

Teacher-Scaffolded Reconfiguration of AI Feedback Literacy in Business English Writing

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Abstract: The integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into writing instruction has fundamentally reconfigured feedback practices in higher education. This change is particularly obvious in Business English writing since it is highly dependent on context, norms and phramatic constraints. While existing research has largely emphasized technological affordances and efficiency gains of AI-assisted feedback, it often overlooks the epistemic limits of AI and the pedagogical mechanisms necessary for its effective use.

This paper develops a teacher-scaffolded framework of AI feedback literacy in Business English writing. Drawing on feedback literacy theory and sociocultural scaffolding theory, it believes that AI feedback literacy is not a single technical ability, but a multi-dimensional evaluation capacity, including epistemic literacy, pragmatic literacy, and strategic literacy. At the same time, teacher scaffolding is regarded as a key mediating mechanism to guide learners to critically use AI feedback instead of accepting it as an absolute authority.

In addition, a process model is proposed featuring a recursive sequence of epistemic positioning, critical mediation, and pragmatic adaptation. By reconceptualizing the relationship among teachers, learners, and AI, this paper extends feedback literacy theory in the AI environment and provides a theoretical basis for future empirical investigation in professional discourse.

Keywords: AI Feedback Literacy; Business English Writing; Teacher Scaffolding; Feedback Literacy; Writing Pedagogy

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1. Introduction

The rapid development of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has brought about major changes to the way of writing and teaching. AI can generate fluent and coherent text, which is increasingly integrated into the educational scene, and reshapes the way learners create, modify and evaluate written texts. This change poses a challenge to the traditional writing teaching model, which has long been based on a relatively stable relationship between teachers and learners.

In the traditional model, feedback is mainly regarded as evaluation information provided by teachers and mediated by people. Under this structure, teachers are both language authorities and teaching interpreters; while learners need to internalize feedback and apply it to the modification process. However, the emergence of artificial intelligence has broken this pattern

and officially entered the feedback ecosystem. Writing activities are now carried out in a triadic system composed of teachers, learners and AI, and the evaluation of authority is no longer completely human-centered.

This transformation has a particularly far-reaching impact on Business English writing. In this field, the success of communication depends not only on the accuracy of the language, but also on the interpersonal positioning and pragmatic appropriateness. Business writing genres such as emails, reports, proposals and negotiation information are essentially associated with the institutional and professional context. Their effectiveness depends on whether the language used is consistent with audience expectations, personal relationships and organizational goals. Therefore, the quality of writing cannot be attributed only to linguistic correctness.

Despite there is increasing attention on AI-assisted writing, most of the existing literature is still focused on the technical level, such as grammar error correction, fluency improvement and efficiency improvement. Specifically, the current research has not fully theoreticalized how learners can interpret, evaluate and strategically respond to algorithm-generated suggestions when facing context-sensitive writing tasks.

This absence points to a deeper conceptual gap. Although there are fundamental differences in epistemic grounding, AI feedback is often regarded as functionally equivalent to human feedback. Different from teacher feedback which considers subject knowledge, teaching intentions and situational awareness, AI feedback is based on the language modeling rather than real communication intentions. Therefore, its language fluency may cover up its limitations in pragmatic judgment and situational sensitivity.

Under this background, this paper argues that in Business English writing, whether AI can exert its pedagogical value depends on how learners respond to AI feedback and how teachers mediate in this process. In other words, AI feedback literacy is not the ability naturally formed by learners in the process of using AI, but is gradually cultivated in the guidance of teachers and continuous learning.

Accordingly, this paper addresses the following issues:

1. What structural restrictions prevent AI feedback from functioning as independent teaching resources in Business English writing?
2. How does teacher scaffolding mediate the development of AI feedback literacy?

To address these questions, the paper proposes a conceptual framework based on feedback literacy theory and sociocultural perspectives on scaffolding. It positions teacher scaffolding is not only an additional teaching aid, but also a key mechanism to help learners form judgment and evaluation ability in the AI-assisted writing environment.

2. Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Positioning

The following section outlines the theoretical foundations of this study and clarifies the key concepts, mainly focusing on feedback literacy and scaffolding in AI-mediated writing environments.

2.1 From Feedback Literacy to AI Feedback Literacy

In the past decade, the research on feedback has undergone a profound conceptual change. Early research mainly regarded feedback as a kind of information transmission, in which teachers pass information to students for the purpose of correcting mistakes and improving the learning outcome. In this transmission-oriented model, the effectiveness of feedback depends on whether it is clear, accurate and timely enough.

However, recently, the academic community has challenged this linear understanding and began to emphasize that feedback is actually a socialized process actively constructed by learners. In this transformation, feedback literacy has become the core theoretical concept. It refers to the knowledge, ability and mentality that learners must have in order to understand feedback, evaluate its relevance, and improve learning accordingly (Carless & Boud, 2018; Carless & Winstone, 2020; Molloy et al., 2020). A major contribution of this perspective is that it redefines the role of learners, who are no longer passive containers for receiving feedback, but active participants (Mamad, 2022). Feedback itself essentially depends on whether learners can use it critically and efficiently.

However, the emergence of generative AI has brought new cognitive challenges, which go beyond the scope of the existing definition of feedback literacy. Unlike human feedback, AI feedback is generated based on statistical language models,

not based on disciplinary logic or teaching intentions. Although the feedback given by AI is grammatically smooth and structurally coherent, it lacks purpose, sense of responsibility and situational awareness in the human sense (Bearman et al., 2023). This essential difference has theoretical significance. AI feedback on the seemingly reliable appearance may mislead learners to overly believe in its authority (Gerlich, 2025). Especially in Business English writing, the effectiveness of communication depends highly on the interpretation of specific situations, and therefore, this misalignment between AI and reality is particularly serious.

In order to solve this problem, this paper develops the concept of AI feedback literacy, which can be understood as a kind of evaluation ability with context sensitivity. Learners should not only understand the feedback given by AI, but also need to judge and make reasonable revision decisions considering the purpose of writing, whether it is appropriate for pragmatics and professional norms.

AI feedback literacy mainly includes three interrelated aspects. The first is epistemic literacy. Learners should understand that AI feedback is not authoritative. Its output is based on the result of probability calculation, not professional judgment based on specific context. The second is pragmatic literacy, which means that learners need to judge whether the modification suggestions given by AI meet the specific communication purpose. The third is strategic literacy, which refers to how learners take the initiative to interact with AI, including how to propose prompts, how to compare different versions of output, and how to decide whether to adopt, modify or reject AI's suggestions. These three aspects together expand the traditional concept of feedback literacy, so that it not only focuses on the feedback itself, but also emphasizes learners' understanding of the AI system and the ability to actively use it in the automated feedback environment.

2.2 Reinterpreting Scaffolding in AI-mediated Writing Environments

Based on Vygotsky's socio-cultural framework, scaffolding is a temporary and targeted help, usually provided by more experienced people, that can enable learners to complete tasks within their zone of proximal development, and gradually internalize these abilities in the process (Vygotsky, 1978; Wood et al., 1976; van de Pol et al., 2010). In writing pedagogy, the teacher tends to employ eliciting, inferential questioning, hints and correctional feedback to scaffold student writing (Harran et al., 2026).

However, in an AI-mediated writing environment, the concept of scaffolding needs to be reconsidered theoretically. The artificial intelligence system itself can act as a technical support by providing instant language suggestions, alternative formulas and iterative feedback loops. Nevertheless, this kind of technical scaffolding is fundamentally different from human scaffolding on the basis of epistemology. Although artificial intelligence can write in different language expressions, it always fails to evaluate whether these expressions are appropriate with teaching objectives, subject norms or specific communication situations (Bender et al., 2021). Therefore, in the educational environment, AI does not have the ability to explain and evaluate the learning process like teachers, and cannot really play the teaching guidance role played by human support.

This limitation, on the contrary, further highlights the importance of teacher scaffolding. Artificial intelligence does not replace the role of teachers, but changes the role of teachers. In the AI-assisted writing environment, teacher scaffolding, as an intermediary mechanism, affects how learners understand and use the AI feedback.

Specifically, the teacher's bracket has three main functions. The first is epistemic positioning, which is to help learners understand that AI is just a tool to generate results, not an authoritative evaluator. The second is critical mediation, that is, guiding learners to judge whether AI feedback is appropriate according to the specific context and writing purpose, instead of accepting it directly. The third is pragmatic adaptation, which refers to help learners turn their judgments into specific modification decisions. From this perspective, teacher scaffolding is not merely instructional assistance but a mechanism for developing evaluative agency in technologically mediated writing environments. At the same time, teachers need to conceptualize these platforms as scaffolds in the writing process rather than as autonomous writing agents (Huang, 2026).

3. Structural Constraints of AI Feedback in Business English Writing

Because Business English writing is deeply rooted in the professional practice of social positioning, effective feedback requires not only language correction, but also explanatory judgment based on institutional and interpersonal reality. These structural constraints show that AI feedback must be supplemented by teacher scaffolding, which provides the necessary

contextual mediation for meaningful evaluation and revision. The following sections examine these constraints in detail from epistemic and pragmatic perspectives.

3.1 Business English Writing as Socially Situated Professional Discourse

Business English writing is essentially a kind of professional communication embedded in specific social and professional situations. In this kind of writing, language is not used in isolation. It is always closely related to organizational operation, interpersonal consultation and communication strategies. In work scenarios, written text is not just a tool for conveying information. It is also an important way for enterprises to shape their own image, coordinate interpersonal relationships and achieve professional goals. Therefore, the evaluative criteria of such writing extend beyond grammatical accuracy to include pragmatic appropriateness, rhetorical effectiveness, and contextual alignment.

From a systemic-functional perspective, the meaning of Business English writing is not determined by the language form itself, but by language selection and specific situations. The purpose of writing, the audience and the organizational background will all affect how language is used. Because of this, the same expression may produce different effects in different scenes. For example, in negotiation, reporting, complaint handling or persuasion communication, the same sentence may convey a completely different pragmatic meaning. This shows that Business English writing not only pursues correct language form, but more importantly, follows the communication norms in specific situations.

In addition, professional communication in the business environment is usually affected by many implicit communication rules, such as the degree of politeness, indirectness, degree of explicitness, and interpersonal positioning. Although these rules are often not clearly written, they directly affect the smooth progress of communication. To truly master these rules, it is not enough to have language knowledge, but also to have sensitivity to the context and an understanding of professional culture and social norms.

3.2 Epistemic and Pragmatic Limitations of AI Feedback in Business English writing

Although generative AI performs well in identifying surface language mistakes, there are still fundamental limitations in its ability to evaluate the quality of writing in Business English contexts.

A major problem is that language correctness is not the same as pragmatic appropriateness. AI feedback mainly comes from the probability analysis of a large number of language patterns, not based on real communication intentions. Therefore, it is more inclined to pay attention to language itself. However, in Business English writing, effective communication is not always the clearer the better. In many cases, the effect of expression depends on the appropriate implicit, consideration of interpersonal relationships, and the directness of expression according to different situations. Linguistic improvement at the surface level may therefore produce unintended pragmatic distortion at the discourse level. In other words, the language has improved, but the interpersonal meaning and context effects that were originally wanted to convey may have been weakened. This problem is especially obvious in business communication. In these cases, writers usually deliberately use more euphemistic or indirect expressions to maintain good interpersonal relationships or leave some space for subsequent communication. However, the AI feedback may often understand these expressions as not clear enough, so it is recommended to change the sentences to be more direct and clear ones, which may weaken the original communication effect.

Another cognitive problem is that people tend to overestimate the authority of AI feedback. The suggestions given by AI are usually fluent, coherent and seemingly professional. Thus, it is easy to mistakenly believe that these suggestions must be reliable and correct. If learners lack critical thinking, they may overly rely on AI's suggestions and regard it as a standard answer, instead of actively thinking about whether these modifications are really appropriate. This kind of uncritical acceptance is especially risky in Business English writing, because a tiny language adjustment may change the tone of the sentence, the way of interpersonal expression, and even affect the overall communication effect.

Overall, these limitations show that AI feedback cannot independently play an evaluation role in Business English writing. Whether it can really give full play to the teaching value still depends on the learner's understanding and judgment.

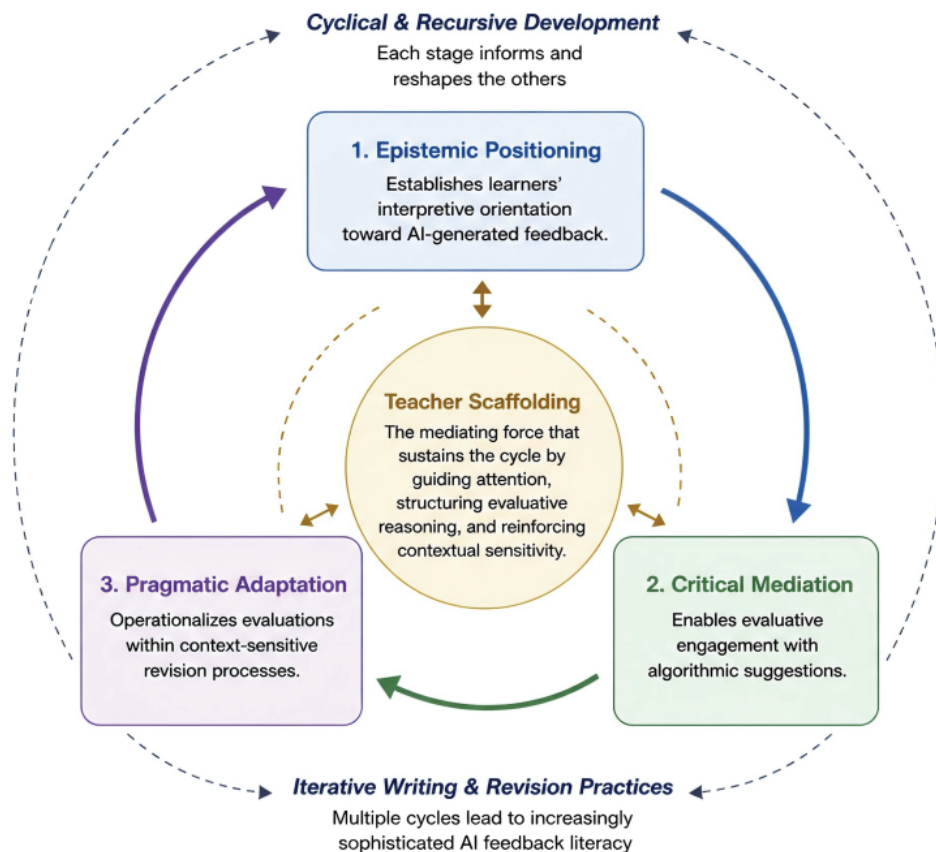
4. Teacher-Scaffolded Model of AI Feedback Literacy Development

This paper proposes a teacher-scaffolded model of AI feedback literacy in Business English writing, which contains three interrelated dimensions including epistemic positioning, critical mediation, and pragmatic adaptation (see Figure 1). These

three dimensions describe the growth path of learners, from first understanding the modification suggestions given by AI, to learning to judge whether these suggestions are reliable and suitable, and finally making appropriate modifications in combination with the actual writing scenario.

This process is not a linear sequence, but a recursive process. Each stage affects and strengthens other stages. Throughout the process, the teacher's guidance always plays a guiding role to help students understand, judge and revise. In general, the model regards AI feedback literacy as a dynamic and process-oriented ability, which needs to constantly interact with AI feedback in writing practice before it can be gradually cultivated.

Figure 1: Teacher-scaffolded model of AI feedback literacy



4.1 Epistemic Positioning in AI-mediated Feedback Environments

In Business English writing, the cultivation of AI feedback literacy should first let learners form a correct epistemic positioning, namely cognitive positioning, for the feedback generated by AI. This positioning is simply how learners understand and view the evaluation content given by AI, including its nature, scope of application and credibility.

In the traditional feedback environment, learners usually consider teacher feedback to be authoritative because it is based on professional knowledge and teaching goals. In contrast, the feedback generated by AI breaks the original authoritative structure. Although the language advised by AI is fluent, it is not based on clear teaching intentions or professional judgments. This change may cause cognitive confusion that learners tend to equate language fluency with evaluating effectiveness.

In Business English writing, the consequences of this confusion are particularly obvious, because pragmatic appropriateness cannot be judged by superficial language forms alone. Therefore, learners need to establish a judgment framework to distinguish whether the language is reasonable and whether the expression is appropriate in a specific situation, so as to use AI feedback more accurately.

Therefore, the teacher's guidance plays an important role in building this cognitive framework. Through guided comparative analysis, situational interpretation and reflective questioning of AI output, teachers help learners realize that the feedback generated by AI is probabilistic, rather than absolute authority. This change of attitude allows learners to regard AI feedback as a reference resource rather than a final conclusion. Therefore, epistemic positioning is the basic condition for subsequent

critical evaluation. It determines whether learners treat AI feedback critically or accept it completely without thinking.

4.2 Critical Mediation of AI-generated Feedback

After establishing epistemic positioning, learners enter a stage that can be called critical mediation of AI feedback. This process means that when learners use AI to obtain feedback, they need to understand and judge the various modification suggestions given by AI, and combine specific text content and writing scenarios to decide whether these suggestions are appropriate. In a writing environment with the participation of AI, learners are often given many different modified versions, which may differ in language expression, style selection and structural complexity. In the face of multiple choices, learners cannot simply copy any of them, but must make evaluative judgments. Therefore, critical adjustment has become the core link in the cultivation of AI feedback literacy.

The teacher's scaffolding builds this adjustment process in three aspects. Learners are guided to assess the linguistic coherence of AI suggestions, to compare alternative formulations with their original textual choices, and to evaluate the contextual appropriateness of proposed revisions in relation to communicative purpose and audience expectations. Through these comparisons and analysis, learners no longer only accept the surface language modification, but need to pay attention to the rhetorical effect and pragmatic effect behind the expression. In Business English writing, this kind of context judgment is particularly important, because the communication effect often depends on subtle adjustments such as tone, directness, interpersonal expression, etc. Therefore, the guidance of teachers is important, which can help learners realize that clearer language expression is not necessarily equal to effective communication. It can be seen that critical adjustment is a core mechanism. Through it, learners transform the external AI feedback into evaluative knowledge that has been internalized and processed by themselves.

4.3 Pragmatic Adaptation in Revision Decision-Making

The last stage of AI feedback literacy cultivation is pragmatic adaptation, which refers to the process of learners transforming evaluation and judgment into modified decision-making to suit the specific context in the writing task. In Business English writing, this stage is particularly complicated, because modification should not only pursue language clarity, but also take into account the requirements of polite expression, strategic euphemism and workplace scenario norms. Therefore, learners' response to AI feedback is not simply adopted or rejected, but a process of continuous adjustment. For instance, suggestions are adopted directly, or modified according to the context, or even completely abandoned when inappropriate. These different choices reflect the judgment ability of learners at different levels.

The teacher scaffolding is still essential at this stage. It can help learners clearly understand the basis for making their revision decisions. By guiding learners to think about reader expectations, communication purposes and discourse norms, teachers assist them to clearly modify the reasons and transform implicit judgments into explicit analysis. It can be seen that pragmatic adaptation is the key link in the reflection of AI feedback literacy in the writing results. Learners here show the ability to integrate language, pragmatic and scene factors into complete modification strategies.

4.4 A Recursive Model of AI Feedback Literacy Development

In summary, these three dimensions together constitute a cyclical and progressive development mechanism, and AI feedback literacy in the Business English writing is gradually formed under this mechanism. Epistemic positioning establishes learners' attitude towards AI-generated feedback; critical mediation enables them to think critically about these algorithmic suggestions; pragmatic adaptation transforms these evaluations into actual modification behaviors that adapt to the context.

This mechanism is not a linear development, but a cyclical advancement. In the process of repeated writing and revision, each stage continues to influence and reshape other stages. The teacher's scaffolding plays a key intermediary role in guiding learners' concerns, helping them form more organized judgments, and strengthening their sensitivity to the context, so as to maintain the operation of this circular mechanism.

From a theoretical point of view, the model redefines AI feedback literacy. It is no longer regarded as a fixed set of skills, but a constantly developing evaluation ability. Under the framework of the higher education assessment system, this redefinition shifts the focus from product-oriented to process-oriented, that is, emphasizing whether learners can critically understand and effectively use AI feedback in professional writing scenarios.

5. Discussion of Teacher-Scaffolded AI Feedback in Business English Writing

Integrating generative artificial intelligence into Business English writing teaching is not limited to improving text quality. More fundamentally, it reshapes the understanding, support and evaluation of the development of writing ability in higher education. In the AI-assisted writing environment, learning increasingly relies on learners' ability to interpret, evaluate and strategically use multiple AI feedback sources. This change requires us to re-examine the evaluation method, the role of teachers, and the conditions needed to cultivate students' independent evaluation ability from the teaching level.

5.1 Process-Oriented Reconfiguration of Assessment

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence makes writing teaching in higher education, especially Business English writing teaching, have to reconsider the way learners' learning outcomes are evaluated. Traditional evaluation mainly focuses on the quality of the final text, such as grammatical accuracy, vocabulary complexity and structural coherence. However, in the case of AI participation in writing, the superficial quality of the final text can no longer truly reflect the ability of learners, because high-quality text may be generated by AI assistance, and behind the written text, there may be a more in-depth thinking and revision process. This disconnect between the results and the learning process brings a fundamental challenge to the evaluation effectiveness of writing teaching.

In order to address this challenge, Business English writing evaluation must be redefined as a process-oriented evaluation system, focusing on the process of learners' handling of feedback, rather than just focusing on the final text performance.

In this revised evaluation logic, three dimensions are particularly important. First, the feedback interpretation becomes the content that can be evaluated. This includes evaluating whether learners can explain, argue and critically reflect on the feedback generated by AI, rather than just passively accepting or directly applying it. The evaluation focuses on whether learners can clearly explain the reasons for adopting or rejecting a feedback in combination with the purpose of communication. Second, modifying decision-making has become a key indicator of evaluation ability. The evaluation of this dimension focuses on how learners handle feedback from different channels, including AI suggestions, teacher comments and peer review, and prioritizes this information during the revision process. The evaluation focuses on the rationality of decision-making, rather than mechanically completing the modification. Third, context adaptation has become the core of evaluating advanced writing ability. In Business English writing, the ability to adjust the text according to readers' expectations, industrial norms and communication purposes is an important part of professional literacy. Therefore, the evaluation must examine the degree to which learners integrate pragmatic factors into the modification strategy.

In summary, these dimensions show that the evaluation in the AI-assisted writing environment should shift from a product-centered to a process-oriented evaluation model. This change is consistent with the overall trend of higher education evaluation, that is, the emphasis on learning-centered and process-oriented formative evaluation.

5.2 Pedagogical Tensions and Theoretical Implications

Although artificial intelligence has potential value in teaching, its integration into Business English writing teaching has also brought a series of contradictions.

One of the core contradictions is the risk of dependence. Although the original intention of AI feedback and teacher support is to help learners improve their ability, it may also lead to learners gradually over-reliance on these external evaluation sources. In this way, learners' opportunities for independent judgment will be reduced, which is not conducive to the development of their inherent evaluation ability.

The second contradiction is related to the restructuring of teachers' authority. In traditional writing teaching, teachers are the main authoritative sources of language and rhetoric. However, AI poses a challenge to this role after entering the classroom, because AI can provide immediate and seemingly authoritative feedback on superficial language problems. This transformation did not abolish the role of teachers, but reshaped their role. Teachers are increasingly becoming intermediaries of subject knowledge, responsible for giving contextual meaning to feedback, not just correcting language errors. This reconstruction requires teachers to change their teaching identity. Their professional ability is no longer mainly reflected in providing definite language modification schemes, but more reflected in guiding learners to interpret and evaluate multiple feedback sources, including AI output, and apply them to specific situations.

The third contradiction is about the cognitive opacity of the AI system. Unlike human feedback based on clear reasoning and teaching intentions, AI feedback comes from a complex and inexplicable statistical calculation process. This lack of transparency makes it difficult for learners to truly understand the generation logic of AI suggestions, which in turn increases the difficulty of critical judgment. In the absence of a clear explanation, learners often need to use external support to build moderate trust and questioning, so as to use AI feedback more reasonably.

These contradictions together highlight the core paradox of artificial intelligence integration into writing teaching: on the one hand, AI improves the accessibility and modification efficiency of feedback, and on the other hand, it brings new challenges such as dependence problems, authority restructuring and insufficient cognitive transparency. To deal with this paradox, it is necessary to change the focus of teaching to cultivating learners' AI feedback literacy, rather than just improving their writing performance. From the theoretical level, these contradictions further reinforce the core point of this article: AI feedback literacy cannot be formed naturally only through contact technology, but also requires structured teaching intervention based on teacher support.

6. Conclusion

This paper has developed a conceptual framework for understanding AI feedback literacy in Business English writing within a teacher-scaffolded pedagogical environment. It has argued that while generative artificial intelligence significantly expands access to feedback, its pedagogical effectiveness is constrained by structural limitations related to contextual sensitivity, pragmatic interpretation, and disciplinary specificity.

The core contribution of this paper is to redefine teacher scaffolding as a mediating mechanism. Teachers have become an important role in guiding learners' cognitive positioning, evaluation, reasoning and pragmatic judgment. At the same time, the research has also promoted the theory of higher education evaluation from product-oriented to process-oriented, emphasizing that learners should pay attention to how to use feedback, how to make revision decisions, and how to achieve context adaptation, not just the quality of the final text.

In addition, the paper points out that in the future, it is still necessary to further explore the development differences of learners at different levels, support strategies in different teaching situations, and how learners integrate multi-source feedback through empirical research. In general, the integration of artificial intelligence into Business English writing does not eliminate the need for human pedagogy. Rather, it intensifies the importance of evaluative judgment, contextual reasoning, and interpretive mediation. In this case, AI feedback literacy has become an important academic and professional ability.

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