AI Tools in Learning Academic Writing: Benefits and Challenges for MA Students in the English Language Studies at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City

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https://doi.org/10.54855/ijaile.25215

ABSTRACT

Many Master of Arts (MA) students believe that these tools offer significant benefits for improving writing abilities, though some challenges can hinder progress. This study explores the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in academic writing among MA students, focusing on English majors at IUH. The research investigates both the benefits and challenges of AI tools like writing assistants and language models in improving students' writing proficiency. A sample of 30 MA students was selected, and a mixed-method approach was employed, combining quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews. The questionnaires collected students' perceptions on the advantages and difficulties of using AI tools for academic writing, while the interviews provided a deeper understanding of how these tools are utilized in practice. Findings indicate that AI tools offer significant benefits, such as improving writing skills and providing support, but they also introduce challenges, including over-reliance and limitations in addressing complex writing issues.

Introduction

Background of the study

Academic writing plays a vital role in research and education, as it is marked by a structured method for presenting ideas clearly. It is considered a cornerstone of the MA curriculum and scholarly endeavors, demanding a range of skills to produce high-quality papers. Tardy (2010) emphasized that students must develop a range of skills when working with source material. These include selecting relevant information, evaluating its credibility, paraphrasing effectively, choosing appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures, and ensuring they avoid plagiarism. These skills help students engage with academic writing more ethically and proficiently. Moreover, Mudawy and Mousa (2017) added that the success of postgraduate

students heavily relies on their ability to critically engage with the words, ideas, and opinions of others.

AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Quillbot, Turnitin, Notion, and EndNote have become essential in academic writing, each serving a distinct purpose. ChatGPT assists in generating and organizing ideas, while Grammarly enhances grammar and style. Quillbot supports paraphrasing, and Turnitin helps detect plagiarism. Meanwhile, Notion and EndNote aid in note organization and citation management. This research focuses on the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Quillbot, Turnitin, Notion, and EndNote in academic writing, examining both their benefits and the challenges they present.

Statement of the problems

Being a master of these skills is challenging, and assistance is needed. For example, Bautista and Pentang (2022) said that students often find it challenging when they have to with different styles of citations and references due to a lack of understanding in rules and conventions. It is common for students to utilize AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, Quillbot, Turnitin, Notion, and EndNote, to enhance their writing competence. While these tools enrich writing efficiency, accuracy, and organization, they also pose several concerns. Over-reliance on AI can hinder the development of critical thinking and independent writing skills, potentially leading to superficial engagement with academic content. Tools like ChatGPT may also generate inaccurate or biased information while paraphrasing software such as Quillbot could inadvertently alter the meaning or produce unnatural phrasing. Furthermore, plagiarism detection systems like Turnitin may not always differentiate between intentional plagiarism and legitimate academic work, raising ethical concerns for students.

Purpose of the study

With the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, AI-powered tools have become integral to academic writing, assisting students in generating ideas, refining grammar, paraphrasing, managing citations, and ensuring originality. While these technologies offer significant support, their role in shaping students' writing skills, particularly at the graduate level, remains an area that requires further exploration. In the context of higher education, students increasingly adopt AI tools to facilitate their writing process. However, despite growing interest in AI-assisted learning, research on its impact has primarily focused on general education rather than on graduate-level academic writing. Specifically, there is a lack of studies investigating how AI tools influence the writing development of MA students in Vietnam, particularly at IUH.

This study, therefore, aims to examine both the benefits and challenges associated with AI tools in academic writing among IUH MA students. By analyzing their usage, perceived effectiveness, and potential limitations, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into how these technologies contribute to or hinder students' writing development.

Literature Review

One of the biggest challenges in academic writing is plagiarism. A study conducted by Bautista and Pentang (2022) investigated the pre-service teachers' level of awareness of plagiarism. A descriptive-correlational research design was employed, in which 235 random pre-service teachers participated as samples. The data were gathered through a web-based survey. As a result, pre-service teachers did not have full knowledge of plagiarism, resulting in their fair academic performance.

Aldabbus and Almansouri (2022) conducted a study in order to investigate the problems of academic writing faced by university students, involving 36 English majors from the Faculty of Education at the University of Benghazi. A 25-item questionnaire was used to address the research questions. They found the same point: students struggled with avoiding plagiarism. Besides, the findings also showed that selecting appropriate academic vocabulary and using grammar correctly, including word classes, subject-verb agreement, and singular/plural forms, were the main problems students had to deal with.

These problems were also found in research by Mudawy & Mousa (2017) on twenty teachers from the English language department in the College of Education at Zulfi. The study aimed to investigate the academic writing challenges faced by English language students. Utilizing a questionnaire and experimental task, the two main issues were highlighted: the students were challenged by spelling mistakes as well as vocabulary and structure when they wrote, and the existing Academic Writing Curriculum didn't cover the writing Techniques. Accordingly, the study suggested five solutions: it is essential to combine writing and reading skills together to improve their critical thinking; there should be a lot of writing practice; improving students' writing skills through using computer; increasing the number of credit hours; adopting a writing syllabus that concentrates on practicing writing rather than teaching about writing.

AlMarwani (2020) studied new insights regarding postgraduate TESOL students' views on academic writing challenges and strategies to address them. The research identified literature gaps and the practical requirements of postgraduate TESOL students in the study context. Data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured focus group interviews. Findings reveal that students face obstacles in producing quality academic writing, including language skills, academic writing abilities, and source management skills. Feedback from supervisors and digital tools played a crucial role in fostering independent learning and critical thinking, supporting students' success at this stage. The study also provided valuable insights into postgraduate TESOL students' perceptions of Google Classroom's impact on their academic writing.

ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, is an AI-powered chatbot based on Chatbot technology and text-generation tools like GPT-3 and GPT-4. It utilizes Natural Language Processing (NLP) to engage in human-like conversations, providing responses based on its vast database. ChatGPT generates accurate replies if user input matches stored data; otherwise, it suggests relevant information. According to Su & Tran (2024), GPT-3 significantly advanced text-related tasks such as translation, summarization, and paraphrasing, while GPT-4 further improved creativity, problem-solving, and multimodal input processing. ChatGPT is widely applied in various fields like business, education, and tourism, enhancing efficiency and minimizing workloads.

In a research conducted by Ghufron et al. (2018), Grammarly is seen as an online proofreading tool that helps EFL learners improve their writing by detecting grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary errors. It also offers style-specific corrections and plagiarism detection by comparing the text against a vast database. Features like an adaptive spell checker and context-optimized synonyms enhance word choice and accuracy. Grammarly effectively supports both teachers and students by identifying punctuation errors, spelling mistakes, and verb form issues, though some explanations can be complex. Overall, it serves as a valuable tool for enhancing writing quality in EFL classrooms.

Quillbot is a widely used AI-powered paraphrasing tool that helps users rewrite text, check grammar, summarize content, and detect plagiarism. Kurniati et al. (2022) said that it simplifies paraphrasing by automatically generating alternative versions of the input text with a single click. Additionally, Quillbot offers automated writing evaluation (AWE) through its grammar

checker, making it a valuable tool for students, writers, bloggers, and educators. Its ease of use and reliability make it a trusted resource for improving writing quality and clarity.

Launched in 1998, Turnitin is a widely recognized plagiarism detection tool designed to uphold academic integrity by comparing student submissions against an extensive database of sources. It plays a crucial role in promoting originality, detecting plagiarism, and providing constructive feedback. As a pedagogical tool, Turnitin helps teach proper research methods, writing practices, and ethical information use. Highlighting similarities in texts encourages students to prioritize originality and proper citation. Additionally, Turnitin fosters a culture of integrity by reinforcing diligence in research, writing, and attribution. According to Obeng-Ofori et al. (2025), this application is used in over 10,000 institutions across 126 countries, it has gained global acceptance as a reliable tool for educators and administrators. Its core function of identifying text similarities aids in detecting and preventing academic dishonesty and supporting policies that uphold academic standards.

AI tools are now commonly utilized among English learners. Accordingly, Amyatun & Kholis (2023) aimed to assess whether QuillBot AI could enhance eleventh-grade students' skills in crafting hortatory exposition texts. This study, conducted as Classroom Action Research (CAR), included 20 students from class XI IPA 2A. A qualitative approach was applied, using a writing test for data collection. The scores demonstrated improvement in students' writing abilities following the use of QuillBot AI in their writing class. Prior to using the AI tool, students' average score was 53.55, which rose to 78.90 on the post-test. Consequently, the study highlighted a positive effect of QuillBot AI on students' proficiency in creating hortatory exposition texts.

Positive about the influence of these tools on students' writing was also found in the research of Marzuki et al. (2023). They aimed to examine the variety of Artificial Intelligence (AI) writing tools and evaluated their effects on student writing, focusing on content and organization, as perceived by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers by using a qualitative approach and a case study design. Besides, the findings revealed a wide range of AI tools (e.g., Quilbot, ChatGPT, WordTune, Copy.ai, Paperpal, and Essay Writer) employed by EFL teachers, though the benefits identified varied slightly among the teachers. However, one educator expressed concern about the potential for over-reliance on AI tools, emphasizing the need to maintain a balanced approach to their use.

Chauke et al. (2024) aimed to explore postgraduate students' opinions related to the usage of AI tools, especially ChatGPT, in their academic learning progress in South Africa's universities. The study employed a qualitative approach with 10 postgraduates, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect perceptions from the postgraduate students who majored in master's degrees in South Africa's historically disadvantaged universities, selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. The study found that ChatGPT proves beneficial for postgraduate students as it refined students' research topics before submission to their supervisors, identified grammatical errors, and paraphrased their academic writing, contributing to improving their writing skills. However, an innovative AI ethical use policy in these universities is a concern that the researchers recommend for future studies.

Nguyen et al. (2025) investigated the challenges higher education students face when using ChatGPT for writing purposes. The study was conducted at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH) and focused on postgraduate English majors. Twenty-five postgraduate students participated in the research, which employed qualitative methods, including survey questionnaires and short interviews, to collect data. The findings reveal that the challenges

posed by ChatGPT outweigh its benefits in improving the writing skills of postgraduate English majors at IUH.

Pham's research also found paraphrasing and grammatical structure management (2024). This study investigated how QuillBot helps postgraduates improve their paraphrasing skills in academic writing and explored their perceptions of QuillBot as a support tool during the paraphrasing process. A survey was conducted with twenty Master of Arts in English Language students, and the data was analyzed to assess QuillBot's impact on their paraphrasing abilities and their views on the tool. The findings highlighted three main benefits of QuillBot: it enriched students' vocabulary and grammatical structures, improved clarity in their writing, and saved time in learning to paraphrase. The study also noted how QuillBot indirectly supported postgraduates in their paraphrasing learning process. Additionally, Pham suggested the need for further research into the potential negative effects of QuillBot on English learners' writing skills and at which stage in the learning process students should begin using AI-paraphrasing tools for optimal benefit.

AI tools are helpful not only for non-professional learners but also for students whose majors require academic writing. Khalifa & Albadawy (2024) evaluated the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in enhancing academic writing and research. The study identified 24 studies through six important aspects where AI helps academic writing and research. This search targeted peer-reviewed articles, review papers, and empirical studies examining the use of AI in academic writing and research. Findings showed that AI is an essential productivity tool that substantially supports academic writing and research by transforming idea development and research design, enhancing content quality, ensuring comprehensive analysis and integrity, streamlining the publishing process, and supporting ethical compliance in research dissemination.

Similarly, Khongtim et al. (2024) looked at the growing field of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it affects academic discussions in postgraduate studies at North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong. This study included the participation of 100 students from departments of the School of Economics, Management, and Information Sciences. The study used a quantitative approach. The data was collected through a survey that employed Likert-scale items and then analyzed using regression analysis. Research findings agreed that AI engagement, AI literacy, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness all positively influence academic writing output. These tools enhanced the writing process by improving efficiency and effectiveness and played a significant part in developing students' understanding of academic writing norms and enhancing their academic work.

Meanwhile, two researchers, Song C & Song Y (2023), examined how an AI-assisted language learning approach affects academic writing skills and motivation among Chinese EFL students, using a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods. Their study included 50 Bachelor's degree students from a national university in China. Qualitative feedback revealed various perspectives, including recognition of AI's innovative contributions to teaching and its beneficial effects on writing skills and motivation, as well as worries about contextual accuracy and the risk of becoming overly dependent on AI. Participants also discussed the long-term effects and sustainability of AI-assisted instruction, underscoring the importance of ongoing development and adaptation of these tools. The results showed that students who received AI-assisted instruction significantly improved their writing skills and motivation compared to those in the control group. The experimental group showed higher organization, coherence, grammar, and vocabulary skills.

Approving the benefits of AI tools in academic writing, Kim et al. (2024) explored and examined students' perceptions and experiences about Gen AI-assisted academic writing. They conducted a semi-structured interview of 60–90 minutes via Zoom with 20 Chinese students in higher education after the participants finished academic writing tasks using a ChatGPT4-embedded writing system developed by the research team. A mixed-methods approach was employed to analyze data, utilizing both inductive and deductive thematic analysis through a structured seven-step process that included transcription, familiarization, coding, and validation. The findings indicated that Gen AI improves students' writing quality and efficiency and fosters a collaborative and interactive writing experience.

Su andTran (2024) aimed to identify the limitations of ChatGPT that learners commonly face when studying writing, particularly in the Research Writing Course. The study involved seven learners from the Master Course at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University, all of whom are English teachers at public schools, English centers, or private tutors in Ho Chi Minh City. Through qualitative data collected from interviews, the researchers found that despite its challenges, ChatGPT can help improve writing skills, mainly for beginner to intermediate learners in vocabulary, structure, and organization. However, its major drawback is unreliable information, requiring students to verify sources. It also lacks credible academic references and updates on recent research, making it unsuitable for advanced research writing.

Besides its advantages, AI tools still hinder many challenges that students have to deal with when engaging in these. Utani et al. (2023) sought to explore perceptions, challenges, and suggestions for improving the use of AI in teaching academic writing in Indonesia. This article presents a case study of three senior high schools in Central Java. The quantitative data were analyzed using percentages based on a Likert scale scoring system, while the qualitative data focused on key themes and responses from selected participants. Findings reveal that challenges such as incomplete editing features for the Indonesian language and the necessity for manual writing skills were noted, indicating that AI tools should supplement traditional instruction rather than a replacement.

These disadvantages were affirmed by Ozfidan et al. (2024) in a study investigating the perceptions of AI tools in Saudi undergraduate students' academic writing skills. The researchers conducted a survey of 189 students who were proficient in English and enrolled in freshmen academic writing courses. Two factors were identified by exploratory analysis: "instructional support of AI tools" and "instructional practices of AI tools". The results showed other dissatisfaction, called accessibility, cost, and customization of these tools, and the need to post, edit, and cross-check the content produced by these tools.

Likewise, Miao et al. (2024) addressed the ethical challenges brought about by using artificial intelligence (AI) in academic writing, particularly within nephrology. The study involved multiple stakeholders, including authors, journal editors, peer reviewers, nephrologists, ethicists, and AI experts, in a proposed framework for ensuring responsible AI usage. Generating text that might not be properly attributed or thoroughly reviewed identified significant ethical concerns, especially the risk of AI undermining academic integrity. This raised issues such as plagiarism and the authenticity of scholarly work. The authors emphasized the need for transparency in disclosing AI's involvement in the research and writing processes. Additionally, the study pointed out several gaps in the current understanding of AI's impact on academic integrity, particularly in terms of how often AI-generated content appears in scholarly work and whether existing plagiarism detection tools were effective in identifying such content. The research highlighted the importance of addressing these challenges to safeguard the integrity of academic writing.

While the current research provides valuable insights into immediate student experiences and benefits from using AI tools, it lacks a longitudinal perspective that could reveal how sustained interaction with AI tools influences writing proficiency, confidence, and attitudes toward academic writing. Additionally, there are few investigations into students' dynamics, especially in a range of educational settings, to establish the most effective and morally acceptable methods for incorporating AI into academic writing. The purpose of this paper was threefold: (1) to find out some popular AI tools that IUH Master of Arts uses in English language students, (2) to identify the benefits of AI tools in academic writing, and (3) to recognize the challenges that students have to face when applying these tools.

Two research questions were addressed:

1. What benefits do AI tools offer to IUH Master of Arts in English language students while learning academic writing?

2. What challenges do IUH Master of Arts in English language students face when using AI tools to learn academic writing?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

AI tools can significantly enhance the academic writing process by providing students with real-time assistance, improving their writing quality, and offering personalized feedback to foster skill development. This study was conducted at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH), Faculty of Languages, which offers a Master of Arts in English Language program for postgraduate students. The research aimed to explore how AI tools assist students in improving their academic writing skills.

A purposive sampling method was used to select participants, ensuring that they had relevant academic backgrounds and experiences with AI tools in writing. The study involved 30 first-semester postgraduate students enrolled in an Academic Writing course. Among them, 4 were male and 26 were female. Since these students were in the early stages of their academic journey, AI tools were integrated into their learning process to support their writing development.

Design of the Study

A mixed-method approach was employed, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods through questionnaires and interviews.

Questionnaire

The online questionnaire consisted of 13 questions:

- Questions 1–4: Identified the most commonly used AI tools.

- Questions 5–6: Used a Likert scale to measure the perceived benefits of AI tools in learning academic writing.

- Questions 7–13: Explored the challenges students faced when using AI tools.

The questionnaire was designed based on previous research results to ensure its validity. The Likert scale questions were carefully designed to enhance reliability and maintain consistency in responses. The wording and structure of the questions were reviewed to ensure clarity and minimize potential misinterpretations among participants.

Interview Design & Reliability Measures

After completing the questionnaire, 12 students were randomly selected for semi-structured interviews. Each interview included four predefined questions, aiming to gain deeper insights into students' experiences, benefits, and challenges when using AI tools. The interviews lasted approximately 10 minutes per participant.

To improve reliability, the interviews were conducted individually in a consistent setting to ensure uniform conditions for all participants. Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim to maintain accuracy and prevent data loss. Additionally, two researchers independently coded the transcripts to enhance inter-rater reliability and minimize potential biases in the analysis.

Data collection & analysis

Data was collected through questionnaires and interviews to gather comprehensive insights into students' experiences with AI tools. The online questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to 30 Master's students, allowing for efficient data collection. Responses were automatically recorded and summarized using Google Forms' built-in analytics. Following the questionnaire, 12 students were selected for face-to-face interviews, each lasting approximately 10 minutes. These interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy in qualitative analysis.

The collected data were then analyzed systematically. Quantitative data from the Likert scale questions were examined using descriptive statistics, while thematic analysis was applied to open-ended responses. Interview transcripts were coded for qualitative data to identify recurring themes related to students' perceptions, benefits, and challenges of using AI tools. This methodological approach ensured a rigorous and structured process, allowing for a well-rounded understanding of AI tools' impact on postgraduate students' academic writing skills.

Results/Findings

Research question 1: What benefits do AI tools offer to IUH Master of Arts in English language students while learning academic writing?

Figure 1

The frequency of using AI tools for academic writing
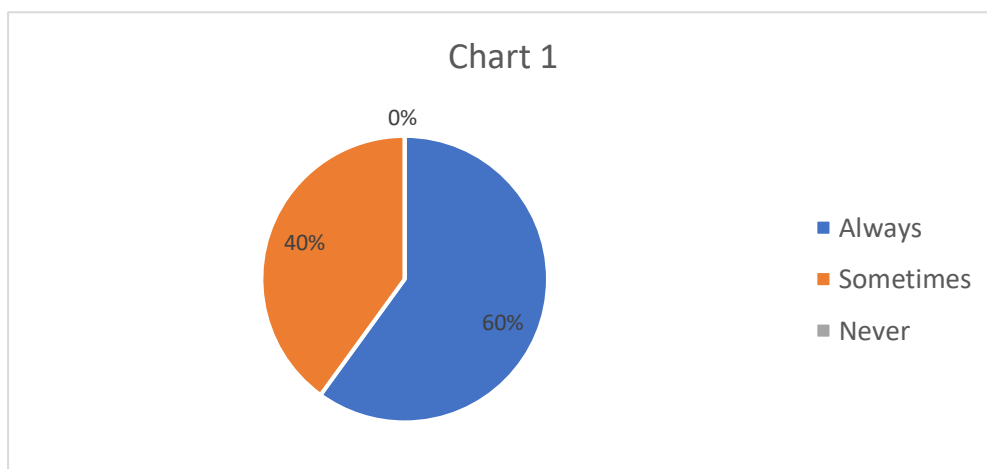
As seen from fig. 1, 60% of postgraduate students always employ AI tools for academic writing, while 40% say they sometimes use them. In short, all students apply AI tools to assist with their academic writing.

Table 1

Usage of popular AI tools in academic writing among postgraduate students

ChatGPT	Grammarly	Quillbot	Turnitin	Notion	EndNote
28	23	12	5	2	1
93.3%	76.7%	40%	16.7%	6.7%	3.3%

The researchers offer the six most popular AI tools for the participants to choose from. According to the table, ChatGPT is the most favored application, accounting for 93.3%. This was followed by Grammarly and Quillbot with 76.7% and 40%, respectively. Just five students utilized Turnitin, while the least of them applied Notion and Endnote. In the next short-answer question, 4 students said that they also used an application called Gemini AI to assist their writing. In the interview, answering the question "Do you use other AI tools (except those from the Questionnaire) for academic writing?" many students revealed that they also use Gemini AI, which similarly functioned as ChatGPT, as a useful tool in writing academic papers.

Table 2

How postgraduate students apply AI tools in academic writing

define topics	develop ideas	find citations	write references part	paraphrase	check grammar errors	check plagiarism
14	22	14	5	21	23	15
46.7%	73.3%	46.7%	16.7%	70%	76.7%	50%

The researchers listed 7 main activities in academic writing. As can be seen from the table, AI tools are helpful for postgraduate students in checking grammar errors and paraphrasing their writings, accounting for 76.7% and 73.3%, respectively. Besides, paraphrasing is also a popular part of AI tools that are utilized at 70%. 50% of the students check plagiarism using those technologies, and less than half of them define topics and find citations using AI tools. 16.7% reported that they take advantage of the advantages of writing references.

Figure 2

Benefits of using AI tools for academic writing
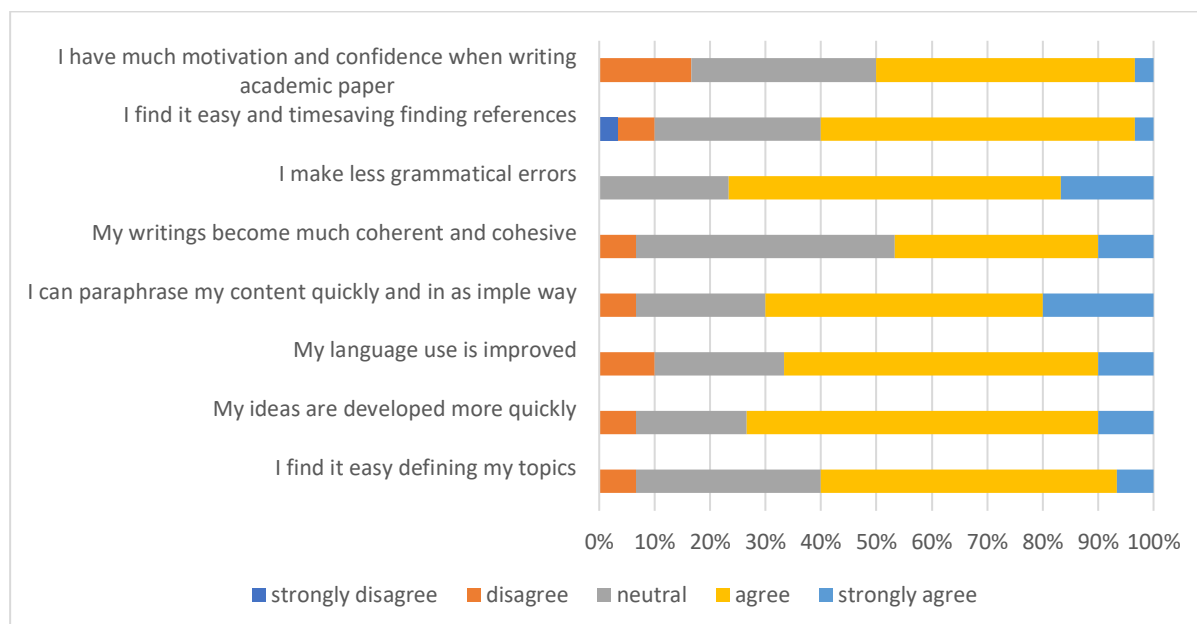
As can be seen from Fig. 2, there are 8 benefits gained by postgraduate students from using AI tools for academic writing. Approximately 63% of them agree that they developed their ideas more quickly while making fewer grammatical errors. Meanwhile, many postgraduate students agreed that their language use is developed and found it easier and more time-saving to search citations, accounting for over 55%. Half of them said they could paraphrase their content quickly while staying neutral so to make their writings more coherent and cohesive. Participants shared their points of view about the benefits of using AI tools for academic writing during the interview. The second question is: "What is the most beneficial point that AI tools offer you in academic writing?"

> *When I had to write paragraphs for my assignments, I sometimes made mistakes regarding grammatical structure. Thanks to chat GPT, the errors in my work were all checked and corrected suitably. AI tools also helped me refine my vocabulary to suit my academic writing style and pointed out grammar mistakes I didn't notice. This enriched my lexical range by giving synonyms or various word choices in different styles.*

Other participants gave deeper opinions about the advantages along with specific applications:

> *With vocabulary, I find synonyms for words; with grammar, I check spelling, tenses, and punctuation. AI tools also support and propose ideas for my writing, check plagiarism, and give citations. Gemini AI improved my ideas and vocabulary, and Grammarly and Quillbot helped me with grammatical mistakes.*

The next question is to find out if postgraduates' motivation in writing academic paper. The participants share their perspectives about the third question: "Have AI tools promoted your motivation in academic writing and improved your grades/performances?"

> *I feel more confident in my work because the errors are checked and fixed. I was supported with my ideas so that I could prepare better for my tasks. I used to be very shy about writing academic papers, but now I'll be more confident.*

Figure 3

Perceived impact of AI tools on academic writing performance
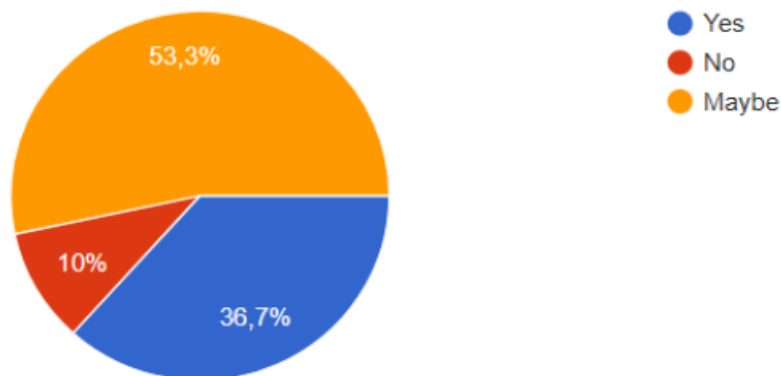
By the benefits mentioned, 36.7% of postgraduates said that their grades or performances in academic writing improved after utilizing AI tools, while 53.3% of them were not sure about that. Only 10% of the participants saw no improvement.

Research question 2: What challenges do IUH Master of Arts in English language students face when using AI tools to learn academic writing?

Figure 4

Challenges faced by postgraduate students when using AI tools in academic writing
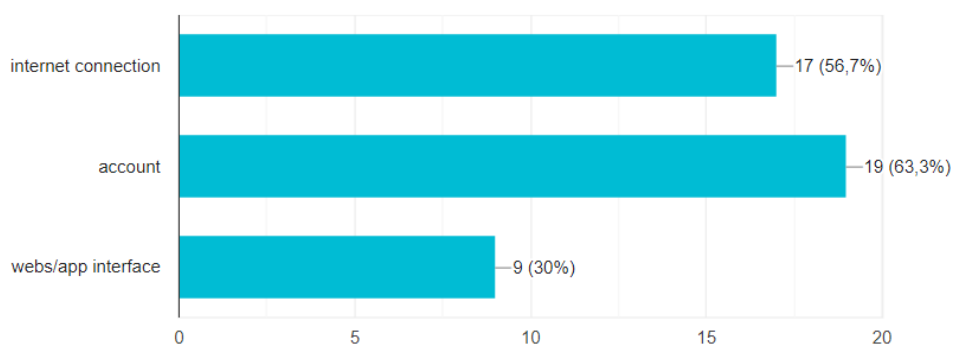
According to the fig. 4, 63.3% of postgraduates have difficulties logging in or signing up for accounts when using AI tools. Besides, 56.7% of them were also found to be disrupted by the internet connection. Web/app interface challenged 30% of participants.

> *Some AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, could not understand what I needed, which led to confusing responses. Besides, it's easy to be detected as plagiarism or AI-made if you extract ideas from AI tools even after paraphrasing.*

Some students expressed that cost is the most disruptive angle:

> *I have to log in to access more functions or support features, but I can only use free versions. Moreover, some websites and applications require an international payment method, which prevents me from approaching official versions. Besides, without an internet connection, I am just offered information from unreliable resources.*

Figure 5

Disruptive issues experienced by postgraduate students with AI tools
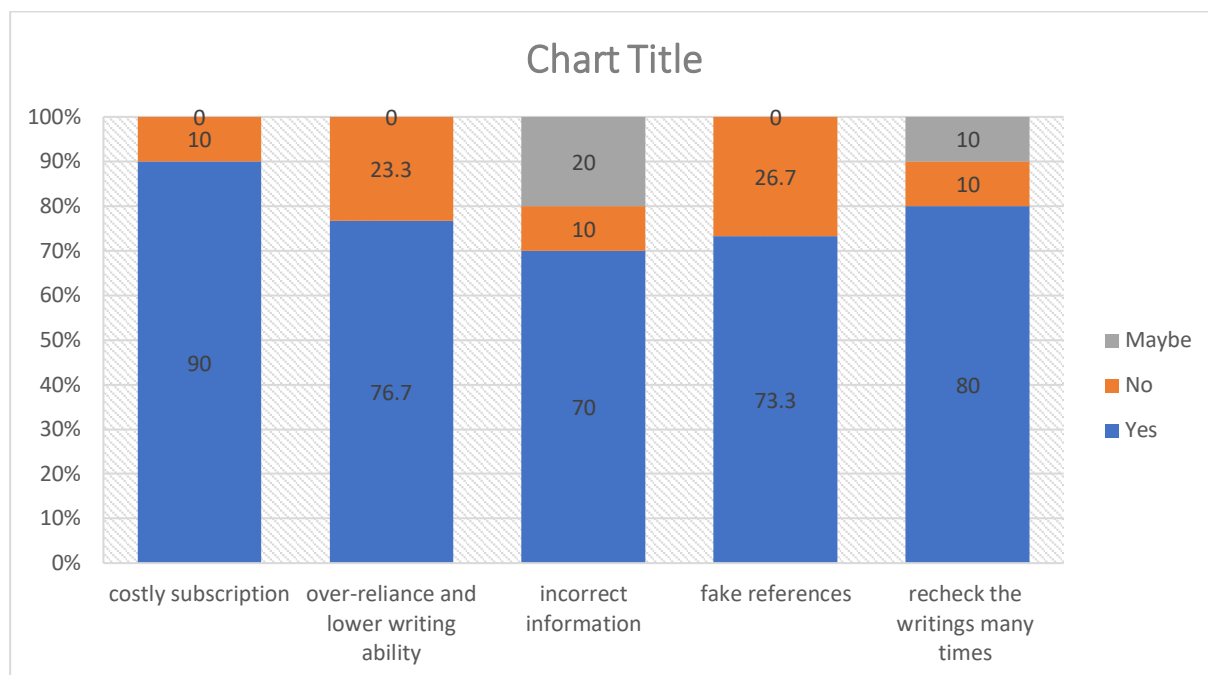

Fig. 5 shows five main challenges that postgraduates face when using AI tools for academic writing. Most of them admitted that costly subscriptions hinder their technological appliance process, accounting for 90%. The next most common difficulty is the worry of over-reliance and lower writing ability, which is the case for nearly 80% of the participants. The same number applies to students who have to recheck their writing many times after using AI tools. Over 70% of postgraduates reported receiving incorrect or fake information from AI assistance. According to the fourth question of the interview, "What are some other challenges that you faced when using AI tools for academic writing?" students shared that:

> *In my humble opinion, I suggest that MA students use AI tools in academic writing because they provide them with many benefits, such as correcting grammatical errors, generating ideas, and brainstorming sentences. However, there shouldn't be more reliance on it, and especially avoid making mistakes regarding plagiarism.*

Generally, most of them recognized that they may become overly reliant on AI tools unless they use them in a suitable manner. Besides, lots of students raised the question of why they were accused of plagiarism even when they just asked the AI tools to check spelling and grammar errors. One other obstacle is that *"My writing style will gradually become robotic like AI, and I sometimes show the potential for bias based on prompt."*

Discussion

The results suggested that a significant majority of EFL college students often or always use these tools in their academic writing work. These findings aligned with the increasing prevalence of AI-powered tools in educational contexts. EFL MA students' familiarity with tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quillbot may be attributed to the broader accessibility and integration of AI technology in writing processes. However, while the usage was high, it is essential to be aware of the validity level of these tools. The validity level of AI writing tools

can vary depending on the task, and students should be aware of which part of those tools are about how to make the best use of them.

AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, provide significant benefits for the IUH Master of Arts in English language students' academic writing. Participants reported improvements in grammatical accuracy, coherence, and lexical variety, which aligns with the study by Su and Tran (2024). Their research similarly highlights ChatGPT's effectiveness in enhancing language accuracy and providing immediate feedback, reinforcing our results. However, both studies also point to potential weaknesses. Our findings suggest that students may become overly reliant on AI-generated content, which could hinder their ability to develop independent critical thinking and writing skills. Additionally, while the previous study emphasizes issues related to creativity and originality, our research identifies an additional challenge: students struggle with integrating AI-generated text into their writing without losing their own academic voice. This highlights the need for instructional strategies that balance AI assistance with students' active engagement in the writing process.

Moreover, EFL postgraduate students believed that AI-powered tools had improved the quality of their academic writing and had had a positive influence on their performance, the positive influence of AI-powered tools on students' writing quality resonates with previous studies highlighting the benefits of these tools in improving writing skills and providing constructive feedback (Al Mahmud, 2023). However, more than half of the participants expressed uncertainty about this matter.

The second dimension of the questionnaire explored EFL university students' perceptions of the primary benefits of AI writing tools. The results showed that students largely agree on the advantages of using these tools, such as developing their ideas more quickly while making fewer grammatical errors, improved language use, easier and more time-saving searching citations, and paraphrasing the content quickly.

This result agrees with Khongtim's research that the positive influence of academic writing output enhances the writing process by improving efficiency. It is effective but significant in developing students' understanding of achieving norms and enhancing their academic work. Notably, EFL university students also found AI-powered tools valuable in helping students become more conscious of proper references. The students' motivation and confidence were considered as they felt supported by their ideas, leading to better preparation for the tasks. This finding also aligned with the idea that AI-assisted instructions significantly improved students' writing skills and motivation in completing academic writing assignments (Song C & Song Y, 2023).

The result also showed that most postgraduates had difficulties logging in or signing up for accounts when using AI tools; more than half of the responses were found disrupted by the Internet connection. Moreover, the level of validity of some AI tools, such as Chat GPT, did not satisfy the user's demand as it seemed unable to meet the user's needs through the questions and then gave confusing responses. In addition, the participants also addressed the unreliability of references provided by Chat GPT. One of the most disruptive angles of AI tools is a costly subscription to access more useful features of the tools, as many of them require international payment. These findings approve the result of Ozfidan et al. (2024) that the cost and customization of these tools are key disadvantages of using AI tools in academic writing when postgraduate students have to pay lots of money to afford the applications.

Besides, the results revealed mixed feelings regarding the improvement in their grade with both agreement and uncertainty. The findings from the three dimensions of the questionnaire

provided valuable insights into EFL university students' attitudes toward AI writing tools. While there was a general agreement on the benefits and use of these tools, it is important to recognize that students' perceptions are not uniform. There was some diversity in their opinions, highlighting that EFL postgraduates may have different levels of confidence and reliance on AI-powered tools for specific aspects of their writing.

Conclusion

The study explores the use of AI tools in academic writing among MA students majoring in English at IUH. It investigates the benefits and challenges of AI tools like writing assistants and language models in improving students' writing proficiency. Findings indicate that AI tools offer significant benefits, such as improving writing skills and providing support, but also introduce challenges, including over-reliance and limitations in addressing complex writing issues. This study was conducted at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, specifically within the Faculty of Languages, which offers a Master of Arts in English Language program for postgraduate students. The participants were selected from a group of 30 first-semester postgraduate students currently enrolled in an Academic Writing course. The author used qualitative and quantitative approaches to explain the context through questionnaires and interviews.

Most postgraduate students always employ AI tools for academic writing. The most favored application is ChatGPT, followed by Grammarly and Quillbot. AI tools are helpful for postgraduate students in checking grammar errors and paraphrasing writing. The researchers found that approximately 63% of the participants agreed that they developed their ideas more quickly while making fewer grammatical errors. 36.7% of postgraduates said that their grades or academic writing performance improved after utilizing AI tools. Most postgraduates have difficulties logging in or signing up for accounts when using AI tools. Most postgraduates faced costly subscriptions, which hindered their technology appliance use.

EFL MA students showed familiarity with tools, such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quillbot, which may be attributed to the broader accessibility and integration of AI technology in writing processes. EFL postgraduate students believed that AI-powered tools had improved the quality of their academic writing and positively influenced their performance. The motivation and confidence of the students were considered as they felt supported by their ideas, leading to better preparation for the tasks. Most postgraduates had difficulties logging in or signing up for accounts when using AI tools, and the Internet connection disrupted more than half of the responses.

Implications

This study highlights the challenges postgraduates face when using AI tools for writing. While AI offers various benefits—such as idea development, paraphrasing, finding references, citations, and correcting grammar—it also presents significant challenges, particularly the risks of over-reliance and Integrity concerns. To maintain critical thinking and creativity, students should use AI tools as supporters rather than a substitute for their own ideas. Schools and teachers play a crucial role in setting clear guidelines and providing training on effective AI tool usage. Properly integrating AI tools into academic writing can enhance learning, but students must first brainstorm independently, verify AI-generated content, and ensure the reliability of information. When used responsibly, AI can be a valuable assistant, improving both writing skills and overall learning outcomes.

Limitations

While this study may offer valuable insights, certain limitations should be acknowledged. First, the small sample size of 30 participants may limit the generalizability of the findings, as it does not fully represent the broader population of MA students. Second, since the research was conducted exclusively at IUH, the results may not be applicable to students in different institutions with varying academic programs and access to AI tools. Third, the study relied on self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews, which may be influenced by social desirability bias or recall inaccuracies. Lastly, the cross-sectional nature of the research captures students' perceptions at a single point in time, limiting insights into how their experiences with AI tools may evolve over a longer period.

Recommendation

The research included only 30 participants, which may not be representative of the broader population of MA students. A larger sample could provide more generalizable insights and improve the validity of the findings. The study specifically targeted students at IUH (International University of Ho Chi Minh City). This localized focus may limit the applicability of the findings to other institutions or educational contexts, as different settings may yield different experiences with AI tools. We suggest that future studies should engage in longitudinal research that follows students over time across different institutions, observing how their experiences and perceptions of AI tools evolve.

Acknowledgment

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