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Human vs AI-Generated Texts in Language Learning: A Linguistic Comparison

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Abstract
The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into education has significantly changed how we approach language learning and teaching. Even though AI-generated materials are becoming more common in English language instruction, there is still not enough linguistic research comparing these texts with those designed for textbooks. This study aims to fill that gap by comparing human-authored and AI-generated texts used in language learning. The goal is to identify the main linguistic differences between these two types of texts and assess their effectiveness as language-learning models. The study uses texts from High Note and Language Leader alongside those generated by ChatGPT on similar topics, all within the B1–B2 proficiency range. The analysis examines lexical richness, syntactic complexity, cohesion, and discourse organization using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The findings show that AI-generated texts exhibit greater lexical diversity and syntactic complexity; however, they often exhibit structural uniformity, overuse of cohesive devices, and limited pragmatic depth. In contrast, textbook-based texts demonstrate balanced grammar, controlled vocabulary selection, greater communicative authenticity, and a stronger fit with teaching goals. The study emphasizes the need to balance technological innovation with effective teaching in language education. The results suggest that while AI-generated texts can be helpful as supplementary resources, they should not replace professionally designed educational materials. This research contributes to ongoing discussions on artificial intelligence in English language teaching and offers insights into the linguistic and educational impacts of AI-assisted learning resources.
Keywords: Artificial intelligence, communicative authenticity, discourse organization, English language learning, lexical richness, syntactic complexity, textbook discourse

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Introduction

The quick rise of AI in education has changed how we approach language learning and teaching. One of the most significant developments is the emergence of text-generating systems like ChatGPT, which can produce clear, relevant, and stylistically diverse text. These technologies offer new opportunities to improve writing instruction, provide instant feedback, and help learners generate ideas. However, they also raise important questions about the quality, authenticity, and teaching value of AI-generated texts compared to those written by humans. From a linguistic standpoint, comparing human and AI-generated texts allows us to explore differences in word variety, sentence complexity, coherence, and practical use. Human writing often shows variability, creativity, and sensitivity to context, while AI-generated texts typically show high structural regularity and grammatical correctness, though they might lack depth or intent. These differences are crucial in language learning, where exposure to real language and the development of communicative skills are key goals (Gilmore, 2007). As AI tools become more common in education, it is essential to study their effects on learners' language development. We need to determine whether AI-generated texts can be effective models for language learning or push students toward more standardized, less nuanced language. Additionally, using these tools challenges our traditional ideas of authorship, originality, and academic honesty, which are vital in language education. This study aims to thoroughly compare human-written and AI-generated texts in language learning, focusing on key factors such as vocabulary richness, sentence variety, coherence, and organization. The main research question for this study is: To what extent do AI-generated texts differ from human-written texts in their language features, and how do these differences affect their usefulness as models in language learning?

Literature Review

Recent research shows that AI plays a significant role in language education, particularly in improving writing, speaking, and self-directed learning. Researchers emphasize that AI tools can help learners by providing immediate feedback, generating ideas, modeling language, and offering interactive practice. Sako (2024) describes AI as a major influence in English language learning, highlighting its ability to tailor instruction and create more opportunities for language practice outside the classroom. These studies view AI not just as a technical development but as a teaching tool that changes how people learn languages.

A considerable body of research has examined AI chatbots as interactive tools for language acquisition. Kang and Sung (2024) show that AI chatbots can foster self-directed learning of conversational skills, particularly by encouraging learner autonomy and sustained practice. Tai and Chen (2024) likewise demonstrate that generative AI chatbots can improve EFL speaking skills through both individual and paired interactions. On a broader level, Koç and Savaş (2025), in their systematic meta-synthesis of studies published between 2010 and 2024, conclude that AI chatbots have considerable pedagogical value in English language learning, especially in promoting engagement, language practice, and personalized support. At the same time, these scholars note that the effectiveness of chatbot use depends on context, task design, and learners' critical awareness of AI-generated output.

The role of AI in writing and text production has also attracted substantial scholarly attention. Mohamed (2024) explores EFL faculty members' perceptions of ChatGPT and finds that educators recognize its strong potential to enhance teaching practices, while also expressing concerns about overreliance, originality, and assessment validity. From a broader educational

perspective, Ahmad et al. (2023) warn that while AI may improve efficiency, it may also contribute to reduced independent decision-making, learner passivity, and safety-related concerns in education. These findings suggest that the pedagogical benefits of AI must be weighed against its potential negative effects on learner agency and academic responsibility. Moreover, Khedr and Abbas (2026) prove that "in both literary and nonliterary genres, human creativity preserves moral and interpretive elements that AI cannot replicate" (p. 97).

Another important line of inquiry concerns the linguistic and communicative nature of AI-generated discourse. Mieczkowski et al. (2021) examine AI-mediated communication and show that language use in human-machine interaction can influence interpersonal effects and communicative performance. Their findings are especially relevant to language learning, as they indicate that AI-generated discourse is not neutral and shapes communicative behavior in specific ways. Pütz and Esposito (2024) further argue that systems such as ChatGPT often produce apparently fluent performance without genuine understanding, relying on humans to repair conversational breakdowns and interpret ambiguity. This distinction between fluency and understanding is central to evaluating AI-generated texts in educational settings, because linguistic correctness does not automatically guarantee communicative adequacy or pragmatic depth.

The issue of authenticity is especially significant in language learning research. Gilmore (2007) emphasizes the value of authentic materials in foreign language learning, arguing that exposure to naturally occurring language supports learners' communicative competence more effectively than artificially simplified input. This perspective provides an essential theoretical basis for comparing human-written and AI-generated texts. While AI-generated texts may be grammatically coherent and lexically rich, they do not necessarily match the degree of contextual embeddedness, sociocultural nuance, or communicative intention found in human-produced discourse. Therefore, the question of whether AI-generated texts can serve as authentic language models remains open and requires close linguistic examination.

More recent research also highlights the institutional and strategic implications of generative AI in higher education. Alzubaidi (2025) examines the role of generative AI in higher education through the lens of institutional guidelines, generational differences, and emerging technological challenges. The study suggests that universities increasingly need clear frameworks for integrating AI into teaching and learning while preserving academic standards: "It is essential that professional educational bodies oversee and assess emerging technologies to ensure their alignment with academic values and their suitability before being introduced into educational environments" (p.3). Zhang and Umeanowai (2025), in their bibliometric analysis of AI in EFL contexts, likewise confirm the rapid expansion of this field and identify it as one of the most dynamic research areas in language education. Their findings indicate growing scholarly interest in the practical and theoretical consequences of AI-assisted language learning.

From a philological viewpoint, Markus and Kirner-Ludwig (2024) show that AI can also be approached as an object of linguistic and lexicographic inquiry. Their study demonstrates that AI-related tools and resources should be evaluated not only for efficiency but also for their implications for language description, representation, and interpretation. A related perspective appears in Stanko (2024), which examines the integration of AI into fan fiction writing and illustrates how AI can shape creative linguistic production within specific discourse communities. Although this case study focuses on digital creative writing, it is relevant to the present topic because it shows that AI-generated or AI-assisted texts participate in meaning-making processes differently from purely human-authored texts.

Overall, the literature suggests that AI has substantial potential in language learning, especially in writing support, interactive practice, and personalized instruction. At the same time, scholars repeatedly emphasize concerns about authenticity, critical thinking, originality, communicative depth, and overreliance on technology. Despite the growing number of studies on AI in education, relatively less attention has been paid to a direct linguistic comparison between human-written and AI-generated texts as models for language learning. This gap justifies the present study, which seeks to examine how these two types of texts differ in lexical, syntactic, cohesive, and discourse-related terms, and what those differences imply for language pedagogy.

Methodology

The current study compares human-written texts with AI-generated texts, with a focus on language learning. It uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze vocabulary, sentence structure, and overall text organization. The research corpus comprises two subcorpora: (1) textbook-based texts and (2) AI-generated texts. The first subcorpus includes reading materials from popular EFL coursebooks, High Note and Language Leader. These textbooks were selected for their emphasis on communicative language teaching and their inclusion of authentic and semi-authentic texts aimed at B1–B2 proficiency levels.

The selected materials consist of argumentative, descriptive, and informational texts on topics such as education, technology, lifestyle, and global issues. The corpus includes 20 texts, 10 from each textbook, averaging 180–250 words. The second subcorpus consists of AI-generated texts produced with ChatGPT. To ensure a valid comparison, the AI texts cover the same topics and tasks as those in the chosen textbooks. Each textbook text has a corresponding prompt that matches its topic, genre, and length. The AI is programmed to generate texts of similar complexity (B1–B2 level) and word count (180–250 words). Thus, the AI subcorpus also includes 20 texts, for a total of 40 texts.

All texts are combined into a single corpus and undergo standard preparation steps, including formatting adjustments and sentence and token splitting. This ensures consistency for the analysis. The linguistic analysis focuses on four main aspects: vocabulary richness, sentence complexity, cohesion, and organization. Vocabulary richness is measured using the type-token ratio and the presence of appropriate vocabulary. Sentence complexity is assessed by examining sentence length, clause structure, and the variety of grammatical forms. Cohesion is examined through linking devices, reference chains, and word repetition. Organization is evaluated by analyzing paragraph structure, logical flow, and clarity of purpose.

In addition to quantitative measures, a qualitative analysis examines stylistic and practical differences between the two subcorpora. Special attention is given to how natural, varied, and authentic the texts feel, as well as to any signs of AI-generated texts exhibiting uniform structure or formulaic patterns.

This methodological framework enables a controlled, systematic comparison of textbook-based and AI-generated texts, facilitating an evaluation of their linguistic features and their effectiveness as models for language learning.

Results

The analysis of lexical richness reveals clear differences between textbook-based and AI-generated texts in both quantity and quality. The results focus on two main indicators: type-token ratio (TTR) and vocabulary appropriate for learners' levels. In terms of quantity, AI-generated texts

have a slightly higher average TTR than textbook texts. This suggests a wider range of word choices within individual texts and indicates greater lexical variation. However, this variation does not always serve a clear purpose. AI-generated texts sometimes use near-synonymous words from the same semantic field without needing context, which may create the impression of artificial diversity.

In contrast, texts from High Note and Language Leader demonstrate more controlled vocabulary selection. Although their TTR values are slightly lower, the vocabulary is better suited for teaching. The words are selected to meet CEFR level expectations (B1-B2), and repetition is used strategically to reinforce key vocabulary and aid understanding. This approach maintains a better balance between lexical variety and clarity. The vocabulary in textbooks aligns well with students' proficiency levels. It is clearly organized, featuring essential terms alongside thoughtfully introduced higher-level words. These texts consistently use thematic categories, which support vocabulary learning through context and repetition.

By contrast, AI-generated texts show less consistency in vocabulary grading. Most words fall within the B1-B2 level, but some exceed the target level or are stylistically unusual. This inconsistency may increase learners' cognitive load and make these texts less effective as controlled learning materials. Additionally, AI-generated texts often use more abstract, generalized vocabulary. While this can create a formal tone, it may lack specificity. The qualitative analysis shows that textbook texts focus on clear communication and teaching goals, whereas AI-generated texts emphasize lexical variation and fluency. As a result, AI texts may seem more lexically rich at first glance, but textbook materials provide better support for vocabulary learning.

Overall, the findings indicate that while AI-generated texts demonstrate higher lexical diversity, as shown by the type-token ratio, textbook-based texts offer more suitable and structured vocabulary for language learners. The analysis of syntactic complexity and cohesion reveals significant differences between textbook-based and AI-generated texts in both structure and discourse.

Regarding syntactic complexity, AI-generated texts tend to have longer average sentences and more multi-clause structures. These texts often contain complex and compound-complex sentences with many subordinate clauses, especially adverbial and relative clauses. This can create an impression of sophistication; however, such complexity is not always necessary. In many cases, longer sentences in AI-generated texts hinder clarity and make it harder for B1-B2 learners to understand. There is also a trend toward similar sentence patterns across these texts, indicating some level of structural uniformity despite the apparent complexity.

In contrast, texts from High Note and Language Leader feature more controlled sentence structure. Sentences are generally shorter and more balanced, clearly alternating among simple, compound, and moderately complex forms. Subordination is used selectively, aligning with teaching goals. This makes grammatical structures easier to grasp while still exposing learners to a range of sentence patterns. This approach effectively supports syntactic development.

When it comes to grammatical structures, AI-generated texts display a wide range, including passive voice, conditional clauses, and complex noun phrases. However, these features can sometimes be overused or sound formulaic. In contrast, textbook texts show a more systematic progression of grammatical forms, often reflecting the syllabus design and CEFR-aligned sequencing.

The analysis of cohesion further reveals differences in how the texts are organized. AI-generated texts often use many linking devices, such as additive connectors (like “moreover” and

"in addition"), contrastive connectors (like "however" and "on the other hand"), and causal connectors (like "therefore" and "as a result"). While this adds clear cohesion, it can also lead to occasional overuse of connectors, creating a somewhat mechanical flow. By contrast, textbook texts use linking devices more selectively and contextually. Cohesion is built not only through connectors but also through well-developed reference chains and careful repetition of words. Pronouns, demonstratives, and substitutions maintain coherence without overloading the text with explicit markers. In textbook texts, lexical repetition serves a clear teaching purpose, reinforcing key vocabulary and aiding comprehension. In contrast, AI-generated texts show less systematic repetition, often replaced by synonyms. While this adds lexical variation, it may weaken the cohesive ties throughout the text.

The findings indicate that AI-generated texts have more complex syntax and use cohesive devices more prominently. However, this can affect clarity, natural variation, and their effectiveness for teaching. In contrast, textbook texts offer a more balanced and learner-friendly approach to syntax and cohesion. The analysis of how these texts are organized shows clear differences between those based on textbooks and AI-generated texts in paragraph structure, logical flow, and clarity of purpose.

AI-generated texts usually feature a clear paragraph structure that typically follows a specific pattern: an introductory sentence, a series of supporting ideas, and a concluding statement. This results in a high level of formal organization and clear separation of ideas. However, this structure can be predictable and uniform across various texts. Paragraphs often adhere to similar rhetorical patterns, regardless of the topic, which may reduce the sense of genuine variation in the discourse. While the logical flow is generally coherent, it can sometimes be too straightforward, connecting ideas in a simple and formulaic manner rather than through subtler development. Texts from High Note and Language Leader show greater variety in paragraph structure and organization. These texts reflect a range of communication purposes and genres, including narrative, descriptive, and argumentative styles. Consequently, paragraphing is more flexible and tailored to the context. The logical flow is sustained through clear markers, implicit connections, thematic progressions, and organized information, resulting in a more natural and authentic use of language.

Both sets of texts typically achieve their goals in terms of clarity of purpose. However, textbook texts show a stronger link between their structure and intent. Each paragraph usually supports the overall aim of the text, whether it is to inform, persuade, or describe. In AI-generated texts, the purpose is generally clear, but there are occasional instances of redundancy or generalization in which supporting ideas do not significantly enhance the argument or add new information.

The qualitative analysis reveals stylistic and practical differences. AI-generated texts are fluent, grammatically correct, and vocabulary-rich. However, they often lack stylistic depth and deeper meaning. The tone is usually neutral and generic, showing little awareness of the audience, context, or subtle elements of communication. There is also a noticeable reliance on formulaic phrases and similar structures across texts, creating a sense of uniformity.

In contrast, textbook-based texts exhibit greater stylistic variety and authentic communication. They encompass a broader range of discourse features, including rhetorical questions, examples, contrasts, and evaluative language. These elements make the text more engaging and grounded in context. Pragmatically, these texts align more closely with real-life communication, reflecting how language operates in specific situations and for specific audiences. Overall, the findings suggest that while AI-generated texts are structurally coherent and well-

organized, textbook texts offer a more varied, context-sensitive, and effective model for discourse organization and communication.

Discussion

The findings of this study both support and extend existing research on the use of AI in language learning, particularly regarding linguistic quality, teaching value, and communicative authenticity.

The higher lexical diversity in AI-generated texts supports Stanko's (2024) claims. He argues that AI tools can improve vocabulary use and broaden learners' lexical range. However, this study adds nuance by showing that increased lexical variation in AI texts isn't always best for teaching. Unlike textbook materials that use controlled repetition to support vocabulary retention, AI-generated texts often prioritize variation. This supports Gilmore's (2007) point that effective language input should balance authenticity with learnability. This suggests that materials designed for teaching may better meet structured language development needs than automatically generated texts.

The results on syntactic complexity also inform ongoing discussions in the field. While AI-generated texts exhibit greater structural complexity, this doesn't always translate into better learning outcomes. This aligns with Pütz and Esposito's (2024) view that AI can produce linguistically sophisticated output without genuine communicative understanding. This study confirms that syntactic complexity in AI texts can be excessive or unnecessary, potentially confusing intermediate learners. In contrast, textbook materials adopt a more balanced, supportive approach to grammar, consistent with pedagogical principles emphasized by Sako (2024), who stresses that language input should match learners' proficiency levels.

Findings on cohesion and discourse organization highlight the distinction between fluency and communicative effectiveness. AI-generated texts often rely too heavily on explicit cohesive devices, resulting in an overuse of connectors and a linear flow of ideas. This aligns with the conclusions of Mieczkowski et al. (2021), which indicate that AI-driven communication can produce structurally coherent discourse but is limited in practical use. In contrast, textbook materials build cohesion through a mix of lexical, grammatical, and contextual methods, allowing for a more natural flow of discourse.

The issue of discourse organization and communicative authenticity is especially important. The tendency of AI-generated texts to use predictable, formulaic structures aligns with the broader concerns raised by Koç and Savaş (2025). They note that while AI tools can boost engagement and accessibility, their outputs often lack variety and depth. Similarly, Mohamed (2024) found that educators recognize both the benefits and drawbacks of AI-generated texts, especially regarding originality and context sensitivity. This study confirms those concerns, revealing that while AI texts are coherent and well-structured, they often lack the stylistic richness and practical nuance seen in textbook materials.

The findings align with Ahmad et al. (2023), who warn that overreliance on AI might weaken learners' critical thinking and independent language skills. If learners primarily use AI-generated texts as models, they may become familiar with language that is correct but overly generalized. This could hinder their ability to develop skills sensitive to different contexts.

At the same time, we should recognize AI's teaching potential. Studies by Tai and Chen (2024) and Kang and Sung (2024) show that AI tools can effectively support interactive and self-directed learning. This study aligns with those findings but suggests that we should carefully

moderate our use of AI-generated texts. Rather than replacing traditional materials, AI outputs could serve as supplementary resources. They might be useful for tasks such as comparison, editing, or critical analysis.

Overall, this discussion shows that while AI-generated texts offer benefits such as greater vocabulary variety and accessibility, they differ significantly from textbook materials in areas such as design, dialogue variability, and real-life communication. These differences underscore the need for a balanced approach to integrating AI into language learning. We should blend the benefits of technology with the structure and learner-focused nature of traditional teaching materials.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study shows that while AI-generated texts have greater lexical diversity and syntactic complexity, they often lack the teaching focus, discourse variety, and authentic communication found in textbooks like High Note and Language Leader. AI texts are usually coherent but tend to be more formulaic and less context-sensitive, which can reduce their effectiveness as primary learning tools. Therefore, AI-generated texts should be used as supplementary resources rather than primary sources. They can support activities such as comparison, editing, and critical analysis. A balanced mix of AI tools and well-designed teaching materials appears to be the best way to improve learners' language skills and communication abilities.

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