



Benefits and Challenges of ChatGPT in Supporting English Academic Writing: A Narrative Literature Review

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-07 Revised: 2026-05-19 Accepted: 2026-09-21 Keywords: ChatGPT, Academic Writing, EFL, AI Literacy, Higher Education, Narrative Literature Review DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i2.8767 Corresponding Author: Wisda Ramadhani Robi'ah s400230018@student.ums.ac.id Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Jawa Tengah	<i>The emergence of generative artificial intelligence, particularly ChatGPT, has transformed academic writing practices in higher education, including within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. This narrative literature review aims to synthesize recent research on the benefits, challenges, and pedagogical implications of using ChatGPT in English academic writing. Relevant studies published between 2022 and 2025 were collected from major academic databases and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal five interrelated themes: (1) enhanced linguistic accuracy and academic language development, (2) the reshaping of cognitive processes in academic writing, (3) affective, motivational, and learner-identity shifts, (4) ethical, academic integrity, and epistemological risks, and (5) pedagogical shifts and institutional considerations. While ChatGPT offers substantial linguistic and motivational support, its effectiveness depends on ethical use, critical evaluation, and appropriate pedagogical integration. Concerns related to plagiarism, overreliance on technology, declining critical thinking skills, and disparities in AI literacy remain significant challenges. The review concludes that higher education institutions need to develop comprehensive AI literacy, adaptive assessment practices, and clear academic policies to ensure responsible implementation. Future research is encouraged to explore classroom-based applications, cross-cultural student experiences, and sustainable models of human-AI collaboration in academic writing instruction.</i>

1. Introduction

In recent years, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has brought significant changes across various fields, particularly in education, including English language learning. Since the release of ChatGPT in late 2022, this platform has quickly attracted the attention of academics due to its ability to respond to questions, generate texts, and provide automated and contextual linguistic feedback (Dwivedi et al., 2023). In the context of higher education, the emergence of ChatGPT marks a new phase of digital transformation, in which students are no longer merely accessing information efficiently but are also actively interacting with technology in the process of knowledge production, including academic writing (Kasneci et al., 2023).

English academic writing is considered one of the most complex language skills, as it requires mastery of linguistic structures, critical thinking abilities, academic vocabulary, and an understanding of scholarly conventions. Many students still experience difficulties in developing arguments, organizing paragraphs, maintaining textual coherence, and producing well-structured writing, which consequently necessitates additional pedagogical support (Zhai, 2023). This condition has encouraged educators to seek new solutions or approaches that can support the writing process in a more effective, flexible, accessible, and sustainable manner.

In response to these developments, the ChatGPT platform has begun to be used in various stages of academic writing, such as paraphrasing, brainstorming, outlining, grammar checking, reviewing language structure, revising texts, and even generating extended paragraphs. Several studies report that students feel supported because ChatGPT helps improve linguistic accuracy, expand lexical choices, and provide instant feedback without the evaluative pressure typically associated with instructors. Moreover, students can freely ask follow-up questions when they encounter difficulties in writing and receive recommendations for better academic expression (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023). This utilization is believed to promote more autonomous, immediate, and reflective learning, particularly within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

Nevertheless, the use of the ChatGPT platform in academic writing also raises pedagogical and ethical concerns. A number of studies highlight risks such as technological dependency, reduced originality, plagiarism, and the potential decline of critical thinking skills when students rely on AI without adequate supervision or sufficient digital literacy (Susnjak, 2022; Gao et al., 2023). In addition, limitations of large language models, including algorithmic bias and the possibility of generating inaccurate information, present challenges for educational institutions that seek to integrate AI responsibly into academic practices (Kasneci et al., 2023).

Although the number of publications addressing ChatGPT and academic writing continues to increase, most existing studies still focus primarily on

technological effectiveness or user perceptions. Consequently, comprehensive reviews that systematically map the benefits, challenges, and pedagogical implications of ChatGPT in English academic writing remain relatively limited (Zhai, 2023). Therefore, a narrative literature review is needed to synthesize recent research findings and provide direction for policy development, instructional practices, and future research.

Based on this urgency, this article aims to: (1) identify the benefits of using the ChatGPT platform to support English academic writing, (2) examine the challenges and risks arising from its use, and (3) formulate pedagogical implications and recommendations for future research. Accordingly, this article is expected to serve as a reference for researchers, students, educators, and educational institutions in understanding and managing the use of ChatGPT in an ethical, critical, and productive manner.

2. Method

This article employs a narrative literature review approach, which is a type of review designed to synthesize and interpret research findings without the strict selection procedures typically associated with systematic reviews. This approach was selected because it allows the author to examine patterns, concepts, and developments in studies related to the use of ChatGPT in English academic writing in a more flexible and comprehensive manner (Baumeister & Leary, 1997).

The literature collection process was conducted by searching several national and international academic databases, including Scopus, Taylor & Francis Online, SpringerLink, Google Scholar, ERIC, and journals indexed in SINTA. The search keywords included “ChatGPT,” “academic writing,” “English as a Foreign Language,” “AI-assisted writing,” “higher education,” and “EFL.” The publication period reviewed ranged from 2022 to 2025, corresponding with the emergence and recent development of generative AI technologies in education.

Inclusion criteria were established to ensure the relevance and quality of the selected sources, namely: (1) scholarly journal articles discussing the benefits of ChatGPT in the context of English academic writing, (2) studies conducted within EFL contexts and higher education settings, and (3) publications written in English or Indonesian. Meanwhile, non-scholarly sources such as blogs, popular news articles, social media content, institutional reports, undergraduate theses, articles, and dissertations were excluded from this review.

The selected literature was then analyzed through intensive reading, thematic note-taking, and cross-study comparison. The analysis focused on identifying user benefits, encountered challenges, and pedagogical implications of using ChatGPT in academic writing. The findings are presented descriptively and interpretatively to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the position of this technology in English writing instruction, particularly within higher education.

3. Result

A review of recent literature published between 2022 and 2025 indicates that the use of the ChatGPT platform in English academic writing, particularly in higher education contexts, represents not merely a technological phenomenon but also a complex pedagogical, social, and epistemological practice. Overall, the research findings converge into five interrelated themes: (1) enhanced linguistic accuracy and academic language development, (2) the reshaping of cognitive processes in academic writing, (3) affective, motivational, and learner-identity shifts, (4) ethical, academic integrity, and epistemological risks, and (5) pedagogical shifts and institutional considerations.

1. Enhanced Linguistic Accuracy and Academic Language Development

Most studies affirm that the ChatGPT platform functions as a language enhancement tool that assists students in improving linguistic accuracy, grammatical correctness, academic word choice, and syntactic structure in their writing (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Zhai, 2023). Through instant and automated feedback provided by ChatGPT, students are able to identify linguistic errors, revise them, and understand the rationale behind such corrections more explicitly (Gao et al., 2023). These findings align with Kasneci et al. (2023), who reported that ChatGPT supports students in producing more structured, coherent, accurate, and formally appropriate paragraphs in accordance with academic standards.

In addition, experimental studies report that ChatGPT-based interventions contribute to improvements in vocabulary range, lexical density, and textual cohesion, particularly among EFL writers who still experience limitations in academic vocabulary (Yang & Wei, 2024). Thus, ChatGPT serves not only as a grammar-checking tool but also as a form of linguistic support that facilitates the development of academic literacy.

2. Reshaping the Cognitive Processes of Academic Writing

The influence of ChatGPT is evident not only in the final written output but also in the underlying cognitive processes of writing. Numerous studies reveal that students utilize ChatGPT for generating ideas, brainstorming, identifying key concepts, and constructing writing outlines (Rudolph et al., 2023). As a result, this technology is perceived as capable of reducing cognitive load during the pre-writing stage, particularly when students encounter topic confusion, idea stagnation, or difficulties in formulating initial arguments (Lee et al., 2024).

However, changes in the writing process have generated differing

perspectives. Some studies argue that interaction with ChatGPT facilitates knowledge-building dialogue, a process in which students actively construct meaning through prompt refinement and evaluation of AI-generated responses (Cotton et al., 2023). Conversely, other research cautions that reliance on ChatGPT may lead to surface-level thinking when students depend excessively on AI outputs without engaging in critical assessment or reflective review (Zhang & Chen, 2024). In other words, the role of ChatGPT in supporting academic writing is largely determined by how students employ it—either as a reflective learning aid or as a shortcut for text production with minimal cognitive engagement.

3. Affective, Motivational, and Learner-Identity Shifts

Beyond its cognitive influence, recent studies also highlight the affective dimension of ChatGPT use. Many EFL students report that ChatGPT helps reduce writing anxiety, increases self-confidence, and makes the writing process feel more manageable and controllable (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Roussel et al., 2024). ChatGPT is often perceived as a “safe consultation space,” free from fear of judgment or evaluation, thereby encouraging students to explore language more freely and confidently.

Nevertheless, not all studies report positive outcomes. Lee et al. (2024) found that some students experience heightened anxiety due to the perceived need to match the quality of AI-generated texts. Concerns have also been raised that excessive reliance on ChatGPT may weaken writer identity, as students may feel that their academic writing no longer represents their own intellectual voice but rather the output of a machine (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Consequently, ChatGPT introduces new emotional dynamics into academic writing practices.

4. Ethical, Academic Integrity, and Epistemological Risks

The most dominant theme in the literature concerns ethical issues. Many scholars warn of both direct and indirect plagiarism risks when students copy AI-generated output without proper attribution or critical understanding (Susnjak, 2022; Gao et al., 2023). Additional risks arise when ChatGPT produces inaccurate, biased, or unverifiable information, thereby threatening academic validity and credibility (Kasneci et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the presence of ChatGPT poses challenges to the

epistemological foundations of higher education by blurring the distinction between knowledge creation and mere reproduction of existing information (Cotton et al., 2023). When students no longer develop arguments independently but instead adopt logical structures generated by AI, their analytical, critical, and evaluative thinking skills may gradually decline (Zhang & Chen, 2024).

Several studies also emphasize disparities in AI literacy, referring to students' ability to assess when, how, and to what extent AI technologies should be employed in academic writing (Nurhayati & Salam, 2025). In the absence of clear institutional policies, the use of ChatGPT may shift from being innovative to becoming problematic.

5. Pedagogical Shifts and Institutional Considerations

The literature indicates that the emergence of ChatGPT compels educators and institutions to reconsider academic writing pedagogy. Many researchers argue that a complete prohibition of ChatGPT use is ineffective, as such an approach limits access to its pedagogical potential and disregards ongoing technological advancements (Rudolph et al., 2023). Instead, ethically grounded integrative approaches—such as using ChatGPT for reflection, revision, or metacognitive development—are considered more beneficial and productive (Yang & Wei, 2024).

In addition, several universities have begun formulating AI usage policies, implementing digital literacy curricula, and designing assessment models that prioritize cognitive processes rather than solely evaluating final written products (Kasneci et al., 2023). These findings suggest that ChatGPT is not merely a technological tool, but a catalyst for paradigm shifts in English language teaching within higher education.

4. Discussion

The findings of this literature review indicate that the use of the ChatGPT platform in academic writing, particularly in English, should be understood not merely as a technological innovation, but also as a psychological, pedagogical, and ethical phenomenon that reshapes writing practices in higher education. The consistently reported improvements in linguistic quality across various studies suggest that ChatGPT functions as a form of scaffolding or supportive assistance that expands EFL students' access to academic registers and styles (Baidoo-Anu & Ansah, 2023; Yang & Wei, 2024). However, these findings also emphasize that writing competence cannot be automatically replaced by AI; rather, they highlight the need for instructional designs that guide, support, evaluate, and help students critically process AI-generated outputs (Kasneci et al., 2023).

Changes in cognitive processes and writing strategies further indicate a

paradigm shift from individual activity toward collaborative processes between humans and machines. Prompt-based interactions enable students to negotiate idea development, structure organization, and argument construction in a more reflective manner (Cotton et al., 2023). Nevertheless, risks may arise when students use ChatGPT as an instant shortcut, potentially leading to a decline in analytical and critical thinking skills (Zhang & Chen, 2024). Therefore, the effectiveness of the ChatGPT platform does not depend solely on the technology itself, but rather on students' level of AI literacy, task design, and the instructional roles of lecturers within the learning process (Deng & Lin, 2024).

The review findings related to affective dimensions identify emotional benefits, such as reduced writing anxiety and increased student confidence (Roussel et al., 2024; Huang, 2024). This condition is particularly relevant in EFL contexts, where psychological barriers often become a major cause of lower academic performance. However, several studies also highlight emerging dilemmas of academic identity, as students feel that the quality of AI-generated texts does not represent their own writing characteristics (Lee et al., 2024). This indicates that the implementation of ChatGPT must consider the development of writer identity and learner autonomy, rather than focusing solely on the quality of written products.

Ethical issues and academic integrity represent the most critical aspects of ChatGPT utilization. Various concerns regarding plagiarism, contract cheating, and the dissemination of unverified information demonstrate that the greatest risks lie in the manner of technology use, rather than in the AI system itself (Susnjak, 2022; Conway & Brennan, 2023). Consequently, the use of ChatGPT should be supported by clear institutional policies, adaptive assessment systems, and the development of academic literacy that upholds intellectual responsibility (Nurhayati & Salam, 2025).

Pedagogical changes reported in multiple studies strengthen the argument that banning AI is not a productive approach. Instead, purposeful integration of ChatGPT—such as for revision, idea development, reflection, and metacognitive learning—is considered more aligned with the demands of 21st-century digital literacy (Karim & Naser, 2024; Bui & Nguyen, 2024). At this point, the findings of this review contribute to theoretical developments in ELT by emphasizing that writing instruction and learning should no longer focus solely on linguistic form mastery, but also on the ability to interpret, evaluate, assess, and manage human–AI collaboration within academic contexts.

Furthermore, social and geographical contexts play a significant role in determining the success of ChatGPT integration. Studies conducted in Asia and Indonesia indicate that barriers related to technological access, digital literacy, lecturer readiness, and academic culture significantly influence the extent to which ChatGPT can generate positive impacts (Fitriani & Rahmawati, 2024; Rosita & Gunawan, 2024). Therefore, the integration of AI in academic writing must be

designed in an inclusive, contextual, and equity-sensitive manner. These findings also suggest that the future of academic literacy cannot be separated from AI literacy, prompting educational institutions to redefine the core competencies of academic writers in the current digital era.

Overall, this review confirms that the ChatGPT platform possesses significant pedagogical potential; however, its benefits can only be optimized through critical, ethical, and reflective use. The primary contribution of this article lies in presenting a comprehensive thematic mapping of the benefits, challenges, and implications of ChatGPT use in EFL academic writing, while emphasizing the importance of collaboration among students, lecturers, and institutions in building a sustainable AI literacy ecosystem.

4. Conclusion

This literature review demonstrates that the use of the ChatGPT platform in English academic writing presents both opportunities and challenges for higher education, particularly within EFL contexts. The main findings reveal that ChatGPT can enhance linguistic accuracy, textual coherence, and the rhetorical quality of students' writing, while also supporting cognitive processes, idea development, and learner autonomy. In addition, this technology contributes to affective aspects by reducing writing anxiety and strengthening the confidence of novice writers.

Nevertheless, these benefits are accompanied by ethical, epistemological, and pedagogical challenges. Concerns related to plagiarism, excessive technological dependence, declining critical thinking skills, and limited AI literacy remain central issues in academic discourse. Furthermore, inequalities in technological access, levels of institutional readiness, and academic culture also influence the success of ChatGPT integration, particularly in higher education settings in developing countries. These findings underscore that the effectiveness of ChatGPT use does not rely solely on the technology itself, but rather on regulatory frameworks, digital literacy competencies, and supportive instructional design.

Therefore, the use of ChatGPT in academic writing should be directed toward practices that are critical, ethical, and reflective. Lecturers, students, and institutions need to develop comprehensive AI literacy, design and implement process-based assessment, and formulate adaptive and inclusive academic policies. This review contributes by mapping key themes in recent research and opening conceptual discussions regarding the future of academic literacy in the AI era. Future studies are encouraged to explore pedagogical implementation, student experiences across cultural contexts, and models of human-AI collaboration in writing instruction.

5. References

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