A STUDY ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF USING CHATGPT AS AN AI WRITING ASSISTANT AMONG THIRD-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS AT DONG A UNIVERSITY

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Abstract:

In the 4.0 era, AI technology continued to develop to support humans. ChatGPT, developed and produced by OpenAI, was launched at the end of 2022 and has become a phenomenon due to the benefits it offers, especially in the process of learning English. This study examined the perceptions of using ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant among third-year English majors at Dong A University. Suggestions were also made to improve the use of ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant for students. The study involved 90 students at Dong A University and employed a quantitative method. A questionnaire was used to determine students' perceptions of the effectiveness and challenges of using ChatGPT, as well as to propose suggestions for its effective use as an AI writing assistant. The results were expected to show that students generally have a positive attitude toward the benefits provided by ChatGPT, although they may still encounter challenges related to its implementation. Additionally, several suggestions were made for more effective use of ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant.

Keywords: *ChatGPT, Perceptions, AI Writing Assistant, Third-year English Majors, Dong A University*

Introduction

In the era of rapid technological advancement, artificial intelligence (AI) has become an increasingly influential force in education. Among AI-powered tools, ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, has emerged as a prominent language model capable of generating human-like text responses. Since its public launch in late 2022, ChatGPT has been widely adopted in academic settings, particularly as a writing assistant (Ahmed & Saeed, 2024).

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, such as Vietnam, writing in English remains one of the most challenging skills for students to master (Rao, 2019). Writing involves not only grammar and vocabulary but also coherence, clarity, and critical thinking. As such, many learners struggle with writer's block, organizing ideas, or expressing themselves fluently. Recent studies have shown that AI writing assistants like ChatGPT can support students by providing instant feedback, suggesting

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vocabulary, and helping refine grammar and structure (Al-Garaady & Mahyoob, 2023; Ali et al., 2023).

Despite growing interest in using ChatGPT in higher education globally, few studies have explored its use in the Vietnamese EFL context. More importantly, little is known about how English majors at Dong A University perceive and engage with ChatGPT in their academic writing. Understanding students' perceptions can help educators make informed decisions about integrating AI tools into the curriculum.

This research aims to investigate third-year English majors' perceptions of using ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant at Dong A University. It explores both the perceived benefits, such as improved grammar, coherence, and writing confidence and the challenges, including over-reliance, inconsistency, and difficulty verifying content. Additionally, the study offers practical suggestions for enhancing the responsible use of ChatGPT in academic writing.

The findings reveal that while most students view ChatGPT as a supportive tool for enhancing their writing skills, they also encounter several issues that require attention. These insights contribute to a growing body of literature on AI in education and provide recommendations for both students and educators to optimize the use of AI writing tools while maintaining academic integrity and critical thinking (Launonen, Talalakina, & Dubova, 2024; Hòa & Khoa, 2024).

Aims and Objectives

The research aims to investigate the perceptions of third-year English majors at Dong A University regarding the use of ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant, and to provide suggestions for its effective application in improving their writing skills. In order to accomplish the aims, the research includes the following objectives (1) to examine students' perceptions of using ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant; (2) to provide possible suggestions for improving the use of ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant.

Significance of the Study

This study examined students' perceptions of using ChatGPT as an AI assistant in learning writing skills, particularly among English majors, and provided suggestions for its effective use. The findings aimed to guide educators and students in integrating AI tools like ChatGPT into academic settings to enhance traditional teaching methods and address writing challenges.

Informants and Research Methodology

Informants

The research subjects consisted of 90 third-year English majors at Dong A University. These students were required to complete a survey with 19 questions regarding the perceptions of the effectiveness and challenges of using ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant. In addition, the survey also proposed solutions to improve the use of ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant for students.

Research Methodology

The research process included the following stages (1) The questionnaire was distributed online to 90 students from four classes: EL22A, EL22B, EL22C, and EL22D at the Faculty of English Language and Culture, Dong A University. This approach ensured the participation of a diverse group of students across different classes; (2) A 19-item questionnaire was designed, with 14 questions focusing on students' perceptions of the effectiveness and challenges of using ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant. The responses were categorized based on the students' level of agreement (e.g., strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree). Percentages and frequencies for each level of agreement were calculated. Additionally, the last five questions of the survey asked students to provide suggestions for improving the use of ChatGPT; (3) The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using quantitative methods; (4) Based on the findings from the quantitative analyses, feasible recommendations were made.

Results and Discussion

Third-year English Majors' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Chat GPT as an AI

Writing Assistant

Students' Perceptions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Using ChatGPT to Improve Clarity in Writing	13.5%	9%	11.2%	42.7%	23.6%
Using ChatGPT to Improve Coherence in Writing	8.9%	2.2%	16.7%	41.1%	31.1%
Using ChatGPT to Improve Grammar and Punctuation in Writing	7.8%	8.9%	13.3%	45.6%	24.4%
Using ChatGPT to Generate Ideas in Writing	11.1%	7.8%	13.3%	32.2%	35.6%

Students' Perceptions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Contributions of ChatGPT to their Overall Writing Performance	13.3%	4.5%	14.4%	36.7%	31.1%
Students' Perceptions of their Confidence Level in Writing After Using ChatGPT	11.1%	6.7%	13.3%	35.6%	33.3%

As the table shows, over 66% of third-year English majors at Dong A University agree or strongly agree that ChatGPT helps improve the clarity of their writing. This indicates a generally positive perception, particularly in enhancing sentence structure and word choice. However, some students remain neutral or disagree, suggesting mixed experiences.

As shown, 72.2% of students believe that ChatGPT improves coherence. Notably, no students selected "Disagree," showing strong approval of ChatGPT's role in helping structure ideas and maintain logical flow in writing.

Nearly 70% of students perceive ChatGPT as effective in this area. However, a minority expressed concerns, possibly due to doubts about its contextual accuracy or fear of over-reliance on AI.

Besides, as reflected in the data, 67.8% of students agree that ChatGPT aids in idea generation. While many find it helpful for brainstorming and overcoming writer's block, some students question its creativity or depth, indicating varied preferences.

Around 68% of students view ChatGPT as contributing positively. However, the presence of neutral and disagreeing responses highlights that its effectiveness may depend on individual needs and expectations.

As indicated, approximately 69% of students report greater confidence when using ChatGPT. While many appreciate the support it provides, others remain hesitant, highlighting the need for tailored guidance to effectively boost confidence.
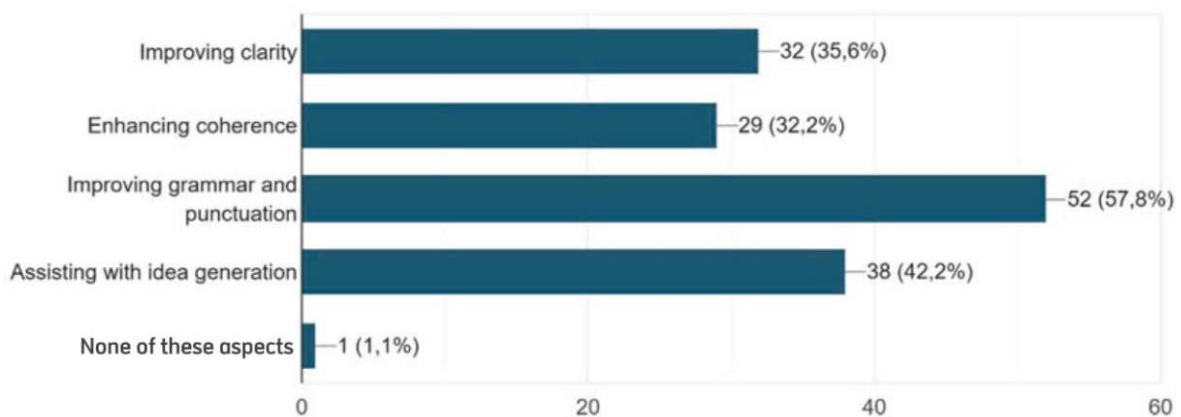
The chart illustrates students' perceptions of the aspects of writing most improved after using ChatGPT. The most significant improvement is in grammar and punctuation (57.8%), followed by idea generation (42.2%), clarity (35.6%), and coherence (32.2%). Only one student (1.1%) reported no improvement.

These results suggest that ChatGPT is particularly effective in enhancing writing mechanics and supporting idea development, while also contributing to improved clarity and logical flow. The overall positive perception highlights ChatGPT's role as a valuable tool in supporting students' academic writing, though its impact may vary among individuals.

Third-year English Majors' Perceptions of the Challenges of Chat GPT as an AI Writing Assistant
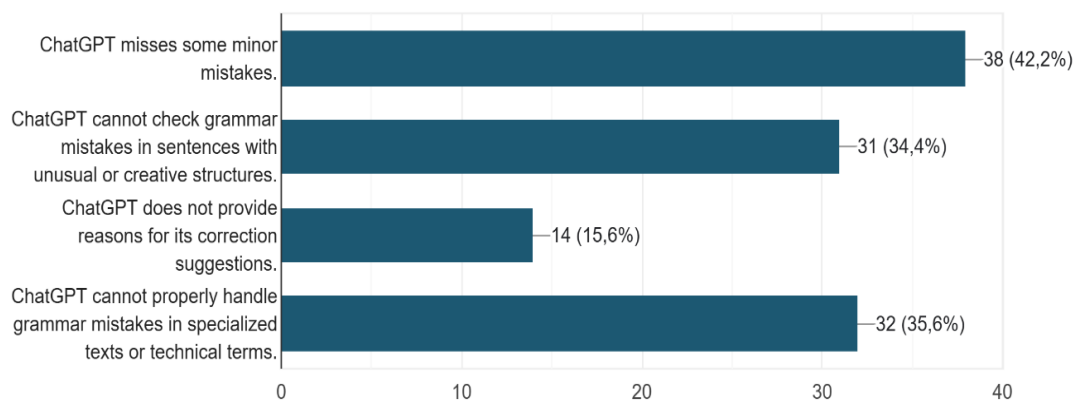

The results indicate that students at Dong A University have experienced notable improvements in specific aspects of their writing after using ChatGPT. The tool appears to be particularly effective in enhancing grammar and punctuation, suggesting that students rely on it to fine-tune their writing mechanics. Additionally, many students have found it useful for generating writing ideas, which likely helps in overcoming writer's block and sparking creativity. The improvements in clarity and coherence further highlight ChatGPT's role in helping students structure their writing more effectively. The minimal number of students who did not report improvements suggests that, overall, ChatGPT has had a positive impact on students' writing skills, although individual experiences may vary.
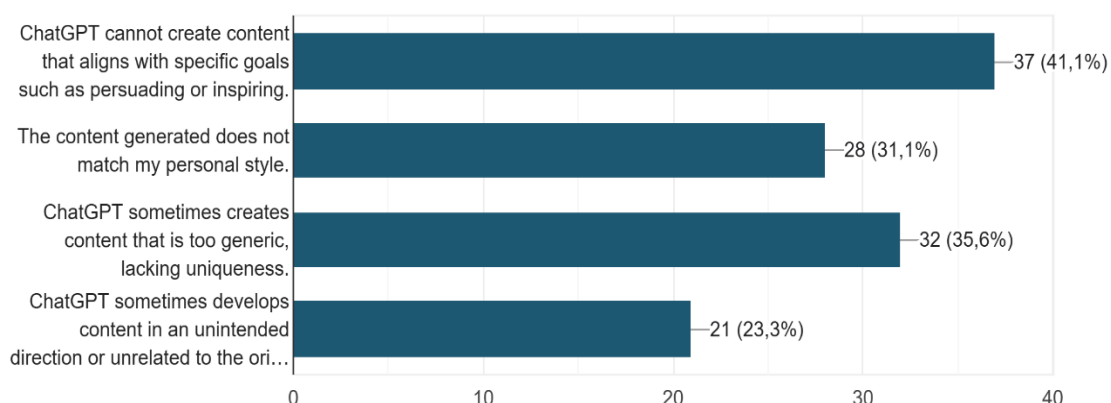
Third-year English majors at Dong A University reported several challenges when using ChatGPT to develop content based on their own ideas. Many students found that the tool struggles to meet specific writing goals, often produces generic content, and fails to reflect their personal writing style. Some also noted that ChatGPT occasionally generates ideas that stray from their original intent. These insights suggest that while ChatGPT can support content development, its effectiveness would be enhanced by features that allow for more personalization and better alignment with students' intended writing purposes.
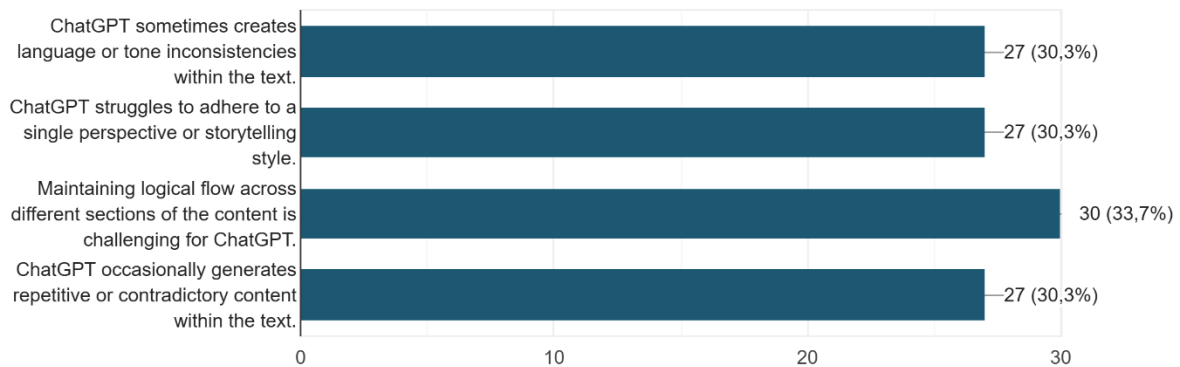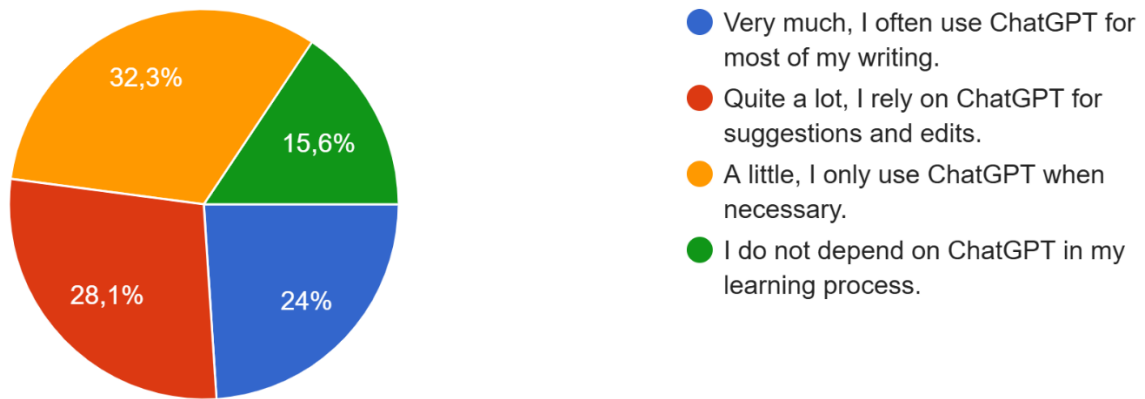

Students reported several challenges when using ChatGPT to maintain consistency in their writing. The most common issue, cited by 33.7% of students, is that ChatGPT struggles to maintain logical flow across different sections of the text. Other concerns include inconsistencies in language or tone (30,3%), difficulty in adhering to a single perspective (30,3%), and the generation of repetitive or contradictory content (30,3%). These challenges highlight the need for students to actively review and refine AI-generated content to ensure coherence, consistency, and clarity in their writing, especially in academic contexts.
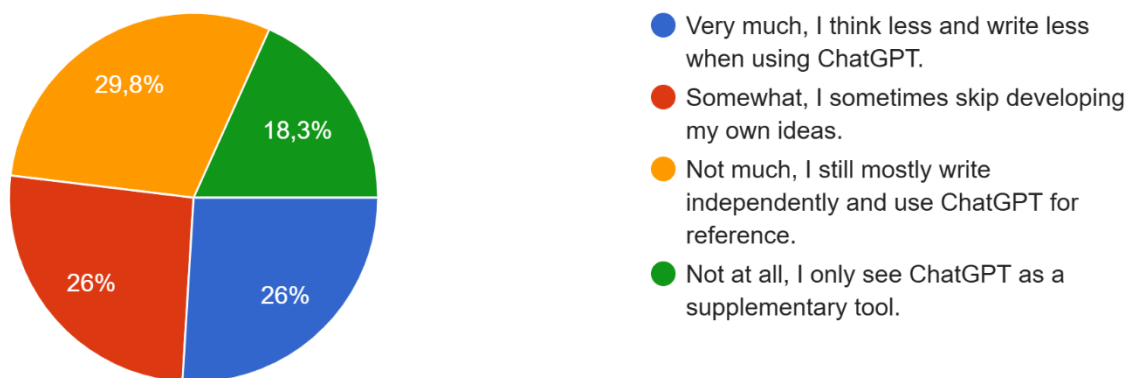

Students had mixed perceptions regarding ChatGPT's impact on their ability to think and write independently. While 60% of students expressed concerns that ChatGPT reduces their ability to develop their own ideas, with some admitting to over-relying on AI-generated content, 55.5% did not see it as a major obstacle, using it selectively for reference rather than as a substitute. These findings suggest that the impact of ChatGPT on independent thinking depends largely on how students use it, highlighting the need

for balanced and thoughtful integration into their writing process to avoid over-reliance and maintain cognitive engagement.

Very much, I often use ChatGPT for most of my writing.

Quite a lot, I rely on ChatGPT for suggestions and edits.

A little, I only use ChatGPT when necessary.

I do not depend on ChatGPT in my learning process.

Third-year English majors at Dong A University exhibit varied levels of dependence on ChatGPT in their academic writing process. While 56.1% of students reported relying on ChatGPT to some degree, with 25.8% using it frequently for most of their writing, 51.7% demonstrated limited or no reliance, with 34.8% using it only when necessary. These findings highlight the need for a balanced approach, where students can leverage AI as a helpful tool without compromising their independent thinking and writing skills.
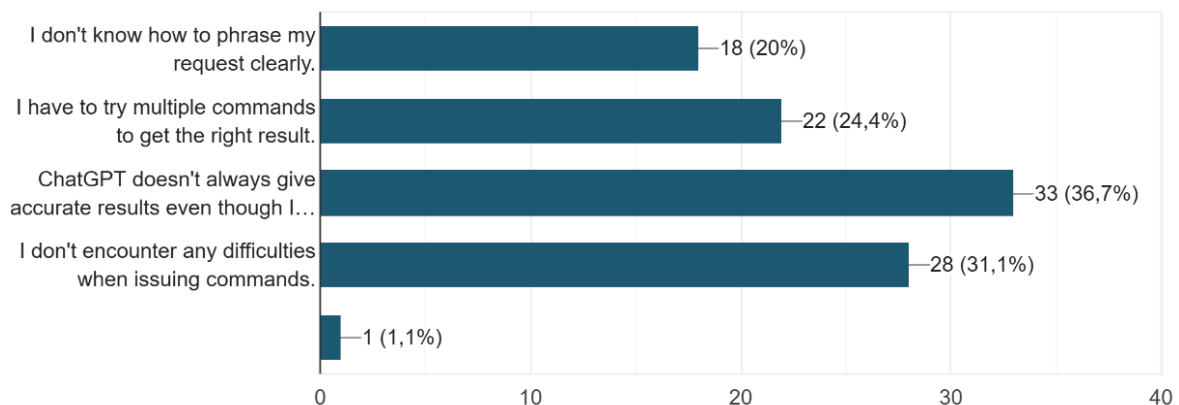

Third-year English majors at Dong A University face various challenges when issuing commands to ChatGPT, with 36.7% of students reporting that the AI does not always provide accurate results despite clear commands. Additionally, 24.4% of students need to try multiple commands to get the desired response, while 20% struggle with phrasing their requests clearly. These findings suggest that improving students' skills in prompt engineering and providing guidance on structuring effective commands could enhance their ability to use ChatGPT more efficiently.
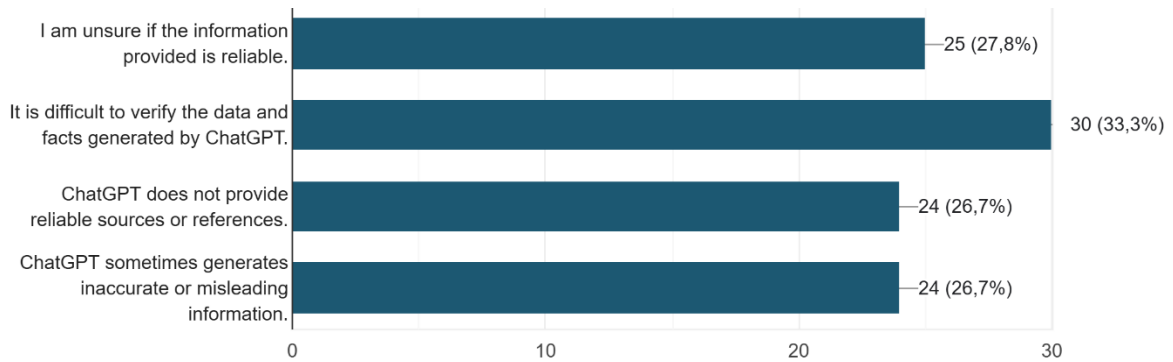
Third-year English majors at Dong A University face challenges when using ChatGPT to check content accuracy. The main issue is the difficulty in verifying the accuracy of the information generated, with 33.3% of students reporting concerns about fact-checking. Additionally, 27.8% expressed uncertainty regarding the reliability of ChatGPT's responses, while 26.7% noted that the tool lacks credible sources or generates misleading information. These challenges highlight the importance of supplementing ChatGPT's output with reliable academic sources and critical thinking to ensure content accuracy.

Third-year English Majors' Suggestions for Enhancing the Use of ChatGPT as an AI Writing Assistant
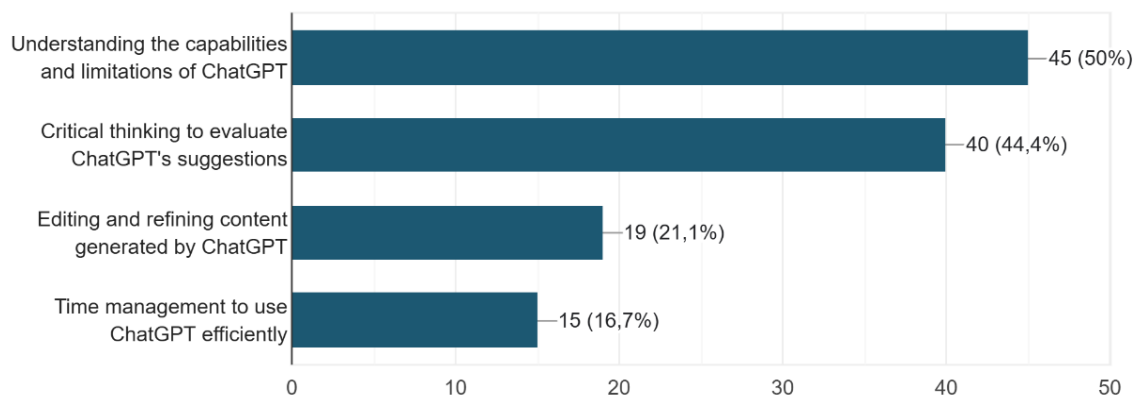
The findings suggest that to effectively use ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant, third-year English majors must cultivate key skills such as understanding the tool's strengths and limitations, thinking critically about its outputs, editing and refining its suggestions, and managing their time efficiently, all of which are essential to ensure AI supports rather than replaces the writing and learning process.
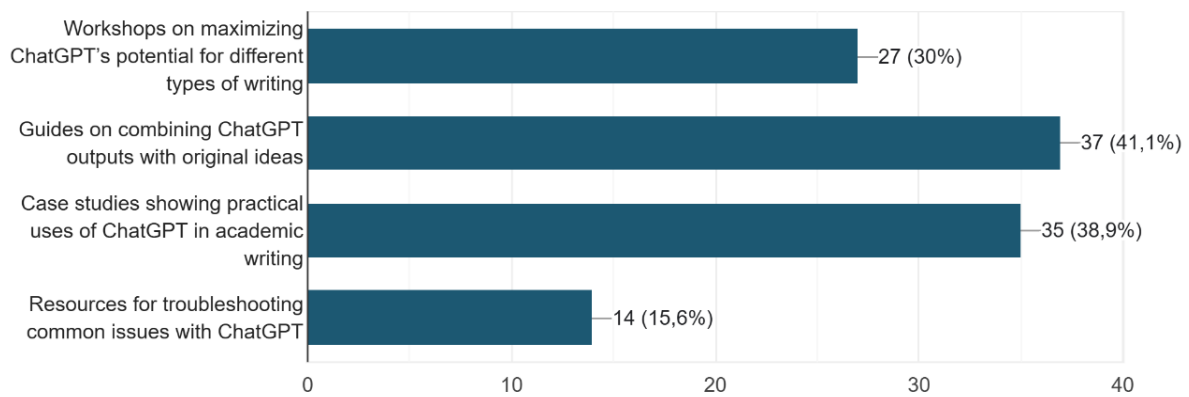
The results indicate that students are eager for structured training, particularly resources that teach them how to integrate ChatGPT outputs with their own ideas, provide practical case studies, and offer targeted workshops and troubleshooting support, which underscores the importance of equipping learners with both technical and critical skills to use AI tools effectively and ethically in academic writing.
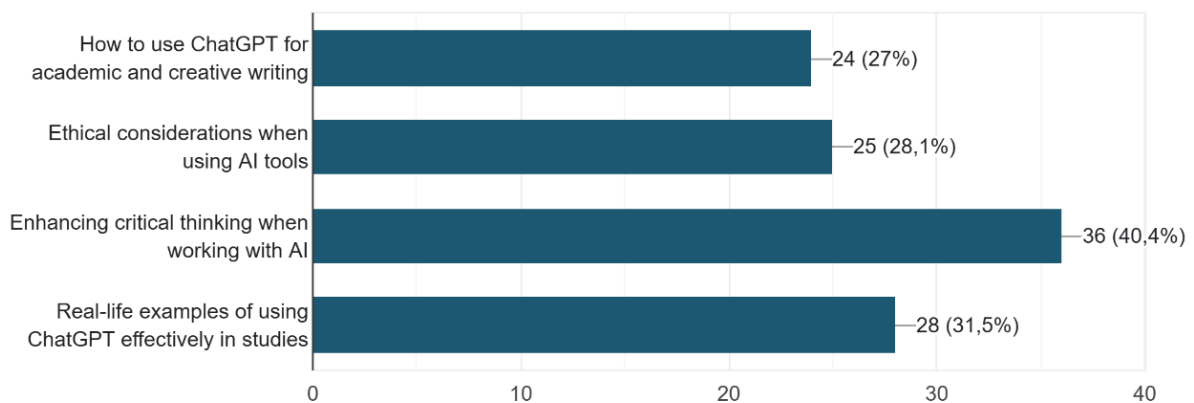
The findings reveal that students prioritize a balanced approach to AI training, focusing not only on enhancing critical thinking and ethical awareness but also on gaining practical skills through real-life examples and tailored guidance for both academic and creative writing, indicating a clear demand for comprehensive, context-based workshops that promote responsible and effective use of ChatGPT in diverse writing scenarios.
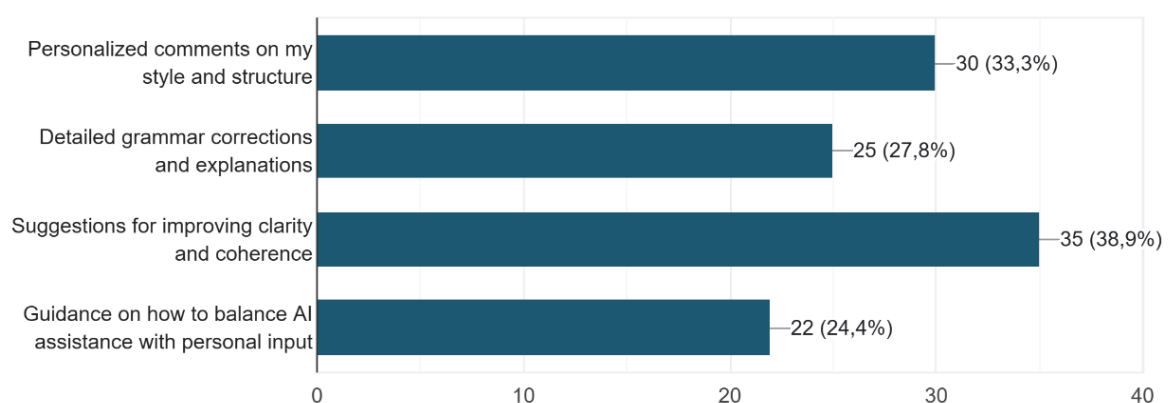
The findings emphasize the indispensable role of teacher feedback in complementing AI assistance, with students valuing teacher input for improving clarity,

developing personal writing style, understanding grammar more deeply, and learning to balance AI-generated content with original thought, highlighting the continued need for human guidance in nurturing critical writing skills that go beyond the capabilities of ChatGPT.

- ● Detailed structural templates for different types of writing (e.g., argumentative essays, pros and cons essays, proble…
- ● Step-by-step guides to improve writing skills when using ChatGPT
- ● Suggestions for enriching vocabulary and correcting grammar and sentence structure errors
- ● Examples of high-quality outputs from ChatGPT to use as reference models…
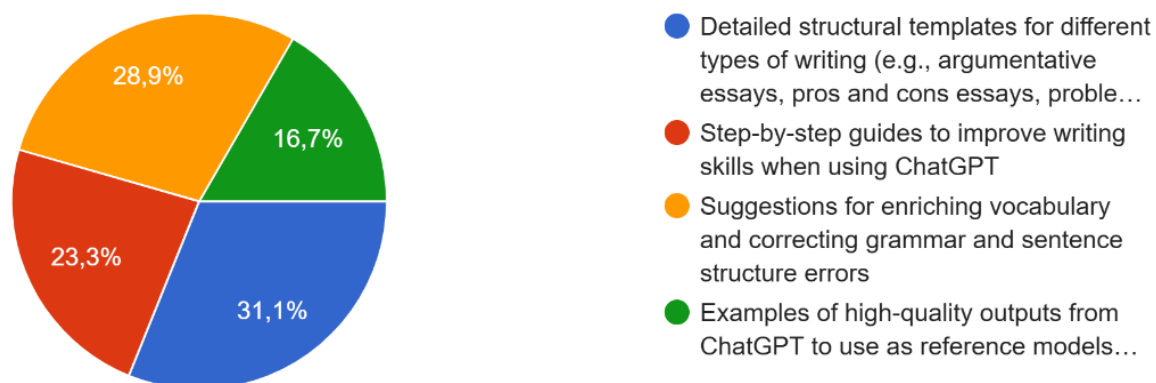
The findings underscore students' desire for practical, supportive resources, such as structural templates, vocabulary and grammar enhancement tools, step-by-step instructional guides, and high-quality output examples, which can help them integrate ChatGPT effectively into their writing while maintaining structure, coherence, and academic authenticity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the perceptions of third-year English majors at Dong A University regarding the use of ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant. The findings revealed that a majority of students viewed ChatGPT positively, recognizing its usefulness in improving various aspects of writing, including grammar, punctuation, coherence, and idea generation. Many students also reported increased confidence in their writing abilities after using the tool.However, the study also identified several challenges. Students noted issues such as over-reliance on AI, difficulties maintaining consistency and originality, and concerns about the accuracy of AI-generated content. Additionally, some students found it challenging to formulate effective commands and understand the reasoning behind ChatGPT's suggestions.

To support the effective and ethical use of ChatGPT as an AI writing assistant, this study proposes a set of clear and practical solutions for both students and educators. These recommendations are based on the findings of the research and supported by recent academic literature.

First, students are advised to use ChatGPT as a support tool rather than a replacement for their own thinking and writing. While ChatGPT can assist with idea generation, grammar checking, and sentence rephrasing, the development of content, organization of ideas, and final revision should remain the students' responsibility. This approach helps students retain control of the writing process and fosters the development

of their academic voice and critical thinking skills (Launonen et al., 2024). Second, it is important for students to combine ChatGPT with other established writing tools. Although ChatGPT can provide general suggestions, it may miss subtle grammatical mistakes or lack the accuracy needed for specialized academic texts. Therefore, tools like Grammarly or LanguageTool should be used in parallel to ensure precision and clarity in writing (Al-Garaady & Mahyoob, 2023). This combination can provide a more comprehensive and reliable editing process. Third, students should be encouraged to revise and personalize AI-generated content. Rather than copying the content directly, they should edit the output to suit the assignment's requirements and reflect their individual writing style. This not only improves authenticity but also helps maintain academic integrity and prevent plagiarism (Ali et al., 2023). Another essential skill students must develop is effective commands writing. To get useful and relevant results from ChatGPT, students need to frame their requests clearly and specifically. For example, instead of asking "Write about pollution," they might say: "Write a 150-word formal introduction about the causes of air pollution in urban areas." Practicing this skill enhances the quality of ChatGPT's responses and makes the writing process more efficient (Halaweh, 2023; Wolfram, 2023). Lastly, students must be aware that ChatGPT is not a fact-checking tool. The information it generates may sound plausible but could be outdated or incorrect. Therefore, students should always verify content using reliable academic sources such as textbooks, research articles, or their university's digital library (Wahle et al., 2022). This practice ensures the accuracy of their writing and promotes academic rigor.

From the educators' perspective, it is essential to integrate AI literacy into the curriculum. Teachers can design workshops or short modules that introduce students to the appropriate and ethical use of AI writing tools. These programs should cover the benefits, limitations, and ethical considerations of using ChatGPT, as well as practical skills like prompt writing and content revision (Hòa & Khoa, 2024). In addition, teachers should guide students in combining AI with traditional writing techniques, such as brainstorming, outlining, drafting, and revising. By reinforcing the writing process proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981), educators can help students see ChatGPT as a supplementary tool, rather than a shortcut to bypass essential stages of learning. Lastly, clear classroom policies should be established to define the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable use of AI. Teachers should emphasize that using ChatGPT for grammar checking or idea generation is acceptable, but submitting AI-generated texts without any personal contribution is considered academic misconduct (Launonen et al., 2024). These guidelines ensure that students can benefit from AI support while maintaining academic honesty.

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