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Making ChatGPT your best friend? A study on a business writing course for Taiwanese college English majors

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The study explores the potential benefits and drawbacks for EFL business writing teachers planning to adopt ChatGPT, a popular chatbot built on a transformer-based language model known as a generative pre-trained transformer (GPT). It reports an 18-week business writing course of 20 EFL writers in the Fall 2023 semester at an English department at a public technological university in Taiwan. This study examines what ChatGPT can and cannot help in preparing students to perform for workplace communications, and how they value ChatGPT, and potential growth and challenges observed from this ChatGPT-enhanced course. Altogether 9 business genres, i.e., resume, short-bio, cover letter, inquiry, reply, order, complaint, recommendation, business report, were taught. Two business writing professionals were invited to evaluate business documents produced by the students with the help of ChatGPT.

The data include the evaluation from the 2 writing professionals, interviews with the students and the class instructor, focusing on their feedbacks in adopting ChatGPT. The findings suggest that ChatGPT tended to function relatively efficient when producing documents of pre-fabricated business genres, such as cover letter, inquiry, reply, order, and complaint but it failed to provide innovation and uniqueness anticipated in resume, short-bio, and business report. ChatGPT may seem to have saved drafting time for business writers as it automates routine documents. Nevertheless, before deploying ChatGPT, business writing teachers and students must carefully analyze its strengths and restrictions. ChatGPT requires training particular geared toward business domain and might produce naive and erroneous judgements, needing in-depth post-draft revision.

Keywords

ChatGPT, business writing, college EFL learners

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