YANGI O‘ZBEKISTON, YANGI TADQIQOTLAR JURNALI
Volume 5 Issue 7 Noyabr 2026
https://phoenixpublication.net/ Online ISSN: 3030-3494

CHATGPT-GENERATED FEEDBACK IN EFL WRITING: EFFECTIVENESS, LIMITATIONS, AND LEARNER REVISION

E’zoza Islomova
Second-Year Undergraduate Student Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature (English) Uzbekistan State World Languages University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan Narrative Review

Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence has expanded access to immediate and interactive feedback on second- and foreign-language writing. ChatGPT can comment on grammar, vocabulary, organisation, and content; however, receiving feedback does not necessarily result in accurate revision or lasting learning. This narrative review examines research on ChatGPT-generated feedback in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) writing, focusing on feedback functions, learner engagement, feedback uptake, revision quality, and the distinction between immediate text improvement and independent writing development. The discussion connects foundational feedback frameworks with empirical studies and recent reviews. The literature suggests that ChatGPT can provide timely explanations and support repeated revision, and that guided use may improve selected aspects of writing. At the same time, AI-generated suggestions can be inaccurate, generic, or insufficiently sensitive to context, and learners may accept them without adequate evaluation. Research on learner engagement further indicates that cognitive processing, observable revision behaviour, and affective responses all shape the use of feedback. Evidence from Uzbekistan is also beginning to emerge, although locally situated studies have examined broader AI-assisted writing practices rather than ChatGPT feedback alone. The review argues that ChatGPT is best treated as a supplementary resource within teacher-guided instruction. It recommends more transparent research designs, closer analysis of revision decisions, and assessments of transfer to new writing tasks.

Keywords: *ChatGPT; generative artificial intelligence; EFL writing; written feedback; learner engagement; feedback uptake; revision; Uzbekistan*

1. Introduction

Writing in a foreign language requires learners to coordinate several dimensions of performance, including grammatical accuracy, lexical choice, sentence structure, coherence, organisation, content development, and awareness of audience and purpose. Feedback is important because it can help writers recognise problems, consider alternatives, and revise

their texts. Nevertheless, feedback does not improve writing automatically. Its educational value depends on the accuracy and relevance of the comments, the learner's ability to understand them, and the decisions made during revision.

The development of generative artificial intelligence has introduced conversational tools that can respond to learners' writing in natural language. ChatGPT can identify possible language problems, suggest alternative expressions, explain grammatical choices, and comment on the organisation or development of ideas. Its availability may be useful when learners need additional practice or when teachers have limited time to provide individual feedback. However, ChatGPT can also produce inaccurate or poorly contextualised responses, and its suggestions may not match a particular assignment rubric or the writer's intended meaning (Barrot, 2023).

Research reviews indicate that writing has become a major area of ChatGPT-related language-education research. Lo et al. (2024) reviewed 70 empirical studies on ChatGPT in ESL/EFL education published during the first year and a half after its public release. Writing was the most frequently investigated application area, although the authors identified a need for further evidence about writing performance and motivation. More recently, Zhang et al. (2026) systematically reviewed 40 articles published between January 2023 and July 2025 that examined ChatGPT as a writing-feedback tool. Their review organised the literature around benefits and limitations, factors affecting effectiveness, user perceptions, and pedagogical approaches combining AI with teacher or peer feedback. It also identified the need for longitudinal research, genre-specific investigation, stronger theoretical frameworks, and attention to ethical issues.

These reviews mean that the originality of another article cannot rest simply on discussing ChatGPT and EFL writing. A more focused contribution is to examine how feedback relates to learner engagement, revision decisions, and independent writing development. This distinction matters because a learner may produce a stronger revised essay after receiving AI suggestions without necessarily acquiring the ability to write more effectively in a later task without assistance.

The topic is also relevant to the Uzbek higher-education context. Recent studies conducted at Fergana State University have begun to examine AI-supported academic writing among Uzbek EFL students. Qosimov et al. (2026), for example, investigated the integration of several AI tools in university students' academic writing, while Xodabande et al. (2026) examined how students used ChatGPT in an academic-writing course. These studies provide context for considering AI-mediated writing in Uzbekistan, but their findings should not be treated as direct evidence about ChatGPT-generated feedback in every Uzbek university or learner group.

The present article therefore offers a focused narrative synthesis of selected conceptual and empirical literature. It does not claim to be the first review of ChatGPT feedback, nor does it claim to be an exhaustive systematic review. Its contribution is to connect feedback theory with evidence about how learners evaluate and use AI-generated suggestions, while distinguishing immediate revision from longer-term development.

1.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of this article is to examine how ChatGPT-generated feedback may support EFL/ESL learners' writing and to identify the conditions and limitations that shape its educational value, with particular attention to learner engagement and revision.

RQ1. What types of ChatGPT-generated feedback and writing outcomes have been investigated in empirical studies of EFL/ESL writing?

RQ2. How do learners engage with, evaluate, select, reject, and apply ChatGPT-generated feedback during writing revision?

RQ3. What benefits, limitations, and methodological gaps have been reported in research on ChatGPT feedback, feedback uptake, and writing development?

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1. Feedback as information that supports learning

Hattie and Timperley (2007) conceptualise feedback as information about aspects of a learner's performance or understanding. Their model is organised around three questions: Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next? In writing instruction, these questions connect feedback to task goals, current performance, and subsequent action. Feedback is potentially useful when it helps learners understand the expected standard, identify a gap in their draft, and decide how to address it.

The model also distinguishes feedback about the task, the process used to complete it, self-regulation, and the personal self. A comment identifying a grammatical error is task-level feedback; advice about how to develop an argument or check paragraph coherence addresses the writing process; and a prompt encouraging learners to evaluate a suggestion can support self-regulation. General praise or criticism about the writer as a person is less directly informative for revision.

ChatGPT may provide comments at several of these levels. It can identify a possible language problem, explain why a sentence is unclear, suggest a different paragraph structure, or prompt a learner to reconsider supporting evidence. However, the existence of an explanation does not guarantee its accuracy. Hattie and Timperley's framework therefore offers a basis for asking whether AI feedback is actionable, relevant to the learning goal, and likely to help the learner decide what to do next.

2.2. Corrective feedback and learner response

Ellis (2010) provides a framework for investigating oral and written corrective feedback. In writing, direct feedback supplies a corrected form, whereas indirect feedback indicates that a problem exists and leaves the learner to identify or produce the correction. Feedback may also be focused on selected error types or unfocused across a wider range of language issues. These distinctions are relevant to ChatGPT because learners can request different forms of assistance.

A prompt asking ChatGPT to rewrite every sentence may produce a different learning experience from a prompt asking it to identify recurring grammar problems without supplying corrections. Direct correction may be efficient, but it can reduce the learner’s need to retrieve and apply relevant knowledge. Indirect feedback may require more effort but can encourage problem-solving when learners have sufficient proficiency and guidance.

Feedback uptake refers to how learners respond to comments. They may accept a suggestion, adapt it, reject it, or misunderstand it. A textual change is not automatically evidence of successful learning. The change must be considered in relation to the original issue, the writer’s intended meaning, and the requirements of the task.

2.3. Learner engagement: cognitive, behavioural, and affective dimensions

Han and Hyland (2015) examine learner engagement with written corrective feedback through cognitive, behavioural, and affective dimensions. Cognitive engagement concerns the mental effort learners invest in understanding and evaluating feedback. Behavioural engagement concerns observable actions, such as making changes, consulting a reference, or asking for clarification. Affective engagement concerns feelings and attitudes, including confidence, frustration, and willingness to use feedback.

These dimensions are related but not interchangeable. A learner may make numerous edits without understanding the reasons for them. Another learner may carefully evaluate a comment and reject it because it changes the intended meaning. Han and Hyland’s (2015) work illustrates why the depth of engagement cannot be measured simply by counting revisions.

Yan and Zhang (2024) extend this discussion to automated written corrective feedback provided by ChatGPT. Their mixed-method multiple-case study examines how L2 writers engage with ChatGPT-generated corrective feedback. This line of research is particularly relevant because it treats learners as active participants in the feedback process rather than passive recipients of corrections.

2.4. Immediate revision and sustained writing development

An important distinction exists between improving a particular draft and developing the ability to write independently. A learner may produce a more accurate essay after applying

ChatGPT’s corrections, but this improvement may reflect direct editing assistance rather than learning that can be transferred to a later task. Stronger evidence of development would include delayed post-tests, new writing tasks completed without AI assistance, or longitudinal observations across multiple assignments.

Studies that assess only the final version of a text can demonstrate the usefulness of feedback for immediate revision, but they cannot by themselves establish durable learning. Research should therefore examine both the quality of revised texts and learners’ subsequent independent performance.

3. Review Approach

3.1. Review design and scope

This article adopts a focused narrative-review approach. It brings together foundational conceptual work on feedback and learner engagement, empirical studies of ChatGPT-supported writing and feedback, and recent reviews of the wider research field. The synthesis is thematic rather than statistical.

The review focuses on research relevant to feedback on learner-produced English writing, including comments on language use, content, organisation, and revision. Studies examining ChatGPT solely as a text generator, without a clear connection to feedback on learners’ own writing, are not treated as direct evidence of feedback uptake. They may provide contextual information about AI-supported writing, but they cannot establish how learners respond to feedback on their own drafts.

3.2. Source selection and analytical procedure

The sources discussed in this article were selected for their relevance to four areas: (1) foundational theories of feedback and learner engagement; (2) empirical investigations of ChatGPT-generated feedback or writing support in EFL/ESL contexts; (3) reviews mapping the research field; and (4) emerging studies of AI-supported academic writing in Uzbekistan. Key sources include Hattie and Timperley (2007), Ellis (2010), Han and Hyland (2015), Barrot (2023), Lo et al. (2024), Mahapatra (2024), Polakova and Ivenz (2024), Yan and Zhang (2024), Zou et al. (2025), Zhang et al. (2026), Qosimov et al. (2026), and Xodabande et al. (2026).

Each source was considered in relation to its research context, the AI tool or feedback source examined, the writing outcomes investigated, the way learner responses were analysed, and the extent to which the design supported claims about longer-term development. Because this is a narrative review rather than a systematic review, these dimensions guide the discussion but do not constitute a reproducible screening protocol.

3.3. Limitations of the review approach

The sources were not assembled through a fully documented systematic database search. No exhaustive screening, formal duplicate removal, PRISMA flow diagram, or systematic quality appraisal was completed. The article therefore does not claim to include every relevant publication or to establish how frequently a finding occurs across the entire literature. The synthesis should be interpreted as a focused narrative discussion of selected sources. Before journal submission, the author should verify all bibliographic details against the original publications and follow the target journal’s requirements for review articles and AI-use disclosure.

4. Evidence-Informed Synthesis

4.1. Potential benefits of ChatGPT-generated feedback

A frequently discussed advantage of ChatGPT is the speed and availability of its responses. Learners can request explanations, alternative wording, examples, or clarification while drafting and revising. This conversational format may support iterative practice and allow learners to ask follow-up questions about particular comments.

Mahapatra (2024) investigated ChatGPT as a formative feedback tool in an intervention with undergraduate ESL students. The mixed-methods study used three tests and focus-group discussions and reported a significant positive impact on academic writing skills, together with generally positive student perceptions. The inclusion of a delayed post-test strengthens the study’s contribution to discussion of retained performance. Nevertheless, the findings relate to a particular educational setting and should not be generalised automatically to all EFL learners, genres, or feedback procedures.

Polakova and Ivenz (2024) examined 110 university EFL students through a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design. Their study reported improvements in selected writing dimensions, including conciseness, grammar, inclusion of key information, and passive-voice use. The qualitative findings also indicated positive student perceptions. These results suggest that ChatGPT feedback can support selected language and text-level outcomes under particular instructional conditions. They do not establish that every AI suggestion is accurate or that the gains necessarily transfer to independent writing.

Woo et al. (2024) explored EFL students’ experiences of learning to write with ChatGPT in a classroom workshop. Their study considered motivation, cognitive load, and satisfaction with the learning process. Although it is not exclusively a study of corrective feedback, it provides useful context about how structured classroom support and prompt-related instruction may shape learners’ experience of ChatGPT-assisted writing.

Taken together, these studies suggest that ChatGPT may provide useful access to explanations and support for selected writing dimensions. The educational value, however,

depends on how the tool is integrated into instruction and how learners are taught to assess the reliability and relevance of its responses.

4.2. Limitations and the need for human judgement

ChatGPT should not be treated as an unquestionable authority. Its responses can be inaccurate, overconfident, generic, or insufficiently sensitive to context. A suggested expression may be grammatically possible but unsuitable for the intended audience, genre, or academic register. It may also change the writer's intended meaning. Barrot (2023) discusses both the potential of ChatGPT for second-language writing and limitations involving accuracy and intelligibility.

AI feedback may also distribute attention unevenly across writing dimensions. Grammar, spelling, and vocabulary problems can be relatively easy to identify, whereas argument logic, the adequacy of evidence, task fulfilment, and the relationship between claims and examples require contextual judgement. ChatGPT can comment on these higher-order features, but its comments need to be checked against the assignment instructions, the writer's purpose, and the assessment criteria.

Teacher feedback remains important because teachers understand course objectives, learner progress, classroom context, and the standards used for assessment. They can prioritise the most consequential issues and explain why a suggestion may be inappropriate. A balanced approach therefore treats ChatGPT as an additional source of feedback, not as a replacement for teacher judgement or learner responsibility.

4.3. Learner engagement and feedback uptake

The literature on learner engagement helps explain why access to AI feedback does not guarantee successful revision. At the cognitive level, learners need to judge whether a comment is accurate, relevant, and consistent with their intended meaning. At the behavioural level, they need to make a purposeful change or decide not to make one. At the affective level, confidence, trust, frustration, and motivation may influence whether they continue interacting with feedback.

Yan and Zhang (2024) are particularly relevant because they investigate L2 writer engagement with automated written corrective feedback provided by ChatGPT. Their mixed-method multiple-case approach places attention on how learners interact with AI feedback, rather than relying only on general attitudes towards the technology. This supports the view that feedback use is an active process shaped by learners' interpretations and decisions.

Zou et al. (2025) investigated students' uptake of teacher- and ChatGPT-generated feedback in EFL argumentative writing. The study compared how 20 Chinese university students used the two sources of feedback when revising their essays. The authors reported stronger overall engagement and more accurate revisions with teacher feedback, while

ChatGPT showed a relative strength in comments about organisation. The findings caution against treating AI and teacher feedback as interchangeable or assuming that one source is universally superior.

Revision should therefore be analysed at the level of individual feedback points. Researchers can record whether a learner accepted, modified, rejected, or misunderstood each suggestion and then assess the resulting change. Such analysis distinguishes productive uptake from uncritical copying. It also recognises that rejecting an AI suggestion can demonstrate sound judgement when the suggestion is inaccurate or changes the writer’s meaning.

4.4. Immediate writing outcomes and transfer

The empirical literature reports promising short-term outcomes, but the interpretation of improvement depends on how writing is measured. A higher score on a revised draft may show that feedback helped improve that particular text. It does not necessarily show that the learner can independently produce a stronger text later.

Mahapatra (2024) included a delayed post-test, providing evidence beyond the immediate revised draft. Polakova and Ivenz (2024) reported improvements in selected writing dimensions after an intervention with university EFL students. These studies make useful contributions, but differences in participants, tasks, feedback procedures, and assessment criteria mean that their findings should not be combined into a single general claim about ChatGPT’s effectiveness.

Future studies should distinguish three outcomes: (1) immediate improvement in the draft receiving feedback; (2) retention of relevant knowledge after a period of time; and (3) transfer to a new writing task completed independently. These outcomes answer different educational questions and should be measured separately.

4.5. Emerging evidence from Uzbekistan

Research on AI-supported writing in Uzbekistan is beginning to develop, offering an important local context for future work. Qosimov et al. (2026) examined the integration of AI tools in academic writing among 351 EFL students at Fergana State University. The study considered writing quality, cognitive independence, and technology acceptance. Because it examined a range of tools, including ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot, its findings should be interpreted as evidence about AI-assisted writing practices rather than as an isolated test of ChatGPT-generated feedback.

Xodabande et al. (2026) conducted a qualitative classroom-based case study involving 10 first-year EFL students at Fergana State University. The study examined ChatGPT-mediated academic writing over a ten-week course and analysed interaction logs, draft-revision pairs, reflective logs, interviews, and teacher field notes. The authors described tensions between

convenience and learning responsibility and highlighted the role of teacher mediation in helping students move from substituting AI output for their own work towards more selective use.

These studies are relevant because they locate AI-supported writing within an Uzbek university setting. However, neither should be treated as evidence that all Uzbek EFL students use ChatGPT in the same way, nor should findings from one institution be generalised to the whole country. In addition, the broader focus of Qosimov et al. (2026) means that it cannot be used as direct proof of the effectiveness of ChatGPT feedback alone.

The local evidence points to a need for further research at different Uzbek universities, including studies that examine how students evaluate specific feedback suggestions, what kinds of corrections they accept or reject, and whether AI-supported revision leads to stronger independent writing. Such research could make the international literature more relevant to local EFL teaching while avoiding unsupported generalisations.

4.6. Methodological gaps in the field

Recent reviews identify several limitations in the developing research field. Lo et al. (2024) mapped empirical studies of ChatGPT in ESL/EFL education and called for further evidence about writing outcomes and motivation. Zhang et al. (2026), whose systematic review focused specifically on ChatGPT as a writing-feedback tool, identified the need for stronger theoretical frameworks, longitudinal designs, genre-specific analysis, and attention to ethical issues.

Several methodological concerns follow. First, short interventions may not establish whether learners retain improvements or transfer them to new tasks. Second, questionnaire-based studies may capture satisfaction or confidence without demonstrating accurate revision. Third, small samples and single-institution settings limit generalisability. Fourth, incomplete reporting of model versions, prompts, feedback procedures, and teacher involvement makes replication difficult. Finally, different rubrics and outcome measures complicate comparisons across studies.

Future research should report the model or version used where possible, the exact prompts, writing tasks, feedback sequence, teacher and peer involvement, and criteria for assessing revision quality. Mixed-methods designs can combine writing scores with draft analysis, feedback logs, learner explanations, and interviews. Delayed assessments and new writing tasks are also needed to investigate retention and transfer.

4.7. Implications for EFL writing instruction

ChatGPT is best used as a supplementary feedback resource within a structured writing process. Students should first produce their own draft and understand the task requirements. They may then request focused feedback on one dimension, such as paragraph organisation,

clarity of topic sentences, or recurring grammatical errors. Focused requests can make the feedback easier to evaluate than a broad instruction to rewrite or improve the entire essay.

Learners should be taught to check each recommendation rather than accept it automatically. They can compare suggestions with the assignment rubric, consult reliable language references, and ask a teacher or peer about complex issues. A revision log can record the original issue, the AI suggestion, the learner’s decision, and the reason for accepting, adapting, or rejecting it. This makes the learner’s reasoning visible and supports feedback literacy.

Teachers can design activities in which students compare AI-generated feedback with teacher or peer comments. Students can identify a helpful suggestion, locate a questionable one, and explain how they would revise the draft. This approach develops critical evaluation rather than encouraging dependence on a single feedback source.

Institutions should also provide clear guidance on privacy, authorship, academic integrity, and acceptable AI use. Students need to understand which forms of assistance are permitted for a particular assignment and how AI assistance should be acknowledged under institutional or journal requirements. Responsibility for the final text should remain with the learner.

5. Discussion

In response to RQ1, the selected literature shows that studies have examined ChatGPT feedback on grammar, vocabulary, conciseness, content, organisation, and broader writing performance. Intervention studies such as Mahapatra (2024) and Polakova and Ivenz (2024) report positive outcomes in their respective settings. Woo et al. (2024) provide related evidence about classroom experiences of ChatGPT-supported writing, while the reviews by Lo et al. (2024) and Zhang et al. (2026) map the broader research field. These studies do not establish that every type of feedback is equally effective.

In response to RQ2, learner engagement involves more than accepting corrections. The frameworks of Ellis (2010) and Han and Hyland (2015), together with Yan and Zhang’s (2024) study of ChatGPT-generated corrective feedback, indicate the importance of cognitive processing, observable revision behaviour, and affective responses. Zou et al. (2025) further show that learners may engage differently with teacher and ChatGPT feedback depending on the writing dimension. Learners’ decisions to modify or reject a suggestion are therefore as important to examine as the corrections they accept.

In response to RQ3, the literature identifies practical benefits alongside important limitations. Immediate access, interactive explanations, and repeated opportunities for practice are potential advantages. Accuracy problems, generic comments, contextual mismatch, overreliance, and uncertainty about long-term learning are significant concerns. Methodological gaps include short interventions, context-specific samples, inconsistent

reporting of prompts and model versions, and insufficient evidence of transfer to independent writing.

The emerging Uzbek studies add a valuable contextual dimension but also underline the need for careful interpretation. Research at Fergana State University indicates that AI-assisted writing and ChatGPT-mediated academic writing are being examined locally (Qosimov et al., 2026; Xodabande et al., 2026). However, these studies differ in scope and design, and they do not justify broad claims about all Uzbek EFL learners. More research at a range of institutions is needed, especially research that isolates feedback uptake and revision quality.

The central argument of this review is that ChatGPT feedback should be evaluated through the relationship between feedback quality, learner engagement, revision quality, and subsequent independent performance. This avoids two oversimplifications: that AI feedback is automatically effective because it is immediate, and that it has no educational value because it cannot replace a teacher. The evidence supports a conditional position: ChatGPT may assist selected writing tasks when learners have the knowledge and instructional guidance needed to evaluate its suggestions.

The article’s contribution is a focused synthesis connecting foundational feedback theory with empirical work on ChatGPT and AI-supported writing, while keeping learner perceptions, immediate revision, and sustained independent development analytically distinct. This is a bounded contribution rather than a claim to be the first or only review of the topic.

6. Limitations

This article has limitations. First, it is a narrative review based on selected publications rather than a systematic review with a fully documented search and screening process. Relevant studies may therefore have been omitted. Second, the included studies differ in educational setting, participant characteristics, writing genre, intervention length, feedback procedures, and assessment measures. Their findings cannot be treated as directly equivalent. Third, some Uzbekistan-based studies examine multiple AI tools or broader ChatGPT-mediated writing practices rather than feedback alone. They are therefore used as contextual evidence, not as direct tests of ChatGPT feedback effectiveness. Fourth, this article does not include new participant data or an independent statistical analysis of the studies.

These limitations mean that the conclusions should be interpreted as a cautious synthesis of selected literature, not as a definitive estimate of ChatGPT’s overall effect on EFL writing. A future systematic review could build on this article by using a documented database search, explicit eligibility criteria, duplicate removal, and a transparent appraisal of study quality.

7. Conclusion

ChatGPT-generated feedback offers practical opportunities for EFL writing instruction through rapid, interactive, and accessible responses to learners' drafts. Empirical studies report improvements in selected writing outcomes, and learners may benefit from explanations and repeated opportunities to clarify feedback. Nevertheless, the educational value of AI feedback depends on the accuracy and relevance of its suggestions and on learners' ability to evaluate and apply them.

The literature shows why feedback uptake and revision quality deserve close attention. Learners may accept, adapt, reject, or misunderstand AI suggestions, and these responses cannot be evaluated simply by counting changes to a text. Immediate improvement in a revised essay should also be distinguished from lasting development in independent writing ability. ChatGPT should therefore be treated as a supplementary resource that works alongside teacher guidance and learner judgement.

Emerging studies from Uzbekistan provide a relevant local context, but further research is needed across different institutions and learner groups. Future studies should document prompts and model details, examine different writing genres, analyse learners' revision decisions, and include delayed assessments and new writing tasks. In classroom practice, students should be encouraged to evaluate AI suggestions critically, explain their revision decisions, and retain responsibility for the final text.

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