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OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS OF AI TOOLS IN ACADEMIC WRITING FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Artificial intelligence tools have quickly entered academic life and changed the way many students approach writing. Systems based on large language models can now help generate ideas, structure paragraphs, simplify language, summarize sources, and revise grammar. For university students, this creates new opportunities, especially in situations where writing is time-consuming, cognitively demanding, or linguistically difficult. At the same time, the growing use of AI in writing raises serious questions about authorship, academic integrity, overreliance, and the quality of learning itself (Guidance for generative AI, 2023).

One reason this topic has become so important is that academic writing is central to higher education. Writing is not only a way of presenting knowledge, but it is also a way of developing it. When students plan, draft, revise, and argue, they do intellectual work that supports critical thinking and subject understanding. Because of this, AI can be both a helpful assistant and a possible obstacle. On the one hand, recent research shows that AI can support writing in multiple areas, including idea generation, text organization, literature synthesis, editing, and communication tasks. On the other hand, the same studies emphasize the need to balance efficiency with ethical responsibility and human judgment (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024).

From a practical perspective, AI tools can be especially useful for students who struggle with structure, academic style, or language accuracy. They may help students overcome writer's block, refine wording, and improve clarity. In this sense, AI can function as a scaffold rather than a substitute. Zhao et al. (2024) show that students often

use ChatGPT alongside other digital tools to deal with specific writing difficulties. Their study also suggests that the use of AI should be understood as part of the broader digitization of writing rather than as a completely isolated phenomenon. It is important because it shifts the discussion from panic to literacy: the key issue is not only whether students use AI, but whether they understand how to use it critically and responsibly (Zhao et al., 2024).

At the same time, the risks are real. Guidance for generative AI in education and research (2023) warns that educational institutions in many countries are still not fully prepared to validate generative AI tools in pedagogical and ethical terms. The organization highlights data privacy, human agency, and responsible use as central concerns. These problems are particularly relevant for students, who may submit sensitive personal data to AI systems without understanding how such systems store, process, or reuse information. In addition, if AI produces text too easily, students may begin to confuse completion of a task with actual learning. In such cases, the tool supports submission, but not intellectual development (Guidance for generative AI, 2023).

Another serious issue is academic integrity. Van Niekerk et al. (2024) note that academic writing is especially vulnerable to misuse because generative AI can produce coherent text very quickly. Their research shows that students may find such tools attractive not only because they are easy to use, but also because they reduce the effort needed to produce formal academic prose. It creates a pedagogical challenge: universities cannot simply ban AI and pretend it does not exist, but they also cannot ignore the risk that students will use it to replace rather than support their own thinking (van Niekerk et al., 2024).

Institutional response, therefore, becomes crucial. According to OECD analysis, the effective use of AI in education requires not only access to tools but also clear guardrails, teacher support, and equitable implementation (OECD, 2023). Similar conclusions emerge from studies of university policy: many institutions now adopt an

open yet cautious approach, combining acceptance of AI's presence with discipline-specific guidance and more complex forms of assessment (Wang et al., 2024). It means that the future of academic writing will likely depend less on detection and punishment alone, and more on transparent expectations, explicit disclosure rules, and the development of AI literacy.

In conclusion, AI tools can offer real benefits to university students in academic writing, especially in drafting, revising, and organizing ideas. However, these opportunities are inseparable from risks related to integrity, privacy, dependency, and reduced engagement with learning. For this reason, AI should be treated neither as a miracle solution nor as an automatic threat. Its educational value depends on how it is integrated into academic practice. When students are taught to use such tools critically, transparently, and within clear ethical boundaries, AI can support writing without replacing authorship or responsibility (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024; Guidance for generative AI, 2023).

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