

CHATGPT – A CHALLENGING WRITING ASSISTANT FOR STUDENTS

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Abstract: *The paper is concerned with the advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT in order to develop the students' writing skills within the English for Professional Communication seminar I hold at University Politehnica of Bucharest. As a midterm assignment for the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024, three groups of first-year Computer Science students were supposed to write a professional letter on the basis of the knowledge acquired during the semester. Anticipating that students would rely on ChatGPT in doing their assignment, I asked them to write two variants of the letter, one of their own, and another one with the help of the chatbot observing the same scenario and instructions. Moreover, they had to answer the following questions: Which variant sounds more natural?, Would you replace any part of your letter with what ChatGPT has produced? If your answer is "Yes", which is/are this/these part(s)? Why would you replace it/them? The assignment was meant to make the students use their writing and critical thinking skills by reflecting on the differences between their own texts and ChatGPT's textual output. The analysis of the assignments highlights the students' preference for the AI-generated letters for two main reasons: time efficiency and the high degree of language formality. However, students do not seem to be aware of the repetitive and limited pattern-like output ChatGPT produces when being fed on the same input of instructions, which contrasts with the infinite human creativity.*

Keywords: *ChatGPT; higher education; assignment; professional letters; writing skills; critical thinking; limitations;*

Introduction

Since its launch in 2022 ChatGPT has been a key tool in the teaching-learning process at all levels of education and whose popularity has grown exponentially due to its increasingly refined capacity to produce text on demand, quickly and efficiently. Its accelerated development, on the one hand, and the lack of common standards and regulations regarding its reasonable use, on the other hand, have led to excessive reliance on the chatbot when writing texts for different purposes. Within this context, teachers and students need to cooperate in order to find a balanced approach to this challenging application, taking into consideration not only its benefits but also its limitations.

The paper addresses ChatGPT as a controversial writing assistant for higher-education students underlining the need for a mutually agreed-upon framework which sets the healthy boundaries within which both teachers and students utilize this tool. Through a methodology combining the narrative literature review and a case study based on a personal pedagogical experience

with ChatGPT in an ESP setting, the study aims at answering three research questions: What are the positive and negative effects of the use of ChatGPT in higher education?, What was ChatGPT's impact on the *English for Professional Communication* seminar in the academic year 2023-2024? and What pedagogical strategies are there for enhancing the students' writing and critical thinking skills within the context of an extensive AI assistance with written assignments?

The structure of the paper is as follows: part I discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT in the teaching-learning process as noticed in higher education; part II analyzes the impact ChatGPT had on the *English for Professional Communication* seminar in the academic year 2023-2024; part III focuses on the strategies I used for developing the students' writing and critical thinking abilities using ChatGPT as an assistant for their assignments. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn on the elements of gain and loss we need to be aware of when we ask for ChatGPT's assistance with doing written assignments. Additionally, I will make suggestions for future research on ChatGPT's effects on the students' writing skills.

I. The impact of ChatGPT on the teaching-learning process in higher education

Chat GPT is a generative AI chatbot built on natural language processing and deep learning techniques capable of producing human-like text and conversations in real time on the basis of the user's input. Described by its creator Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, as "an incredible educator in our pocket" in March 2023, ChatGPT has become the main digital tool which is resorted to in higher education for generating text content with various teaching and learning purposes, thus confirming the professed accessibility of the application. Three years after its launch that took the academic world by surprise, the "friend or foe" perception of ChatGPT in the educational environment continues.

Warmly embraced by some while strongly rejected by others, the application has stirred serious ethical debates within universities and research institutes because of the lack of a common legal framework to regulate its use and to which the academia should adhere. Some higher education institutions have banned it, others have formulated their own rules regarding its use whereas others let the chatbot be around with no specific stance on the matter. Therefore, caught in between outstanding possibilities of use, misuses and abuses of such a versatile and powerful tool that develops so rapidly, teachers and students must find the middle way to experience education authentically and meaningfully. How is it possible to remain authentic and relevant on our educational journey when ChatGPT is here luring us into a world which "happens" in an instant as a result of our own instructions? There are as many

“worlds” as the users of the tool. But the content generated by the machine is not the outcome of the instructor’s work or passion but the output of data mixing underlying large language models like ChatGPT.

Undoubtedly, the advent of this technology stands for a revolutionizing moment in the history of education which will challenge not only our capacity to adapt to the changes that it brings about but also our will to hold on to some of the good educational practices of the pre-ChatGPT era.

Although the topic is recent, a lot has been written about the use of ChatGPT in higher education, which proves the unprecedented impact this type of AI has had upon all the participants in the teaching-learning process. Searching the most relevant literature on this subject on the basis of a string of keywords such as “the impact of ChatGPT on higher education”, I have noticed three main directions of analysis: the upsides and the downsides of using the chatbot in the educational sector, the pressing need for shared institutional policies on the responsible and ethical use of AI technologies and the urgent call for developing new teaching and evaluating strategies focused on human creativity, critical thinking and academic integrity. Despite the varying perceptions of ChatGPT across the educational environment, one thing is certain: the tool is here, and it is our responsibility to understand its potential for both positive and negative ends and to make sure that human rights and values lie at the core of our interaction with it.

Synthesizing information from various scholarly articles on the advantages and disadvantages of using AI tools such as ChatGPT in higher education, the following findings are relevant to the aim of this paper.

Optimist educators consider ChatGPT a valuable instrument that can enhance pedagogical as well as learning experiences creating a more inclusive, flexible and innovative educational environment. Among the major benefits of integrating the chatbot into the teaching and learning activities, scholars mention the easy and quick access to information, the variety of knowledge which can be accessed by prompting ChatGPT, planning of lessons, preparing teaching and assessment materials (Rathore), offering diverse pedagogical strategies and personalized learning opportunities (Heaven; Garcia Castro et al.).

ChatGPT may also increase administrative efficiency, support research processes and promote interactive learning for students (Mucharraz y Cano et al.; Chukwuere). As argued by different scholars, ChatGPT proves instrumental in developing critical thinking skills through student-chatbot conversations that give learners the opportunity to compare information and explore diverse perspectives and in assisting students in researching and writing tasks by generating ideas (Ilieva et al.; Moroianu et al.; Radeva).

According to Alier et al., other advantages of the chatbot are meeting the various individual needs of students and researchers in point of time,

distance, preferences, styles through permanent accessibility, providing feedback on progress and suggesting areas for improvement through personalized materials and resources. Similarly, Francisco et al. highlight ChatGPT's role as a personal tutor across subjects, adapted to each student's skills, interests and needs.

As far as educators are concerned, ChatGPT can reduce the teachers' workload by automating routine tasks (Chan and Tsi) and assist them in evaluating and grading the students' work, in identifying difficulties and in drawing up targeted intervention plans. Rudolph et al. argue that ChatGPT is a valuable tool that empowers teachers to introduce innovative teaching techniques and interactive learning activities such as the flipped classroom which encourages remote independent study. Another area where teachers may benefit from ChatGPT's assistance is syllabus, test and quiz design. In addition, the chatbot can generate presentations, questions and prompts based on the course content, which potentially develop the students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Atlas; Trust; Trust et al.; Kasneci et al.).

Scholars also emphasize that ChatGPT is a highly proficient translation tool that can be used to make educational content automatically available in different languages, even in less familiar ones (Jiao et al.; Grassini).

These are just a few of the roles that ChatGPT may assume in the educational setting with the promise of substantially improving the teaching-learning process and ultimately the quality of life for both teachers and students.

However, the use of generative AI technologies, particularly of ChatGPT, for educational purposes poses a lot of challenges and risks of which we need to be aware so as to be able to prevent or diminish their negative consequences. The scientific articles reviewed in this study highlight issues related to information accuracy, data security, academic integrity, technological dependence, decline in human creativity and in fundamental skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and argumentation and poor communication abilities.

Despite their remarkable capacity to produce diverse textual content in a human-like fashion, large language models such as ChatGPT cannot critically evaluate the huge datasets they have been trained on so the quality of their output may be affected (Grassini; Mucharraz y Cano et al.). If the datasets contain political, religious, racial, gender, fairness or other types of biases, the generative AI models "absorb" them and the unfiltered content they generate will include them as well (McGee; Rozado; Singh and Ramakrishnan). Thus, through this lack of critical assessment capacity, ChatGPT may turn into a harmful source of information especially for young

learners who tend to take for granted the output of the AI tool without checking it against other sources.

Besides biases, the presence of errors in the chatbot's responses has been noticed (Garcia Castro et al.), which may be traced back either to the inaccurate information in the internet databases the AI model is built on or to the chatbot's knowledge based on data prior to 2021. Therefore, ChatGPT's output often contains incorrect or fabricated information (Hern; Gravel et al.), the so-called AI hallucinations, regarding recent events and specialized subjects and this can be misleading for students whose primary source of information is the chatbot. It is expected that in the future, the more refined the generative AI models will get, the fewer their hallucinations will be (Alkaissi and McFarlane). However, for the time being, the most efficient method to combat the impact of these AI hallucinations on students is to encourage them to search for multiple sources and use their critical thinking skills when evaluating the quality of information.

Student plagiarism by means of AI writing tools is another aspect that worries educators worldwide. Making use of intellectual property without citing it appropriately is a serious ethical issue which affects the educational process. Different plagiarism-detection applications are used to scan the students' work for copied and pasted material in an attempt to break this widespread habit which is incompatible with the purpose of education. Having ChatGPT as a writing companion seems to be the "easiest way out" method of doing written schoolwork these days. Being capable of producing content which seems genuine with no visible track of the underlying sources, the chatbot evades the plagiarism-detection software, which makes it even more desirable for students as a writing assistant (Kahlil and Er).

It is expected that due to accelerated advancements in AI technology, the next versions of generative models will become more sophisticated and consequently we will need more powerful plagiarism-detection tools to spot AI-generated content (Grassini). In other words, academic dishonesty will take subtler forms which may transform the educational setting into an unproductive race where teachers compete with students in handling AI technologies with opposing purposes: detection of cheating vs evasion of cheating detection. Ultimately, it will become harder and harder for educators to distinguish between student-written and AI-generated content, which will have a negative impact on assessments too (Alarcón-Llontop et al.; Cotton et al.).

There are two categories of students: those who use ChatGPT to do their assignments and those who do not use it, so the former category will have an advantage over the latter one in point of the quality of their work. AI-generated or AI-enhanced output will be flawless in comparison with student-

written material, which will result in the teachers' difficulty in evaluating the students' assignments fairly.

Moreover, the students' real level of knowledge will remain obscure beyond the perfect appearance of the AI-generated work and the possibility of timely remedial intervention will decrease (Grassini). On the long term, unless clear guidelines of ethical use of AI tools are established in the educational settings, the easiness in the completion of school tasks and assignments with generative models like ChatGPT will increase the students' technological dependence making them passive recipients in the learning process (Alier et al.; Garcia Castro et al.).

As underlined in different articles reviewed, another area which is affected by the excessive reliance on ChatGPT in higher education is the development of fundamental skills such as critical thinking, research, analytical and argumentation abilities and creativity (Garcia Castro et al.). Getting instant answers from the chatbot to questions related to any domain looks extremely attractive and convenient to students who want to save time. Yet, taking for granted the AI generated content and not checking it against other sources of information narrows the students' perspective on different topics and affects their capacity to understand other, more nuanced, points of view. Activities such as essay writing, summarizing, analyzing, synthesizing, reviewing, among others, which used to require the students' attention, curiosity, effort and time are now completed by AI tools in a matter of seconds. When prompting ChatGPT to produce answers instead of working on tasks by themselves, students miss the opportunity to use core skills and, consequently, the opportunity to learn (Lancaster). In other words, assignments are becoming irrelevant since they do not test the students' capacity to apply their knowledge but their rapidness in having the tasks completed by the AI tool.

As various scholars have recently argued, the unregulated use of AI through clear policies and guidelines affects not only the teaching-learning process but also the teacher-student relationship which is a crucial factor that contributes to educational success (Luo). Naturally, there should be mutual trust between teachers and students. However, trust is compromised when teachers suspect students of doing their assignments with ChatGPT or when students are mistakenly accused of AI cheating because an anti-plagiarism software shows a high AI score. Feelings of frustration, uselessness, defensiveness, vulnerability, unfairness or distress may lead to the "erosion of trust" (Gratiot) between the two parties, which creates a hostile learning environment. Within higher education, building trust in the age of generative AI is a complex mission which entails not only institutional policies but also the commitment of teachers and students to being open and transparent to one another in their joint effort to use AI tools ethically and responsibly (Plé).

The extensive usage of ChatGPT may limit the students' communication and interaction with teachers and colleagues (García-Peñalvo et al.). Since chatbots lack emotional intelligence, they are incapable of responding appropriately to the students' emotional states as a human being would do, which results in isolation, school disengagement and demotivation (Chukwuere). As highlighted by Ryan and Deci, besides autonomy and competence, relatedness is another fundamental psychological need that the educational environment should meet so that students thrive and feel part of a community. These needs are satisfied only through genuine human interaction which entails tuning in to the other's emotions, being aware of the other's abilities and understanding the other's perspective. Thus, replacing human with chatbot interaction has a negative impact on the students' interpersonal skills and on their emotional well-being.

Student data security and privacy represent another major concern that higher education needs to address (Grassini; Chukwuere). The lack of shared protocols and of ethical awareness regarding the integration of AI generative models in the educational environment may expose users to serious risks such as data breaches, unauthorized access to private information or the use of data for other purposes than education (Kasneci et al.). The most vulnerable utilizers are the students who may accidentally disclose sensitive information about themselves in their interactions with the AI tools. As noticed by Tlili et al., there is a discrepancy between OpenAI's position and ChatGPT's answer regarding the storage and use of conversations between users and the chatbot. OpenAI's official webpage (<https://help.openai.com/en/articles/6783457-chatgpt-faq>) mentions that conversations with ChatGPT are recorded and analyzed for further improvement of the tool while ChatGPT states that it is not able to retain or to use any of the conversations with individual users. Therefore, as educators, we must raise the young users' awareness that handling AI tools requires responsibility and caution so as to prevent or minimize the risks they may pose.

Given the controversial potential of generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT, educators across the world emphasize the urgent need for providing both teachers and students with technological training regarding the responsible and ethical use of these tools in the academic environment (Alarcón-Llontop et al.; Garcia Castro et al.; García-Peñalvo et al.; Chukwuere). Teachers need to acquire solid technical skills in order to be able to guide students in the process of incorporating AI into their schoolwork in a healthy manner and to evaluate the information presented by students in an accurate way.

Additionally, educators have to redefine plagiarism considering the current AI capabilities that make possible very subtle forms of academic dishonesty and develop new assessment methods for reducing the risk of

plagiarism attempts (Lancaster; Grassini; Cotton et al.). To counterbalance the students' immersion in ChatGPT for completing their assignments, teachers should design and implement educational activities and assessments that promote the development of critical thinking, problem-solving and communication skills and encourage students to use their creativity and originality in approaching different topics.

However, increasing the teachers' technological literacy and updating their perspectives on academic cheating and their strategies for minimizing AI fraud are not enough. It is critical to develop institutional policies and procedures that establish the boundaries within which AI is to be used for educational purposes promoting academic integrity, student privacy and information security. Such a common ethical framework of reference (Maboloc), if adhered to by higher education institutions, would make the integration of AI technologies into the teaching-learning process safer and smoother, at the same time protecting the individuals' rights.

The idea of a shared stance on the use of AI and its impact on society dates back to November 2021 when UNESCO released the *Recommendation on the Ethics of AI*, adopted by 193 member states, thus setting the first global framework within which AI systems and their ethical implications should be understood. The document approaches the ethics of AI from a human rights perspective emphasizing that the development of AI technologies should benefit humanity, individuals, societies and the environment. To meet these requirements, member states should provide appropriate education to the public regarding the AI potential and risks through accessible training, interdisciplinary expert teams, civic engagement and research on ethical AI.

Building on its previous recommendation, in 2023, UNESCO issued another document entitled *Guidance for Generative AI in Education and Research* in response to the unprecedented development of GenAI tools and their impact on education. Having the protection of human rights at its core, the Guidance is meant to help governmental agencies to plan and implement regulations regarding the ethical use of generative AI by teachers, students and researchers, so as to maximize its benefits and minimize its risks.

Published in April 2023 as a reaction to the enormous success of OpenAI's chatbot, *ChatGPT and Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Quick start guide* is UNESCO'S third document on generative AI which particularly addresses the applications of ChatGPT as well as its challenges and ethical implications in the academic environment. The Quick Start Guide explains what ChatGPT is and how it may be used in the teaching-learning process and highlights the controversies which arise from its unregulated status. In this respect, the document provides higher education institutions with practical guidelines for integrating ChatGPT appropriately and ethically into their activities. "Care", "creativity" and "capacity to understand" are the

key concepts underlying a healthy approach to using ChatGPT in order to enjoy the benefits and prevent the risks it entails. The following are some of the critical steps that should be taken at the institutional level: discussing the impact of ChatGPT with teachers, administrative staff and students and developing joint strategies to accommodate it in the educational setting; guiding teachers and students on the use of ChatGPT within ethical standards they share; reviewing and adjusting the assessment methods in connection with the updated meaning of AI plagiarism; supporting the development of AI literacy, AI ethics and fundamental AI skills that enhance the teachers' and students' capacity to understand and manage the impact of AI technologies in the educational process.

Despite the existence of such documents that offer clear guidelines on how to integrate the use of AI tools into the academic environment, there is no common framework of reference that higher education institutions have adhered to and implemented worldwide. This lack of shared protocols regarding the use of AI creates opportunities for undetected plagiarism, undermines the relationship between teachers and students and affects the quality of education overall.

II. ChatGPT and the *English for Professional Communication* seminar

My experience in dealing with ChatGPT's impact on my first-year Computer Science students started soon after the launch of the application in November 2022. Students were curious to discover what the amazing tool could do and tested it for different purposes ranging from writing code to writing PowerPoint presentations on various topics and shared their discoveries with me. The major strength of the chatbot they pointed out was how fast it worked and consequently how quickly they could have their assignments done, especially when they were overwhelmed by schoolwork. Nothing was mentioned about the quality of the data provided by ChatGPT or about checking it against other sources of information. Therefore, the advantage of resolving tasks rapidly made them overlook other aspects of the issue such as plagiarism, the possible presence of errors in the content generated by the chatbot, the security of the data they introduced in their prompts etc.

Given the exciting potential of the AI tool for students and the lack of an official institutional position on the matter at that moment, I considered that an open discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT in their learning activity was appropriate. My goal was to raise the students' ethical awareness of the multiple facets of the chatbot starting from understanding that digital tools of this kind should be handled with caution and responsibility. Hearing the students' voice on the use of ChatGPT and expressing my own views and worries related to its impact on education created an honest dialogue space in which we felt partners and not opponents.

For the last two years, such discussions during the *English for Professional Communication* seminars have been a constant strategy for practicing critical thinking and argumentation skills, for keeping up to date with the latest features of the chatbot and for strengthening the teacher-student relationship. On the basis of the seminar activities in which my students (both 1st and 2nd year) have used ChatGPT, I have noticed the following positive aspects: the chatbot can support individual learning, for instance, helping students to train for a job interview or to prepare the content of a presentation; it may explain complex concepts, which facilitates understanding; the chatbot's textual output can be used as a term of comparison for human generated texts based on similar requirements, which may be a source of vocabulary enrichment for students. On the other hand, among the disadvantages of using ChatGPT, the most significant are: students tend to internalize the AI generated content without checking it against other sources; the chatbot may support plagiarism as students do not associate it with an author so they do not cite it as a source of information; it may encourage the students' lack of responsibility and authorship; the constant use of the chatbot for solving school tasks very quickly may have a negative impact on the students' level of knowledge and patience.

Pondering together on the elements of gain and loss when adopting AI technologies for educational purposes seems to be a reasonable approach to such a controversial topic, yet it is not enough. Teachers and students need an institutional framework of reference for regulating the use of digital tools such as ChatGPT, thus preventing or minimizing its abusive utilization.

III. ChatGPT as an assignment writing assistant

As highlighted in the literature review in the first section of the paper, written assignments represent the area most affected by the use of ChatGPT in the students' activity. For the last two years all the written assignments my students had to complete for the *English for Professional Communication* seminar have been AI enhanced in one way or another. Despite our open discussions on the ethical implications of AI cheating, it seems that the students' need to do things fast, with very little effort, is stronger than the need to be honest. Even after showing them how to reference ChatGPT in a reference list of a paper, some students still have difficulty in acknowledging the presence of AI in their work. Not having an official framework within which instances of AI plagiarism are sanctioned and their authors are held responsible, all we can do as teachers is to point out the AI elements and have a conversation with the students on the reasons for resorting to the chatbot and what they have learned from prompting it for that assignment. Whether we speak about essays, summaries, reports, abstracts, presentations or short

documents such as letters, e-mails and memos, they are partially or entirely AI-generated and this has become the norm.

Given the current situation in which students are constantly AI-assisted in doing their schoolwork, my only option has been to adjust the requirements of the written assignments or to add an oral component that may enable students to reflect on their work and argue in support of their choices, thus developing their critical thinking and communication skills, among others. Rather than resist the use of ChatGPT in written assignments, I took what Mucharraz y Cano called “adaptive approach” to integrating AI tools into the English seminar. Moreover, following Shestakova, I considered this assignment an opportunity for students to improve their formal written style with the help of ChatGPT. This type of assignment which combines a written component with self-reflection on the written text in comparison with the AI-generated text was applied to the first-year Computer Science students for the midterm assessment during the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024.

The assignment was based on the unit *Writing Short Documents* (*English for Professional Communication* textbook), in which students had learned how to write different types of professional letters. Being aware that they could easily have the assignment entirely done by ChatGPT, I made the requirements more complex by asking them to appeal to the chatbot’s assistance but with a critical stance. They were supposed to compare their letter with the letter generated by ChatGPT based on the same instructions.

The assignment requirements were the following:

- 1) *Write one of the letters A (letter of complaint) or B (letter of inquiry) in Task 12, pp. 77-78, Unit 4, English for Professional Communication textbook.*
- 2) *Ask ChatGPT to write the letter you have chosen by feeding it on the same scenario you used in Task 12. At the end of the letter, you should mention the date and hour when you accessed the chat.*
- 3) *On the basis of the two variants you have got, answer the following questions:*
 - a) *Which variant sounds more natural?*
 - b) *Would you replace any part of your letter with what ChatGPT has produced? If your answer is “yes”, which is/are this/these part(s)? Why would you replace it/them?*

To illustrate what ChatGPT produced in response to the students’ prompts, I chose a few excerpts from the AI-generated letters that I will discuss in relation to the answers provided by the students in the self-reflection analysis of their letters.

1) *In an attempt to rectify the situation, SYSAFE Ltd.'s service representatives made two adjustment attempts in April and three more in June. Regrettably, these efforts proved futile, as the printer continues to exhibit erratic behavior, (...). I trust that as a reputable provider of printing solutions, SYSAFE Ltd. will prioritize customer satisfaction and promptly address this matter to ensure a swift resolution. (12/5/2024, 1:26 PM)*

2) *Regrettably, the printer is now experiencing problems again, leading me to conclude that it is indeed a defective machine. Considering the repeated attempts to rectify the situation and the ongoing malfunctioning of the printer, I kindly request that SYSAFE Ltd. replaces the faulty printer with a functioning one at the earliest convenience. (May 10th, 19:29 PM)*

3) *Despite repeated attempts by SYSAFE Ltd. service representatives to rectify the issues, including adjustments made twice in April and three times in June, the printer continues to malfunction. Regrettably, it is now experiencing problems once again (...) I trust that your company will take swift action to address this matter and ensure my satisfaction as a valued customer. (12.05.2024, 10:33)*

4) *Regrettably, the issues persist, and the printer is once again failing to perform as expected. (...) [I]t is evident that the printer is a defective machine, and the repeated attempts to rectify its faults have been unsuccessful. (...) I trust that you will understand the urgency of this matter and take swift action to resolve it. I appreciate your attention to this issue and look forward to a prompt resolution. (11 May 2024, 13:13)*

5) *Regrettably, the printer is once again not functioning properly. It is evident that the printer is a defective machine, and its consistent malfunctioning has significantly disrupted my workflow. (...) Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to a swift resolution and the replacement of the faulty printer. (12.05.2024)*

In what follows, I selected some of the students' opinions on the two versions of the letter which highlight the evaluation criteria they used in comparing the texts:

1) *The version written by me sounds more natural. I would replace my first part of the letter with the first two paragraphs written by ChatGPT, because the language is more elevated and the issue is explained in a more formal way. Thus, the reader's attention would be captured easily because the starting part sounds more serious.*

2) *My initial letter sounds more natural, because even if it tries to be a formal letter, it still has some informal language inside it. I would try to merge the two letters by adding more formal language that ChatGPT came up with,*

because I think the letter provided by ChatGPT is a more complete and more formal letter of complaint than the one I wrote.

3) It is obvious that the first version sounds more natural, because of the creative details that I have added. I would replace some parts of my letter with what the AI has produced. For example, the third paragraph is much more direct and clearly stated by ChatGPT, so I would be inclined to use his phrasing instead of mine.

4) My variant sounds more natural. I wouldn't replace any parts of my letter with what ChatGPT has produced, but rather I would add more details, inspired by what ChatGPT wrote additionally compared to my variant.

5) I am satisfied with what I wrote, but if I were to replace anything from it with what ChatGPT has produced, I think I could borrow some more formal words from the text generated. I do think my letter is well written, especially because I used the right structure in comparison to what ChatGPT came up with, but, on the other hand, reading the letter generated by AI made me realize I could incorporate some words ChatGPT mentioned, and also add them to my vocabulary for future use. I sincerely believe that AI is an excellent tool but that it can't do great things on its own.

Looking at the AI-generated letters and the students' answers in the self-reflection analysis of the texts, the degree of formality seems to be the main criterion underlying the comparison between the two versions. Although their letters sound more natural, the students tend to prefer the version produced by ChatGPT due to its formal language in terms of vocabulary as well as phrasing. Consequently, most of them would replace certain parts of their letter with the corresponding structures generated by the chatbot to make it more professional.

Besides the questions that stimulated the students' written argumentation of their choices, the oral component of discussing the two versions of the letter in a feedback session helped the students engage in an open dialogue on the gains and losses of AI writing. I showed them several letters generated by the chatbot using the same prompts and they immediately noticed how much they resembled one another. Formal structures such as “to rectify the situation/ the issues/ its faults”, “swift action/ resolution”, “defective machine”, “to malfunction” to name a few are constantly used in ChatGPT's letters in similar positions in the text, which creates a repetitive pattern. This pattern is visible only if you can have access to more samples in parallel at the same time, which is exactly what a teacher does when checking the students' AI generated assignments. Seeing the texts from the teacher's position made students aware of how similar their assignments looked, as if they were copies of one another. This could count as an instance of plagiarism

but not having a framework of reference for making the authors accountable, the problem remains unsolved.

This type of assessment with two components, written and oral, was an appropriate strategy for enhancing the AI contribution through a human critical filter. Students understood that they should not rely entirely on the chatbot's assistance as its pattern-like thinking is limitative and the output it generates based on the same input is repetitive. Such a conclusion reminds me of Chomsky's reaction to the humanlike capabilities of thinking and using language promised by ChatGPT's creators in 2023:

“AI minds differ profoundly from how humans reason and use language (...) they lack intellectual insight, artistic creativity and every other distinctive human faculty” (8).

Conclusions

The current examination of the multiple facets of ChatGPT leads to the conclusion that extreme reactions to its use are not healthy. As confirmed by the literature review in the first section of the paper, over-reliance on the chatbot's capabilities without “critical filtering” is as harmful as denying its potential without understanding it. Finding a balanced approach to integrating AI technologies into the teaching-learning process benefits all parties concerned if certain conditions are met. Firstly, higher education institutions need to establish policies that regulate the use of AI and protect teachers and students from undesirable effects of improper utilization. Secondly, higher education institutions have to provide teachers and students with appropriate technical and ethical training related to AI technologies and facilitate the process of adaptation to an AI-based education. Thirdly, teachers and students should collaborate and find effective strategies for making maximum positive use of AI tools and mitigating their negative outcomes.

The discussion of the impact of ChatGPT on the *English for Professional Communication* seminar in the second part of the paper and the case study dealt with in the third part highlight that ChatGPT is the students' constant writing assistant and therefore written assignments as a form of evaluation become irrelevant unless teachers combine them with other assessment methods. Being based on a personal pedagogical experience with ChatGPT, the study has several methodological limitations: there were only three groups of students whose written assignments were analysed, so the sample under consideration was too small for a systematic analysis; there was just one type of text examined, professional letters; the study was conducted over a short period of time, the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024. Despite these limitations, the present study offers valuable insights into the students' motivation for preferring the chatbot's texts to their own and into

possible teaching strategies for developing the students' writing and critical thinking abilities while being assisted by ChatGPT.

This case study may be the starting point for future research into ChatGPT's impact on the students' writing skills. For instance, the study may be extended to a quantitative survey of a larger group of students (e.g. all the first-year Computer Science undergraduates), who should complete the same type of written assignment. The data collected from the students' assignments could be compared with the data provided by questionnaires focused on the students' acknowledgement of using ChatGPT in view of identifying possible discrepancies. Another direction of research could be a longitudinal study aimed at observing the long-term effects of the use of ChatGPT on the writing skills of the same group of students along the bachelor's studies. Future research may also explore whether the introduction of official AI regulations in higher education settings influences the students' behaviour related to the use of ChatGPT in written assignments.

Drawing a more personal conclusion, the experience of the last two years having ChatGPT around my students at the *English for Professional Communication* seminar has taught me a lesson about my own capacity to adapt, to understand and to learn. Adapting to the extremely rapid pace of technology development may be challenging but my Computer Science students have shared a lot of their knowledge about the field with me. Understanding the context of their digital generation that is accustomed to doing things fast and with little effort at all costs can be difficult. Yet, I have realized that my role as a teacher is exactly to show them that things can be done more slowly, with more work but honestly, which will result in their personal growth in the long run. Learning about ChatGPT and its capabilities and risks has given me a sense of keeping up with the technological side of the world around me and has strengthened my belief that our interaction with AI tools should be grounded in critical thinking.

One final observation on the use of ChatGPT as an assignment writing assistant is that it can be of help to students only if combined with a self-reflection analysis and an oral component which stimulate critical thinking and argumentation skills. As noticed in the assessment activity, students preferred the AI-generated letters to the ones they wrote for reasons related to language formality, clarity and efficiency. However, they did not seem to be aware that ChatGPT's output was highly repetitive and not so creative. Discussing these aspects in the feedback session gave students the opportunity to understand that they should not assume authorship of the AI-generated content. Instead, they should compare their texts with the artificial ones and critically assess the "borrowings" from the chatbot, whether formal words or phrasing. Such an approach may prevent the students' copy and paste tendency raising their awareness of the choices they can make and their consequences.

Honesty and responsibility regarding the use of AI technologies are values whose constant cultivation will have a positive impact not only on our students' education but also on their profession.

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