Jo-ELT (Journal of English Language Teaching)
Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa dan Seni
Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP
https://e-journal.undikma.ac.id/index.php/joelt
Email: joelt@undikma.ac.id

December 2025. Vol. 12 No. 2
e-ISSN: 2548-5865
p-ISSN: 2355-0309
pp.469-481
https://doi.org/10.33394/jo-elt.v12i2.17549

AI AS A STUDY PARTNER: EXPLORING HOMEWORK PRACTICES, CHALLENGES, AND POTENTIALS AMONG NON-EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

[1*]Yunika Triana, [2]Dewi Zulaiha

[1]Faculty of Sharia, Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta, Indonesia
[2]Faculty of English Education, Institut Cinta Tanah Air, Indonesia

*Corresponding author email: yunika@staff.uinsaid.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The rapid integration of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education has created a new landscape filled with both opportunities and challenges, especially in the context of language learning. While AI offers undeniable convenience for English language tasks, its independent use creates significant ethical and pedagogical dilemmas. This study, therefore, aims to explore these challenges and the potential of AI in completing English language course homework. This case study utilized semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis to describe and explain the revealed duality in the role of AI. The research reveals a duality in the role of AI. As a positive catalyst, AI serves as an effective cognitive assistant, providing ideational frameworks, initial concepts, and instant feedback that empower students to learn independently (self-directed learning). However, as a source of challenges, AI has been shown to produce biased and inaccurate data, and its unwise use raises serious ethical issues. These issues extend beyond plagiarism to include the erosion of critical thinking skills and a decline in intellectual originality when students use it indiscriminately as a substitute for cognitive effort. This study recommends using AI as a tool for self-learning, but it is necessary to limit students' use of AI. Furthermore, institutions are recommended to adapt AI but need to strengthen students' digital literacy through structured AI usage guidelines.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Received: 13 September 2025
1st revision: 2 November 2025
2nd revision: 1 December 2025
Accepted: 11 December 2025
Published: 30 December 2025

Keywords:
Artificial intelligence;
English language course;
Self-learning;
Digital literacy

How to cite: Triana, Y., & Zulaiha, D. (2025). AI as a Study Partner: Exploring Homework Practices, Challenges, and Potentials Among Non-EFL University Students. *Jo-ELT (Journal of English Language Teaching) Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa & Seni Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP*, *12*(2), 469–481. https://doi.org/10.33394/jo-elt.v12i2.17549

INTRODUCTION

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) has ushered in a new era in English language learning, fundamentally changing the pedagogical landscape. This transformation shifts from statistical tools like basic spelling and grammar checkers to more dynamic and interactive platforms, historically an evolution of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) (Chen et al., 2024). The advent of generative language models and advanced algorithms now enables personalized corrective feedback and authentic conversational simulation, surpassing the capabilities of previous generations of software (Lin et al., 2026;

Zou et al., 2025). As a result, the learning paradigm shifts further, facilitating an adaptive learning environment where learners can practice independently and receive instant guidance, fundamentally changing their role from passive recipients to active participants in the language acquisition process (Agung et al., 2025; Du, 2025).

The transformative potential of AI in education aligns directly with the global development agenda to create equitable access to and quality learning. As UNESCO emphasizes, AI has tremendous potential to address some of the greatest challenges in education today, and to innovate teaching and learning practices (UNESCO, 2021). This capability is crucial in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which targets inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (UN, 2015). Furthermore, UNESCO also advocates a human-centered approach, ensuring that the application of AI technology in education aims to enhance human capacities and not replace them, so that technology serves as a tool to empower educators and enrich human interactions in the learning process, such as language learning in the classroom (UNESCO, 2021).

Furthermore, AI in language learning has the potential to significantly enhance self-regulated learning (SRL), a crucial competency for lifelong learners. In language acquisition, AI-based tools can support the three main phases of SRL proposed by Du (2025) and Daiu et al. (2026), namely planning, monitoring, and reflection. In the planning phase, AI systems can help students set realistic learning goals and develop personalized learning paths to achieve them, a function supported by intelligent tutoring systems (Katsarou et al., 2023; Triana, 2023). During the monitoring phase, AI offers instant, data-driven feedback, allowing students to track their progress in real-time and identify errors immediately (Shukla et al., 2025). In the reflection phase, AI-powered learning analytics dashboards can visualize students' learning patterns and performance, encouraging them to reflect and adjust their learning strategies for better results in the future (Shen et al., 2023). While AI offers great potential, its use in language learning, even for non-EFL students, presents significant pedagogical and ethical challenges. While the primary risk for EFL students is the atrophy of language editing skills (Alzubi et al., 2025; Neshkovska, 2025). For non-EFL students, the challenge shifts to the risk of inhibiting metacognitive and critical thinking skills (Alruwaili & Kianfar, 2025). For them, AI could be misused not as a language aid but as an instant answer generator, directly undermining academic integrity. This creates an ethical gray area that challenges traditional notions of originality (Alawad et al., 2025). Moreover, the urgency of this study is underscored by preliminary empirical observations conducted in the classroom. The researcher identified significant anomalies in student submissions, characterized by factual discrepancies, narratives that appeared linguistically coherent yet substantively inaccurate. This phenomenon raises profound pedagogical concerns regarding the erosion of students' information verification processes. However, AI's pedagogical potential remains if used responsibly, for example, as a "virtual tutor" for writing scaffolding (Belda-Medina & Kokošková, 2023; Triana, 2023). To balance these potentials and risks, a paradigm shift is needed in which educators "redesign assignments that emphasize process, reflection, and creative application." (Muthmainnah et al., 2024), while remaining vigilant about fundamental ethical issues such as data privacy and algorithmic bias (Alzubi et al., 2025).

Thus, the integration of AI in education not only provides advantages but also requires high vigilance because of the fundamental shift in risk, from the erosion of technical language skills in EFL students to the degradation of critical thinking and metacognitive skills in non-EFL students. This creates a serious ethical dilemma, as the use of AI has the potential to shift from a mere language learning aid to a shortcut that undermines academic integrity and the activation of definitions of originality. Therefore, this study aims to explore

in-depth the challenges and potential of AI use by non-EFL students in completing English course assignments. This research will also provide recommendations for lecturers and students in using AI in an effort to build a framework for ethical and effective use, which supports the achievement of learning objectives without sacrificing academic integrity.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach rooted in the interpretive tradition, aiming to understand how individuals make sense of their experiences within the world (Kayyali, 2025). This approach was chosen because it aimed to understand the phenomenon of AI use in-depth, context-rich ways, and holistically explore participants' perspectives. Specifically, a case study design was chosen as the research strategy. According to Cresswell (2012), a case study design is a strategy in which researchers deeply investigate a program, event, or group of individuals. This design is highly relevant because, as DeHart (2024) emphasizes, case studies excel at answering the questions of "how" and "why" a phenomenon occurs within a real-life context that cannot be separated from its variables.

A case study design was used to examine the phenomenon of students' use of AI to complete English assignments. This "case" is defined as a "bounded system." (Delmas & Giles, 2023), specifically focusing on one compulsory university English class at the Faculty of Sharia, on one class, at Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Mas Said Surakarta in Indonesia. Data collection was conducted intensively over one semester (14 weeks) in the even semester of 2025. This population was chosen intentionally due to its unique contextual relevance: (1) as non-EFL students, their primary focus tends to be completing assignments efficiently rather than language acquisition, making them a relevant population for examining motivations for using AI; and (2) within the Faculty of Sharia's context, their background in Islamic law, ethics, and morality provides a rich lens to explore how they personally navigate perceptions of ethics and academic integrity when faced with AI technology.

This design allows the researcher to intensively explore the complex interactions between students (actors), AI technology (tools), and academic assignments (contexts). The goal is not simply to describe actions, but rather to understand the "processes and meanings" that participants construct from those experiences (Ayed et al., 2024), resulting in a rich and contextual understanding.

Subject

The participants in this study were five active students (three females and two males, aged 19–21) from the Faculty of Sharia, a non-EFL study program. All participants were in their second academic year (semester 2) and had English proficiency levels ranging from A2 (Elementary) to B1 (Intermediate) based on the university's initial placement test. In Addition, they followed a full semester.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select students who (1) actively used AI for English assignments and (2) could articulate their experiences. The target participant pool was five students, a number deemed sufficient for a qualitative case study to achieve data saturation, where no significant new information emerges from additional interviews.

Instruments

The primary instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher herself (the researcher as the key instrument). To ensure the data collection process is systematic and focused, the researcher uses a semi-structured interview guide as a tool. This guide contains a series of open-ended questions designed to explore students' perceptions and experiences in depth, while still providing flexibility for the researcher to ask follow-up questions (probing questions) based on participant responses. This interview guide is structured around three

main themes that are the focus of the research: (1) the potential of AI as a learning accelerator, (2) the risks of dependency and its impact on critical thinking skills, and (3) ethical dilemmas faced by students.

An interview guide was then developed based on a literature review on human-AI interaction and academic ethics. To ensure validity and alignment with the research objectives, the draft guide was peer-reviewed by two experts, one in Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and one in digital ethics. Interviews were conducted individually face-to-face to provide flexibility and comfort for participants. Each session lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, was audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and then transcribed verbatim to ensure data accuracy.

Data Analysis

Data collected from interview transcripts were analyzed in depth using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The analysis process began with an introductory phase, in which the researcher repeatedly read the transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding. Following this, initial coding was conducted manually. The researcher read the data line by line and assigned descriptive labels (codes) to relevant data segments, for example, (language anxiety) or (relying on ideas). These codes were then announced to identify potential themes.

To review and validate coherence, a critical review process was conducted. This not only involved creating a thematic map to visualize the relationships between themes but also validated through a peer debriefing session. In this session, the researcher outlined the theme structure and initial interpretations to an academic colleague to challenge assumptions, ensure the internal consistency of the themes, and mitigate potential researcher bias.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

Thematic analysis of semi-structured interview data yielded three main interrelated themes. These themes comprehensively address the research question of how AI tools are being utilized to improve language skills and self-directed learning, as well as the associated risks such as dependency, potential plagiarism, and impact on critical thinking skills.

AI as a Language Skills Accelerator and a Catalyst for Self-Learning

The first finding shows that students actively utilize AI as an effective tool to accelerate their English language acquisition and encourage independent learning. AI is not viewed as a substitute for lecturers, but rather as a personal learning assistant available at all times. This potential manifest itself in two main functions: as a sparring partner and as a provider of instant feedback. As a brainstorming partner, AI is used in the early stages of assignments to overcome ideas blockages and build a framework for thinking. Students feel AI helps them structure complex ideas. As one participant expressed:

> "When I get an essay assignment and the topic is difficult, I often get stuck. I usually ask ChatGPT for an outline or key points. Not to copy, but to stimulate my own ideas. From there, I develop them using my own research and writing style. It's like having a personal assistant helping me create a roadmap." (Student A)

Data from respondent Student A demonstrates a model of strategic and ethical use of AI, in which the technology plays a dual role. As a language skills accelerator, AI is utilized to overcome writer's block by providing a "roadmap" in the form of an essay outline, allowing students to focus their energies on higher cognitive tasks such as in-depth research and developing an authentic style. Simultaneously, AI acts as a catalyst for self-directed learning as students proactively seek solutions, using the tool to "spark ideas" while

consciously maintaining academic integrity by avoiding plagiarism. Thus, students position AI not as a shortcut, but as a personal assistant that empowers their thinking process and strengthens their autonomy as learners.

As providers of instant feedback, AI tools like Grammarly or QuillBot are considered invaluable for improving technical aspects of language, such as grammar and word choice. This functionality allows students to self-correct in real time, a process that previously relied heavily on instructor intervention. This directly boosts their confidence and independence.

> "I used to be the least confident with grammar. Every time I wrote, I was always worried about making mistakes. Now, with Grammarly, I can immediately see where the mistakes are and how to correct them. This forces me to learn from my mistakes immediately, instead of having to wait a week for corrections from my lecturer. The learning process is faster, and I've become more independent." (Student B)

Data from Student B illustrates AI as both an effective language skills accelerator and a catalyst for self-directed learning. Using Grammarly, students receive instant, contextual grammar corrections, significantly accelerating the learning cycle by eliminating the need to wait for instructor feedback. This real-time correction process not only improves writing in real-time but also encourages students to actively learn from their mistakes, ultimately boosting their confidence and independence. The AI, in this case, serves as a personal, always-available mentor, transforming the writing improvement process from a passive waiting for evaluation to a proactive, ongoing, self-paced practice.

The data from both respondents collectively illustrates the role of AI as an adaptive pedagogical tool and an autonomy enabler, not just a shortcut. While both utilized AI as a skills accelerator and a catalyst for self-directed learning, their focuses differed strategically. Student A used it for higher-order cognitive scaffolding (essay and idea frameworks), freeing up mental resources for in-depth research. In contrast, Student B relied on it as a micro-skills mentor (instant grammar correction), accelerating feedback cycles and building confidence. Despite these differences in approach, the interpretation of the data reveals a common pattern, when used proactively and ethically. AI transforms into a personal assistant that empowers learners' autonomy, both in the structuring of ideas and in the technical execution of writing.

Overdependence and the Erosion of Critical Thinking Skills

Despite its potential, a second theme that emerged strongly was the risk of over-reliance, which can erode critical thinking skills. The ease and speed with which AI can provide answers often act as a double-edged sword. Participants noted a tendency to take shortcuts, ultimately hindering in-depth learning. This dependency manifested itself in a decreased sense of urgency when faced with complex problems. Several students acknowledged the reflex to immediately ask questions of AI rather than try to solve problems independently.

> "Honestly, sometimes I feel lazy about thinking. If there's a difficult reading comprehension question, the temptation is huge to just copy and paste it into the AI. I do get the answer, but I realize I'm missing out on analyzing the text. My analytical skills could become stagnant if this continues." (Student C)

Student C's statement clearly illustrates the negative side of AI, related to over-reliance and the erosion of critical thinking skills. Respondents acknowledged that the convenience offered by AI creates a strong temptation to take shortcuts, seeking answers directly without going through the proper intellectual process. This "lazy thinking" attitude is a symptom of dependency, where students rely more on the machine's output than on their own abilities. More profoundly, this erodes critical thinking skills because students consciously admit to

"skipping the process of analyzing text," a fundamental skill that involves deep understanding, interpretation, and evaluation of information. If continued, this habit risks dulling analytical skills and turning students into passive recipients of information, rather than active and critical processors.

Furthermore, participants also recognized that AI, while sophisticated, cannot replace higher-level cognitive processes such as synthesis, evaluation, and argumentation. There are concerns that the unwise use of AI could produce students who are technically proficient but weak in substance and critical analysis.

> "AI can make our writing look grammatically perfect, but it doesn't necessarily guarantee meaningful content. It can't teach us how to construct a strong argument or critique a theory. The challenge is knowing when to use AI for polish and when to rely on our own brains for deep thinking. This is the hardest part." (Student A)

Student A's statement sharply highlights the risk of over-reliance on AI, which could lead to the erosion of critical thinking skills. Respondents recognized that while AI is capable of producing technically (grammatically) perfect writing, this perfection is superficial and does not guarantee "content of substance." This reliance is dangerous because AI does not train users to perform essential cognitive tasks, such as constructing strong arguments or critiquing theories. The greatest challenge identified is the difficulty in determining the line between using AI as a polishing tool and when to rely solely on intellectual capabilities, a dilemma that, if not recognized, can deprive students of the ability to think deeply and independently.

Collectively, the data from Students C and A clearly identify a key danger of AI. Its role as an agent of cognitive erosion can trigger over-reliance. Student C highlights erosion at the process level, where the ease of AI creates the temptation of "lazy thinking" and encourages students to consciously "skip the process of analyzing," turning them into passive recipients. Student A complements this diagnosis by highlighting erosion at the product level, where AI is capable of producing superficial technical (grammatical) perfection but fails to train essential cognitive tasks such as constructing substantial content or critical arguments. These two perspectives converge on a single analytical conclusion: the greatest challenge is not the technology itself, but rather the inability of users to distinguish the line between an intellectual aid and a crutch, which, if not done, risks blunting the ability for independent analysis.

Ethical dilemmas faced by Students

The most prominent theme was the confusion and ethical dilemma students faced regarding the boundary between reasonable use of AI and plagiarism. The lack of clear guidelines from institutions or lecturers created a "gray area" that left students uncertain. Participants expressed difficulty defining these boundaries. The use of AI for paraphrasing, for example, was a major source of contention.

> "The line is very thin. If I have an original idea, I write it in my own words, and then I ask QuillBot to paraphrase it to make it more academic, is that plagiarism? I don't think so, because the idea is mine. But my friend said that's cheating. We need clear rules about this." (Student D)

Data from Student D highlights how overreliance on AI paraphrasing tools like QuillBot creates ethical confusion that can lead to the erosion of critical thinking skills. The respondent indicated a "very fine line" between perfecting writing and cheating, as he began outsourcing the fundamental task of academic writing structuring sentences that conform to scientific conventions to machines. This reliance risks eroding students' ability to develop their own academic writing style, as they no longer practice transforming original ideas into

structured arguments in their own language. The confusion and debate over the legitimacy of this practice indicate the potential for students to become reliant on tools to "sound academic" without truly mastering the thinking and language skills necessary to achieve this.

Furthermore, academic integrity issues arise when students observe the misuse of AI by their peers. This raises concerns about the fairness of grading and the devaluation of students' honest work.

> "The ethical issues are real. I've seen friends submit essays that were 90% created by ChatGPT, with only minor changes. That's clearly unfair to those of us who put in the hard work of researching and writing from scratch. My concern is that lecturers might not be able to distinguish between those who are using AI wisely as a tool and those who are outright cheating." (Student E)

Data from Student E highlights a clear manifestation of over-reliance on AI. Academic dishonesty, which inherently leads to the erosion of critical thinking skills. Respondents observed their peers handing in assignments whose substance was generated by AI, an act that demonstrates a complete surrender of the intellectual process and a complete disregard for the development of research, analysis, and argumentation skills. This phenomenon not only creates inequity but also raises systemic concerns that, if undetected, the academic environment will tolerate and even encourage the erosion of intellectual standards, where the ability to think critically and independently is no longer valued or developed. Overall, these findings indicate that while AI offers great potential as a learning tool, its use is accompanied by significant challenges related to independent thinking and academic ethics, requiring better digital literacy and guidelines.

Data from Students D and E demonstrate how reliance on AI can erode thinking skills in two areas including writing style and content. Student D treads a fine line ethically when using a paraphrasing tool, which risks students losing their authentic academic writing style by handing over sentence construction to a machine. Student E demonstrates a more severe example of academic dishonesty, where AI handles the entire body of the writing (research and analysis). Both demonstrate that this reliance creates a dangerous imbalance between the appearance of good writing and actual mastery of the material, ultimately dulling critical thinking.

Discussion

The findings indicate that students view AI not as a replacement for their thinking but as a supportive tool that aids idea generation and language tasks. This aligns with self-regulated learning, where learners strategically use external resources to plan and monitor their progress (Zimmerman, 2000), and with distributed cognition, which considers AI as an external support that extends cognitive capabilities (Hutchins, 2000). In this context, AI acts as a "more knowledgeable other" that provides temporary assistance such as essay outlines or grammar corrections, enabling students to tackle tasks previously beyond their own capabilities. Student A's account of using AI to generate an outline is a clear example of conceptual scaffolding, helping him structure his thoughts before writing. This proves that AI can be an Open Educational Resource that helps students to provide very rich ideas, concepts, and learning materials (Zulaiha & Triana, 2023). Furthermore, this AI-mediated scaffolding process inherently fosters the development of metacognitive skills, which are central to self-regulated learning (Daiu et al., 2026; Wei, 2023). When students receive advice from AI, they are required to make a decision: to accept, reject, or modify the advice. This interaction forces them to actively reflect on the quality of their own work, evaluate weaknesses, and consciously choose strategies for improvement, transforming them from passive learners into active managers of their own learning process.

Based on the interview results, AI has been proven capable of improving learning outcomes in language skills by transforming into a dynamic and personalized learning partner. The ease with which students complete course assignments stems not only from AI's ability to generate text but also from its function as a cognitive facilitator that provides fresh ideas to overcome creative blockages and provides instant feedback for improvement. This real-time feedback process is key to accelerated learning; students can immediately identify and correct grammatical and sentence structure errors without having to wait for evaluation from the lecturer. This aligns with the findings of Neshkovska (2025) who stated that AI assistance, such as ChatGPT, effectively improves students' writing skills by providing automatic suggestions and corrections, thus creating an efficient self-learning cycle where each writing assignment also serves as a directed and constructive practice session. Furthermore, constant interaction with AI as a personal editor gradually builds students' confidence in writing. Anxiety about technical errors is reduced, allowing them to experiment more boldly with more complex sentence structures and focus on more substantive elements of writing, such as logical argument development, coherent narrative flow, and depth of critical analysis (Chomicz, 2024; Liu & Zhang, 2025).

The role of AI as a provider of instant feedback, as expressed by Student B, corroborates previous research on the effectiveness of Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE). Habeb and Marcel (2025) found that the immediate and specific formative feedback from the AWE system significantly improved students' grammatical accuracy and self-confidence. This finding also supports the self-regulated learning model of Muthmainnah et al. (2024), where the self-monitoring phase is crucial. With AI, students can actively monitor and correct their errors in real time, a process that fosters autonomy and reduces reliance on instructors' limited feedback schedules. Thus, AI not only improves the technical aspects of writing but also empowers students to take control of their learning process.

While previous research (e.g., Habeb & Marcel, 2025) focused on how AI improves linguistic accuracy and language learning, these findings highlight a different dynamic for non-EFL students. For them, AI functions not simply as a language corrector, but as a cognitive facilitator for task management. Consequently, the main identified risks also shift: from mere language acquisition failure to erosion of critical reasoning ("lazy thinking") and the production of "shallow content." (Baumgartner, 2023), which were core concerns expressed by participants.

On the other hand, findings regarding the risk of over-reliance and the erosion of critical thinking skills confirm concerns widely voiced in the literature. The phenomenon described by Student C, "lazy to think," is a manifestation of cognitive offloading, the tendency to delegate cognitive tasks to external devices (Tuong & Tran, 2025). While efficient, excessive offloading can hinder the development of internal mental schemas and problem-solving skills. When students reflexively turn to AI for immediate answers, they miss out on "desirable difficulties," a concept in cognitive psychology that suggests that deep learning occurs when the brain is forced to struggle to solve a problem. Furthermore, user reliance on data presented by AI can produce bias (Rusdin et al., 2024; Shruthi et al., 2025).

Student A's concern that AI cannot teach how to construct strong arguments is highly relevant. This highlights the fundamental difference between generating text (syntactic production) and critical reasoning (semantic and pragmatic processes). Baumgartner (2023) argues that generative language models like ChatGPT excel at mimicking linguistic patterns, but lack the evaluation, synthesis, or contextual awareness capabilities that are at the heart of critical thinking. Relying on AI for tasks requiring in-depth analysis risks producing graduates capable of producing superficially polished text but lacking in substance and original argumentation. Furthermore, AI is highly likely to produce suggestions or feedback that lack emotional and cognitive engagement (Habeb & Marcel, 2025). This can lead to a

shallow and transactional learning process, where students act as mere "operators" receiving and applying corrections without deep intellectual engagement. Consequently, opportunities to practice self-evaluation, debate ideas, and internalize the structured ways of thinking that often emerge from nuanced, human dialogue and feedback are lost.

This study provides an original contextual contribution by shifting the focus of the dominant literature from EFL students to non-EFL students. The findings reveal a fundamental shift in the role of AI, from functioning primarily as a linguistic corrector in EFL contexts to acting as a cognitive and structural facilitator in non-EFL settings. In this context, students' primary motivation for using AI is efficient task management rather than language acquisition. This functional shift reflects a change in how learning processes are mediated by technological tools. Rather than supporting gradual cognitive engagement and skill development, AI is frequently used to streamline or substitute complex cognitive processes, enabling students to complete academic tasks with minimal intellectual effort. As a result, learning becomes increasingly outcome-oriented rather than process-oriented. However, the generalizability of these findings is limited by the small qualitative sample size and the specific institutional context of the Faculty of Sharia (PTKIN), where ethical and religious considerations may shape students' perceptions and use of AI.

Ethical dilemmas highlight how generative AI has blurred the traditional boundaries of academic integrity. Student D's confusion about the use of paraphrasing tools like QuillBot reflects a "grey area" currently under debate globally. According to Eaton (2021) technology has changed the definition of authorship, making existing plagiarism policies often inadequate. When an original idea is "polished" by AI, questions of intellectual ownership become complex. Furthermore, Student E submitted an assignment largely generated by AI with minimal personal intervention, seemingly using the technology as a substitute author. This behavior highlights an ethical gray area, where the content evades conventional plagiarism detection despite lacking authentic intellectual property. This shows that students are facing a new type of violation that is no longer based on 'textual copying', but rather 'algorithmic authorship' of ideas, which demands a radical evolution from mere similarity checks to verification of cognitive processes (Kumar et al., 2024).

Concerns about the fairness and misuse of AI align with research by Sullivan et al. (2023), which found that without clear guidelines, there is a significant gap in AI usage practices among students. This creates an unfair assessment environment, where students who adhere to traditional ethical standards may be disadvantaged compared to those who utilize AI extensively without oversight. These findings underscore the urgency for educational institutions to develop clear ethical frameworks and guidelines for AI use, rather than simply banning it. Without AI literacy and adaptive policies, AI's potential to democratize access to information could undermine the foundations of fairness and originality in academia. Furthermore, the biased data generated by AI presents a new layer of risk to academic integrity. AI is not a neutral entity. It is trained using data from the internet, which is rife with historical, social, and cultural biases. This aligns with warnings from researchers like Noble (2018) in his work, Algorithms of Oppression, he shows how digital platforms can perpetuate harmful stereotypes. When students use these tools without critical awareness, they risk unconsciously adopting and reproducing these biases in their academic work, ultimately undermining objectivity and intellectual fairness. Therefore, the challenge for educators goes beyond simply detecting plagiarism to developing "critical AI literacy" that equips students to question, interrogate, and deconstruct AI output before using it (Cooper et al., 2025).

This research is unique because it focuses on non-EFL students, unlike most other studies on EFL students. While for EFL students, AI paraphrasing tools are often considered "language assistance," these findings highlight a deeper dilemma for non-EFL students. Their

confusion isn't about language, but rather about handing over the task of thinking and constructing arguments to AI. In other words, for fluent speakers, the ethical debate shifts from mere "assistance" to fundamental questions of originality and intellectual ownership.

CONCLUSION

This research conclusively demonstrates that generative AI has significant potential to act as a language skills accelerator and a catalyst for self-directed learning. When positioned as a cognitive assistant, AI serves as an effective scaffolding tool. Through instant feedback and structured assistance, students are able not only to improve the technical quality of their writing but also to build confidence and autonomy as self-regulated learners. These findings underscore the shift in technology's role from being merely a source of information to an active partner in the learning process.

While AI holds transformative potential to personalize learning and scaffold student development, this study confirms that its unchecked use fosters a culture of cognitive offloading that threatens the integrity of non-EFL education. For Sharia students specifically, this manifests not merely as a loss of skill but as a unique ethical paradox where the convenience of instant answers violates the core value of *Sidq* (fair), effectively hollowing out the moral rigor required of future religious scholars. To bridge the gap between this technological capability and pedagogical necessity, institutions must adopt a collaborative framework of Critical AI Literacy. Lecturers must design assignments that demand critical contextualization, while students must treat AI as a brainstorming partner rather than a final authority. Besides, the future direction of AI integration in higher education lies not in efforts to ban or unconditionally embrace this technology, but rather in the ability of institutions to adapt. The key is equipping students with "critical AI literacy," the ability to utilize AI as a powerful tool while remaining aware of its limitations, questioning its output, and maintaining intellectual integrity as original and responsible thinkers. Ultimately, while these findings are bound by the specific context of a small-scale qualitative study, they signal an urgent need for broader research into how higher education can harness AI without sacrificing the intellectual struggle that defines true academic and moral maturation.

REFERENCES

Agung, A. S. S. N., Ayong, H., & Feri, Z. O. (2025). An English teacher's lived experience in online vs limited face-to-face learning. *Advanced Research in English Education and Linguistics, 1*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.63120/areel.v1i1.49

Alawad, E. A., Ayadi, H. H., & Alhinai, A. A. (2025). Guarding integrity: A case study on tackling AI-generated content and plagiarism in academic writing. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 15*(6), 1730–1742. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1506.02

Alruwaili, A. R., & Kianfar, Z. (2025). Investigating EFL female Saudi teachers' attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT in English language teaching. *Forum for Linguistic Studies, 7*(2), 203–216. https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i2.7937

Alzubi, A. A. F., Nazim, M., & Alyami, N. (2025). Do AI-generative tools kill or nurture creativity in EFL teaching and learning? *Education and Information Technologies, 30*(11), 15147–15184. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-025-13409-8

Ayed, T. L., Ali, I., Abdelhamid, H., & Mohamed, A. H. (2024). *Utilizing case studies in business education*. IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-3779-0

Baumgartner, C. (2023). The opportunities and pitfalls of ChatGPT in clinical and translational medicine. *Clinical and Translational Medicine, 13*(3), e1206. https://doi.org/10.1002/ctm2.1206

Belda-Medina, J., & Kokošková, V. (2023). Integrating chatbots in education: Insights from the Chatbot-Human Interaction Satisfaction Model (CHISM). *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 20*(1), Article 43.

https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00432-3

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589–597. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

Chen, B., Bao, L., Zhang, R., Zhang, J., Liu, F., Wang, S., & Li, M. (2024). A multi-strategy computer-assisted EFL writing learning system with deep learning incorporated and its effects on learning: A writing feedback perspective. *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 61*(8), 60–102. https://doi.org/10.1177/07356331231189294

Chomicz, M. (2024). Enhancing EFL writing skills for adult deaf and hard of hearing individuals. *Frontiers in Education, 9*, Article 1504503. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1504503

Cooper, G., Tang, K.-S., & Fitzgerald, A. (2025). Intersections of mind and machine: Navigating the nexus of artificial intelligence, science education, and the preparation of pre-service teachers. *Journal of Science Education and Technology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-025-10200-9

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson.

Daiu, S., Qosja, A., & Ali, M. (2026). Integrating artificial intelligence in English language classrooms: Enhancing English for specific purposes education. In *Lecture notes of the institute for computer sciences, social-informatics and telecommunications engineering* (Vol. 623, pp. 161–183). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-92625-9_11

DeHart, J. D. (2024). *Utilizing case studies in literacy and language education*. IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-5738-5

Delmas, P. M., & Giles, R. L. (2023). Qualitative research approaches and their application in education. In R. J. Tierney, F. Rizvi, & K. Ercikan (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of education* (4th ed., pp. 24–32). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-818630-5.11003-6

Du, Q. (2025). How artificially intelligent conversational agents influence EFL learners' self-regulated learning and retention. *Education and Information Technologies*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-025-13602-9

Eaton, S. E. (2021). *Plagiarism in higher education: Tackling tough topics in academic integrity*. Libraries Unlimited. https://doi.org/10.5040/9798400697142

Habeb, A.-O. L., & Marcel, P. (2025). AI partner versus human partner: Comparing AI-based peer assessment with human-generated peer assessment in examining writing skills. *Language Testing in Asia, 15*(1), Article 18. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-025-00375-8

Hutchins, E. (2000). Distributed cognition. In *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (pp. 2068–2072). Elsevier.

Katsarou, E., Wild, F., Sougari, A.-M., & Chatzipanagiotou, P. (2023). A systematic review of voice-based intelligent virtual agents in EFL education. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning, 18*(10), 65–85. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v18i10.37723

Kayyali, M. (2025). Research methodology: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. In *Navigating theory, methodology, and researcher development in doctoral research* (pp. 93–121). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-5676-1.ch004

Kumar, R., Eaton, S. E., Mindzak, M., & Morrison, R. (2024). Academic integrity and artificial intelligence: An overview. In *Springer international handbooks of education* (pp. 1583–1596). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5_153

Lin, J., Rao, J., Zhao, S. Y., Wang, Y., Gurung, A., Barany, A., Ocumpaugh, J., Baker, R. S., & Koedinger, K. R. (2026). Automatic large language models creation of interactive

learning lessons. In *Lecture notes in computer science* (Vol. 16063, pp. 259–274). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-03870-8_18

Liu, M., & Zhang, L. J. (2025). Examining language learners' GenAI-assisted writing self-efficacy profiles and the relationship with their writing self-regulated learning strategies. *System, 134*, 103826. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103826

Muthmainnah, M., Cardoso, L., Alsbbagh, Y. A. M. R., Al Yakin, A., & Apriani, E. (2024). Advancing sustainable learning by boosting student self-regulated learning and feedback through AI-driven personalized in EFL education. In *Lecture notes in networks and systems* (Vol. 1033, pp. 36–54). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-63717-9_3

Neshkovska, S. (2025). The benefits and risks of AI-assisted academic writing: Insights from current research. *ELOPE: English Language Overseas Perspectives and Enquiries, 22*(1), 55–68. https://doi.org/10.4312/elope.22.1.55-68

Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism*. NYU Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1pwt9w5

Rusdin, D., Mukminatien, N., Suryati, N., & Laksmi, E. D. (2024). Critical thinking in the AI era: An exploration of EFL students' perceptions, benefits, and limitations. *Cogent Education, 11*(1), Article 2290342. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2290342

Shen, C., Shi, P., Guo, J., Xu, S., & Tian, J. (2023). From process to product: Writing engagement and performance of EFL learners under computer-generated feedback instruction. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, Article 1258286. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1258286

Shruthi, H. L., Radhakrishnan, A., Veigas, A. D., Railis, D. J., & Dinesh, R. S. (2025). Analyzing pedagogy and education in English language teaching using information and communication technology. *Education and Information Technologies, 30*(12), 16551–16573. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-025-13439-2

Shukla, A., Meeprom, B., Khunasathitchai, K., & Yadav, N. (2025). *AI-powered English teaching*. IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-1952-0

Sullivan, M., Kelly, A., & McLaughlan, P. (2023). ChatGPT in higher education: Considerations for academic integrity and student learning. *Journal of Applied Learning & Teaching, 6*(1), 31–40. https://doi.org/10.37074/jalt.2023.6.1.17

Triana, Y. (2023). *Belajar bahasa Inggris aktif berbasis artificial intelligence*. CV Presscience. https://presscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Belajar-Bahasa-Inggris-Aktif-Berbasis-AI.pdf

Tuong, T.-P.-L., & Tran, T.-T. (2025). The differential impact of AI tools among EFL university learners: A process writing approach. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 24*(5), 452–471. https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.24.5.24

United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development* (General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1).

UNESCO. (2021). *AI and education: Guidance for policy-makers*. UNESCO Publishing. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/ai-and-education-guidance-policy-makers

Wei, L. (2023). Artificial intelligence in language instruction: Impact on English learning achievement, L2 motivation, and self-regulated learning. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, Article 1261955. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1261955

Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Attaining self-regulation: A social cognitive perspective. In M. Boekaerts, P. R. Pintrich, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *Handbook of self-regulation* (pp. 13–39). Academic Press.

Zou, B., Lyu, Q., Han, Y., Li, Z., & Zhang, W. (2025). Exploring students' acceptance of an artificial intelligence speech evaluation program for EFL speaking practice: An

application of the integrated model of technology acceptance. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 38*(5–6), 1366–1391. https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2023.2278608

Zulaiha, D., & Triana, Y. (2023). Students' perception toward the use of open educational resources to improve writing skill. *Studies in English Language and Education, 10*(1), 174–196. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i1.25797