University Students' Perceptions and Practices of AI-Assisted Writing Tools in Academic Writing

Persepsi dan Praktik Mahasiswa terhadap Penggunaan Alat Bantu Penulisan Berbasis Kecerdasan Buatan dalam Penulisan Akademik

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Article Info	Abstrak
	Perkembangan kecerdasan buatan (Artificial Intelligence/AI) telah membawa perubahan signifikan dalam praktik penulisan akademik di pendidikan tinggi, khususnya dalam konteks EFL. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi dan praktik mahasiswa universitas terhadap penggunaan AI-assisted writing tools dalam penulisan akademik. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan dukungan data kuantitatif. Partisipan penelitian adalah mahasiswa sarjana yang mengikuti mata kuliah penulisan akademik dan memiliki pengalaman menggunakan AI-assisted writing tools. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan analisis dokumen tulisan mahasiswa. Data kuesioner dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, sedangkan data wawancara dan dokumen dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa memiliki persepsi positif terhadap AI-assisted writing tools, terutama terkait kemudahan penggunaan, kebermanfaatan, dan peningkatan kepercayaan diri dalam menulis. Dalam praktiknya, mahasiswa paling sering menggunakan AI tools pada tahap revisi dan penyuntingan, khususnya untuk memperbaiki tata bahasa, pilihan kosakata, dan kejelasan kalimat. Selain itu, temuan juga mengungkapkan adanya kesadaran etis di kalangan mahasiswa, di mana mereka cenderung membatasi penggunaan AI hanya sebagai alat pendukung bahasa, bukan penghasil ide utama. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa AI-assisted writing tools berpotensi besar mendukung penulisan akademik dan pembelajaran mandiri mahasiswa apabila diintegrasikan secara pedagogis dan etis. Implikasi penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya peran dosen dalam memberikan panduan penggunaan AI yang bertanggung jawab dalam pembelajaran menulis akademik. ***Kata Kunci : AI-assisted writing, persepsi mahasiswa, praktik penulisan akademik***

Abstract

The rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed academic writing practices in higher education, particularly in EFL contexts. This study aims to explore university students' perceptions and practices of using AI-assisted writing tools in academic writing. A descriptive qualitative design supported by quantitative data was employed. The participants were undergraduate students enrolled in academic writing-related courses who had experience using AI-assisted writing tools. Data were collected

through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis of students' academic writing. Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while interview and document data were analyzed thematically. The findings indicate that students hold positive perceptions toward AI-assisted writing tools, particularly in terms of perceived usefulness, ease of use, and increased writing confidence. In practice, students most frequently utilized AI tools during the revising and editing stages, mainly to improve grammatical accuracy, vocabulary choice, and sentence clarity. Furthermore, the study reveals a notable level of ethical awareness, as students tended to limit AI use to language-level support rather than idea generation. The study concludes that AI-assisted writing tools have considerable potential to support academic writing development and self-regulated learning when integrated responsibly. Pedagogical implications highlight the importance of instructional guidance in fostering ethical and effective AI use in academic writing instruction.

Keywords: AI-assisted writing, students' perceptions, academic writing practices

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly influenced various aspects of education, including the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In recent years, AI-powered applications such as Grammarly, QuillBot, Wordtune, and other AI-assisted writing tools have been increasingly adopted by university students to support academic writing activities. These tools offer features such as grammar checking, paraphrasing, coherence improvement, and instant feedback, which potentially enhance students' writing quality and efficiency.

Several studies have highlighted that AI-assisted technologies can be both beneficial and problematic in English language education. Liando et al. (2025) emphasize that AI in language learning functions as a double-edged sword, offering pedagogical opportunities while simultaneously raising ethical and instructional concerns. Similarly, Hockly (2023) and Meniado (2024) argue that the integration of AI in ELT requires careful consideration of human–machine collaboration to ensure that technology supports, rather than replaces, learners' cognitive and linguistic development.

In the context of academic writing, AI-assisted writing tools have gained particular attention. Empirical studies indicate that tools such as Grammarly are perceived positively by students for improving grammatical accuracy, clarity, and confidence in academic writing (Lo, 2025; Alghamdi & AbuSa'aleek, 2025; Setyani et al., 2023). Furthermore, AI-based paraphrasing tools have been reported to help students avoid plagiarism and improve textual originality when used appropriately (Fitria, 2022). These findings suggest that AI-assisted writing tools play a supportive role in addressing common challenges faced by EFL university students in academic writing.

Beyond writing accuracy, recent research has also explored students' perceptions of AI-assisted tools in relation to learning autonomy and self-regulated writing practices. Amani and Bisriyah (2025) found that AI-assisted writing tools can support students' self-regulated learning by enabling independent revision and reflection. Similarly, Senowarsito and Ardini (2023) demonstrate that AI applications can promote autonomous language learning when integrated

thoughtfully into instructional contexts. These studies indicate that students' perceptions toward AI are closely linked to how they actually use these tools in their learning practices.

However, existing literature reveals that most studies tend to focus either on students' perceptions or on specific technological tools in isolation. Research examining teachers' perspectives (Yu & Wilang, 2025) and broader pedagogical innovations (Syaripudin, 2025) further suggests that the effective use of AI in EFL classrooms depends not only on attitudes but also on how AI tools are practiced within instructional and ethical boundaries. Moreover, earlier studies on technology-supported writing, such as collaborative writing using Google Docs (Valizadeh, 2022) and technology-supported peer feedback (Sağlamel & Çetinkaya, 2022), indicate that students' actual writing practices play a crucial role in determining learning outcomes. This highlights the importance of examining not only what students think about AI-assisted writing tools, but also how they use them in real academic writing situations.

Despite the growing body of research on AI in English language teaching, there remains a lack of studies that comprehensively investigate both university students' perceptions and their actual practices of using AI-assisted writing tools in academic writing, particularly in EFL contexts. Most existing studies emphasize attitudes, effectiveness, or ethical issues separately, leaving a gap in understanding how perceptions align with or differ from students' real writing practices. Addressing this gap is essential to provide a more holistic understanding of AI-assisted writing tool usage and to inform pedagogical decisions regarding their integration into academic writing instruction.

Therefore, this study aims to explore university students' perceptions and practices of AI-assisted writing tools in academic writing. By examining how students perceive these tools and how they actually employ them during different stages of academic writing, this research is expected to contribute empirical evidence to the growing discussion on AI integration in EFL writing instruction and offer insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers.

Theoretical Framework

1. Artificial Intelligence in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of English language teaching, offering innovative ways to support language learning processes. In the context of ELT, AI refers to computational systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as providing feedback, analyzing language patterns, and generating linguistic suggestions. Liando et al. (2025) describe AI-powered language learning as both a pedagogical opportunity and a potential challenge, emphasizing the need for balanced integration in educational settings. Similarly, Hockly (2023) argues that AI should be viewed as a supportive tool that enhances learning rather than as a replacement for teachers or learners.

From a pedagogical perspective, Meniado (2024) introduces the concept of human–machine collaboration, highlighting that effective AI integration in language education depends on meaningful interaction between learners and intelligent systems. This perspective aligns with

Syaripudin (2025), who stresses the importance of structured pedagogical designs when incorporating AI-mediated inquiry into second language acquisition. Together, these studies position AI as a complementary agent in ELT that requires thoughtful instructional alignment.

2. AI-Assisted Writing Tools in Academic Writing

AI-assisted writing tools refer to digital applications that employ AI technologies to support writing tasks, including grammar checking, paraphrasing, coherence enhancement, and style improvement. Tools such as Grammarly, QuillBot, and Wordtune are widely used by university students to assist academic writing. Empirical studies indicate that these tools are particularly beneficial in improving surface-level writing features, such as grammatical accuracy and lexical appropriateness (Lo, 2025; Alghamdi & AbuSa'aleek, 2025; Zhao, 2022).

In the Indonesian EFL context, research has shown that AI-assisted writing tools contribute to increased writing confidence and reduced anxiety, especially in thesis and academic writing tasks (Setyani et al., 2023). Moreover, Fitria (2022) highlights that AI-based paraphrasing tools can support students in avoiding plagiarism when used responsibly. These findings suggest that AI-assisted writing tools function as scaffolding mechanisms that assist learners during various stages of the academic writing process.

3. Students' Perceptions of AI-Assisted Writing Tools

Students' perceptions play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of technology integration in learning. Perceptions encompass students' beliefs, attitudes, and evaluations regarding the usefulness, ease of use, and ethical implications of AI-assisted writing tools. Studies consistently report generally positive student perceptions toward AI-assisted writing tools, particularly in terms of writing support and feedback immediacy (Lo, 2025; Amani & Bisriyah, 2025; Alghamdi & AbuSa'aleek, 2025).

However, concerns related to over-reliance, academic integrity, and reduced critical thinking have also been identified. Liando et al. (2025) and Hockly (2023) caution that uncritical dependence on AI tools may undermine students' language development. In addition, Yu and Wilang (2025) reveal that students' perceptions are influenced by instructional guidance and institutional norms, indicating that attitudes toward AI are socially and pedagogically constructed rather than purely individual.

4. Students' Practices in Using AI-Assisted Writing Tools

Students' practices refer to the actual ways in which AI-assisted writing tools are utilized during academic writing tasks. These practices include the frequency of use, types of tools employed, and stages of writing where AI support is applied, such as pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Research suggests that students predominantly use AI-assisted writing tools during the revising and editing stages to improve grammar, vocabulary, and coherence (Lo, 2025; Alghamdi & AbuSa'aleek, 2025).

Furthermore, Amani and Bisriyah (2025) indicate that AI-assisted writing tools can support self-regulated writing practices by enabling students to independently monitor and revise their work. This aligns with earlier findings on autonomous learning facilitated by AI technologies (Senowarsito & Ardini, 2023). Comparative studies on technology-supported writing, such as collaborative writing through Google Docs (Valizadeh, 2022) and technology-supported peer feedback (Sağlamel & Çetinkaya, 2022), reinforce the notion that students' actual practices significantly influence learning outcomes. These studies provide a foundation for examining AI-assisted writing tools as part of broader digital writing practices.

5. Relationship between Perceptions and Practices of AI-Assisted Writing Tools

The relationship between students' perceptions and their actual practices forms the core of this study's theoretical framework. Positive perceptions toward AI-assisted writing tools are often associated with more frequent and strategic use, while negative perceptions may lead to limited or superficial engagement. Although many studies have explored perceptions and practices separately, there is limited research examining how these two constructs interact within academic writing contexts.

Drawing on the human–machine collaboration perspective (Meniado, 2024) and the pedagogical considerations of AI integration in ELT (Liando et al., 2025; Hockly, 2023), this study conceptualizes students' perceptions as a key factor influencing their practices of AI-assisted writing tool usage. Understanding this relationship is essential for designing pedagogical strategies that promote responsible, ethical, and effective use of AI in academic writing.

This study is grounded in the assumption that AI-assisted writing tools, when integrated appropriately, can support academic writing development in EFL contexts. Students' perceptions of these tools influence how they practice their use during academic writing tasks. These practices, in turn, shape the effectiveness of AI-assisted writing in supporting learning outcomes. The framework positions AI as a supportive agent within a human–machine collaborative model, emphasizing the importance of pedagogical guidance and ethical awareness..

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design supported by quantitative data to explore university students' perceptions and practices of using AI-assisted writing tools in academic writing. This design was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' views and their actual experiences in utilizing AI tools, as recommended in recent studies on AI integration in EFL contexts (Liando et al., 2025; Hockly, 2023).

The research was conducted in an EFL university context. The participants were undergraduate students enrolled in writing-related courses, such as Academic Writing or Thesis Writing, who had prior experience using AI-assisted writing tools, including Grammarly, QuillBot, and other generative AI applications. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that participants

were relevant to the research objectives. A total of 20–40 students participated in the study, which is considered adequate for descriptive and qualitative inquiry.

Data were collected using three instruments: a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The questionnaire aimed to gather data on students' perceptions and practices of AI-assisted writing tools. The questionnaire items were developed based on previous empirical studies focusing on AI-assisted writing, writing confidence, ethical concerns, and self-regulated learning as shown in Table 1 (Lo, 2025; Amani & Bisriyah, 2025; Alghamdi & AbuSa'aleek, 2025).

Table 1 Questionnaire content mapping

Variable	Dimension	Sample Item	Scale	Key References
Students' Perceptions	Perceived usefulness	AI-assisted writing tools help improve the quality of my academic writing.	Likert (1–5)	Lo (2025); Zhao (2022)
	Ease of use	AI-assisted writing tools are easy to use for academic writing tasks.	Likert (1–5)	Amani & Bisriyah (2025)
	Writing confidence	Using AI-assisted writing tools increases my confidence in academic writing.	Likert (1–5)	Setyani et al. (2023)
	Ethical awareness	I am aware of ethical issues related to using AI-assisted writing tools.	Likert (1–5)	Liando et al. (2025); Hockly (2023)
Students' Practices	Frequency of use	I frequently use AI-assisted writing tools in academic writing.	Likert (1–5)	Yu & Wilang (2025)
	Stages of writing	I use AI-assisted writing tools during revising and editing stages.	Likert (1–5)	Alghamdi & AbuSa'aleek (2025)
	Purpose of use	I use AI-assisted writing tools for grammar checking and paraphrasing.	Likert (1–5)	Fitria (2022)
	Self-regulated writing	AI-assisted writing tools help me revise my writing independently.	Likert (1–5)	Amani & Bisriyah (2025)

To obtain deeper insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants. The interviews explored students' experiences, purposes of use, challenges, and ethical considerations in using AI-assisted writing tools during different stages of academic writing. In addition, document analysis was employed to examine students' academic writing samples in order to identify patterns of AI tool usage, particularly during revising and editing stages, as suggested in prior technology-supported writing research (Valizadeh, 2022; Sağlamel & Çetinkaya, 2022).

Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and mean scores, to identify general trends in students' perceptions and practices. Interview and document data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and triangulate findings across data sources. To ensure trustworthiness, data triangulation and member checking were

applied. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.

FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study on university students' perceptions and practices of AI-assisted writing tools in academic writing. The findings are derived from questionnaire data and semi-structured interviews, and they are organized into three major subsections: students' perceptions, students' practices, and the relationship between perceptions and practices.

1. Students' Perceptions of AI-Assisted Writing Tools

The questionnaire results indicate that university students generally demonstrated positive perceptions toward the use of AI-assisted writing tools in academic writing. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of students' perceptions across four dimensions.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perceptions (n = 32)

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Perceived usefulness	4.28	0.61	High
Ease of use	4.41	0.57	High
Writing confidence	4.16	0.65	High
Ethical awareness	3.89	0.72	Moderate–High

As shown in Table 2, ease of use received the highest mean score (M = 4.41), suggesting that students found AI-assisted writing tools accessible and easy to operate. This finding indicates that technical barriers did not significantly hinder students' adoption of AI tools in academic writing. The high score for perceived usefulness (M = 4.28) further suggests that students believed AI-assisted writing tools contributed positively to the quality of their academic texts, particularly in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and clarity.

Students also reported a relatively high level of writing confidence (M = 4.16). Many participants indicated that AI feedback reduced anxiety related to academic writing and increased their confidence when submitting assignments. Interview data support this finding, as illustrated by the following statements:

"Before using AI tools, I was not confident with my grammar. Now I feel more secure when submitting my writing." (Student 6)

"AI tools help me notice mistakes that I usually ignore, so I feel my writing is more academic." (Student 12)

Although students generally viewed AI-assisted writing tools positively, the ethical awareness dimension received a slightly lower mean score (M = 3.89). This suggests that while students were aware of ethical issues such as plagiarism and over-reliance, these concerns were not as strongly internalized as perceived usefulness or ease of use. Some students expressed cautious attitudes during interviews:

"Sometimes I worry that using AI too much can make students lazy, so I try to limit my use." (Student 4)

"AI is helpful, but I think we still need clear rules from lecturers about how to use it properly." (Student 15)

2. Students' Practices in Using AI-Assisted Writing Tools

Students' actual practices of using AI-assisted writing tools were examined through questionnaire items and interview responses. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics related to students' practices.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Practices (n = 32)

Practice Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Frequency of use	4.02	0.68	High
Use in pre-writing stage	3.21	0.81	Moderate
Use in drafting stage	3.47	0.76	Moderate
Use in revising/editing stage	4.36	0.59	High
Self-regulated writing practice	4.05	0.63	High

The findings show that students used AI-assisted writing tools frequently (M = 4.02), particularly when working on academic writing assignments with high linguistic demands. However, the intensity of use varied across different stages of the writing process.

The highest mean score was observed in the revising and editing stage (M = 4.36), indicating that students primarily used AI tools to refine their writing after completing initial drafts. Interview data revealed that students commonly relied on AI for grammar checking, sentence restructuring, and clarity improvement:

"I usually finish my draft first, then I use AI to revise grammar and make my sentences clearer." (Student 3)

"I don't really use AI for writing from zero; I use it more for editing and polishing." (Student 10)

In contrast, the use of AI-assisted writing tools during the pre-writing (M = 3.21) and drafting stages (M = 3.47) was moderate. Some students reported using AI tools for idea generation or outlining, but this practice was less common and often accompanied by ethical considerations:

"Sometimes I use AI to get ideas, but I don't copy them directly. I just use it as inspiration." (Student 8)

The findings also indicate that AI-assisted writing tools supported self-regulated writing practices (M = 4.05). Students reported that AI feedback enabled them to revise and improve their writing independently without relying solely on teacher feedback:

"AI helps me revise my writing by myself. I don't need to wait for the lecturer's comments every time." (Student 1)

3. Relationship between Students' Perceptions and Practices

The combined analysis of questionnaire and interview data suggests a meaningful relationship between students' perceptions and their actual practices. Students who reported high perceived usefulness and ease of use tended to use AI-assisted writing tools more frequently and more strategically, particularly during revising and editing stages.

At the same time, ethical awareness appeared to influence the scope of AI usage. Students who expressed stronger ethical concerns tended to limit their use of AI tools to language-level support rather than content generation. This pattern was evident in interview responses:

"AI is okay for checking language, but for arguments and ideas, it should come from us." (Student 7)

"I try not to depend on AI too much because academic writing should reflect our own thinking." (Student 13)

These findings indicate that positive perceptions do not necessarily lead to uncritical or excessive use of AI-assisted writing tools. Instead, many students demonstrated reflective and selective practices when integrating AI into their academic writing.

In summary, the findings reveal that university students generally perceive AI-assisted writing tools positively and use them frequently, particularly during revising and editing stages of academic writing. AI-assisted writing tools were found to enhance writing confidence and support self-regulated learning, while ethical awareness shaped how students limited and controlled their usage. These findings provide empirical evidence that students' perceptions are closely related to their writing practices and highlight the importance of pedagogical guidance in fostering responsible AI-assisted writing in academic contexts.

DISCUSSION

This study explored university students' perceptions and practices of using AI-assisted writing tools in academic writing. The findings reveal that students generally hold positive perceptions toward AI-assisted writing tools and actively integrate them into their academic writing processes, particularly during revising and editing stages. These results confirm and extend previous research on AI integration in English language teaching.

The high level of perceived usefulness and ease of use found in this study aligns with earlier findings by Lo (2025) and Alghamdi and AbuSa'aleek (2025), who reported that AI-assisted writing tools, such as Grammarly, are widely perceived as effective in improving grammatical accuracy and textual clarity. Similarly, Zhao (2022) emphasized that AI writing assistants function as supportive tools that help EFL students refine language output rather than generate content from scratch. The present study reinforces this view by demonstrating that students predominantly use AI tools to polish and revise their writing, rather than to replace their own ideas.

The findings related to writing confidence are also consistent with previous studies. Setyani et al. (2023) reported that the use of AI-based writing tools increased Indonesian EFL students' confidence in academic writing, particularly in high-stakes tasks such as thesis writing. In the present study, students expressed that AI feedback reduced anxiety and provided reassurance before submitting academic assignments. This suggests that AI-assisted writing tools may function as affective support, helping students overcome linguistic insecurity in academic contexts.

Regarding students' practices, the dominant use of AI-assisted writing tools during the revising and editing stages reflects patterns identified in prior research. Lo (2025) and Alghamdi and AbuSa'aleek (2025) similarly found that students relied heavily on AI feedback for surface-level revisions, such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. This finding suggests that students conceptualize AI tools primarily as language support mechanisms rather than as tools for content development. Such practices align with the human–machine collaboration perspective proposed by Meniado (2024), which emphasizes that AI should complement, not replace, human cognitive processes in language learning.

The study also highlights the role of AI-assisted writing tools in supporting self-regulated writing practices. Consistent with Amani and Bisriyah (2025), the findings indicate that AI tools enable students to revise and monitor their writing independently, reducing reliance on immediate teacher feedback. This supports the argument that AI-assisted writing tools can promote learner autonomy when used responsibly. Similar conclusions were drawn by Senowarsito and Ardini (2023), who emphasized the potential of AI technologies to foster autonomous language learning.

Despite the generally positive perceptions and practices, the findings also reveal ethical awareness and cautious attitudes among students. This aligns with Liando et al. (2025), who describe AI in language learning as a double-edged sword, offering pedagogical benefits while raising concerns related to over-reliance and academic integrity. Hockly (2023) similarly warned against uncritical adoption of AI in ELT. In this study, students demonstrated awareness of ethical boundaries by limiting AI use mainly to language-level support rather than idea generation. This suggests that students are capable of reflective AI use, particularly when ethical considerations are emphasized.

Overall, the findings suggest that students' perceptions strongly influence their practices. Positive perceptions encourage frequent and strategic use, while ethical concerns shape the scope and limits of AI integration. These results underscore the importance of pedagogical guidance in helping students develop responsible and effective AI-assisted writing practices, as advocated by Yu and Wilang (2025) and Syaripudin (2025).

CONCLUSION

This study investigated university students' perceptions and practices of using AI-assisted writing tools in academic writing. The findings indicate that students generally perceive AI-assisted writing tools positively and use them frequently, particularly during revising and editing stages.

AI-assisted writing tools were found to enhance writing confidence, improve language accuracy, and support self-regulated writing practices.

However, the study also reveals that students are aware of ethical issues related to AI use and tend to limit their reliance on AI tools to avoid over-dependence and academic misconduct. This suggests that AI-assisted writing tools are not automatically misused; rather, students can engage in reflective and selective practices when appropriate guidance is provided.

Based on these findings, the study concludes that AI-assisted writing tools have significant pedagogical potential in academic writing instruction when integrated within a human–machine collaborative framework. Educators are encouraged to provide clear guidelines and instructional support to help students use AI tools responsibly and effectively. Future research may explore longitudinal effects of AI-assisted writing tools on writing development or examine teachers' instructional strategies in integrating AI into academic writing curricula.

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