FAIR ASSESSMENT OF WRITING: STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN AUTOMATION AND HUMAN JUDGEMENT

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Abstract:
In the fast-paced digital era, the assessment of writing has undergone a transformative shift with the integration of automated tools. As technology continues to advance, the debate surrounding the fair assessment of writings without the human factor intensifies. While automated tools offer efficiency and objectivity, concerns arise regarding their ability to comprehend nuances, creativity, and the human touch in writing. This article explores the challenges and opportunities associated with assessing writings solely through tools, drawing insights from various sources to present a comprehensive perspective.

Key words: Artificial Intelligence AI, Grammarly, Turnitin, ETS e-rater, GRE (Graduate Record Examination), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), ambiguous language, automated system.

1. The Rise of Automated Writing Assessment Tools:

The advent of sophisticated artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP) tools has ushered in a new era of automated writing assessment. Tools such as Grammarly, Turnitin, and ETS e-rater promise quick evaluations, identifying grammatical errors, plagiarism, and providing overall writing scores. These tools leverage vast databases and complex algorithms to analyse written content, offering a level of efficiency and consistency that human evaluators may struggle to achieve. One example of them is identified below:

ETS e-rater is an automated essay scoring (AES) system developed by Educational Testing Service (ETS). It is designed to evaluate and score essays based on various linguistic and structural features. The system employs natural language processing and machine learning techniques to assess the quality of written content, considering factors such as grammar, vocabulary, and organization. E-rater is commonly used in educational settings, particularly for standardized tests like the GRE (Graduate Record Examination) and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), providing a quick and consistent way to evaluate large volumes of essays. However, it's important to note that automated scoring systems like e-rater are supplementary and are often used in conjunction with human evaluators for a comprehensive assessment of writing proficiency.[1]

2. The Limitations of Automated Assessment:

Despite the advantages, automated tools face significant limitations in understanding the context, creativity, and emotional nuances of human writing. The rigidity of algorithms can lead to misinterpretations, especially when

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assessing subjective elements such as style, tone, and voice. Critics argue that the elimination of the human factor in assessment can result in a one-size-fits-all approach, neglecting the uniqueness and diversity of individual writing styles. Automated assessment systems, while valuable in certain contexts, have several limitations that need to be considered. Some of these limitations include:

Lack of Context Understanding – automated systems may struggle to understand the broader context of an essay or written piece, which can affect their ability to accurately assess content and intent. Difficulty with Creativity and Originality – automated systems might struggle to recognize and appreciate creativity, originality, and unique writing styles, as they often rely on predefined patterns and structures. Limited Handling of Ambiguity – ambiguous language or complex, nuanced ideas may be challenging for automated systems to interpret accurately. They may not handle ambiguity or subtleties as well as human evaluators. [2]

3. Striking a Balance: The Hybrid Approach:

Recognizing the shortcomings of both automated tools and exclusive human assessment, educators and researchers are increasingly advocating for a hybrid approach. This approach combines the efficiency of automated tools with the nuanced understanding and subjectivity of human evaluators. By leveraging the strengths of both, this hybrid model aims to provide a more comprehensive and fair evaluation of written works.[3]

The fair assessment of writings without the human factor requires a delicate balance between the efficiency of automated tools and the subjective insights of human evaluators. While technology continues to evolve, it is essential to recognize its limitations in capturing the intricacies of human expression. The integration of a hybrid approach, as advocated by educators and researchers, holds promise in ensuring a fair and comprehensive assessment that acknowledges the uniqueness of each piece of writing. As we navigate the intersection of technology and human judgment, striking the right balance becomes imperative for fostering a writing assessment landscape that is both efficient and fair.

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