Lecturer's Perceptions and Strategies on ChatGPT Overreliance in ESL Academic Writing Among Undergraduates: A Case Study at a Malaysian Private University

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.91200050

Received: 10 December 2025; Accepted: 17 December 2025; Published: 31 December 2025

ABSTRACT

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT has transformed academic writing practices in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts while simultaneously raising concerns about academic integrity and skill development. This study explored ESL lecturers' perceptions of students' overreliance on ChatGPT and the strategies adopted to manage this phenomenon at a Malaysian private university. Guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), a qualitative case study design was employed, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with three ESL lecturers teaching academic writing. Reflexive thematic analysis revealed that while ChatGPT offers linguistic scaffolding, lecturers perceived a decline in authentic writing processes, diminished metacognitive engagement, and increasing occurrences of AI-generated inaccuracies and fabricated references. Moreover, varied lecturer expectations and the lack of guidelines were found to encourage students' dependence on AI applications. Consequently, lecturers introduced in-class writing tasks, structured assessments and oral defences to verify the authenticity of student submissions. These results are significant because they emphasise the institutional requirements for AI literacy education, unified governance and the restructuring of assessments to guarantee ethical and accountable AI application. As a result, this study contributes context-specific insights into sustainable AI integration aligned with SDG 4's call for quality education in the digital era.

Keywords: ESL academic writing, ChatGPT, AI overreliance, Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), higher education

INTRODUCTION

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT in English as a Second Language (ESL) education presents a dual-edged reality in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on quality education. AI writing assistants offer learners instant language support along with feedback, improving fairness and significantly boosting learning achievements for non-native English learners in tertiary education (Barrot, 2023). Additionally, a recent student generative AI survey conducted by HEPI (2025) indicates that over two-thirds of undergraduates are now relying on generative AI weekly for academic tasks, which underscores growing pedagogical impact.

Nonetheless, this educational instrument raises concerns regarding academic honesty. The reason is that learners may grow dependent on an AI-driven writing tool for cultivating essential critical writing abilities, which are regarded as fundamental to an academic perspective (Yan, 2023). In addition, overreliance on AI can undermine the development of authentic academic writing skills, as students increasingly submit AI-generated work that appears polished but lacks depth and originality (Cotton et al., 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023). This concept aligns with empirical studies showing that generative AI systems, like ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini, can generate text that is linguistically smooth yet superficial and inaccurate (Li et al., 2024; Farquhar et al., 2024).

Additionally, unclear institutional guidelines and a lack of proficiency among teachers increasingly shift the responsibility of handling AI misuse onto educators (Setyaningsih et al., 2025). While numerous investigations

examine students' overreliance on AI tools, only a limited number have focused on ESL instructors' views and reactions to ChatGPT's influence on writing. Since teachers are responsible for guiding students' behaviour, shaping learning strategies, designing assessments, and providing ethical support, this research gap must be covered. Research on educator attitudes and readiness shows that teachers' AI literacy and institutional guidance strongly influence whether AI is integrated responsibly or becomes a source of uncertainty (Setyaningsih et al., 2025; Ali et al., 2024).

Despite growing AI adoption in Malaysian universities, many ESL programmes reported inconsistent classroom practices and a lack of institutional guidelines, which may indirectly normalise AI misuse. As a result, lecturers increasingly struggle to maintain academic integrity while supporting students' learning needs. In this study, overreliance is defined as excessive reliance on the technological support of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT for completing independent thinking and cognitive processes involved in academic writing tasks, such as developing ideas, building arguments, and constructing unique compositions. Such reliance may appear through verbatim copying of AI-generated texts, failure to go through drafting processes, and incomplete reasoning processes or displays of minimal or negligible critical engagement, ultimately resulting in foundational erosion of writing and analysis skills (Teng, 2025; Kasneci et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, academic writing is a set of core skills that include coherence, argumentation, source integration, linguistic appropriateness, and adherence to academic integrity requirements, which are necessary for students' roles as academic authors (Jiang & Hyland, 2025). Educators' evaluations of students' work, particularly in generative AI contexts, therefore serve as key indicators of these competencies' development or decline. Existing articles highlight the pedagogical challenges educators face when reconciling AI's technological affordances with the need to maintain authentic learning (, 2024; Bin-Nashwan et al., 2023). Nonetheless, empirical insights into Malaysian ESL lecturers' perceptions remain limited.

Addressing the mentioned gap is essential for developing informed policies, curricula, and professional development frameworks in ESL education. The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore ESL lecturers' perceptions towards overreliance of ChatGPT in ESL undergraduate students' academic writing.

2. To explore the strategies for addressing the issues that arise from the overreliance of ChatGPT tools in ESL students' academic writing.

Through these objectives, the research contributes vital insights into responsible AI integration in higher education, with particular relevance to Malaysia's evolving educational landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic Writing and Artificial Intelligence in Education

Writing academic discourse in ESL contexts is a multi-faceted higher-order cognitive process that involves students having to engage in two or more simultaneous prose processes. As outlined in Flower and Hayes (1981) framework, the writing process is seen as recursive, encompassing planning, translating and reviewing, all demanding significant cognitive effort (Barrot, 2024). With generative AI tools becoming widely available, scholars have begun examining how these recursive stages might be altered. Jiang & Hyland (2025) believe that overreliance on AI tools may hinder the development of academic writing skills. Wang & Fan (2025) supports the claim and also concludes that although ChatGPT reduces cognitive load for linguistic accuracy, it simultaneously decreases leaners' engagement in idea generation and higher-order processing. This can weaken the cognitive complexity required in academic writing.

The cognitive demands of writing are also evident in feedback and revision processes. According to Flower and Hayes (1981), metacognitive review is crucial for development because it encourages writers to recognize flaws, assess coherence and enhance clarity. Research highlights its shortcomings, although AI can assist in correcting surface-level mistakes (Barrot, 2023; Hwang et al., 2023). Steiss et al. (2024), conversely, caution that depending

heavily on automated feedback could interfere with the recursive stage of writing known as "reviewing." If AI takes control of the revision process, learners might fail to absorb techniques or identify their flaws, resulting in what recent cognitive studies refer to as "cognitive offloading," a form of passivity that hinders the growth of autonomous problem-solving skills (Gerlich, 2025).

Baek et al., (2024) and Ali et al. (2024), also claim that AI tools can help novice writers by reducing cognitive load for grammar, structure and organisation, which enables them to focus on higher-level thinking drawn from long-term memory. However, this perceived benefit highlights a recurring tension. AI tools often bypass generative phases such as drafting, evaluating meaning and constructing arguments, which limit opportunities for authentic knowledge building. Subsequently, generative AI can encourage premature acceptance of machine outputs and reduce learners' monitoring and evaluative behaviours (Espartinez, 2024). This research has observed a lack of drafting and revising among students, in addition to the reduction in self-regulated engagement with meaning-making.

The "monitoring phase" component of Flower and Hayes' (1981) model may also be compromised if AI is introduced early in the writing process. Yan (2023) suggests that students employing AI tools exhibit reduced awareness because the technology interferes with the organic writing flow by providing early answers. Research on LLM quality and hallucinations also adds complexity to depending on AI. Surveys and technical studies document hallucinations and factual errors in LLM outputs, resulting in fluently expressed paragraphs with inaccurate statements or misleading references (Farquhar et al., 2024; Hwang et al., 2023). The evidence suggests that although AI-generated text may appear rhetorically polished, it can be conceptually shallow and require careful pedagogical mediation.

Artificial Intelligence in Education and the ESL Classroom

Rapid advancement in AI has significantly reshaped English as a Second Language instruction, particularly in academic writing development. Modern adaptive learning tools can now provide personalized writing support that adapts to individual student needs with real-time feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure (Barrot, 2024; Hwang et al., 2023; Espartinez, 2024). For many ESL learners, AI writing assistants serve as always-available language tutors, providing instant error corrections and suggestions which boost the learning process (Espartinez, 2024; Barrot, 2023).

However, emerging research reveals concerning trends about overreliance on these technologies. AI tools can excel at improving surface-level writing features, but they may unintentionally discourage deeper intellectual engagement (Gerlich, 2025; Yan, 2023). Multiple studies document cases where students' dependence on AI-generated content resulted in writing that is grammatically correct but lacks original thought and critical analysis (Wang & Fan, 2025; Espartinez, 2024). The limitations become particularly evident in advanced academic writing, where AI often fails to replicate subject-area writing styles or generate nuanced arguments (Jiang & Hyland, 2025; Baek et al., 2024). Recent research also shows that overuse of tools such as ChatGPT may reduce metacognitive involvement and awareness on the part of L2 writers (Freeman, 2025; Espartinez, 2024).

In response, educators now face the challenge of integrating these tools effectively while preserving essential writing skills. Current best practices emphasize using AI as an assisting tool rather than a replacement for traditional writing instruction (Espartinez, 2024; Cotton et al., 2023). Many experts support hybrid approaches that combine AI's efficiency with human-guided instruction in critical thinking and genre conventions (Wang & Fan, 2025; Jiang & Hyland, 2025). However, implementation remains uneven across institutional contexts. Many universities lack clear policy frameworks, leaving educators to adopt ad hoc approaches to AI regulation (Cotton et al., 2023). This challenge is particularly severe in Asian and Malaysian tertiary settings where human-centred pedagogies and concerns about maintaining students' authentic voices shape more cautious adoption practices (Hu et al., 2025). Compounding these issues, teachers are increasingly expected to evaluate AI-mediated writing without the necessary AI literacy training (Espartinez, 2024). Additional evidence suggests that students using AI systems may show reduced self-editing tendencies compared to learners using automated writing evaluation systems (Steiss et al., 2024). These results highlight the necessity of pedagogical approaches that teach students when and how to use AI tools responsibly.

Although there has been cumulative scholarly recognition of both the strengths and limitations of AI writing, only a handful of studies advance practical, ethical or pedagogically grounded models for their use within the English language classroom (Ali et al., 2024; Kasneci et al., 2023). They also point out that there are wide-ranging professional development shortfalls and many lecturers feel unprepared to cope with AI-assisted writing, as they receive a low level of support from their institutions (Freeman, 2025; Yan, 2023). Successful integration of AI will involve designs that mediate what is relevant, which ultimately provide the answer to how the technology assists in achieving these aims and learners continue to engage in acts such as analysis and interpretation that cannot be automated (Farquhar et al., 2024). These studies collectively highlight the increasing need for context-specific investigations, particularly in Malaysian tertiary ESL settings, where institutional readiness and assessment practices vary widely (Hu et al., 2025; Espartinez, 2024).

Previous Studies of Educators' Perceptions in Using AI in ESL Classrooms

Educators see both the advantages and the challenges of using AI in ESL classrooms. Recent research shows that not only teachers become in favour of AI as teaching assistance that can provide instant feedback on the students' written texts and encourage different learning paths (Espartinez, 2024). Many educators mentioned using AI tools to handle grading responsibilities while ensuring uniform assessment criteria for large ESL classes (Freeman, 2025). However, these perceived benefits come with concerns about academic integrity, as evidenced by Malaysian university educators' worries about ChatGPT-generated submissions in composition courses (Hu et al., 2025; Cotton et al., 2023).

The adoption of AI technologies in ESL education environments encounters considerable institutional barriers. Many universities lack defined policy guidelines, resulting in educators creating improvised strategies for AI incorporation (Espartinez, 2024). According to Li et al., 2024), East Asian universities often emphasize human-centred pedagogy, which leads to more cautious AI integration compared to Western institutions. These cultural distinctions are especially noticeable in writing education, where preserving the genuineness of students' expression is an issue. Moreover, recent advancements indicate that teachers are progressively required to assess student writing influenced by AI without being provided professional education in AI literacy (Espartinez, 2024).

Recent studies reveal significant gaps in comprehending AI's impact on language instruction in higher education. Although prior studies report on both the affordances and limitations of AI writing technologies, few reports exist on how they could be used ethically within an academic ESL programme in a university setting (Espartinez, 2024; Cotton et al., 2023). Additionally, there remains insufficient investigation into effective professional development models that prepare writing instructors to leverage AI while maintaining academic standards (Yan, 2023). More recent research also reveals that teachers' degree of assurance to rein in AI itself differs greatly by institutional direction (Freeman, 2025).

There is growing recognition that successful AI integration in tertiary ESL education requires balanced, context-sensitive approaches. Rather than viewing AI as either a solution or a threat, developing pedagogical models that strategically incorporate these tools while preserving essential elements of writing instruction is crucial (Jiang & Hyland, 2025). This involves designing tasks that leverage AI's capabilities in language support appropriately while necessitating cognitive skills and unique critical thinking, beyond automation (Graham & Milan, 2025; Barrot, 2024).

The Effects of AI Overreliance on Writing Skills

Recent empirical studies have shown that although these tools provide immediate gains in terms of language production, the uncritical use of these tools is likely to place at risk the development of long-term writing competencies in university settings. Research reveals that overreliance on AI tools can reduce the ability to think critically. Baek et al. (2024) found that undergraduate students who use AI writing assistance were shown to be much weaker at generating natural arguments and integrating source materials than those who made routine utilisation of nondigital means. This research is of special concern because at the tertiary-level writing assessments often have a critical analysis component to the prompt (Jiang & Hyland, 2025).

Graham & Milan (2025) found that students who used AI tools significantly engaged less in revising drafts and were less iterative writers. Textual analyses of AI-assisted submissions in the humanities and social sciences have established a pattern where these will include less field-specific information and demonstrate lower levels of personal engagement with source materials (Jiang & Hyland, 2025; Baek et al., 2024). Recent comparative work also demonstrates notable inconsistencies in LLM-generated academic content, including fabricated citations and factual errors in tools such as ChatGPT, Bard/Gemini and Claude (Farquhar et al., 2024; Huang et al., 2023).

Additionally, preliminary findings indicate that students who have become over-reliant on AI tools exhibit less metacognitive awareness of their writing processes and are less able to self-identify areas where they might be weak (Freeman, 2025; Espartinez, 2024). This has potential long-lasting implications for writing skill development beyond just individual courses.

Conceptual Framework

This study employs the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) to analyse lecturers' strategies for addressing ChatGPT overreliance in ESL academic writing. The construct in the framework includes attitudes (perception of benefits and risks for writing development), subjective norms (institutional policies, peer expectations, and student demands) and perceived behavioural control (confidence controlling AI use, influenced by training resource availability). These influences in combination dictate teacher intention and thereby the resulting pedagogy associated with AI tools.

The institutional context of Malaysian private universities moderates these relationships. Unclear AI policies could compound issues of control through perceived empowerment, whereas clear guidelines and faculty development can help educators to accommodate ChatGPT in a critical capacity (Ali et al., 2024; Cotton et al., 2023). The framework also reflects academic integrity theory to address the ethical questions that are necessary for any framework that purports to implement practice compatible with wider educational values and standards (Cotton et al., 2023; Bin-Nashwan et al., 2023)

By integrating TPB with institutional and ethical concerns, this framework provides a comprehensive perspective on how lecturers can balance innovation with pedagogical integrity in ESL writing instruction. It illustrates how personal values, social pressures and situational constraints interact to influence responses to new AI interventions in higher education.

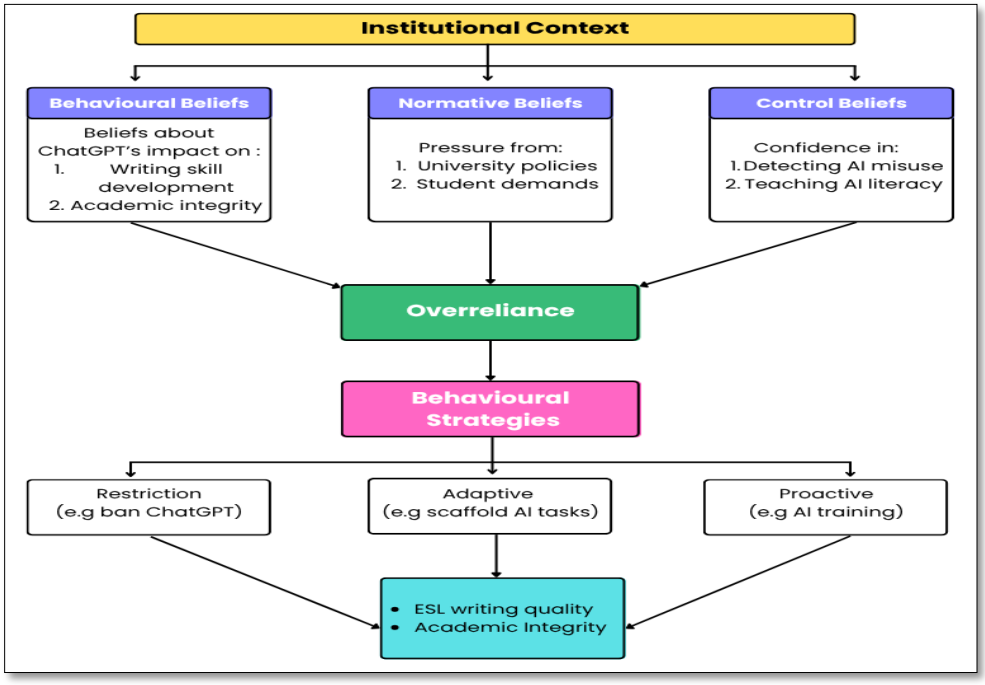

Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Adapted from Ajzen, 1991)

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to investigate ESL lecturers' perceptions and strategies for addressing students' overreliance on ChatGPT in academic writing. A qualitative approach was appropriate for capturing the depth, complexity, and contextual nuances of lecturers' lived experiences, interpretations, and instructional practices within their institutional environment. As stated by Yin (2018), a case study design enables a detailed and contextualised examination of a bounded system or in this particular research, the practices and perspectives of ESL educators at Malaysian higher learning institutions.

Guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), the research design focused on examining lecturers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control in relation to AI-assisted writing. These constructs informed the development of interview questions and shaped the analytical lens applied during data interpretation.

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection. This format ensured flexibility while maintaining alignment with the TPB framework, allowing participants to elaborate on their teaching experiences, institutional challenges, and strategies for managing AI overreliance.

Population, Participants and Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was utilized to choose participants with knowledge regarding AI applications in academic writing classrooms. The sample included three ESL instructors teaching writing at a Malaysian private university. Eligible participants were required to (1) be actively involved in teaching English or academic writing at the tertiary level, and (2) have encountered or managed instances of student writing potentially influenced by AI-generated content. This sampling strategy ensured that participants were information-rich and able to provide meaningful reflections on AI-related writing behaviours.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through individual, online semi-structured interviews conducted via Google Meet. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. The interview guide was organised around TPB constructs, covering attitudes toward ChatGPT, perceived social influences, and the ability to regulate AI use in writing tasks.

Participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the study's objectives, confidentiality measures, and rights to withdraw. Verbal and written consent were obtained prior to data collection. Interviews were transcribed verbatim shortly after completion.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2021) six-phase framework. The researcher first familiarised herself with the transcripts through repeated readings before conducting manual line-by-line coding. A combined deductive–inductive approach was applied: the three constructs of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control) were used deductively as the thematic domains, while the specific codes under each domain were generated inductively from lecturers' narratives. Thus, the TPB constructs formed the main themes, and the codes reflected the nuanced patterns that emerged from the data, which were later organised and presented in Table 1. Themes and codes were iteratively refined to ensure internal coherence and meaningful representation of participants' experiences. Manual coding was selected to maintain close engagement with the data and to support interpretive meaning-making appropriate for a small qualitative dataset. To enhance the trustworthiness of the instrument, the revised interview script was also validated by one interviewee, who confirmed that the questions were clear, relevant, and appropriate for the study context.

FINDINGS

Lecturers' Perceptions of Students' Overreliance on ChatGPT

Lecturers consistently expressed dual views regarding the growing dependence of students on ChatGPT in completing academic writing tasks. They acknowledged the AI tools as beneficial to assist weaker students, particularly in generating ideas or improving their grammar, but many students rely on them excessively by replacing genuine writing effort with AI-generated text.

L1 explained that some students "paste the question straight into ChatGPT and submit whatever comes out," which indicates a lack of engagement with essential writing processes such as planning and drafting. L2 also echoed similar concern where the gap between students' in-class writing and take-home assignments is "too drastic to be genuine,". This shows that AI tools heavily influence the final submissions, and many assignments appear overly polished. L2 also added that "the writing sounds very similar with generic points that students themselves cannot elaborate."

All lecturers observed a noticeable decline in students' writing competence and critical thinking ability. L2 reported that although assignments appeared well-polished, students' in-class writing demonstrated weaker grammar and less developed ideas. Additionally, L1 stated that prolonged reliance on ChatGPT will result in a reduction in critical thinking and independent reasoning. L3 emphasised that students often could not justify the content produced in their assignments during consultations: "When I ask why they included a particular example, they cannot explain it at all."

Lecturers also raised concerns regarding the loss of students' individual voices. Many assignments displayed a generic, uniform style characteristic of AI-generated text. L3 commented that "many assignments sound the same," while L1 noted that sentence structures appeared "too perfect" and inconsistent with students' typical writing patterns.

Social influences and inconsistent expectations further contributed to students' behaviour. According to L1, students frequently claimed that "everyone is using ChatGPT", which reinforced the perception that dependency on the tool is acceptable. L2, on the other hand, also pointed out that students often compare lecturers' expectations across courses, noting that some lecturers allow extensive AI use while others discourage it. This inconsistency creates confusion regarding acceptable academic practice. L3 also stated that the absence of a clear institutional policy leaves both lecturers and students uncertain about what constitutes appropriate or excessive use of AI tools.

Table 1 presents the study's findings mapped onto the three TPB domains, which function as the primary analytical themes. Under each theme, inductively derived codes illustrate the specific forms of behaviour, perceptions, and challenges described by lecturers. These codes were developed from repeated patterns in the data and reflect both shared and individual experiences expressed by the participants. The supporting quotations provide authentic evidence for each code, demonstrating how lecturers interpret students' writing practices and their reliance on ChatGPT.

TPB Domain	Codes	Supporting Quotations
(1) Attitudes Toward the Behaviour	Decline in authentic writing	"Some students don't even attempt to write a draft anymore—they just paste the question into ChatGPT and submit whatever comes out." (L1) "The jump in quality between their in-class writing and assignment writing is too drastic to be genuine." (L2)
	Reduced critical thinking	"When I ask them why they included a certain point, they cannot explain it at all." (L3)

		"Their essays look polished, but the reasoning is shallow. They can't defend the ideas." (L2)
	Loss of student voice	"Many assignments sound the same—very generic and unnatural. You can immediately sense it's from ChatGPT." (L3) "You see perfect sentences that don't match their usual style." (L1)
	Presence of AI hallucinations	"Some examples are irrelevant or inaccurate; sometimes the facts are just wrong." (L2) "I've seen fabricated references—authors and titles that don't exist." (L3)
(2) Subjective Norms	Peer pressure	"When we question them, they say 'But everyone is using ChatGPT,' so they think it's acceptable." (L1) "They genuinely believe it's the new norm in university writing." (L3)
	Lecturer expectations	"Some lecturers allow unlimited AI use, so students think we're too strict when we ask them to write on their own." (L2) "Students are confused because every lecturer has different rules." (L1)
	Lack of clear policy	"There is no official guideline, so everyone interprets ChatGPT use differently." (L3) "The lack of clear rules makes students feel anything goes." (L2)
(3)Perceived Behavioural Control	Difficulty detecting AI-generated writing	"Essays look perfect, but the moment you ask them to explain, they can't say a single thing." (L2) "It's difficult to prove AI use because the detection tools are not reliable." (L3)
	Limited ability to regulate out-of-class writing	"We cannot control what they do at home. They can use ChatGPT anytime without us knowing." (L1) "We can warn them, but we can't monitor every step of their writing outside class." (L2)
	Institutional expectations	"We ourselves need more training. We're still learning how to deal with AI in the classroom." (L3) "I wish we had proper workshops or at least standard guidelines to guide us." (L1)

Table 1: Themes (TPB Domains), Codes, and Supporting Quotations

Strategies Employed to Address ChatGPT Overreliance

To counter the challenges posed by students' overreliance on ChatGPT, the lecturers implemented several pedagogical and assessment-based strategies.

A key approach involved increasing in-class writing activities. L1 stated that weekly in-class tasks "help show their real ability," as students are unable to depend on AI tools during class. L2 used short-term writing activities to observe students' spontaneous writing performance. Additionally, L3 also explained that the direct comparison between in-class drafts and take-home assignments helps identify inconsistencies.

Lecturers also emphasised scaffold assignments to ensure engagement with the writing processes. L2 required the students to submit brainstorming notes, an outline and multiple drafts, which explain "forces them to show their thinking process instead of depending entirely on ChatGPT". L1 and L3 similarly used staged drafting to monitor progress and detect sudden changes in style or quality.

Oral checks such as mini presentations, oral defences and brief interviews were another effective strategy. L3 frequently used oral defences to verify whether students understood the content of their assignments, noting that "students who rely heavily on ChatGPT struggle the moment you ask them to justify what they wrote". According to L2, incorporating short interviews during drafting is meant to ensure that students can explain the key arguments.

In addition, lecturers redesigned assessments to discourage AI misuse. L1 adopted more personalised writing prompts, which require students to connect topics to their own authentic experiences, making AI-generated responses less suitable. L2 incorporated interview-based or observation-based tasks that required original data. L3 embedded reflective components where students described their decision-making throughout the writing process.

Overall, lecturers actively employ a combination of instructional and assessment strategies to promote authentic writing and reduce dependence on ChatGPT.

DISCUSSION

Lecturers' Perceptions of Students' Overreliance on ChatGPT

The findings revealed that lecturers hold negative and cautious perceptions toward students' increasing reliance on ChatGPT for academic writing. These perceptions are related directly to the Attitude, Subjective Norms, and Perceived Behavioural Control components of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

Lecturers noticed that many students skip the cognitive stages of writing, like planning and drafting, and instead depend heavily on ChatGPT. This corresponds with the Attitudes Toward the Behaviour aspect of TPB, which showed that this behaviour (overdependence) leads to outcomes. These worries closely mirror studies suggesting generative AI tools can disrupt genuine writing involvement and diminish vital cognitive tasks such as idea generation, organisation and iterative revision (Graham & Milan, 2025; Steiss et al., 2024). Similarly, the concerns raised by lecturers, such as over-polished assignments and inconsistency of students' in-class writing, mirror the findings that ChatGPT can mask fundamental proficiency and undermine writing development.

A critical issue highlighted by the lecturers was the decline in students' critical thinking and content understanding. Students were unable to justify arguments or explain their own work. This reflects earlier findings by Teng (2025) and Espartinez (2024), who found that dependence on AI diminishes students' metacognitive involvement and restricts their capacity to assess the quality of ideas. Moreover, the occurrence of AI hallucinations, such as examples and made-up citations, supports the findings of Farquhar et al. (2024) and Li et al. (2024), who demonstrated how AI systems produce believable yet incorrect data. These errors increased instructors' scepticism towards AI-supported tasks.

Subjective norms also played a significant role in shaping students' reliance on ChatGPT. Lecturers noted that students often justified their behaviour by asserting that everyone is doing it, which echoed TPB's view that

perceived social expectations influence behavioural choices. Similar patterns were also reported by Fajt & Schiller, (2025) and Setyaningsih et al., (2025) who found that students tend to normalise questionable practices when they believe peers are engaging in the same behaviour. In this study, inconsistency in the lecturer's policies, where some permit AI use and others forbid it, confused and reinforced students' perception that reliance was acceptable.

The findings also show that lecturers experience reduced perceived behavioural control in detecting AI-generated writing. Many expressed uncertainties about distinguishing genuine student writing from AI-assisted text. Recent research similarly reports that educators struggle to verify AI-generated submissions due to unreliable detection tools (Cotton, 2024; Bin-Nashwan et al., 2023). Additionally, the absence of clear institutional guidelines mirrors concerns that higher education institutions are not yet adequately equipped to address AI-integrity issues (Freeman, 2025; Espartinez, 2024). As TPB suggests, when individuals perceive low control over a behaviour, their ability to regulate or influence it becomes limited. This was reflected in lecturers' uncertainty and inconsistent approaches to managing AI use. Overall, lecturers' perceptions in this study align closely with the literature, highlighting the disruptive impact of AI overreliance on cognitive, ethical, and pedagogical dimensions of writing.

Strategies Employed to Address ChatGPT Overreliance

Lecturers responded to students' overreliance by implementing various instructional and assessment practices aimed at promoting authentic writing. These strategies relate to behavioural responses and intentions which are influenced by their beliefs, the expectations of others, and their sense of control, in line with TPB.

The use of in-class writing was one of the most prominent strategies. Assigning students to write paragraphs, drafts or reflections in real-time enables the lecturers to observe the students' actual writing abilities and identify inconsistencies with take-home submissions. This aligns with Shin et al (2024), who emphasize the importance of process-based work to reduce AI misuse. Such strategies reinforce authentic learning experiences and are widely encouraged as adequate safeguards against AI-generated academic dishonesty.

Lecturers also implemented scaffolded writing processes, which require brainstorming notes, outlines, and multiple drafts. This approach encourages students to engage meaningfully with each stage of the writing process and reduces the likelihood of relying on AI-generated content. Such practices are consistent with the work of Teng (2025) and Steiss et al. (2024), who highlight that scaffolding improves reasoning, coherence and metacognitive awareness, which usually deteriorate when students overly rely on AI tools. Research further backs the focus on scaffolding, indicating that systematic drafting cycles assist students in assimilating techniques and enhance their ability to oversee their thoughts (Teng, 2025; Steiss et al., 2024); Graham, 2022). Moreover, scaffolded assignments support the iterative processes described in known writing frameworks, such as the phases recognized by Flower and Hayes (1981) and subsequently elaborated by Hayes (2012).

Lecturers also highlighted evaluations like consultations, brief presentations and oral defences. These function as verification methods since students who depend greatly on ChatGPT frequently struggle to defend, justify, or clarify their thoughts. Studies indicate that oral assessments rank among the dependable techniques for identifying AI-produced content and confirming authorship responsibility (Freeman, 2025; Cotton, 2024).

Another strategy was assessment redesign, where lecturers introduced personalised, reflective or experience-based tasks. These tasks require students to draw from their own prior knowledge, observations and making AI-generated responses less relevant. Studies emphasise that authentic, contextualised assessments significantly reduce reliance on generative AI (Shin et al., 2024; Kasneci et al., 2023). Findings from this study demonstrate that such tasks led to more original submissions and deeper engagement with course content.

Across all strategies, lecturers highlighted the need for institutional support, including clearer guidelines, AI literacy training, and programme-level consistency. Although individual strategies were effective in the classroom, they also highlighted the need for clearer guidelines, AI literacy training and assessment policies to ensure consistent practice across the programme. Even though individual strategies were effective, lecturers stressed that sustainable change requires institutional alignment, which is consistent with TPB's emphasis on

enhancing perceived behavioural control. Recent research echoes this need, showing that educator confidence and regulatory consistency improve when institutions provide clear governance (Espartinez, 2024; Cotton et al., 2023).

Overall, these strategies align closely with global educational recommendations and reflect adaptive, context-sensitive responses to the challenges of AI-assisted writing. They demonstrate lecturers' commitment to maintaining academic integrity, fostering authentic writing, and safeguarding learning outcomes despite institutional uncertainty.

CONCLUSION

This study explored ESL lecturers' perceptions of students' overreliance on ChatGPT and strategies employed to address this issue in academic writing classrooms at a Malaysian private university. Overreliance on ChatGPT was identified as detrimental to students' writing skills, critical thinking and sense of responsibility for their assignments. Educators noted growing differences between AI-generated writing, shaped by peer influences and diverse course demands. The lack of institutional policies and ineffective detection tools also diminished their assurance in handling AI-related concerns. In response, lecturers implemented classroom-based and assessment-oriented strategies to encourage genuine engagement with the writing process. Although this study was limited to a single institutional context, the issues identified may mirror emerging trends in other Malaysian higher education settings experiencing similar challenges with generative AI integration. These findings highlight the need for clearer policies, stronger AI literacy, and more cohesive institutional support to ensure responsible and ethical use of generative AI in academic writing.

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