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An Exploratory case study of generative AI in supporting EFL students' written communicative competence

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Abstract
Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is rapidly transforming academic writing practices, raising concerns about its role in supporting the development of communicative competence. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where students often struggle to produce socially appropriate and contextually coherent texts, GenAI tools such as ChatGPT offer immediate linguistic support, model texts, and feedback. Despite the growing use of GenAI tools, limited classroom-based evidence exists on how GenAI supports EFL students' written communicative competence in authentic tasks. This qualitative case study investigates the role of ChatGPT-5 in supporting EFL university students' written communicative competence in an email-writing task and examines how teachers mediate AI-assisted learning. The study involved thirty-nine second-year Indonesian university students. Data were collected from students' email drafts, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and learning artifacts, including screen captures and peer feedback. The findings indicate that students demonstrated development in sociolinguistic and discourse competence, particularly in refining tone, applying appropriate politeness strategies, and improving cohesion and coherence in their written texts. Even though ChatGPT played a role in these changes, but it was not the only thing that contributed. The results are affected by the combination of AI-generated input, teacher guidance, peer feedback, and students' ability to think critically about the AI's suggestions. This suggests that pedagogical mediation is very important for helping students develop their communicative competence when they use AI.

Keywords: *ChatGPT-5, communicative competence, EFL writing, Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), higher education.*

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Introduction

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is referred to as deep learning models trained on large datasets to identify patterns and generate original human-like text and content (Habibi et al., 2023). It has begun to revolutionize educational settings around the world, especially in the writing process. The change is especially apparent when it comes to learning in the second and foreign languages. Tools like ChatGPT and other GenAI provide students with quick access to texts, feedback on their language, and help with revisions, which mirrors the great advancement of the use of AI in educational settings (Chiu et al., 2023; Hwang et al., 2020). While these affordances offer an innovative way for the writing process improvement, they also become the major debate about whether such a tool could really facilitate any improvement in students' written communication or just make them overly reliant on its instant feedback. This issue is especially concerning for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, as

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the EFL students encounter not only the grammatical accuracy of their written content, but also have to be able to tailor their written works to the target audience's expectations.

To fully comprehend this evolving landscape, the notion of communicative competence must be broadened through theoretical frameworks that consider both human cognition and machine interaction. Hymes (1966) initially asserted that effective communication depends not solely on linguistic competence but also on sociolinguistic awareness. Afterward, scholars added that identifying grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competencies is the foundational pillar of coherent communication (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). To implement these principles, Bachman (1990) introduced a model that systematically classifies sociolinguistic and discourse competence as pragmatic and organizational knowledge as the Communicative Language Ability. So that, when GenAI joins this paradigm, the writing process itself shifts from a solitary cognitive process into a socially mediated process of distributed cognition, that referred to as Paradigm Two (Ouyang & Jiao, 2021). In this paradigm, AI serves as a technological intermediary where the students no longer need to produce their work from scratch independently.

Because GenAI largely automates the accuracy of sentences, the cognitive burden of writing shifts directly toward social appropriateness and extended logical flow. This shift makes the sociolinguistic competence of the students become the integral part of it. Sociolinguistic competence itself is the ability to follow sociocultural conventions to say things that are appropriate for certain social situations (Canale & Swain, 1980). Thus, this skill is very important in the writing process as the human filter of the computational output that often gives generic answers that do not take into account power dynamics, cultural norms, or nuanced professional registers. Meanwhile, discourse competency, or the ability to put together linguistic forms and meanings to make a writing that makes sense as a whole (Canale, 1983), becomes another important point. As AI can fix small mistakes in the writing content, it frequently struggles to comprehend the overall framework of an argument over long periods. Therefore, students need to oversee their writing based on these two competencies, so that it can become grammatically correct and also make sense in the overall context. Xi (2025) corroborates this by placing students as the active agents who negotiate meaning by actively interpreting and purposefully modifying AI outputs to satisfy specific communicative intents.

Emerging research illustrates this intricate connection, demonstrating that GenAI may facilitate effective writing development through feedback, drafting support, and revision. For instance, Polakova and Ivenz (2024) elucidated that ChatGPT feedback enhanced EFL students' writing development. Moreover, Mekheimer (2025) noted that upon receiving feedback from the AI, students' writing quality improved through the increasing frequency of the revision. In the same vein, Michel et al. (2025) found that interacting directly with GenAI alters the way students approach the drafting and revision process. To conclude, the text generated by these tools actually serves as an effective, practical model for learning specific writing genres (de Oliveira & dos Santos, 2025). However, Wang (2024) and Yang & Lin (2025) found that students' engagement with such tools is rarely straightforward, but there are several factors that promote students' engagement with AI, including cognitive and sociocultural aspects, as well as adaptable and multilingual approaches such as translanguaging.

Despite these technology enhancements, there remains an inadequate study investigating GenAI in language education, specifically within the writing process in the EFL context. Current research

investigations anchor their findings in performance metrics and affective states, primarily documenting the impacts of AI on students' grades, perspectives, and willingness to communicate (Polakova & Ivenz, 2024; Wang, 2024; Yang & Lin, 2025). Moreover, systematic and scoping reviews reveal a paucity of classroom-based evidence regarding GenAI's facilitation of situated language usage and communicative competence in authentic circumstances (Lee et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2025). Additionally, the role of teachers in AI-mediated learning remains little investigated. Studies related to GenAI are frequently presented as an autonomous source of assistance. Ji et al. (2023) stated that conversational AI must be contextualized within its collaboration with the teachers. In a similar line, Liu (2025) added that teachers have to be equipped with AI literacy to enable students' critical engagement with AI-generated content. Furthermore, Zhai (2025) argued that GenAI is transforming teacher roles by necessitating new forms of pedagogical judgment and ethical awareness. These perspectives suggest that teachers play a crucial role in mediating the use of GenAI in language learning, especially in enhancing students' ability to differentiate between fluent language and contextually appropriate communication. Consequently, there remains a gap in the empirical understanding of students' utilization, evaluation, and adaptation of AI-generated language throughout authentic writing tasks, alongside the methods by which teachers mediate this whole process in a classroom setting within the Indonesian context.

To fill this gap, the current study tries to contribute to investigating the deployment of ChatGPT-5 to scaffold the written communicative competence of university-level EFL students during an authentic professional email-writing assignment in the classroom context. This activity requires students to make complex decisions regarding tone, interpersonal distance, politeness markers, and structural flow. Even though AI may rapidly provide a syntactically exquisite email template, the process by which students comprehend and modify that input in order to adhere to the target readers' expectations remains mostly unclear. Addressing this issue requires an approach that recognizes the interactive and situated nature of communicative development, rather than concentrating merely on isolated textual outcomes. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How does ChatGPT-5 suport the development of the sociolinguistic and discourse competence of the EFL students?
2. How does the teacher do in mediating students' engagement with AI-generated language in EFL writing instruction?

Method

This research utilized an exploratory case study to investigate the function of GenAI in improving written communicative competence among university students who study English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study focused on an authentic email writing task while concurrently examining the teacher's mediation of students' engagement with AI-generated texts. Selecting this particular methodological design facilitated a comprehensive examination of a predominantly unrecorded occurrence inside a natural classroom environment, successfully documenting the practical negotiation and development of communicative abilities (Yin, 2018).

The study comprised 39 second-year undergraduates, consisting of 29 females and 10 males, enrolled in a professional writing course at an Indonesian university. To ensure the cohort was appropriately suited for the research goals, participants were chosen based on three distinct criteria.

These included: (1) active enrollment in a second-year English writing course, (2) having prior experience in paragraph composition, and (3) possessing no previous exposure to ChatGPT-5 within formal writing instruction. The choice to focus on second-year students was influenced by the institutional curriculum framework. During their first year, these students focused entirely on constructing basic paragraphs and generating coherent text. Their second-year curriculum deliberately shifts to applying these foundational skills toward professional contexts aimed at genuine audiences. Targeting this exact developmental phase provided an ideal opportunity for students to critically engage with sociolinguistic and discourse elements before they advance to the highly complex research and thesis writing required in their subsequent years.

Addressing a practical academic need, the core instructional task required participants to compose an email directed to the corresponding author of an academic publication to request a complimentary copy of their work. This exercise provided a highly authentic communicative scenario that necessitated careful consideration of tone, politeness, audience awareness, and textual organization, which are all fundamental components of sociolinguistic and discourse competence. During the exercise, ChatGPT-5 functioned as a tool for drafting and revising, rather than operating as an independent content generator. The pedagogical sequence began with the educator outlining the communicative objectives and structural norms associated with professional emails. Students were then instructed to produce initial model language via the artificial intelligence platform. Subsequently, they critically assessed the algorithmic output, paraphrased the material to reflect their authentic intentions, and refined their writing through peer evaluation and teacher feedback prior to submitting their finalized documents after a similarity review.

To develop an in-depth understanding of the learning trajectory, evidence was collected from various sources, including the actual student email drafts that could be accessed online, direct classroom observations, and digital artifacts like screen captures of their software interactions in ChatGPT-5 alongside online peer feedback tracks. Seeking a more detailed perspective, the researchers applied purposive sampling to identify eight highly engaged individuals, balancing the group equally with four male and four female students. This purposeful selection guaranteed the incorporation of information-rich cases offering varied and contextually deep viewpoints. Concurrently, a semi-structured interview was arranged with the classroom teacher to explore their teaching strategies and mediation techniques. Each conversation spanned roughly 60 to 90 minutes, took place in Indonesia, to encourage natural expression, and was subsequently transcribed in full. All standard ethical guidelines were rigorously maintained, including the acquisition of informed consent and the utilization of pseudonyms for all involved parties.

The collected materials underwent examination through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This evaluative phase was intricately connected to the foundational communicative competence (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980), consistently prioritizing sociolinguistic and discourse elements. Analysts familiarized themselves deeply with the raw text before engaging in a blend of inductive and deductive coding. Information was systematically categorized using specific competence markers, notably politeness, tone, cohesion, and coherence. In line with this, the researchers also identified distinct pedagogical mediation habits and evaluated how holistic communication skills progressed through the dynamic interplay between the student, the ChatGPT-5 system, peer feedback, and the teacher mediation. Ultimately, to ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the study relied on extensive data triangulation across all interviews, observations, and collected artifacts, supported by thorough peer debriefing and an ongoing iterative review of the coding framework.

Results and Discussion

These results indicate that students' utilization of ChatGPT-5 in email composition evolved across three interrelated dimensions: sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and teacher-facilitated engagement with AI-generated language. In these dimensions, students did not just use AI output as a final product, but they also evaluated, adapted, and revised it to fit their needs for communication and target readers' expectations.

ChatGPT-5 and the Development of Communicative Competence

Sociolinguistic competence: Calibrating tone, politeness, and cultural appropriateness

Evidence of sociolinguistic development emerged in students' ability to carefully manage tone, politeness, and the suitability of their email composition for the audience's expectations. ChatGPT-5 provided the baseline models for professional correspondence; however, the participants consistently refrained from using these digital outputs directly. Instead, they went through a critical evaluation process to see if the language they made really fit their academic audience and the context. Furthermore, classroom observation showed that students were actively avoiding just copying and pasting the email from ChatGPT's output. They looked closely at the sentences that were provided to them and carefully chose how well they fit in with their context. This active evaluation was further supported by interviews with the students, which showed how students mostly used ChatGPT-5 to check their drafts against the requirements they were supposed to meet related to the norms and politeness in international academic communication. The following excerpts reflect the aforementioned point:

> *"…I use ChatGPT to check if my sentences are written correctly when I write emails. The fact that Indonesia's culture is different from that of other countries made me worry that my answers would be overly rude or too personal for them…" (**Student 8**)*

> *"…I always use ChatGPT before I write because I am not sure whether what I write is polite or not for an academic context…" (**Student 6**)*

These excerpts provide evidence that ChatGPT-5 was predominantly used as a cultural and linguistic sounding board. By using the GenAI, students improved their sociolinguistic competence by using an adaptive and highly evaluative way of looking at its output. So that the student carefully assessed the output created by the AI and purposefully revised their language to align with the professional communication standards to fulfill the academic audience's expectations. Figure 1 shows a specific conversation that captured a student's cognitive process where the student improved their email introduction using ChatGPT-5. In this case, the student purposefully removed casual conversation and small talk from the draft to make it much more concise and more acceptable in international academic norms. These deliberate alterations demonstrate that sociolinguistic competency was not passively learned but actively performed through the ongoing evaluation and refinement of language within the authentic social context.

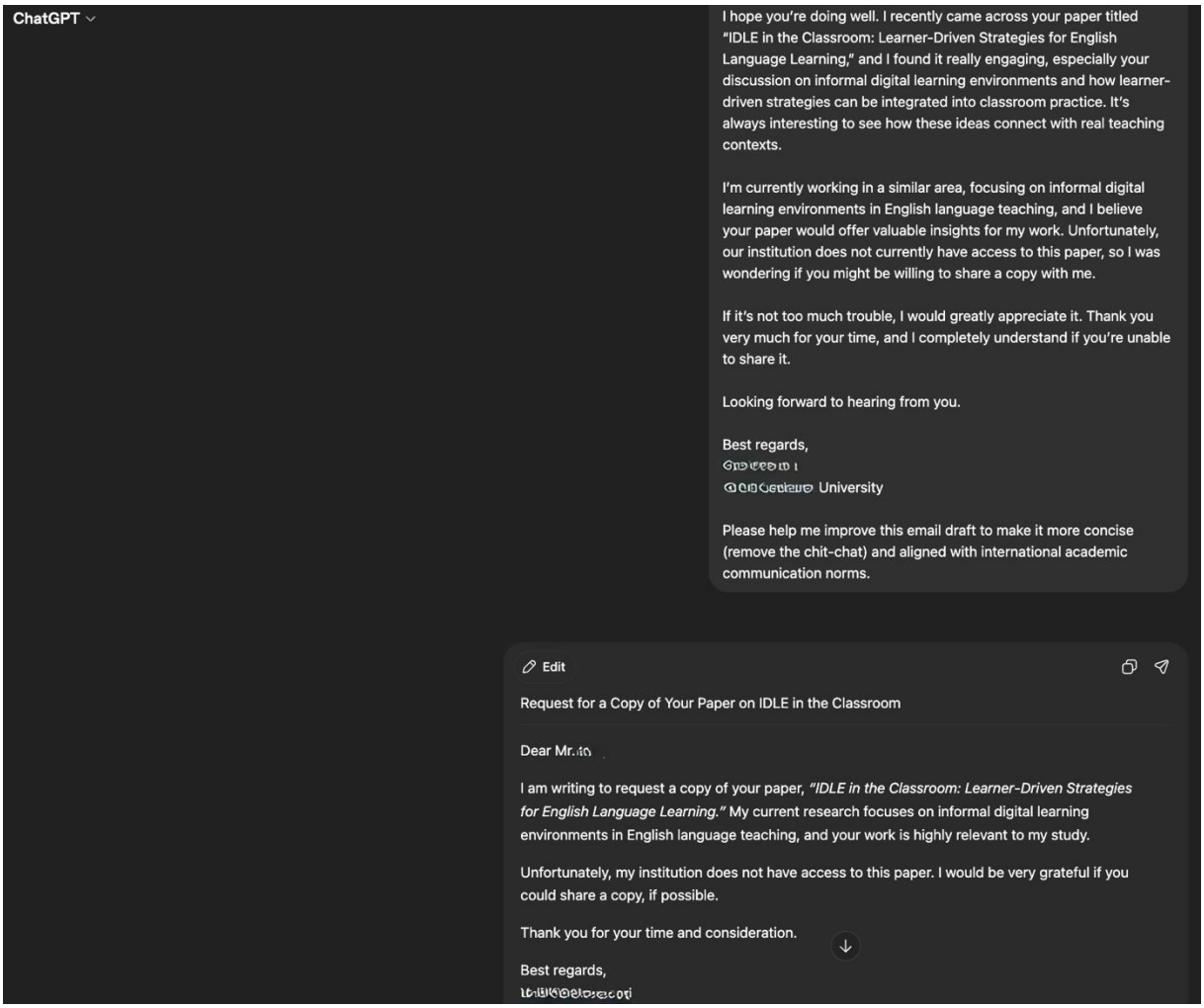

Figure 1. Student's interaction with ChatGPT-5 in improving the email draft

Moreover, Figure 2 becomes more proof of the peer feedback stage, where the focus turned mostly to tone and the writer's position. The students worked together to find and refine phrases that they thought were too casual or robotic. Additionally, they worked together to make sure that their word choices were in line with strict professional academic requirements.

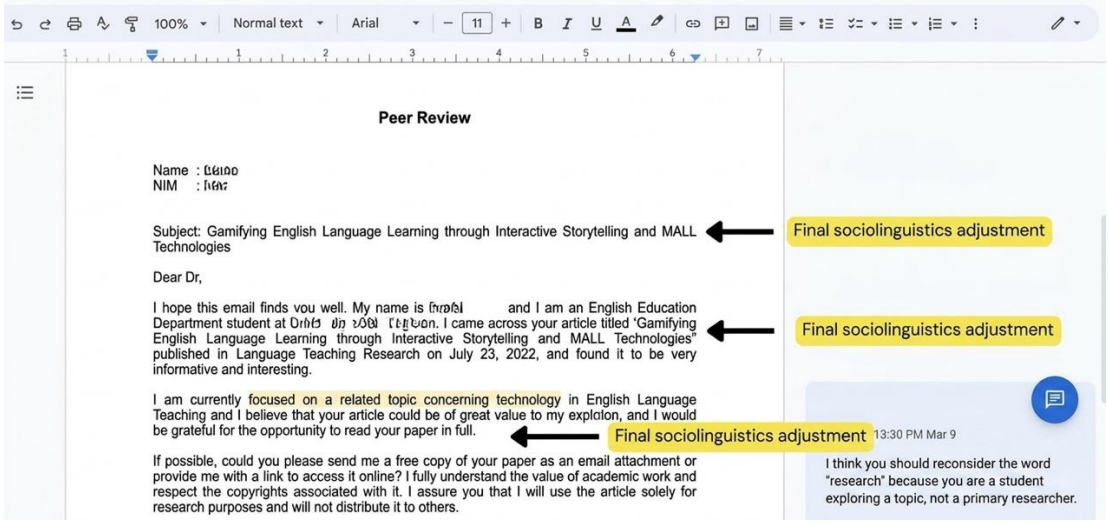

Figure 2. Peer feedback on tone and cultural appropriateness

An even clearer picture of this developmental trajectory can be obtained by comparing the final student-corrected versions with the raw AI-generated drafts. A prominent example is when a student substitutes a direct request phrase like "*I want your research paper*" into a more polite request like "*I would like to respectfully inquire if it is…*". The significant change shows that the students involved were searching much beyond simple grammatical correction by actively managing interpersonal meaning, a key part of sociolinguistic competence. The findings also show that students are quite aware of social and cultural subtleties, especially when it comes to managing phatic communication and keeping a professional distance. During the peer feedback session, students methodically improved their writing by removing robotic phrases and excessive social fillers that they thought were too personal for academic writing. This peer discussion helped the students to find the right balance between being direct and showing deep respect for professionals while talking to the researchers in the academic world.

Throughout this process, ChatGPT-5 functioned only as a supporting source of the email template of the acceptable expressions during the whole series. Students then enhanced the template by adding very specific details, such as exact paper titles and personalized academic references, to guarantee that the email content and the communicative context are perfectly aligned. The following writing showed the sociocultural shift from AI-generated text into a student-revised version:

Table 1. Sociolinguistic adjustments in AI-assisted email writing

AI-Generated Text Excerpt	Student-Revised Text Excerpt	Interpretation
"I hope this email finds you well. I am a student and I want your research paper about [title of the paper]. Please send it to me. Best regards."	"I am writing to respectfully inquire if it is possible to receive a copy of your recent paper entitled "[title of the paper]". I have been following your work and find it very relevant to my current study."	**Removed directness**: The student refined the direct request that sound demanding like "I want" and "Please send it" with a more polite expression to ask like "I am writing to respectfully inquire…".

	Cultural adjustment: The student gave the researcher a professional compliment regarding their work to bridge the social distance without getting too personal.

Ultimately, these outcomes suggest that ChatGPT-5 fosters sociolinguistic competence not by serving up ready-to-use language but by acting as a powerful stimulus for evaluative judgment and deep contextual adaptation. Instead of mindlessly reproducing machine-generated expressions, the students immersed themselves in a complex negotiation of appropriateness, carefully weighing their audience's cultural expectations and specific communicative goals. Therefore, sociolinguistic competency in AI-assisted writing is an act of critical selection and targeted change, rather than just linguistic copying. This behavioral tendency is closely related to the foundational theories of Hymes (1966), alongside Canale and Swain (1980), who reflected the fundamental ability to utilize language correctly within a certain situation. However, the present results greatly extend this standard view by showing that contemporary competency increasingly requires the cognitive ability to critically assess externally produced material. This echoes recent claims by Xi (2025) that in an age of technology, communicative competency is based on students' ability to actively understand and enhance algorithmic output, rather than just produce language independently.

Furthermore, peer review is crucial in showing that sociolinguistic competency does not develop in an isolated vacuum; instead, it is socially developed through social contact when students in groups discuss tone etiquette and professional distance. Such dynamics are closely related to the current studies of Wang (2024) and Yang and Lin (2025), who prominently emphasize the social features of machine-assisted writing, as well as Drajati et al. (2024), who advocate the requirement of intercultural awareness in language acquisition. Unlike the vast majority of previous studies, which focus on mere gains in grammatical accuracy (Mekheimer, 2025; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024), the present research shows that AI is a key catalyst for the development of interpersonal and pragmatic sensitivity in authentic professional communication.

Discourse competence: Improving cohesion, coherence, and textual organization

In addition to providing scaffolding for sociolinguistic competencies, the use of ChatGPT-5 actively facilitated students' broader discourse competency. The approach produced baseline structural templates, which students then critically evaluated and rearranged to improve the logical flow. However, when the screen captures were combined with the peer-review records, an obvious pattern of iterative drafting emerged. They often focused on referential cohesion and sentence order to ensure clarity of context. For example, students frequently reorganized their emails to first identify themselves before specifying requirements. This iterative refinement procedure is shown in Figure 3. In line with the peer comments, students identified structural bottlenecks, including complex grammar, confusing references, and imprecise vocabulary, and resolved them collectively for improved overall readability and coherence of the text.

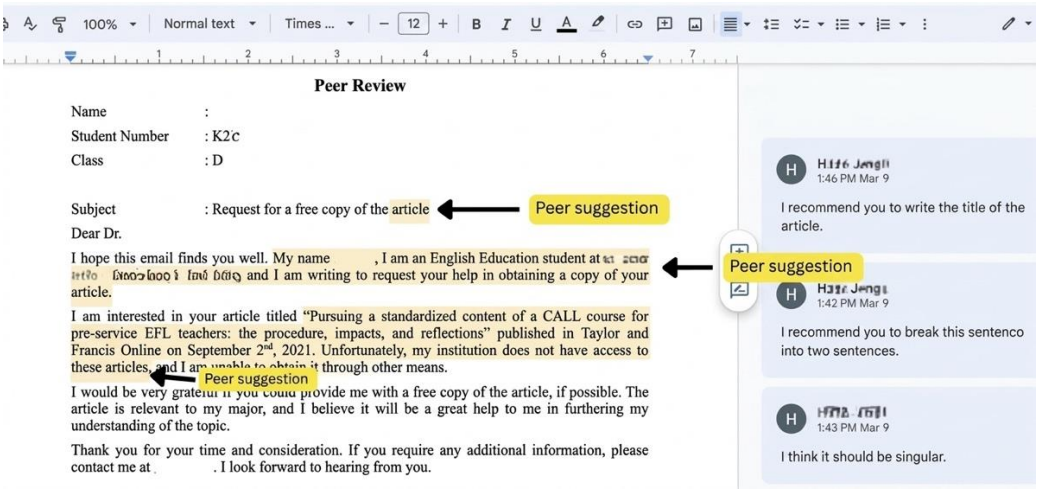

Figure 3. Peer feedback on clarity and sentence structure

This is also shown by the comparison below:

Table 2. Discourse revisions in AI-assisted email writing

AI-Generated Text	Student-Revised Text	Interpretation
"I am interested in your research. Please send me these articles so I can read them for my assignment. Thank you. I am a university student."	"I am a student at (the name of the university) and I am interested in your research on Digital Literacy. Could you please share the specific article titled 'AI in the Classroom'?"	Logical Sequencing: The student moved the self- introduction to the start to create a natural flow. Correcting "Robot-like" Referencing: The student noted the AI's use of "these articles" was ambiguous and awkward. They replaced it with a specific title to clarify the situation.

In addition to structural organization, students were also acutely aware of the stylistic limits of GenAI, specifically the tendency of the tool to generate generic and robot-like text. The students did not take the output as it is, but they actively questioned the authenticity of the output text. One student reflected:

> *"…ChatGPT was very helpful for me in writing and drafting the content of my email. It was quick to respond within seconds after I sent my prompt. Then it supplied me with the format or template to send the emails straight. But I didn't copy the sentences straight into the email. I examined and asked my peer to check it because I believed the sentences were in robot-like language. It was extremely awkward and unnatural, thus I had to edit the sentences first, before I could ultimately email it to the authors." (**Student 3**)*

The process from machine-assisted drafting to critical evaluation emphasizes an important pedagogical shift that students did not see GenAI as the final authority, but rather as a flexible starting point for their writing process. Hence, literary coherence and contextual nuance did not automatically arise from the AI tool, but were obtained through the students' active semantic and syntactic

participation. This dynamic adds to the standard theoretical models of language acquisition. When compared to traditional conceptualizations of discourse competence as an internal individual capacity to organize language into cohesive communication (Canale, 1983), these data suggest a dispersed model of composition. In this hybrid writing environment, the student functions as the primary text organizer, critical proofreader, and editor that transform a machine output draft into a contextualized piece of communication. Although GenAI has been described as a "mentor text" for contemporary literature that scaffolds the creative process (de Oliveira & dos Santos, 2025; Michel et al., 2025), the findings suggest that this mentoring is essentially inadequate without human mediation. AI-generated manuscripts sometimes require extensive remediation due to imprecise referencing and odd wording. In line with Guo et al. (2024) and Tran (2025), peer feedback in this study exemplifies that discourse construction is a helpful collaborative process. Lastly, the findings are consistent with a wider consensus across the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) that highlights the effectiveness of GenAI does not rely on how students make use of it as a writing tool, but also on how they engage with it, and refine its output to produce an authentic writing that suit the context (Chiu et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2025).

The Teacher's Mediation in AI-assisted Writing Instruction

Teacher as mediator of GenAI use

The findings highlight the crucial role of instructional mediation in shaping students' engagement with ChatGPT-5 during the writing process. The teacher did not position the generative tool as an independent substitute authority, but as a targeted resource to address certain, pre-determined learning shortcomings. This instructional explanation can be seen in the teacher's interview below:

> *"…one major problem that I have encountered is the difficulty that students have in ordering words to form syntactically correct sentences. This issue with sentence construction prevented them from generating cohesive and well-structured written text, especially in the case of writing an email for professional communication. To these difficulties, I created a supporting resource called ChatGPT-5…" (**Teacher educator interview**)*

This excerpt illustrates a problem-driven approach to technology integration in which the use of ChatGPT-5 was explicitly contingent upon the problems students identified in grammatical sequencing and discourse coherence. In this case, the agency of the teacher shifts away from the basic use of tools to a more sophisticated type of pedagogical arrangement. The GenAI was purposefully confined to complement, not replace, the students' cognitive writing processes. The finding corroborates the claim made by Ji et al. (2023) and Zhai (2025) that the pedagogical effectiveness of AI in language classes largely depends on teacher mediation. It also echoes Zhan et al. (2025), who argue that GenAI tools can yield meaningful results only as part of structured, purposeful feedback environments with explicit educational design.

Guiding students' critical evaluation of AI-generated Language

Instructional mediation here was much more than the initial scaffolding, but it became an explicit demand for critical evaluation of the output. Rather than allowing a passive acceptance of automated outputs, the teacher required students to interrogate every sentence against its immediate

communication environment. The teacher's interview clearly explains the necessity of using this approach:

> *"…I asked my students to do a self-review and check the contextual word used… I told them to examine every word that ChatGPT generated, whether or not it matched the contextual situation of this professional communication…" (**Teacher educator interview**)*

This educational drive changed the nature of interaction between students and GenAI. Students moved from passive users to active evaluators, beginning to interrogate the tone, situational appropriateness, and pragmatic relevance of the machine-generated literature. This critical stance precisely accounts for the behavioral patterns identified in the sociolinguistic data, where students deliberately trimmed colloquialisms, reduced unnecessary "chit-chat", and tuned politeness methods within the parameters of professional norms. This approach illustrates the concept that introduced by Zhang (2022), namely feedback engagement, a process of deep cognitive processing and appraisal of external information, rather than their blind acceptance. More precisely, it implements the important processing stage in the feedback paradigm of Zhan et al. (2025), in which students autonomously evaluate the quality of the information they received. Such critical appraisal is central to contemporary models of student feedback literacy and, in particular, the development of evaluative judgement (Carless & Boud, 2018). In this framework, ChatGPT-5 was not an impregnable source of truth; however, it served as a cognitive catalyst that provoked the very introspective appraisal and rhetorical decision-making requiring students' advanced language acquisition.

Operationalizing feedback engagement: Structured frameworks and collaborative peer review

The teacher implemented a structured evaluation framework to institutionalize a systematic assessment of how students investigated ChatGPT-5 outputs. This instructional framework converted abstract conceptions of effective writing into four tangible, actionable dimensions below:

1. Clarity of Purpose: Evaluating whether the primary goal of the communication was instantly clear to the email recipient.
2. Tone Appropriateness: Ensuring language choices are consistent with recognized registers of the professional and academic discourse.
3. Grammar and Syntax: Analyzing sentence structures, accuracy, and syntactic integrity.
4. Content Relevance: Verifying all the information produced directly contributes to the sender's intended purpose.

Operationalizing the writing process as a series of discrete evaluative processes, the framework shifted students' engagement to be more meaningful and into the macro-level of textual remediation. This systematic approach was then codified through a co-constructed evaluation checklist that was employed during active drafting cycles, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' evaluation processes in AI-assisted writing

Analysis Type	Focus Area	Action Taken by Student
Contextual Analysis	Purpose & Interlocutor	Checking whether the message is clear and appropriate for the intended recipient
Contextual Analysis	Tone & Interpersonal Meaning	Adjusting tone to match professional and academic expectations

Content Evaluation	Coherence & Relevance	Ensuring the email aligns with the topic and communicative goal
Lexical Analysis	Grammar & Accuracy	Identifying and correcting errors in wording, punctuation, and phrasing

Table 3 shows that students had to go through a critical review process in many tiers and were able to successfully reconcile the macro-level contextual needs with the micro-level linguistic accuracy. These practices provide direct support to previously observed data (Tables 1 and 2), which registered students' advances in pragmatic politeness and structural reorganization.

This managed environment was further developed by means of specific peer-review sequences (Figures 2 and 3). By working collaboratively, students crowdsourced the identification of stylistic bottlenecks, such as sterile, "robot-like" phrasing, ambiguous pronominal references, and jarring tonal shifts, and negotiated the necessary corrections. The collaborative feature effectively took the teacher scaffolding into a socialized arena; these practices directly illustrate the action stage of feedback engagement (Zhan et al., 2025). Drafting did not become a linear task, but an erratic, multi-layered conversation where independent student review, peer review, and algorithmic prompts constantly collided (Hapsari et al., 2023). This design proves a vital point that digital feedback tools mean little unless they are explicitly tied to a student's actual feedback literacy (Zhan et al., 2025). By anchoring the machine's raw output to strict criteria and peer review, the teacher stopped students from adopting the text blindly. The technology was no longer an easy out, but it became a catalyst for genuine rhetorical choice.

Conclusion

This study examined the connection between GenAI affordances and EFL communicative competence, mapping the specific ways in which instructional mediation regulates student interaction with algorithmic text. The results show that when used as a problematic baseline rather than an authoritative voice, the data show that the use of ChatGPT-5 improves sociolinguistic and discourse skills. In this study, students did not simply duplicate patterns, but critically audited machine drafts, negotiating pragmatic nuance, calibrating register alignment, and re-establishing structural cohesiveness for fragmented outputs. Crucially, these language improvements were not hard-coded into the software. They emerged at the shifting confluence of machine input, focused teacher framing, collaborative peer review, and individual metacognitive activity. This realization demands a reconceptualization of L2 writing. Communicative competency in AI-mediated contexts should include the ability to critically assess, select, and repair externally produced texts, not just language creation. Pedagogically, these observations highlight the futility of introducing generative technologies without structured instructional design. If AI is to be utilized responsibly, then developing student feedback literacy, evaluative judgment, and contextual awareness must become a primary educational goal. Future research should explore the co-compositional dynamics across genres and skill levels, including longitudinal studies investigating whether hybrid human-AI writing models promote or hinder the development of sustained student autonomy.

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