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Editorial: The Role of AI and ChatGPT in Giving Corrective Feedback: Panacea or Unfulfilled Promise

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Welcome to our special issue: *The role of AI and ChatGPT in giving corrective feedback: panacea or unfulfilled promise*. In a remarkably short span of time, AI-driven feedback has evolved from an experimental pedagogical luxury to a baseline student expectation. Language learners no longer simply wait for instructor guidance; they actively prompt AI systems for structural revisions, stylistic polishing, and pragmatic advice. This shift demands that second language feedback research fundamentally updates its paradigms. The four contributions in this issue offer much-needed empirical clarity, moving past the initial hype of generative AI with rigorous evaluations of its measurable impact on learner development and interlanguage progression.

The first paper in this issue of *Feedback Research in Second Language* is Pitychoutis & Spathopoulou's *AI-Mediated Written Corrective Feedback in L2 Writing: What Changes, What Doesn't, and What We Still Don't Know*. The authors reflect on the rapid adoption of large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT particularly for written corrective feedback (WCF) and center their essay on the question: "Is AI-driven feedback a true solution for language learning or just an unrealized promise?" (p. xx) The authors cite the need for specific, "well-thought-out, practical and long-lasting changes" in the writing our students do rather than simply surface accuracy and argue that the need for teacher oversight increases when writers are faced with the often-cumbersome output from LLMs. They address three connected questions:

- Which principles from the WCF literature remain relevant in AI-driven settings?
- What aspects of LLM-based feedback indicate a genuine shift rather than just extending previous AWE concepts?
- What does current evidence say about claims regarding complexity, accuracy, and fluency?

A summary table quickly and effectively shows the reader what changes in AI-mediated WCF, what doesn't, and what we still don't know. Pitychoutis and Spathopoulou add seven areas to explore (e.g. Design Principles for AI-Mediated WCF, Keep WCF focused and explicit, prioritize noticing and learner agency). In a hopeful turn, the authors claim, "AI-mediated WCF is unlikely to replace teachers. Instead, it will foster disciplined hybrid practices in which LLMs serve as responsive teaching tools under human supervision" (p. xx). The article then sets a research agenda focusing on the developmental value of AI-mediated WCF.

The second reflection is Li Dong's *When Machines Teach Writers: Reflecting on GenAI's Role in Giving Corrective Feedback on Linguistic CAF Facets*. Complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) constitute the three core dimensions used in second language acquisition (SLA) and language testing to evaluate a learner's speaking or writing proficiency. Dong reminds us that generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools, such as ChatGPT, have significantly reshaped written corrective feedback (WCF) in second-language (L2) writing by transforming it from a solely human-driven activity into an interactive collaboration between learners and AI systems. Dong's reflection examines the influence of GenAI on learners' linguistic development, particularly in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF).

Dong draws on experiences and existing research to emphasize that active and meaningful learner engagement is essential for maintaining writer autonomy when using AI-generated feedback. The author outlines six connected features to demonstrate negotiation of meaning, agency, and learning in AI-mediated feedback settings: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, ethical engagement, behavioral engagement, technical engagement, and prompt engagement.

The discussion concludes by calling for a dynamic perspective and long-term research to better understand how GenAI and learners' CAF development evolve together, arguing that the true value of GenAI lies in the joint efforts of teachers and learners to redefine feedback practices within a human–AI learning environment.

In *Navigating the AI frontier: A personal reflection on ChatGPT as a language learning companion*, Özcelik reflects on a three-year classroom implementation of ChatGPT with nearly 300 Turkish university adult EFL students. The author evaluates both the advantages and limitations of ChatGPT across four key areas of language learning: enhancing writing skills and providing feedback, expanding vocabulary, developing conversational fluency, and fostering understanding of cultural contexts and differences.

The findings highlight ChatGPT as a useful educational tool due to its accessibility, patience, and ability to provide immediate, personalized support. It offers tailored feedback, recommends alternative vocabulary, and creates low-pressure opportunities for language practice. However, the paper also explores the shortcomings of using ChatGPT as a teaching resource. Drawing on established second language acquisition theories, including the Zone of Proximal Development, the Input Hypothesis, and the Interaction Hypothesis, it argues, as others have in this special issue, that excessive dependence on AI may reduce learner autonomy, diminish authentic self-expression, and lead to only surface-level language proficiency. The reflection emphasizes that the social and cultural dimensions of language learning are deeply embedded in human interaction and cannot be fully replicated through algorithm-based communication. The paper concludes with recommendations for educators on integrating AI technologies into language instruction in a thoughtful, informed, and responsible manner.

The author is careful to remind readers of the importance of language educator awareness of new technologies; preparing students to be savvy consumers of these technologies, and calling on teachers to cultivate AI awareness, AI literacy, and correct and effective use of AI.

The final paper in this special issue of *Feedback research in second language* is Kostka and McMartin-Miller's *Reflections on using GenAI for multilingual writing feedback* in which the authors consider what role GenAI generated corrective feedback will play as they adopt GenAI into their writing courses; they are also concerned with the oft-considered question: will GenAI help or harm the writing process?

The authors examine the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools in providing feedback to multilingual English learners. Recognizing the significant influence of GenAI on writing instruction, the authors highlight the importance of combining the human aspects of feedback with the ethical and responsible use of AI technologies. Drawing from their classroom experiences, they present instructional

strategies designed to develop students' critical awareness of AI, including evaluating and critiquing AI-generated texts, collaboratively engaging with AI-generated feedback, and conducting error analyses with GenAI support. The article discusses both the benefits and challenges of incorporating GenAI into writing education, addressing concerns such as academic integrity, transparency in AI use, and the risk of student overreliance on these tools. The authors contend that established principles of effective writing instruction—such as process-oriented teaching and trust-building through meaningful dialogue—remain essential in the AI era. The authors leave us with the promise to continue to explore GenAI's effects on teaching second language writing and the commitment to process-based writing instruction and collaborative learning, balancing technological innovation with the human elements of written corrective feedback that empower multilingual writers to develop confidence in their writing.

Ultimately, AI-driven tools like ChatGPT are neither a complete panacea nor an entirely unfulfilled promise. The four papers in this special issue collectively demonstrate that transforming these technologies into effective pedagogical realities requires deliberate, evidence-based integration rather than blind adoption. By exploring the diverse empirical insights presented in this collection, readers will find a clearer roadmap for navigating this digital transition. We urge researchers and educators to engage with these narratives, continuing to interrogate how we can responsibly harness AI to meaningfully enrich the feedback loop. To that end, the crucial insights offered by Dong; Kostka and McMartin-Miller; Ozcelik; and Pitychoutis, and Spathopoulou provide an essential foundation for this ongoing scholarly conversation.

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