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BEYOND THE RED MARKINGS: EXPLORING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF AI INTEGRATION INTO MALAYSIAN WRITING INSTRUCTIONS

Evelyn Xing Ying Then ^{1*}, Hanita Hanim Ismail ²

¹Faculty of Education, National Universiti of Malaysia, Malaysia

 p145493@siswa.ukm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-5295-2756>

²Faculty of Education, National Universiti of Malaysia, Malaysia

 hanitahanim@ukm.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3121-8822>

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become increasingly influential in English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, offering new possibilities for supporting young learners' writing development. In Malaysian primary schools, writing continues to pose challenges due to limited vocabulary, grammatical weaknesses, lack of ideas, and low motivation. This qualitative study investigates how Malaysian primary ESL teachers perceive and integrate AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, QuillBot, and Gemini in writing instruction. Five teachers participated in semi-structured interviews, revealing that they primarily use AI tools to support pre-writing, revision, and differentiation stage. Teachers reported benefits such as enhanced linguistic accuracy, increased student motivation, and decreased workload. However, the study also identified concerns related to over-reliance, academic integrity, loss of creativity among students, and technological constraints. The findings highlight the importance of pedagogical mediation, AI literacy, and professional development to ensure responsible and effective integration of AI in Malaysian ESL classrooms.

Keyword:

Artificial Intelligence; AI Integration; ESL Writing Classroom; Teachers' Classroom Experience; Teachers' Perspective



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Introduction

The increasing integration of technology in education has transformed traditional pedagogical approaches, particularly in ESL contexts, by reshaping instructional delivery, learner engagement, and feedback mechanisms (Chapelle, 2009; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Technology is making great strides to help ESL teachers improve their students' language skills (Chapelle, 2009; Dudeney et al., 2013). In the field of education, technology also impacts both teachers and students (Dunstan & Ismail, 2024). The emergence of AI tools presents new opportunities and challenges, prompting researchers to explore teachers' perception and practices.

AI-powered writing tools have emerged as valuable resources for supporting young ESL learners in developing their writing skills. Tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot provide immediate, personalized feedback on grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and sentence structure, enabling young learners to identify and correct errors in real time. These AI tools help primary-level students who are still learning the basics of writing by guiding them through the difficult writing process (Jeyraman et al., 2025). This aligns with the principles of constructivism, where learners are considered active participants in building their own knowledge. Young ESL learners are encouraged by AI tools to engage in trial-and-error learning, reflect on AI-generated suggestions, and make decisions about how to revise their writing. This interactive process transforms learners from passive recipients of correction into active agents who shape their linguistic development (Mahapatra, 2024). For instance, Jeyraman et al. (2024) reported that Year 6 pupils who used ChatGPT demonstrated increased motivation and independence while experimenting with vocabulary and sentence patterns to enhance their compositions.

From a sociocultural theory standpoint, AI writing tools serve as mediational artifacts that offer scaffolding within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) asserts that the use of tools and interaction with more knowledgeable individuals enhances learning. In the case of young ESL writers, AI tools offer a form of guided support that mimics the feedback typically provided by a teacher or peer. These AI tools help Malaysian primary ESL learners organize their thoughts and improve the coherence of their writing through tailored feedback and revision support (Ekizoğlu, 2025). This study shows that AI tools can be helpful in the writing process. Furthermore, the integration of AI tools can promote collaborative learning opportunities where learners discuss AI feedback with peers or teachers, co-constructing knowledge as they revise and improve their writing (Lai et al., 2021). This highlights the potential of AI to integrate sociocultural theory into young ESL writing instruction, as these tools facilitate learning and close the gap between what learners can accomplish on their own and what they can accomplish with help.

Literature Review

Learning Theories

The increasing integration of technology in education has transformed traditional pedagogical approaches, particularly in ESL contexts, by reshaping instructional delivery, learner engagement, and feedback mechanisms (Chapelle, 2009; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019). Technology is making great strides to help ESL teachers improve their students' language skills (Chapelle, 2009; Dudeney et al., 2013). In the field of education, technology also impacts both teachers and students (Dunstan & Ismail, 2024). The emergence of AI tools presents new opportunities and challenges, prompting researchers to explore teachers' perception and practices.

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AI in ESL Writing Instruction

Pedagogical Integration of AI with Process Writing

The Process Writing Approach (PWA) highlights 5 stages of writing: pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publication. ESL classrooms extensively employ this approach to assist students in composing their written works (Hyland, 2015). AI tools can help with each of these

steps by coming up with ideas, giving feedback on drafts, and checking grammar. However, there is limited understanding of how primary school educators effectively incorporate AI tools into each phase of the writing process.

It is important to understand the teachers' perspective on using AI tools for writing instruction because AI is considered beneficial for both educators and learners. Past studies (e.g. Yim & Wegerif 2024; Nikolic et al. 2024) have highlighted a generally positive attitude towards AI tools among educators, recognizing their potential to enhance teaching and learning experiences. The workload for teachers is alleviated since it automates ongoing instructions for pupils and diminishes the time and effort required for evaluating student work or grading assessments (Kasneci et al., 2023). Students receive personalized education, as AI can assess their learning pace and deliver suitable educational resources (Singh et al., 2021).

Effectiveness of AI Tools in ESL Writing

AI tools such as ChatGPT and Grammarly have been lauded for their ability to personalize feedback, which is critical for improving students' writing proficiency. Teachers in Malaysian urban schools have noted that the capacity of ChatGPT to offer tailored suggestions enhances students' ability to refine their writing skills (Aineh & Ngui, 2024; Wu, 2024). Timely and constructive feedback is important, as it impacts the pupils' performance and motivation. It promotes a more profound understanding of the materials and a reflective attitude towards education. According to Merkviladze (2024), effective feedback allows students to identify areas for improvement, understand their current performance, and formulate strategies to enhance their talents. AI tools do not only provide immediate constructive feedback; the tool's ability to generate ideas and assist with proofreading has been highlighted as particularly useful for ESL learners, who often struggle with creative writing and grammatical accuracy (Aineh & Ngui, 2024).

In the Malaysian ESL classroom, ESL learners encounter various obstacles, such as restricted exposure to English beyond the classroom, diminished confidence in writing, and inadequate customized feedback due to large class sizes and resource limitations. Therefore, the incorporation of AI technologies, e.g. ChatGPT and Gemini AI, presents promising resolutions to these challenges. It is essential for the teachers to adapt the AI technology to help the students study more effectively. Moreover, AI tools have also been effective in automating routine tasks such as essay scoring and feedback generation. For example, automated writing evaluation (AWE) systems have been shown to make teachers' jobs easier by giving them instant feedback on students' writing assignments. This allows teachers to focus more on instructional strategies and less on repetitive grading tasks (Li et al., 2014; Karatay & Karatay, 2024).

The use of AI tools has been associated with increased student engagement in writing activities. ChatGPT, for example, offers interactive and human-like conversational features that make the writing process more engaging for students. This interactivity has been particularly beneficial for ESL learners, who often find writing tasks daunting due to language barriers (Baskara, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Teng, 2024).

Challenges of AI Tools in ESL Classrooms

Although using AI tools in ESL classrooms has provided various benefits to the teachers and students, undeniably it also brings concerns to the stakeholders. One of the primary concerns among teachers is the potential overdependency of students on these AI-powered writing assistants. While these tools can enhance writing skills, excessive reliance on AI tools may hinder students' ability to develop independent writing skills (Aineh & Ngui, 2024; Baskara, 2023). Teachers have expressed concerns that students may rely too heavily on AI-generated content, leading to a lack of original thought and creativity (Alsaedi, 2024; Teng, 2024). Such an outcome is a huge concern, as writing proficiency is an essential ability for academic and professional achievement, requiring that learners' express ideas coherently while conforming to grammatical, structural, and lexical rules (Yunus & Chan, 2021).

The use of AI tools in writing instruction has also raised ethical concerns. Teachers have highlighted the potential for academic dishonesty, as students may use AI tools to complete assignments without proper understanding or original input. This has led to calls for clear policies to ensure the ethical use of AI in educational settings (Teng, 2024, Özkan et al., 2024). Another significant challenge is the need for teacher training and support. While AI tools offer numerous benefits, their effective integration into the classrooms requires teachers to have a certain level of technical proficiency. Numerous educators in urban institutions have articulated the necessity for professional development initiatives to enhance their proficiency in employing AI tools within their pedagogical practices (Ningsih et al., 2025).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative exploratory approach to examine teachers' nuanced perspectives and pedagogical choices regarding AI tools in writing classrooms. Grounded in the constructivist paradigm, this design views knowledge as co-constructed through social and institutional interactions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). As AI integration in Malaysian ESL contexts is a nascent phenomenon, a qualitative approach is uniquely suited for documenting lived experiences and emerging practices.

The research seeks to comprehend how ESL educators construct methodologies for AI integration through their daily teaching routines. Semi-structured interviews serve as the primary data-gathering method, offering the flexibility for educators to articulate their insights in their own terminology. This allows the researcher to elicit reflective insights regarding the utilization of tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot in instruction.

Sampling

Potential participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on their experience teaching ESL writing and their familiarity with using AI tools in classroom instruction. The interview questions were developed using the TPACK and TAM frameworks to elicit specific information regarding technology, pedagogy, and subject matter expertise. These interviews enable participants to express their opinions while allowing the researcher to probe for the rationale behind specific educational decisions. Themes focused on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of AI, its application during various writing stages -- pre-writing, drafting,

or revision, and alignment with the existing curriculum. Interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes and were conducted either in person or via video conferencing (Zoom or Google Meet), depending on teacher availability. This comprehensive data collection ensures a deep understanding of the challenges and successes faced by practitioners in the field.

Research Instrument

The main instrument is a semi-structured interview protocol, developed based on the conceptual framework grounded in TPACK and TAM models. The questionnaire consists of 23 questions that have been divided into five parts: background information, general perception and awareness of AI, current practices and experiences of AI, perceived impact and future outlook, and lastly, the recommendations. The interview questions were derived from established models of technology acceptance and pedagogical integration, including current implementations of the Technology Acceptance Model and the TPACK framework (Scherer et al., 2020; Koehler & Mishra, 2016). The integration of inquiries concerning writing processes, feedback approaches, ethical considerations, and professional growth was also informed by recent research on artificial intelligence-aided writing and automated writing assessment (Kasneci et al., 2023). This provided a theoretical foundation and coherence with contemporary research on AI integration in ESL settings, including Malaysian schools (Aineh & Ngui, 2024; Asad et al., 2024). The interview questions were open-ended and adaptable, enabling participants to convey narratives and examples that illustrate their classroom experiences. Interviews were conducted in English, either in person or via online platforms (e.g., Google Meet or Zoom), and lasted for about 30 to 45 minutes.

Research Procedures

This study was conducted through a series of steps to ensure ethical and credible data collection. Before contacting the participants, the necessary authorities and school administrators gave their ethical approval and permission. This is in line with established qualitative research ethics and concerning informed consent, confidentiality and participants protection (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Potential participants were then identified through purposive sampling based on their experience in teaching ESL writing and their exposure to AI tools in classroom instruction. Written informed consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Next, a semi-structured interview protocol was developed based on the research questions and informed by the TPACK framework and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they allow flexibility while ensuring the key themes related to the study are consistently addressed (Kallio et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The interview questions were then validated through pilot study to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives. Interview sessions were then scheduled at mutually convenient times and conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms such as Google Meet or Zoom, depending on participant availability. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted in English. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate data capture.

Following data collection, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim for analysis. The transcripts were then returned to participants for member checking to ensure the accuracy of their responses and to enhance the credibility of the findings. After confirmation, the data were

coded and thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2022) based on the procedures outlined in the Data Analysis section. Throughout the process, all participant identities were anonymised using pseudonyms (T1, T2, T3, and T4) to maintain confidentiality and protect their privacy.

Data Analysis

To analyse the data, this study employs thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-step process. After transcription of the interviews, the researcher becomes familiar with the data through repeated reading, followed by the generation of initial codes. These codes are then grouped into themes that reflect recurring patterns across participants. The themes are examined, improved, and clarified in connection with the research questions and conceptual framework. Manual coding is used for a manageable dataset, but digital tools such as NVivo is employed when needed. Thematic analysis provides a systematic yet flexible method to capture the teachers shared and contrasting perspectives on AI use in ESL writing instruction.

Findings and Discussion

This section summarises the results of the study and places them within existing literature on AI integration in ESL writing instruction. The analysis was guided by the two research questions, uses interviews with five ESL teachers to identify key themes regarding the use of AI tools at various writing stages, perceived advantages like improved linguistic accuracy, learner motivation, and instructional efficiency, as well as drawbacks like over-reliance, student work authenticity, and access to technology. Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework were followed in conducting an inductive thematic analysis, which included rereading the interview transcripts, first classifying significant data segments, and then combining the codes into categories and overarching themes. This analytical procedure made sure that the conclusions were drawn in a methodical manner, with Table 1 presenting a summary of the codes, categories, and finalised themes discussed in the subsequent sections.

Table 1: List of Codes, Categories, and Finalised Themes Based on The Interview

Research Questions	Excerpts	Codes	Categories	Themes
How do ESL teachers integrate AI tools into their writing lessons and classroom practices?	Students normally lack ideas...AI helps them brainstorm. (T2)	Idea generation	Writing process support	AI as pedagogical scaffolding across the writing process
	They use prompts to start writing. (T1)	Use of prompts		
	AI helps students explore sentence structures. (T3)	Sentence modelling		
	I've used ChatGPT for helping pupils to generate some ideas and	Idea generation		

points...(T5)

	I use ChatGPT to generate sample articles (T1)	Model texts	Genre learning	AI-generated model texts for awareness
	Students analyse structure and tone (T1)	Text analysis		
	...(Gemini) will helps to mark students' essays and give personalised feedback (T2)	Text analysis		
	AI helps me to generate some questions for pupils as guidance to build the structure of the writing to meet the requirement (T5)	Guidance questions		
	Use AI to generate different worksheets for weak, moderate, and advanced students. (T3)	Levelled materials	Personalised learning	AI for differentiation and personalised learning
	AI marks essays based on rubrics (T2)	Automated feedback		
	Students talk first using speech-to-text (T2)	Multimodal support		
	AI should enhance, not replace thinking (T1)	Guided use	Teacher role	Teachers as mediators and ethical gatekeepers
	I give prompt, not full essays (T2)	Scaffolding control		
	I teach cyber ethics (T4)	AI literacy		
(b) What do teachers	AI saves preparation time	Time efficiency / reduce	Instructional efficiency	Enhanced efficiency and time-

perceive as the benefits of using AI tools for writing instruction?	Less time correcting grammar more on content (T1)	workload		saving for teachers
	AI makes it feels more like a game...increase practice leads to improvement, especially in grammatical accuracy and sentence fluency (T2)	Reduced marking	Increase motivation	Immediate , private feedback that boosts revision and confidence
	Access examples and learn from model texts (T1)	Modelling	Leaner affect	Improved linguistic accuracy and vocabulary developme nt
	Students gain more confidence correcting privately (T2)	Private feedback / increase confidence		
(c) What do teachers perceive as the limitations of using AI tools for writing instruction?	Language exposure and vocabulary building (T4)	Language exposure		
	Students rely too much on AI (T1)	over-reliance	Learning risks	Over-reliance and loss of originality
	Weaker students become lazy...copy everything (T3)	copying		
	Risk of losing students' voice (T2)	Voice erosion		
	I can tell from vocabulary and tone (of the writing). If something suddenly appears too polished...it is quite easy to identify (T1)	Teacher judgement		

A quick conversation about their process almost always reveals the truth (T2)	Oral verification		
Marks are reduced if AI is misused (T3)	Penalty enforcement		
By discussing digital ethics and demonstrating how AI can assist rather than replace human creativity, I guide students to use these tools responsibly and thoughtfully (T4)	Discussion of AI ethics	Academic integrity	Academic integrity and ethical concerns
...I find out that they use AI I will actually reduce their marks	Penalty enforcement		
Not enough laptops (T4)	Device shortage	Structural barriers	Technological and pedagogical constraints
Students misuse computers to play games (T4)	Monitoring challenges		
Teachers need training (T2, T4)	Lack of training		

Teachers' Integration of AI Tools Into Writing Lessons and Classrooms Practices

AI as Pedagogical Scaffolding Across the Writing Process

The findings indicate that teachers primarily integrate AI tools during pre-writing (idea generation) and editing stages. Tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Grammarly, and QuillBot were used to help students generate ideas, identify grammatical issues, and refine sentence structures. This pattern suggests that teachers conceptualise AI not as an autonomous text generator, but as a cognitive and linguistic scaffold embedded within process-oriented writing instruction.

T1 and T2 used ChatGPT, Claude, QuillBot, and Grammarly to support students “generate ideas,” “brainstorm,” and “explore different sentence structures,” particularly for students who struggle with idea generation. T3 uses AI mainly to support “revising and writing,” particularly for grammar accuracy and to improve sentence structure accuracy and coherence. This pattern reflects a growing global consensus that AI is most effective at supporting linguistic scaffolding rather than full-text production (Jiang et al., 2023).

The focus on pre-writing support corresponds with cognitive theories of L2 writing, which identify idea generation as a major obstacle for learners with lower proficiency (Hyland, 2015). Teachers shared that AI helps students get over “writer's block,” especially those who aren't very good at writing and “normally lack ideas” (T2). This supports existing research showing that generative AI can reduce cognitive load and provide conceptual scaffolds that facilitate entry into complex writing tasks (Kasneji et al., 2023).

During revision, teachers appreciated tools such as Grammarly for offering immediate, impartial feedback, enabling students to rectify mistakes prior to submitting final drafts. This is in line with studies on Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE), which show that using it in iterative feedback cycles always leads to better linguistic accuracy (Wei et al., 2023).

“I often use ChatGPT and Claude during the pre-writing and drafting stages... For high-achieving students, I encourage the use of Grammarly during the revising and editing stages.” (T1)

“Pre-writing... because brainstorming is always the critical stage.” (T2)

“Probably... revising and writing... especially the sentence structure.” (T3)

I've used ChatGPT for helping pupils to generate some ideas and points for writing. Pupils end up having some good ideas related to the topic for writing. (T5)

In short, AI is not a replacement but an assistive scaffold: idea generation, modelling, and micro-level editing—with teacher-led reflection. The pattern maps onto the literature: AI most robustly supports surface-level accuracy and form-focused noticing while requiring pedagogical design to reach higher-order writing outcomes. Malaysian guidance similarly emphasises clear policies and ethics to translate enthusiasm into sustainable practice (Karatay, 2024).

AI-Generated Models Text for Awareness

One significant integration practice observed is the use of AI-generated model texts. T1 uses ChatGPT to produce sample news reports, which students examine to understand structure and tone. This approach aligns with genre-based pedagogies, where model texts serve as exemplars that support learners' noticing and internalisation of genre conventions (Hyland, 2015).

The teachers' adoption of AI-generated models resonates with Yin and Zhang's (2024) findings that AI can effectively generate genre-specific examples that enhance students' rhetorical awareness. Time constraints and resource availability often limit exposure to authentic models in Malaysian ESL classrooms, making such scaffolding particularly relevant.

“I used ChatGPT to generate a sample article... The goal was to help them analyse the structure, tone, and vocabulary of a formal news report.” (T1)

“For pre-writing part, AI helps me to generate some questions for pupils as guidance to build the structure of the writing to meet the requirements.” (T5)

In summary, the teachers used AI to create sample essays that students could analyse and learn a proper writing structure. These model texts helped students to understand the proper writing structure and vocabulary in order to improve their confidence in writing and also rising their awareness of the writing conventions.

AI For Differentiation and Personalised Learning

Differentiation emerged as a strong theme across teachers. T1 and T3 use AI to generate levelled writing worksheets - weak, moderate, and advanced. T2 creates automated rubric-based markers using Gemini, enabling personalized feedback. He also uses speech-to-text so learners can “talk first, notice wavy lines, then refine” that spurs self-correction without public embarrassment.

These approaches exemplify teacher-designed scaffolds rather than tool-led instruction and demonstrate how AI can address the mixed-proficiency realities in Malaysian classrooms, where disparities in linguistic knowledge are substantial (Adnan et al., 2024). Literature supports the value of AI-driven personalisation: adaptive learning tools can provide tailored feedback and allow learners to progress at their own pace (Dakakni & Safa, 2023).

“When they see their marks are very low, then they will try to improve the essay by looking into the mistakes.” (T2)

This finding is particularly relevant to the Malaysian context, where classrooms often include students with starkly different proficiency levels due to multilingual exposure, socioeconomic disparities, and mixed-ability grouping. AI provides teachers with a mechanism to customise support without excessive workload, enabling more equitable instructional opportunities.

AI tools allowed teachers to tailor writing tasks and feedback according to students’ proficiency levels. This can be effectively helpful to cater to students at different levels, and every student can learn at their own pace and levels. Tools like Grammarly provide private, instance feedback while AI-generated worksheets made it easier to cater to mixed-ability classes.

Teacher As the Mediator

Despite the benefits, teachers unanimously emphasised that AI integration must be guided, monitored, and ethical. T1 stresses that AI “enhances—not replaces—thinking.” T2 uses prompts and bullet-point scaffolds to prevent students from generating entire essays; T3 warns students that marks will be reduced if AI is overused; and T4 incorporates lessons on cyber ethics and responsible use.

This widespread emphasis on mediation aligns with theories of teacher cognition and responsible AI use, which argue that AI cannot replace human judgment, contextual understanding, or pedagogical expertise (UNESCO, 2023). Teachers assume the role of

gatekeeper and mediator, ensuring that AI supports learning without eroding critical thinking or authenticity. This aligns with the TPACK framework: effective AI integration requires pedagogical wisdom and content knowledge, not just technical familiarity (Chai et al., 2016).

“Use AI to enhance—not replace—our thinking.” (T1)

“We give them prompts... they have to complete the whole thing using their own words.” (T2)

“I teach them how to paraphrase... not copy the entire thing.” (T3)

“I will become the facilitator of critical, reflective and ethical engagement with AI tools.” (T4)

In conclusion, teachers emphasised that they, as the mediators, play an important role in guiding the pupils to avoid over-reliance on AI. They taught students to paraphrase and use AI as a support rather than a shortcut. Teacher monitoring was essential to ensure authentic learning.

Teachers’ Perspectives on Using AI Tools For Writing Instruction

Benefits of AI In Writing Classroom

Enhanced Efficiency and Timesaving for Teachers

Teachers consistently described AI as reducing time spent on repetitive planning and corrective tasks. Rather than merely improving efficiency, this reallocation of labour enabled greater focus on higher-order instruction, including organisation, coherence, and argumentation. T2 calls AI as his “assistant” and T1 notes that AI “freed her from extensive error correction, allowing more time to focus on content.”

This finding contributes to emerging scholarship suggesting that AI may redistribute teacher cognitive resources from surface-level correction to deeper pedagogical engagement (Pack et al., 2024). In this sense, AI does not simply save time—it potentially transforms instructional priorities.

“Reduction of preparation time... assistant learning.” (T2)

*“Less time on extensive error correction... more on content and expression.”
(T1)*

Teachers reported that AI helped generate lesson plans, worksheets, and feedback quickly, saving time and allowing students to focus more on higher-level writing instruction. AI also reduced repetitive marking tasks.

Immediate, Private Feedback That Boosts Revision and Confidence

AI supports students’ confidence by providing instant, private feedback, which reduces embarrassment from making mistakes. Zulkefli and Ismail (2025) supported that AI-assisted writing tools can enhance the acquisition of autonomous learning and writing proficiency among ESL learners in the domains of revision, planning, and reflection. For example, T2

observes that Grammarly's scoring system "triggers students to improve," while T4 notes that shy learners benefit from AI before sharing their ideas with teachers.

"AI makes it feel more like a game... increased practice leads to improvement, especially in grammatical accuracy and sentence fluency." (T2)

This finding aligns with research on AWE-enhanced motivation, where private, immediate corrective feedback increases learners' willingness to revise and promotes positive writing dispositions (Merkviladze, 2024). From a self-regulated learning perspective, AI feedback appears to support metacognitive awareness by making linguistic errors visible and actionable. Zulkefli and Ismail (2025) further suggest that AI-assisted revision tools can strengthen learner autonomy, particularly in planning and reflective stages of writing.

Improved Linguistic Accuracy and Vocabulary Development

Teachers consistently reported improvements in students' grammar, subject-verb agreement, and lexical choices. Some teachers highlighted model texts and vocabulary expansion as one of the benefits gained from AI tools (Fan & Ma, 2022). For instance, T2 noted that students began noticing verb changes and correcting them independently.

"Access examples and learn from model texts." (T1)

"Broaden... language exposure and vocabulary building." (T4)

Repeated correction enables students to "realise their mistakes and improve." This helps them to learn from mistakes and do better next time.

Limitations Of AI in Writing Classroom

Over-Reliance and Loss of Originality

All teachers expressed concerns that students may rely too heavily on AI, especially weaker learners. They tend to generate an entire essay, undermining originality and reducing opportunities for critical thinking. T1 worried about loss of creativity, T2 warned about losing "authentic voice," and T3 observed students asking to "finish at home with the help of AI." These fears reflect broader scholarly concerns that AI may undermine critical thinking and reduce opportunities for students to develop independent writing skills (Kasneci et al., 2023).

"Students may become too reliant...lack of creativity or original thoughts." (T1)

"Risk of losing a child's unique, authentic voice." (T2)

"I'm afraid they might become lazy...not think critically." (T3)

Scholars similarly caution that AI can flatten individual expression and discourage critical engagement without explicit pedagogy (Robert, 2025; Yingbao et al., 2025) which has become the main concern among all the interviewees.

“If something suddenly appears too polished...it is quite easy to identify.”
(T1)

“A quick conversation about their process almost always reveals the truth.”
(T2)

“Progress doesn’t happen overnight...I reduce marks if they copy the entire thing.” (T3)

Teachers can use their professional judgment to detect AI misuse based on changes in vocabulary, tone, and complexity; therefore, they have the responsibility and ability to guide the students to use the AI ethically and think creatively for writing tasks. Their vigilance aligns with global calls for AI-resilient assessments emphasising process rather than product (UNESCO, 2023).

Academic Integrity and Ethical Concerns

Teachers highlighted risks of plagiarism and AI-generated essays. This mirrors findings from Özkan et al. (2024), who reported increasing concerns about AI-facilitated academic dishonesty in language classrooms. Academic integrity and ethics are important issues because it could lead to a widespread of problems such as fraud and eroded trust. Hence, it's important to address this problem.

T4 addressed this through cyber ethics lessons, while T3 penalised students who copied AI-generated texts—indicating teacher-driven accountability mechanisms in the absence of formal school policies.

“By discussing digital ethics and demonstrating how AI can assist rather than replace human creativity, I guide students to use these tools responsibly and thoughtfully.” (T4)

“Let's say I find out that they actually use AI I will actually reduce their marks so that it will actually help them to understand that I'm actually serious about copying the exact thing from there.” (T3)

In short, most teachers express strong concerns regarding academic integrity, especially the risk of students manipulating AI tools to generate the entire writing tasks without genuine learning. Such practices were perceived to undermine originality, critical thinking and the development of authentic voice. As a result, teachers relied on professional judgement, familiarity with student’s writing styles and follow-up questioning to detect misuse of AI tools. These findings highlight the need for explicit guidance, clear boundaries and AI literacy instruction to ensure ethical and responsible use of AI in ESL writing classrooms.

Technological and Pedagogical Constraints

Challenges included unreliable internet, lack of devices, American English spelling used in AI applications, hallucinations in AI responses, and inconsistent AI training for teachers, are parts of the reasons for unsuccessful use of AI in the writing classroom. These issues align with

findings that Malaysian schools face uneven access to ICT infrastructure and require structured professional development for successful AI adoption (Ningsih et al., 2025).

“Suggest providing more structured training or professional development opportunities for teachers...” (T1)

“There’s no enough laptop or computers that my students can access unless we go to the computer lab.” (T4)

Despite recognising the benefits of AI tools, teachers identified several technological and pedagogical constraints that limited effective classroom implementation. These included insufficient access to devices, unreliable internet connectivity, and time constraints. Such barriers particularly affected public-school contexts, restricting equitable and consistent AI integration. Thus, effective AI integration appears contingent not merely on teacher willingness but on institutional support, infrastructural stability, and sustained professional development. The findings suggest that AI adoption in ESL writing instruction is a systemic rather than purely pedagogical issue.

Conclusion

The findings of the investigation have significant pedagogical, professional, and policy implications for teaching ESL writing in Malaysia. The findings show that integration of AI tools, especially for students with low language competency, can effectively complement the Process Writing Approach by scaffolding idea development, drafting, and revision. Giving instant, individualised feedback have lessens teachers’ effort associated with superficial corrections, freeing up more teaching time for higher-order skills in writing like organisation, coherence, and content development. To address issues with over-reliance, plagiarism, and the loss of genuine student input, the results also highlight the need for teacher mediation, AI literacy training, and ethical standards. AI integration in primary ESL classes is further impacted by infrastructure limitations, such as restricted device access, network problems, and inadequate training.

These results suggest that teachers should intentionally use AI throughout the writing process while assisting students in critically analysing and using AI feedback in an ethical manner. Schools should provide targeted professional development that is linked with the TPACK framework, as well as defined policies in the integration of AI tools. Incorporating AI literacy into CEFR-aligned curricula and encouraging process-oriented, AI-resilient assessment methods are crucial at the policy level. Overall, even though AI has a lot of potential to improve ESL writing instruction, its success hinges on deliberate pedagogy, teachers’ preparedness, and institutional frameworks that support it.

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