The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Graduation Thesis Writing: A Case Study of English Majors at a Vietnamese Public University

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Abstract: *Artificial Intelligence (AI) has rapidly flooded various educational contexts, influencing how students approach academic writing. This study explores the extent and nature of AI usage among English major students in Vietnam during their graduation thesis process, and investigates both the positive and negative effects on their academic skills and integrity. Using a qualitative case study approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 students and 3 supervisors involved in the thesis process. Thematic analysis revealed that while AI tools support language accuracy, idea generation, and time management, they also introduce concerns about academic honesty, over-reliance, and erosion of critical research skills. Recommendations are proposed to foster responsible AI integration in academic writing.*

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence (AI), Academic Writing, Graduation Thesis, English Majors.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has undeniably become a prevalent force across various domains, including education. With AI-related publications constituting approximately 2.2% of total scientific outputs from 2000 to 2021, its influence is increasingly recognized (Alharbi, 2023). This technological surge, particularly accelerated by the global shift to digital platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic, has fundamentally altered pedagogical landscapes, making digital writing an inescapable component of academic life (Bygstad et al., 2022; Roe et al., 2023). Consequently, the integration of AI-powered writing assistance tools – such as machine translators (MTs), digital writing assistants (DWAs), automated paraphrasing tools (APTs), and sophisticated large language models (LLMs) like ChatGPT – has become a critical area of discourse, redefining how writing is conceived, taught, and evaluated (Alharbi, 2023; Roe et al., 2023).

However, the rapid development of these assistive writing technologies often outpaces the creation of institutional academic integrity policies, leading to pervasive "grey areas," confusion, and a notable lack of awareness among educators, students, and administrators alike (Roe et al., 2023). This contextualizes the urgent need to critically examine the multifaceted implications of AI in academic writing.

The conclusion of higher education, particularly the writing of a graduation thesis or dissertation, represents far more than a simple formality; it is a foundational demonstration of a student's capacity for critical thinking, rigorous research, and advanced academic discourse (Ciampa & Wolfe, 2019; Storey, 2023). This effort demands care, clarity, structured argument, and solid ethical scholarship, deeply integrating analytical and synthesizing skills beyond mere grammatical correctness (Malik et al., 2023; Storey, 2023). However, the rise of AI tools, with their capacity to generate extensive content, including entire thesis drafts, within minutes, introduces a profound concern for undermining these essential higher-order skills and threatening academic integrity within this crucial academic milestone (Aljuaid, 2024; Hiouani & Khiari, 2024; Perkins, 2023; Sennersten & Klonowska, 2025; Storey, 2023).

In Vietnam, the integration of AI in higher education remains relatively new and under-researched. Particularly, the experience of English major students during their graduation thesis – often a high-

stakes and intensive academic task – has not been systematically studied. This research aims to explore how AI influences the thesis writing process in this specific context, focusing on both benefits and potential drawbacks.

The university in this study, a large public institution in Vietnam, implemented a policy in 2022 requiring all English major students to complete a graduation thesis worth 3 academic credits during their internship semester. Previously, only select high-achieving students were allowed to undertake a thesis voluntarily. Students work in groups of 10 to 15 under one faculty supervisor for approximately three months. Prior to the thesis, students take a 30-hour Research Methods course, but many still find the thesis writing process challenging, particularly in mastering English academic writing conventions. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do English major students at a Vietnamese public university utilize AI tools in their graduation thesis writing process?

2. What are the perceived positive and negative effects of AI tool usage on English major students' academic writing skills and research practices during their graduation thesis process?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Intricate Challenges in Thesis Writing for EFL Students

The process of writing a thesis or dissertation stands as a formidable intellectual and social challenge, demanding not only rigorous research acumen and advanced academic writing proficiency but also sustained focus and resilience (Ciampa & Wolfe, 2019; Storey, 2023; Sükan & Mohammadzadeh, 2022; Willis et al., 2010). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, this endeavor is inherently more complex, as writing is widely considered one of the most arduous language skills, requiring a comprehensive command of both linguistic structures and writing conventions (Abrar et al., 2023; Bracewell, 2020). The difficulties encountered by EFL students in thesis writing are typically categorized into intertwined internal and external factors, revealing a holistic struggle that extends beyond mere linguistic proficiency (Fitria, 2022).

Internal factors frequently revolve around profound academic and psychological hurdles. Students often struggle with fundamental decisions like choosing an appropriate thesis title (77.5% of students), a task that can dictate the entire research trajectory (Fitria, 2022). More upsettingly, many report feelings of boredom, pessimism, self-doubt, and significant anxiety during the writing process, undermining their confidence and motivation (Fitria, 2022; Khasanah et al., 2023; Winarti et al., 2025). Linguistically, a staggering 92.5% of students struggle with writing grammatically correct English sentences or paragraphs, particularly with verb tense usage, often resorting to drafting in their native language before translating (82.5%) (Fitria, 2022; Khasanah et al., 2023). These linguistic deficiencies extend to selecting appropriate vocabulary and mastering advanced academic skills such as paraphrasing and referencing, which are crucial for academic integrity and avoiding unintentional plagiarism (Fitria, 2022; Malik et al., 2023; Winarti et al., 2025).

External factors, regrettably, often compound these internal struggles. Students frequently lament insufficient support from supervisors (75%), citing issues like illegible feedback, which hinders effective revision and learning (Fitria, 2022). The difficulty in accessing relevant academic resources, both online (82.5%) and in university libraries (75%), presents a substantial barrier to conducting thorough literature reviews and substantiating arguments (Fitria, 2022). Furthermore, practical challenges such as technical issues with equipment and financial constraints also significantly impede the thesis writing process (Fitria, 2022). Ren and Zhu (2023), adopting an Activity Theory perspective, highlight how these challenges are mediated by the student's interaction with artifacts, rules, community, and roles, underscoring the social embeddedness and systemic nature of writing difficulties. These multifaceted difficulties reveal that EFL students do not merely face isolated linguistic errors but a systemic challenge impacting their entire academic trajectory, demanding comprehensive support mechanisms.

2.2. The Dual-Edged Nature of Ai in Thesis Writing: Opportunities and Emerging Problems

The integration of AI tools presents a complex array of opportunities for EFL students navigating the demanding process of thesis writing, yet these benefits are often entangled with significant pedagogical and ethical dilemmas.

Apparent enhancements in writing quality and efficiency are frequently cited. Many EFL teachers acknowledge that AI tools can improve the quality of students' writing, particularly concerning content organization and grammatical accuracy (Marzuki et al., 2023). Tools like Wordtune are cited for enhancing vocabulary and sentence structure, offering linguistically acceptable suggestions (Zhao, 2023). This perceived improvement often extends to efficiency, with students reporting significant time savings in academic tasks (Aljuaid, 2024; Winarti et al., 2025). AI's ability to provide instant feedback can theoretically empower students to identify and correct errors, thereby boosting confidence (Setyani et al., 2023). For EFL learners, MTs and grammar checkers are undeniably valuable for overcoming immediate linguistic barriers (Alharbi, 2023). However, a critical perspective questions whether these improvements are genuinely fostering deeper learning or merely enabling superficial corrections without developing underlying writing competence (Alharbi, 2023).

Beyond surface-level corrections, AI can also be seen to facilitate more fundamental aspects of the writing process, such as brainstorming ideas, structuring arguments, and identifying relevant references (Aljuaid, 2024; Malik et al., 2023; Winarti et al., 2025). The potential for AI to quickly scan and summarize vast academic literature could significantly streamline the literature review process, a historically time-consuming task for graduate students (Malik et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this raises concerns about the quality of critical analysis and synthesis if students merely accept AI-generated summaries without deep engagement (Malik et al., 2023).

From a pedagogical standpoint, some educators view AI as a beneficial tool for both students and teachers, with a potential positive impact on education (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Alharbi, 2023). ChatGPT, for instance, is seen as a potential alternative to traditional search engines, offering more direct and reliable results (AlAfnan et al., 2023). However, this pedagogical integration is not without controversy. Ranalli (2021) suggests that for learning gains to occur, students must engage critically with AI feedback, developing "calibrated trust" rather than blind acceptance (Alharbi, 2023). The effectiveness of AI as a genuine learning tool is often contingent on explicit instruction and teacher mediation, which guides students to become "informed users" who can evaluate and refine AI outputs (Alharbi, 2023; Wulyani et al., 2024). Without such critical engagement, the purported benefits risk becoming superficial conveniences.

2.3. Profound Concerns: the Erosion of Academic Integrity and Critical Thinking

The integration of AI into academic writing presents not merely technical challenges but fundamental threats to the core tenets of higher education: academic integrity, intellectual development, and the very nature of authorship. The convenience offered by AI tools paradoxically underscores a critical vulnerability in traditional academic practices.

A central and alarming concern is AI's capacity to generate sophisticated text that can skillfully evade detection by conventional plagiarism software, such as Turnitin (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Alexander et al., 2023; Roe et al., 2023; Uzun, 2023). This ability fundamentally challenges established notions of originality and authorship, prompting a re-evaluation of what constitutes legitimate academic work (Fyfe, 2023; Roe et al., 2023; Storey, 2023).

The ease with which AI can produce text without proper citation or even reproduce sections from online sources blurs the ethical boundaries that EFL students, already grappling with complex rhetorical conventions, find difficult to navigate (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Roe et al., 2023; Tseng & Warschauer, 2023). This raises profound questions about whether students can truly claim ownership over AI-generated content (Anson, 2022; Anson & Straume, 2022; Fyfe, 2023).

Perhaps the most insidious threat is the potential for over-reliance on AI tools to diminish students' critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Farrokhnia et al., 2024; Malik et al., 2023; Winarti et al., 2025; Zhai et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Critics warn that such dependency could lead to "human unintelligence and unlearning" (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Fošner, 2024), where the convenience of AI bypasses the rigorous cognitive effort essential for deep learning and skill acquisition (Wickramasinghe, 2025). Teachers express concern that students may prioritize quick fixes over genuine understanding, neglecting the development of crucial self-editing and analytical skills (Iskender, 2023; Marzuki et al., 2023). This erosion of "craft skills" – encompassing critical analysis, synthesis, and sense-making – represents a significant threat to academic prowess (Storey, 2023).

Beyond the question of originality, AI tools can generate factually incorrect or unreliable information – colloquially termed "hallucinations" – placing an inherent burden on the user to critically verify outputs (Hiouani & Khiari, 2024; Winarti et al., 2025). Furthermore, AI models are trained on vast datasets from the internet, which inherently embed and perpetuate existing biases, raising critical ethical questions about whose viewpoints AI expresses and whose it excludes (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Bender et al., 2021; Fyfe, 2023). This potentially undermines the pursuit of objective scholarship and the development of students' own informed perspectives.

Educators face an escalating dilemma in distinguishing between human-generated and AI-generated text, particularly when AI is used subtly for outlining or drafting (Alexander et al., 2023; Escalante et al., 2023; Herbold et al., 2023; Perkins, 2023). Unexpectedly, some instructors may mistakenly associate high technical accuracy and perfect grammar – qualities often exhibited by AI-with AI-generated content, while human-like errors might be seen as indicators of student work (Alexander et al., 2023; Hiouani & Khiari, 2024). This undermines the reliability of traditional assessment methods and necessitates a rethinking of essay assignments to prioritize critical thinking and personalized responses over mere information recall (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Alexander et al., 2023; Sennersten & Klonowska, 2025). The rapid evolution of AI may also create confusion, leading to "emotional educators" who might misinterpret student work (Farrokhnia et al., 2024; Lampropoulos et al., 2023). The development of "AI literacy" for both students and teachers, emphasizing ethical use, limitations, and biases, becomes paramount (Fyfe, 2023; Hiouani & Khiari, 2024; Tseng & Warschauer, 2023).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

Adopting a qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2014), this research seeks to gain a rich, contextualized understanding of how AI affects thesis writing among English majors. Qualitative methods allow exploration of participants' perspectives and lived experiences beyond what quantitative surveys might capture (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.2. Research Context and Participants

The study took place at a large public university in Vietnam, which introduced a mandatory graduation thesis for all English majors in 2022. Each cohort undertakes the thesis as part of a three–month internship semester, earning 3 academic credits. Students typically form groups of 10 to 15 and work under the supervision of a faculty advisor.

Participants were purposively sampled for relevance and included 10 final year English major students who had recently completed or were working on their thesis, and 3 supervisors experience guiding thesis groups under the new policy.

Before the thesis semester, students complete a 30-hour Research Methods course covering fundamental research skills and academic writing, but many still find the thesis challenging, especially in language proficiency.

3.3. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Vietnamese between October and December 2024. This approach allowed participants to freely discuss their experiences while providing consistent data across interviews. Interview guides covered AI usage patterns, perceived benefits, challenges, ethical views, and the thesis process.

Student interviews lasted 30-45 minutes, supervisors' 45-60 minutes. All interviews were audio–recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for analysis. Participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was ensured via pseudonyms.

3.4. Data Analysis

Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six–step framework (2006) was applied: data familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and reporting. Codes included categories like AI usage, language support, dependency, plagiarism concerns, and skill development. NVivo 12 was used to organize codes and themes collaboratively. Triangulation between student and supervisor perspectives enhanced validity.

4. FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the data analysis from interviews with 10 English-major students and 3 academic supervisors regarding the use of AI in the process of writing graduation theses. Through coding and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the research team identified key themes that reflect the multifaceted impact of AI in this specific academic context.

4.1. Students' Extent And Forms of Ai Usage in thesis Writing

All interviewed students admitted to using at least one AI tool during their thesis writing process. The most commonly used tools were Grammarly (for grammar and spelling checks), ChatGPT (for idea generation, paragraph writing, and sentence refinement), and QuillBot (for rephrasing and improving tone).

"I usually use Grammarly to fix grammar and spelling errors because I'm not very confident with English grammar. I also ask ChatGPT to help me develop ideas or rewrite sentences to sound smoother." (Student 2)

AI usage was not limited to the drafting stage but was also applied in outlining, research idea generation, and even checking the logical flow of arguments.

"When writing the literature review, I often ask ChatGPT to suggest key concepts or relevant references. This helps me get an overview and feel less overwhelmed." (Student 7)

Supervisors also confirmed this trend:

"Students nowadays quickly adopt AI tools, especially ChatGPT. They use it for idea generation, writing sentences, or even translating some paragraphs." (Supervisor 1)

However, the extent and manner of AI use varied significantly among student groups, depending on their English proficiency, confidence levels, and understanding of AI.

4.2. Positive Impacts of Ai on the Thesis Writing Process

4.2.1 Supporting Language Skill Improvement

One of the most frequently mentioned benefits was that AI helped students overcome language difficulties, especially grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure.

"I used to write very simple and sometimes grammatically incorrect sentences. When I use Grammarly, I can see my mistakes and learn how to fix them. ChatGPT also helps me rewrite sentences more naturally." (Student 4)

Supervisors also appreciated AI's support in helping students improve their academic writing:

"Students can present their ideas more clearly thanks to AI helping with grammar and sentence structure. This is crucial because even good ideas might be overlooked if the language is too weak." (Supervisor 3)

4.2.2 Helping Overcome "Idea Blocks" And Boosting Productivity

Many students stated that ChatGPT helped them break through creative blocks or provided model answers for reference, which accelerated the writing process.

"There were times I had no idea what to write in the discussion section. I input a question into ChatGPT and got a few suggestions. I didn't copy them directly but used them as a reference to develop my ideas." (Student 1)

Instant feedback from AI tools also helped save time on sentence – by – sentence editing.

"I didn't have to spend too much time revising manually. ChatGPT or Grammarly provided quick corrections, and I just had to review and adjust as needed." (Student 9)

Supervisors also noticed this change:

"Students work more efficiently, partly because AI helps them write and edit faster. However, supervision is still necessary to ensure they truly understand the content." (Supervisor 2)

4.2.3 Boosting Confidence In Academic Writing

Many students shared that AI made them feel more confident when writing in English, reducing anxiety about grammar errors or lack of ideas.

"I used to be afraid of making mistakes, but with AI checking my work, I feel more secure, and I can write more proactively and quickly." (Student 6)

This is especially important for students without a strong English foundation, as AI becomes a "companion" that helps them approach thesis writing more easily.

4.3 Negative Impacts and Challenges

4.3.1 Risk of Over-Reliance and Reduced Independent Research Skills

Some students frankly admitted that they sometimes relied too much on AI, even allowing AI to write complete paragraphs without thoroughly understanding the content, leading to shallow engagement with the material.

"There was a time I let ChatGPT write a discussion paragraph, and I just made a few edits without really understanding what it was saying. I know that's not good, but I was busy, so I did it anyway." (Student 8)

Supervisors also expressed concerns:

"Many students overly depend on AI, neglecting the development of critical thinking or research skills. This can negatively affect long-term academic quality." (Supervisor 3)

4.3.2. Issues of Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Using AI has sparked debates around content ownership and plagiarism. Some students were unsure whether AI-generated content could truly be considered their own.

"I'm not sure if using a paragraph generated by ChatGPT counts as plagiarism. I edited it, but I don't know what counts as acceptable." (Student 10)

Supervisors also pointed out the lack of clear policies and appropriate detection methods in schools.

"There are no clear regulations on AI use in thesis writing. It's also hard for supervisors to detect AI-generated content." (Supervisor 1)

4.3.3. Hindered Development of Research and Academic Writing Skills

Some supervisors were concerned that AI use may reduce opportunities for students to develop independent research skills, analytical thinking, and coherent argument presentation.

"When students rely too much on AI, they don't practice organizing arguments or analyzing documents. This negatively impacts their academic maturity." (Supervisor 2)

Students also felt disconnected from their own work when they didn't fully control the content:

"I don't really feel proud of my thesis if most of the content was created by AI." (Student 4)

4.3.4. Concerns About Losing Control and Ethical Pressure

Some students expressed confusion and stress over the ethical boundaries of using AI, especially when there are no clear guidelines from their schools.

"It's very awkward. I don't know how to use AI properly. If I misuse it, I could get penalized." (Student 7)

Supervisors resonated this concern:

"The lack of clear regulations makes both students and supervisors uneasy when using AI." (Supervisor 3)

4.4. The Role of Supervisors in Guiding and Managing AI Use

Supervisors clearly recognized their role in guiding students to use AI properly but also faced challenges due to a lack of tools and clear regulations.

"I try to advise students to use AI as a support tool, not a replacement for their own thinking." (Supervisor 1)

However, they admitted that monitoring was difficult in practice:

"It's impossible to check whether students used AI to write or not, so the focus should be on raising awareness and teaching proper skills." (Supervisor 2)

4.5. Students' Expectations and Suggestions for Future AI Use

Most students expressed a desire for formal courses or official guidance on how to use AI in academic settings, especially regarding ethical rules and control techniques.

"I think it would be great if the school offered a course on how to use AI to support research. It would help students use it properly." (Student 3)

They also hoped that supervisors and schools would introduce clear policies to avoid misunderstandings and handle violations transparently.

5. DISCUSSION

This study embarked on an exploration of AI's burgeoning role in the demanding process of graduation thesis writing among English major students at a Vietnamese public university. The findings resonate deeply with broader academic discourse on AI's dual-edged impact on academic writing globally, affirming both its considerable utility and the profound challenges it introduces (Luckin et al., 2016). The qualitative insights gathered from students and supervisors in this unique context offer a nuanced perspective on the intricate interplay between technological advancement, pedagogical realities, and evolving notions of academic integrity.

Consistent with existing literature, AI tools were widely embraced by students, primarily serving as invaluable aids for improving language accuracy and fostering idea generation. Students explicitly reported relying on Grammarly for grammar and spelling corrections and ChatGPT for overcoming "idea blocks" and refining sentence structures, leading to a palpable boost in their confidence. These firsthand accounts corroborate the established benefits highlighted by scholars such as Luckin et al. (2016), who acknowledge AI's capacity to streamline writing processes and enhance textual clarity. Indeed, the supervisors in this study also observed marked improvements in students' ability to articulate ideas more clearly, a critical advancement for EFL learners often grappling with linguistic hurdles. AI's immediate feedback not only accelerated the writing process but also offered a crucial sense of security to students apprehensive about their English proficiency.

However, beneath this surface of efficiency and confidence, the findings critically highlight the pervasive risks of over-reliance and the erosion of independent research and critical thinking skills. Students honestly admitted to allowing AI to generate entire paragraphs without full comprehension, leading to a superficial engagement with their own content. This resonates alarmingly with the warnings articulated by Williams et al. (2025), who caution against AI undermining students' efforts to deeply engage with material and develop original thought. Supervisors voiced profound concerns that this dependency could significantly obstruct students' long-term academic quality and critical analytical development. The emotional disconnect felt by students from AI-generated work – "I don't really feel proud of my thesis if most of the content was created by AI" (Student 4) – underscores a deeper pedagogical crisis, threatening the very "craft skills" essential for sound academic expertise (Storey, 2023).

Furthermore, this study richly captured the ethical difficulties surrounding plagiarism and content ownership. Students expressed genuine confusion about what constitutes acceptable AI use and what crosses the line into academic dishonesty, especially in the absence of clear institutional directives. This uncertainty aligns with the broader challenges to academic integrity posed by AI, as identified by Alexander et al. (2023), Roe et al. (2023), and Tseng and Warschauer (2023), particularly the difficulty in detecting AI-generated text and the blurring of authorship boundaries. Supervisors explicitly acknowledged the lack of clear policies and effective detection methods within the university, leaving both faculty and students in a state of unease. This "grey area" significantly amplifies the ethical pressure on students and complicates the supervisors' role in fostering responsible scholarship. The potential for AI to produce "hallucinations" or perpetuate biases (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Bender et al., 2021; Hiouani & Khiari, 2024) further compounds these ethical dilemmas, requiring students to possess a critical discerning eye – a skill potentially undermined by over-reliance.

Crucially, the Vietnamese context introduces unique vulnerabilities to these global challenges. The relatively rapid implementation of a mandatory graduation thesis for all English majors in 2022, a significant policy shift from previous years, placed students – many still grappling with fundamental English academic writing conventions despite a Research Methods course – under considerable pressure. This, coupled with promising AI literacy, creates an environment where AI tools, particularly generative ones, become perceived necessities, yet without the corresponding foundational training in ethical use and critical evaluation. The absence of formal guidance on AI literacy and ethical integration leaves students uncertain about proper AI use, thereby increasing the risk of misuse and worsening existing skill gaps. This situation frankly represents Ren and Zhu (2023) Activity Theory perspective, where external pressures and the availability of new artifacts (AI tools) mediate and sometimes complicate the student's activity system, revealing systemic rather than isolated difficulties.

Ultimately, this study underscores the urgent need for holistic educational approaches that thoughtfully balance the undeniable technological benefits of AI with the imperative to cultivate critical skill development and robust ethical training. The pervasive use of AI by English major students in this Vietnamese university – a trend confirmed by both students and supervisors – demands proactive institutional responses. Simply prohibiting AI is likely impractical and counterproductive, given its accessibility and perceived benefits; instead, the focus must shift towards empowering students to become "informed users" who can employ AI tools responsibly and ethically, integrating them into their human intellectual endeavor rather than replacing it (Alharbi, 2023; Wulyani et al., 2024). The existing ambiguity concerning AI use is not sustainable for academic integrity or for nurturing the independent scholars that higher education aims to produce.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This qualitative case study critically examined the integration of AI tools into the graduation thesis writing process of English major students at a public Vietnamese university. The investigation revealed a complex landscape where AI has become an indispensable aid, offering tangible benefits in language accuracy, idea generation, and time management, as enthusiastically reported by both students and observed by their supervisors. These findings align with broader global acknowledgments of AI's potential to streamline academic tasks and boost confidence, particularly for EFL learners navigating the intricacies of academic English (Luckin et al., 2016; Winarti et al., 2025).

However, beneath this layer of apparent utility, the study also unveiled profound concerns that underscore a critical vulnerability in the academic ecosystem. The pervasive risk of over – reliance on AI threatens to diminish students' innate critical thinking, creativity, and independent research skills, shifting their role from genuine intellectual engagement to mere content curation (Storey, 2023). Students' own confessions of allowing AI to generate significant portions of their work, often without full comprehension, signals a deep-seated ethical dilemma surrounding plagiarism and content ownership that remains largely unaddressed by institutional policies. This ethical ambiguity, exacerbated by the lack of clear guidelines and detection methods, places an undue burden of ethical navigation on students and supervisors alike (Alexander et al., 2023; Roe et al., 2023).

The unique context of this Vietnamese university, characterized by a recent policy shift requiring all English majors to undertake a thesis and a nascent stage of AI literacy, amplifies these challenges, making students particularly susceptible to superficial engagement without proper guidance (Ren & Zhu, 2023). Ultimately, while AI offers powerful scaffolding, its unchecked integration risks undermining the very foundational skills and academic integrity that a graduation thesis is designed to cultivate. In light of these findings, a proactive and holistic approach is imperative to harness AI's potential beneficially while safeguarding academic rigor and ethical scholarship.

To ensure the responsible integration of AI in higher education – particularly in thesis writing – coordinated efforts are needed from institutions, educators, and researchers. Universities and institutions should develop clear, comprehensive policies on AI use in academic work. These policies must define acceptable uses, ethical boundaries, and consequences for misuse, especially in high-stakes assessments like graduation theses (Aljuaid, 2024; Roe et al., 2023). Clear guidelines will reduce ambiguity and ease ethical concerns for both students and faculty. In parallel, AI literacy and ethics should be integrated into existing curricula, particularly in research methodology and academic writing courses. Students need to learn how to critically assess AI-generated content, understand its limitations,

and use it as a support tool rather than a substitute for original thinking (Hiouani & Khiari, 2024; Tseng & Warschauer, 2023; Wulyani et al., 2024). Faculty development is also essential. Institutions should provide ongoing training to help Supervisors understand AI's pedagogical implications and develop strategies for supervising AI use effectively and designing AI-resilient assignments (Barrett & Pack, 2023; Khlaif et al., 2024). Educators and supervisors should guide students toward responsible AI use by emphasizing the importance of original thought. Instead of banning AI, they should encourage students to reflect critically on its outputs and demonstrate personal engagement with the content (AlAfnan et al., 2023; Ren & Zhu, 2023). Assignments should be designed to require higher-order thinking and personal interpretation, which AI tools cannot replicate. Future research should explore the long – term effects of AI on academic performance and integrity through longitudinal and comparative studies. Additionally, the development of AI detection tools and context-specific ethical frameworks remains an urgent need. In conclusion, by implementing these measures, higher education can ensure that AI becomes a tool that supports, rather than undermines, meaningful learning and scholarly growth.

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