

From Tool to Routine: The Normalization of ChatGPT in Vietnamese Undergraduates' Writing Practices

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ABSTRACT: The study aims to examine how Vietnamese university students use ChatGPT in their writing practices, with a focus on patterns of use, normalizing process and awareness of ethical concerns. Employing a quantitative approach, 205 undergraduates majoring in English studies at Nguyen Tat Thanh University (NTTU) participated in an online survey, consisting of 15 Likert-scale items. The findings indicate that a significant number of the students use ChatGPT for their writing activities, particularly in varied stages such as brainstorming, planning essay structures and revising drafts. Also, it has been found that the participants perceive ChatGPT as a useful tool for enhancing their writing skills and everyday writing practices. Nonetheless, a large proportion of students are well aware of ChatGPT's drawbacks and express ethical concerns about potential plagiarism and over-reliance. These results underscore a need for providing students with proper guidance on how to use AI and other technologies responsibly in educational contexts.

Keywords: *ChatGPT, Academic writing, Vietnamese undergraduates, AI normalization, Ethical awareness.*

1. Introduction

Previous studies suggested that ChatGPT and other AI tools have gradually changed how students engage with

academic writing activities, intervening stages of developing ideas and planning essay outlines (Kohnke et al., 2023; Barrot, 2023; Tai et al., 2023; Lingard, 2023). According to Stokel-Walker (2022), AI-based technologies are now widely used within diverse educational settings, making them an essential part of students' learning routine, rather than a support for completing assignments. While a large number of recent research focuses on ChatGPT's benefits and drawbacks regarding its implementation in schools (Futterer et al., 2023; Tlili et al., 2023), there remains a knowledge gap involving how students incorporate ChatGPT into their learning habits (Essel et al., 2024). Scholars therefore call for further research on how AI tools impacts undergraduate students' academic growth, specifically the process of normalizing ChatGPT usage for writing skill development (Klimova et al., 2022; Yu, 2024).

This research seeks to understand how Vietnamese undergraduates, studying at a private university in Vietnam, integrate ChatGPT into their regular writing practices, focusing on their perceptions of ChatGPT as a cognitive resource for writing instructions. Through a quantitative research methodology, students' patterns in usage of ChatGPT, normalized learning habits with ChatGPT, and relevant ethical awareness will be explored to answer the following questions:

1. How do Vietnamese undergraduates use ChatGPT in their writing activities?
2. To what extent do they perceive ChatGPT as a routinely useful and integrated part of their academic writing practices?
3. What is their level of awareness regarding ethical issues when using ChatGPT in writing tasks?

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Student Use of AI in Writing Practices*

According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, learning takes place with the help of cultural tools and social interactions. In the context of academic writing, AI has increasingly found its place in teaching writing skills, with ChatGPT becoming a preferred tool among students (Jia et al., 2022; Kohnke,

2023). Unlike common AI tools in writing such as Grammarly and QuillBot, as discussed by Chen (2023) and Salvagno et al. (2023), ChatGPT offers enhanced interactive features that allow students to directly interact with their text, require writing samples, and modify generated texts to fit various contexts and writing styles. Barrot (2023) and Huang & Tan (2023) have argued that ChatGPT also serves as a supportive tool that enables students to come up with ideas, edit writing drafts, and review language usage in a structured way. Overall, ChatGPT provides valuable learning opportunities for students to better prepare for their writing assignments through participating in interactive knowledge exchanges with a chatbot, which significantly enhances their writing skills.

As claimed by Liu and colleagues (2021), students have increasingly chosen ChatGPT and other AI tools not only to overcome psychological obstacles during writing, specifically the fear of making mistakes, but also to seek a strategic plan for their drafts. It has been found that ChatGPT is frequently integrated into different stages of the writing process in which it would be used for brainstorming ideas, outlining well-structured essays, suggesting advanced vocabularies and diverse sentence structures for further enhancement (Wang & Guo, 2023). In the same vein, Kohnke (2023) noted that ChatGPT enables students to compare their own draft with its generated writing samples, thereby encouraging them to revise and correct errors or inappropriate wording in their assignments. This assistance directs students' focus on thoroughly editing and improving their writing, significantly boosting confidence in writing and greater learning autonomy throughout their educational journey (Ali et al., 2023; Su et al., 2023; Suarez et al., 2025).

Although a large number of recent studies have primarily investigated the practical application and accurate use of language among modern AI tools, research into how these tools are gradually incorporated into students' learning habits remains limited (Jelson and Lee, 2024). This points to the importance of understanding students' perceptions of ChatGPT as a learning partner that influences their academic engagement and writing skill development, instead of a novel intervention.

2.2. Normalization of AI Technologies in Education

Digital technologies, once viewed as potential new tools within higher education, have become an essential part of student academic life. Moradi (2025) suggests that these learning technologies have undergone a process of normalization, turning into routine resources that students consistently use for their schoolwork. This phenomenon aligns with Normalization Process Theory by May and Finch (2009), which provides a model for explaining the embedding of new technologies into normal practices. In recent years, as students become more used to AI technologies in their everyday academic practices, they often use these tools unconsciously without thoughtful consideration (Bilos & Budimir, 2024). Over time, AI starts impacting students' learning behaviors and is regarded as more than basic tools to support learning.

ChatGPT, which is currently helping numerous students in their homework and study, is the most notable instance of such a transformation in education. As much of academia turns to online resources, it is valuable to examine how they are changing the learning habits of students and reforming their older methods of knowledge acquisition. It has been found that the majority of the students are using AI to do their homework within a short duration, instead of taking the traditional route of writing, rewriting, and enhancing their work (Punar et al., 2024). This reflects a significant change in the students' educational priority, where speed and convenience are valued more than actual academic progress. These new approaches however pose challenges for teachers, requiring a reassessment of pedagogical objectives. Educators also have the overwhelming responsibility of helping students acquire critical thinking skills when a significant portion of analysis tends to be carried out by AI.

2.3. Ethical Issues in AI-Assisted Writing

According to Yan (2023), the widespread use of AI tools in writing classes requires a careful examination of ethical issues that arise from their intensive implementation. Floridi & Cowls (2019) and Selwyn (2016) advocate for the integration of ethical digital literacy into school curricula since the application of

AI without adequate guidance might result in problems of originality as well as academic integrity. When students use AI technologies without ethical considerations, they may perceive that writing is a task of editing texts provided by AI without carefully reading them over, instead of putting efforts on working through their own ideas (Naznin et al., 2025).

Moreover, Ghimire and Edwards (2024) pointed out that the majority of educational institutions do not have yet clear policies when it comes to using AI in essay assignments. Without well-defined educational guidance, there might be ethics and practical problems due to the fact that students might unknowingly violate academic integrity by submitting in essays that are not original work and not reflective of the learning outcomes of the assignment. In addition, over dependence on AI tools can slow down the development of analytical and reasoning skills that are essential in order to provide quality writings (Mirranda et al., 2025). On a wider scale, Chan and Hu (2023) argued that students can perceive technology-driven solutions being more valuable than the process of learning, problem-solving, and skill-building. These highlights the key role educators play in enabling learners to not only develop their writing skills but also a robust sense of ethical consciousness while using AI tools.

3. Methodology

Grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural theory (1978) and May and Finch's Normalization Process Theory (2009), the current study aims to investigate how Vietnamese undergraduates engage with ChatGPT in academic writing practices, with a focus on identifying students' patterns of use, perceived routine integration, and awareness of ethical considerations. In order to obtain these goals, a questionnaire consisting of 15 4-point Likert-scale items was designed and categorized into three sections: (1) ChatGPT usage for writing; (2) Frequency of use and perceived usefulness; and (3) awareness of ethical concerns. The 4-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), was chosen to avoid neutral standpoints and promote clearer opinions. Using a convenience sampling, the online survey was distributed to 205 undergraduate students majoring in English studies at Nguyen Tat Thanh

University, all of whom have taken academic writing classes and regularly practiced writing skills. The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS to examine participants' patterns of use and ethical awareness.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

N = 205			
Gender		Year of Study	
Male	85 (41.5%)	2nd	90 (43.9%)
Female	120 (58.5%)	3rd	115 (56.1%)

2. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Usage Patterns of ChatGPT for Writing Purposes

Table 2: Patterns of ChatGPT Use for Academic Writing Tasks

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average	STD
1. I have used ChatGPT to assist with academic writing assignments.	1.4%	2.4%	72.1%	24.0%	3.19	0.537
2. I regularly use ChatGPT to help generate ideas and structure outlines for essays.	5.8%	30.3%	43.3%	20.7%	2.79	0.836
3. I have used ChatGPT along with other AI writing tools (Grammarly, QuillBot) to support my academic writing, and found the experience useful.	1.0%	19.7%	63.5%	15.9%	2.94	0.627

4. I believe that ChatGPT plays a beneficial role in supporting my academic writing tasks.	1.4%	17.3%	58.2%	23.1%	3.03	0.680
5. I see ChatGPT as a tool that enhances my writing development and skill-building.	1.9%	13.0%	64.4%	20.7%	3.04	0.643

As presented in Table 2, 96.1% of the participants claimed to have used ChatGPT in their academic writing, which indicates that the tool has become an essential part of students' study habits. Notably, while 46.53% of respondents mentioned using ChatGPT for idea generation and essay outlining, nearly 30% disagreed, implying that a considerable number of students still favor traditional brainstorming methods.

Moreover, 79.4% of the respondents reported to also use ChatGPT along with other AI tools, such as Grammarly and QuillBot, showing an increased willingness to use multiple technologies to support their academic writing. While over 80% of the students think that ChatGPT is beneficial for their writing tasks, an even larger proportion, 85.1%, stated that it contributes to their writing skill enhancement. Beyond providing an easy solution to writing challenges, ChatGPT seems to act as an effective learning partner that motivates students' academic growth. These results align with the findings of Barrot (2023) and Kohnke (2023), who emphasized the benefits of ChatGPT in generating idea, suggesting appropriate word choice, and providing feedback that fosters further improvement.

4.2 Perceived Usefulness and Routine Integration

Table 3: Students' Perception of ChatGPT Usefulness and Integration

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average	STD
6. I rely on ChatGPT to produce writing quickly and with relatively high quality.	1.0%	25.0%	51.4%	22.6%	2.96	0.718
7. Using ChatGPT encourages me to take more initiative in improving my writing.	1.0%	27.4%	61.1%	10.6%	2.81	0.620
8. I believe that ChatGPT meaningfully enhances the quality of my academic writing.	1.4%	27.4%	61.5%	9.6%	2.79	0.622
9. I feel that I can complete writing tasks more efficiently when I use ChatGPT.	3.8%	11.5%	62.5%	22.1%	3.03	0.701
10. I would recommend ChatGPT to other students as a useful writing tool.	1.0%	15.9%	67.8%	15.4%	2.98	0.593

Data from Table 3 show that most students viewed ChatGPT as a helpful tool for writing and making their written work better. About 74% claimed that it enabled them to finish writing tasks on time without lowering the quality. Also, 84.6% found it easier to achieve their writing goals with ChatGPT. Many students also felt that ChatGPT helped them improve their own writing skills, and 71.7% claimed it encouraged them to keep working hard in the long run.

These results indicate that ChatGPT has evolved from an assistance tool to a regular part of students' academic journey. This is in line with the Normalization

Process Theory by May and Finch, which explains how new technologies become part of our everyday routines. The fact that 83.2% of students would recommend ChatGPT to their friends reinforces this change in education and supports Moradi (2025) conclusions about AI's impact on students' academic behaviors.

4.3 Awareness of Ethical Concerns

Table 4: Students' Awareness of Ethical Concerns While Using ChatGPT

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average	STD
11. I have noticed occasional word-choice or grammar mistakes in ChatGPT-generated texts.	3.8%	16.3%	45.7%	34.1%	3.10	0.807
12. I usually revise or edit the text after generating it with ChatGPT.	1.0%	13.0%	47.6%	38.5%	3.24	0.707
13. I believe that as AI tools improve, the need for human writing in certain professions may decrease.	5.3%	26.0%	52.4%	16.3%	2.80	0.772
14. I do not consider ChatGPT completely reliable for producing flawless academic writing.	1.9%	23.6%	50.5%	24.0%	2.97	0.745
15. I believe that using ChatGPT in writing tasks raises concerns about academic integrity, such as plagiarism or overdependence on AI.	2.4%	23.6%	43.8%	30.3%	3.02	0.798

Although students widely employ ChatGPT in their writing activities, they are generally aware of its limitations. As shown in Table 4, a large number of respondents, particularly 79.8%, noticed errors in written materials generated by AI, primarily related to grammar or word choice, and 86.1% reported that they regularly edited or revised the created text. Such behaviors imply that students are not completely dependent on the tool and understand the importance of human supervision.

Students also showed awareness of broader ethical issues. Approximately 74% of students agreed that ChatGPT is not completely reliable, and the same percentage were interested in academic honesty issues, such as plagiarism and excessive reliance. Interestingly, 68.7% believed that with further development of AI, the need for human writing in some careers could fall. These figures demonstrate that the students make good use of ChatGPT, but at the same time being well aware of its ethical considerations. The results are consistent with findings from the study of Chan and Hu (2023) suggesting that students recognized the impact of AI tools on their study and from Yan's (2023) recommending a balance between AI use and critical thinking. The gathered results reinforce the necessity of adequate trainings and well-built instructions in the responsible implementation of AI in education (Floridi & Cowls, 2019).

5. Conclusion

This paper endeavors to explore the normalization of ChatGPT in educational contexts by further explaining its frequency of use, perceived benefits and relevant concerns of ethics among Vietnamese tertiary students. The findings indicate that ChatGPT routinely serves as a learning support for academic writing development and is employed at various stages of the students' writing process, from helping generate ideas to suggesting areas for improvement. Besides, despite ChatGPT's widespread use, most students are well aware of certain challenges particularly over-reliance and risk of plagiarism. The study also sheds light on the importance of maintaining strong critical thinking skills while employing AI technologies for study purposes. Therefore, schools should emphasize digital literacy education, specifically informed and thoughtful use of AI.

Several limitations are acknowledged in the study. Firstly, since the data were collected in forms of students' self-reports, the results could have been affected by levels of memory and honesty. Secondly, sample diversity is limited as participants recruited from the same university and major, which may impact the validity of the data. Finally, the use of only quantitative methodology can hinder the exploration of deeper and more personal perspectives. To address these shortcomings, further research is encouraged with mixed methods and broader sampling as well as considering teachers' viewpoints on AI integration and its impact on overall teaching practices.

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