MAKING REASONING VISIBLE: PORTFOLIO-BASED ASSESSMENT AND AI-USE DISCLOSURE IN EFL ACADEMIC WRITING

Islamova Saida Farxadovna Teacher,
Uzbekistan State World Languages University Tashkent,
Republic of Uzbekistan islamova.saida1986@gmail.com

Abstract. Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has weakened the link between a well-written essay and the learning that is supposed to stand behind it. This thesis argues that, in EFL academic writing, the problem is primarily one of assessment rather than of technology. If only the final product is graded, students rationally choose the shortest route to a polished text. The paper proposes a process-oriented assessment model that combines a writing portfolio, a six-criterion rubric for critical analytical writing and a mandatory AI-use disclosure. The model makes the learner's reasoning observable at each stage and turns responsible GenAI use into an assessable learning outcome. Its application in ESP and General English classes in Uzbekistan is discussed, together with directions for empirical validation.

Keywords: EFL academic writing, critical thinking, process assessment, writing portfolio, generative AI, AI-use disclosure, constructive alignment, academic integrity.

Introduction. For decades, the written essay served as a convenient proxy for a student's ability to analyse sources and construct an argument. With the arrival of large language models, this assumption no longer holds. GenAI tools offer real benefits to second-language writers, including explanations and immediate language feedback [1], and they can support argumentative writing when embedded in a carefully designed task sequence [7]. Yet the same tools allow learners to bypass the cognitive work of writing. People tend to offload mental effort onto external aids whenever possible [6], and knowledge workers who place greater confidence in GenAI report applying less critical scrutiny to its output [5]. For EFL students, who already struggle to see the

essay as an argument rather than an organised summary of sources [9], the temptation is considerable.

Institutional responses have often focused on detection or prohibition. Both approaches are of limited value: detection tools are unreliable, and prohibition contradicts international guidance that calls for teaching critical and responsible use of GenAI [8]. A more productive question is how assessment can be redesigned so that the thinking behind a text becomes visible and therefore worth doing.

Aim and method. The aim of the study is to develop a process-oriented assessment model for EFL academic writing that (a) captures evidence of students' analytical reasoning and (b) integrates transparent GenAI use into the assessed outcomes. The study is conceptual and design-based. Principles drawn from research on writing processes, feedback, scaffolding and self-regulation were translated into assessment instruments, which were then refined in the author's teaching of ESP and General English to B1–C1 university learners in Tashkent.

The assessment model. The model rests on the principle of constructive alignment: if the intended outcome is critical analysis, then analysis itself, not merely its final textual form, must be assessed [2]. Writing is understood as a recursive process in which much of the effort goes into planning and revising [3]. Accordingly, the unit of assessment is a portfolio that documents this process. It includes:

annotated source texts and a claim–evidence map;

a list of questions about the sources' reasoning;

an argument planner based on claim, reasons, warrant and qualifier;

the first draft, written in class without AI support;

a written evaluation of a GenAI-generated counter-argument and the student's rebuttal;

a change log recording every language edit accepted from GenAI or a grammar checker;

a short reflective log and an AI-use statement.

The portfolio is scored with a rubric of six criteria, each on a four-point scale: source analysis, evaluation of evidence, argument structure, counter-argument and rebuttal, language and academic style, and reflection and transparency. Crucially, the first four criteria can be awarded high marks only if they are supported by process evidence. A fluent essay without a documented reasoning trail is thus treated as incomplete rather than excellent.

AI-use disclosure. The AI-use statement asks the student to name the tool, the stage at which it was used, the exact prompts and the suggestions accepted or rejected, with brief reasons. This instrument serves two purposes. First, it replaces suspicion with accountability: the teacher no longer needs to guess whether AI was used, because its use is documented. Second, it functions as a metacognitive task. Explaining why a suggestion was rejected requires the learner to evaluate machine output against their own argument, which corresponds to the reflection phase of self-regulated learning [11]. Feedback from peers and the teacher is organised around three questions — where the student is going, how they are progressing and what to do next — which has been shown to make feedback most effective [4].

Discussion. Classroom experience suggests that students differ markedly in how they respond to GenAI feedback. Some accept suggestions wholesale and cannot later justify the changes in their texts; others treat the tool as one voice among many, select what is useful and retain ownership of their position. Under product-only assessment these two groups may receive identical grades. Under the proposed model, the difference becomes visible in the change log, the counter-argument evaluation and the AI-use statement, and it can be addressed through targeted feedback. In this sense, the instruments act as scaffolding that structures responsible behaviour at first and can be gradually reduced as learners internalise it [10].

The model is low-tech and can be implemented in large classes with uneven access to devices, which is typical of many universities in Central Asia. Its main cost is teacher time; this can be reduced by peer review against the same rubric and by assessing selected portfolio components rather than all of them in every assignment.

Conclusion. When GenAI makes fluent text inexpensive, assessment must reward the reasoning that produces it. A portfolio-based model with an analytical rubric and mandatory AI-use disclosure shifts the focus from the final product to the learner's thinking, discourages uncritical reliance on GenAI and turns its responsible use into an explicit learning outcome. The next step is empirical: a quasi-experimental study comparing portfolio-assessed and product-assessed groups in terms of critical thinking gains, writing quality and patterns of AI use.

References

1. Barrot, J. S. (2023). Using ChatGPT for second language writing: Pitfalls and potentials. *Assessing Writing, 57*, 100745. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2023.100745
2. Biggs, J. (1996). Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment. *Higher Education, 32*(3), 347–364. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00138871
3. Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication, 32*(4), 365–387. https://doi.org/10.2307/356600
4. Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1), 81–112. https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487
5. Lee, H.-P., Sarkar, A., Tankelevitch, L., Drosos, I., Rintel, S., Banks, R., & Wilson, N. (2025). The impact of generative AI on critical thinking: Self-reported reductions in cognitive effort and confidence effects from a survey of knowledge workers. In *Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '25)*. New York: ACM.

https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713778

6. Risko, E. F., & Gilbert, S. J. (2016). Cognitive offloading. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 20*(9), 676–688. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2016.07.002
7. Su, Y., Lin, Y., & Lai, C. (2023). Collaborating with ChatGPT in argumentative writing classrooms. *Assessing Writing, 57*, 100752. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2023.100752
8. UNESCO. (2023). *Guidance for generative AI in education and research*. Paris: UNESCO.
9. Wingate, U. (2012). 'Argument!' Helping students understand what essay writing is about. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 11*(2), 145–154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.11.001
10. Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 17*(2), 89–100. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1976.tb00381.x