

English-Major Master's Students Regarding the Use of ChatGPT in Learning Research Writing at IUH

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 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9442-2278>

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

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Received: 21/02/2025

Revision: 23/04/2025

Accepted: 27/04/2025

Online: 27/04/2025

ABSTRACT

Keywords: ChatGPT, research writing, English major, students, perspectives

Researchers in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) have significantly focused on the use of ChatGPT for writing. Many studies have shown that the use of ChatGPT has somewhat influenced students' attitudes toward applying ChatGPT in academic writing. The researchers conducted a study to gather the perceptions of English-major master's students regarding using ChatGPT to learn research writing at a university in Vietnam. A mixed-method approach was employed to assess students' perceptions, with a sample size of 29 students participating in a research writing course. This study examined not only the general benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT but also its impact on critical thinking and the risk of unintentional plagiarism. These findings suggest that educators should guide learners to approach ChatGPT not merely as a simple language correction tool but as a double-edged resource requiring functional, cognitive, and ethical considerations in AI-assisted learning environments.

Introduction

Currently, the implementation of ChatGPT, an AI learning chatbot, has garnered significant attention in the area of language education (Slamet, 2024). Since its release on November 30, 2022, ChatGPT, an acronym for "Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer" (OpenAI, 2023), has been described as "a language model application that allows users to extrapolate information in a human-like manner." (Singh, 2023, p. 204). Due to its ability to replicate intelligent human behavior, Shalevska and Kostadinovska-Stojchevska (2024) concluded that ChatGPT has the potential to completely transform teaching, learning, and evaluation in the educational system. ChatGPT offers students not only personalized and immediate feedback but also an opportunity for language practice, meeting individual learners' needs. With these abilities, this chatbot makes the classroom environment more engaging and interesting compared to traditional methods (Rudolph et al., 2023; Shen et al., 2023). According to Gilson et al. (2023) and Pavlik (2023), ChatGPT can respond with good coherence due to the ability to understand the meaning and contextual factors of the prompts.

Additionally, ChatGPT is considered a supportive tool for learning to write although there are some concerns about it. Hidayat and Sujarwati (2024) find that students have a positive perception of the use of ChatGPT in their writing. It can be a personal guide for learners whether they are studying at school or at home (Song and Song, 2023). However, accurate prompts may be necessary for the users to ensure better writing results (Özçelik and Ekşi, 2024). All in all, employing ChatGPT to improve writing skills is a relatively new approach that warrants further research.

In some previous studies, the researchers have examined ChatGPT's effects on EFL learners' writing skill development. ChatGPT offers a variety of potential advantages in research writing. Baskara (2023) states that ChatGPT is a tool that promotes individual learning, as it provides learners with personalized feedback and suggestions on grammar and lexical sources based on their writing proficiency. It also fosters learners' passion for writing through smart interaction and immediate feedback. ChatGPT gives learners recommendations on databases where they can search for relevant sources of information, articles, and research papers. Learners, therefore, may save a great deal of time and effort in collecting useful information. Besides, ChatGPT allows learners to organize their ideas better by providing structures for different kinds of academic writing (Koos & Wachsmann, 2023).

ChatGPT offers many benefits, but it also has problems. Despite its speed, ChatGPT sometimes produces erroneous results (Day, 2023; Gordijn & Have, 2023; Hügler, 2023; Sallam, 2023; Tlili et al., 2023; Wen & Wang, 2023). Nearly all of the students are confused by ChatGPT's responses since they think the data is untrustworthy and irrelevant to their writing assignment (Nguyen et al., 2025). Hügler and Day (2023) admit that learners sometimes can not find ChatGPT-generated references and citations on official websites. In addition, overreliance on ChatGPT when learning research writing may restrict critical thinking and academic performance (Sok & Heng, 2024; Firat, 2023; Rasul et al., 2023). Barrot (2023) affirms that incorrect training may cause students to overuse ChatGPT, reducing critical thinking. Thus, ChatGPT should be integrated into the curriculum (Minh, 2024) and used just to refine their outline (Barrot, 2023). Learners also struggle with integrity, including cheating and plagiarism when using ChatGPT (Sok & Heng, 2024). According to Botez (2023, para. 3, as cited in Singh, 2023, p. 207), the platform efficiently conducts student research with vast amounts of data affecting academic honesty, especially at universities. ChatGPT offers structured, well-organized, and creative writing, but Bibi and Atta (2024) warn that it carries the potential risks of biased, deceptive, and inauthentic information. Shalevska and Kostadinovska-Stojchevska (2024) indicate that higher education plagiarism problems may be a case of normalizing dishonesty and unethical behavior. Sok and Heng (2024) further assert that plagiarism can cause learning disparities and academic misconduct, ultimately undermining teaching and learning quality.

Previous studies have examined ChatGPT's effects on writing and teachers' perceptions of it. Meanwhile, there have been a few studies exploring students' perspectives on using ChatGPT in scientific writing, especially focusing on its critical analysis and academic integrity. This aligns with the suggestions of Nguyen (2023) and Sok and Heng (2024), as students represent a major user group of this tool. However, not all students receive comprehensive guidance on how to use ChatGPT effectively and ethically in research writing. For this reason, critical thinking and academic integrity remain two of their main concerns. The purpose of this study is to investigate how master's students view ChatGPT's advantages and disadvantages when it comes to research writing, as well as its implications for critical thinking and academic integrity.

Literature Review

Benefits and drawbacks of ChatGPT on writing

The research of Tseng and Lin (2024) aimed to investigate the merits of ChatGPT on learning writing. A qualitative method was used to gather descriptive data from 15 non-native English-major juniors and seniors at a private university. The researcher analyzed students' written works with the application of the TPACK framework and the ADDIE model. The findings showed the positive influences of ChatGPT on the quality of students' academic writing. Besides, by using this chatbot, students can get exposed to a more interesting and interactive learning environment. Therefore, students can engage better in writing courses.

Mahapatra (2024) examined the influences of implementing ChatGPT on learning writing and students' perceptions of this application. The research was conducted at a private university in India, where 134 science-major freshmen participated. The data were gathered using a mixed-method approach, including the quantitative results from three writing tests and the qualitative results from focus group discussions. This study found that ChatGPT enhances students' writing skills in terms of grammar, idea generation, and connection. Besides, students remained enthusiastic about this application. Although a minor concern, ChatGPT has been criticized for imposing a pattern on writing and hindering creativity in content organization.

Similar to the aim of the current research, Mubaroq et al. (2024) discussed the benefits and drawbacks of ChatGPT on university-level writing skills. Instead of gathering information directly from participants, the researchers conducted a qualitative study by reviewing the literature. A large amount of research exploring the advantages and disadvantages of ChatGPT was collected from both online and offline sources, evaluated, and briefly summarized to give the findings. The results revealed that using ChatGPT in writing is advantageous to students at higher schools as it helps students outline and brainstorm ideas effectively, as well as translate and generate language. However, this chatbot also has some drawbacks, the most important of which is that it fails to provide accurate and in-depth responses. Furthermore, excessive use of ChatGPT may lead to overdependence and decrease students' creativity.

Building on this, Teng (2023) explored the challenges of ChatGPT in academic writing. The participants of this research were four writers, three reviewers, and two editors from the International Journal of TESOL Studies (IJTS). All of them were asked to take part in a participant-oriented evaluation and interview to share their opinion on ChatGPT integration in learning writing. The results highlighted some drawbacks of using ChatGPT, including inaccurate information, wrong citations, and unreliable research articles despite potential merits. Additionally, ChatGPT may provide overly general ideas and information and affect the quality of students' writing papers.

The research of Wahyuddin et al. (2023) examined the integration of ChatGPT in academic writing. The participants were 13 second-year students at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Muhammadiyah University of Parepare. Using a quantitative approach, the researchers obtained data through observation, questionnaires, and documentation. The research showed that ChatGPT allows students to enhance their writing skills as this chatbot provides them with ideas, structures, and writing styles. Moreover, students also have the chance to foster creativity in writing.

The prior studies presented above provided researchers with a more extensive view of the advantages and disadvantages of ChatGPT in the process of using it for academic purposes. However, embedded in the general findings were two important aspects of the research writing process that were not examined more closely, namely, critical thinking and plagiarism. These

factors were not only significantly influenced by ChatGPT in the academic context, but were also directly or indirectly related to the thinking process of researchers, as well as partly or fully affecting the validity of their research articles. Therefore, the following related studies provided more nuanced perspectives on these two dimensions in a variety of research contexts with diverse participants.

Effects of ChatGPT on critical thinking

Tran and Tran (2023) explored the role of ChatGPT in enhancing critical thinking in language learning. The study used a qualitative methodology, including semi-structured interviews with 3 language teachers and 8 language students to measure how ChatGPT enhances learners' critical thinking. Their results indicated that ChatGPT plays a significant role in boosting critical thinking skills, leading to the development of their analytical abilities, problem-solving skills, and creativity. The study encouraged learners and educators to utilize ChatGPT to learn languages. However, the researcher assumed that ethical and social aspects should be considered when using ChatGPT for studying.

Suriano et al. (2024) researched the use of ChatGPT for promoting critical thinking skills in education, also focusing on students' attitudes and trust in ChatGPT. The researchers used a quantitative method involving 241 Italian university students from diverse educational backgrounds. Self-report questionnaires and performance tests were conducted and analyzed with SPSS software. The findings showed that students had a positive attitude towards ChatGPT, which was a beneficial resource for developing their critical thinking skills. However, overdependence should be avoided by increasing in-depth comprehension among learners. In this case, teachers may play a significant role in instructing students using ChatGPT effectively and responsibly.

Avsheniuk et al. (2024) conducted a qualitative study to explore the impacts of ChatGPT on critical thinking skills in three Chinese language classrooms. Thirty-eight second-language learners and native Chinese speakers from Chinese classes and a Chinese Academic Writing class participated in the study. The data were collected directly in two Chinese classes. The learners answered questions in a document. In the Academic writing class, the researcher collected ten assignment worksheets. The study revealed that language proficiency levels lead to different results in learners' critical thinking when they use ChatGPT to write. This research highlighted the role of designing lectures to improve critical thinking skills by using ChatGPT.

Shanto et al. (2024) conducted the study to propose a conceptual framework leveraging ChatGPT to enhance learners' critical thinking aptitude. 20 undergraduate students participated in this empirical research and answered an open-ended question based on their opinions and by using ChatGPT. In addition, the researchers used a Likert scale for the survey questions to measure students' perspectives on using AI assistants for writing. The findings showed that using ChatGPT helped them enhance their creativity so that they could have more in-depth analysis. Overall, the study stated that critical thinking can be fostered when the students use ChatGPT carefully and follow the necessary guidelines.

Xue (2024) explored the use of ChatGPT by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to scaffold critical thinking-oriented writing. The study, using a mixed-method approach, involved 60 Chinese English-majored learners. The researchers collected data through argumentative writing tests and semi-structured interviews. The participants were required to do a pre-test based on their writing ability and a post-test with the support of ChatGPT. The results showed that the students' critical thinking improved when using ChatGPT for writing. The authors also

indicated the aspects including comprehension of critical thinking, model discourse, feedback, AI engagement, and logic that ChatGPT influenced EFL learners' critical thinking in writing.

Issues regarding plagiarism in using ChatGPT for academic writing

Yan (2023) examined L2 students' behaviors and perceptions of the impact of ChatGPT on their writing skills. This study was conducted in the context of a week-long ChatGPT implementation in L2 writing in the classroom, involving 116 undergraduate EFL majors. During that time, the data were collected by using a multi-method qualitative approach. Specifically, the researchers observed students' learning behaviors during ChatGPT usage through their daily submission of learning diaries. Furthermore, responses from in-depth interviews with random students were collected, recorded, and transcribed for analysis. Findings showed that the majority of students grasped the basic skills of ChatGPT in creating texts on certain topics. They also recognized the strengths of ChatGPT but were somewhat concerned about the potential for educational inequality and violations of academic integrity. This leads to the suggestion of a broader definition of plagiarism, enabling the monitoring and prevention of plagiarism's new forms associated with ChatGPT.

Khalaf's (2024) study examined the relationship between students' attitudes towards plagiarism and "aigiarism", defined as AI-assisted plagiarism with noticeable intervention from ChatGPT. Regarding this, the researcher also predicted the future trend of using aigiarism, as well as analyzed the factors that influence students' positive attitudes towards plagiarism and aigiarism. To achieve the above objectives, the study was conducted at Sultan Qaboos University with 131 participants (35 males, 96 females) majoring in science and humanities. Data were collected through responses to two online questionnaires: Attitudes Toward Aigiarism Questionnaire (ATAQ) and Attitudes Toward Plagiarism Questionnaire (ATPQ). The results showed that the correlation between students' attitudes towards plagiarism was demonstrated, specifically through the increased tendency of students to use aigiarism in academic contexts regardless of gender, academic performance, or field of study.

Karkoulia et al. (2024) explored students' and lecturers' perspectives on academic integrity in the context of ChatGPT being increasingly used in academic fields. To help clarify the above-mentioned purpose, the researchers used a qualitative approach to conduct face-to-face interviews at universities in Lebanon, involving 20 students and 20 lecturers. The diverse responses from the interviews informed the study's conclusions, which showed that both students and lecturers were generally aware of the potential benefits of ChatGPT, as well as its threat to academic integrity. Specifically, students recognized that there was a risk of plagiarism detection during the use of ChatGPT and actively mitigated it by rephrasing AI-generated work with other AI tools. Therefore, instructors highlighted the importance of proper paraphrasing and citing sources to prevent plagiarism while engaging with ChatGPT. They also suggested training programs to educate teachers and students on ethical and responsible AI usage.

Bringula's (2023) study explored the perspective of academics (e.g., scholars, teachers, educators, and researchers) on the use of ChatGPT in research writing. Text mining analytics, a quantitative research tool, was used to select 86 peer- and non-peer-reviewed research papers on "using ChatGPT in research writing" from Scopus and Google Scholar. The search process was conducted using specific keywords and criteria. The results showed that academics are primarily concerned about plagiarism, implying that the use of ChatGPT in research writing has made plagiarism easier. Therefore, researchers should critically evaluate ChatGPT's generated content while using it as a brainstorming tool to develop comprehensive research papers and maintain academic integrity.

Yazid and Dzulfikri (2024) explored the potential limitations and ethical issues of ChatGPT as a writing support tool. The study was conducted at the University of Indonesia, involving 30 students from Islamic high schools and universities with various grade levels. The qualitative data was acquired through in-depth interviews with students to gain insights into ChatGPT in writing. Data analysis revealed ChatGPT's concerns into five themes: understanding, reliance, feedback, writing style, and plagiarism—the last and most essential. In particular, the results showed that using ChatGPT may raise the risk of accidental plagiarism because students use ChatGPT-provided content without double-checking, highlighting the importance of maintaining a boundary between leveraging AI support and academic integrity.

Although previous studies investigated the prevalent benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT in writing (Teng, 2023; Wahyuddin et al., 2023; Tseng and Lin, 2024; Mahapatra, 2024; Mubaroq et al., 2024), the positive influences of this chatbot on learners' critical thinking along with the supportive guidances (Tran and Tran, 2023; Suriano et al., 2024; Avsheniuk et al., 2024; Shanto et al., 2024; Xue, 2024) as well as emerging issues related to plagiarism in the context of AI shaping education (Yan, 2023; Khalaf, 2024; Karkoulian et al., 2024; Bringula, 2023; Yazid & Dzulfikri, 2024), some issues are still up for debate. In particular, Mubaroq et al. (2024) claimed ChatGPT has detrimental effects on students' creativity, but Teng (2023) and Wahyuddin et al. (2023) argue that it serves as a tool to foster critical thinking by promoting interactive discussions in which students actively engage in seeking more ideas or opinions related to the essay material. Besides, most of the previous studies focused on the importance of lecturers and training in the use of ChatGPT to enhance critical thinking and avoid plagiarism, but they did not explore students' perspectives. All of these issues lead to one big gap in this study: none of the previous researchers explored the master's students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in research writing at a university in Vietnam.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT in learning research writing from the perspective of English-major master's students?
2. In what ways do students believe ChatGPT affects their critical thinking in research writing?
3. How do students perceive plagiarism when using ChatGPT in research writing?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This research was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH), which is one of the top-notch universities in Vietnam. IUH is one of the universities that has obtained ASEAN University Network AUN-QA accreditations for 24 learning programs. IUH employs highly qualified lecturers and staff, specialized training services across various fields, a large number of modern facilities, and a dynamic environment that attracts thousands of students from all over the country. The Faculty of Foreign Languages (FFL) was established in 2005 under the direction of IUH. There are over 3000 students with varied English proficiency levels studying at the FFL-IUH. For this research, the participants were 29 English-major master students who experienced ChatGPT in a Research Writing course. The ages of participants were varied, ranging from 20 to 49, but they engaged in the

same training programme and received equal guidance from lecturers. They worked in different fields, but all of them desired to be deeply specialized in English Linguistics. Therefore, the participants had sufficient essential elements to provide quality answers, ensuring the validity and reliability of our study.

Design of the Study

Overall, this study used a mixed-method approach with an explanatory sequential design to comprehensively examine the views of IUH English major master's students on the use of ChatGPT in research writing. The mixed-method approach includes qualitative and quantitative methods. Specifically, the design allowed the researchers to identify common threads of opinion formed by student responses through quantitative data in the first phase of the study. In the second phase, the researchers analyzed and extracted the underlying causes of such formation through qualitative data collected from interviews with randomly selected students. By collecting two types of data for the study, the researchers could measure the causal perspectives for students' responses when using ChatGPT in research writing. These perspectives were related to perceived impacts, effects on critical thinking and the risk of academic plagiarism.

To explore students' perceptions of ChatGPT, a mixed-methods approach was employed to provide both breadth and depth of understanding. Surveys were used to gather quantitative data from a larger group of students, allowing for the identification of general trends related to the perceived benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT. In addition, interviews allowed for more detailed exploration of students' thoughts and feelings, particularly about how ChatGPT affects their critical thinking and how they perceive plagiarism when using it. The combination of these methods offered a more complete picture of the issue. SPSS was used to analyze survey data statistically, helping to identify patterns, frequencies, and relationships in student responses. These methods provided complementary insights that supported a more well-rounded answer to the research questions.

To ensure the results are reliable and trustworthy, a comprehensive approach was adopted for data collection. Questionnaires were distributed remotely by means of Google Forms, providing convenience for all participants. Furthermore, the privacy of the participants was strictly maintained as the forms did not require any personal information, thus safeguarding their anonymity. Participants were also encouraged to provide any difficulties or problems encountered in the course of carrying out the survey process, and problems were solved quickly through online support. Finally, answers collected were systematically recorded, securely archived, and thoroughly analyzed to ensure the accuracy and validity of research outcomes.

Data collection & analysis

Procedure of data collection

The questionnaires were designed on Google Forms with questions such as multiple choice, checkbox grid, checkbox, short answer, and linear scale. Afterward, researchers sent the online form to all MA learners in the Research Writing course from October 29, 2024 to November 5, 2024. After receiving 29 responses, researchers randomly selected 10 students for interviews. The interview consisted of 3 questions emphasizing the issues related to critical thinking and plagiarism when using ChatGPT to do research writing. Each student spent about 7 minutes being interviewed and their responses were recorded. To ensure accuracy, interview recordings were securely kept and transcribed immediately after finishing the interview.

Data analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis (Phase One)

An online questionnaire was used to collect data using a 5-point Likert scale in the first phase of the study. With responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), the researchers used SPSS 2.0 to measure students' views on the role of ChatGPT in research writing, its impact on critical thinking, and their concerns about plagiarism. Additionally, the researchers applied inferential analysis to examine the statistical significance of the correlations between the variables mentioned in the survey.

Qualitative Data Analysis (Phase Two)

In the second phase of the research, thematic analysis was applied to interpret responses from semi-structured interviews, contextualizing the collected qualitative data. Through careful review and manual classification of each interview transcript, researchers successfully identified recurring themes. This qualitative data was then compared and combined with the quantitative data to provide the researchers with a comprehensive view of the overall trends expressed in participants' responses and individual experiences.

Results/Findings

Theme 1: Perceived benefits and drawbacks of using ChatGPT in learning research writing from the perspective of English-major master's students (Research question 1)

Figure 1.

The students' frequency of using ChatGPT for their research writing

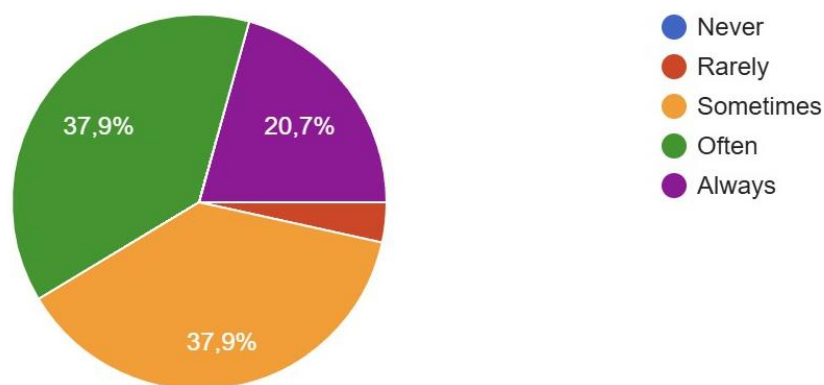
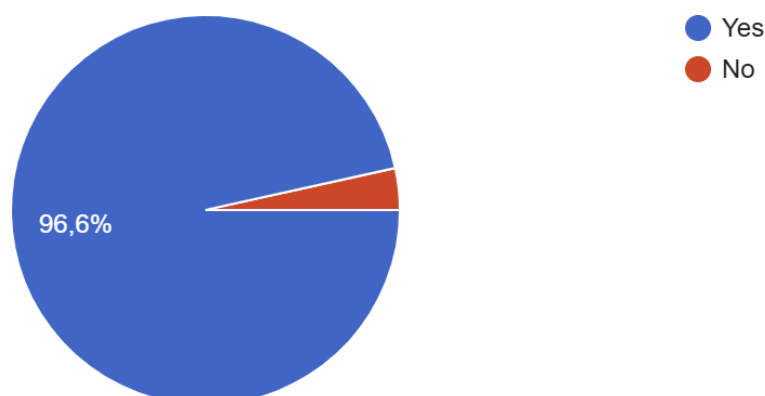
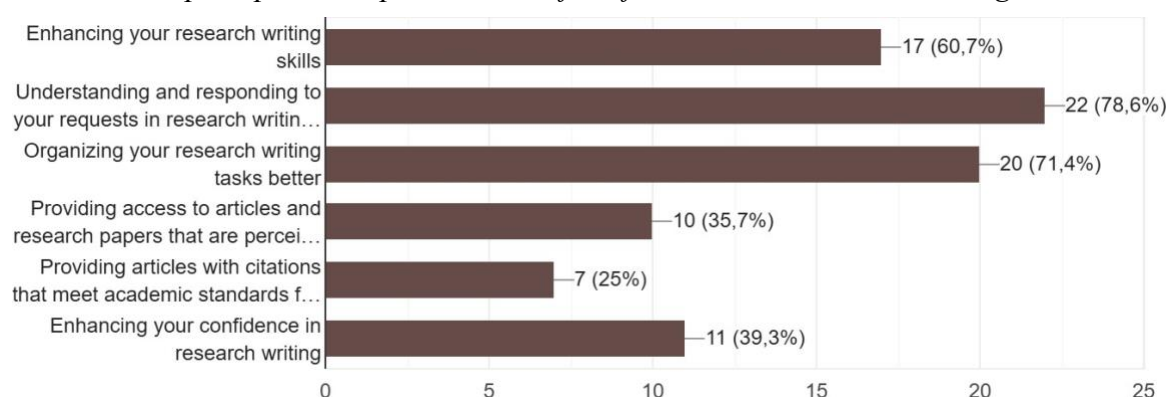


Fig. 1 shows how often master's students use ChatGPT in research writing. As can be seen from the chart, two options, 'Often' and 'Sometimes,' account for the highest percentage of using ChatGPT's frequency, which is 37,9% for each one. The number of students who always use this chatbot was lower, at 20,7 %. In contrast, students who rarely integrate ChatGPT into their research writing tasks accounted for a negligible percentage. To conclude, all master students use ChatGPT for their research writing works and a large number of them use it frequently.

*Figure 2.**The students' opinion on whether ChatGPT has benefits*

The fig. 2 provided shows whether participants think ChatGPT has benefits in research writing. 96,6% of students responded “Yes” while the proportion of “No” accounted for less than 4%. This reveals that most of the users of ChatGPT benefit from its functions.

*Figure 3.**The students' perceptions on potential benefits of ChatGPT in research writing*

The provided Fig 3 illustrates the perceived potential benefits of ChatGPT in research writing. As can be seen from Figure 4.3, approximately 79% of students thought that ChatGPT enables them to understand and respond to research-related prompts in research writing, followed by the benefit of better organizing their research writing tasks, with nearly 71%. Additionally, around 61% of master's students hold the opinion that ChatGPT fosters their research writing skills. Two other options, including providing access for articles and research papers that are relevant to their research topics and enhancing their confidence in research writing were approximately 36% and 39%, respectively. Providing articles with citations that meet students' academic standards for accuracy and relevance, however, had the lowest percentage, merely 25%. Based on the data above, it can be summarized that students gained various benefits from integrating ChatGPT into their research writing.

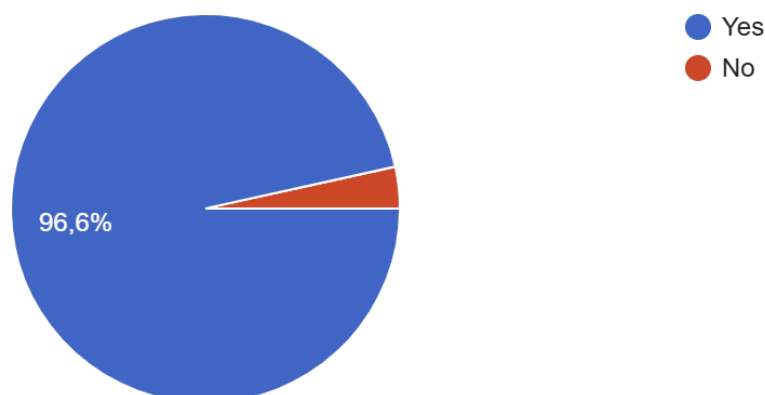
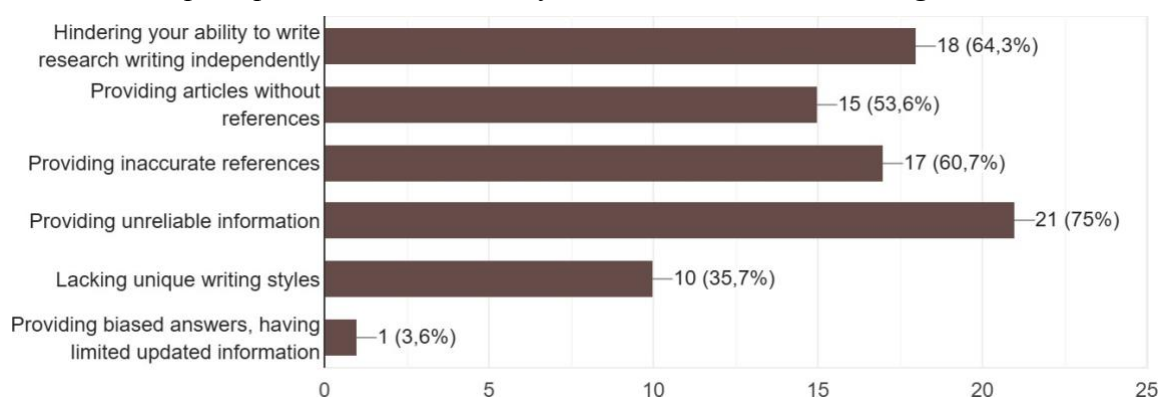
*Figure 4.**The students' opinion on whether ChatGPT has drawbacks*

Fig. 4 gives information about whether master students think that ChatGPT has some drawbacks. The selection “Yes” takes up nearly 97%, which is the major trend, whereas only 4% of participants opted for “No”. This data implied that despite many benefits, there were several drawbacks of ChatGPT in research writing that should be taken into consideration.


*Figure 5.**The students' perceptions on drawbacks of ChatGPT in research writing*

The fig. 5 illustrates the perceived demerits of ChatGPT in research writing. To begin with, 75 % of master's students claimed that the most prevalent problem of ChatGPT was providing unreliable information. Besides, over 64% of them thought that using ChatGPT hindered their ability to write research papers independently. The proportion of students reporting inaccurate references was nearly 61%, followed by 54% who reported that ChatGPT provided articles without references. Around 36% of students cited the lack of unique writing styles as a drawback of ChatGPT. However, the least common concern was biased answers and outdated information, with only 3.6%. In brief, a large number of master students think that unreliable information is the biggest obstacle to ChatGPT, but biased and outdated answers are not the problem.

Theme 2: Effects of ChatGPT on critical thinking in using ChatGPT in learning research writing from the perspective of English-major master's students (Research question 2)

Table 1.

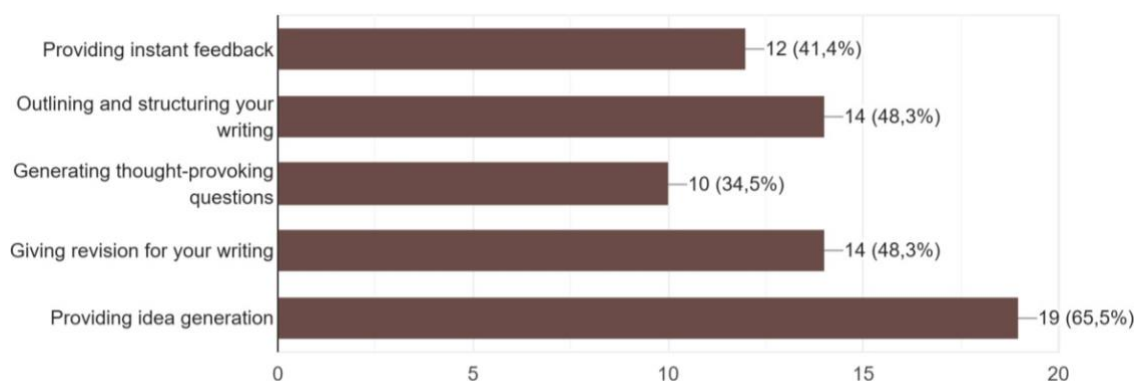
Critical thinking improvement when using ChatGPT

| NUM | QUESTION IS USED FOR SURVEY | Rating percentage (%) | | | | | Mean |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|------|----------------|------|
| | | Strongly disagree | | | | Strongly agree | |
| | Critical thinking improvement |  | | | | | |
| 6 | Do you believe that using ChatGPT has improved your critical thinking skills? | 3.4 | 6.9 | 51.7 | 37.9 | 0.0 | 3.24 |

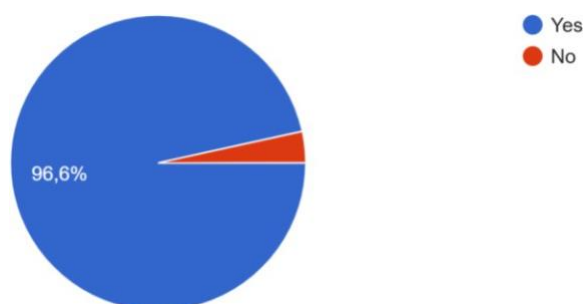
The survey results from English-major master's students at IUH reveal a mixed perspective on the impact of ChatGPT on critical thinking skills. While 51.7% of respondents remained neutral, indicating uncertainty on the tool's effectiveness, 37.9% agreed that using ChatGPT had positively impacted their critical thinking. Only 3.4% of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, and no one strongly agreed, as shown by the 0.0% in that category. The average score of 3.24 indicates that most students have a somewhat positive or neutral view of how ChatGPT impacts their critical thinking skills. All in all, although there are some positive opinions, the predominant neutral stance suggests that learners may not see a strong or consistent link between the use of ChatGPT and improvement in critical thinking, indicating the need for further investigation into what could affect this perception.

Figure 6.

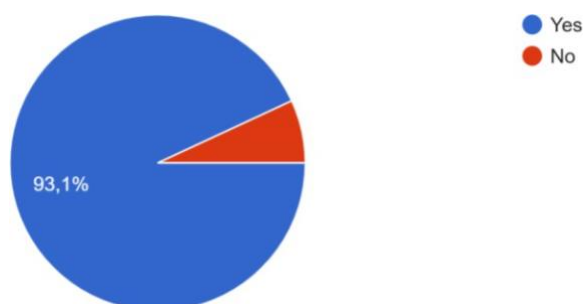
ChatGPT supports critical thinking in research writing



The fig. 6 highlights various ways respondents believe ChatGPT could support critical thinking in research writing. The majority of respondents (65.5%) selected "Generating ideas", indicating ChatGPT was a significant source of inspiration for generating new ideas. "Outline and structuring your writing" and "Providing revisions for writing" were also popular choices, each selected by 48.3% of respondents, which means that this tool can help them to organize thoughts and refine drafts. "Providing instant feedback" was chosen by 41.4% of respondents, while "Generating thought-provoking questions" was the least selected option, with 34.5% of users. The results show that ChatGPT can be a valuable tool for idea generation and structuring while the roles in challenging their thinking with thought-provoking questions are relatively less emphasized.

*Figure 7.**Reliance on ChatGPT could hinder critical thinking skills*


Based on the fig.7, it is evident that most of the respondents (96.6%) believe that relying on ChatGPT could hinder their critical thinking skills, with 28 out of 29 participants choosing "Yes". Meanwhile, only one respondent (3.4%) disagreed with this viewpoint. This strong agreement points to a common belief that using ChatGPT excessively may negatively impact individuals' ability to think critically on their own. The findings suggest that users are generally concerned about the possible drawbacks of over-relying on ChatGPT, especially when it comes to critical thinking ability.

*Figure 8.**ChatGPT's responses led to rethink*

The fig. 8 shows that nearly all of the respondents (93.1%) have been able to change their opinions or beliefs due to one of the responses given by ChatGPT. This high percentage suggests that ChatGPT has an influence on users' thought processes, promoting reflection and possibly broadening perspectives. Meanwhile, only 6.9% of respondents indicated that their attitudes remained unchanged after using ChatGPT. These results suggest that ChatGPT helps learners explore different points of view and deepens their understanding of various topics.

Table 2.

Users' satisfaction level after using ChatGPT

| NUM | QUESTION IS USED FOR SURVEY | Rating percentage (%) | | | | | Mean |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|--------------------|------|
| | | Very dissatisfy ing | | | | Very satisfying | |
| | Critical thinking skills - After using ChatGPT |  | | | | | |
| 10 | How would you rate your overall critical thinking skills after using ChatGPT for writing? | 3.4 | 10.3 | 41.4 | 41.4 | 3.4 | 3.31 |

The Table 2 shows a mixed response regarding satisfaction with critical thinking skills after using ChatGPT for research writing. A significant number of respondents took a neutral stance (41.1%) which was equal to the figure for feeling satisfied (41.1%) of the users with their critical thinking skills after ChatGPT usage. Meanwhile, a small minority indicated dissatisfaction, with 10.3% finding the skills "unsatisfactory" and 3.4% selecting "very dissatisfying." However, only 3.4% of respondents rated their skills as "very satisfactory". The mean score of 3.31 suggests that, on the whole, students felt somewhat satisfied with ChatGPT's influence on their critical thinking skills, though the improvement was not overwhelmingly strong for most. These results suggest that while some learners feel positive about their critical thinking after using ChatGPT for research writing, a large portion remains neutral, indicating that the tool's impact on critical thinking may be seen as limited or unclear by many users.

Interview question 1: How effectively do you think ChatGPT promotes critical thinking in your writing?

"ChatGPT can harm my critical thinking" (Student 10, interview extract)

"... helpful in promoting my critical thinking, getting deeper insight" (Student 7, interview extract)

"...offer alternative viewpoints of scenarios" (Student 2, interview extract)

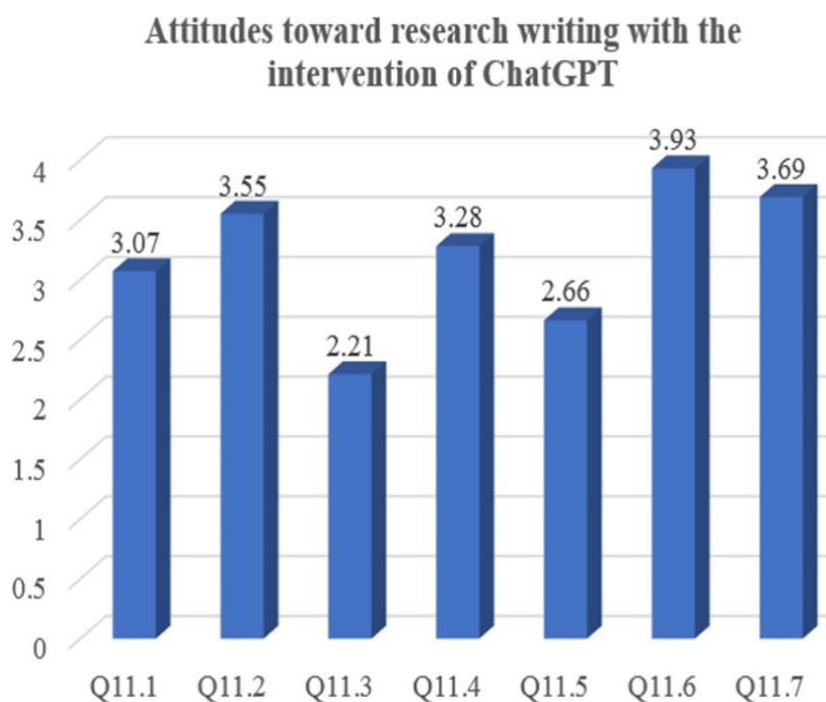
"...depends on the percentage of people who trust ChatGPT" (Student 9, interview extract)

Some participants felt that relying on ChatGPT might hinder their critical thinking. Meanwhile, several respondents said that ChatGPT can support their critical thinking by offering diverse perspectives and providing deeper insights. Additionally, this tool can help users to evaluate different viewpoints and deepen their understanding of complex topics. However, one learner believed that the effectiveness of using ChatGPT depends on the level of trust users place and how it is utilized. This implies that although ChatGPT can be beneficial in making decisions, its effectiveness depends more on its incorporation in the writing stage.

Theme 3: Issues regarding plagiarism in using ChatGPT for academic writing from the perspective of English-major master's students (Research question 3)

Figure 9.



Comparison of mean values of Table 4.3



The fig. 9 show the mean value of the students' attitudes toward research writing with the intervention of ChatGPT. The most noticeable finding is that most master's-level students are highly aware of the risk of unintentional plagiarism the unintentional plagiarism risk by its checking software (Q11.6) with the highest mean value of 3.93 (68.90% agree and strongly agree). This awareness is further demonstrated by the fact that students responded negatively to the statement that ChatGPT products can bypass the plagiarism detection system (Q11.3), with the lowest mean value of 2.21 (over 50% strongly disagree and disagree), and expressed a neutral attitude, showed limited agreement (mean value = 3.28), about the statement that they tried to "circumvent" the checking system by rephrasing the content of ChatGPT (Q11.4). In addition, students' top priority when using ChatGPT is to ensure that academic integrity is preserved in research articles (Q11.7) with the second-highest mean value of 3.69 (over 70% strongly agree and agree). This priority is once again proven in the fact that students do not overestimate ChatGPT's capabilities of ChatGPT if it lacks proper copyright authorization (Q11.5) with the second lowest mean value of 2.66. These above results determined that although the majority (mean value = 3.55) of master's level students used ChatGPT to find supporting information for research purposes (Q11.2), becoming increasingly popular among research colleagues (Q11.1, mean value = 3.07), they had a fairly clear understanding of the principles related to academic integrity and plagiarism of using ChatGPT in writing a research paper.

Table 3.

Percentage and Mean value of attitudes toward research writing with the intervention of ChatGPT

| NUM | QUESTIONS ARE USED FOR SURVEY | Rating percentage (%) | | | | | Mean |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|----------------|------|
| | | Strongly disagree | | | | Strongly agree | |
| 11. Attitudes toward research writing with the intervention of ChatGPT | |   | | | | | |
| 1 | I use ChatGPT in my research because I see my friends doing the same. | 13.8 | 17.2 | 24.1 | 37.9 | 6.9 | 3.07 |
| 2 | I mostly use ChatGPT to get facts and supporting information for my research. | 3.4 | 10.3 | 17.2 | 65.5 | 3.4 | 3.55 |
| 3 | I usually use ChatGPT since its output cannot be checked by plagiarism detection software. | 41.4 | 17.2 | 24.1 | 13.8 | 3.4 | 2.21 |
| 4 | Using ChatGPT doesn't seem wrong to me because I will rephrase what it says. | 6.9 | 6.9 | 41.4 | 41.4 | 3.4 | 3.28 |
| 5 | I find ChatGPT fascinating and useful even without copyright authorization. | 10.3 | 27.6 | 48.3 | 13.8 | 0 | 2.66 |
| 6 | My concern about unintended plagiarism led me to double-check all ChatGPT content. | 0 | 0 | 31.0 | 44.8 | 24.1 | 3.93 |
| 7 | While using ChatGPT, I still preserve academic integrity in my research work. | 3.4 | 3.4 | 20.7 | 65.5 | 6.9 | 3.69 |

Interview question 2: How do you avoid plagiarism when incorporating information generated by ChatGPT into your research writing?

When interviewed about ways to prevent plagiarism, most students said they would try to minimize ChatGPT's dependence on their research. For instance, three respondents (Students 1, 2, 3) stated that they would only use the content provided by ChatGPT as a trigger for their brainstorming to “ensure that academic integrity still exists in our writing” (Student 1, interview extract). The other four respondents (Students 6, 7, 8, 9) chose to minimize their reliance by paraphrasing the content provided by ChatGPT, trying to inject their personality into the content, and providing as detailed citations as possible to avoid being flagged for plagiarism:

“ChatGPT provides me with well-structured but somewhat mechanical sentences. So I use it for reference, and I rewrite the idea according to my idea to avoid plagiarism” (Student 6, interview extract);

“I think that after I read the information that ChatGPT gave me, I understood it in my own way, and then I typed what I understood from this information into ChatGPT again. This means that I can avoid plagiarism” (Student 7, interview extract);

“I select the information, paraphrase it to make it unique, and verify it” (Student 8, interview extract);

“I think that I will use my own words or paraphrase the reference. I just use ChatGPT for references, so I also give clear citations to avoid plagiarism” (Student 9, interview extract).

Regarding how to avoid unintentional plagiarism, another respondent (Student 4) also had the idea that he/she would observe ChatGPT's writing style to “consider using a similar structure and start writing my own to ensure that I can learn the grammar from ChatGPT and make sure my own writing is not marked as plagiarism” (Student 4, interview extract). In the same trend of paraphrasing the content, the other two respondents (Students 5, 10) differed in their next approach. Specifically, they use third-party intervention (other AI software) to either “make it more coherently related to my topic” (Student 5, interview excerpt) or “verify clarity before submitting my work” (Student 10, interview excerpt).

In short, although there were clear differences in the students' second solution steps using ChatGPT as a brainstorming tool, personalizing content, demonstrating varied writing approaches, and incorporating another AI as a third-party intervention), the researchers found that most students mastered the important first step in avoiding plagiarism when using ChatGPT in writing research: paraphrasing the content.

Interview question 3: Do you believe that ChatGPT has the potential to become a helpful tool instead of a plagiarism threat? Explain your reasons.

During the interviews, the researchers collected a wide range of responses from the students. First, all four responses (Student 2, 4, 9, 10) acknowledged the potential usefulness of ChatGPT in supporting information searching, synthesis, and instant feedback, a time-consuming and laborious process for individuals who have written or are writing scientific research papers:

“information generated by ChatGPT supports you, and the function that I like in ChatGPT is its ability to provide feedback on grammatical structures and errors, patterns of sentences” (Student 2, interview excerpt);

“I agree that ChatGPT is very useful” (Student 4, interview excerpt);

“I think it will be a helpful tool for research writing” (Student 9, interview excerpt);

“If I have a topic and I don't know what to write, and I don't have any ideas, I can use ChatGPT to suggest some ideas. And based on that idea, I will find the relevant references. It can be helpful in that way” (Student 10, interview excerpt)

However, another response (Student 7) stated that constantly exploiting ChatGPT information without proper verification, modification, or citation will make it more difficult than ever to limit plagiarism risks: “I don't think it is a helpful tool because it integrates information from various sources from many sources, from the web sources. So I think that this is a threat for people who write academic writing” (Student 7, interview excerpt). Noticeably, the majority of the remaining responses (Students 1, 3, 5, 6, 8) argued that “helpful tool” and “plagiarism threat” are both aspects of the dual nature of ChatGPT. One of them will be expressed more in the writing's content depending on the writer's usage:

“I think ChatGPT is useful, because the accusations of “plagiarism threat” about ChatGPT are ultimately just the incorrect usage of the majority of users, if we can comply with some rules related to the copyright category of the information compiled by ChatGPT, which has no official announcement at this time, then there is no reason for us to deny the conveniences it brings” (Student 1, interview excerpt);

“I think it has the potential for both of these statements to come true” (Student 3, interview excerpt);

“ChatGPT can become a helpful tool or a plagiarism threat. It depends on the way we use it...So I think it's a helpful tool, but the way you use it can turn it into either a threat or a useful aid.” (Student 5, interview excerpt)

“I mentioned before, we need to use it intelligently to support our writing instead of relying too much on the Information provided” (Student 6, interview excerpt)

“The plagiarism when using Chat GPT depends on the writer” (Student 8, interview excerpt).

Therefore, this group of respondents emphasized that instead of trying to choose one aspect and ignore the other, they should acknowledge the existence of both to establish responsible and ethical principles of using ChatGPT, based on the mindset of “set clear boundaries of personal identity and exploit the usefulness that this software brings” (Student 3, interview excerpt).

From the above results, the authors discovered some key findings on the three themes during the analysis process. First, the study found that master's students were selectively aware of the specific functions and limitations of ChatGPT during each stage of the research writing process. To explain this, the authors looked at the contrasting results of the two potential benefits of ChatGPT in Figure 4.3, which were “understanding and responding well to research prompts” (79%) and “providing relevant articles with citations” (25%). This difference in the number of levels of agreement suggested that although the majority of students found ChatGPT useful in the early stages of the writing process, such as prompt understanding and information seeking, it was impossible to completely utilize the provided information for later important stages, such as drafting arguments without checking. This certainty was again explained by the most commonly agreed-upon drawback in Figure 4.5, which was “providing unreliable information” (75%). These findings implied that teachers should not have ignored early signs of students' limited ChatGPT recognition skills but promoted their development through “prompt-verify-apply” activities. As the name suggested, ChatGPT was allowed to be used in the early stages to find information. Then, students were required to assess the academic validity of that information to form independent ideas, reinforcing the importance of human judgment in AI-assisted writing.

Second, the findings suggested that the majority of students were not fully convinced of the supposed ‘positive’ effects of ChatGPT on their critical thinking development. This was demonstrated by the data in Table 4.1, which showed that while 37.9% of students agreed that ChatGPT positively impacted their critical thinking, a larger proportion (51.7%) remained neutral, and it was worth noting that no one strongly agreed. The researchers thus found that this ambiguity in students’ positions might have come from a conflict between two streams of opinion. Specifically, 96.6% (Figure 4.7) of students said ChatGPT hindered critical thinking with concerns about overreliance, but 91.3% (Figure 4.8) of students said it helped them rethink their ideas, which could have been seen as a potential benefit of ChatGPT. However, the researchers wondered whether students actually “rethought” or, in some cases, quickly accepted ChatGPT’s ‘gift’ without actively questioning it? If the answer was in favor of the second option, then the student's critical thinking process missed out on the mental struggles necessary to strengthen their deep analytical and reasoning abilities. It was this lack that turned the entire thinking process into a substitute for AI thinking rather than a development and deepening of students’ ideas. To counter this, teachers should have implemented critical analysis activities to enhance students’ thinking processes in response to ChatGPT’s alternative perspectives on

their assumptions, maintaining their role as idea creators and knowledge builders rather than passive information consumers.

The researchers found that this third key finding was formed from two core observations. The first core observation was the strong commitment from the majority of master's students to maintain academic ethics and fair collaboration when using AI assistance, as evidenced by their high awareness of unintentional plagiarism risk when using ChatGPT without explicit checking (68, 90% agreed and strongly agreed, Table 4.3, Q11.6). It also demonstrated that the top priority in their research papers was academic integrity (over 70% agreed and strongly agreed, Table 4.3, Q11.7), strongly refuting the notion that most of them believed naively that ChatGPT could magically fool plagiarism detection systems (only 3.4% strongly agreed, mean value 2.21, Table 4.3, Q11.3) with information that lacked proper citations but 'looked academic' (no one strongly agreed, mean value 2.66, Table 4.3, Q11.5). Another notable observation was the connection between the students' neutral responses about ChatGPT's roles in research writing and the variety of self-devised methods they used to prevent plagiarism. Specifically, the students' ambivalence was a testament to their mature recognition of ChatGPT's dual nature based on how it was used, either as a dedicated research assistant or as a full-time ghostwriter. Furthermore, their uncertainty was also due to the lack of formal guidance and citation standards for AI-assisted writing. This left them with no choice but to build ethical boundaries themselves through personal precautions such as using ChatGPT only for brainstorming, rewriting ChatGPT-provided content in their own words, or interpreting it with the assistance of other AI tools. Since these preventions could not completely avoid plagiarism, teachers urgently needed to provide clear and specific guidance on the ethical use of ChatGPT through lectures and workshops on academic integrity in the age of AI.

Discussion

Benefits and drawbacks of ChatGPT on writing

The current results showed that ChatGPT is considered to bring a wide range of benefits to students, which aligns with the findings of Tseng and Lin (2024), Mahapatra (2024), Mubaroq et al. (2024) and Wahyuddin et al. (2023). Specifically, previous studies such as Mubaroq et al. (2024) and Wahyuddin et al. (2023) confirmed that chatbot has the ability to provide them ideas and help them organize their writing. However, there are differences between our findings and those of others, which distinguish the current study. First of all, our research explored several perceived benefits of ChatGPT in the context of research writing, including providing relevant articles and research papers with citations. Moreover, students thought that integrating ChatGPT allowed them to foster their confidence and writing skills.

However, despite the aforementioned benefits, our findings also indicated that there are some challenges associated with using ChatGPT in research writing. Similar to Mahapatra's (2024), Mubaroq et al.'s (2024) and Teng's (2023) results, our study confirmed that ChatGPT may provide unreliable information and citations, as well as make students become dependent on it. Additionally, our finding is supported by other disadvantages of ChatGPT in relevant research writing. First, many students claimed that providing and researching papers without references, leading to confusion and the risk of plagiarism. Besides, some of them thought that ChatGPT reduces the uniqueness in their writing styles. Finally, a small number of students confirmed that one of ChatGPT's drawbacks is the biased information it provides.

Effects of ChatGPT on Critical Thinking in Research Writing

The findings indicate that the students regard ChatGPT more positively as a tool aimed at idea generation and organizing research writing, however, its role in fostering deeper critical thinking remains ambiguous. This observation is consistent with previous studies presented in chapter two, e.g. Xue (2024) and Tran and Tran (2023) who reported that ChatGPT enhances some elements of critical thinking, like organizational structure and evaluative comments but does not extend automatic analysis of content as high as it could be if utilized optimally. Similarly, Shanto et al. (2024) argued that the tool can enhance creativity and problem-solving when paired with appropriate instructional guidance, a factor not emphasized in the survey results.

While ChatGPT offers valuable support for organizing writing and generating ideas, its impact on fostering deep critical thinking remains limited. Students may not naturally engage in complex analytical tasks such as evaluation, synthesis, or reflection without deliberate instructional scaffolding. The concern about over-reliance on ChatGPT, also reflected in the current findings, reinforces Barrot's (2023) assertion that excessive dependence on AI tools may restrict students' independent reasoning and critical engagement. This highlights the need for balanced use, as previously recommended by Suriano et al. (2024), who emphasized teachers' roles in providing strategies to integrate ChatGPT effectively without diminishing students' cognitive autonomy.

In summary, the study shows that ChatGPT can be valuable for supporting certain cognitive tasks but should be used with caution to ensure it enhances rather than replaces critical thinking.

Issues regarding plagiarism in using ChatGPT for academic writing

From the survey's findings and the interview responses, the researchers found that the majority of students were aware of the plagiarism risks associated with organizing research writing using ChatGPT. First, it shows their growth in ethical thinking and their not seeing AI as a shortcut to cheating. Academically, this result strongly supported the views of Yan (2023) and Yazid and Dzulfikri (2024), who emphasized students' awareness of accidental plagiarism and their efforts to maintain academic integrity in their writing, contradicting Khalaf's (2024) insight into students' increasing tendency to plagiarize. Second, most students expressed skepticism about ChatGPT's ability to bypass plagiarism-detection systems and actively offered suggestions for proper citations, demonstrating their realistic understanding of its limitations. They also expressed a tendency to rewrite ChatGPT-provided content, supporting the view of Karkoulian et al. (2024) on students' attempts to collaborate with other AI software in paraphrasing content to limit plagiarism. Third, the use of ChatGPT in the learning context was a growing phenomenon that students perceived as difficult to avoid. Therefore, establishing guidelines for using ChatGPT as a trigger for the brainstorming process and maintaining the writer's individuality in the article supported the perspective of Bringula (2023), who suggested that ChatGPT should only be used for its original function: to support students in finding information related to the topic. Regarding the significance of the study, the researchers concluded that students' attitudes towards ChatGPT when it came to plagiarism threat showed that while ChatGPT was useful, adherence to copyright rules is essential. For that reason, students actively devised specific plagiarism prevention strategies, such as personalizing the content written by ChatGPT or observing how the software interpreted the problem to learn grammar and apply similar sentence structures to present their ideas. However, all their prevention methods often rely on personal experience rather than formal guidance. Therefore, universities should implement AI literacy programs to equip them with specific skills such as learning through AI models without mimicking, ethical decision-making in AI use, and

responsible attribution of AI assistance to effectively integrate AI tools like ChatGPT into their writing while maintaining academic integrity.

Conclusion

Research shows that master's students have positive but careful views on ChatGPT when writing research papers, highlighting its benefits and challenges in a balanced way. Many acknowledged its usefulness in understanding requirements, organizing ideas, and improving writing skills in general. However, they were also concerned about some issues such as misinformation, inaccurate references, and decreased independence. These concerns extended to critical thinking, as overreliance on ChatGPT sometimes led them to rethink their ideas, affecting their unique critical thinking ability. As a result, most students double-check ChatGPT-generated content to minimize dependence on this chatbot as well as maintaining academic integrity.

Limitations

Although the study provided a good understanding of the application of ChatGPT in research writing among master's degree students, there are also some limitations that should be pointed out. First, there was a relatively small to medium sample size due to the participants being only English-major master's students studying in one context. Furthermore, the study was mainly concerned about the benefits, the challenges and the role of critical thinking in the usage of ChatGPT but did not consider the effect it has on students' academic performance or their writing quality more deeply in the long run.

Recommendations

For educators

This study has indeed provided educators with nuanced insights into students' perceptions of various themes related to the use of ChatGPT in today's academic context, including selective utilization (Theme 1), conscious ambivalence (Theme 2), and ethical awareness (Theme 3). This serves as a call to action for them to develop student training courses that not only focus on basic ChatGPT instruction but also expand to broader perspectives, such as identifying ChatGPT's appropriate role in the thinking process, aligning its use to avoid accidentally 'shorten' student's efforts, and guiding learners to set their limits on the extent of ChatGPT's usage in different academic situations. By focusing on these angles, teachers can better support their students in developing more suitable academic competencies in the AI era.

For further studies

In light of the aforementioned limitations, future researchers are expected to conduct the same study on a larger scale in different academic contexts. Researchers should examine undergraduates' perspectives, including those of both English-major and non-major students, on using ChatGPT. Besides, they should explore the effects of ChatGPT on students' quality of writing by using a longitudinal design. This helps students and teachers believe in the positive impacts that ChatGPT brings by concrete statistics, encouraging them to actively integrate this chatbot in writing. Finally, the teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding plagiarism issues can be examined in further studies.

Acknowledgments

The authors sincerely appreciate the valuable contributions of individuals and groups in the process of supporting the authors in completing this research. First of all, the authors would like to express their deep gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Pham Vu Phi Ho, PhD at Van Lang University for sharing valuable practical experiences and consistent encouragement right from the beginning of the research idea. It was his dedication that inspired the authors to complete the research to the final steps. In addition, the research authors also sincerely thank the members of the Faculty of Foreign Language for supporting and exchanging ideas with us throughout the research process. Finally, the authors also thank the postgraduate students of the Faculty of Foreign Language for generously spending their time participating in the research and sharing their ideas, making the research more practical and meaningful.

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Biodata

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