

AI TOOLS FOR ACADEMIC WRITING: INSIGHTS FROM INDONESIAN GRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify which AI tools Indonesian graduate students use for academic writing and how aware they are of AI's use in their writing. A survey was administered to 79 graduate students to collect data for this study. The results indicate that ChatGPT is the most frequently utilized AI model, alongside various others that help improve students' English writing and comprehension skills. The participants also demonstrated an understanding of the necessity of engaging with AI-generated writing for their academic needs and acknowledged the importance of maintaining research ethics when employing these tools. In summary, students are effectively using AI chatbots, especially ChatGPT, to support their academic writing. Their significant awareness of AI's role suggests they recognize that human contribution is still crucial in the writing process. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the AI tools that enhance academic writing among graduate students in Indonesia. It also presents the level of graduate students' awareness of the position of AI tools in academic writing. Thus, it is advisable to reassess research ethics regarding the extent to which generative AI models can be incorporated into academic writing. Given its educational implications, universities should develop guidelines for the ethical and appropriate use of AI and clarify AI support limitations within their educational frameworks.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Artificial Intelligence Tools, Ethical Awareness, Graduate Students, Indonesian EFL Context

INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of AI tools in higher education has affected a range of learning activities, particularly in the area of academic writing (Moorhouse et al., 2025). Graduate students in Indonesia are expected to complete a thesis or dissertation and submit an article to reputable journals for publication (Ministry of Research and Technology and Education of the Republic of Indonesia, 2018). A majority of journal articles, including those published by Indonesian publishers, require authors to write in a foreign language, especially English (Cakrawala Pendidikan, 2021). This policy poses a challenge for graduate students since English is not their native language, and many Indonesians find it difficult to learn. Most Indonesian students encounter specific challenges when instructed to write English academic texts, such as restating sentences in different words, ensuring a logical flow,

creating unity, expressing their thoughts, selecting suitable language, and identifying pertinent subjects in their writing (Ningrum et al., 2023). Thus, the presence of AI tools makes it a breeze for them to assist in writing an academic paper.

Numerous AI tools have been developed to assist learners in various aspects, particularly in academic writing (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024). It has been empirically proven to significantly influence the students' writing skills when AI is used as a medium for learning writing (Listiyanti-AD et al., 2025). These tools have become increasingly vital as they help tackle challenges such as creating well-structured writing, selecting precise words and phrases, generating ideas, and referencing previous research effectively (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024). AI tools, especially chatbots like ChatGPT, can help postgraduate students identify grammatical errors and refine their academic writing, ultimately enhancing their writing skills (Chauke et al., 2024). The emergence of AI tools has revolutionized the process of achieving academic objectives, fostering innovative ideas, completing assignments, and conducting comprehensive research projects (Bouteraa et al., 2024). Hence, the presence of AI in academic writing studies has helped students develop their writing in various ways.

Several challenges may arise because these tools are relatively new to students in Indonesia. For example, students may struggle with the accuracy of AI-generated translations or paraphrases, or they may find it challenging to maintain their own voice and writing style when using AI tools (Eltahir, 2019). Although numerous studies suggest that students tend to have a favorable view of the rise of AI in academic writing, it's important to acknowledge that not everyone shares this perspective. Certain students recognize the effectiveness and precision of AI tools in their writing, while others worry that these technologies may diminish creativity and originality (Budjalemba & Listyani, 2020; Fitriana & Nurazni, 2022; Ningsih et al., 2024; Sumakul et al., 2022; Utami et al., 2023). Doctoral students from two universities in the US found occasional inaccuracies and ethical considerations related to the utilization of AI tools in academic writing, although they benefited from AI through improved clarity and efficiency in their academic writing (Bista & Bista, 2025). Several master's students at a Vietnamese university find that using AI in their academic writing enhances their support and improves their writing skills, despite facing challenges related to over-dependence and difficulties in tackling complex writing problems (Tran et al., 2025).

The AI tools pose multiple threats to academic writing. Primarily, educators may find it difficult to assess writing originality amid the proliferation of tools based on specific AI models. Therefore, the authenticity of academic writing, including journal articles, theses, or dissertations, should be clearly established (Shaheen, 2021). An ethical framework for AI use in academic writing is essential, as incorporating AI-generated content in academic papers may lead to reliability issues (Mondal & Mondal, 2023) and unintentional plagiarism (Coman, 2023). The integrity of students in using AI tools for academic writing is often called into question (Bouteraa et al., 2024; Fleckenstein et al., 2024; Roe & Perkins, 2022). Third, students should be made more aware that AI tools, especially for language translation and paraphrasing, require human involvement (Ansorge et al., 2021). Increasing awareness is one of the main steps toward addressing the challenges posed by AI tools' limitations and capabilities. Furthermore, teaching students about research ethics is vital to understanding

the ethical limits of its fair use. As a result, students' awareness and understanding of AI's role in academic writing need to be investigated.

There has been extensive research on the use of AI as a tool for producing writing in academic contexts. Research indicates that an AI writing tool powered by ChatGPT can enhance students' writing abilities and boost their motivation to learn (Song & Song, 2023). ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot are recognized as the most popular AI tools used by graduate and undergraduate students in Turkey for academic writing, as well as in an Indonesian senior high school (Amyatun & Kholis, 2023; Tokdemir Demirel, 2024). Guo and Zaini (2024) found that among the studies reviewed, ChatGPT is the most commonly used tool by students for academic writing. ChatGPT can help students with their academic writing by generating ideas, developing content, supporting literature reviews, improving data management, and assisting with editing, reviewing, and maintaining ethical standards (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024). Research indicates that most students are familiar with AI writing tools in academic writing (Narayan, 2024). While Gasaymeh et al. (2024) reported that students in Jordan demonstrated moderate familiarity and awareness of AI as a scientific writing aid.

In the context of tertiary education, many studies that seek to utilize AI tools in academic writing are frequently conducted. These studies have also shown a range of AI tool use in academic writing, with students exhibiting varying levels of awareness of their use. The methodologies and research environments of these studies are diverse. Most of the studies were conducted outside Indonesia. A few studies have explored these fields. Pratiwi et al. (2025) investigated the utilization of AI for academic writing among doctoral students, particularly on the ethical standards and critical thinking, by applying phenomenological studies, and revealed that ChatGPT, DeepL, Zotero, Numata, and Scite AI are tools that are frequently used in their academic writing. Wahyuningsih (2024) investigated what AI tools are frequently used by undergraduate students for academic writing. She found that Google Translate, QuillBot, Grammarly, Zotero, and Mendeley are frequently used in academic writing with their various functions. The investigation on the benefits of AI tools for academic levels, such as for literature review, generating ideas, and developing writing among graduate students, is found (Aktepe & Çetinkaya, 2025) and doctoral students (Wu et al., 2026). Dorado (2024) found that graduate students experience various emotions when using AI tools in their academic writing.

The studies reviewed above indicate that research on the use of AI tools at the tertiary level is often conducted in undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs, and most employ qualitative methods. This study attempts to fill a gap by quantitatively exploring which AI tools graduate students use, an area that has not been explored before. This study also aims to further explore students' awareness of AI use in academic writing. Furthermore, this study seeks to address the lack of research on AI tools utilized by Indonesian graduate students in academic writing. It focuses on these students, who are frequently tasked with producing a variety of written work in English, such as journal articles, mini-research reports, papers, reading reports, theses, and dissertations. The following questions are the pillars to be answered in this research: (1) Which AI tools are commonly utilized by EFL students as an

academic writing tool? (2) How aware are EFL students of using various AI as an aid to academic writing?

METHODS

To achieve the research objectives, a descriptive quantitative approach was used to examine which AI tools Indonesian graduate students most frequently use in writing academic papers and students' awareness of the AI tools available as writing assistants. This study was conducted in Indonesia around 2024.

The participants in this study were Indonesian graduate students pursuing their master's or doctoral degrees in Indonesia or abroad. Indonesian postgraduate students pursuing a master's or doctoral degree in Indonesia or abroad have agreed to participate in this research. They were selected as study participants because these educational levels require students to write academic papers, such as journal articles, book reviews, theses, and dissertations. A non-probability sampling was chosen as the sampling technique for collecting the sample. It was used because the researchers could not force the participants to participate in the study. Eighty-nine students volunteered for this study. However, only 79 students were eligible to participate in this study due to their inexperience with AI for writing academic papers. The following are the demographic details of the participants in this study.

Table 1. Research participants demography

Education level	Non-English Department	English Department	Total
Magister	27	17	44
Doctor	17	18	35
Total	44	35	79

More students from the non-English departments (either English education or linguistics) participated in this study. 56% of the respondents are non-English department students at the master's and doctoral levels. 96% of participants study in Indonesia, and the remaining 4% study abroad (in Scotland and Australia). All participants were willing to sign the consent form, which informed them of their participation in this research. The researchers will maintain the confidentiality of all the participants' identities.

All participants were asked to participate voluntarily and informed that they had the right to stop participating in the research at any time without consequences. The research team ensured the confidentiality of all participants' identities. The names of the university and participants were pseudonymized in this research. All collected data was stored securely on the researcher's personal computer in a folder protected by a password.

A survey was distributed randomly to participants via WhatsApp groups of master's and doctoral students, private messages, and Instagram stories. The survey was conducted to identify the AI tools that students frequently use when writing academic papers. There was a question to identify frequently used IA tools in academic writing: What AI tools do you usually use in writing academic papers? In this form, participants can list more than one tool

they use. Then, two other statement items in the survey confirmed students' knowledge and awareness about the presence of academic writing tools powered by AI: (1) I think AI tools' results still require human involvement to accomplish the results; (2) I am concerned about the limitations and the fair use of AI tools as a scientific writing assistant. The participants had to respond to those statements by choosing one of the five scales related to their conditions: (1) never, (2) sometimes, (3) seldom, (4) often, (5) always. Before this instrument was used for data collection, it was reviewed by two experts to ensure construct validity and readability. All expert suggestions and judgments were used to refine and develop the research instruments.

The data were gathered online. It spanned two weeks, from May 14 to May 30, 2024. It used Google Forms to create the survey instruments. The Google Form link was shared through WhatsApp groups of master's and doctoral students from various majors (i.e., scholarship awardee WhatsApp groups), in private messages to researchers' colleagues pursuing master's and doctoral studies, and via Instagram stories.

After gathering data, the respondents were selected to identify only those who had ever utilized AI for academic writing, making them the participants in this study. Then, the researchers attempted to classify and count participants based on their similar frequencies of using AI for each item. Finally, the number of students was calculated using percentages. Furthermore, the AI academic writing tools used by the students were presented in a chart.

RESULTS

Most Frequently Used AI Tools for Academic Writing

This investigation aims to identify the most frequently used AI tools among Indonesian graduate students for writing academic papers. After a mini-survey of 79 eligible students, several AI tools were identified as frequently used by graduate students. The list of AI tools is presented in the chart shown in Figure 1, followed by the number of students who frequently use those tools.

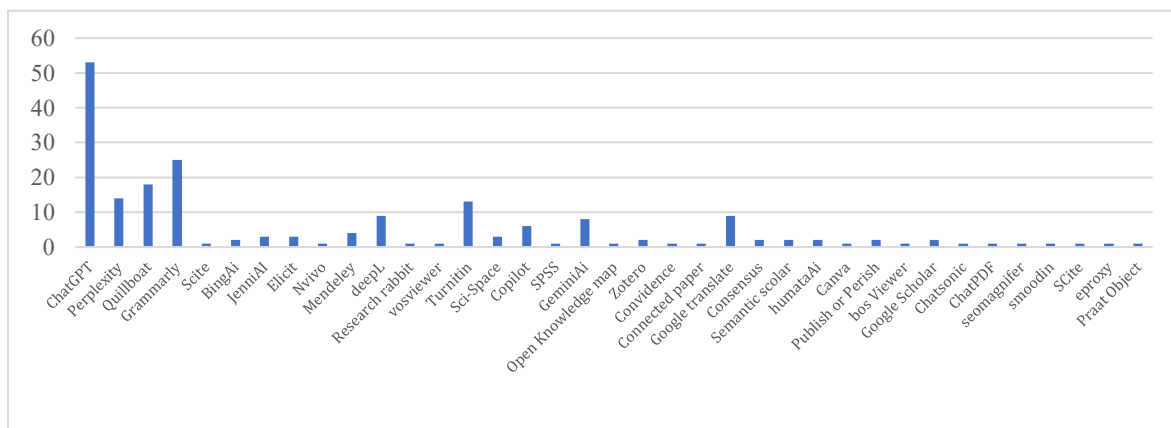


Figure 1. Most frequently, AI tools are utilized by Indonesian graduate students for writing academic papers

According to Figure 1 above, 37 AI tools are used by the research participants. They are allowed to mention as many AI tools as possible that are frequently used to assist their academic writing. Thus, a student might mention more than one AI tool in this survey. However, 2 participants were reluctant to mention the tools they frequently use for academic writing.

The figure above shows that ChatGPT is the most widely used AI tool among students. Specifically, 53 students mentioned this AI chatbot as the medium they used to assist with their academic writing. Grammarly, a writing tool that uses AI to correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors while also enhancing clarity, style, and tone, is the second most frequently used AI tool among students in academic writing. Totally, 25 students use it. Other AI tools that have garnered significant interest include QuillBot, Perplexity, Gemini AI, Google Translate, and Turnitin. In short, students mention various AI tools that they often utilize for academic writing. They use them for various functions of AI tools that assist them in generating ideas, improving their writing quality, and identifying text similarity. ChatGPT is the most-mentioned AI tool among students, followed by Grammarly.

Students' Awareness of AI Utilization for Academic Writing

This study has successfully revealed the extent of students' awareness of the use of AI tools in writing scientific papers. Two items confirm this issue: the frequency with which they are aware of human involvement in AI tool performance, and their awareness of the frequency of research ethics concerns regarding AI tool use to assist in writing academic papers. Shown in Figure 2 is the frequency with which students report using AI for writing, and that they still need their involvement to improve the quality of their writing.

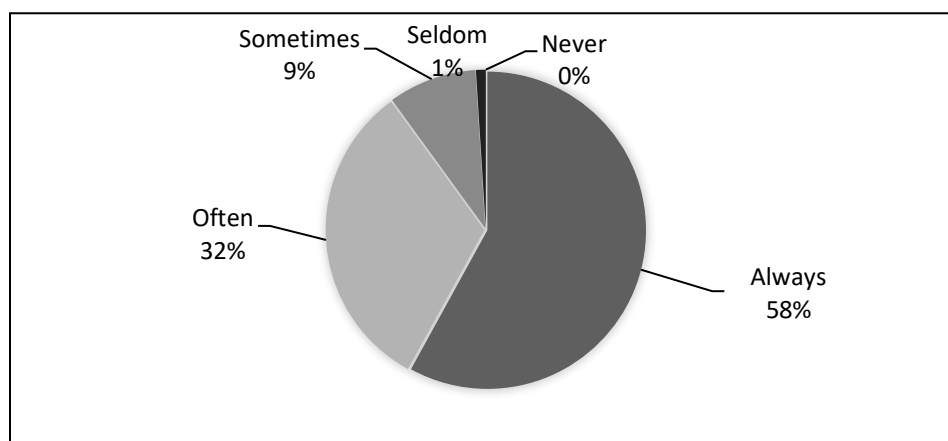


Figure 2. The frequency of students' awareness of AI tools results still requires human involvement to accomplish the desired results

Based on the illustration in Figure 2, AI tools for academic writing still require human involvement to achieve the desired results. It is evident from the students' responses that 58% are aware of this fact. Most students are aware that AI tools still need significant improvement and human intervention. However, 1% of total respondents are still seldom

aware of this issue. Although it is minimal, it requires teachers to strengthen students' awareness of the existence of AI tools that still require human involvement to correct and maintain the quality of ideal academic writing. In summary, while students use various AI tools to aid their academic writing, they do not rely entirely on them. They are generally aware of the need to verify the AI-generated outcomes to improve their writing.

The second pie chart in Figure 3 still supports the finding that students tend to be aware of the influence of using AI for writing. The following illustration in Figure 3 is about how often students utilize generative AI while thinking about ethical considerations in composing scientific writing.

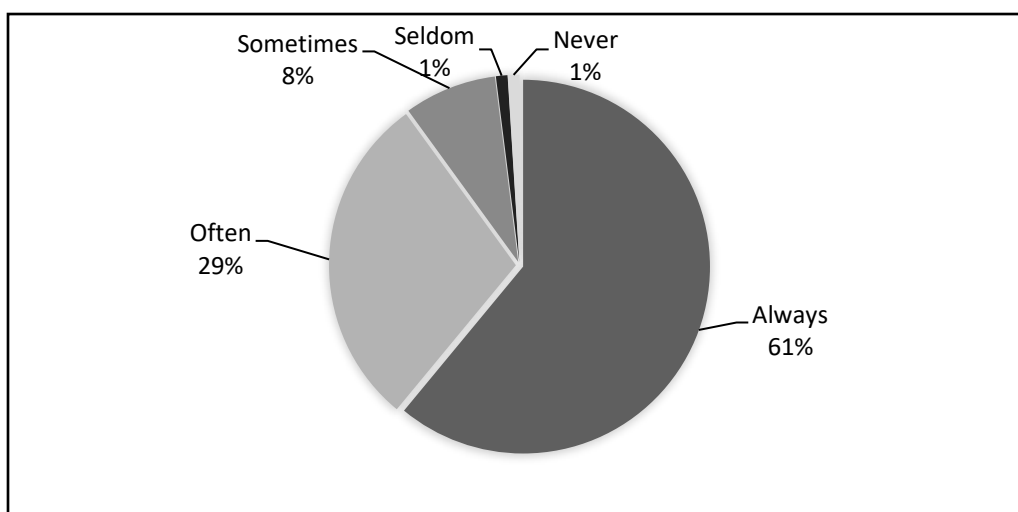


Figure 3. The frequency of students' awareness of ethics toward the utilization of AI tools in Academic Writing

It is identified that most students are aware of considering the ethical use of AI tools for academic writing, as illustrated in Figure 3. Specifically, 61% of students have recognized the importance of considering research ethics when utilizing AI tools to write academic papers. They are always concerned about the ethics of using AI to write academic tasks. Since ethical guidance on using AI tools in academic fields is still lacking, it is possible that people rarely or never consider ethics when using them. To sum up, besides students' awareness of the human role in academic writing while they utilize AI tools, they also know that there has been an ethical consideration for using AI tools in academic writing.

DISCUSSION

This study addresses the question of what AI tools are most frequently used as academic writing assistants and whether students are aware of the implications of their use. That information was gathered from the survey that had been spread to the Indonesian graduate students (master's and doctoral degrees) from various majors (English and non-English departments).

The findings of this study, which present the AI tools frequently used by the graduate students in academic writing, strengthen the notion that AI tools empower students in second language writing (Moorhouse et al., 2025). Furthermore, ChatGPT, as the most commonly used AI tool which is identified in this study strengthens the existing studies that this AI tool is frequently used for academic writing and is frequently investigated recently due to their benefits to academicians such as for generating ideas and expanding on information related to the discussed topic (Bouteraa et al., 2024; Imran & Almusharraf, 2023; Mondal & Mondal, 2023; Santiago-Ruiz, 2023; Singh, 2023; Song & Song, 2023). In addition, this AI tool is identified as most frequently used by Indonesian graduate students since it can assist them in identifying grammatical errors and refining their academic writing, ultimately enhancing their writing skills (Chauke et al., 2024). As we know, English is a foreign language for Indonesians, which might make it challenging for them to write the English text with good grammatical structures (Ningrum et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the other AI tools mentioned by the students align with their writing activities and require assistance from these tools. A notable finding is that students consistently require AI assistance for detection. Most AI tools that EFL students mention help students improve their language quality and comprehension, such as translating, paraphrasing, and summarizing. For example, students mention Grammarly as one of the most frequently used tools in enhancing their academic writing. It relates to a study that has proven Grammarly to be a helpful AI tool for students to enhance their grammar through suggested refinement and automated feedback generated (Asnas & Hidayanti, 2024). Academic writing using QuillBot software is a clear example. The investigation of QuillBot utilization in academic writing has shown its effectiveness in assisting students with writing through text paraphrasing (Amyatun & Kholis, 2023). Another tool commonly used by students is Google Translate. This tool has presented its function that is not only a machine translation; it is proven to assist students in enhancing their vocabulary, detecting word spelling and pronunciation, correcting grammatical errors, and supporting students' writing activities in the form of pre-editing, post-editing, and word translation (Wirantaka & Fijanah, 2021). Besides assisting students in writing academic papers, other AI tools are listed as the most beneficial tools for conducting research.

Despite the improvements AI tools have made to their academic writing, human involvement is still needed for further enhancements. It supports the notion that AI-generated information is still raw and requires human decision-making to proceed with the information (Cukurova et al., 2019). As it requires students' involvement in generating the information resulting from AI, it might help students improve their critical thinking by clarifying the information, synthesizing the AI-generated information with the actual knowledge, and resulting in a more in-depth comprehension of several meanings and terms (Sanusi et al., 2022). Strengthening students' awareness of the accuracy of AI-generated results and consistently reminding them to recheck them is required.

Additionally, this study underlines that the ethical intentions in academic writing using AI have been realized by students. Raising students' awareness of the ethical issues deals with academic writing utilizing AI is required, and it necessitates teachers' involvement to enhance their understanding. It relates to the notion that establishing explicit research ethics

that govern the utilization of AI tools in academic writing is highly suggested to regulate which AI tools can be utilized in academic writing in an ethical manner (Bouteraa et al., 2024). Therefore, EFL students will utilize AI tools to aid them in comprehending English-written texts and improve their English writing skills wisely by considering the ethics of AI utilization for academic writing.

To summarize, students utilize various AI tools to assist with academic writing. As reported by several existing studies, ChatGPT has become the most frequently utilized AI tool. Especially in terms of helping users improve their English proficiency, it has surpassed other AI models. When students use AI tools during academic paper writing, they often have a good understanding of these tools. However, they still need to recheck their writing products (papers, reports, etc.) and consistently consider the ethics of writing scientific papers with the help of AI. This research suggests that AI tools complement academic activities, especially in the context of academic writing among Indonesian students. They help graduate students who are currently facing difficulties with writing academic papers, particularly in English. The students' recognition of the presence of AI tools, along with their need for human input to enhance their writing, indicates that these tools will not completely replace the role of individuals in academic endeavors.

Although this study successfully probes the AI tools utilized by the graduate students for the sake of enhancing their academic writing and to what extent their awareness of AI roles in assisting writing academically, this study is limited to the research approach (descriptive qualitative) applied, which limits the further exploration of this study. The narrow number of research participants who participated in this investigation may limit broader exploration of what AI tools are utilized by graduate students in academic writing.

CONCLUSION

This study presents valuable information in response to the research questions being addressed. The most commonly used AI tool in academic writing is ChatGPT, followed by several other tools that enhance English writing and comprehension, including Turnitin, Google Translate, Gemini AI, Perplexity, Copilot, QuillBot, and Deep AI. Most students are aware of the limitations of AI capabilities, which still require human participation to perfect writing, as well as the research ethics involved in academic writing with the help of AI tools. This study's results contribute to our understanding of how AI is used in education. It highlights the AI tools commonly employed by advanced learners, such as graduate students, to enhance their academic writing. This information could be valuable for other students looking for suitable AI tools to assist with their own writing endeavors.

The high frequency of academic writing with AI tools utilization, as revealed in this study, has driven several recommendations. For academic writing, lecturers and research supervisors are advised to strengthen students' awareness of the AI tool's strengths and weaknesses when writing academic papers. The presence of AI tools cannot be avoided in students' academic writing nowadays; university academic policymakers must regulate the extent to which AI tools can be used in academic papers without compromising students' originality. Universities and policymakers should establish guidelines for the use of AI in academic activities, especially in the area of academic writing, and promote it to the students.

Since this study employed a single research procedure, which relied solely on a survey to gather information from the research participants, it may be limited in its ability to elaborate on the information revealed. Further studies, including deeper interviews and the analysis of students' writing papers, are recommended for investigation in the following studies. In addition, this study focuses on the commonly used AI tools but does not explore the specific academic writing activities for which these tools are utilized. It is recommended that future researchers investigate this aspect further.

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