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EXPLORING EFL GRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF GENAI WRITING THROUGH TAM

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing in English remains challenging for EFL graduate students, and Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has emerged as a potential source of support, yet research on its acceptance has relied largely on quantitative surveys or qualitative studies that do not examine graduate-level writing through a complete Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework. This study qualitatively examined how three EFL graduate students perceived and experienced GenAI in academic writing, using TAM as an interpretive framework. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. Findings show perceived usefulness took corrective, cohesive, and generative forms depending on each participant's needs, while perceived ease of use depended partly on participants' developing ability to formulate effective prompts. Positive attitudes were associated with autonomy and confidence, whereas negative attitudes arose when AI-generated suggestions conflicted with intended meaning or personal judgement; for one participant, this extended to a disruption of confidence in her own reasoning, a dimension not readily captured by TAM's original constructs. Despite these concerns, all participants intended to continue using GenAI, consistently qualifying this intention with self-imposed conditions such as cross-checking AI output and relying on teacher feedback. The study interprets this pattern as bounded and negotiated acceptance, in which participants recognized GenAI's usefulness while actively determining the limits of its role in their writing. This interpretation is offered as a context-specific, empirically grounded reading of three participants' accounts rather than a generalized model of GenAI acceptance, extending TAM-based research by showing how behavioral intention can coexist with self-regulated boundaries on technology use.

Keywords: EFL Writing; Generative Artificial Intelligence; Learner Perceptions; Technology Acceptance Model.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is an essential yet challenging skill for EFL learners, particularly at the graduate level, where students are expected to communicate ideas clearly, develop coherent arguments, and engage critically with academic sources. Although many EFL students have received years of English instruction, they may still experience difficulties in generating and organizing ideas, formulating arguments, and revising their texts for linguistic accuracy. These challenges are particularly relevant in academic contexts, where writing requires not only grammatical and lexical competence but also the ability to construct ideas logically and appropriately for particular academic purposes. In Indonesia, students continue to experience difficulties in producing well-organized and accurate English texts even after

completing academic writing coursework, particularly in organization, grammar, and mechanics (Toba et al., 2019). Such challenges may become more significant for graduate students, who are expected to meet increasingly demanding academic writing standards.

The development of educational technology has introduced new possibilities for addressing these challenges. The integration of technology into English language education has shifted teaching and learning practices toward approaches that incorporate various digital tools (Oktadela et al., 2023). Among the most recent developments is Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), including ChatGPT and other large language models (LLMs), which can generate human-like language and provide support for tasks such as idea generation, vocabulary selection, feedback, and revision. These capabilities have created new opportunities for EFL students to receive immediate assistance during the writing process. At the same time, the use of GenAI in academic writing raises questions concerning students' perceptions, dependence on technology, academic integrity, and the extent to which such tools should be incorporated into academic writing practices.

Previous studies have reported generally positive perceptions of AI-supported language learning. For example, Alsakaker (2025) found positive perceptions of AI-based tools among EFL learners, while Losi et al. (2024) reported that Indonesian students using ChatGPT for vocabulary development demonstrated positive responses toward the technology. Research applying the TAM has also indicated that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use play important roles in shaping students' acceptance of ChatGPT and other AI technologies in educational contexts (Vo & Nguyen, 2024; Maheshwari, 2024), including in writing tasks specifically (Zou & Huang, 2023). At the same time, qualitative studies have begun to explore EFL students' experiences with ChatGPT in writing (Arifin et al., 2024; Werdiningsih et al., 2024), and TAM has recently been applied qualitatively to examine ChatGPT acceptance in writing among secondary-school students (Faridah et al., 2026). However, as detailed in the following literature review, none of these studies has examined all four TAM constructs together, usefulness, ease of use, attitude, and behavioral intention, through a qualitative lens among EFL graduate students specifically engaged in academic writing.

This study therefore explored EFL graduate students' perceptions of using GenAI to assist their English writing skills through the TAM as an interpretive framework. Specifically, the study addressed three research questions: (1) How do EFL graduate

students perceive the usefulness and ease of using GenAI for writing? (2) What attitudes, positive or negative, emerge from their experiences? and (3) How do participants describe the relationship between these perceptions and their intention to adopt GenAI in academic writing? By focusing on the qualitative experiences of graduate-level EFL writers, this study sought to provide a more nuanced understanding of technology acceptance in academic writing and contribute insights into the responsible integration of GenAI into EFL writing practices.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

EFL Academic Writing

Writing is a complex skill that requires learners to coordinate linguistic knowledge with the ability to develop, organize, and communicate ideas effectively. In academic contexts, students are expected to demonstrate clarity, coherence, appropriate language use, and critical engagement with a particular topic. Writing therefore requires not only knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to focus on a given task and express ideas clearly and fluently (Fareed et al., 2016). For EFL and ESL learners, these demands can create substantial difficulties, particularly when they need to produce extended academic texts.

Previous research has identified several challenges experienced by EFL and L2 postgraduate writers. Lin and Morrison (2021), for example, found that L2 postgraduate students were particularly concerned with challenges at the sentence level, including local language features, while academic writing also involves broader discourse-level demands. Similar challenges have been reported among Indonesian students. Muflihun and Tohamba (2021), for instance, identified difficulties related to critical thinking, plagiarism, sentence structure, grammar, and limited academic writing practice among Indonesian postgraduate students. Other studies in the Indonesian context have also reported difficulties related to vocabulary use, sentence structure, coherence, and logical flow (Hamdani & Abid, 2025; Hardiyanti & Herda, 2023; Pasaribu et al., 2024; Muamaroh et al., 2020). Writing performance is further related to students' knowledge of the writing process and other dimensions of writing knowledge, although the contribution of particular aspects may vary across learners and writing contexts (Perdana et al., 2023; Indah, 2017). Limited exposure to academic English and other challenges in developing academic writing competence may further complicate Indonesian graduate students' efforts to meet academic writing

expectations (Herda et al., 2025; Muflihun & Tohamba, 2021; Subandowo et al., 2025). Taken together, these studies indicate that EFL graduate writing involves challenges at both the language and higher-order levels. These challenges provide an important context for examining the kinds of support students may perceive as useful when using GenAI for academic writing. For example, difficulties with language accuracy and sentence construction may make grammar correction, vocabulary suggestions, and sentence revision relevant, while challenges related to organization and coherence may make support for transitions and the development of connected ideas useful. Difficulties in developing ideas may also make brainstorming and other forms of generative support relevant to students' writing processes. Examining these connections can therefore help explain how EFL graduate students perceive the usefulness of GenAI in relation to their particular writing needs.

These challenges demonstrate the need for appropriate support throughout the writing process. Technological developments have increasingly provided learners with tools that can support different stages of writing, including generating ideas, selecting vocabulary, receiving feedback, and revising texts. The integration of such technologies has become particularly relevant as English language education continues to incorporate digital tools into teaching and learning practices (Oktadela et al., 2023).

Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI in Language Learning

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an increasingly important technology in education. AI can broadly be understood as the capacity of computer systems to obtain, learn, and analyze external information in order to accomplish tasks and goals with a degree of complexity (Haenlein et al., 2019). Aldosari (2020) similarly highlights AI as one of the important technologies of the current era, with applications extending across different fields. In language education, AI-supported systems have provided new forms of assistance for both teachers and learners. In particular, the use of Natural Language Processing (NLP) enables AI-based systems to analyze language and provide feedback that can be more context-sensitive than that offered by some earlier digital learning tools.

A more recent development is Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), which includes ChatGPT and other large language models (LLMs). Unlike conventional digital tools that primarily provide predetermined responses or limited language support, GenAI can generate new language based on user prompts. In EFL writing contexts, these

capabilities may support students in generating ideas, selecting vocabulary, developing sentences, receiving feedback, and revising their texts. Such functions can provide students with more opportunities to interact with language during the writing process and may facilitate faster and more frequent revision. The interactive nature of GenAI also allows students to request alternative expressions, explanations, or revisions according to their particular writing needs, potentially making AI a flexible source of support throughout different stages of the writing process.

Despite these potential benefits, the use of GenAI in academic writing also presents several concerns. GenAI-generated information and references may require careful verification because AI systems can produce inaccurate or unreliable information and references (Sanchez-Ramos et al., 2023). The use of AI-generated text also raises concerns about authorship, plagiarism, and academic integrity, particularly when the contribution of AI to academic work is not appropriately acknowledged (Lund et al., 2023; Perkins, 2023; Cotton et al., 2024). These concerns are particularly relevant to academic writing, where students are expected to take responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and authorship of their work. Moreover, excessive reliance on AI-generated suggestions may limit opportunities for students to independently develop ideas and critically evaluate their own writing. This concern is especially important when students accept AI-generated language without considering whether it accurately represents their intended meaning, argument, or academic voice. Therefore, the usefulness of GenAI in academic writing needs to be considered alongside students' ability to evaluate, revise, verify, and critically engage with its outputs.

Research has begun to examine students' perceptions of AI-supported language learning. Alsakaker (2025) found that EFL learners in Saudi Arabia generally viewed AI-based vocabulary tools positively, with perceived usefulness and ease of use contributing to favorable perceptions. Similarly, Losi et al. (2024) reported positive responses among Indonesian students who used ChatGPT to strengthen their vocabulary knowledge, including increased motivation toward learning. These findings indicate that AI technologies may provide meaningful support for language learning. However, much of this research has concentrated on vocabulary learning or general perceptions of AI rather than the more complex demands of academic writing.

Writing presents distinct challenges because students must manage multiple higher-order processes, including idea development, organization, coherence, academic style, and critical engagement with content. Therefore, students' acceptance of GenAI for writing cannot necessarily be assumed from their acceptance of AI for vocabulary or general language learning. Understanding how students perceive GenAI specifically as a writing-support tool is important, particularly among graduate students who regularly engage in academic writing.

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides a useful framework for understanding users' perceptions and acceptance of technological tools. Originally proposed by Davis (1986, 1989), TAM explains technology acceptance primarily through perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which users believe that using a particular technology will improve their performance, whereas perceived ease of use concerns the extent to which users perceive the technology as requiring little effort. These perceptions are associated with users' attitudes toward a technology and their behavioral intention to use it.

Although TAM was originally developed to explain relationships among technology acceptance variables and has been widely applied through quantitative approaches, its constructs can also serve as sensitizing concepts for qualitative interpretation. In the present study, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude, and behavioral intention were used as theoretically informed concepts to guide the development of the semi-structured interview questions and the interpretation of participants' accounts, rather than as four predetermined themes. Thematic analysis was then used to identify patterns and meanings within the interview data, with the findings organized into three themes corresponding to the three research questions: perceptions of GenAI's usefulness and ease of use, attitudes toward GenAI, and behavioral intention to use GenAI in academic writing. This approach allows TAM to provide a theoretical lens for interpreting students' perceptions while allowing the specific patterns within each research question to be grounded in participants' accounts.

TAM has been widely applied to investigate the acceptance of educational technologies, including AI-based tools. In educational contexts, Vo and Nguyen (2024) and Maheshwari (2024) demonstrate the relevance of perceived usefulness and perceived ease

of use in understanding students' intentions to use ChatGPT and other AI technologies. These findings suggest that students are more likely to accept AI tools when they perceive the technology as useful for their learning tasks and relatively easy to operate.

The model has also been applied specifically to EFL contexts. Alsakaker (2025), for instance, examined students' acceptance of ChatGPT as a writing-feedback assistant and found that perceived usefulness and ease of engagement contributed to largely positive attitudes. Students perceived benefits in areas such as feedback and idea generation, while their experiences also revealed concerns about overreliance and academic integrity. Such findings are particularly relevant to academic writing because the usefulness of GenAI may coexist with concerns regarding students' autonomy, critical thinking, authorship, and responsible use.

Previous Studies and Research Gap

Previous research indicates that AI technologies can be perceived positively by students when they provide useful and accessible support for learning. Studies by Alsakaker (2025) and Losi et al. (2024) demonstrate generally favorable perceptions of AI-supported language learning, while Vo and Nguyen (2024) and Maheshwari (2024) highlight the importance of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use in understanding students' acceptance of AI technologies. However, much of the existing research on AI acceptance in education has relied on quantitative survey methods, particularly Likert-scale instruments. Although such approaches are useful for identifying general patterns and relationships among variables, they provide less insight into how individual students experience, interpret, and negotiate the use of AI in their actual learning practices. In addition, previous studies have frequently focused on vocabulary learning or general educational applications rather than the specific demands of academic English writing, while EFL graduate students remain comparatively underexplored despite their engagement with complex academic writing tasks involving organization, critical thinking, disciplinary conventions, and academic integrity.

Qualitative studies have increasingly examined EFL students' experiences with ChatGPT in writing. Arifin et al. (2024), for example, explored Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of ChatGPT affordances in L2 writing through screen capture and semi-structured interviews, using collaborative reflexive thematic analysis, finding that ChatGPT use had the potential to improve lexical resources, grammatical accuracy, and coherence.

Similarly, Werdiningsih et al. (2024) investigated the experiences of three EFL students using ChatGPT in academic writing and highlighted the importance of balancing AI assistance with the preservation of authentic voice. More recently, Faridah et al. (2026) applied TAM qualitatively to examine secondary-school EFL students' acceptance of ChatGPT in writing tasks, finding that perceived usefulness operated as cognitive scaffolding while perceived ease of use was complicated by the need for iterative prompt refinement.

While these studies demonstrate the value of qualitative approaches for revealing students' experiences with GenAI in writing, none has done so through the complete TAM framework. Arifin et al. (2024) and Werdiningsih et al. (2024) offer rich thematic accounts of students' experiences but are not organized around TAM's constructs, while Faridah et al. (2026) applies TAM qualitatively but addresses only perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, without examining attitude or behavioral intention, and focuses on secondary-school rather than graduate-level writers. Consequently, no study to date has qualitatively examined how EFL graduate students, who face the more complex demands of argumentation, disciplinary conventions, academic voice, and critical judgement in academic writing, experience and negotiate all four TAM constructs, usefulness, ease of use, attitude, and behavioral intention, together.

Accordingly, the present study addresses this gap by applying TAM as a qualitative interpretive framework to explore how three EFL graduate students understand and negotiate the use of GenAI in academic writing. Rather than treating technology acceptance as a numerical outcome, the study examines how students perceive the usefulness and ease of using GenAI, how positive and negative attitudes emerge from their experiences, and how these perceptions shape their intention to continue using GenAI. Particular attention is given to the ways in which students negotiate the benefits of AI support with concerns about academic judgement, autonomy, authenticity, and responsible use. In this way, the study contributes a more nuanced account of technology acceptance in graduate-level EFL academic writing and extends existing TAM-based research beyond the measurement of acceptance toward an understanding of how acceptance is experienced and negotiated in practice.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design informed by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to explore EFL (English as a Foreign Language) graduate students' perceptions of using Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in academic writing. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected to provide a detailed account of participants' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes toward the use of GenAI in their writing practices. Rather than testing relationships among TAM variables statistically, TAM was used as a theoretical framework to inform the research questions, the semi-structured interview guide, and the interpretation of participants' accounts. The study focused on four TAM constructs: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes toward use, and behavioral intention.

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis with both deductive and inductive elements. The four TAM constructs served as sensitizing concepts that provided an initial theoretical orientation during the analysis, rather than being treated as predetermined themes. Patterns and meanings were identified from participants' accounts and subsequently organized according to the three research questions. This approach allowed the analysis to remain theoretically informed while also allowing findings and subthemes to emerge from the participants' accounts. The study was conducted at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta and involved graduate students who actively engaged in academic writing activities, particularly coursework and research-related writing tasks.

Participants

The participants in this study were three graduate students enrolled in a Master's program in English Language Education at a state university in Indonesia. All participants were EFL graduate students who had prior experience using Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools, particularly ChatGPT, to support their academic writing activities. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who met the study criteria, namely being graduate-level EFL students, actively engaged in academic writing, and having direct experience using GenAI as part of their writing process. To maintain confidentiality, the participants were identified as P1, P2, and P3. They were recruited through personal communication via WhatsApp and participated voluntarily after providing informed consent.

The adequacy of the sample was considered based on the principle of information power, which suggests that a smaller sample may be appropriate when a study has a focused aim, a specific participant group, and participants with relevant and information-rich

experiences (Malterud et al., 2016). The present study had a narrowly defined focus on EFL graduate students’ perceptions of GenAI in academic writing and used semi-structured interviews to obtain detailed accounts of their experiences. Therefore, the three participants were considered sufficient to provide information directly relevant to the research questions. The study aimed not to achieve statistical generalization but to develop an in-depth understanding of participants’ perceptions within the specific research context.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Participant	Academic Stage	Duration of GenAI Use	Frequency of Use
P1	Master’s student	Approximately 2.5 years	Almost daily
P2	Master’s student	Approximately 2 years	1–2 times per week
P3	Master’s student	Approximately 2 years	3–4 times per week

The participants varied in their duration and frequency of GenAI use, as presented in Table 1. P1 reported the longest experience and most frequent use, while P2 and P3 had similar durations of experience but differed in their frequency of use. This variation provided different levels of experience with GenAI while maintaining a common characteristic of direct engagement with the technology for academic writing.

Data Collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted online via Zoom. The interview guide consisted of 16 open-ended questions adapted and modified from the TAM-related questionnaire developed by Alsakaker (2025), which was based on the Technology Acceptance Model proposed by Davis (1986, 1989). Because the original instrument was designed as a closed-ended questionnaire for quantitative measurement, its items were reformulated into open-ended questions to allow participants to provide detailed accounts of their experiences and perceptions of using GenAI in academic writing. The interview questions addressed perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes toward GenAI use, and behavioral intention, while the semi-structured format allowed the researcher to ask follow-up and clarification questions when necessary. The interview guide was developed and refined by the researcher based on the TAM constructs and the adapted items from Alsakaker (2025); no formal pilot testing or external expert review was conducted prior to data collection.

The interviews were conducted in English and lasted approximately 45 minutes for each participant. With participants’ consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and

subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Participants were encouraged to provide detailed explanations and examples of how they used GenAI in their academic writing, including the perceived benefits, challenges, and considerations that influenced their intention to continue using the technology.

Table 2. Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1986, 1989)

TAM construct	Interview questions
Perceived Usefulness	Can you describe how AI tools have helped (or not helped) you improve your English writing?
	In your opinion, how do AI tools compare with traditional methods (like teacher feedback or textbooks) for improving writing?
	Do you feel that using AI tools has improved your overall writing performance (e.g., organization, grammar, style)? Can you give an example?
	How do AI tools assist you in recalling or applying new writing strategies, expressions, or structures?
Ease of Use	How easy or difficult do you find AI tools for supporting your writing tasks?
	What has been your experience using AI tools to practice or complete writing activities?
	Do you usually need help from others when using AI tools for writing, or do you feel comfortable using them on your own?
	How much effort does it take for you to learn how to use AI tools for writing support?
Attitude toward GenAI	Have you ever found AI tools annoying or unhelpful when working on writing tasks? Can you explain?
	Do you feel that AI tools sometimes make the writing process more difficult? Why?
	Do you sometimes prefer traditional methods (like dictionaries, grammar books, or peer feedback) over AI tools for improving your writing? If yes, in what situations?
	Do you think relying on AI tools could prevent you from learning how to write effectively on your own? Why or why not?
Behavioral Intention	Do you plan to continue using AI tools to enhance your English writing in the future?
	Would you recommend AI tools to your classmates or friends for writing support? Why or why not?
	Do you plan to explore more AI tools to improve your writing skills in the future?

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved six stages: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for patterns across codes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final interpretation. First, the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed for accuracy. The researcher then read the transcripts repeatedly to become familiar with the participants' accounts and identify segments relevant to the research questions.

The coding process combined deductive and inductive approaches. Deductive coding was informed by the TAM, particularly the concepts of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude toward use, and behavioral intention. These concepts served as sensitizing concepts to guide attention to relevant aspects of participants' experiences rather than as fixed themes imposed on the data. At the same time, inductive coding allowed patterns and meanings that were not explicitly anticipated by TAM to emerge from participants' accounts. For example, a participant's statement that AI "helps me rephrase awkward sentences and suggest more natural expressions" was initially coded as grammar and language improvement. This code was grouped with related codes such as sentence revision, vocabulary support, and writing improvement, which contributed to the broader pattern of writing support. This pattern was subsequently interpreted within the first research question concerning students' perceptions of the usefulness and ease of using GenAI for academic writing. Similarly, a statement about becoming unsure of one's own point of view after receiving AI suggestions was initially coded as doubt in personal judgement, which was grouped with codes related to over-reliance, output mismatch, and academic voice and contributed to the theme concerning attitudes toward GenAI.

Following the coding process, related codes were compared across participants and organized into broader patterns. The final themes were aligned with the three research questions: (1) perceived usefulness and ease of use, (2) attitudes toward GenAI, and (3) behavioral intention. This organization allowed the findings to remain closely connected to the research questions while retaining the explanatory concepts provided by TAM. The coding and interpretation were conducted by the researcher. To manage potential interpretive bias, the researcher maintained an audit trail documenting coding decisions and

revisions throughout the analysis and conducted member checking by inviting participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpreted findings. These procedures supported the credibility and transparency of the analysis while acknowledging that the interpretation reflected the researcher's qualitative judgement.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted under the guidance of the researcher's academic supervisor at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, following the ethical research guidelines of the study program. As the study involved adult volunteer participants in a minimal-risk, non-clinical educational context, it did not require review by a separate institutional ethics committee. Nonetheless, standard ethical procedures were followed throughout: participants were fully informed of the study's purpose and procedures prior to participation, provided written informed consent, and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms in place of participants' real names and by storing all recordings and transcripts securely, accessible only to the researcher and academic supervisor.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the interviews with three EFL graduate students, P1, P2, and P3, generated three major themes corresponding to the research questions: (1) perceptions of the usefulness and ease of using Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) for writing, (2) attitudes toward the use of GenAI in academic writing, and (3) intention to continue using GenAI in academic writing. The findings and discussion are presented together to connect the participants' experiences with the TAM and previous research on AI-supported EFL writing.

EFL Graduate Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness and Ease of Using GenAI for Writing

All three participants perceived GenAI as useful for supporting their academic writing, although the specific forms of usefulness differed across participants. P1 primarily experienced GenAI as a tool for correcting grammar, improving sentence structure, and developing greater awareness of writing organization:

"AI tools have helped me improve my English writing by giving quick feedback on grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary. They also help me rephrase awkward sentences and suggest more natural expressions."(P1)

P1 further explained that the feedback provided by GenAI influenced her awareness of how ideas should be connected within academic writing:

“I’ve become more confident with grammar and sentence flow. For example, when writing essays, I now pay more attention to transitions and structure because AI often points out when my ideas are not clearly connected.”(P1)

P2’s perception of usefulness focused more strongly on academic register, sentence structure, and cohesion. Rather than using GenAI only to correct errors, P2 used it to evaluate the clarity and comprehensiveness of completed writing:

“When I write a paragraph, the tool suggests more academic words and corrects sentence structure. Then, when my writing is complete, for the final check, I ask AI to give feedback on my writing, for example whether it is already clear and comprehensive.” (P2)

P2 also described how GenAI helped improve connections between ideas:

“For example, when I wrote an introduction, the AI suggested transition phrases that made my writing more cohesive.” (P2)

In contrast, P3 primarily perceived GenAI as useful for generating ideas and overcoming difficulties during the early stages of writing:

“It has been very helpful and influential. AI gives me input and alternatives for academic writing, or just as a way to brainstorm when I’m confused about how to write on a topic.” (P3)

P3 specifically associated GenAI with overcoming writer’s block:

“Writer’s block really hinders the writing process, but sometimes AI is able to give a broader perspective. With references and summaries, the examples AI provides give me insight to continue writing.” (P3)

These accounts indicate that perceived usefulness varied according to participants’ writing needs. P1 emphasized correction and structural awareness, P2 focused on cohesion and academic register, while P3 valued idea generation and support in overcoming writer’s block. These findings provide qualitative nuance to Davis’s (1989) formulation of perceived usefulness by showing how its meaning may vary across different writing needs in graduate-level academic writing. This interpretation complements previous TAM-based research by Vo and Nguyen (2024) and Maheshwari (2024), which generally examine usefulness through aggregated survey measures, and is consistent with Alsakaker’s (2025) finding that

GenAI can support EFL learners through functions such as idea generation and vocabulary access.

The participants also perceived GenAI as relatively easy to use, although their explanations of ease of use differed. P1 associated ease of use primarily with the simplicity of the tools' interfaces:

"I find them quite easy to use. Most tools have simple interfaces, and I just need to type or paste my writing to get instant help." (P1)

She further explained:

"Not much effort. Once I tried it a few times, it became easy to use. It's mostly just copy-pasting or typing directly, so there's not a big learning curve." (P1)

P2 similarly perceived the basic functions as accessible but emphasized that more advanced use required some learning:

"The design is intuitive, and most users can navigate the basic functions without much difficulty. However, it's true that fully understanding all the features may take some time." (P2)

For P2, effective use was closely related to the ability to formulate appropriate prompts:

"One of the most important skills I developed was the ability to formulate clear and precise questions. I learned how to craft effective prompts, not only asking questions but also providing context." (P2)

P3 expressed a similar experience:

"It's very easy. With clear prompts, AI can identify the difficulty in writing." (P3)

She added:

"It's really easy. I just needed to get used to writing clear prompts so that AI's answers were already close to what I wanted." (P3)

The findings therefore suggest that perceived ease of use was not experienced solely in terms of the technical simplicity of GenAI tools. For P1, ease of use was primarily associated with interface accessibility, whereas P2 and P3 emphasized the development of prompt-formulation skills. These findings suggest that prompt literacy may be an important contextual factor influencing how perceived ease of use is experienced in GenAI-supported academic writing. In the participants' accounts, using GenAI became easier as they gained experience in communicating their needs more clearly and effectively through prompts. This provides qualitative nuance to previous TAM-based research, including studies by Vo

and Nguyen (2024) and Maheshwari (2024), by highlighting how users' developing interaction skills may shape their perceptions of ease of use.

EFL Graduate Students' Attitudes toward GenAI Use in Academic Writing

The participants expressed both positive and negative attitudes toward GenAI. Positive attitudes were primarily associated with confidence, efficiency, autonomy, and convenient access to writing support. P1 described GenAI as useful when she needed immediate assistance:

"It's been helpful. AI gives quick suggestions that I can apply immediately, which is great when I'm under time pressure or unsure about a certain part of my writing."
(P1)

She also emphasized the autonomy provided by the technology:

"I feel comfortable using them on my own. Most tools are self-explanatory, and I can usually figure things out without help." (P1)

P2 associated repeated practice with GenAI with a growing sense of confidence, particularly through opportunities to experiment with different sentence structures:

"They frequently provide various alternative sentence structures, which is incredibly helpful for expanding my writing skills. This practice not only enhances my sentence variety but also boosts my confidence in my writing abilities." (P2)

P2 also connected GenAI use with greater confidence when completing academic assignments:

"I usually practice writing essays with AI tools. They help me revise quickly, and I feel more confident when submitting my assignments." (P2)

P3's positive attitude was associated with the availability of immediate feedback and support without having to depend on another person:

"AI provides feedback directly and practically, without making me feel like I'm bothering someone else to evaluate my writing." (P3)

She also explained that GenAI had become part of her regular writing practices:

"So far, AI has always been part of how I practice and complete my writing tasks. It can look for appropriate references and helps me interpret sentences or new vocabulary that I don't understand." (P3)

These findings indicate that positive attitudes were not based solely on perceived improvements in writing quality. All three participants' statements pointed toward a shared theme of independence: P1 described being able to work "on my own" without needing

help, P2 associated repeated practice with GenAI with a growing sense of confidence in her writing abilities, and P3 valued receiving feedback "without making me feel like I'm bothering someone else." Read together, these statements suggest that part of GenAI's appeal lay in reducing participants' reliance on other people for feedback, though this reading goes beyond what any single participant stated explicitly and should be treated as an inference from the pattern across accounts rather than a direct finding. If accurate, this interpretation would extend Alsakaker's (2025) report that EFL learners felt empowered by GenAI's writing feedback by suggesting that part of this empowerment may stem specifically from avoiding the social cost of seeking help from another person, rather than from the technical quality of AI feedback alone. This possibility warrants more targeted investigation in future qualitative work, as the present interviews were not designed to probe this social dimension directly.

However, the participants' attitudes were not entirely positive. Each participant identified limitations or concerns related to GenAI use. P1 was concerned about semantic mismatch and repetitive suggestions:

"Sometimes AI gives suggestions that don't match the tone or meaning I want. Also, it can be repetitive, suggesting the same type of changes over and over." (P1)

She also expressed concern that excessive reliance could affect her confidence in her own writing:

"If I rely too much on them, I start second guessing my own writing instead of trusting my instincts." (P1)

P2's concern focused on the appropriateness of AI-generated language for academic contexts:

"Sometimes the suggestions are too general or not suitable for academic writing. For instance, it sometimes recommends informal expressions." (P2)

Meanwhile, P3 described difficulties when GenAI failed to respond appropriately to a revised request:

"Sometimes AI just repeats what it has already given, even though my request was actually different." (P3)

More importantly, P3 was concerned that extensive AI-generated explanations could cause her to question her own ideas:

“Sometimes AI makes me confused, because when it gives a broader explanation about certain aspects, I become unsure and start doubting my own point of view, even though I should be writing according to my own original thoughts.” (P3)

The negative attitudes therefore did not arise because GenAI was perceived as completely ineffective. Instead, concerns emerged when AI-generated suggestions conflicted with the participants’ intended meaning, academic register, or personal judgement. P1’s concern about tone and meaning, P2’s concern about academic register, and P3’s concern about losing confidence in her own viewpoint indicate that the participants were actively negotiating the boundaries between AI assistance and their own academic voice. This finding adds nuance to concerns reported in previous research on AI-supported language learning. While Losi et al. (2024) reported students’ positive responses to ChatGPT in vocabulary learning, the present findings indicate that AI use in academic writing involves additional concerns related to ownership, judgement, and maintaining one’s own position in writing. Across the three participants, these concerns were not expressed as rejection of GenAI but as efforts to establish limits on how and when the technology should be used. P1 emphasized using AI alongside teacher feedback, P2 similarly viewed AI as complementary to teacher feedback, while P3 explicitly stressed the need to re-analyze and cross-check AI-generated responses rather than treating them as shortcuts. Taken together, these patterns suggest an emerging form of bounded or negotiated acceptance, in which participants accepted GenAI as a useful writing-support tool while simultaneously maintaining boundaries around their own judgement, academic voice, and responsibility for the final text. Thus, positive attitudes toward GenAI did not necessarily indicate uncritical acceptance.

Among these concerns, P3’s account deserves closer attention because it points to a dimension of technology acceptance that conventional TAM does not readily capture. P1’s and P2’s concerns, tone mismatch and inappropriate register, describe dissatisfaction with the quality of AI output: the suggestions simply did not fit what they wanted to say. P3’s concern is different in kind. She did not report that GenAI produced incorrect or low-quality output; rather, she reported that receiving a broad explanation of an idea led her to become “unsure” and to “start doubting my own point of view,” even though she recognized she “should be writing according to my own original thoughts.” This describes not a usability problem but a disruption to what can be termed her epistemic agency: her sense of ownership over her own reasoning and judgement in the writing process. In TAM’s original

formulation, a technology perceived as both useful and easy to use is expected to generate positive attitudes; P3's account complicates this expectation by showing that a technology can be experienced as useful while simultaneously undermining the user's confidence in her own thinking. This tension echoes, but also sharpens, Werdiningsih et al.'s (2024) concern regarding the erosion of authentic voice in AI-assisted writing: where Werdiningsih et al. describe authenticity as a property of the resulting text, P3's account suggests the tension may begin earlier, at the level of the writer's confidence in her own ideas before the text is even produced. This distinction, between usefulness as output quality and usefulness as a potential threat to epistemic agency, may represent a more theoretically consequential contribution of the present findings than the broader observation that GenAI use involves both benefits and concerns.

EFL Graduate Students' Intention to Use GenAI in Academic Writing

Despite the concerns identified above, all three participants expressed an intention to continue using GenAI for academic writing. However, their behavioral intentions were accompanied by different conditions and boundaries. P1 intended to integrate GenAI into her writing process while continuing to seek human feedback:

"I plan to keep using them as part of my writing process. They're helpful for revision and brainstorming ideas." (P1)

She further explained:

"I would use AI tools alongside other resources. Teacher feedback is still important for deeper learning, but AI is great for everyday writing and quick help." (P1)

P2 similarly viewed GenAI as complementary to teacher feedback:

"I would use both. AI tools are faster, but teacher feedback is more reliable for improving critical thinking and argument development." (P2)

P2 also identified efficiency as an important reason for continued use:

"Yes, because they save time and help me avoid many common mistakes." (P2)

P3 expressed the most conditional intention to continue using GenAI. Her intention depended on whether the technology provided assistance that she could not obtain elsewhere:

"For certain needs that I cannot get elsewhere, or in certain conditions as I mentioned before, yes, I plan to continue using AI." (P3)

She also emphasized the importance of critically evaluating AI-generated information:

“I would recommend using AI, with the note that you should re-analyze and cross-check AI’s answers rather than immediately treating it as a shortcut in writing.”

(P3)

P3 further emphasized the importance of maintaining personal judgement:

“Relying on AI can help, but it can’t be used as the main source. Using it requires your own judgement in the writing process. Depending on it completely without analysing its answers can hinder the ability to write effectively.” (P3)

These findings suggest that behavioral intention among the participants was not simply expressed as a decision to either accept or reject GenAI. Instead, participants described how they intended to establish boundaries around its use. P1 and P2 intended to use GenAI alongside teacher feedback and other resources, while P3 emphasized self-monitoring, critical evaluation, and cross-checking. These accounts indicate that the participants’ stated intention to continue using GenAI was accompanied by explicit conditions regarding how the technology should be used in academic writing. This finding provides a context-specific understanding of behavioral intention in graduate-level EFL writing and complements previous quantitative studies (Vo & Nguyen, 2024; Maheshwari, 2024), where intention is generally operationalized through scales measuring willingness or likelihood to use a technology. However, the findings reflect participants’ reported intentions rather than their actual future use of GenAI. Because the study did not longitudinally observe their subsequent writing practices, the boundaries described by the participants should be understood as intended conditions of use rather than evidence of sustained or responsible adoption in practice.

The participants’ continued intention to use GenAI also reflects the importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use identified in the earlier findings. The perceived benefits of rapid feedback, revision, idea generation, vocabulary support, and time efficiency provided reasons for continued adoption. At the same time, participants did not interpret continued use as unrestricted dependence. Their intention was shaped by an awareness that teacher feedback, critical thinking, personal judgement, and independent writing remained important. This pattern is consistent with Alsakaker’s (2025) finding that positive perceptions of GenAI can coexist with concerns about overreliance and academic integrity.

Overall, the three themes demonstrate that the participants’ acceptance of GenAI was characterized by both appreciation and regulation. GenAI was perceived as useful because it could address different writing needs, while ease of use developed partly through

participants' growing ability to formulate effective prompts. Positive attitudes were associated with autonomy, confidence, and efficiency, whereas negative attitudes emerged when AI output conflicted with academic register, intended meaning, or personal judgement. Finally, all participants intended to continue using GenAI, but within boundaries established through human feedback, critical evaluation, and self-monitoring. These findings provide qualitative nuance to previous TAM-based research on AI in education (Vo & Nguyen, 2024; Maheshwari, 2024) by showing how technology acceptance among EFL graduate writers involves not only perceptions of usefulness and ease of use, but also participants' negotiation of how GenAI should function within their writing process. Rather, acceptance involves an ongoing negotiation of how GenAI should function within the broader writing process. This qualitative perspective complements the quantitative, survey-based evidence that has dominated previous research and provides a more nuanced account of how graduate EFL writers incorporate GenAI into authentic academic writing practices.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how three EFL graduate students, P1, P2, and P3, perceived the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in supporting English academic writing through the TAM as an interpretive framework. The findings show that GenAI was perceived as useful and relatively easy to use, although these perceptions varied according to participants' writing needs. Perceived usefulness included corrective support for grammar and sentence structure, cohesive support for academic register and organization, and generative support for idea development and overcoming writer's block. Perceived ease of use was associated with interface simplicity and participants' developing ability to formulate effective prompts.

Participants expressed both positive and negative attitudes toward GenAI. Positive attitudes were associated with autonomy, confidence, efficiency, and immediate access to writing support, whereas negative attitudes emerged when AI-generated suggestions conflicted with intended meaning, academic register, or personal judgement. All participants reported an intention to continue using GenAI, but their intended use was bounded by teacher feedback, other resources, critical evaluation, crosschecking, and responsibility for their own academic voice and judgement. Taken together, these findings suggest an emerging pattern of bounded and negotiated acceptance, in which participants recognized the benefits of GenAI while determining appropriate limits on its role in

academic writing. This provides a context-specific qualitative understanding of technology acceptance and complements existing TAM-based research by showing how stated behavioral intention may be accompanied by explicit conditions of use.

These findings should be interpreted with caution. The study involved only three participants from one graduate program, all of whom were already regular GenAI users. Students who avoid, reject, distrust, or have limited access to GenAI were therefore not represented, which may have contributed to the generally positive perceptions and stated intentions found in the study. In addition, the findings were based on self-reported interviews and coding by a single researcher, so they reflect participants' reported experiences and remain subject to interpretive subjectivity despite member checking. Future research should include both GenAI users and non-users across multiple institutions and contexts, use longitudinal designs to examine changes in GenAI use and prompt literacy, and examine whether explicitly teaching the kind of critical, reflective AI use some participants (e.g., P3) already adopted informally, such as cross-checking AI-generated responses, could support responsible EFL academic writing, a hypothesis this study's design does not test. Research involving instructors and institutions could also provide complementary perspectives on GenAI use in graduate writing.

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