



## Integrating AI into EFL writing: Insights from Islamic higher education institutions

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### Abstract

Currently, AI-based tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot are increasingly used by students to assist in academic writing. Previous research has shown that these tools can enhance fluency, grammar accuracy, and writing motivation. However, most of these studies have not addressed the context of Islamic educational institutions, where ethical and religious values play an essential role. This study explores the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) academic writing classes at an Islamic tertiary institution, focusing on student and teacher perspectives. Employing a qualitative methodology with thematic analysis, the research investigates perceived benefits, challenges, and strategies for integrating AI, alongside the influence of Islamic ethical values. Findings reveal that AI applications such as ChatGPT and Grammarly enhance writing accuracy, vocabulary, and student motivation but also introduce concerns related to reliability and academic integrity. Both students and instructors adopt adaptive practices that align with core Islamic principles of amanah (trustworthiness), ikhlas (sincerity), and 'adl (justice) to ensure responsible and ethical use of AI in learning. This study contributes to the development of pedagogical strategies that harmonize technological advancements with religious and moral frameworks, fostering effective and ethically sound academic writing instruction in Islamic higher education contexts

### Keywords:

Academic Writing; AI; Islamic Values

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) development has significantly transformed the tertiary level landscape, particularly in the teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or second language (L2). AI corresponds to computer systems that act as human intelligence aspired outputs usually require, for example, learning, reasoning, decision-making, as well as natural language processes (Panesar, 2021). In the language educational field, generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot has transformed how learners deal with reading, writing, and communication. Hence, the use of AI in the EFL or L2 classroom, particularly when it comes to Academic Writing courses, presents novel prospects and challenges for the learners as well as the teachers.

In academic writing, students encounter usual challenges such as making sound arguments, mastering grammar, employing applicable vocabulary, as well as maintaining academic integrity (Syahnaz & Fithriani, 2023). To determine the above challenges, AI-instrumented software applications such as Grammarly, QuillBot, as well as ChatGPT have been increasingly utilized by students for grammar polishing, sentence formation improvement, vocabulary augmentation, and overall writing clarity (Arisandi & Sudarajat, 2023). In empirical evidence, it emerges that AI-

aided applications could promote independence among students through comment on performances instantly, thereby reducing the feeling of discomfort while promoting student motivation (Alashwal, 2024). For example, Al-Raimi et al. (2024) portrayed how an AI software application termed Semantris augmented the writing fluidness of Omani EFL students, while Alshehri (2025) referred to an improvement in the students' grammar development as well as vocabulary development upon using AI-based Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) software applications. In a similar vein, Safitri & Fithriani (2024) referred to how higher education students regarded AI software applications as useful for time use improvement as well as for developing ideas but where the problem of dependency as well as ethical use remained.

While these encouraging outcomes prevail, most current scholarship was conducted in generic or non-denominational university contexts, with limited attention to the distinct pedagogical and cultural dynamics of Islamic tertiary-level institutions. In educational environments where Muslims draw the bulk of the crowd, the learning-teaching process involves not only the acquisition of scholarship skills but also the formation of the person's moral fiber, integrity, and accountability (Puspitasari et al., 2025). What becomes crucial within the parameter of AI-enabled writing, where plagiarism, over-reliance on AI-enabled content as well as issues of authorship create severe ethical dilemmas (Mudawy, 2024). In their recent research, Yunita et al. (2025) emphasized how teachers at Islamic universities call for guidelines to moderate the use of AI so as the use of technology won't compromise fairness, originality as well as scholarship honesty.

Furthermore, the application of AI in the centers of Islamic learning must be geared toward the achievement of foundational Islamic values such as amanah (trustworthiness), ikhlas (sincerity), and adl (justice). In the words of Rohmana et al. (2024), the Islamic universities of Indonesia adopt the value of religious moderation (wasatiyyah), preaching equipoise and toleration in teaching for the purpose of safeguarding ethical as well as culture values. In the achievement of the above goal, the application of AI in the process of Academic Writing should not only target language development but also the development of the students' development of character-building, honesty in scholarship and responsibility. Without this convergence, application of AI could perhaps unintentionally undermine the moral and religious foundations of learning at the Islamic level.

Given these considerations, there is an urgent need for research that examines both students' and teachers' perspectives on Artificial Intelligence use in EFL's Academic Writing class in Islamic tertiary level. While many studies highlight the benefits of AI for improving writing proficiency and motivation, less attention has been paid to the lived experiences, expectations, and concerns of educators and learners in values-based education systems. By investigating how students and teachers perceive AI use in Academic Writing classes, and how ethical and Islamic values influence these perceptions, this study seeks to provide a more contextualized understanding of AI integration. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of pedagogical strategies that ensure AI is used effectively, responsibly, and in accordance with the moral and educational values of Islamic tertiary level. Therefore, this research aims to explore how students and teachers use AI in academic writing classes and identify how Islamic values and ethical considerations influence the integration of AI in writing instruction.

## **B. METHODS**

This study used a qualitative research design to explore how Islamic university students and teachers used AI in Academic Writing classes. This design was suitable for capturing participants' thoughts, feelings, and real experiences. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive qualitative research aims to describe a phenomenon by addressing the "what," "how," and "why" of a situation, helping researchers gain a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives.

The research was conducted in the English Language Education Department of a state Islamic university in East Java, Indonesia. About 58 students enrolled in the Academic Writing course participated in the study. They were selected because of their direct involvement in the writing process and experience using AI tools. Participants completed a questionnaire as a preliminary research to clarify their usage of AI in the Academic Writing course. Later, it is used to identify students who will be chosen for the interviews.. Researchers then interviewed nine students and one lecturer using purposive sampling based on the questionnaire to ensure varied experiences. All participants were informed about the study's purpose, their rights, and confidentiality measures.

Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires as the preliminary research. The interviews used open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses about AI use in writing classes and lasted about 20 minutes each. They also explored ethical and Islamic value considerations. The questionnaires included open and close-ended items covering demographics, familiarity with AI, reasons for using it, and perceived benefits and challenges, with Likert-scale ratings addressing academic integrity and Islamic values. Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved identifying connections and patterns through inductive coding (Weston et al., 2001), which produced broader themes reflecting the key experiences and perspectives of teachers and students regarding AI-based learning in Academic Writing courses.

### **C. RESULT & DISCUSSION**

The study aims to explore the perceptions of students and teachers toward the use of AI in EFL Academic Writing classes at Islamic tertiary level institutions and identify how Islamic values and ethical considerations influence the integration of AI in writing instruction. From the questionnaire results, it showed that both students and teachers are familiar with AI and often use it as a complimentary tool in their learning process. As a preliminary study, the results are very helpful to check the consistency from the questionnaire answer and the interview answers, as well as helping researchers to make a coding data. The findings are categorized based on the students and teachers' perceptions of using AI in EFL Academic Writing class, which comprises the benefits, challenges, and strategies of using AI in Academic Writing Class. Additionally, the findings show how Islamic values and ethical considerations influence the integration of AI in writing instruction.

#### **Students' Perspective: The Benefit of Using AI in an Academic Writing Class**

Students and instructors who have explored the application of AI in academic writing classes frequently cited several benefits that enhance the educational process. The use of AI technologies is seen as a way to improve students' confidence, accuracy, and creativity when producing academic texts, in addition to making writing assignments easier. Participants' thoughts on how AI helps people get beyond language hurdles, improve their grammar and vocabulary, and get instant feedback that encourages self-directed learning reveal these advantages. The various ways that AI use has improved academic writing are demonstrated in the following samples.

Several participants emphasized how AI directly improves their writing quality. One student stated,

“Yeah, it can help me to correct my incorrect grammar” (SL).

Another participant similarly expressed,

“Yes, it's very helpful, because AI helps in correcting grammar and generating ideas” (MC).

These responses indicate that grammar correction and idea generation were the most recognized advantages.

Moreover, students perceived AI as a motivating factor in enhancing their academic writing

ability. For instance, one participant shared,

“Of course, I can improve my writing by using AI” (MD),

while another confirmed,

“Sure, it really helps me” (LL).

Such reflections suggest that students associate AI with both functional and psychological benefits: it not only improves technical accuracy but also gives them a sense of support in the writing process.

The participants' acknowledgement of advantages such as refined grammar, augmented vocabulary, ideation, and heightened self-assurance is consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). These models posit that perceptions of usefulness and ease of use serve as primary drivers of users' intentions to adopt technology. When students describe AI as a “helpful assistant” that facilitates writing processes, they articulate strong performance and effort expectations (Dewi, 2024). This is also in line with Ali & Ekeng (2024) that teachers who acknowledge AI's capacity to facilitate lesson planning or feedback similarly recognize its practical value in the pedagogical workflow.

### **Students' Perspective: The Challenges of Using AI in an Academic Writing Class**

Although students acknowledge the advantages of using AI, they also pointed out several challenges that limit its effectiveness in academic writing. A recurring concern was the issue of accuracy, as participants noted that AI responses were not always reliable and often required further clarification or correction. In addition, restrictions or certain features, especially those available only through the paid version, were identified as practical barriers. Another issue highlighted was AI's inability to fully understand the context of the assignment, which sometimes led to unsatisfactory or misleading answers.

For instance, one participant remarked,

“Sometimes the answers to the questions are not satisfactory.” (FR), while another added,

“AI does not always do what we want, and AI does not understand context.” (EZ).

Similarly, the problem of accuracy was emphasized by another student.

“One of them is accuracy, AI sometimes provides incorrect answers” (SL).

Beyond accuracy, some participants raised concerns about accessibility, as one explained,

“Sometimes, some of them have paid features, and I can't use it freely” (AM).

This study revealed that the primary challenges faced by students include the unreliability of AI responses, limited access due to premium features, and the tendency of AI to misinterpret instructions. Such challenges suggest that while AI can be a supportive tool, it cannot yet fully substitute human judgment in academic writing. However, reported challenges reveal the limitations of purely perceptual constructs in TAM. These issues align with the Technology-Task Fit (TTF) Model (Goodhue & Thompson, 1995), which posits that technology effectiveness is contingent upon its congruence with particular learning task requirements. In instances where AI-generated text lacks contextual appropriateness or cultural sensitivity, the concept of “fit” becomes compromised, leading to diminished satisfaction and suboptimal learning outcomes (Hasan, 2025). This insight underscores the necessity of aligning the functionalities of AI with the cognitive and linguistic demands of the task, rather than presuming uniform benefits.

### **Students' Perspective: The Strategies of Using AI**

In response to the challenges encountered, participants developed various strategies to optimize their use of AI in academic writing. Rather than relying on AI completely, students described how they positioned it as a supplementary tool to support their independent efforts. Strategies such as limiting AI use once they reach the desired answer, double-checking the

accuracy of AI-generated texts, and clarifying instructions were frequently mentioned. Some students even emphasized the importance of combining AI support with their own critical thinking to ensure originality and responsibility in their academic work.

As one stated,

“I treat AI as a study partner, not a replacement” (EZ),

indicating the effort to maintain balance between self-learning and technological assistance.

Another marked,

“When I knew the answer I wanted, I stopped” (AM), showing the strategy of limiting AI reliance. Similarly,

“We have to be smart in examining and double-checking the answers” (SL) highlights the importance of critical verification in the process.

These strategies reflect not only practical solutions but also resonate with the foundational Islamic values embedded in the academic environment. By treating AI as a partner rather than a substitute, students demonstrate *amanah* (trustworthiness) in maintaining academic integrity. The willingness to continue their own efforts beyond AI support shows *ikhlas* (sincerity) in learning and producing authentic work. Meanwhile, the emphasis on double-checking and ensuring accuracy resonates with *‘adl* (justice), as students strive to be fair and responsible in how they use knowledge sources.

The demonstration of adaptive behaviors by students, such as rechecking AI output, clarifying prompts, or discontinuing use once objectives are attained, serves as an indicator of their evolving AI literacy skills (Sangadji et al., 2025). AI literacy, therefore, extends beyond technical expertise to include critical evaluation, ethical reasoning, and awareness of bias. The capacity to question, verify, and modify AI-generated text is indicative of metacognitive regulation, which aligns with high-level digital competency frameworks (Shibani et al., 2024). These findings imply that when learners are prompted to deliberate on their interactions with AI, they tend to cultivate critical partnerships rather than dependent relationships.

### **Teacher's Perspective: The Benefits of Using AI in an Academic Writing Class**

From the teacher's perspective, the integration of AI in academic writing activities brings several notable benefits that support both teaching practices and student learning. AI is perceived as a valuable tool not only to assist teachers in preparing and delivering lessons, but also in guiding students to enhance the quality of their writing. The teacher highlighted that AI contributes to generating teaching ideas, checking students' writing, and providing continuous feedback that may not always be possible during class sessions.

In particular, MR emphasized the role of AI as an additional partner in the learning process. She stated,

“I use it to give me ideas on how to teach academic writing... and also to help me to check the writing of the students. I use it to also give the students' knowledge on how they can use AI as their partner and as their teacher whenever I do not teach, to give them feedback on their writing, on the grammar, vocabulary checker, and also how to refine the drafts” (MR).

This reflection shows that AI supports both pedagogical preparation and student learning by providing functions such as grammar correction, vocabulary improvement, and draft refinement.

The evidence suggests that AI plays a dual role: enhancing teachers' teaching strategies and empowering students with tools for self-directed learning. For the teacher, AI functions as an extension of classroom teaching, ensuring students can continue to receive feedback beyond face-to-face sessions. For students, it offers a sense of having a “personal partner” in their writing process. These benefits demonstrate how AI can enrich the academic writing classroom by bridging gaps between teacher support and student autonomy.

### **Teacher's Perspective: The Challenges of Using AI in an Academic Writing Class**

The teacher recognized many advantages of integrating AI into academic writing courses, but she also pointed out a few urgent issues that arise when it is put into practice. The main issue is that students' over-reliance on AI frequently lowers their interest in the real learning process. Many students tend to rely on AI to produce answers directly rather than honing their own writing or critical thinking skills. According to MR, this dependence raises the likelihood of plagiarism, lowers reading engagement, and weakens digital literacy. MR emphasized,

"They don't really know how to use it critically. I mean, they should be able to choose which one is more suitable for them, which one fits the teacher's instructions, and so on. Also, I think their dependence on technology itself limits their digital literacy, because in my era, I tended to read a lot, but in the era of AI, students are not really interested in reading. Another problem is plagiarism. If they just copy and paste, I might realize that those are AI words, but with some others, I don't know whether they are AI words or not, but overall, I can see that it's not their own work, especially when strange words appear." (MR).

These challenges reveal that the use of AI, if not guided properly, may unintentionally weaken essential academic values and skills. The issues of overreliance and plagiarism suggest a potential erosion of students' integrity and intellectual engagement. In this context, the lecturer's perspective underscores the need for balanced AI integration where technology assists learning without replacing human effort and ethical responsibility.

### **Teacher's Perspective: The Strategies of Using AI**

To address the challenges of using AI in academic writing, the teacher implemented practical and ethical strategies. The core aim of this approach was to position technology as a tool that enhances the learning process rather than undermining it.

MR emphasized instructing students in the wise and responsible use of AI. Her pedagogical strategy involves moving beyond simply permitting AI use to actively teaching students how to utilize it effectively. This is achieved through modelling appropriate AI prompts and encouraging students to critically engage with the outputs generated by the technology. Through this method, she helps students improve their writing abilities while simultaneously upholding originality and integrity.

"I told them how to use it wisely, gave them examples of how to use it, and taught them how to create prompts. On several occasions, I forbade them from using their cell phones and asked them to write by hand. Then I gave them specific topics, and they had to write by themselves. Whether they liked it or not, they had to do it that way so I could see their true abilities. I think that's what I've been doing in class so far." (MR).

Beyond the technical and ethical guidance, the teacher's strategies are also deeply rooted in the fundamental Islamic values that underpin the institutions' educational philosophy. By guiding students toward honest and responsible AI use, she actively cultivates *amanah* (trustworthiness), ensuring students maintain full accountability for the authenticity of their academic work.

Furthermore, her emphasis on genuine, personal effort, particularly through methods like incorporating handwriting tasks, embodies *ikhlas* (sincerity) in the learning process, highlighting the importance of pure intention and dedication over simply achieving the final result. Finally, the balanced and equitable approach to integrating technology demonstrates *'adl* (justice). This commitment promoted fairness by establishing an appropriate balance between the value placed on students' intellectual effort and the role of digital assistance.

These findings are consistent with and expand upon extant frameworks regarding the adoption of educational technology, artificial intelligence (AI) literacy, and ethical decision-making in language education (Pack & Maloney, 2024). Student and teacher reflections indicate

that AI tools in academic writing in English as a foreign language (EFL) serve as both facilitators of learning and sources of ethical concerns, particularly in the context of Islamic tertiary level (Yuan et al., 2024)

The responses provided by the teachers serve to further illustrate the duality between opportunity and risk. Concerns regarding plagiarism, over-reliance, and diminished reading motivation are consistent with prior studies on educators' trust and accountability in AI-supported environments (Brandhofer & Tengler, 2024). Their strategies, which include requesting handwritten drafts, monitoring cell phone use, and teaching prompt design are conscious efforts to maintain academic integrity while promoting responsible AI use. This finding aligns with the theory of teacher professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004), in which educators negotiate a balance between innovation and ethical stewardship.

From the perspective of providing feedback, the function of artificial intelligence (AI) is to act as an automated writing coach. It provides immediate, form-focused corrections. The Socio-Cognitive Theory of Feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006) posits that the impact of feedback is contingent upon student perception and mediation. The student's report indicates that the accuracy and clarity of AI suggestions can be inconsistent. This finding underscores the notion

that the efficacy of feedback alone is insufficient to ensure optimal learning outcomes. The importance of pedagogical scaffolding in facilitating comprehension and retention cannot be overstated (Dominguez & Svihla, 2023). The integration of teacher mediation with AI feedback ensures that students critically process comments and transform them into authentic learning (Escalante et al., 2023).

This study's findings are particularly noteworthy in light of the fact that they demonstrate the profound influence of Islamic ethical principles on technology adoption. The invocation of *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *'adl* (justice) reflects a faith-based ethical consciousness that governs responsible use. This internalized moral compass mirrors secular frameworks such as Responsible AI, yet it is profoundly anchored in spiritual accountability (Alamsyah et al., 2025). Collectively, these insights propose an integrative model in which the adoption of AI is driven by perceived usefulness (TAM), moderated by task fit (TTF), enacted through AI literacy, and ethically governed by Islamic moral reasoning. For Islamic tertiary institutions, this underscores the need to integrate AI literacy training with religious ethics education.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study makes a significant contribution to the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Islamic tertiary level by offering insights into how learners and teachers navigate the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in writing instruction. AI tools are regarded as beneficial aids for enhancing writing performance and efficiency. However, they also present pedagogical and ethical challenges. The responses of students and teachers indicate an interaction between technology acceptance, cognitive adaptation, and moral reasoning.

The integration of TAM, TTF, and AI literacy theories with Islamic ethics underscores the necessity of incorporating both competence and moral awareness in the responsible use of AI in education. Institutions should implement structured AI literacy programs, establish policies for AI use, redesign writing assignments to emphasize process and reflection, and base digital ethics on values aligned with students' religious beliefs. Subsequent research endeavors should entail the empirical testing of this integrative model, with a view to investigating the manner in which cultural and religious contexts exert their influence on the sustainable and ethical adoption of AI in language education.

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