Writing Progress in Australian Schools
An Experimental Proof-of-concept Application

Charbel El-Khaissi [1]

charbel.el-khaissi@anu.edu.au

School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics
Australian National University
Baldessin Precinct Building, 110 Ellery Crescent, Acton ACT 2601 Australia

This presentation investigates the feasibility of using corpus linguistic technology for identifying habitual writing errors in Australian secondary school students. A small experiment was conducted using written assignments of a Sydney-based high school student, comprising a small corpus (500k words) that spanned three years (2019-2000), multiple subjects (English, Geography, Health, Religion, etc) and multiple genres (e.g. creative writing, scientific reports). Experimental design emphasised the automation and scalability of natural language data collection, processing, analysis, and visualisation to enable swift deployment in school networks. Results expose both positive and negative trends in student writing performance across several Australian curriculum areas. The presentation concludes with the implications for using such technology at a micro- (e.g. classroom) and macro-level (e.g. national), including possibilities for month-on-month adaptive grading (i.e. measuring individual student writing progress longitudinally) as a complement to biennial, standardised assessments (e.g. point-in-time NAPLAN testing). Existing challenges and opportunities for commercialising this application in the EdTech sector are also provided.

Themes: corpus linguistics, language development, research commercialisation

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[1]**Charbel El-Khaissi:** a doctoral student at the Australian National University and consultant for the Australian Government Department of Education's University Research Commercialisation taskforce.