

Using ChatGPT to Develop Reading Materials for ESL Learners

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本文は生成系 AI である ChatGPT を活用した英語読解教材開発における実践報告である。AI が教育分野、特に語学教育に革新をもたらす中、本研究は日本の中級英語学習者を対象とした「Mobile English Learning Project」における ChatGPT の具体的な活用事例を示す。ChatGPT の導入により、教材作成の効率化が図られ、教師は多様な教材を迅速かつ質の高い状態で提供できるようになった。本報告は、生成系 AI が語学教育のあり方を根本的に変革する可能性を示唆し、AI 活用の重要性と同時に、その限界と留意点についても論じる。

Introduction

Since the emergence of ChatGPT, a large language model AI, in November 2022, artificial intelligence has sparked revolutionary changes across various industries, with education being no exception. This impact is particularly profound in the field of language education, as ChatGPT, fundamentally a language model, naturally influences language teaching in unprecedented ways. The advent of AI has the potential to transform foreign language education (Warschauer & Xu, 2024). It is foreseeable that university language teachers who fail to use AI or develop superior AI-supported skills compared to their students may risk being replaced by AI-assisted teaching methods in the future.

On the other hand, teachers who can effectively harness AI skills and technologies will find immense support in enhancing their teaching abilities and methodologies. This will allow them to reshape their roles as educators, save time, improve efficiency, and achieve better teaching outcomes. By doing so, they can provide more effective support for students' knowledge acquisition, cognitive development, and skill cultivation. Based on the author's experiences with ChatGPT in language teaching since April 2023, this article aims to share practical insights into leveraging ChatGPT for English reading material development. We hope these reflections can serve as valuable guidance for fellow educators. A survey involving both teachers and students reveals that properly designed AI-generated teaching materials, such as reading resources, often meet the same quality standards as those created by humans. In most cases, both teachers and students are unable to distinguish between human-generated and AI-generated materials. This suggests that AI-generated teaching materials can effectively replace or complement human-created ones, making them equally reliable and widely applicable for English learning purposes (Wang, 2024)

Using ChatGPT to Create English Reading Materials

The Mobile English Project

In 2013, the author initiated a project called *Mobile English Learning*. This project involves regularly

inviting native English speakers and Japanese English teachers to create English short essays, grammar exercises, quizzes, and other engaging materials tailored for Japanese intermediate-level English students. Occasionally, students are also invited to contribute by writing essays.

These materials are written in simple, easy-to-understand English, designed to take only two to three minutes to read. They aim to be engaging, relatable, and reflective of students' campus life or topics of interest. To enhance accessibility and convenience, *Mobile English* offers its content through smartphone applications for both iOS and Android, available for download on the Play Store or Apple Store.



Fig.1. Mobile English Project
(<https://www.mobile-english.net/>)

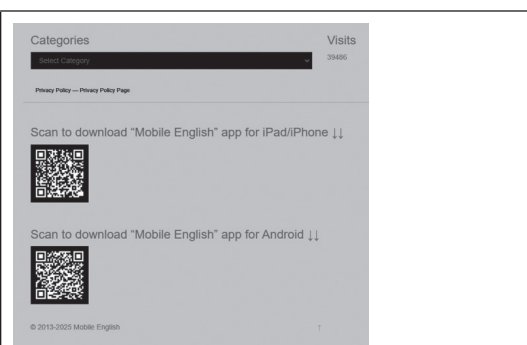


Fig. 2. Smartphone application and QR codes for downloading

Before the advent of AI tools, even native English teachers spent significant time searching for appropriate sources and crafting essays to match the intermediate English proficiency level of Japanese students. This was a time-consuming and costly process. Content creators were often paid for their contributions, adding to the expense.

However, since the emergence of ChatGPT, creating these materials has become much more efficient, saving both time and costs. With ChatGPT, generating various types of English reading materials, including essays, is now quick and easy.

ChatGPT for Essay Creation

This project involves creating short essays on various topics such as cultural differences, science and technology, the environment, lifestyle, health and entertainment, society, politics, sports, history, and notable figures.

Previously, the process was complex. Teachers would decide on a topic, gather materials, and draft essays. If a Japanese teacher wrote the essay, a native English speaker would review it for language accuracy. Now, with ChatGPT, the process is streamlined. Teachers can choose a topic and use ChatGPT to provide resources and draft an essay quickly. A well-constructed prompt significantly enhances efficiency. For example:

“Please revise the following essay to ensure the English is easy to understand and suitable for CEFR A2-B1 level students. The revised essay should be 100–150 words in length. Additionally, select five to six challenging words for Japanese university students and provide their definitions in Japanese.”

ChatGPT generally generates authentic and readable essays. However, teachers should still review the output to ensure accuracy. Below is an example of a ChatGPT-revised essay titled “What an American Found Surprising After a Month in Japan” under the *Cultural Differences* category. In this project, essays are revised using ChatGPT and fine-tuned for appropriate difficulty levels.

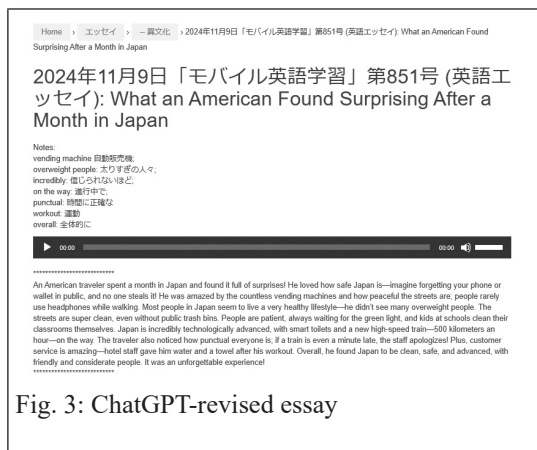


Fig. 3: ChatGPT-revised essay

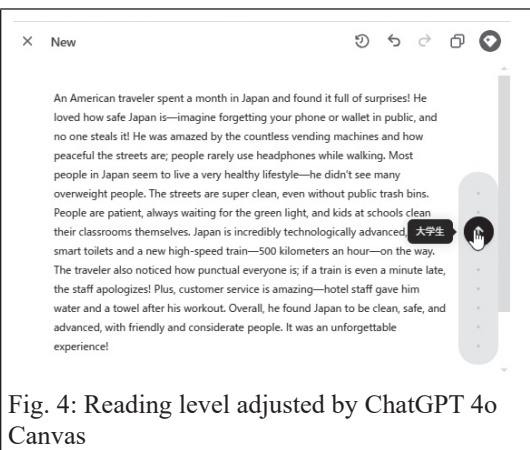


Fig. 4: Reading level adjusted by ChatGPT 4o Canvas

Vocabulary Learning with ChatGPT

When creating essays or reading materials, we often ask ChatGPT to select challenging words and explain them in Japanese or English. A typical prompt might be:

“Please select 5 to 10 words from the text. The chosen words should be somewhat challenging for Japanese English learners at the A2-B1 level.”

We also use Quizlet to help students practice vocabulary with flashcards. ChatGPT can format words and definitions for Quizlet, saving significant time for teachers. For example:

“I want to create flashcards for my students to learn the following words. Please format the words and their definitions with a comma between each word and its definition, like this: Word 1, Definition 1
Word 2, Definition 2”

Image and Video Creation

After developing essays, we often create visuals to enhance their content. Previously, this involved searching for copyright-free images, a time-consuming task. With ChatGPT, we can now generate images tailored to the essay’s themes. For instance:

“Please generate a Japanese animated-style image based on the following essay.”

Additionally, platforms like www.sora.com, part of ChatGPT service, now allow video creation.

Although its video creation is not yet as advanced as its image generation function, it still meets many of our needs. For example, we can provide prompts like:

“ Setting:

The serene beauty of Matsue City, Shimane Prefecture, Japan, with the iconic Lake Shinji (宍道湖) as the central focus. Highlight the city’s skyline, tall buildings, and the impressive bridge spanning the lake. The nearby airport is a key element, showcasing a JAL flight arriving from Tokyo.

Storyline:

The video begins with a tranquil aerial view of Lake Shinji, capturing the still waters reflecting the city lights and the bridge. As the camera pans toward the horizon, a JAL flight gracefully descends, symbolizing new beginnings and connections. The atmosphere gradually transforms into a vibrant celebration of the 2025 New Year, with festive lights, subtle fireworks, and cheerful music enhancing the festive mood.”

The website www.sora.com can generate a 5-second image based on the descriptions provided above. Refer to Figure 5.

ChatGPT is not only useful for creating videos and images but also for quickly and accurately finding highly relevant videos from YouTube and other platforms to enhance students’ understanding and extend their learning of the reading materials. For example, when we use a prompt like this to ask ChatGPT to recommend an appropriate video to fit the reading material.

“Can you search YouTube.com for a high-quality video that aligns with the theme and examples discussed in the following essay?”

Within seconds, it provides a highly relevant video along with its link. See Figure 6.



Fig.5. ChatGPT created video: New Year’s Shinji Lake

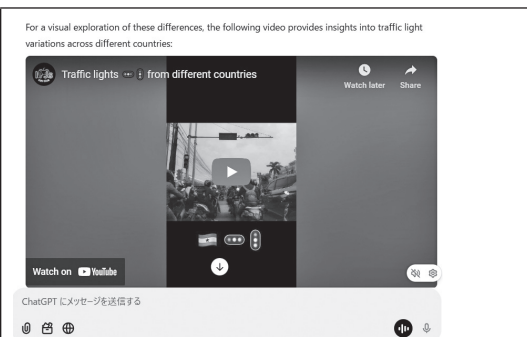


Fig.6. ChatGPT recommends highly relevant YouTube resources in seconds

Discussion

Using ChatGPT, we can create effective reading materials. In addition, ChatGPT can also create multiple-choice questions to assess students’ reading comprehension. For instance, you can ask ChatGPT, “Create a multiple-choice question to evaluate students’ understanding of this essay,” and it will even provide the correct answer.

ChatGPT can be incredibly helpful for teachers who are teaching reading courses. For example, you can ask ChatGPT to translate an English passage into Japanese and format the output so that each English paragraph is followed by its Japanese translation. This method provides a clear and structured learning experience for basic level students.

Another tip for using ChatGPT effectively is to use voice input for prompts. While typing prompts is an option, it can be time-consuming. Instead, we strongly recommend using a voice control plugin for ChatGPT. With voice control, you can simply “speak” your prompt to ChatGPT. Even if your speech contains filler words, pauses, or minor errors, ChatGPT is usually capable of understanding and processing your request accurately.

It’s important to note, however, that while ChatGPT is a powerful tool for generating reading materials, all outputs should be carefully reviewed by teachers to ensure accuracy and appropriateness (Wang, Iwata & Okamoto, 2024). Although rare, ChatGPT might occasionally produce content with errors. Teachers must review and, if necessary, revise the materials to ensure they meet the required standards.

Conclusion

This article highlighted how ChatGPT can assist in creating English reading materials. ChatGPT also functions as a conversation partner, enabling learners to practice real-time communication skills, and its editing capabilities provide valuable learning opportunities. While some challenges exist, overall effectiveness in supporting language teaching is clear. The author believes ChatGPT, and similar AI tools will revolutionize language learning, urging educators to research and integrate these technologies into their teaching practices.

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