

From Assistance to Dependency: The Influence of ChatGPT on the Authenticity of Academic Writing among Final-Year English Education Students

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Abstract

The development of generative artificial intelligence technology, particularly ChatGPT, has transformed the way students complete various academic tasks, including the process of writing academic papers. The presence of ChatGPT offers various benefits, such as helping to develop ideas, correct grammar, and improve writing efficiency. On the other hand, the use of this technology has also raised concerns regarding the authenticity of academic writing and the potential for students to become dependent on artificial intelligence. This study aims to explore the impact of ChatGPT use on the authenticity of academic writing among final-year students in the English Education Program at Nurul Jadid University. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving five senior students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews and analyzed using the interactive analysis model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results indicate that students use ChatGPT to assist with brainstorming, proofreading, grammar checking, paraphrasing, and developing academic arguments. Although the use of ChatGPT is considered capable of improving writing efficiency and quality, some participants acknowledged that excessive use has the potential to diminish the uniqueness of their writing style and their independence of thought. Nevertheless, the authenticity of the writing can still be maintained if students use ChatGPT as a tool, while the development of ideas, analysis, and academic decision-making remain under the writer's control. These findings suggest that ChatGPT's impact on the authenticity of writing is determined more by how students use it than by the technology itself.

Keywords: ChatGPT, academic writing, authenticity, artificial intelligence, English Language Education students.

INTRODUCTION

The development of *Artificial Intelligence* (AI) in recent years has brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including higher education. One of the developments that has received the most attention is the emergence of *Large Language Models* (LLMs), which are capable of generating text resembling human writing through natural language processing. These models have advanced rapidly since the introduction of GPT-3, which demonstrated the ability to generate contextual and coherent text (Brown et al., 2020). Along with these developments, the use of AI in education has also expanded. Various studies indicate that AI is no longer used merely as a learning tool but is also beginning to play a role in supporting critical thinking, completing academic tasks, and developing students' skills in higher education (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Since its public release, ChatGPT has sparked significant changes in various aspects of higher education, including the learning process, assessment, and academic writing. Its emergence presents both new

opportunities and challenges related to learning practices, academic evaluation, and academic integrity (Jensen et al., 2025). The emergence of ChatGPT as a generative AI application has further accelerated these changes because it is capable of providing interactive responses, assisting with information retrieval, and supporting various academic activities, including scholarly writing (Gill et al., 2024) .

In the context of higher education, ChatGPT is increasingly being utilized as a tool to assist in various stages of academic writing. Academic writing is fundamentally a process that demands not only precise language use but also the ability to develop ideas, construct logical arguments, and communicate knowledge in accordance with academic conventions (Hyland, 2003). Consequently, various supporting technologies, including ChatGPT, are increasingly being utilized to help students meet these demands. Students use these tools to search for initial references, draft outlines, correct grammar, *proofread* their work, and receive feedback on their writing. Numerous studies indicate that the use of ChatGPT can enhance the efficiency of the learning process and help students overcome various challenges in writing academic papers. (Kasneci et al., 2023) explains that *large language models* have the potential to support learning by providing quick, personalized, and adaptive feedback tailored to users' needs. These findings are reinforced by (Dwivedi et al., 2023), who states that ChatGPT has the potential to transform various academic activities, including the process of academic writing. Meanwhile, (Tlili et al., 2023) emphasizes that these benefits can only be realized if ChatGPT is used responsibly as a learning support tool, not as a substitute for students' own thinking processes. In the same context, (Habibi et al., 2023) also found that most students accept the use of ChatGPT as a technology capable of supporting the learning process and enhancing academic productivity.

Although it offers various benefits, the use of ChatGPT has also sparked debate regarding the authenticity of academic writing. In academic writing, a scholarly work is expected to demonstrate the author's ability to construct arguments, organize ideas systematically, and adhere to established academic conventions (Swales & Feak, 2020). Consequently, the use of AI-based technology raises questions about the extent to which a written piece still represents the author's own academic abilities. In higher education, an academic paper is not only evaluated based on the quality of language or the completeness of information but also reflects the author's thought process, analytical skills, and intellectual responsibility. Consequently, the increasing use of generative AI raises questions about the extent to which a piece of work can still be considered a representation of a student's abilities. (Perkins, 2023) explains that generative AI presents new challenges to academic integrity because it is capable of producing text that is difficult to distinguish from human writing. Similarly, (Cotton et al., 2024) argues that the emergence of ChatGPT has transformed the landscape of academic assessment, necessitating that higher education institutions develop new approaches to ensure that student work continues to reflect their true abilities. (Kasneci et al., 2023) also emphasize that the use of AI in education must remain focused on supporting the learning process, not replacing students' academic responsibilities. This view aligns with (Bretag, 2013), which states that academic integrity is not only about avoiding plagiarism but also encompasses honesty, responsibility, and originality throughout the entire process of producing scholarly work.

Various previous studies have shown mixed results regarding the use of ChatGPT in academic writing. Some studies highlight the benefits of ChatGPT as a tool capable of improving writing quality and learning efficiency, while others raise concerns about a decline in students' ability to think independently and an increased reliance on AI found that students generally view ChatGPT as a useful tool for improving the quality of academic writing, particularly in terms of language

and idea development. However, the study also indicated concerns that excessive use of AI could reduce students' opportunities to develop their writing skills independently. Relatively similar results were also reported by (Janah & Dewi, 2026), which showed that ChatGPT can support the development of writing and critical thinking skills when used as a tool to support the learning process, rather than as a substitute for students' intellectual activities. These differing findings indicate that ChatGPT's impact on academic writing is heavily influenced by how students utilize the technology.

Although research on ChatGPT is evolving rapidly, most studies still focus on the effectiveness of its use in learning, user acceptance levels, and its implications for academic integrity in general. These studies generally position ChatGPT as a technology that benefits the learning process or as a challenge to academic integrity. However, few studies have explored how students perceive the use of ChatGPT during the academic writing process and how they maintain the authenticity of their writing when utilizing generative AI. Furthermore, the relationship between ChatGPT's function as *an academic writing assistant* and the potential for *AI dependency* has not been extensively examined, particularly in the context of English Language Education students in Indonesia. Yet, disciplinary characteristics, academic culture, institutional environments, and educational values can influence how students use AI and uphold intellectual responsibility in academic writing. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by exploring how students utilize ChatGPT, interpret the boundary between assistance and dependency, and maintain the authenticity of their academic writing during the process of drafting scholarly works.

Based on this gap, this study aims to explore the impact of ChatGPT use on the authenticity of academic writing among senior students in the English Language Education Program at Nurul Jadid University. This study focuses on how students utilize ChatGPT during the academic writing process, how they interpret the boundary between academic *assistance* and potential dependency, and how they maintain the originality of their ideas, the structuring of their arguments, and their academic responsibility when using generative AI. The findings of this study are expected to provide empirical and conceptual contributions to the development of responsible AI use in higher education and to enrich the discourse on the authenticity of academic writing in the era of artificial intelligence.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore the impact of ChatGPT use on the authenticity of academic writing among senior students in the English Language Education Program at Nurul Jadid University. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and the meanings they construct regarding the phenomenon under study. According to (Creswell, 2018), qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social issue or specific phenomenon. A case study design was used because this research focuses on a specific context, namely students' experiences in utilizing ChatGPT during the academic writing process at Nurul Jadid University.

Research participants were selected using *purposive sampling*, a technique for selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Creswell, 2018). Participant criteria included senior students in the English Language Education program who were currently writing or had completed their theses and had experience using ChatGPT in the academic writing process. Based on these criteria, the study involved five students as primary participants.

All participants received an explanation of the study's objectives and provided voluntary consent to participate before the data collection process began.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. This technique was chosen because it provides researchers with the flexibility to explore participants' experiences in greater depth, while still adhering to pre-established interview guidelines (Creswell, 2018). The interview questions focused on students' experiences using ChatGPT, the benefits they perceived, the challenges they faced, its impact on the authenticity of academic writing, and their views on the line between using ChatGPT as an aid (*assistance*) and the potential for dependency. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and then transcribed verbatim to serve as the basis for data analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive model developed by (Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, 2023) , which includes *data condensation*, *data display*, and *conclusion drawing and verification*. The analysis process was conducted simultaneously as data collection took place, allowing the researcher to systematically identify patterns, categories, and themes. To enhance the credibility of the findings, this study employed member checking in which participants were asked to review the researchers' interpretations to ensure they aligned with the experiences they had shared as well as source triangulation, which involved comparing information obtained from all participants to ensure data consistency (Creswell, 2018) .

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

1. ChatGPT as a Tool to Support Academic Writing

The interview results show that all participants utilized ChatGPT as a support tool in the thesis writing process. Although their purposes for using it differed, all participants viewed ChatGPT as a technology that helped them overcome various obstacles during the academic writing process. Its uses included translating scientific articles, checking grammar, paraphrasing, searching for academic vocabulary, proofreading, developing ideas, and helping to draft an outline.

Most participants began using ChatGPT because they faced difficulties understanding English-language literature and constructing academic sentences. AM explained that limited ability to read international journals and a lack of vocabulary were the main reasons he began using ChatGPT while writing his thesis.

"I started using ChatGPT in my seventh semester because I had to read a lot of international journals, while my reading skills and vocabulary were still limited."

(AM)

NH cited similar reasons. However, in addition to difficulties in constructing academic sentences, NH linked the use of ChatGPT to the time pressure of completing her thesis.

"I started using ChatGPT because I was panicking about the thesis defense deadline, while I was struggling to construct academic sentences in English." (NH)

In addition to helping overcome language barriers, ChatGPT is also used to support the writing process. SM explained that ChatGPT serves as a discussion partner to explore connections between theories before she rephrases those explanations in her own words.

"I use it as a discussion partner. I ask ChatGPT to help bridge two theories, then I take the framework and rephrase it in my own words." (SM)

Meanwhile, RZ uses ChatGPT in the final stage of writing to check grammar after the entire paragraph has been written independently.

"I write the entire paragraph manually first. Once I'm done, I ask ChatGPT only to identify grammatical errors, and then I rewrite the corrections in my own style." (RZ)

The data shows that the ways participants used ChatGPT varied. Some used ChatGPT to assist with linguistic aspects, while others utilized it as a tool for discussion and to generate alternative ideas. Nevertheless, all participants viewed ChatGPT as a tool that supported the academic writing process according to their individual needs.

2. The Authenticity of Writing Depends on Students' Control Over the Writing Process

The interview results show that ChatGPT's impact on the authenticity of academic writing varies among participants. This variation relates to the extent to which students maintain control over their ideas, arguments, and the writing process while using ChatGPT.

Some participants stated that using ChatGPT did not diminish the originality of their writing because they themselves determined the main ideas and direction of the discussion. RZ explained that he never used ChatGPT's output directly but instead studied the suggestions provided before rewriting them in his own style.

"I never just take the AI's answers directly. If it suggests improvements to a sentence, I first study its explanation, then I rewrite it in my own style." (RZ)

SM expressed a similar view. He uses ChatGPT to refine linguistic aspects while maintaining the main points of his ideas.

"I always ask ChatGPT to correct the grammar without changing the main points of my ideas." (SM)

On the other hand, some participants acknowledged that greater reliance on ChatGPT was beginning to affect their sense of authorship over their writing. AM stated that the core ideas of the text still came from him, but the writing style of the final result felt different from his usual writing style.

"The basic idea is purely mine, but the writing style has changed completely. My writing feels too stiff, and my original writing style has been somewhat lost." (AM)

NH shared a more profound experience. He felt that the resulting writing no longer represented his own writing ability because the thought structure within the paragraphs was largely shaped by AI.

"To be completely honest, that writing isn't a true representation of my actual writing ability. The structure of the ideas was constructed by AI." (NH)

AD also described a similar experience when asked to explain the content of his thesis during a advising session. He realized he struggled to account for the parts of his writing that had been heavily assisted by ChatGPT.

"During my advising session, when my advisor asked me about the theory I had written, I was at a loss for words. That's when I realized the authenticity of my writing had been compromised because I didn't understand what was written in my own thesis." (AD)

These findings indicate that participants' perceptions of the authenticity of their writing are not only related to the use of ChatGPT but also to their level of involvement in developing ideas, constructing arguments, and understanding the content of the resulting text. Participants who continued to write, review, and rephrase their work tended to feel that authenticity was still maintained, whereas participants who delegated most of the writing process to AI acknowledged a decline in their sense of ownership and understanding of their work.

3. From Assistance to Dependence in the Use of ChatGPT

The interview results show that the level of ChatGPT usage varies among participants. Some participants use ChatGPT only to a limited extent as a support tool during the writing process, while others acknowledge that increasingly intensive use is beginning to influence how they complete their academic assignments. These differences illustrate varying levels of dependence on ChatGPT during the thesis writing process.

RZ explained that he uses ChatGPT only for specific purposes, such as proofreading and checking grammar. According to him, the entire process of developing ideas, arguments, and content is still done independently.

"As long as it's used only for proofreading or grammar, I don't think it's a problem because I'm still the one creating the content and arguments." (RZ)

SM also noted that ChatGPT is used solely as a tool to improve the quality of the writing, while responsibility for the thesis's content remains with him as the author.

"The responsibility for the thesis's content still lies with the student. ChatGPT only helps improve certain parts." (SM)

Unlike those two participants, AM admitted that their use of ChatGPT increased when facing the pressure to finish their thesis. Under certain circumstances, most of the text generated by ChatGPT was reused after minor adjustments.

"When the deadline is approaching, I use about 70% of the text as is after making minor adjustments." (AM)

AD also revealed that his approach to using ChatGPT changed during the research process. After receiving feedback from his advisor, he began to reduce his reliance on ChatGPT's output by rewriting the text based on his own understanding.

"Now, I read ChatGPT's output, understand the pattern, then close my laptop and rewrite it based on my own understanding." (AD)

Meanwhile, NH mentioned that he had difficulty continuing the writing process when ChatGPT was unavailable. This situation made him feel lost in structuring his writing.

"If ChatGPT is experiencing an error or is down, I immediately hit a complete wall and can't continue writing at all." (NH)

In addition to discussing their user experiences, all participants also shared their views on the ethical boundaries of using ChatGPT in academic writing. They argued that the use of ChatGPT remains acceptable as long as it functions solely as a writing aid and does not replace the student's responsibility as the primary author of the academic work.

Overall, the research results show that the use of ChatGPT varies among participants. Some students are able to limit their use of ChatGPT to a writing support tool, while others tend to use it more intensively during the thesis writing process. Nevertheless, all participants emphasized the importance of maintaining responsibility for the content and the process of academic writing.

Table 1. Thematic Analysis Table

Theme	Sub-theme	Representative Quotes	Participants
ChatGPT as an Academic Writing Tool	Grammar and language support	<i>"Most often used for translating journal abstracts, finding synonyms, and improving sentence structure." (AM)</i>	AM
		<i>"I use it as a discussion partner for texts. I take the outline, then I write it out myself." (SM)</i>	SM
		<i>"I type out the entire paragraph manually first, then I ask ChatGPT to find any grammar errors." (RZ)</i>	RZ
	Writing efficiency	<i>"It helps me overcome writer's block." (NH)</i>	NH
		<i>"It's very quick at providing alternative perspectives on an argument." (AD)</i>	AD
	Changes in the writing of authorship Academic Writing	<i>"The basic idea is entirely mine, but the writing style has changed completely." (AM)</i>	AM
The Influence of ChatGPT on the Authenticity of Academic Writing		<i>"That writing isn't a true representation of my actual writing ability." (NH)</i>	NH
	Maintaining originality	<i>"I never just take the AI's answers as is. I rewrite them in my own style." (RZ)</i>	RZ

		<i>"I correct the grammar without changing the main points of my argument." (SM)</i>	SM
	Loss of understanding	<i>"I had trouble explaining the theory I wrote during my tutoring session." (AD)</i>	AD
From Assistance to Dependency	Controlled use	<i>"As long as it's used only for proofreading or grammar." (RZ)</i>	RZ
	Emerging dependency	<i>"When I'm up against a deadline, I use about 70% of the text as is after making a few minor adjustments." (AM)</i>	AM
		<i>"I used to use it as-is, but now I rewrite it based on my own understanding." (AD)</i>	AD
	High dependency	<i>"If ChatGPT is having an error or is down, I'm completely stuck." (NH)</i>	NH
	Ethical Boundary	<i>"It's ethical as long as ChatGPT is used only as a personal editor, not as the one writing the thesis content." (AM)</i>	AM
		<i>"The responsibility for the thesis content remains with the student." (SM)</i>	SM

Discussion

1. ChatGPT as an Academic Writing Tool

The research findings indicate that ChatGPT serves as a supportive tool that assists students in various stages of academic writing, particularly in correcting grammar, enriching academic vocabulary, proofreading, translating literature, and developing ideas when writing a thesis. Although all participants utilized ChatGPT, the research results show that they did not use this technology to replace the entire writing process. Instead, ChatGPT was primarily used as a tool to help overcome academic obstacles that arose during the process of writing scholarly papers.

These findings align with the (Kasneji et al., 2023), which explains that *large language models* have great potential to support the learning process by providing fast, adaptive, and user-tailored feedback. In this study, these benefits are reflected in the experiences of students who used ChatGPT to help them understand English-language literature, improve the quality of their academic writing, and generate alternatives for developing initial ideas. Thus, ChatGPT serves as a source of assistance that helps students overcome various technical difficulties without replacing the entire learning process.

These findings also reinforce the research (Dwivedi et al., 2023), which states that ChatGPT has transformed various academic activities through its ability to generate rapid, contextual, and easily accessible responses. In the context of this study, this transformation is evident in the changes in how students complete various writing tasks. Processes that previously took a considerable amount of time such as finding academic vocabulary equivalents,

proofreading, or drafting an initial outline have become more efficient with the help of ChatGPT. This efficiency allows students to focus more on the substance of their research rather than the technical aspects of writing.

Furthermore, the results of this study are consistent with the research (Habibi et al., 2023), which found that students embrace the use of ChatGPT because it is considered easy to use and capable of enhancing academic productivity. The participants' experiences in this study indicate that this acceptance is influenced not only by the technology's ease of use but also by the tangible benefits they experienced during the thesis writing process. This finding also supports the perspective presented in (Tlili et al., 2023), which emphasizes that the benefits of generative AI are maximized when it is used as a learning support tool rather than as a substitute for students' own thinking processes. Similar findings were also reported by (Verma, 2024), which explains that ChatGPT can improve the efficiency of academic writing by helping to organize ideas, improve language quality, and enhance the clarity of idea presentation. Furthermore, (Siti Rahmah & M. Ramli, 2025) also reports that the use of ChatGPT contributes positively to students' academic productivity, particularly by accelerating the completion of assignments and assisting in the process of drafting academic papers. Collectively, these studies reinforce the finding that ChatGPT has practical value as a supportive tool in academic writing when used appropriately.

These findings are also supported by (Aljuaid, 2024), which, through *a systematic review* of the use of artificial intelligence in academic writing instruction at the university level, concluded that AI can improve language quality, text organization, and the efficiency of the writing process. However, these benefits can only be achieved if AI is used as a learning support tool, while students maintain active engagement, critical thinking skills, and academic responsibility throughout the writing process. This perspective aligns with the results of this study, which show that ChatGPT functions as a support for academic writing, not as a substitute for students' intellectual processes.

The findings of this study can be understood through the concept of **Cognitive Artifacts** proposed by the (Norman, 1992). Norman explains that technology is designed to extend human cognitive capabilities by simplifying certain tasks, not to replace users' intellectual activities. In this study, ChatGPT functions as a cognitive artifact that helps students reduce the burden of technical aspects, such as grammar checking, sentence construction, and the development of writing structure. With this reduced burden, students have more room to focus on developing arguments, analyzing data, and organizing ideas which are at the core of academic writing. Therefore, the presence of ChatGPT does not automatically diminish the quality of the learning process, as long as students maintain an active role throughout the entire writing process.

Nevertheless, this study offers a slightly different perspective compared to previous research. Most prior studies have emphasized ChatGPT's effectiveness in enhancing productivity or the quality of learning. In contrast, this study demonstrates that the benefits of ChatGPT are determined not only by the technology's capabilities but also by how students position ChatGPT within the academic writing process. The research data show that students actively define ChatGPT's functions according to their individual needs, ranging from a grammar checker, a discussion partner, to a tool for exploring potential ideas. Thus, ChatGPT's function is dynamic and heavily influenced by the academic decisions made by users during the writing process.

The implications of these findings suggest that the use of ChatGPT in higher education should not be viewed solely as a threat to academic integrity. Instead, universities need to develop AI literacy that encourages students to understand the distinction between using AI as a supportive tool and as a substitute for critical thinking. This approach allows students to reap the benefits of

the technology without compromising their intellectual responsibility as the primary authors of scholarly works.

Overall, this theme demonstrates that ChatGPT has great potential as **an academic writing assistant** that supports various academic writing activities. However, these benefits heavily depend on how students utilize the technology during the process of drafting scholarly works. This discussion serves as the foundation for understanding the next theme: how the use of ChatGPT affects the authenticity of academic writing when the level of student engagement in the intellectual process begins to change.

2. Authenticity of Academic Writing Depends on Students' Intellectual Control

The research findings indicate that the use of ChatGPT does not automatically diminish the authenticity of students' academic writing. Rather, authenticity is determined more by the extent to which students maintain control over their thought processes, idea development, argument construction, and decision-making throughout the writing process. The results show that students who use ChatGPT as a supporting tool still view their work as the product of their own thinking because all academic decisions remain in the hands of the author. Conversely, when students begin to delegate most of the writing process to ChatGPT, they acknowledge that their sense of ownership over the writing begins to diminish.

These findings support the perspective (Perkins, 2023), which explains that the main challenge of using artificial intelligence in education does not lie in the existence of the technology itself, but rather in how that technology influences students' thought processes and intellectual responsibility. Perkins emphasizes that academic integrity is not sufficiently measured by the presence of AI in the writing process alone, but also through the author's active engagement in generating, evaluating, and taking responsibility for the content of scholarly work. In the context of this study, students who continued to develop ideas, construct arguments, and revise ChatGPT's output demonstrated a higher level of intellectual engagement compared to those who accepted the AI's output directly.

These findings also align with (Cotton et al., 2024), which states that the use of generative AI presents new challenges to the concept of authorship in higher education. Cotton explains that scholarly works are not only evaluated based on the quality of the final product but also reflect the author's thought processes, analytical skills, and academic responsibility. The findings of this study show that the participants were aware of this principle. They clearly distinguished between using ChatGPT to help improve the quality of their writing and using ChatGPT to replace the thinking process during the writing of their theses.

Similar findings were also reported by (Sullivan et al., 2023), which confirms that generative AI can provide significant benefits as long as users maintain oversight of the entire academic process. Sullivan emphasizes that the relationship between humans and AI should be collaborative, not substitutive. This perspective aligns with the participants' experiences in this study, which showed that ChatGPT was used as a tool to improve the quality of writing, while academic decision-making remained the responsibility of the students.

Furthermore, the findings of this study reinforce the argument of (Bretag, 2013) regarding academic integrity as a form of the author's moral and intellectual responsibility toward their scholarly work. From this perspective, authenticity is not only related to who wrote a sentence but also to the extent to which the author understands, masters, and is able to account for the entire content of the text produced. The research findings indicate that students begin to question the authenticity of their writing when they feel they no longer understand the content of the paragraphs

generated with the help of ChatGPT. Thus, the decline in authenticity observed in this study is not solely due to the use of AI, but rather to the author's reduced engagement in the knowledge-construction process.

These findings are also consistent with (Khalil & Er, 2023), which explains that the use of ChatGPT in higher education must be accompanied by critical thinking skills so that students do not merely passively accept AI-generated information. Students must still engage in the processes of evaluation, source verification, and rephrasing information in accordance with the context of the research being conducted. In line with this, Kosasih and Multazam (2024) emphasize the importance of AI literacy as a new competency that students must possess to be able to use technology responsibly without compromising academic integrity. The results of this study show that the ability to control the use of ChatGPT is a crucial factor in maintaining the authenticity of scholarly work.

Unlike most previous studies that discussed the relationship between ChatGPT and academic integrity within the framework of "whether or not it should be used," this study demonstrates that the main issue does not lie in the existence of the technology, but rather in the level of students' intellectual control over the writing process. These findings indicate that two students may use ChatGPT with nearly the same frequency but produce different levels of authenticity due to differences in how they manage their thought processes, evaluate AI outputs, and maintain ownership of the ideas they develop. This perspective broadens our understanding of authenticity in academic writing by positioning students as the primary actors who determine the quality of the relationship between AI and the academic process.

The implications of these findings highlight the need for a shift in approach when formulating AI usage policies at universities. Policies should not merely focus on restricting the use of ChatGPT but must also cultivate students' ability to use AI reflectively, critically, and responsibly. Strengthening AI literacy, information evaluation skills, and awareness of academic responsibility are crucial components in maintaining the authenticity of academic writing in the era of artificial intelligence.

Overall, the research results indicate that the authenticity of academic writing is not determined by the presence or absence of ChatGPT use, but rather by students' ability to maintain intellectual control throughout the process of producing scholarly work. These findings serve as a foundation for understanding the next theme: how the use of ChatGPT can evolve from a form of academic assistance to a state of dependency as that control begins to diminish.

3. From Assistance to Dependency: The Continuum of ChatGPT Use in Academic Writing

The research findings indicate that students' relationship with ChatGPT is not static but evolves along a spectrum ranging from academic assistance to dependency. Interview results reveal that some students use ChatGPT sparingly to support technical aspects of writing, such as proofreading, grammar checking, and developing initial ideas. Conversely, some participants acknowledged that increasingly intensive use led them to begin relying on ChatGPT to structure paragraphs, develop arguments, and even continue the writing process when facing difficulties. These findings suggest that the extent of ChatGPT's influence on academic writing is influenced not only by the frequency of use but also by the level of student engagement in the thinking process while composing academic papers.

These research results align with the (Risko & Gilbert, 2016) through the concept of *cognitive offloading* that is, the tendency of individuals to transfer part of their cognitive processes to external tools to reduce mental load. In the context of this study, ChatGPT serves as a tool that

allows students to reduce the burden of searching for information, constructing academic sentences, or developing the structure of their writing. Cognitive offloading is essentially a reasonable strategy in learning activities as long as it is used to support thinking skills rather than replace them. Therefore, the use of ChatGPT as an aid does not automatically indicate dependence.

These findings can also be explained through the theory of Self-Regulated Learning proposed by (Zimmerman, 2000). Zimmerman explains that students with self-regulation skills are able to set learning goals, monitor their thinking processes, evaluate the results of their work, and make independent decisions throughout the learning process. In this study, students who continued to demonstrate good self-regulation used ChatGPT selectively. They verified the information generated, adapted it to the research context, and rewrote the results based on their own understanding. In contrast, students who began to lose control over the writing process tended to accept ChatGPT's output without adequate evaluation. This difference indicates that self-regulation plays a crucial role in determining whether the use of ChatGPT remains at the level of assistance or develops into dependence.

The results of this study reinforce the findings of (Kardeş & Oran, 2024), which explain that the use of generative AI in education does not always have the same impact on every student. This impact is influenced by the purpose of use, critical thinking skills, and each individual's level of independent learning. This study shows that students who use ChatGPT as a tool to explore ideas or improve the quality of their writing are still able to maintain their academic responsibility. Conversely, students who begin to delegate most of the writing process to AI acknowledge a reduced understanding of the content of the texts they produce. Thus, the use of the same technology can lead to different academic consequences depending on how students manage it.

This perspective is also supported by (Jensen et al., 2025), which explains that early discussions regarding ChatGPT in higher education tend to frame AI as either a threat or a solution to learning. However, their findings suggest that the use of generative AI is better understood as part of a transformation in educational practices that requires responsible management and integration. The findings of this study expand on this perspective by showing that students' relationship with ChatGPT is not dichotomous but rather evolves along a continuum between *assistance* and *dependency*, influenced by students' level of intellectual control during the academic writing process.

These findings also complement previous studies, which generally addressed the benefits and risks of using ChatGPT separately. (Dwivedi et al., 2023) , and (Tlili et al., 2023) focus more on the potential of generative AI to enhance learning effectiveness, whereas (Perkins, 2023), and Khalil and Er (2023) place greater emphasis on the various challenges to academic integrity. This study shows that these two perspectives are not actually mutually exclusive. ChatGPT can provide benefits while also posing risks, depending on where students fall on the spectrum of AI usage. In other words, the relationship between students and ChatGPT cannot be understood through a simple dichotomy of "beneficial" or "harmful," but rather as a dynamic process influenced by the user's level of intellectual engagement.

This is the main contribution of this study. Unlike previous research, which tended to categorize ChatGPT use as either a positive or negative practice, this study proposes that the use of ChatGPT in academic writing is better understood as a continuum between assistance and dependency. Students' position on this continuum is not determined by how often they use ChatGPT, but by the extent to which they maintain ownership of their ideas, the ability to evaluate AI output, and academic responsibility for the resulting scholarly work. Thus, the *assistance*–

dependency continuum concept offers a new perspective on understanding the relationship between generative AI and the authenticity of academic writing.

The implication of these findings is that AI usage policies in higher education should not only focus on restricting the use of technology but also on strengthening students' ability to manage AI use responsibly. AI literacy programs should be designed to enhance critical thinking, self-regulation, information evaluation, and awareness of intellectual property. This approach enables students to derive maximum benefit from AI technology without losing their engagement in the learning and academic writing processes.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that ChatGPT's impact on the authenticity of academic writing cannot be explained through a simple cause-and-effect relationship. This influence arises from the interaction between the technology's capabilities and the ways in which students manage their thought processes. Therefore, maintaining the authenticity of academic writing in the AI era depends not only on technological developments but also on students' ability to maintain an active role as writers, decision-makers, and primary owners of the scholarly work they produce.

Table 2. Summary of Thematic Findings

Theme	Main Finding	Implication
ChatGPT as an Academic Writing Tool	ChatGPT helps students improve their grammar, expand their academic vocabulary, develop ideas, and increase efficiency during the thesis writing process.	ChatGPT serves as a supportive tool that can boost academic productivity when used appropriately.
The Influence of ChatGPT on the Authenticity of Academic Writing	The authenticity of the writing is maintained when students retain control over their ideas, arguments, and analytical processes. Conversely, overreliance on AI diminishes the students' sense of ownership over their work.	The authenticity of scholarly work is determined more by students' intellectual engagement than by the presence of AI itself.
From Assistance to Dependency	The use of ChatGPT falls on a spectrum, ranging from technical assistance to full dependence. The level of dependence is influenced by students' ability to control their thought processes while writing.	The line between <i>assistance</i> and <i>dependency</i> is determined by the level of student control over the academic process, not by the frequency of ChatGPT use.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the impact of ChatGPT use on the authenticity of academic writing among senior students in the English Language Education Program. Based on the research findings, ChatGPT is utilized as a supportive tool in various stages of academic writing, such as helping to understand the literature, correcting grammar, paraphrasing, developing ideas, and *proofreading*. The presence of ChatGPT provides tangible benefits in helping students overcome various technical challenges during the thesis writing process.

However, the research findings indicate that the use of ChatGPT does not directly determine the authenticity of academic writing. Authenticity is more influenced by the extent to which students maintain intellectual control over the writing process, including in developing ideas,

constructing arguments, evaluating information, and taking responsibility for the content of the resulting academic work. Students who use ChatGPT as a supportive tool are still able to maintain ownership of their writing, whereas excessive use tends to reduce their understanding of and sense of ownership over their academic work.

This study also shows that the relationship between students and ChatGPT cannot be understood through a simple dichotomy of “good” or “bad” use. Rather, the use of ChatGPT exists on a continuum ranging from assistance to dependency, depending on the level of student engagement in the process of academic thinking and decision-making. Thus, ChatGPT’s impact on the authenticity of academic writing is not determined by the technology itself, but rather by how students manage and control its use during the writing process.

This study has several limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results. First, this study was conducted at a single institution, namely the English Education Study Program at Universitas Nurul Jadid; therefore, the results cannot yet be generalized to describe the experiences of students from different study programs, universities, or educational contexts. Second, this study employed a qualitative case study approach using semi-structured interviews as the primary data source. Although this approach provides an in-depth understanding of students’ experiences and perceptions, the study did not directly observe the academic writing process or analyse the documents or drafts produced during the use of ChatGPT. Third, this study focused solely on the use of ChatGPT as one type of generative AI technology. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot yet describe the characteristics of use or the impact of other generative AI platforms with different features and capabilities.

Given these limitations, future research is expected to involve participants from various universities, academic programs, and different academic backgrounds to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the use of generative AI in academic writing. Future research is also recommended to use a *mixed-methods* or *longitudinal* approach so that it cannot only describe students’ perceptions but also analyse changes in ChatGPT usage patterns and their impact on the authenticity of academic writing over a longer period. Additionally, future research could combine interview data with document analysis, observations of the writing process, or comparisons of writing outcomes before and after AI use to gain a more comprehensive picture of ChatGPT’s influence on the process and outcomes of academic writing. Future research could also expand the scope by comparing the use of various generative AI platforms such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, or other similar technologies to provide a broader understanding of the characteristics, benefits, and challenges of each technology in supporting academic writing in higher education.

The findings of this study imply that universities need to develop AI usage policies focused on enhancing students’ AI literacy, critical thinking skills, and academic responsibility. Such an approach enables the optimal use of ChatGPT as a learning support tool without compromising the integrity and authenticity of students’ academic work.

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