



Using ChatGPT in EFL Writing Classrooms: A Literature Review

Trieu Vy Truong ^{a*}

^a Saigon International University, Ho Chi Minh City 700000, Vietnam

ABSTRACT:

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has revolutionized traditional teaching practices, offering innovative solutions to enhance learners' writing skills. This review examines the potential and challenges of utilizing ChatGPT, an AI-powered conversational tool, mainly focus on Vietnamese EFL writing classrooms. By providing personalized feedback, interactive learning experiences, and promoting engagement, ChatGPT addresses critical areas such as grammar, vocabulary, and coherence. However, issues such as over-reliance, ethical considerations, and infrastructural disparities present significant challenges to its implementation. Drawing on recent research and practical insights, this study underscores the importance of a balanced approach that combines AI tools with human instruction to foster effective learning while preserving educational integrity. The findings highlight the need for strategic policies, teacher training, and equitable access to technology, ensuring that advancements in AI benefit all learners. This discussion aims to inform educators, policymakers, and researchers, emphasizing the transformative yet cautious integration of AI in EFL education.

Keywords: ChatGPT, artificial intelligence, AI, writing, EFL.

1. Introduction:

The integration of advanced technologies in the evolving landscape of EFL education has become increasingly pivotal. Particularly in Vietnam, where the demand for proficient English communication skills is rising amidst globalization, the role of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) systems is becoming more central. This essay explores the potential of ChatGPT, an AI-driven conversational model, in enhancing the writing capabilities of EFL students. By leveraging such cutting-edge technology, educators can potentially transform traditional writing classrooms into more dynamic, interactive, and personalized learning environments.

EFL writing, a critical skill for academic and professional success, presents significant challenges to learners, particularly those in contexts where English is not the primary language of communication. Students often struggle with issues ranging from basic grammar and vocabulary to more complex aspects like coherence and argumentative structure. In response, CALL has emerged as a supportive tool, promising to address some of these challenges through interactive and adaptive learning experiences.

The purpose of this review is to examine both the opportunities and the potential drawbacks of deploying ChatGPT within the EFL writing classrooms in Vietnam. While the integration of such technology can offer unprecedented support in terms of personalized feedback and engagement, it also introduces concerns related to dependency, accuracy, and educational integrity. The thesis posits that a balanced approach to integrating ChatGPT can significantly enhance the learning experience but requires careful consideration of ethical and practical dimensions. This discussion aims to accent the importance of strategic development in CALL practices, ensuring that the adoption of such technologies aligns with educational goals and cultural contexts, ultimately benefiting learners and educators alike.

2. Methodology:

2.1. Research design

To thoroughly explore the different aspects of utilizing ChatGPT in EFL writing classrooms, a systematic review of the literature was conducted, focusing on relevant studies and publications addressing this important topic. The purpose of the review extends beyond merely gathering relevant resources; it aims to examine and interpret the findings, drawing attention to central themes and emerging challenges associated with the application of AI tools in the context of EFL writing education. The methodology for the systematic review involves identifying scholarly articles using clearly defined search criteria, ensuring a transparent and replicable process to select and evaluate literature relevant to the research question (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Gough et al., 2012).

2.2. Document selection

ScienceDirect was chosen due to its reputation as one of the most reliable, current, and comprehensive search engines for interdisciplinary peer-reviewed literature, as highlighted by Falagas et al. (2008). To ensure thoroughness, additional searches were carried out in three other databases: Taylor & Francis, Web of Science, and Scopus. However, these supplementary searches mainly duplicated documents already identified or returned materials that were inaccessible. To maintain relevance and quality, those released prior to 2019, documents not published in English were excluded from this analysis. This study also did not keep statistics on encyclopedia, conference info, book reviews, discussion and communications.

2.3. Document review

To facilitate the organization of documents and to examine significant themes and publishing trends related to using ChatGPT in EFL writing classrooms, a structured questionnaire was developed. This questionnaire captured the general characteristics of each article, such as publication year, author affiliations, document type, and specific aspects of ChatGPT's application in EFL writing education. To effectively illustrate quantitative trends in the literature, both descriptive and basic inferential statistics were employed. Following this stage, the selected documents were imported into NVIVO, a qualitative data management software, for comprehensive analysis. Each document was carefully examined and systematically coded based on specific uses of ChatGPT and various aspects of its application in EFL writing classrooms. This analysis uncovered key themes, enabling the synthesis of information related to each theme and providing an overview of the current research landscape concerning the integration of ChatGPT in EFL writing instruction.

3. Findings and Discussion:

3.1. AI and ChatGPT in the EFL contexts

The utilization of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the field of EFL has expanded considerably over the last decade. AI tools are increasingly employed to enhance language acquisition, particularly in the domain of writing, where they serve as tutors, provide automated feedback, and facilitate interactive writing platforms. According to Park (2019) and Alotaibi (2023), AI-driven tools have been effective in improving grammatical accuracy and vocabulary use among EFL learners. These systems not only identify errors but also suggest contextual corrections and offer explanations, enabling learners to understand their mistakes in real-time.

ChatGPT, a variant of generative AI developed by OpenAI, has been specifically noted for its capabilities in generating human-like text, making it an intriguing tool for language learning. Research by Yan (2023) explored the use of ChatGPT in EFL writing classes and found that students who interacted with the AI reported improvements in writing fluency and felt more confident in their writing abilities. However, the study also highlighted the need for careful moderation, as AI-generated responses can sometimes propagate errors or generate culturally inappropriate content.

In Vietnam, the integration of AI in EFL teaching faces unique challenges and opportunities. While the government has initiated policies to boost digital infrastructure and integrate technology into education, practical issues such as uneven access to technology across urban and rural areas, and varying levels of teacher digital literacy, impact the effectiveness of such implementations. Quy et al. (2023) noted that while urban educational organizations are well-equipped with technological resources, rural areas suffer from a significant lack of access, which can hinder the nationwide adoption of AI tools like ChatGPT. Additionally, teachers in Vietnam may require further training to effectively incorporate AI into their teaching practices, as noted by Cong-Lem et al. (2024) and Nguyen (2023), who suggest that teacher readiness is a critical factor in the successful adoption of this innovative educational technologies.

These studies have underscored the potential of AI tools like ChatGPT in transforming EFL education by providing personalized learning experiences and enhancing student engagement. However, they also highlight the importance of addressing infrastructural and educational disparities to ensure that the benefits of such technologies are accessible to all learners across Vietnam. As the country continues to develop its educational technologies, strategic investments in teacher training and infrastructure will be crucial to maximize the effectiveness of AI in educational settings.

3.2. ChatGPT in the EFL writing classroom

One of the major advantages of integrating ChatGPT in EFL classrooms is the potential for enhanced student engagement. Interactive AI tools like ChatGPT can transform the writing process from a traditionally solitary activity into an engaging, interactive experience that mimics conversation with a human partner. For instance, a study by Song and Song (2023) observed that students who interacted with ChatGPT were notably more motivated and participated more actively in writing exercises than those who did not use the tool. This finding suggests that the instant feedback and the conversational nature of ChatGPT not only make learning more engaging but also less intimidating, helping students to stay interested and motivated throughout the learning process. However, it's essential to consider the novelty effect, indicating the need for ongoing evaluation of engagement strategies within AI-enhanced learning environments.

ChatGPT's ability to provide personalized feedback is another significant benefit, addressing one of the traditional challenges in language education. According to Baskara (2023), EFL students receiving AI-generated personalized feedback demonstrated quicker improvement in writing skills compared to their peers receiving generic responses. This kind of tailored interaction helps meet individual learning needs, potentially accelerating mastery and

reducing frustration. Personalized feedback from AI tools allows for a differentiated learning approach, adapting to individual student's pace and learning style, which is often not feasible in larger classroom settings due to resource constraints. Nevertheless, educators must ensure that this personalized learning does not become a crutch for students, where they rely too heavily on AI for corrections and suggestions, potentially stunting their learning autonomy and critical thinking development.

The role of ChatGPT as a supplemental tool rather than a replacement for traditional teaching methods is crucial. Combining AI with human instruction can leverage the strengths of both: AI for consistent, immediate feedback and data-driven insights, and human instructors for context-sensitive guidance and emotional support. Ausat et al. (2023) highlight that integrating ChatGPT alongside human-led instruction creates an educational framework that supports traditional teaching methods while enhancing learning opportunities through technology. This approach helps ensure that AI supports educational goals without undermining the essential role of the teacher, preserving the critical human interaction that is vital for student development, especially in language-sensitive contexts.

However, the use of ChatGPT in educational settings is not without challenges. There is a risk of over-reliance on ChatGPT for critical thinking and creativity tasks. The study by Esmail et al. (2023) warns against the dependency on AI for developing argumentative skills, as it may inhibit students' ability to think independently and critically. They suggest that while AI can assist with structural and grammatical aspects of writing, teachers should actively cultivate critical thinking through personalized guidance and interactive classroom debates.

Another significant concern is the accuracy of the content generated by Akpur (2024) notes that while ChatGPT generally produces grammatically correct text, it can occasionally create responses that are factually inaccurate or inappropriate for the context. This requires educators to remain vigilant and possibly intervene to correct or contextualize AI output, which could impose additional burdens on teachers. Moreover, ethical considerations such as plagiarism and data privacy cannot be overlooked. As Roe et al. (2023) argue, there is a pressing need for educational institutions to establish clear guidelines on the ethical use of AI tools like ChatGPT. These should aim to prevent academic dishonesty and ensure the protection of students' personal information, addressing both the academic integrity and the privacy concerns associated with AI in education.

Through a critical examination of these various dimensions, engagement, personalization, supplement versus over-reliance, accuracy, and ethics, it becomes evident that while ChatGPT can significantly enhance the EFL writing classroom, its integration must be handled with careful strategic planning and ongoing oversight. This balanced approach ensures that educational technology fulfills its promise without compromising educational quality or ethical standards.

3.3. Recommendations

- *For teachers:* The integration of ChatGPT into EFL writing classrooms offers a range of pedagogical advantages but also requires careful implementation to maximize benefits while minimizing potential pitfalls. A practical strategy for teachers is to use ChatGPT primarily as a formative assessment tool that provides instant feedback on student writing. This application can significantly enhance the efficiency of the writing process by allowing students to revise their work based on immediate, targeted feedback. However, as reported by Steiss et al. (2024), while the AI can assist with feedback provision to certain extent, it is less capable of evaluating the coherence and depth of argumentation. Therefore, teachers should supplement AI feedback with personalized, critical feedback on higher-order writing skills. Furthermore, to maintain academic integrity, educators need to establish clear guidelines about the acceptable use of AI in writing assignments (Alzahrani & Zheng, 2024). These guidelines should define what constitutes permissible assistance versus plagiarism, helping students understand how to use AI tools responsibly as part of their learning process.
- *For policymakers:* Policymakers play a crucial role in the ethical and effective integration of AI technologies like ChatGPT in educational settings. They should consider developing policy frameworks that promote equitable access to AI technologies across different regions and socioeconomic groups (Costa et al., 2024), particularly in countries like Vietnam where there is a significant disparity in technological infrastructure between urban and rural areas. Policies should also address the need for comprehensive teacher training programs that equip educators with the skills necessary to effectively integrate AI into their teaching practices. This includes training on the technical use of AI tools, pedagogical strategies for their integration, and critical awareness of the ethical implications of using such technologies in the classroom (Balci, 2024).
- *For researchers:* There is a significant opportunity for researchers to explore the long-term effects of AI integration in EFL classrooms. Specific areas of interest could include the impact of AI on student motivation and learning outcomes, the effectiveness of AI in improving different aspects of writing skills, and the psychological effects of AI interactions on language learners (Werdingisih et al., 2024). Furthermore, with the specific context of Vietnam, research could focus on the differential impacts of AI in urban versus rural educational settings, investigating how technological disparities influence educational equity. This research could provide valuable insights that inform both pedagogical practice and policy development.

3.4. Implications for Vietnamese EFL writing classroom

The integration of technology, especially AI, can be both a boon and a challenge. First, tools like ChatGPT can engage students in ways that traditional methods might not, especially by catering to the digital native generation that finds technology inherently engaging. However, the reliance on such tools

must be carefully managed because students can become dependent on AI for corrections, risking their ability to write independently and critically think about their work (Ausat et al., 2023).

Moreover, while AI tools can provide immediate grammatical corrections and feedback, they sometimes lack the nuanced understanding of human feedback that can recognize the subtleties of tone, style, and cultural relevance in student writing. Therefore, the use of AI as a supplementary tool is advocated, the irreplaceable value of direct teacher-student interactions and traditional pedagogical methods that foster deeper learning and critical thinking skills (Baskara, 2023).

Generally, the integration of ChatGPT and similar AI technologies in EFL writing classrooms holds substantial promise but must be navigated thoughtfully, with a concerted effort from teachers, policymakers, and researchers to harness its benefits while addressing its limitations. This collaborative approach is essential for creating an inclusive, effective, and ethically sound educational environment.

4. Conclusion:

This review has explored the integration of ChatGPT into EFL writing classrooms, emphasizing its potential benefits and challenges. ChatGPT enhances student engagement through interactive learning, provides personalized feedback, and serves as a supplementary educational tool to support traditional teaching methods. However, its use also poses concerns, including the risk of over-reliance on AI for critical thinking, inaccuracies in AI-generated content, and ethical issues such as plagiarism and data privacy. These findings underscore the importance of employing ChatGPT as a balanced adjunct to human instruction, ensuring it complements rather than replaces conventional teaching practices.

The potential of AI tools like ChatGPT in EFL education sparks cautious optimism. These technologies offer exciting opportunities to make learning more accessible, engaging, and personalized, particularly in diverse learning environments. However, their adoption must prioritize maintaining educational integrity and addressing inequities in access. Close monitoring of ChatGPT's use is essential to align its application with educational objectives and to prevent adverse outcomes, such as compromised learning quality or ethical violations (Ausat et al., 2023; Baskara, 2023). A critical, balanced approach to integrating AI tools can maximize their benefits while minimizing associated risks (Cong-Lem et al., 2024).

As AI technologies continue to evolve, their potential to reshape educational practices in Vietnam and globally is immense. However, the success of these innovations will depend on the collaborative efforts of educators, policymakers, and researchers to address the accompanying challenges. To fully harness the transformative power of AI in EFL classrooms, stakeholders must balance enthusiasm with caution, ensuring these tools enhance learning while upholding the highest educational standards. This balanced approach will pave the way for equitable and impactful integration of AI in education, preserving the enduring value of human instruction alongside technological advancements.

References

- Akpur, A. (2024). Exploring the potential and limitations of ChatGPT in academic writing and editorial tasks. *Firat Üniversitesi Journal of Social Science*, 34(1), 177-186. <https://doi.org/10.18069/firsbed.1299700>.
- Alotaibi, A. H. E. (2023). The Impact Of AI-Powered Grammarly on Enhancing Grammar Proficiency Among Saudi EFL Students. *Remittances Review*, 18(4), 3718-3726. <https://doi.org/10.33182/rr.v8i4.256>.
- Alzahrani, A., & Zheng, Y. (2024). *Exploring AI Applications in Essay-Based Assignments: Affordances and Risks*. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1008230>.
- Ausat, A., Massang, B., Efendi, M., Nofirman, N., & Riady, Y. (2023). Can Chat GPT Replace the Role of the Teacher in the Classroom: A Fundamental Analysis. *Journal on Education*, 5(4), 16100-16106. <https://doi.org/10.31004/joe.v5i4.2745>.
- Balcı, Ö. (2024). The Role of ChatGPT in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learning and Teaching: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Current Educational Studies (IJCES)*, 3(1), 66-82. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12544675>.
- Baskara, F. R. (2023). Integrating ChatGPT into EFL writing instruction: Benefits and challenges. *International Journal of Education and Learning*, 5(1), 44-55. <https://doi.org/10.31763/ijele.v5i1.858>.
- Cong-Lem, N., Nghi, T. T., & Nguyen, T. T. (2024). Academic integrity in the age of Generative AI: Perceptions and responses of Vietnamese EFL teachers. *Teaching English With Technology*, 24(1), 28-47. <https://doi.org/10.56297/fsyb3031/mxnb7567>.
- Costa, C. J., Aparicio, M., Aparicio, S., & Aparicio, J. T. (2024). The Democratization of Artificial Intelligence: Theoretical Framework. *Applied Sciences*, 14(18), 8236. <https://doi.org/10.3390/app14188236>.
- Esmail, A. A. A., Matanluk, & Marshall, S. (2023). Understanding Student Perception Regarding The Use of ChatGPT in Their Argumentative Writing: A Qualitative Inquiry. *Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 39(4), 150-165. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2023-3904-08>.
- Falagas, M. E., Pitsouni, E. I., Malietzis, G. A., & Pappas, G. (2008). Comparison of PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar: Strengths and weaknesses. *The FASEB Journal*, 22(2), 338-342. <https://doi.org/10.1096/fj.07-9492LSF>.

- Gough, D., Thomas, J., & Oliver, S. (2012). Clarifying differences between review designs and methods. *Systematic Reviews*, 1, 28–28. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2046-4053-1-28>.
- Nguyen, T. T. H. (2023). EFL Teachers' Perspectives toward the Use of ChatGPT in Writing Classes: A Case Study at Van Lang University. *International Journal of Language Instruction*, 2(3), 1-47. <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.23231>.
- Park, J. (2019). Implications of AI-based Grammar Checker in EFL Learning and Testing: Korean High School Students' Writing. *English Language Assessment*, 14(1), 11-39.
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2006). *Systematic Reviews in the Social Sciences: A Practical Guide*. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470754887>.
- Quy, V. K., Thành, B. T., Chehri, A., Linh, D. M., & Tuan, D. A. (2023). AI and Digital Transformation in Higher Education: Vision and Approach of a Specific University in Vietnam. *Sustainability*, 15(14), 11093. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151411093>.
- Roe, J., Renandya, W. A., & Jacobs, G. M. (2023). A review of AI-Powered Writing Tools and their implications for academic Integrity in the language classroom. *Journal English and Applied Linguistics*, 2(1), 22-30. <https://doi.org/10.59588/2961-3094.1035>.
- Song, C., & Song, Y. (2023). Enhancing academic writing skills and motivation: assessing the efficacy of ChatGPT in AI-assisted language learning for EFL students. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1260843. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1260843>.
- Steiss, J., Tate, T., Graham, S., Cruz, J., Hebert, M., Wang, J., Moon, Y., Tseng, W., Warschauer, M., & Olson, C. B. (2024). Comparing the quality of human and ChatGPT feedback of students' writing. *Learning and Instruction*, 91, 101894. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2024.101894>.
- Werdiningsih, I., Marzuki, N., Indrawati, I., Rusdin, D., Ivone, F. M., Basthomi, Y., & Zulfahreza, N. (2024). Revolutionizing EFL writing: unveiling the strategic use of ChatGPT by Indonesian master's students. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2399431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2024.2399431>.
- Yan, D. (2023). Impact of ChatGPT on learners in a L2 writing practicum: An exploratory investigation. *Education and Information Technologies*, 28(11), 13943-13967. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11742-4>.