

Transcription of the Zoom chat during Session 1: A vision for academic language and learning education in programmatic assessment — 2024 AALL Symposium

Keynote: Dr Andrew Kelly, AALL President & Manager, Learning Support,
Edith Cowan University

Please excuse any incompleteness or inaccuracy in this transcription

Lisa Ralston: So much of what we do in individual consultations is about the human connection - helping students talk through their ideas and providing support that a robot simply can't

David Rowland: You can ask AIs to act as Socratic tutor, and at least sometimes this might help students talk through their work.

Lily Klasson: That's so dystopian!

Zoe Pettifer: Most students won't know what a Socratic tutor is. I don't think they always understand the role we play. Maybe this needs to change?

David Rowland: I saw a study which found feedback was good for okay and fairly good assignments, but was poor for poorly done assignments, when students had missed the point.

Michelle Sowe: I've come across another study that has somewhat opposing findings. It's titled 'Comparing the quality of human and ChatGPT feedback of students' writing' and the results (for research question 2) suggest that AI feedback tends to decline in accuracy as essay quality improves (see page 7 in the PDF): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959475224000215>

Adam Gall: (though to be fair, we don't always have good evidence that we help students learn either!)

Alexandra Garcia: The problem with relying on published evidence for the effectiveness of our activities is that we are mostly a 'professional' force, not remunerated for doing research.

Anna Podorova: Agree about integrated discipline-specific approaches. We must remember that the genre is a large language model, not a knowledgeable professional. I've worked with Danny Liu's AI tutor (Cogniti), of the the best customised tools in Education, and it does a great job as a socratic maths or English tutor, but it is not reliable in complex contexts such as LANTITE prep :-)

Adam Gall: the problem with assuming AI does things well is we actually don't have strong evidence about that either. We are also focusing on artefacts that automated tools can produce as a way of assessing their capabilities

Alexandra Garcia: I haven't seen meaningful feedback on students' writing

Amy Cairns: You'll also want to see how well they perform at these tasks given the inputs from students looking for help - not only experts

Adam Gall: We haven't validated the learning they are supposedly facilitating

Michael McAuley: How do we encourage appropriate AI use that supports learning from inappropriate use that replaces learning?

Renee Shibuya: When using AI, what students don't have is the ability to recognise errors, skills to match criteria and critical thinking skills to apply patterns/skills to a range of contexts. They can't evaluate the quality of the answers.

Sue Gollagher: Perhaps that's where we should direct our energies - to helping students develop these capacities.

Renee Shibuya: I'm very interested in that!

Alexandra Garcia: It seems to me that saying that AI will replace us is similar to the argument that Google would replace teachers.

Adam Gall: One challenge with getting into class time is that units of study already feel very crowded under pressure from...

Kacie Fahey: From the perspective of cultural considerations/Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, AI will never be able to fill this role. Relationally is key for many of our students. This is our 'superpower'.

Joel Russell: Is the question about the value of generic support similar to the debate about why profession specific training is more or less useful than generic Arts degrees with focus on learning and problem solving capacity rather than knowledge specific professional degrees which may be outdated by the time the students complete the training?

Adam Hembree: As always, concerns about AI end up revealing huge systemic issues with how universities already obstruct their own educative purpose with giant class sizes, crazy workload for staff, and lack of teacher training.

Alexandra Garcia: Problem is the educational purpose has been superseded by the business purpose.

Anna Podorova: Couldn't agree more! Sad.

Andre Breedt: Hard agree

Lisa Rolston: I'm sure many universities have entirely separate teams for upskilling academics - this is Learning, Teaching and Curriculum responsibility, more than learning advisors

Lucy Macnaught: The article mentioned re: gradual handover: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2022.2048369> ('Sustainable embedded academic literacy development: the gradual handover of literacy teaching', by Lucy Macnaught, Mark Bassett, Vanessa van der Ham, John Milne & Chris Jenkin)

Also mentioned in the chat: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2024.2354280> ('Embedded approaches to academic literacy development: a systematic review of empirical research about impact', by Mark Bassett & Lucy Macnaught)

Rachel Barber: Absolutely Lisa - I keep saying to our managers that we need to be doing staff D but get told 'that's not our role'

Lily Klasson - Learning advisors should be modelling appropriate use of GenAI. Why should we use it to create resources when in most cases, students wouldn't be able to do the same for their assessments?

Alex Barthel: UTS has a definition of embedding ALL and has a very good model of full institution wide curriculum embedding. Happy to talk about it and explain how it works: lexybar@gmail.com

Mark Eggins: I don't quite agree with the 'handover' approach - assessments change as do many other factors like cohorts, so academics should feel they can still reconnect even if it is on the same task.

Lucy Macnaught: @Mark Eggins we agree and discuss that in our article

Steve Campitelli; I wonder if AI interactions can ever be truly dialogic experiences?

Adam Hembree: About like hitting a tennis ball against a brick wall as tennis practice

Steve Campitelli: The main dialogic difference for me is that a human-human interaction is always an open discussion with unexplored possibilities whereas a human-AI interaction is open discussion of already-explored information

Rachel Barber: What Andrew is suggesting is so important but our main barrier is institutional culture, that has historically marginalised ALL work

Michael Mifsud: Students need to know their stuff before they can filter the BS.

Lily Klasson: Can all 'impact' be truly quantified?

Jock: Research rarely measures learning

Sue Gollagher: The Bassett & Macnaught article shook me. It made me question so many of my assumptions!

Anna Podorova: As the AALL Research and Scholarship Lead, I'd like to support Andrew's point about collecting and using evidence to support our roles. We hope to support you in this endeavour in 2025.

Tom Coverdale: It's hard to set up studies that measure changes in achievement. You can't get a trial/control research design through ethics, and staff are strongly discouraged from conducting research on their own students, in any case.

David Rowland: Example of a dialogic discussion with Meta AI around research methodology. Not sure how well this would go if I didn't know the answers. [Attachment: Thinking critically about research methodology - a chat with Meta AI (Meta AI conversation 4/10/24)]

Lily Klasson: Much of the literacy development we facilitate with students is related to unconstrained skills (E.g. writing, structuring a text, building an argument), which are built over time and are naturally difficult to quantify, rather than unconstrained skills like decoding words, spelling correctly, using punctuation, etc. Are skills less important because they can't be quantified so easily? What about dispositions like critical thinking and creativity?

Rachel Barber: This is a really good point Lily, and also perhaps suggests that what counts as evidence in the current climate privileges the measurable constrained skills.

Hollie West: Agree. Universities just don't invest in this type of research anymore. Dollars and quick data fixes are the only forms that are validated.

Joel Russell: Justin how would we then pass on the responsibility for generating learning to the student?

Alexandra Garcia: Are there any studies on the impact of generic workshops? Again, we are an almost entirely professional force. The research that is produced is mostly done as free labour. There may not be evidence simply because the studies have not been done.

Joel Russell: Is there anything, knowledge, skills or tech-wise, that we don't need to be experts in?

Mark Eggins: Is the research still more supportive for embedded versus generic ALL though?

Mark Bassett: Not really, Mark. That's why we need to get out there and get more evidence of

Mark Eggins: I see @Mark Bassett, in that case then generic programs could still be done as well as long as they are well evaluated in terms of their efficacy.

Mark Bassett: Research that could compare them would be great :-)

Lisa Rolston: AI is not a morally neutral technology and nobody should be forced to use it.

Lily Klasson: This feels very reminiscent of all the pressures that primary and secondary teachers are subject to right now – the push for accountability and 'data' and a subsequent focus on mostly construed skills that are naturally easier to quantify.

Tao Bak: Toes that new focus rusk crossing over into the role of education/academic developers, and learning design specialists?

Sue Gollagher: I think our roles already do overlap.

Adam Hembree: I hope so! It's an ideal collaboration

Lisa Rolston: I don't want either team to start losing jobs, and universities don't need any more excuses to cut jobs

Alexandra Garcia: Peer learning is not exactly cost-effective (if you pay for students' training, planning and delivery). You are asking students to deliver support it has taken years for us to develop. There's also high turnover.

Sue Gollagher: True, but I think the benefits make it worthwhile. Remember, the Peer Leaders are also benefiting. They graduate with enhanced leadership skills and deeper understand of their disciplines.

Brendan Hall: What is the evidence of relative efficacy compared to specialist advice?

Alexandra Garcia: They benefit the peer leaders, who are already overachievers, rather than the attendees.

Sue Gollagher: @ Alexandra Garcia our data shows that the students who attend PASS regularly achieve higher grades. Although I do know that that doesn't account for other variables.

Subhash Koirala: For me, what Andrew is suggesting depends on the social, cultural and institutional context of where we work, who our students are, and where they're coming from. For me, the demand for one-on-one consultations has been even higher after COVID and GenAI. Increasingly, a large number of students with complex learning needs, mental health issues, or students from non-traditional backgrounds have constantly shared that they benefit much more from human connection. To use GenAI effectively, students need not only certain literacy but also a certain level of meta-cognitive, self-directed learning skills, and executive functioning.

Amelia Yarwood: My experience mirrors this.

Alice Lee: Learning how to learn remains key for us to scaffold students

Ha Nguyen: How do AI and belonging sit together?

Adam Hembree: For one low-low monthly feeeee

Lily Klasson; This sounds like an oxymoron!

Kate Hall: lots of apparently white, able bodied, young people...

Anna Podorova: AI prompting skills need further development :-)

Adam Hembree: Do you have any sources for the proven effectiveness of AI in the individual consultation space? As a regular user of the software and researcher about its capabilities, I've seen little evidence that AI can meaningfully replace one-to-one advice

Lisa Rolston: Sources that aren't marketing copy for AI books and actually come from practitioners!

Mark Eggins: The main message we should make I think is our complementarity, especially with working with academics, for example we can have a role in teacher training especially say in rubric design, that of course would also involve learning developers - but LDs don't work with students so we do still have a unique perspective to offer.

Alexandra Garcia: This is what they said about the Internet and education in the 2000s: 'In 2000, some predicted that the internet would change education in the following ways: More participatory classrooms. Students would learn independently using digital classrooms and internet resources'

Jock: If it's pass or fail, why try harder than the next person

Barbara: We have anecdotes about effectiveness of embedding in curriculum. That type of 'data; shouldn't be under-valued

Vittoria Grossi: @Barbara agree, anecdotes and stories are valuable data

Ha Nguyen: My question: do you think fostering belonging should be part of our role?

Tao Bak: Sarah O'Shea has found that diverse background students particular often to think in terms of 'mattering', rather than 'belonging'. can AI provide this?

Fiona Perry: QUESTION: Does Andrew or anyone here know of any examples of research papers that could be used as a model to investigate impact (not staff or student perception) of ALL work?

Kate Absolom: Great talk, Andrew. Thanks!

Robyn Latimer: Thank you Andrew Kelly... your presentation was music to my ears.

Christopher Mccaughey: Thank you, Andrew. Excellent

Renee Shibuya. Thanks Andrew. Great talk!

Andre Brett: Thank you Andrew – a very thought-provoking presentation :)

Teresa Balfour Brown: Fantastic presentation Andrew.

Nicholas Robinson: Linked question: Do we have any proof that students enjoy writing essays, or other assessments with AI? Or, does it merely compound student alienation, and feelings of loneliness, which we know many students struggle with?

Adam Gall: We aren't yet paying for generative AI tools

Ha Nguyen: High-achieving students don't necessarily want to use AI.

Josta Heyligers: Thanks Andrew. A thought provoking presentation - much food for thought:-).

Adam Hembree: Thanks Andrew!

Adam Gall: Yes, thank you Andrew for this great keynote

Vittoria Grossi: Thanks Andrew, interesting!

jc138359: Thank you for this excellent food for thought. Today is definitely part of the Community of Practice (CoP). Now onto making it more seamless with students and other staff also in partnership arrangements on learning journeys.

Jenny Mendieta: Thanks, Andrew!

Mark Eggins: Thanks Andrew, great talk!

Tom Coverdale: Thanks, Andrew!

Mark Eggins: What about an AALL AI COP?

Mark Eggins: One elephant in the room is that if students do graduate with excellent skills in AI that should help them in the workplace - but if they don't really have the disciplinary content and soft skills like good communication, that's not really a well rounded graduate I guess...

Hollie West: I resonate with all of this. And the long term impact of devaluing human-human connection is immeasurable. I think it's important to reflect on those concerns rather than shove us all in the luddite/parochial camp. AI in Education is a return to elitism.