

Course: LINC10 (Argumentation and Analysis)
Class size: 50 students (working in groups of 2-3)
Level: Third-year undergraduate UTSC linguistics course

Activity: “Spot the Error”: Using AI to Practice Critical Reading & Reasoning

In this activity, students work with AI-generated answers to:

1. Spot inconsistencies, hallucinations, and overconfident claims.
2. Explain why something is wrong and how to fix it.
3. Return to core concepts, definitions, and evidence from the course materials.
4. Strengthen information literacy by seeing that AI is not always correct and authoritative.

Step 1: Preparing an AI-generated answer

I give an AI tool (e.g., ChatGPT) a course-specific prompt. For example:

In what ways can the Critical Period Hypothesis for first language acquisition be applied to second language learning? Is there evidence for a critical period in second language acquisition?

I intentionally keep an answer that is imperfect:

- a. Maybe it mis-defines a key concept
- b. Confuses examples
- c. Includes vague or overconfident claims without evidence

Note: I *do not* correct or edit the AI answer. I bring it to class “as is”. In other disciplines, the prompt can target historical timelines, scientific explanations, data interpretation, or a math proof. The key here is: the AI output contains a mix of correct and incorrect material.

Step 2: Students receive the AI answer (either in class or as Quercus homework)

In class students get:

1. The original prompt
2. The AI-generated answer

I also remind the students that AI is a *tool*, not a textbook. Their job is to be “argumentation detectives”

Step 3: Group Activity: “Spot, Discuss, and Prioritize the Errors” (15-20 minutes)

During the activity, students first complete a brief individual scan (3-5 minutes). Each student reads the AI response silently and highlights or underlines anything that seems incorrect, incomplete, overgeneralized, or unsupported/vague based on what they learned in the course

previously. They jot quick notes such as, “Why do I think this is wrong?” and “What course concept does this conflict with?”

They then move into small-group discussion (pairs or groups of three, 10-15 minutes). Students compare what each person flagged as an error or weakness and discuss whether each issue is actually wrong, just unclear, or potentially acceptable. For the issues they decide to keep, they label the type of problem (for example, a factual error, misused terminology, logical gap, wrong definition, wrong timeline, overconfident claim with no evidence, or a misleading/biased example). Finally, each group selects the top 3-5 most important errors to focus on so they practice prioritizing the most significant problems rather than trying to fix everything.

Step 4: In this step, we move into a whole-class debrief (10-15 minutes). We come back together and invite groups to share one major error they found in the AI response, explain their reasoning, and present their improved version verbally. As a class, we then discuss which issues are conceptual versus stylistic, how easy it was to be misled by fluent but incorrect text, and what strategies help us avoid being “over-impressed” by AI’s strong claims. I explicitly connect this conversation to information literacy and academic integrity, emphasizing that students are still the experts in training, that fluency does not equal accuracy, and that their job is to question, verify, and improve the texts they encounter including AI-generated ones.

Step 5: Post-Activity Reflection (200-300 words)

After the “Spot the Error” activity, students write a short reflection in which they answer these questions:

- 1) Describe one error or issue in the AI response that you found interesting or surprising. Why did it catch your attention?
- 2) Explain how your thinking changed, if at all, about AI-generated answers. For example, did the activity affect how much you trust AI or how you plan to use it in your academic work?
- 3) Connect the activity to one concept from the course, such as argument structure, evidence, language ideology, first language acquisition, or critical period. How did this concept help you evaluate the AI’s answer?
- 4) Identify one strategy you will use in the future when reading AI-generated text, whether for studying, drafting, or checking your work.

This is a low-stakes, completion-based activity that counts toward their course participation. It also shows how students are developing critical AI literacy. If there isn’t enough class time, this activity can be completed in the form of an assignment even for large-enrollment courses. You can give students one or more AI-generated answers and ask them to find the errors and explain why they are a problem, using concepts and evidence from the course materials.

Safieh Moghaddam, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Linguistics
Teaching Stream, Department of Language Studies
University of Toronto Scarborough