

Students' Views on the Challenges & Ethical Issues of Using AI in Academic Writing

Nabillah Fizah Putri

putribengkulu1919@gmail.com

Tadris Bahasa Inggris IAIN Curup , Indonesia, Email:

Siti A'isyah

aisyah.linggau012@gmail.com

Tadris Bahasa Inggris IAIN Curup, Indonesia, Email:

Julia Permata Sari

juliapermata2307@gmail.com

Tadris Bahasa Inggris IAIN Curup, Indonesia

Abstract: AI usage had an immediate and growing impact on EFL academic writing habits in the college education environment. The study aimed to examine students' perspectives on the problems and ethical issues arising from the use of AI in EFL academic writing at IAIN Curup, Rejang Lebong. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected from 10 English Tadris Program (TBI) students via semi-structured interviews and analyzed qualitatively through four steps: coding, reduction, display, and interpretation. Findings showed that students thought that AI has numerous benefits to assist their academic writing; i.e., improving grammar accuracy, enhancing idea generation by brainstorming, widening vocabulary choice, providing an initial draft, and helping with writing structure and organization. However, the students also showed significant concerns about overusing the tools; i.e., becoming overdependent, lowering the quality of creativity, developing non-logical reasoning, giving nonspecific answers, and providing inaccurate/false information. Regarding ethical issues, the main problems of using AI tools pointed out by the students were not only plagiarism and cheating, but also ambiguous ownership and non-transparent authorship. The study additionally noted that the tool may considerably boost speed and the quality, but the extensive use will turn into a detrimental obstacle to learners' autonomy, creativity, and independence of thought, especially when learners already have language barriers. Conclusively, it is crucial that students only use AI as supportive tools, not as alternatives to their thoughts and skills, and thus, immediate plans to develop sound institutional policies, provide AI literacy training, and ensure ethical guidelines on AI in EFL academic writing practices are needed.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Academic Writing, Ethical Concerns, EFL Students, Qualitative Investigation

Introduction

The rapid rise and development of artificial intelligence (AI), specifically generative AI models such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot, have revolutionized English academic writing practices in institutions of higher learning around the world, changing how students approach writing, and their understanding, creation, organization and revision of scholarly output, particularly in EFL academic environments, where students frequently struggle with substantial language-related challenges, such as their underdeveloped English vocabulary, English grammatical rules, and production of consistent academic discourses. Given this, the use of AI for learning and writing purposes has increased significantly in these areas; EFL learners increasingly utilize their cutting-edge abilities throughout multiple stages of writing, from initial brainstorming

and ideation, to the organization of their thoughts into an intelligible structure, proofreading for accurate grammar and sentence structure, the arrangement of the writing of the text more clearly, coherently and cohesively, revising numerous drafts, improving the quality of the student's writing and vocabulary selection in English, making for greater sentence variety and appropriate level of formality, and assuring they have met the appropriate citation or reference styles for the text (Jia & Lu, 2026).

In addition to technical benefits, AI facilitates learners' overcoming psychological barriers such as writing blocks, anxiety about writing, and lack of confidence due to their perceived shortcomings in English skills. The outcome of such use of AI is that most EFL learners consider AI a highly beneficial, practical, and very possible tool that significantly facilitates the learning and development of English academic writing (Meng et al., 2026). This intelligent tool functions as a scaffold that assists EFL students in filling the gap between their level of English proficiency and the stringent expectations of university assignments, thesis, academic papers and publications, rather than replacing the role of human writers, particularly those focusing on the unique qualities of our works, and encouraging students to concentrate more on the quality of their arguments, analyses, analyses, original thoughts, etc., thus reducing the mental effort required for writing the actual text, increasing their overall confidence and motivation, completing assignments quickly, and enhancing the overall quality of their academic production, all of which constitute changes in academic literacy in multilingual and multicultural environments for universities (Zainab & Parveen, 2026).

Beyond the various unarguable merits that the integration of AI generative tools brings to EFL students' academic writing in English, the increased use of this kind of AI has raised serious issues concerning the integrity and ethics in higher education, particularly in the use of plagiarism, over-reliance, lack of originality, and weak critical thinking, as well as indistinct authorship widely seen across academic settings. EFL students, as one of the prominent cases, would like to take great advantage of AI to create new ideas, rephrase the originals, and even generate entire pieces, leading to blurry lines between students' original input and machines' output, which makes the issue about authenticity and ownership a problematic one in academic work. In view of these problems, UNESCO (2021) clearly expresses in its statement that any use of AI for educational purposes needs to obey strict ethical guidelines. These are transparency on the usage of AI, responsibility over all users and developers, fairness on the equitable use and access across different groups of learners, and the requirement to maintain appropriate levels of human oversight over all writing and learning processes. These principles have all been suggested to prevent potential impacts on academic honesty, fairness, and authenticity in education around the world. Perkins et al. (2024) support the call that schools and universities should define the boundaries between authorized and inappropriate uses of AI writing assistance. Authorized usage might include the application of grammar check tools, enhancement of word choice, or idea generation during the early writing stage. Inappropriate use of AI, by contrast, covers submitting an essay written entirely by AI without appropriate attribution or over-dependence on the assistance provided by AI that will ultimately hinder the development of students' personal writing and thinking skills. Such a stance can serve to enable students to benefit from the assistance of AI while promoting their awareness of values, including integrity, originality, autonomy, and accountability, to contribute to the better and more sustainable application of artificial intelligence in academic writing in higher education.

Previous research, on the integration of artificial intelligence in academic writing, mostly tended to emphasize on the numerous benefits of generative AI technologies, such as improving efficiency, enhancing grammar correctness, improving vocabulary, and having generally positive students' attitude towards their usability and affordability, but there is still a conspicuous gap in knowledge, because there is few or no study that analyzed the potential pitfalls, obstacles and ethical implications arising from their use especially in the specific local context such as that of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings which often possess specific socio-cultural, lingual and educational characteristics. There has been a remarkable lack of the analysis on issues like

those of in the smaller region as Curup, Rejang Lebong, Bengkulu in which, learners of EFL may suffer from problems in the availability of the technology, the degree of literacy of students toward the technological equipment and facilities in addition to the local cultural view and policies toward academic plagiarism, and they are different from those found in the wider or more global context of education in these settings. Therefore, this research aims to fill the significant gap by critically investigating EFL students' attitude toward the use of the artificial intelligence tools in academic writing at IAIN Curup in term of beneficial aspects, adoption level and satisfaction with it and investigating a myriad of problems encountered by EFL students on the process of its use such as: technical difficulties, inaccurate results provided by artificial intelligence tools, the difficulty to adjust artificial intelligence tool results and the personal ideas and thought of the learners, the difficulty to maintain standards of academic, exploring a plethora of ethical conflicts faced by the EFL students in the process of use such as those regarding plagiarism, authorship and proper acknowledgment, transparency in the use of the tool, and ethical conflict in regard of convenience and academic integrity, furthermore, the present study will investigate the negative effects of over-dependence on the use of AI on their creativity, originality, intellectual independence and process of academic writing on the grounds of developing authentic academic writing in the context of EFL students of IAIN Curup by analyzing whether sustained AI dependence strengthens or inhibits their capacity to generate original ideas, to produce original arguments, to engage in self-reflection and independent critical thinking, to establish individual voices and opinions, to develop strategies of independent learning and to build legitimate research capabilities.

Methods

This research is employing a qualitative research design, in which the intention is to inquire into students' perception, experience, and viewpoint on using an artificial intelligence (AI) tool in their EFL writing, for the purpose of exploring complex students' views on using it, particularly regarding its role in learning, writing practice, and academic achievement. The qualitative design was employed since it can probe students' subjective perception, personal experience, worries, and ethical perception in the study, which could hardly be acquired by quantitative data. In this research, ten English Tadris Program (TBI) students at IAIN Curup, Rejang Lebong, Bengkulu are the participants in which the English Tadris program has a special emphasis to train students to be competent English teachers. The reason why ten TBI students were chosen on this criterion was that they had lots of experience using some AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, and many others, in their academic works, such as essays, thesis proposals, article reviews, and so on. Because they have many experiences, their views toward using AI tools are not imaginary based on a theory or fiction, but they are actually based on their own experience. In doing so, it is hoped to find some valuable views about the pros and cons within this research context at IAIN Curup, where both limited sources and regional linguistic features existed, as well as the frequent use of AI tools in their writing tasks.

Data for this study were collected from a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews which was an interview type that is considered less structured as compared to structured interviews; it was the type of research method that allowed the researcher to delve into the participants' thoughts about specific topic, while keeping the questions within the scope of research purposes (Ary et al., 2010), thus providing students with detailed and rich responses (Creswell and Poth, 2017). The semi-structured interview focused on the four research questions; in the first place, what are the overall students' attitudes towards the application of AI tools for writing their academic texts? In the second place, what kind of challenges and difficulties did students experience while using AI to facilitate their writing? In the third place, what kind of ethical issues and conflicts did they encounter or foresee while using AI in their studies? In the fourth place, what do they think are the impacts of the application of AI for writing, including on students' creativity, autonomy, critical thinking skills, and their independent learning abilities? Using a semi-

structured approach enabled the interviewer to ask preliminary questions with probes in order to explore participants' answers to greater depth (Longhurst & Johnston, 2023) and to have a follow-up question or even a probe (Cohen et al., 2002). The interview questions were carefully constructed and framed on main indicators extracted from different literatures on the uses of AI in Education, academic writing practices, the principle of academic integrity, and the ethics related to educational technological practices which ensures that the constructed questions were relevant, unambiguous and likely to reveal useful data that would assist the study in answering the questions on the positive uses and negative challenges, ethical issues, and influences of the uses of AI on EFL students writing experiences at IAIN Curup.

A qualitative approach was employed for the analysis of the qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews, which was done in a systematic and in-depth manner that comprised four main types of data analysis in qualitative research, including data coding, data reduction, data display, and interpretation to be thorough, transparent, and trustworthy for analyzing the rich narratives and accounts provided by the participants. The data coding stage started with the researcher reading and rereading all of the transcripts, segmenting the relevant parts of the interview participants' responses, and creating codes for recurrent themes, patterns, and ideas connected with the utilization of AI. Data reduction stage followed, where a huge volume of raw data was reduced and condensed by deleting not important sections and sticking only to the most essential parts for addressing the research questions. Data display stage then was concerned with systematic presentation and organization of the reduced data by means of thematic matrices, tables, and narrative summary to make connections and relationships between the data easily visualized by the researcher. The interpretation stage went further to provide in-depth explanations of displayed data that were examined and interpreted within the framework of the study objective. This analytical stage of interpretation resulted in the following thematic categories which contained the perspectives of the ten IAIN Curup TBI students on AI assistance; positive emotions and perceptions on AI tools as helping tools, dependency issues on AI that might reduce the capability to perform individually, issues related to plagiarism and cheating, issues on transparency in reporting using AI assistance, negative effect of using AI on idea creativity and originality, and practical aid from the AI usage in writing such as for grammar correction, improving the vocabulary, as well as sentence structure. Through the interpretation process, emergent themes were systematically related and compared to existing theory and previous empirical studies in AI in education, development of academic writing, integrity in academic activities, and ethics of computer-mediated education, which helps the researcher to situate the context in IAIN Curup into the scope of general discussions and conversations about prospects and limitations of generative AI in the context of EFL academic writing.

Results and Discussion

Result

Table 1. Students' Views on the Use in Academic Writing

Indicator	Main Category	Frequency
Attitudes towards AI	Positive but Cautious	10/10
Benefits of AI	Grammar, vocabulary, and ideas generation, efficiency	10/10
Acceptance of AI	Understood as a support tool, but with reservations	10/10

All subjects had positive attitudes towards AI while showing cautious awareness of its overutilization. Students expressed high regard for the effectiveness of AI tools in assisting with grammar, vocabulary, content, and organization. Subjects reported improved writing efficiency

and confidence due to the use of AI. However, the students maintained that AI is an assistive tool, not an intellectual substitute.

Table 2. Key Challenges in Using AI

Indicator	Main Category	Frequency
Dependence of AI	Over-dependence	10/10
Creativity/Originality	Reduces creativity and originality	9/10
Accuracy of Content	Inaccurate generic output	8/10
AI Literacy	Lack of understanding of how to use AI properly	7/10

Students reported one significant problem: an over-reliance on AI. Students feared that too much reliance on AI would diminish their ability to think critically and learn on their own. Furthermore, some participants felt that the outputs of AI were inaccurate, too vague, or not academically acceptable. Lastly, some students admitted that a lack of knowledge and proficiency with AI has contributed to poorly generated AI-assisted writing.

Table 3. Ethical Use of AI

Indicator	Main Category	Frequency
Plagiarism	Plagiarism & Academic dishonesty	10/10
Transparency	Need for openness/ disclosure	9/10
Authorship	Unclear Authorship & Ownership	9/10

According to the results, the major ethical issues surrounding using AI in academic writing appear to be plagiarism and academic dishonesty. It was thought that students should acknowledge the use of AI in their assignments in order to uphold transparency and fairness among fellow students, and the questions about who the “author” is when the writing process is largely dominated by an AI tool were often considered.

Table 4. The Influence of AI on the Writing Process, Creativity, and Independence

Indicator	Main Category	Frequency
Writing	Helps speed up drafting and revising	10/10
Creativity	Can reduce creativity if overused	9/10
Writing independence	Can reduce independence	10/10

Based on the results, it was found that AI enhances writing activity. The students reported that they improved both their drafting and revising processes more efficiently. The students agreed that AI assists them in overcoming their writer's block and their language problems in EFL writing. However, the students also acknowledged that they can experience loss of creativity, originality, confidence, and independence in the academic writing activity if they overuse AI.

Discussion

Based on the results of this study, AI is seen as a blessing and a curse in EFL students' academic writing context at IAIN Curup. Students positively think that AI is a benefit that will replace their limited language skills and several writing problems, such as insufficient vocabulary, grammatical mistakes, and poor ability to organize thoughts, while they also consider AI as a curse because it will cause students to be over-reliant on AI and reduce originality. The findings support the argument that Holmes et al. (2023) explain the usefulness of AI that can help learners complete writing tasks with great efficiency, such as drafting, editing, idea generation, and language checking.

The students' worries about the overreliance on AI clearly reflect the literature, that the overuse of AI can potentially be detrimental to students' critical thinking skills and independent learning. Several of the students in this study voiced concerns over the dependency on AI tools weakening the skills they had in critical and analytical thinking in the absence of the tools, much like how the students in this study's worries about the misinformation and inaccuracies that could be written in AI generated essays as well as the potentially generic nature of AI generated essays clearly illustrate how artificial intelligence cannot take the place of human discretion and critical evaluation in student writing.

Plagiarism, ownership, and transparency are indeed symptomatic of the overarching worries related to the integrity of AI-authored texts in EFL academic writing. The students in this study commonly voiced their concerns about distinguishing between student and AI texts, accidental plagiarism from too heavy reliance upon AI-authored paragraphs, questions about ownership about who can claim responsibility for the product of writing, and the dilemma of transparency and disclosure of AI use to teachers. These students' experiences align quite well with the calls made by UNESCO (2021) and Perkins et al. (2024) for clear ethical guidelines and regulations within academic institutions to ensure responsible use of AI. This awareness shown by the students is testimony to their understanding of how AI writing can pose a real threat in the academic context- they understand that, although convenient, AI writing can undermine academic integrity and originality.

All in all, the study shows that the use of artificial intelligence in EFL academic writing is a double-edged sword for the students of tertiary level, like IAIN Curup, because they are given outstanding advantages but also potential disadvantages. While the use of artificial intelligence is proved effective in supporting the students in the process of learning and writing, providing students assistance in dealing with language deficiency as a perfect helper, speeding up the writing, enriching the writing, and providing the students' academic texts with the best quality, the results of the study has proved that there are also great disadvantages if without any constraint and help. They are the lack of originality and creativity, and students' independence, students' over-reliance on AI, decreased critical thinking of students, loss of students' unique voice, and the decreasing of autonomous learning of students. So, a balanced use of AI must be maintained in the EFL academic writing context. Thus, students, lecturers and institutions should set a clear limit, foster proper use and incorporate AI literacy instruction for these tools to support rather than replacing the students' thinking efforts to avoid over-reliance on it, maintain student's creativity and personal writing voice in their academic writing and ultimately to maintain intellectualism and student's critical thinking ability and independence in the 21 st Century.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the discussion above and data analysis, it can be concluded that the EFL students of the English Tadris Program (TBI) at IAIN Curup generally hold a predominantly positive attitudes toward the use of AI tools in EFL academic writing, as they see AI as a useful, practical, and beneficial technology in aiding the process of learning and solving different kinds of language problems as is often experienced by non-native speakers. The students indicated great admiration toward the many roles that AI has provided, such as a grammar assistant by correcting

syntactical errors, recommending better sentence constructions, and improving language accuracy; a brainstorming helper by offering ideas for topics and arguments development; a text organizer by facilitating logical outlines, ensuring coherent texts between paragraphs, and developing coherent academic texts, and a fast-writer by providing a quicker writing process with fewer mechanical works and shorter time for producing a lengthy writing text. As a result, these positive impacts reportedly boost their confidence, motivation for writing tasks, and grades in demanding courses such as writing-intensive ones. Nevertheless, despite such advantages, there were still many serious negative aspects which cannot be neglected in relation to the usage of AI tools by the students such as the over-reliance on AI tool leading to a decrease in individual thinking and a reliance on the computer outputs rather than their own skills; the perceived decrease in creativity by a reduction in originality of ideas, individual voice and imagination for writing; the production of wrong or inappropriate output by presenting hallucinated data, irrelevant and culturally inappropriate suggestions and errors that required double checking and correction and the lack of AI literacy by the users regarding evaluation of AI inputs, critical thinking on AI capabilities and limitations and optimal utilization of prompting for desired outcomes and ethical integration of AI output in their own work. These two findings have shown the paradoxically dualistic characteristic of using AI in academic writing that needs further consideration, attention, and assistance from education providers for balance and responsible usage.

The current study also draws attention to several major ethical issues highly relevant to AI applications in the academic writing process, especially around plagiarism, transparency, honesty, and authorship of EFL students at IAIN Curup. It is shown that while the benefits provided by AI applications in students' assignments are undeniably numerous regarding convenience and language assistance, their utilization gives rise to various types of ethical concerns that need the utmost careful consideration for students and teachers. Plagiarism issue emerges significantly as they sometimes fail to recognize how to differentiate acceptable paraphrasing by AI from plagiarism, where AI-generated ideas or text are reported as one's own work, thereby possibly breaking the academic regulations and code of practice. Transparency becomes another significant ethical problem, since numerous students confessed that they do not state that they use AI in their papers, making it unclear to teachers whether the provided results are genuine student abilities or not. Besides, the concern about honesty will occur when students may use AI to invent information or citations without proper fact-checking. Similarly, the authorship issue occurs as it will be harder to discern who is actually responsible for the entire writing piece since AI also contributed to its completion to some extent. But it is beyond such violation issues; the dependency and overreliance on AI can cause students to lose the sense of autonomy and creativity since they are too dependent that it will decline their independence in thinking, originating ideas, finding their own academic style, and developing the ability to do critical analysis, which is fundamental for academic performance. Hence, it is emphasized that AI tools must be viewed and used as assistive tool in helping students enhance their writing skills, instead of substitute students' thinking process, analytical ability, and writing ability; instead, the students must be taught how to use them critically through clear regulations, well-trained instructions, and proper coaching as supportive learning tool which will assist the EFL learners without violating the principle of integrity and ownership in higher education settings like IAIN Curup.

Finally, the outcomes of the present study reinforce the imperative of integrating substantial institutional policies, strong ethical standards, and sound AI literacy training programs to guarantee the responsible, balanced, and sustainable use of AI in EFL academic writing in institutions like IAIN Curup and other similar higher education institutions in Indonesia. Institutions are obliged to establish and implement policies outlining the accepted and not accepted uses of AI tools in academic assignments. Clear instructions on how students should disclose their use of AI, the extent of assistance they can obtain, and the penalty imposed on academic cheating due to AI misuse must be provided. Likewise, the formation of effective ethical norms will create a culture of integrity, honesty, and transparency between instructors and students and make sure that traditional values of originality, authorship, and honesty prevail even with advanced technologies.

Finally, it is strongly suggested that institutions provide structured AI literacy training programs that equip EFL learners with skills to analyze and evaluate AI outputs, compose clear instructions for the model to follow, use the output appropriately in their own writing, understand the limitations and possible biases of generative models, and recognize ethical considerations of their use. It is suggested that AI literacy programs focus on technical ability as well as critical awareness, independent writing, and personal learning so that learners will acquire optimal benefits from AI without impeding their individual growth as intellect and writers. By combining these three integral elements (robust institutional policies, effective ethical norms, and continuous AI literacy education), institutions are expected to create a beneficial learning environment that maximizes the strengths of AI while circumventing its weaknesses and leads EFL learners to more moral, innovative, and independent academic writing.

Reference

- Almusharraf, A., Bailey, D., Almusharraf, N., & Alotaibi, T. (2025). Students' perceptions of generative AI in EFL writing: Strategies, self-efficacy, satisfaction, and behavioural intention. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 41(5), 18-36. <https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.10045>
- Alfiras, M. I. I., Emran, A. Q., & Mohamed, A. M. (2025). Ethics and governance of generative AI in education: a systematic review on responsible adoption. *Discover Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-01051-y>
- Ary, D. (2010). Research Method. *Learning*, 648.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203224342>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage publications.
- Holmes, W., & Miao, F. (2023). Guidance for generative AI in education and research. *Unesco Publishing*.
- Jia, C., & Lu, Y. (2026). Exploring generative AI assisted-EFL academic writing: An activity theory perspective. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 81, 101672. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2026.101672>
- Longhurst, R., & Johnston, L. (2023). 10 semi-structured interviews and focus groups. *Key methods in geography*, 168. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781036233679.n10>
- Marzuki, Widiati, U., Rusdin, D., Darwin, & Indrawati, I. (2023). The impact of AI writing tools on the content and organization of students' writing: EFL teachers' perspective. *Cogent Education*, 10(2), 2236469. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2236469>
- Meng, Q., Xie, Y. N., & Lu, D. (2026). A systematic review of AI-assisted academic writing: Tools, measures, and effects. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 82, 101726. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2026.101726>
- Perkins, M., Furze, L., Roe, J., & MacVaugh, J. (2024). The Artificial Intelligence Assessment Scale (AIAS): A framework for ethical integration of generative AI in educational assessment. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 21(6), 49-66. <https://doi.org/10.53761/q3azde36>
- Perkins, M., Roe, J., & Furze, L. (2025). Reimagining the artificial intelligence assessment scale: a refined framework for educational assessment. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice*, 22(7), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.53761/rrm4y757>
- Rofkah, U., & Arafah, B. (2025, May). Indonesian Students' Perception of AI-Assisted EFL Academic Writing. In *The 5th International Conference on Linguistics and Cultural Studies 5 (ICLC-5 2024)* (pp. 410-419). Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-394-8_46

- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (2021). Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence.
- Zainab, S., & Parveen, S. (2026). Scaffolding Academic Writing for EFL Learners Through AI Tools: A Mixed Method Study. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL (JALT)*, 9(1), 1578-1595. <https://doi.org/10.63878/jalt2038>

Empty Page