Feedback fatigue: Can AI save us from ever more marking?

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The benefits of feedback:

- provides writers with a sense of audience
- gives opportunities for students to learn from the expectations of readers
- offers the assistance of an expert, guiding a novice
- points forward to other texts students will write,
- supports targeted classroom instruction

So teachers are now expected to give:

- more, more personalised, more detailed, and more timely responses to students,
- feedback that encourages student engagement and
- feedback that contains do-able recommendations for improvement.

Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) and Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) promise to rescue teachers from these demands. I will focus on 5 questions:

1. Is it accurate? Does it give correct and consistent advice on writing?
2. Is it useful? Can it support students in different disciplines?
3. Is it empathetic? Can it give critical feedback gently but effectively?
4. Is it trusted and valued? Are learners and teachers willing to accept it?
5. Is it educational? Does it produce better writers or just better texts?

I should warn you that there are no final answers to these questions ----yet.

Research shows mixed results on the effectiveness of AI on feedback

- ***Positive Outcomes***: AI feedback can lead to improvements in grammar and organization in writing.
- ***Comparative Studies***: While AI can provide more and more balanced feedback, this is often impersonal, vague and limited to surface issues, Human feedback provides deeper insights, pragmatic advice and more nuanced critiques.
- ***User Experience***: The effectiveness of AI feedback can also depend on students digital literacy skills and level of engagement with feedback. Students who actively reflect on AI suggestions benefit more.

But feedback is more than advice on texts. It is a dialogue between students and teachers to encourage reflection and growth. To best help students develop their writing skills we should consider using AI in conjunction with human feedback and student self-reflection.

A Teacher-AI partnership may look like this:

1. **Scaffolded Writing Tasks**
   Teachers let students write a first draft, get AI feedback, then hold a mini-lesson on common errors before students revise. AI becomes a teaching tool not just a fixer.
2. **Error Analysis Activities**
   Students get AI feedback and then categorize their errors (e.g., verb tense, word order). Over time, they build an awareness of language and their weaknesses.
3. **AI as a "Writing Coach"**
   Some teachers set up ChatGPT as a coach students can "talk to" about

how to improve clarity, structure, or argument in their essays. This interactive format helps students think metacognitively.

This balanced approach not only promises better quality feedback, but encourages student agency and critical AI literacy. Encouraging students to use AI effectively while understanding its limitations.

If you would like to follow up any of the studies mentioned, here are the references:

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