

Exploring EFL Students' Attitudes of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Tool for Writing English Thesis Proposals in Higher Education

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Abstract

This study explores EFL students' attitudes towards the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in writing English thesis proposals in higher education. The rapid advancement of AI technology has encouraged many university students to use AI-based tools to improve the quality of their academic writing. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study examined students' perceptions, experiences, and challenges. Data were collected through a questionnaire involving 35 English Education students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung as well as semi-structured interviews with 10 selected participants. The results showed that most students had a positive attitude towards AI due to its ability to improve writing efficiency, grammatical accuracy, and text organization. AI also helps in generating ideas, structuring arguments, and providing quick feedback, thus reducing anxiety in writing. However, there are concerns about over-reliance on AI that may stifle critical thinking and creativity. In addition, students were aware of the ethical challenges of using AI, especially regarding originality and the risk of plagiarism. Some students also customized AI results to better suit academic standards, which show that they did not fully rely on AI without re-evaluating. This study concludes that AI can be an effective support tool in thesis proposal writing if used wisely. Therefore, this study emphasizes the need for AI literacy in higher education to help students understand the limitations and ethical implications of its use. With the right approach, AI can be an effective support tool in developing students' academic abilities.

Keywords: EFL Students' Attitudes; Artificial Intelligence (AI); Thesis Proposal

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi sikap mahasiswa EFL terhadap penggunaan Kecerdasan Buatan (AI) dalam menulis proposal tesis bahasa Inggris di perguruan tinggi. Kemajuan teknologi AI yang pesat telah mendorong banyak mahasiswa untuk menggunakan alat berbasis AI untuk meningkatkan kualitas tulisan akademis mereka. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini meneliti persepsi, pengalaman, dan tantangan mahasiswa. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner yang melibatkan 35 mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di UIN Raden Intan Lampung serta wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan 10 partisipan terpilih. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa memiliki sikap positif terhadap AI karena kemampuannya untuk meningkatkan efisiensi penulisan, akurasi tata bahasa, dan organisasi teks. AI juga membantu dalam menghasilkan ide, menyusun argumen, dan memberikan umpan balik yang cepat, sehingga mengurangi kecemasan dalam menulis. Namun, ada kekhawatiran mengenai ketergantungan yang berlebihan pada AI yang dapat menghambat pemikiran kritis dan kreativitas. Selain itu, para mahasiswa menyadari tantangan etika dalam menggunakan AI, terutama terkait orisinalitas dan risiko plagiarisme. Beberapa mahasiswa juga menyesuaikan hasil AI agar lebih sesuai dengan standar akademis, yang menunjukkan bahwa mereka tidak sepenuhnya bergantung pada AI tanpa melakukan evaluasi ulang. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa AI dapat menjadi alat pendukung

yang efektif dalam penulisan proposal tesis jika digunakan dengan bijak. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menekankan perlunya literasi AI di perguruan tinggi untuk membantu mahasiswa memahami keterbatasan dan implikasi etis dari penggunaannya. Dengan pendekatan yang tepat, AI dapat menjadi alat pendukung yang efektif dalam mengembangkan kemampuan akademis mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: EFL Students' Attitudes; Artificial Intelligence (AI); Thesis Proposal

Introduction

The rapid development of technology in recent years has brought various conveniences and comforts to human life. Technological advances in this modern era have also brought significant changes in various aspects, including education (Chen, Xie and Hwang, 2020). As times change, the educational sector must respond to new technical advancements in order to raise educational standards, particularly with regard to information and communication technologies (Almeida and Simoes, 2019). Since the industrial revolution to the current digital era, technology has evolved from simply assisting human activities to automating complex tasks (Zawacki-Richter, Marín, Bond and Gouverneur, 2019).

The early emergence of computers as data processing tools marked a major change in terms of efficiency and accessibility of information. The Internet then made a big leap by facilitating global communication and enabling real-time data access, pushing technology towards a more interactive and personal direction. In recent decades, data-based technologies such as big data and machine learning have paved the way for the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI). Artificial Intelligence or (AI) is a technology that allows machines to learn and understand logic like humans. This technology is said to be able to help very complex human life (Fitria, 2021).

AI has become an inseparable part of various aspects of life and influences the way humans learn, work, create, and communicate. The use of AI technology in various fields has increased work efficiency and productivity (Putri, Sotyardani and Rafael, 2023). This is supported by a report from Gartner (2023) which states Application of artificial intelligence in education worldwide has increased by 47% in recent years. With the various intelligences that AI has, it is not impossible for all needs and AI to have the ability to learn, analyze, and make decisions based on data patterns. This technology is now widely applied in various sectors, including education. In higher education, AI has begun to be applied in various fields, such as personalized learning, automated assessment, and academic support, including writing and research assistance. In the context of education, Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers numerous benefits, including accelerating assessment processes, providing more accurate feedback, and aiding students in comprehending material (Gea et al., 2025). Traditionally, student learning relied heavily on conventional methods with minimal technological integration. However, the advent of AI technology in education has increasingly exposed students to diverse information sources through platforms capable of automatic recommendations.

This shift is particularly evident in the realm of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). According to Alzahrani (2024), The integration of artificial intelligence and English teaching has attracted attention for its potential revolutionary changes writing skills development. AI offers a variety of tools and applications designed to enhance writing skills, provide instant feedback, and support students in composing quality academic texts. Consequently, technology, especially AI, plays a significant role in facilitating academic processes in the digital era. Amidst the challenges EFL students face in writing thesis proposals, AI emerges as a promising solution. Writing a thesis

proposal presents a significant challenge for EFL students as it requires advanced writing skills, including the ability to express ideas clearly and in a structured manner.

This task, being an essential component of higher education, demands a thorough understanding of academic structure, grammar, and appropriate vocabulary use. Many students struggle with these aspects, which can hinder their ability to produce well-organized academic writing (Reza, Atik and Hidayanti, 2023). Psychological and pedagogical factors play a crucial role in this issue. The pressure to meet high academic standards without clear guidance can cause students to feel like failures. This uncertainty often leads to anxiety, which disrupts their learning process (Pascoe, Hetrick and Parker, 2020). Moreover, a lack of instructor support, particularly in the form of constructive feedback, can worsen the situation, leaving students feeling isolated and directionless.

While AI has shown promise as a tool for academic writing, but it has also raised some concerns. Studies show that over-reliance on AI tools may reduce students' creativity and critical thinking abilities. Emphasize that although AI can expedite the writing process and provide valuable feedback, students may become overly dependent on these tools, neglecting essential learning processes. Furthermore, plagiarism and the originality of work are ongoing concerns among educators and academics (Cotton, Cotton and Shipway, 2024). Thus, while AI can offer significant assistance to EFL students in writing thesis proposals, it is important to carefully consider its potential drawbacks, ensuring it complements rather than replaces the critical thinking and creative processes necessary for academic success.

Psychologically, attitudes consist of three main components. First, the cognitive component encompasses our beliefs, convictions, and knowledge about an attitude object. For instance, the belief that smoking is harmful is the cognitive component of a negative attitude towards smoking. Second, the affective component relates to the feelings and emotions associated with the attitude object. The fear of snakes, for example, is the affective component of a negative attitude towards snakes. Lastly, the behavioral component reflects our tendency to act or behave in certain ways as a response to our attitude. A person with a positive attitude towards exercise, for instance, is more likely to exercise regularly. An attitude is a relatively stable evaluation that we form towards people, objects, or ideas. Attitudes are shaped by our experiences, social interactions, and environmental influences. EFL students' attitudes towards the use of AI in thesis proposal writing are becoming increasingly apparent. These attitudes not only reflect their views on technology, but may also influence how they interact with these tools and how effectively they use them to improve their writing skills. The previous research conducted by Haryanto and Ali (2018) titled *Students' Attitudes Towards the Use of Artificial Intelligence SIRI in EFL Learning at One Public University* provides valuable insights into students' perceptions of AI in language learning contexts.

However, it primarily focuses on the use of the SIRI application and its implications for English language learning, employing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative questionnaires and qualitative focus group discussions. While this study highlights the enthusiasm and motivation of students in engaging with AI tools, it also identifies significant challenges, such as limited access to technology and poor communication skills among students. This research showed that positive attitudes towards technology tend to be associated with increased learning motivation and better academic outcomes. Therefore, it is important to explore the factors that influence students' attitudes towards AI, including their personal experiences with technology, their comfort level in using the tools, and their perceptions of the benefits and risks involved.

In contrast, the proposed research titled *Exploring EFL Students' Attitudes of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a Tool for Writing English Thesis Proposals in Higher*

Education aims to fill a gap by specifically targeting the attitudes of EFL students towards AI tools in the context of academic writing, particularly thesis proposals. This study will utilize a qualitative methodology, employing structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather data from students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung. The focus on thesis proposal writing is particularly relevant as it represents a critical component of higher education that requires advanced writing skills, critical thinking, and originality.

By concentrating on this specific academic task, the proposed research seeks to uncover deeper insights into how EFL students perceive AI's role in enhancing their writing capabilities, addressing potential concerns regarding creativity and dependency on technology that were noted in previous studies. Furthermore, this research will explore how students' attitudes are shaped by their experiences with AI tools, their comfort levels in using these technologies, and their perceptions of the benefits and risks involved. Therefore, the writer is interested in conducting this research to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the role of AI in academic writing, particularly within the context of English as a Foreign Language education.

Method

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach, specifically by adopting a descriptive approach to explore EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' attitudes towards the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in thesis proposal writing. A qualitative approach was chosen as it was deemed suitable for investigating complex phenomena and gaining in-depth insights into the experiences, perspectives and behaviors of individuals in their natural context. By adopting a descriptive approach, this study aims to provide a detailed and comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes, allowing the researcher to investigate the nuances of the phenomenon under investigation. The population of this study consists of English Education students at UIN Raden Intan Lampung class of 2021.

From this population, only 35 English Education students were selected as respondents to the questionnaire with the criteria that these students were preparing or had completed their thesis proposals and were using AI in the process. From the population of EFL students who completed the questionnaire, 10 were selected as samples through purposive sampling to conduct interviews. The researcher used purposive sampling technique, which is a procedure where the researcher selects informants who have specialized knowledge related to the topic. The selection of respondents was based on their understanding of AI as well as willingness to participate in the study. The research instruments consisted of questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire contained Likert scale questions focusing on AI usability, attitude towards AI, experience, and risk.

The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to dig deeper into students' experiences and perceptions of AI, including its benefits, challenges, and ethics. Data collection was conducted over two weeks. The first week was used for questionnaire distribution, while the second week interviews were conducted with selected participants. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for further analysis. Data analysis was conducted descriptively using the Tripartite Theory of Attitude, which includes cognitive (perceived benefits and risks of AI), affective (emotions related to AI use), and behavioral (students' propensity to use AI) aspects. The questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics, while the interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of student attitudes towards AI. To increase the validity of the results, this study used triangulation by comparing data from questionnaires and interviews to ensure consistency of findings.

Result and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study on EFL students' attitudes toward the use of AI in writing English thesis academic proposals. The analysis is structured based on the Tripartite Model of Attitude, which examines cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of students' perspectives on AI-assisted writing. The findings are derived from qualitative questionnaire responses and interview data, providing a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences, perceptions, and usage patterns. The results are discussed thematically, integrating students' reflections on the benefits and challenges of AI, their emotional responses, and their behavioral tendencies when using AI tools. To strengthen the analysis, students' direct quotes from both the questionnaire and interviews are included, offering deeper insights into their attitudes and concerns. By exploring these key themes, this study highlights how EFL students navigate the integration of AI into their academic writing, balancing its advantages with the need for critical thinking and originality. Each subsection below presents a specific aspect of students' attitudes, supported by qualitative data to provide a rich and in-depth discussion.

1. EFL Students' Attitudes Toward AI Tools in Writing English Thesis Proposals

a. Cognitive Attitude: Students' Understanding and Perceptions of AI

1) Students' Understanding of AI and Its Use in Academic Writing

Students' understanding of AI in an academic context reflects their awareness not only of AI as a writing tool but also of its strengths and limitations. AI has become an integral part of students' academic writing processes, assisting them in multiple ways, such as idea generation, grammar checking, paraphrasing, and structuring their writing to enhance clarity and coherence (Chen et al., 2020). Most students are familiar with a variety of AI-based tools, including ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, DeepL, and Perplexity AI, which they utilize for different academic purposes. Many students perceive AI as an effective solution to address writing difficulties, particularly for those who struggle with structuring arguments systematically and maintaining grammatical accuracy. However, students also recognize that AI has its constraints, especially when it comes to understanding the nuanced and complex academic contexts required in thesis writing. This is in line with the statement of one of the student from the English Education students of UIN Raden Intan Lampung, namely Amirah, that:

In my opinion, AI is amazing, especially for helping us with things that require extensive references or brainstorming ideas. AI tools like ChatGPT and others can serve as a solution when we're stuck, unsure of what to write, or in need of suggestions to refine our writing. But it must be used wisely so that we don't become overly dependent on it (Interview, February 2, 2025).

This response highlights the perceived usefulness of AI in overcoming writer's block and structuring ideas. AI tools help students generate ideas more efficiently, reducing anxiety and enhancing their ability to organize thoughts systematically (Fitria, 2021). However, it also indicates students' awareness of the need to maintain a balance in AI usage to avoid excessive reliance. Technology-enhanced learning tools improve students' confidence in writing, an over-reliance on AI can hinder independent critical thinking. While AI can be a beneficial tool, it is clear that students acknowledge its limitations and recognize that human judgment and creativity remain essential in academic writing.

This balanced perspective suggests that students are approaching AI as a supporting tool rather than a replacement for their intellectual contributions (Lin and Chen, 2024). The questionnaire data showed that 83% (29 out of 35 students) agreed and strongly agreed that AI helped them generate ideas faster for their thesis proposals. This reinforces the interview that AI plays a role in helping students overcome idea blockages

and organize their thoughts in a more structured way. In addition, 77% (27 out of 35 students) stated that AI improved the overall quality of their writing, which is in line with students' statements in the interview that AI helped with aspects of grammar, coherence, and clarity of writing. According to Mega Afriya and Mutiara Sabilla, who are students from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated :

Almost every time I write an assignment or revise my thesis proposal, I use AI. Not to cheat, but to help check grammar, find synonyms, or restructure sentences to make them more polished and readable (Interview, February 1, 2025).

This statement suggests that students are using AI primarily as a technical aid, rather than as a content creation tool. The emphasis on personal responsibility in writing reflects a conscious effort to ensure that AI is used as a support, rather than a substitute for independent thinking. The decision to use AI to improve grammar and structure, rather than to create content entirely, suggests that students are still trying to develop their own arguments and perspectives. Studies have indicated that while students view AI as beneficial for enhancing writing skills, they remain cautious about over-reliance on such tools (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

However, the questionnaire data also showed that 63% (22 out of 35 students) were concerned that AI could reduce their creativity. This supports the interview that AI should be used wisely so as not to reduce students' critical thinking skills. Furthermore, 71% (25 out of 35 students) agreed that AI cannot completely replace in-depth analysis and critical thinking, which is in line with the interviews highlighting the limitations of AI in understanding complex academic contexts. According to Hana Atikah, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

AI is fairly accurate, but it still has limitations in understanding specific research contexts. Sometimes, AI-generated sentences sound well-structured but lack depth and are conceptually incorrect (Interview, February 3, 2025).

This statement highlights a major limitation of AI, its inability to understand complex academic arguments. While AI can improve the clarity of writing, students still recognize the importance of human judgment to ensure the accuracy of content. Concerns about the lack of depth in certain research contexts emphasize that students still need to critically evaluate and refine AI-generated content using their own knowledge and analytical skills (Alkaissi and McFarlane, 2023).

2) Students' Perceptions of the Benefits and Challenges of AI in Thesis Proposal Writing

Students generally view AI as a tool that offers numerous advantages in enhancing the quality of their writing. AI is perceived as beneficial in improving writing efficiency, minimizing grammatical errors, and structuring arguments more systematically and cohesively. Many students believe that using AI allows them to save time and focus on the substance of their writing rather than being preoccupied with technical aspects such as sentence structure and grammar. Additionally, AI-powered writing assistants can offer real-time feedback, helping students refine their ideas and develop more polished and coherent academic papers. This increased accessibility to writing support fosters greater confidence among students, particularly for those who struggle with academic writing (Aljuaid, 2024). Moreover, AI tools like Grammarly provide adaptive feedback that enhances students' engagement and writing skills by assisting them in improving grammar and structure (Sulistiyowati, 2021). According to Rifky and Alip Piati, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

AI enhances writing structure, grammar, and paragraph cohesion in thesis proposals. However, students still need to think critically because AI cannot replace deep analysis and original thought processes (Interview, February 2, 2025).

This perspective acknowledges the benefits of AI in improving the mechanics of writing while still emphasizing the importance of independent analysis in academic writing. The ability of AI to effectively structure text is a significant advantage, but students understand that critical engagement with material remains a core academic skill that cannot be replaced by AI. The questionnaire results showed that 74% (26 out of 35 students) believed that AI helped them save time in completing academic assignments. This finding supports the interviews that stated that AI made it easier for students to structure their writing. In addition, 66% (23 out of 35 students) felt that AI greatly supported them in writing their thesis proposals, reinforcing the interview findings that AI provided substantial assistance without replacing their independent thinking. According to Ingrid Stefani, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

AI is like a double-edged sword. It can be extremely helpful, but if overused, it might make people lazy and prevent them from thinking for themselves (Interview, February 2, 2025).

These concerns reflect broader concerns about the potential for AI to diminish students' critical thinking skills. They suggest that AI must be used in a targeted manner to maximize its benefits without diminishing students' cognitive engagement. If students begin to rely too heavily on AI for tasks that require independent thinking, they may struggle to develop the analytical and problem-solving skills that are critical to academic success. Further support comes from the questionnaire which showed that 71% (25 out of 35 students) adjusted the AI content to fit academic ethics, indicating that students use AI responsibly. In addition, 83% (29 out of 35 students) stated that they think critically when using AI, reinforcing the interview that students are aware of the need to limit the use of AI to keep it active in their academic process.

b. Affective Attitude Students' Emotional Reactions to AI

1) Students' Initial Feelings When Using AI

Students' initial emotional reactions to AI varied, with some expressing excitement and enthusiasm, while others felt skeptical and cautious. Many students appreciated AI's ability to streamline their writing process, enhance grammatical accuracy, and provide quick suggestions for structuring ideas (Phan, 2023). AI was seen as an innovation that could address common writing challenges, such as difficulties in structuring grammatically correct sentences and finding relevant ideas. However, alongside this enthusiasm, some students also experienced skepticism and uncertainty, particularly due to their unfamiliarity with how AI functions and whether it would produce content that met academic expectations (Aljuaid, 2024).

Prior research has shown that while students recognize AI as a valuable support tool in writing, they remain cautious about its reliability and potential limitations in maintaining academic integrity (Kim, Yu, Detrick and Li, 2024). Survey data supports this finding, as 80% of students (28 out of 35) either strongly agreed and agreed that AI helps them generate ideas faster for their thesis proposals, demonstrating an initial sense of excitement. Additionally, 74% (26 out of 35) agreed that AI assists them in structuring arguments more effectively. However, 43% (15 out of 35) remained neutral or disagreed when asked if AI significantly supported their writing process, reflecting an initial hesitation or skepticism about its reliability. According to Rifky, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

At first, I was like, wow, this is incredible! I was seriously amazed at how much AI could help. But over time, I realized that AI couldn't be used for everything, so I still had to put in my own effort (Interview, February 2, 2025).

These statements reflect initial enthusiasm for the capabilities of AI, but also indicate a growing awareness of its limitations. The recognition that AI cannot handle all aspects of writing underscores the importance of human involvement in refining ideas, ensuring coherence, and maintaining academic integrity. This shift in perception indicates that while students initially viewed AI as a revolutionary tool, they are gradually recognizing its complementary rather than dominant role in the writing process. This is supported by the findings of identified that while algorithmic writing tools offer efficiency benefits, their uncritical use can threaten academic integrity and reduce learner autonomy (Gustilo, Ong and Lapinid, 2024). According to Asri Oktavia Ningrum and Hana Atikah, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

At first, I felt a bit awkward and doubtful. I was worried that AI-generated writing wouldn't meet my expectations or would sound too rigid. But after using it frequently, I became more comfortable (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

This statement highlights the transition from initial skepticism to growing confidence in using AI. The concern that AI-generated writing might be too rigid indicates that students value personal expression and authenticity in their academic work. Over time, as they learn how to integrate AI strategically, they become more comfortable with its use, treating it as a flexible aid rather than a rigid structure.

2) Confidence or Dependence on AI

Students' experiences with AI in academic writing influenced their confidence levels and dependency on the technology. Many students reported feeling more confident in their writing abilities after using AI, particularly in terms of grammatical accuracy, structure, and word choice. AI was seen as a supportive tool that could help refine ideas and improve academic writing quality (Kim et al., 2024). However, alongside this confidence, some students acknowledged a growing reliance on AI, which raised concerns about their ability to write effectively without it. While AI provided efficiency and reassurance, excessive dependence on it could potentially hinder the development of independent writing skills.

This is in line with research findings indicating that reliance on AI can have a negative impact on the development of students' critical thinking skills and independent writing abilities (Zhang, Zhao, Zhou and Kim, 2024). Survey results indicate that 66% of students (23 out of 35) agreed and strongly agreed that AI improves the overall quality of their writing. Furthermore, 77% (27 out of 35) stated that AI helps them structure their writing better, and 71% (25 out of 35) felt AI gave them better control over the outcome of their work. However, 51% (18 out of 35) expressed concern that AI might reduce their creativity in writing, highlighting their awareness of potential over-reliance. According to Amirah and Salwa, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

AI helped me structure my writing better, and I feel much more confident about my grammar and sentence flow. But I remind myself not to depend on it too much because I still need to develop my own skills (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

This response reflects how AI can enhance students' confidence in writing by providing valuable assistance with technical aspects. However, it also highlights the awareness that over-reliance on AI might limit their ability to write independently. Students recognize the importance of balancing AI assistance with personal effort to ensure continuous skill development (Kurniawan and Tambunan, 2024). According to Inggrit Stefani, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

Honestly, AI makes everything easier. I can quickly check my grammar and improve my arguments. But sometimes, I worry that I might be relying on it too much. What if I stop thinking critically about my writing (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

This statement illustrates the dual nature of AI use in academic writing-while it offers immediate benefits, it can also create a sense of dependency. The concern about reduced critical thinking suggests that students are aware of the need to engage actively with their writing rather than passively accepting AI-generated suggestions. Over time, students strive to find a balance between leveraging AI for support and maintaining their ability to write independently and critically. This is in line with previous research that emphasizes the importance of critical interaction between students and AI to ensure that deep thinking skills are maintained in the writing process (Shibani, Knight, Kitto, Karunanayake and Shum, 2024).

c. Behavioral Attitude How Students Use AI in Thesis Proposal Writing

1) Patterns of AI Usage in Academic Writing

Students exhibit various patterns in integrating AI into their academic writing. Most students utilize AI for brainstorming ideas, grammar checking, and paraphrasing text. AI is often used in the early stages of writing, particularly for reference searching, error correction, and improving the flow of writing. Additionally, students often rely on AI tools to refine sentence structures and ensure clarity in their arguments, making the writing process more efficient and structured (Zhang et al., 2024). Survey results support this finding, as 83% of students (29 out of 35) both strongly agreed and agreed that AI helps them generate ideas faster for their thesis proposals. Similarly, 77% (27 out of 35) reported that AI assists in structuring their arguments more effectively. Additionally, 74% (26 out of 35) use AI to find sources, references, or paraphrase content, reinforcing that AI is frequently used for research and idea development in the early writing stages. According to Mutiara Sabilla, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

I usually use AI in the initial stages for brainstorming ideas and gathering references. Sometimes, when I get stuck, I also use it to organize my writing structure (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

This response suggests that AI serves as a facilitative tool in the initial stages of writing, helping students generate and organize ideas. However, it also implies that AI is not necessarily the final step in writing, as students still need to refine and develop their arguments further. The fact that students primarily use AI for structuring ideas rather than creating full content indicates that they see AI as a starting point rather than a substitute for their intellectual efforts (Akhyar et al., 2023). According to Rifky, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

I use AI not only to check grammar but also to structure paragraphs to make them more academic. But I always revise it first to ensure it doesn't sound too automated (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

This statement highlights the need for human intervention in AI-assisted writing to maintain an authentic academic voice. The concern about AI-generated text sounding too automated suggests that students are actively engaging in post-processing revisions to ensure that the final output reflects their own analytical thinking. This careful approach demonstrates an understanding that while AI is helpful, it should not dictate the final outcome of their work (Hosseini and Horbach, 2023).

2) Awareness of Over-Reliance on AI

While AI provides convenience, most students emphasize that they still manually review and refine AI-generated content to ensure quality and originality. They

acknowledge that AI is not infallible and requires fact-checking and validation before being incorporated into their academic work. Many students view AI as a supportive tool rather than a definitive source, recognizing the importance of human judgment in maintaining academic integrity and producing well-structured arguments (Phan, 2023). Survey results indicate that 80% of students (28 out of 35) strongly agreed and agreed that they reread and adjust AI-generated content before incorporating it into their writing. Additionally, 77% (27 out of 35) claimed that they critically think when using AI as a learning tool, reflecting their awareness of the need for careful review and independent reasoning. However, 51% (18 out of 35) expressed concerns that AI might reduce their creativity in writing, suggesting that while they benefit from AI, they are also wary of becoming overly dependent on it. According to Amirah, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

I don't use AI-generated content directly, I always revise it first. I usually check whether the sentences align with the context of my writing, and if something sounds too formal or unnatural, I adjust it (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

This statement underscores students' proactive approach to ensuring AI-generated content remains contextually appropriate and aligned with their personal writing style. The willingness to manually refine AI's output suggests that students are not blindly accepting AI suggestions but are instead using them as a foundation for further refinement. Previous research indicates that students actively engage with AI tools throughout various stages of the writing process while maintaining their own authorial voice (Jacob, Tate and Warschauer, 2023). This level of critical engagement with AI-generated content demonstrates a mature and responsible use of technology in academic writing. This reflective and evaluative use of AI demonstrates a mature and responsible approach to technology in academic writing, reinforcing the importance of human oversight in maintaining originality and clarity (Alzahrani, 2024). According to Hana Atikah and Inggrit Stefani, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

Some students seem overly dependent on AI, especially those who just copy AI-generated text without understanding its content. I try to balance using AI while still thinking critically on my own (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

This assumption emphasizes the significance of using AI in a balanced way, making sure that technology complements critical thinking rather than replaces it and academic integrity. Research suggests that students who rely too heavily on AI-generated content may struggle to develop their own academic voice, which may ultimately weaken their ability to engage in independent scholarly discourse (Zaidy, 2024). This insight confirms that AI should serve as a tool for improvement, supporting students in refining their writing skills rather than providing shortcuts to avoid the cognitive effort required in academic writing. Moreover, it highlights that students who are aware of the potential risks associated with AI are more likely to develop strategic approaches to its use, allowing them to harness its benefits without compromising their intellectual growth. Over-reliance on AI-based systems in conversation can improve critical and independent thinking skills. In addition, students who are aware of the risks of using this technology are more likely to develop strategies to use it effectively without sacrificing their thinking and learning processes (Zhai, Wibowo and Li, 2024).

2. Familiarity with AI Technologies

The findings indicate that EFL students are highly familiar with various AI technologies that support their academic writing processes. The most commonly used AI tools fall into three main categories, AI writing assistants and grammar and style checkers

a. AI Writing Assistants

Students frequently use AI-based writing assistants to aid in brainstorming, structuring ideas, and generating academic content. The most recognized tools in this category include ChatGPT, Gemini AI, Claude AI, and Perplexity AI. ChatGPT is used for generating ideas, structuring arguments, and rewording sentences to improve coherence. Gemini AI functions similarly to ChatGPT, providing alternative explanations and content refinements. Claude AI assists in expanding content and summarizing information for academic purposes. Perplexity AI helps students retrieve relevant references and better understand complex concepts. According to Hana Atikah are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

I often use ChatGPT to brainstorm and organize ideas in my thesis proposal. AI is very helpful when I feel stuck or need an alternative way to explain something (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

Another student, Inggrit Stefani emphasized the usefulness of multiple AI tools: I use ChatGPT to find initial ideas, but when I want to paraphrase or clarify academic sentences, I mostly use QuillBot and Grammarly. Meanwhile, if I need additional references, I sometimes use Perplexity AI. (Interview, Februari 2, 2025)

Similarly, another student, Alip Piati, mentioned the benefits of AI beyond ChatGPT:

Gemini AI helps me provide alternative explanations that are more appropriate to my academic context. In addition, I often use Claude AI to summarize information from several sources to make it easier to understand (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

These responses indicate that students perceive AI writing assistants as valuable tools in enhancing idea generation and structuring academic writing, particularly when they face difficulties in organizing their arguments. While ChatGPT remains a primary choice, students also utilize other AI tools like Gemini AI, QuillBot, Grammarly, and Perplexity AI to improve various aspects of their academic writing. However, they acknowledge the need for critical engagement with AI-generated content to ensure that it aligns with their academic objectives. This finding is supported who found that students considered AI technology useful in English writing classes, but still emphasized the importance of critical evaluation of AI output to maintain academic integrity (Phan, 2023).

b. Grammar and Style Checkers

To enhance the linguistic accuracy and readability of their academic writing, students frequently use AI-powered grammar and paraphrasing tools such as Grammarly, QuillBot, and DeepL. Grammarly ensures grammatical accuracy, corrects punctuation errors, and refines sentence structure. QuillBot is primarily used for paraphrasing to improve clarity and avoid plagiarism. DeepL supports academic translation while maintaining contextual accuracy. According to Salwa, who are student from the English Education Program at UIN Raden Intan Lampung, as stated:

A student emphasized the importance of these tools:

Grammarly and QuillBot are the tools I use all the time. Grammarly makes sure my writing is free from grammatical errors, while QuillBot helps me paraphrase sentences to make them sound more academic (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

Another student, Mutiara Sabilla, highlighted the role of DeepL in improving translation accuracy:

Sometimes I use DeepL to translate certain parts of my academic writing. Compared to other tools, DeepL is more accurate in preserving the academic context (Interview, Februari 2, 2025).

These responses indicate that students actively incorporate Grammarly, QuillBot, and DeepL into their writing process to enhance clarity and maintain linguistic precision. While Grammarly and QuillBot are the most frequently used tools for grammar correction and paraphrasing, some students also rely on DeepL for academic translation, ensuring that their writing remains contextually appropriate.

Conclusion

This study uncovered EFL students' complex views on the use of AI tools in academic writing, particularly in the context of writing an English thesis proposal. Key findings indicate that while students generally had positive attitudes towards AI, particularly in helping to speed up the writing process and improve the structure of their writing, they also expressed concerns about over-reliance on these tools. Students appreciated the practical benefits of AI, such as the ease of checking grammar, organizing ideas, and generating suggestions to improve their writing. However, they also recognized the limitations of AI in more complex academic contexts, such as understanding the nuances of the research context and its ability to generate more critical and in-depth analysis. In addition, students expressed concerns about the potential loss of critical thinking and creativity if the use of AI is not adequately monitored. They also emphasized the need for AI use to be done with full awareness of academic ethics, particularly regarding originality of writing and the risk of unintentional plagiarism. The study also highlighted the importance of improving AI literacy among students and the need for clear guidance from instructors to ensure AI is used responsibly and effectively. Recommendations for future researchers, Future studies should expand sample sizes to include participants from different geographic locations, educational institutions, and cultural backgrounds. This will help to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes towards AI tools in academic writing. In addition, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods can provide deeper insights into the challenges and benefits that students face when using AI tools. In addition, longitudinal research can also be applied because the ability to track students' attitudes towards AI over time can further enrich the understanding of how these attitudes develop and the factors that influence them.

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