

EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SUPPORTING WRITING PROCESS

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed to explore learners' perspective of using artificial intelligence. The respondents of this study were 15 learners who had completed the academic writing course. The technique of collecting data used was a semi-structured interview method to EFL learners who had experience using AI technology to help their writing assignments. The research design used in this study was qualitative. The results revealed that all of students using AI in helping their writing assignment. The findings showed that the artificial intelligence variation used by the learners were ChatGPT, Grammarly, DeepLWriting, Quillbot, Bing Translator, Gemini and POE to help them doing their writing assignments. However, the EFL students still found the result of writing was inaccurate, so they cross-referenced them manually and sometimes used other AI tools to refine the writing. The results utilization of Artificial Intelligence in supporting of their writing assignment indicated students' positive perspective of utilizing Artificial Intelligence in composing their writing assignments influences the efficacy of their written work.

Keyword: Artificial Intelligence, Writing, EFL, and Perspective



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1. INTRODUCTION

The industrial era and the wave of globalization in the 4.0 revolution have compelled individuals to adapt rapidly to technological advancements. Technology has become essential in transmitting information through text, images, and sound (Fitria, 2021). Among the most transformative innovations is Artificial Intelligence (AI), which has shown great potential in English Language Teaching (ELT) for enhancing skills such as writing, translation, assessment, and learner engagement (Iftanti et al., 2023). One of the most prominent AI tools, ChatGPT, demonstrates the ability to produce coherent and contextually relevant writing through predictive algorithms, though its responses sometimes lack depth.

AI-driven writing tools employ machine learning models to analyze and generate text, offering language learners convenient and immediate assistance. These tools provide real-time feedback, helping students understand meanings, correct errors, and improve their writing accuracy and fluency (Pratama et al., 2024). Consequently, AI has become an integral element of educational innovation, offering unique learning experiences and opening new opportunities in English language education.

Writing, however, remains one of the most demanding skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, requiring mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and organization, as well as sustained cognitive engagement and critical thinking (Ginting et al., 2023). Many EFL students struggle to express ideas clearly, and teachers often face challenges in providing individualized feedback. AI writing tools such as Grammarly and ChatGPT have emerged as effective supports for addressing these issues by enabling immediate feedback and reducing writing anxiety (Marzuki et al., 2023; Shidiq, 2023).

Writing represents a key indicator of language proficiency, as it integrates multiple linguistic and cognitive processes (Olowoyeye et al., 2022). The growing use of AI tools in academic writing highlights their role in refining writing quality through grammar correction, idea generation, and plagiarism detection (Aljuaid, 2024). However, the convenience of AI tools may also lead to overreliance, reducing students' independent writing ability and communication confidence.

Drawing on observations from the English Education Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara (UMSU), researchers found that many students depend heavily on AI assistance and face difficulties producing original writing without it. Time pressure in academic tasks often worsens these challenges, leading to errors or superficial work. Therefore, this study investigates EFL students' perceptions of AI-powered writing tools to determine whether these technologies improve writing quality. By exploring their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion on AI's role in language education and provide insights for educators, developers, and policymakers to optimize AI-based tools in supporting EFL writing development.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate how advanced Artificial Intelligence technologies improved writing quality from the perspective of EFL students. In qualitative research, a purpose statement delineated the objective of exploring or understanding the central phenomenon with specific individuals in a specific research setting (Creswell, (2012:131). Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observable behaviors (Hasnunidah, (2017:11).

From the previous explanation, it could be concluded that the research conducted in this report utilized a qualitative descriptive approach. This research design was appropriate because qualitative research focused on in-depth exploration and understanding of individuals' experiences, perspectives, and behaviors, providing rich and detailed insights into a particular phenomenon.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed qualitative methods through semi-structured interviews involving fifteen EFL learners from Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara who had completed the Academic Writing course. The research aimed to explore students' perspectives on Artificial Intelligence (AI) in supporting their writing process and to identify AI's role in enhancing writing performance.

a. Experience using AI in the writing process

The findings revealed that nearly all participants used AI-based tools to support their academic writing. Respondents W and MI used AI to accelerate idea generation and gather references efficiently, while RH and CPS used AI for proofreading, grammar checking, and refining word choice. Collectively, students found AI tools to improve productivity, creativity, and writing accuracy by offering instant suggestions and feedback. AI was viewed as a dynamic partner that facilitated brainstorming, research, and revision.

b. Role of AI in writing

Most students perceived AI as a valuable tool to improve writing quality by enhancing vocabulary, comprehension, and grammatical accuracy. Respondents YF and RA highlighted AI's contribution in idea generation, organizing content, and summarizing large data, while SAR and WSJ emphasized AI's usefulness in research, fact-checking, and lexical refinement. However, respondent S expressed skepticism, preferring manual writing for maintaining creativity and authenticity. These responses reflected diverse attitudes toward AI, balancing its efficiency with the need for originality and human judgment.

c. Effective AI features in writing

Students identified Grammarly, QuillBot, and DeepLWriting as the most effective tools. YF and RH emphasized their usefulness in ensuring clarity and accessibility, while CPS and NA noted their efficiency in grammar and spell-checking. These tools provided context-aware features, paraphrasing support, and real-time feedback that improved sentence fluency, coherence, and accuracy.

d. The use of AI in the writing process

AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, and POE were used for generating ideas, restructuring sentences, checking grammar, and maintaining originality. Respondents RK and WSJ valued ChatGPT's assistance in word choice and argument structuring, while RH and YF utilized QuillBot and Grammarly for plagiarism detection and grammar analysis. Respondent AB used POE as a virtual editor for clarity and coherence evaluation. AI thus played a key role in refining writing quality, improving accessibility, and supporting academic integrity.

e. Challenges in using AI

Despite its advantages, challenges emerged. Respondents S and RY mentioned the loss of originality

and misinterpretation of context. W and RA highlighted overreliance on AI, which could hinder critical thinking, alongside the rapid pace of AI development that created a skills gap. MI raised ethical concerns related to data privacy and user consent. These findings underscored the need for responsible AI use that balances technological benefits with human creativity and ethical awareness.

Overall, the findings indicated that AI substantially enhanced students' writing efficiency and accuracy, particularly in brainstorming, content organization, grammar checking, and vocabulary development. However, students also recognized the importance of maintaining authenticity, creativity, and awareness of privacy concerns when utilizing AI-based tools.

The integration of AI in the writing process was positively perceived by students, aligning with previous studies by Lee et al. (2024) and Inong (2023). Similar to prior findings, students valued AI's user-friendliness and its ability to enrich vocabulary, grammar, and writing fluency. AI served as a powerful brainstorming and translation aid, enabling learners to overcome writer's block and generate diverse perspectives.

AI tools were found to significantly refine writing quality through grammar and style checkers, which not only corrected errors but also educated students on writing conventions. Real-time feedback enhanced their awareness of sentence structure and coherence, gradually improving overall writing competence. Furthermore, AI allowed customization based on tone, purpose, or format, enabling students to tailor their work and explore personalized learning experiences.

In terms of effectiveness, AI proved instrumental in reducing student writing errors and saving time during the revision phase. Automated grammar correction and context-aware suggestions minimized inaccuracies and improved sentence flow. Immediate feedback also fostered an iterative approach to writing, allowing continuous refinement and increased efficiency.

Nevertheless, AI's limitations remained evident. While it excelled in speed, accuracy, and structure, it lacked the human depth of cultural understanding and nuance. Excessive reliance risked homogenized expression and ethical dilemmas concerning data privacy. Therefore, successful integration of AI in writing requires balance—leveraging its efficiency while nurturing critical thinking, creativity, and ethical responsibility.

In conclusion, AI emerged as a transformative educational tool for EFL learners, enhancing accuracy, productivity, and creativity in writing. However, its use should complement—not replace—human intellect and authenticity. A balanced synergy between human cognition and AI technology ensures that writing remains both efficient and genuinely expressive.

4. CONCLUSION

The discussion revealed that EFL students held diverse perspectives on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in supporting writing. Interviews showed that all students used AI-based writing tools, with most preferring ChatGPT, while others used Quillbot, DeepLWriting, Grammarly, Gemini, Bing Translator, and POE. From their perspectives, AI tools offered convenience and speed, helping students handle complex texts, unfamiliar structures, and assignments more efficiently. This accessibility enhanced comprehension and confidence in overcoming language barriers.

However, AI also presented challenges, including excessive dependence on technology that could weaken critical and creative skills. Instead of fostering deep writing abilities, AI risked diminishing originality as it generated content from existing patterns. Ethical issues such as plagiarism and authenticity further complicated its use. Thus, while AI accelerated the writing process, its long-term impact required careful consideration.

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