

Research Papers/Extended Abstracts

Presentation Evaluation Guidelines: AI and ChatGPT – An Initial Study at the Department of English and Linguistics, University of Ruhuna

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Abstract

The use of Generative AI in humanities and the social sciences education in Sri Lanka has raised significant concerns in higher education discourses in Sri Lanka. The use of Generative AI is an issue categorically in a discipline such as English studies given that authenticity and originality are critical to develop skills in textual and linguistic analyses. This mixed-methods research is an ongoing, collaborative project by the Staff Members of the Department of English and Linguistics of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Ruhuna on the feasibility of adopting an assessment methodology/criterion for oral presentations considering undergraduates' expectations for quality education in the humanities and social sciences within emerging trends of Generative AI such as ChatGPT and Gemini. This study is important to ascertain the validity and reliability of the testing and evaluation procedures in assessing the undergraduate performance in the modules offered within the curricula of BA (Hons) in English and BA (General) in Arts degree programmes. Considering the policy level implications of the study, policy document analysis will be employed as a primary research method along with the data gathered from open-ended interviews with practitioners, researchers and lecturers involved in the curricula of the Department. The qualitative data thus gained will be triangulated with quantitative data gathered from a questionnaire administered among the undergraduates of the Department as key stakeholders of the university education system. The study will argue for a pedagogic necessity for adopting alternative assessments based on criteria that primarily assess the undergraduates' presentation skills, its relevance within the discourse on quality assurance in the higher education sector and the establishment of a policy framework on using Generative AI in pedagogical activities in a responsible and ethical manner. Finally, based on the best practices explored during the study on creating a framework on presentation-based alternative assessments as followed at the Department of English and Linguistics, the researchers will present recommendations to be implemented at the national level.

Keywords: *Assessments, Generative AI, Higher Education, Language Policy, Oral Presentations*

Introduction

The Department of English and Linguistics of the University of Ruhuna having been established in 2015 fulfilled the void of English Literature and Linguistics education in the South of the Nation in terms of State Tertiary education in Sri Lanka. The Department simultaneously offers course units/modules ranging from Teaching English as a Second Language and World Literatures in English, where ‘presentations’ are synonymous with the Departmental academic trajectory. In this context, the evaluation of ‘presentations’ be it creative responses as in the case of literature studies or linguistic engagements as part of continuous assessments is an arduous task, in that, ‘presenting’ is not only a subjective act, when it is culminated with the subjective creative arts, it is complex only to be further exacerbated by a subjective presenter as an evaluator. This extant complex context is further problematised by the evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Chat GPT assistance in the writing task – effects of which are inevitable owing to the rapid development of modern Information Technology, where, in the case of written submissions numerous applications (apps) and research is being conducted into its effect on the act of ‘writing’ and the notion of ‘originality’ and ‘plagiarism’. The nature and scope of presentations thus allude to plagiarism, AI assistance and ChatGPT inadvertently, for, most often than not, the focus is on the ‘presenting’ primarily with the ‘presentation’ secondary. This working paper thus is an ongoing case study in the Department’s collective effort of introducing a Departmental guideline for the evaluation of presentations recognizing the said rapidly shifting elements of Information Technology shaping writing which is often projected as the presentation (slides) per se.

While ‘plagiarism’ is a recognised and duly evaluated aspect of the evaluation of writing, the technical reference to nuances of presentation and its evaluation needs to be explicitly recognised as aspects that rupture the notion of ‘original work’/ ‘original submission’. Furthermore, while numerous IT platforms are of use in the detection of ‘plagiarism’ and its percentage, the explicit reference and acknowledgment of these recent developments in the field of presenting and its effect on presentations are yet to be cited as mitigating factors in the larger process of the evaluation of presentations. The Department offers two Course Modules for the Final Year students made mandatory as per the Faculty Guidelines, namely, Dissertation and Industrial Training both of which mandate 20 percent of the final mark allocation for presentations in the form of viva-voce. As such, the need for a presentation evaluation guideline is imminent.

Taking this complex context into account, the Department in preparation for the larger curriculum review due in 2025 at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is in the process of preparing a Departmental Guideline to be used in the evaluation of presentations – mandatory as part of the

Continuous Assessment (CA) process. With this as the aim, this case study explores the current context of presentation evaluation, the challenges faced by evaluators in the evaluation process, the implications of the lack of a specific reference to evaluation indicators, the indicators of disqualification, the views and notions of stakeholders in the process ranging from IT perspectives to literature/linguistic facilitators, the humanistic aspects of evaluation of this subjective endeavour albeit in the larger task of formulating a Departmental guideline for presentation evaluation.

Objectives

This study aims to analyse presentation-based assessments as a response to the influence of Generative AI tools, considering undergraduates' expectations for quality higher education in the humanities and social sciences. The researchers aim to develop a policy framework to be used both at university level and national level to ensure standards in the humanities and social sciences education in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this research aimed to identify the best practices for adopting presentation-based assessments as valid and reliable evaluation procedures to enhance undergraduates' skills that align with their expectations for quality higher education.

Methodology

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect and analyse data. Policy documents related to quality assurance in higher education will be examined to identify directives given to practitioners to identify the validity/authenticity of students' submissions. The analysis of policy documents will focus on directives concerning the assessment of higher education students' performance in oral/viva-voce presentations. The documents under review include:

1. Manual for Review of Undergraduate Study Programmes of Sri Lankan Universities and Higher Education Institutions (2015)
2. Internal Quality Assurance in Universities: Different Approaches, Policies and Procedures (2007)
3. Plagiarism Prevention Policy and Interpretative Guidelines (2022) University of Ruhuna

Policy document analysis serves as a research method to understand the nature and sources of complex problems (Cardno, 2018, p.625). It allows researchers to explore the underlying principles and intentions within policy frameworks. In this context, policy is considered a crucial component of the higher education sector, as it provides guidelines for practice and acts as a mediator between theory and praxis.

However, as Cardno (2018) suggests, policy document analysis alone may not be sufficient to research complex issues in the higher education sector, due to potential selectivity bias in selecting documents. The researchers will conduct open-ended interviews with practitioners, researchers, lecturers and students as stakeholders in the higher education sector to address this limitation.

Additionally, a questionnaire with close-ended questions will be distributed among students, who are key stakeholders in the State University system. The questionnaire aims to collect quantitative data on students' awareness and satisfaction with assessment criteria utilised in oral/viva-voce presentations.

Finally, the data collected will be triangulated to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings throughout the research process.

Results and Discussion

The study is ongoing and is in the white paper stage, where the data is simultaneously being collected for analysis. However, as an overview and as tentative assertions the following have been identified:

- There is an imminent need for the formulation of a policy document on presentation evaluation at the Departmental level, given that the nature and scope of the subject matter of the Department calls for regular presentation as continuous assessment criteria.
- The reference to and acknowledging of ChatGPT and AI developments as having an impact on presentations is vital in the shaping of the above policy document.
- Plagiarism and its conceptualisation should be broadened to encompass presentations at the Departmental level deviating from the traditional assumption of plagiarism being associated with written work.
- Citation of sources in a presentation which includes ChatGPT and AI in the event of its usage as being mandatory.
- The establishment of a code of conduct and framework of ethics of using Generative AI such as ChatGPT if/when required to apply to pedagogical activities.

This study further argues that the acknowledgement of such developments in the field of Information Technology must take place in the examinations/evaluation guidelines of the Department and in turn Faculty, where appropriate measures are taken to address the incorporation of such developments in the evaluation process. The study further asserts that not acknowledging such developments

contributes to a sense of redundancy where there is an incongruence of evaluation processes in line with student activities and the 21st century learning environment.

This study suggests that legal implications will be minimised in the future if a clear policy document addressing the issue of ChatGPT and AI in relation to the evaluation of presentations is in place given that such presentations are as highlighted mandated in the Final Year evaluation process. Furthermore, the evaluation space of presentations is not one-sided elaborations but rather spaces of dissemination of knowledge where the possibility of plagiarism through non-academic citation can be asserted, thus calling for a legal policy document stipulating penalisations in the event such non-academic instances arise.

This study additionally calls for the inclusion of external observers, i.e. industry professionals to be on the evaluation panel adding not only a sense of transparency to the evaluation process but also contributing to further research through the input of such external observers/evaluators in the process.

Conclusion

This ongoing study argues for a strong macro-level restructuring of policy directives on the type and scope of continuous assessments administered in the modules offered to the undergraduates at the University of Ruhuna given that inadequate academic discourse on the inclusion or exclusion of emerging trends in Generative AI such as ChatGPT and Gemini. The study aims to present an overarching analysis of the presentations as an alternative to take-home written assignments to evaluate the undergraduates' accomplishment of Intended Learning Outcomes of the corresponding modules. The study aims to analyse the best practices followed by both academics and undergraduates in such oral presentations to assess the undergraduates' accomplishment of skills, knowledge and attitudes and mindset. This study will then analyse larger implications of applying the lessons learned from the best practices at the University of Ruhuna to the national level. The study also aims to present a legal and ethical framework for using Generative AI in production and dissemination of knowledge with special reference to the current policy level directives issued to the academics and administrators in Sri Lanka, striking a balance between opening avenues to enhancing skills and knowledge in the digital age and preserving unique, core values of each discipline in the higher education sector in the country.

References

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