

## EVALUATIVE AUTONOMY AND AI-ASSISTED TASKS IN THE ESP CLASSROOM

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The rapid integration of generative algorithms into professional communication curricula raises a fundamental question for higher education: how to redefine the instructional focus when the mechanics of writing are increasingly automated. Within Business English (ESP), this issue is particularly significant, as professional success depends not only on linguistic precision but also on the ability to navigate complex social contexts and strategic goals. While scholarly debate ranges from strong skepticism regarding "high-tech plagiarism" (Chomsky, 2023) to more optimistic views on technological support (Barrot, 2024), the role of the human agent requires clearer definition. As generative tools become a standard part of the writing process, the role of the learner must evolve from a primary producer of text to a strategic curator. This shift requires the development of evaluative autonomy—the capacity to critically assess, refine, and adapt machine-generated content to meet specific professional demands.

The theoretical foundation of this approach draws on the concept of co-intelligence (Mollick, 2024), which frames artificial intelligence as an intellectual partner. In this collaborative model, technical and routine tasks are delegated to the algorithm, while the human user focuses on higher-level functions such as strategic intent, tone, and pragmatic alignment. However, such a partnership presupposes a high level of AI literacy that extends beyond basic prompt engineering. It requires the ability to recognize the limits of an algorithm's "cultural memory" and to identify pragmatic mismatches that can lead to communication failure. Without this critical oversight, uncritical reliance on AI risks weakening independent writing skills and reducing the distinctiveness of an authorial voice, which is essential for professional differentiation (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

In the ESP classroom, developing this autonomy involves practical strategies that move beyond traditional text production. One effective approach is the use of pragmatic mismatch exercises, where students audit AI-generated drafts that are grammatically correct but contextually unsuitable—for instance, an overly formal response to a long-term partner or a too-polite request in a crisis situation. By deconstructing these outputs, learners develop a "pragmatic ear" for tone and power dynamics. Furthermore, persona-based contrastive prompting allows students to generate multiple versions of a message and justify their selection based on situational constraints. These activities are supported by the use of revision logs, where students document every strategic change made to a draft, making the decision-making process transparent and ensuring that the human agent remains the primary architect of the message.

This transition toward an oversight-centric model inevitably demands a fundamental re-evaluation of how we assess student work. If evaluation remains focused only on the final output, it becomes difficult to distinguish between genuine competence and passive reliance on technology. Instead, ESP instruction should prioritize process-oriented evaluation, where the quality of a student's critique and their ability to justify stylistic adaptations are given as much weight as the final text (Xu et al., 2025). This approach encourages students to act as "editors-in-chief" of their own digitally-mediated communication, maintaining their individual voice while adhering to professional standards. It also serves as a safeguard against the standardization of business discourse, ensuring that communication remains a tool for building authentic professional rapport.

Ultimately, pragmatic competence remains a human responsibility that cannot be fully replicated by algorithms. While generative AI is an effective tool for overcoming initial drafting barriers and ensuring technical accuracy, the responsibility for the outcome of a professional relationship lies with the writer. For higher professional education, this means integrating systematic critical evaluation into the curriculum and focusing on strategic personalization—areas where human judgment maintains a clear advantage. Furthermore, encouraging transparency in the use of AI tools (Hosseini et al., 2025) is essential for ethical academic practice. Only by developing these evaluative skills can future specialists ensure that professional communication retains its quality and strategic integrity in an AI-mediated world.

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