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 55(1), 12-29.