

ENGLISH-MAJOR STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AI-ASSISTED IELTS WRITING TASK 2 PRACTICE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY AT THANH DO UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated English-major students' perceptions of AI-assisted tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice at Thanh Do University, Vietnam. The study aimed to explore how students perceived the usefulness and challenges of using AI-assisted writing technologies during IELTS-oriented writing activities. A qualitative research design was employed, involving semi-structured interviews with 15 third-year English-major students enrolled in the Integrated English 2 course during the second semester of the 2025 academic year. The participants had experience using AI-assisted tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Gemini to support IELTS Writing Task 2 practice. Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that students generally perceived AI-assisted writing tools positively due to their usefulness in idea generation, essay organization, grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, and self-study support. Participants also believed that AI technologies improved writing confidence and encouraged learner autonomy. However, concerns regarding overreliance on AI-generated content, reduced independent thinking, and the reliability of AI-generated feedback were also identified. The study highlights the potential of AI-assisted writing technologies as supplementary learning resources in IELTS-oriented writing instruction while emphasizing the importance of responsible and balanced AI integration in higher education contexts.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, IELTS Writing Task 2, AI-assisted writing, English-major students, learner perceptions, EFL writing*

I. INTRODUCTION

AI has increasingly transformed educational practices in higher education, particularly in language learning and academic writing. The rapid development of AI-powered writing tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Gemini has significantly changed the way students plan, revise, and improve academic writing. In English language education, these technologies are becoming increasingly popular because they provide immediate feedback, personalized

support, and flexible learning opportunities. Recent studies have suggested that AI-assisted writing tools can support learners' writing development and writing confidence (Kasneci et al., 2023; Pinninti, 2025).

Among different areas of English learning, IELTS Writing Task 2 is widely considered one of the most challenging components for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. The task requires students to produce a well-structured argumentative essay within a limited amount of time while demonstrating lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, task response, and coherence and cohesion. Previous studies have shown that many EFL learners experience difficulties in relevant arguments, organizing ideas logically, and maintaining language accuracy (Fareed et al., 2016). In the Vietnamese context, Ngo and Truong (2023) reported that university students often struggled with academic writing due to limited vocabulary, insufficient grammar knowledge, and difficulties in organizing ideas coherently. Similarly, Lam et al. (2020) found that English-major students at Soc Trang Teachers' Training College experienced challenges related to thesis statement development, idea organization, grammatical accuracy, and academic vocabulary use in argumentative essays. These difficulties are particularly relevant to IELTS Writing Task 2, which requires students to construct coherent arguments and provide sufficient supporting evidence within strict time constraints. Because of these challenges, many students increasingly rely on AI-assisted writing tools to support their IELTS writing practice both inside and outside the classroom.

The growing use of AI technologies in education has attracted considerable scholarly attention worldwide. Previous studies have highlighted both the opportunities and challenges associated with AI-assisted writing. Kasneci et al. (2023) argued that generative AI technologies could facilitate personalized learning experiences and enhance students' academic writing processes. Similarly, Pinninti (2025) found that AI-assisted writing tools positively influenced ESL students' engagement and writing development by helping learners revise essays more effectively. In addition, AI-assisted writing tools have been associated with increased learner autonomy and more flexible self-study practices. Le et al. (2023) found that Vietnamese EFL students perceived ChatGPT positively because it enhanced engagement in writing activities, improved writing skills, and encouraged independent learning. Participants in the study also appreciated the ability of AI-assisted tools to provide immediate support during writing practice, particularly independent writing practice.

Despite these benefits, previous studies have also raised concerns regarding the use of AI in academic writing. Researchers have suggested that excessive reliance on AI-assisted technologies may reduce students' critical thinking, creativity, and independent writing ability (Kasneci et al., 2023). Ethical concerns regarding plagiarism, academic dishonesty, and overdependence on AI-generated content have also become increasingly common in higher education contexts. Cotton et al. (2024) argued that unrestricted use of AI-generated writing assistance may create challenges for maintaining academic integrity in educational settings. Similarly, Dwivedi et al. (2023) emphasized that although generative AI technologies provide substantial educational opportunities, they also raise important concerns regarding ethical use, reliability, and responsible implementation in teaching and learning.

In Vietnam, AI-assisted learning technologies have become increasingly common in higher education, particularly among English-major students. Many students frequently use AI tools to support IELTS essay preparation during self-study. Recent Vietnamese studies have also demonstrated the growing influence of AI technologies in English writing instruction. Nguyen et al. (2025) investigated the use of ChatGPT in IELTS essay writing and found that AI-assisted writing practice improved students' task response and grammatical range and accuracy while also promoting positive attitudes toward AI-supported learning. Similarly, Le et al. (2023) found that Vietnamese EFL students perceived ChatGPT positively because it enhanced engagement in writing activities, improved writing engagement and encouraged more independent learning. However, students also expressed concerns regarding overreliance on AI-generated content and reduced creativity during writing tasks.

To better understand students' acceptance of educational technologies, many researchers have applied the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989). TAM proposes that users' acceptance of a technological system is primarily influenced by two major factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which users believe that a technology can improve their performance, whereas perceived ease of use refers to the degree to which a technology is considered effortless to use. In educational settings, TAM has frequently been employed to investigate students' acceptance of digital learning technologies and AI-assisted educational tools. In the Vietnamese EFL context, Le et al. (2023) employed TAM to examine students' perceptions of ChatGPT in EFL writing activities and found that perceived usefulness and ease of use significantly contributed to students' positive attitudes toward AI-assisted writing technologies. Therefore, TAM provides an appropriate theoretical framework for exploring English-major students' perceptions of AI-assisted IELTS Writing Task 2 practice.

Despite the growing body of research on AI-assisted writing, several research gaps remain. First, many previous studies have focused primarily on the effectiveness of AI tools through quantitative or experimental approaches. Relatively few studies have employed qualitative methods to investigate students' personal experiences and perceptions of AI-assisted writing. Second, limited research has specifically explored the use of AI-assisted tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice, which involves unique argumentative and academic writing requirements. Third, although AI-assisted learning technologies have recently attracted increasing attention in Vietnam, qualitative studies focusing on English-major students in Vietnamese higher education contexts remain limited.

Therefore, this study aims to explore English-major students' perceptions of AI-assisted IELTS Writing Task 2 practice at Thanh Do University (TDD). Specifically, the study investigates students' perceived benefits, challenges, and experiences of using AI-assisted writing tools during IELTS Writing Task 2 learning. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing field of educational technology and provide pedagogical implications for the responsible integration of AI technologies in English writing instruction.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do English-major students perceive the use of AI-assisted tools for IELTS Writing Task 2 practice?
2. What benefits and challenges do students experience when using AI-assisted tools for IELTS Writing Task 2 practice?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. AI-assisted writing in English language education

The rapid advancement of AI technologies has significantly influenced teaching and learning practices in higher education, particularly in language education and academic writing. AI-assisted writing tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Gemini are increasingly used by students to support idea generation, grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, paraphrasing, and text organization. These technologies provide immediate feedback and personalized assistance, allowing learners to revise and improve their writing more efficiently.

Previous studies have highlighted the pedagogical potential of AI-assisted writing tools in English language learning. Kasneci et al. (2023) argued that generative AI technologies can support personalized learning experiences and enhance students' writing processes through adaptive feedback and content generation. Similarly, Pinninti (2025) found that AI-assisted writing tools positively influenced ESL learners' engagement and writing development by helping students revise and improve their writing. The study also suggested that AI-generated feedback increased learners' confidence and reduced writing anxiety.

In the Vietnamese context, Le et al. (2023) found that EFL students perceived ChatGPT positively because it enhanced engagement in writing activities, improved writing skills, and encouraged learner autonomy. Students particularly appreciated the ability of AI tools to provide immediate support during writing practice. These findings indicate that AI-assisted technologies may support EFL learners in developing greater confidence and independence in academic writing.

Despite these advantages, researchers have emphasized that AI-assisted writing should not replace human instruction entirely. Cotton et al. (2024) argued that excessive dependence on AI-generated content may reduce students' critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. Similarly, Zhai (2023) warned that overreliance on AI writing technologies might negatively affect students' independent writing competence because learners may become passive recipients of automatically generated suggestions. Ethical concerns regarding plagiarism, academic integrity, and responsible AI use have also become increasingly important in discussions of AI-assisted writing in higher education.

Overall, previous studies suggest that AI-assisted writing technologies provide considerable educational benefits while simultaneously presenting pedagogical and ethical

challenges. These findings highlight the importance of examining students' perceptions of AI-assisted writing in specific educational contexts.

2.2. IELTS writing task 2 and challenges among EFL Learners

IELTS Writing Task 2 is widely regarded as one of the most demanding academic writing tasks for EFL learners because it requires students to compose a formal argumentative essay within a limited timeframe. To achieve high band scores, learners must demonstrate strong performance across four assessment criteria: task response, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical range and accuracy.

Previous studies have identified numerous challenges faced by EFL learners in argumentative essay writing. Fareed et al. (2016) reported that students frequently struggled with generating relevant ideas, organizing arguments logically, and maintaining grammatical accuracy in essay writing. Similarly, Ngo and Truong (2023) found that Vietnamese university students experienced considerable difficulties in academic writing due to limited vocabulary, grammatical weaknesses, and insufficient coherence in idea organization.

In addition, Lam et al. (2020) found that English-major students at Soc Trang Teachers' Training College experienced difficulties in generating well-organized ideas, using sufficient academic vocabulary, developing clear thesis statements, and providing adequate supporting evidence in argumentative essays. The study also revealed that grammatical limitations and unfamiliarity with argumentative rhetorical features negatively affected students' writing performance. These challenges are particularly relevant to IELTS Writing Task 2 because the task requires students to construct coherent arguments and support opinions effectively within strict time limitations.

Because IELTS Writing Task 2 requires complex cognitive and linguistic skills, many students seek additional support outside the classroom. Recently, AI-assisted writing tools have become increasingly popular among IELTS learners because they provide immediate feedback and writing support during IELTS practice. Students often use AI technologies to revise and improve essays more efficiently.

However, the use of AI-assisted technologies in IELTS writing remains controversial. While some researchers argue that AI tools effectively support writing development, others suggest that students may become overly dependent on AI-generated content instead of developing independent writing skills. Therefore, understanding students' perceptions of AI-assisted IELTS writing practice is important for evaluating the pedagogical value and limitations of these technologies in EFL education.

2.3. Students' perceptions of AI-assisted writing tools

Students' perceptions play an important role in determining the effectiveness and acceptance of educational technologies. Recent studies indicate that students generally

perceive AI-assisted writing tools positively because these technologies improve writing efficiency, provide immediate feedback, and support language development.

Nguyen et al. (2025) found that university students viewed AI-assisted writing tools as useful for improving the overall quality of IELTS essays. Students reported that AI-generated feedback enabled them to identify errors more easily and revise their writing more effectively. Similarly, Dwivedi et al. (2023) noted that learners appreciated the accessibility and convenience of AI-powered writing support systems because they could receive assistance anytime and anywhere.

Another important finding in previous studies is increased writing confidence. Pinninti (2025) reported that students felt less anxious when using AI-assisted writing tools because they received immediate suggestions and corrective feedback during the writing process. This support encouraged learners to write more confidently during revision tasks. In addition, AI technologies were reported to enhance learner motivation and engagement in writing activities.

Nevertheless, previous studies have also identified concerns regarding the use of AI-assisted writing tools. Cotton et al. (2024) argued that students might become overly dependent on AI-generated suggestions, which could weaken their independent thinking and writing abilities. Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2025) reported that some learners questioned the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated feedback, particularly in complex writing tasks. Ethical concerns regarding plagiarism and academic dishonesty were also commonly discussed in previous research.

In Vietnam, studies examining students' perceptions of AI-assisted writing remain relatively limited. Le et al. (2023) found that Vietnamese EFL students generally perceived AI writing tools positively because these technologies supported writing revision and self-study practices. However, students also expressed concerns regarding overreliance on AI and reduced creativity during writing tasks.

Although previous studies have explored students' attitudes toward AI-assisted writing, most research has relied primarily on quantitative surveys or experimental approaches. Consequently, limited attention has been paid to students' lived experiences and personal perspectives regarding AI-assisted IELTS Writing Task 2 practice in authentic classroom contexts.

2.4. Technology acceptance model (TAM)

The TAM, developed by Davis (1989), is one of the most widely used frameworks for examining users' acceptance of technology. TAM proposes that technology adoption is mainly influenced by two factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which users believe technology can improve their performance, while perceived ease of use refers to how effortless the technology is perceived to be.

In educational contexts, TAM has frequently been applied to investigate students' acceptance of digital learning technologies and AI-assisted educational tools. In the Vietnamese EFL context, Le et al. (2023) found that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use significantly contributed to students' positive attitudes toward ChatGPT in EFL writing activities. In the present study, TAM provides an appropriate framework for exploring how English-major students perceive AI-assisted tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice.

2.5. Research gap

Although previous studies have explored AI-assisted writing in language education, several important research gaps remain. First, many existing studies have focused primarily on measuring the effectiveness of AI tools through quantitative or experimental approaches. Relatively few studies have employed qualitative methods to investigate students' personal experiences and perceptions of AI-assisted writing.

Second, limited research has specifically examined the use of AI-assisted technologies in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice, which involves unique argumentative and academic writing requirements. Third, despite the increasing use of AI-assisted learning tools in Vietnam, qualitative studies focusing on English-major students in Vietnamese higher education contexts remain limited. Finally, few studies have applied TAM to qualitatively explore students' perceptions of AI-assisted IELTS writing practice.

Unlike previous studies focusing mainly on general AI-assisted writing or quantitative evaluation, the present study qualitatively explores English-major students' perceptions of AI-assisted IELTS Writing Task 2 practice in the Vietnamese higher education context. To address these gaps, the study investigates students' perceived usefulness, ease of use, benefits, and challenges of AI-assisted writing tools at TDD through a qualitative exploratory approach grounded in TAM.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative exploratory research design to investigate English-major students' perceptions of AI-assisted tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore students' experiences, opinions, and perceptions in depth rather than measure causal relationships or statistical effects. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research is suitable for understanding participants' perspectives and interpreting meanings within specific educational contexts. The study was guided by the TAM developed by Davis (1989). Specifically, the concepts of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use informed the development of the interview questions and the interpretation of students' perceptions regarding AI-assisted writing tools.

3.2. Research context

The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2025 academic year at TDD. The participants were third-year English-major students enrolled in the course *Integrated English Skills 2*, a three-credit course designed to develop students' academic English proficiency through the four components of the IELTS Academic examination, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

The course used *Complete IELTS Bands 5-6.5 Student's Book with Answers* by Brook-Hart & Jakeman (2012), published by Cambridge University Press, as the primary instructional material. The textbook consists of eight topic-based units and focuses on helping learners develop IELTS Academic skills at the intermediate to upper-intermediate levels. In the writing component, students regularly practiced IELTS Writing Task 2 argumentative essays and received instruction on idea development, essay organization, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammatical accuracy.

During classroom activities and self-study practices, many students reported using AI-assisted writing tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Gemini to support their IELTS Writing Task 2 practice. These tools were commonly used for brainstorming ideas, checking grammar, paraphrasing sentences, improving vocabulary, and organizing essay structures.

Based on classroom assessments and course-related tests, the students' English proficiency level was estimated to be approximately B1+ according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The researcher was also the instructor responsible for teaching the course during the semester. This role enabled easier access to participants and facilitated a deeper understanding of the classroom context and students' learning experiences.

3.3. Participants

The study involved 15 third-year English-major students selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was chosen because the participants met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Specifically, all participants: (1) were English-major students; (2) were enrolled in the *Integrated English Skills 2* course; (3) regularly practiced IELTS Writing Task 2 essays; and (4) had experience using AI-assisted writing tools during their writing practice.

Among the participants, four were male, and eleven were female. The participants had varying frequencies of AI tool usage and different levels of familiarity with AI-assisted writing technologies. This variation allowed the researcher to collect diverse perspectives regarding the perceived benefits and challenges of AI-assisted IELTS writing practice.

Because the researcher was the students' direct lecturer, participants were invited to join the study through face-to-face classroom announcements. Participation was entirely

voluntary, and students were informed that their decision to participate or decline would not affect their academic results or classroom evaluation in any way.

3.4. Data collection instruments

The primary data collection instrument in this study was a semi-structured interview protocol. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences in detail while maintaining flexibility during the interview process. According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), Semi-structured interviews are effective for obtaining rich and detailed descriptions of participants' perspectives.

The interview questions were developed based on previous studies on AI-assisted writing, EFL writing challenges, and the TAM, particularly perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989). Previous studies by Le et al. (2023), Nguyen et al. (2025), and Pinninti (2025) highlighted students' perceptions of AI-assisted writing tools, including their usefulness, accessibility, and concerns regarding overreliance on AI technologies. In addition, studies by Lam et al. (2020) and Trinh et al. (2025) identified common difficulties among Vietnamese EFL students in argumentative essay writing, such as idea organization, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and coherence development. Based on these studies, the interview protocol focused on students' experiences using AI-assisted writing tools, perceived benefits and challenges of AI-assisted IELTS writing practice, the usefulness and accessibility of AI tools, and students' future intentions regarding AI-assisted writing technologies.

Before the main data collection process, a pilot interview was conducted with two English-major students who shared similar characteristics with the target participants. The pilot interviews were conducted to evaluate the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the interview questions. Based on feedback from the pilot participants, several interview questions were revised to improve clarity and reduce ambiguity.

3.5. Data collection procedures

Data collection was conducted during the second semester of the 2025 academic year. After obtaining participants' consent, individual semi-structured interviews were arranged at mutually convenient times. Due to scheduling flexibility and participant convenience, all interviews were conducted online via Zoom.

Each interview lasted 30 minutes. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to share their personal experiences and opinions regarding the use of AI-assisted writing tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice. Follow-up questions were used when necessary to clarify participants' responses or obtain more detailed explanations. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy during transcription and analysis. The recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim by the researcher for data analysis purposes.

3.6. Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method was selected because it provides a flexible and systematic approach for identifying patterns within qualitative data. The analysis process included familiarizing oneself with the interview transcripts, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing recurring themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Particular attention was given to themes related to perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, benefits, challenges, and ethical concerns associated with AI-assisted writing tools. To enhance trustworthiness, the researcher repeatedly compared codes and themes across the interview transcripts to ensure consistency and coherence in the analysis.

3.7. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Informed consent was obtained before the interviews were conducted. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms such as Student 1, Student 2, and Student 3 were used in the interview transcripts and research reporting. All audio recordings and interview data were stored securely and used only for research purposes. Since the researcher was also the course instructor, students were clearly informed that participation was entirely voluntary and would not affect their academic assessment or course performance.

IV. RESULTS

The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed four major themes regarding English-major students' perceptions of AI-assisted tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice: (1) perceived usefulness of AI-assisted writing tools, (2) perceived ease of use and accessibility, (3) concerns and challenges regarding AI-assisted writing, and (4) learner autonomy and changing learning behaviors.

Before presenting the detailed findings, the major themes identified from the thematic analysis are summarized in Table 1. The table provides an overview of the key patterns emerging from participants' perceptions of AI-assisted tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice.

Table 1

Major themes identified from the interview data

Theme	Description	Representative examples
Perceived usefulness	AI tools supported idea generation, grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, and essay organization in IELTS Writing Task 2	Brainstorming arguments, paraphrasing prompts, improving coherence

Ease of use and accessibility	Students perceived AI tools as convenient, fast, and accessible for self-study	Instant grammar checking and essay revision outside class
Concerns and challenges	Students expressed concerns regarding overreliance, inaccurate feedback, and reduced creativity	Dependence on AI-generated ideas and essay structures
Learner autonomy	AI tools encouraged self-study, repeated revision, and independent writing practice	Revising essays multiple times before submission

4.1. Perceived usefulness of AI-assisted writing tools

Most participants perceived AI-assisted writing tools positively because these technologies helped them overcome common difficulties in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice. The most frequently mentioned benefits included idea generation, essay organization, vocabulary enhancement, and grammatical correction.

Participants commonly reported difficulties generating arguments for IELTS opinion essays. Many students used ChatGPT to brainstorm ideas for topics related to education, technology, and social issues. One participant stated:

“Ví dụ đề về việc chính phủ nên đầu tư vào giao thông công cộng hay đường xá, em thường không nghĩ ra đủ ý. ChatGPT giúp em brainstorm nhanh hơn.” [For example, when the topic was whether governments should invest in public transportation or roads, I often could not develop enough ideas. ChatGPT helped me brainstorm more quickly.] (Student 3)

Student 8 also shared: “Em dùng Grammarly để sửa lỗi ngữ pháp vì nó giúp em nhận ra lỗi nhanh hơn.” [I use Grammarly to correct grammar mistakes because it helps me identify errors more quickly.]

Interview data also showed that AI-assisted tools supported essay organization by suggesting clearer structures for introductions, topic sentences, and supporting paragraphs. In addition, Grammarly was widely used to improve grammatical accuracy and sentence clarity. Several participants also used AI tools to paraphrase essay prompts and diversify academic vocabulary, which they believed improved their lexical resource in IELTS essays.

4.2. Ease of use and accessibility

Another major theme emerging from the interviews was the accessibility and convenience of AI-assisted writing tools. Most participants reported that the tools were easy to use and provided immediate feedback, making them suitable for independent IELTS writing practice.

Participants appreciated being able to access AI tools anytime through smartphones or laptops. Several students explained that AI-assisted technologies reduced dependence on teacher feedback because they could revise essays outside classroom hours. Student 11 noted that when practicing Writing Task 2 at home, he could immediately check grammar and coherence instead of waiting for the next lesson. Student 2 explained: “Em thấy AI tiện vì có thể dùng bất cứ lúc nào trên điện thoại.” [I find AI convenient because I can use it anytime on my phone.]

Four participants preferred Gemini because it was integrated with Google services and easily accessible through personal accounts. Participants also valued the speed of AI-generated responses, particularly when practicing under IELTS time constraints. In addition, several students stated that AI-assisted tools reduced writing anxiety because they could revise essays repeatedly and experiment with vocabulary and sentence structures more confidently after receiving immediate feedback.

4.3. Concerns and challenges regarding AI-assisted writing

Despite the generally positive perceptions, participants also identified several concerns and challenges related to AI-assisted writing technologies. One major concern involved overreliance on AI-generated ideas and essay structures.

Some students worried that excessive use of AI tools could negatively affect independent thinking and creativity during IELTS Writing Task 2 practice. Student 5 stated: “Nếu dùng AI quá nhiều thì em bị phụ thuộc và lười tự nghĩ ý.” [If I use AI too much, I become dependent on it and feel lazy to develop my own ideas.]

Another common concern is related to the reliability and appropriateness of AI-generated feedback. Some students believed that AI-generated vocabulary and examples occasionally sounded unnatural or overly general for IELTS argumentative essays. Student 9 commented that sometimes AI gives examples that are too general or not similar to the IELTS writing style. Moreover, Student 6 noted: “Đôi khi AI viết hơi máy móc và không tự nhiên như cách giáo viên hướng dẫn.” [Sometimes AI-generated writing sounds mechanical and less natural than teacher guidance.] Participants also expressed ethical concerns regarding plagiarism and excessive dependence on AI-generated essays. Although students generally viewed AI-assisted tools as learning support systems rather than cheating tools, they acknowledged that overusing AI-generated content might negatively affect genuine writing development.

4.4. Learner autonomy and changing learning behaviors

The findings also indicated that AI-assisted writing tools influenced students' learning behaviors and promoted learner autonomy. Many participants reported revising essays more frequently after using AI-assisted technologies because they could receive immediate feedback during the writing process. Student 14 explained: “Trước đây em chỉ viết một lần rồi thôi, nhưng bây giờ em sửa bài nhiều hơn nhờ AI. [Previously, I only wrote one draft, but now I revise my essays more because of AI.] Furthermore, Student 10 stated: “AI giúp em tự học

nhều hơn ở nhà thay vì chỉ chờ giáo viên chữa bài.” [AI helps me study more independently at home instead of only waiting for teacher feedback.]

Students also described AI-assisted writing tools as “personal learning assistants” that supported independent learning and self-study. Students 4 and 12 explained that AI technologies encouraged them to compare sentence structures, explore academic vocabulary, and practice writing more regularly outside classroom hours. However, most participants (11 out of 15) emphasized that AI tools should complement rather than replace teachers. Students believed that teachers remained essential for providing detailed explanations, personalized feedback, and emotional support during IELTS writing instruction.

V. DISCUSSION

This study explored English-major students' perceptions of AI-assisted tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice at TDD. The findings revealed that students generally perceived AI-assisted writing technologies positively due to their usefulness, accessibility, and ability to support independent learning. However, participants also expressed concerns regarding overreliance, reduced creativity, and the reliability of AI-generated feedback.

5.1. English-major students' perceptions of the use of AI-assisted tools for IELTS Writing Task 2 practice (Research question 1)

The findings revealed that English-major students generally held positive perceptions toward AI-assisted writing tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice. Participants considered ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Gemini useful for generating essay ideas, organizing argumentative structures, improving grammar, and expanding academic vocabulary. These findings support previous studies suggesting that AI-assisted writing technologies can facilitate writing development and learner engagement in EFL contexts.

This result is consistent with Kasneci et al. (2023), who argued that generative AI technologies can support academic writing through immediate feedback and personalized learning support. Similarly, Pinninti (2025) found that ESL students perceived ChatGPT positively because it improved sentence structures, grammatical accuracy, and writing confidence. In the present study, participants frequently mentioned using AI tools to brainstorm ideas and supporting examples for common IELTS Writing Task 2 topics such as education, technology, environmental protection, and social media.

Similar perceptions were reported by Le et al. (2023), who found that Vietnamese EFL students viewed ChatGPT positively because it enhanced engagement in writing activities, promoted learner autonomy, and improved writing skills. Likewise, participants in the current study appreciated the accessibility and convenience of AI-assisted writing tools because they could receive instant support during self-study practice without waiting for teacher feedback.

Another notable point concerns grammatical correction and lexical resource development. Participants particularly valued Grammarly for identifying grammatical errors and improving sentence clarity. This result aligns with Nguyen et al. (2025), who reported that ChatGPT-supported IELTS writing practice improved students' grammatical range and

accuracy as well as task response. Because grammatical accuracy and lexical resource are important IELTS Writing Task 2 assessment criteria, participants perceived AI-assisted tools as highly beneficial for improving these aspects.

Students' positive attitudes toward AI-assisted writing technologies also strongly reflect the Technology Acceptance Model proposed by Davis (1989). Participants perceived AI tools as both useful and easy to use because they could quickly generate feedback, suggest vocabulary alternatives, and provide sample essay structures with minimal effort. Similar findings were reported by Le et al. (2023), who applied TAM to examine students' perceptions of ChatGPT in EFL writing contexts.

In summary, the results suggest that English-major students perceived AI-assisted writing tools as supportive learning resources that enhanced writing efficiency, confidence, and independent IELTS writing practice.

5.2. Benefits and challenges experienced by students when using AI-assisted tools for IELTS Writing Task 2 practice (Research question 2)

The findings identified several important benefits associated with AI-assisted IELTS Writing Task 2 practice. First, participants reported that AI technologies helped them generate arguments and supporting examples more effectively within a limited writing time. This benefit is particularly important because IELTS Writing Task 2 requires students to complete a well-developed argumentative essay within approximately 40 minutes. Many participants explained that ChatGPT helped them brainstorm relevant ideas for difficult topics and organize essays into clearer introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions.

This finding supports Fareed et al. (2016), who emphasized that EFL learners often struggle with idea generation and logical organization in argumentative writing. Similarly, Lam et al. (2020) found that Vietnamese English-major students experienced difficulties in organizing ideas, developing thesis statements, and providing supporting evidence in argumentative essays. In the present study, students believed that AI-assisted tools partially addressed these writing difficulties by offering immediate organizational and linguistic support during IELTS essay practice.

Another major benefit involved grammar correction and vocabulary enhancement. Participants reported using Grammarly and ChatGPT to improve sentence structures, paraphrase ideas, and identify grammatical mistakes before revising essays. This finding is consistent with Pinninti (2025), who found that AI-generated feedback positively influenced ESL students' writing development and engagement. Likewise, Nguyen et al. (2025) demonstrated that ChatGPT-assisted IELTS writing practice improved students' grammatical accuracy and task response performance.

The findings additionally suggest that AI-assisted writing tools promoted learner autonomy and reduced writing anxiety. Students appreciated being able to practice IELTS essays independently outside the classroom and receive immediate feedback at any time. These findings align with Le et al. (2023), who reported that AI-assisted writing technologies increased learner autonomy and engagement in Vietnamese higher education contexts.

However, participants also identified several important challenges related to AI-assisted IELTS writing practice. One major concern involved overreliance on AI-generated content. Some students worried that excessive dependence on AI-generated ideas and essay structures might weaken their ability to think critically and write independently during actual IELTS examinations, where AI tools are unavailable. This finding corresponds with Kasneci et al. (2023), who warned that overdependence on generative AI technologies could negatively affect learners' critical thinking and independent writing abilities.

Another important challenge concerned the reliability and appropriateness of AI-generated feedback. Several participants reported that AI-generated IELTS essays sometimes contained unnatural expressions, repetitive vocabulary, or overly general arguments that did not fully match IELTS band score expectations. Although students considered AI-generated feedback useful, they also recognized that AI responses occasionally lacked contextual appropriateness and nuanced explanations.

Ethical concerns regarding plagiarism and academic integrity also emerged from the interviews. Participants acknowledged that some students might misuse AI-generated essays by submitting them directly without meaningful revision or critical evaluation. This finding reflects concerns raised by Cotton et al. (2024), who argued that generative AI technologies may create challenges for academic integrity in higher education.

Interestingly, despite their positive perceptions of AI-assisted writing technologies, many participants still emphasized the irreplaceable role of teachers in IELTS writing instruction. Students believed that teachers provided personalized explanations, emotional encouragement, and contextualized feedback that AI systems could not fully replicate. This finding suggests that students viewed AI-assisted writing tools as supplementary learning resources rather than replacements for human instructors.

All in all, the findings indicate that AI-assisted writing technologies provide considerable pedagogical benefits for IELTS Writing Task 2 practice while simultaneously presenting important educational and ethical challenges. Therefore, the integration of AI-assisted writing tools into IELTS-oriented instruction should be implemented carefully and responsibly to ensure that students develop independent writing competence alongside technological literacy.

5.3. Limitations and implications for future research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study involved only 15 participants from a single university, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts. Second, because the researcher was also the course instructor, participants may have moderated some opinions despite ethical precautions implemented during data collection. To minimize this potential bias, participation was voluntary, pseudonyms were used to protect anonymity, and students were informed that their responses would not affect their grades or course performance. Third, the study focused exclusively on students' perceptions rather than objectively measuring improvements in IELTS writing performance.

Future research could employ mixed-method or experimental designs to investigate the relationship between AI-assisted writing practices and IELTS writing achievement. Further studies involving larger participant groups from multiple universities would provide broader insights into AI-assisted language learning in Vietnamese higher education. Furthermore, future research may examine teachers' perspectives on AI-assisted writing instruction and explore effective pedagogical strategies for integrating AI technologies responsibly into IELTS-oriented English courses.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study explored English-major students' perceptions of AI-assisted tools in IELTS Writing Task 2 practice at TDD. The findings revealed that students generally perceived AI-assisted writing technologies positively due to their usefulness, accessibility, and support for independent learning.

Participants reported using AI-assisted tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Gemini to support idea generation, essay organization, grammatical correction, vocabulary enhancement, and paraphrasing during IELTS Writing Task 2 practice. Students believed that these technologies improved writing confidence, facilitated essay revision, and encouraged more frequent self-study practices. The findings also indicated that AI-assisted tools promoted learner autonomy by enabling students to practice writing more independently outside classroom hours.

However, participants also expressed concerns regarding overreliance on AI-generated ideas, reduced independent thinking, and the reliability of AI-generated feedback. Although students viewed AI-assisted writing technologies as valuable learning resources, they emphasized that AI tools should complement rather than replace teachers in IELTS writing instruction.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on AI-assisted language learning in Vietnamese higher education contexts, particularly in IELTS-oriented writing instruction. The findings also support the TAM by demonstrating that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use strongly influenced students' acceptance of AI-assisted writing tools.

Pedagogically, the findings suggest that English lecturers and educational institutions should provide appropriate guidance on the responsible and effective use of AI-assisted writing technologies in IELTS preparation courses. When integrated carefully, AI-assisted tools may function as supportive learning resources that enhance students' writing development while still maintaining the important role of teachers in providing personalized feedback and critical guidance.

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