Exploring the Risk of Being Transparent About GenAI use in Second Language Writing

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Abstract

This study investigates the potential risks associated with transparency in the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools in second language (L2) writing. It examines the impact of AI disclosure on student grading and trust within student-teacher relationships, while also analysing the effects of over-reliance on AI tools on students' writing and critical thinking skills. The research situates these findings within a broader context, discussing global trends in AI adoption in education and the ethical dilemmas surrounding its use. Drawing from previous studies, the analysis highlights biases in assessments of AI-assisted work and the challenges of balancing ethical guidelines with effective AI integration. By providing recommendations for educators and policymakers, this study seeks to contribute to the ethical and effective implementation of GenAI in L2 education, ensuring both enhanced learning outcomes and the development of essential skills.

1.   Introduction

The integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools in education has become a global phenomenon, promising to revolutionise learning and teaching. However, this technological advancement also brings significant challenges. Globally, the use of AI in education is projected to grow from $177 billion in 2023 to $2,745 billion by 2033 (International Data Corporation, 2023). This rapid expansion highlights the transformative potential of AI but also underscores the need for careful consideration of its implications.

In Malaysia, the adoption of AI in higher education is gaining momentum. Universities are incorporating AI into their curricula to enhance learning outcomes and prepare students for the future job market (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2024). Despite these advancements, the Malaysian education system faces criticism for producing graduates who lack critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Ahmad & Ismail, 2024). This issue is exacerbated by the integration of AI, which, if not managed properly, could further diminish these essential skills.

Top scholars in the field, such as Helen Crompton and Diane Burke, emphasise the dual nature of AI in education. While AI offers personalised learning experiences and efficient administrative support, it also poses risks of bias and ethical concerns (Crompton & Burke, 2024). For instance, a survey revealed that 78% of parents believe the use of AI generative tools in school assignments constitutes cheating (Huff, 2024). This statistic highlights the ethical dilemmas and trust issues surrounding AI in education.

Previous studies have explored the benefits and challenges of AI in education. Tan, Wang, and Xu (2025) found that teachers often exhibit biases against AI-assisted work, leading to lower grades for students who disclose their use of GenAI tools. However, these studies often overlook the long-term impact of AI dependence on students' writing and critical thinking skills. They also fail to address the broader implications of AI on student-teacher trust and the ethical use of AI in academic settings.

This article aims to fill these gaps by exploring the risks associated with students being transparent about their use of GenAI tools in L2 writing. First, it will examine the impact of AI disclosure on grading and student-teacher trust. Second, it will analyse the potential over-reliance on AI and its effects on students' writing and critical thinking skills. Third, it will provide recommendations for educators and policymakers to ensure the ethical and effective integration of AI in education. **Figure 1** presents a mind map outlining the risks associated with students disclosing their use of AI tools in writing.

Figure 1: Mind Map of Risks Associated with Students Revealing Their Use of AI Tools in Writing

2.   Literature Review

Global Adoption of AI in Education

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in education is a rapidly growing global trend. The market for AI in education is projected to expand from $177 billion in 2023 to $2,745 billion by 2033 (International Data Corporation, 2023). This growth underscores the transformative potential of AI in enhancing educational practices, including lesson planning, grading, and personalised learning experiences (POSTnote, 2024). However, the rapid adoption of AI also necessitates a careful examination of its implications, particularly in the context of second language (L2) writing.

Local Context (Malaysia)

In Malaysia, the adoption of AI in higher education is gaining momentum, with universities incorporating AI into their curricula to improve learning outcomes and prepare students for the future job market (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2024). This strategic integration aims to align educational practices with the demands of the international job market and technological trends (Evangeline, 2024). For instance, universities such as the University Malaysia of Computer Science and Engineering (UniMY) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) are leading the way in offering AI courses and integrating AI tools into their teaching methods (Evangeline, 2024).

Despite these advancements, the Malaysian education system has faced criticism for producing graduates who lack critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Ahmad & Ismail, 2024). This issue is not new; it has been a persistent concern highlighted by various stakeholders, including employers and educational experts. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 results showed that Malaysia ranked 56th in mathematics, 52nd in science, and 49th in reading out of 79 countries, reflecting significant gaps in higher-order thinking skills among students (World Bank, 2021).

The integration of AI, if not managed properly, could exacerbate these issues by potentially diminishing students' development of essential skills. Over-reliance on AI tools for tasks such as essay writing, problem-solving, and data analysis can lead to a decline in students' ability to think critically and solve problems independently (BusinessToday, 2025). For example, AI systems like ChatGPT and DeepSeek can generate essays and solve complex problems, which might discourage students from engaging deeply with the material and developing their own analytical skills (BusinessToday, 2025). Moreover, there are concerns about the ethical implications and data privacy issues associated with AI use in education. AI systems often require large amounts of data to function effectively, raising concerns about the security and privacy of student information (BusinessToday, 2025). Without stringent data protection measures, there is a risk of data breaches and misuse of sensitive information, which can undermine trust in AI technologies.

Critics also argue that AI is being used as a "band-aid" solution to deeper systemic issues in the education system, such as outdated teaching methods and a lack of emphasis on creativity and innovation (BusinessToday, 2025). The focus on AI-driven solutions might overshadow the need for fundamental reforms in teaching practices and curriculum design that foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In conclusion, while the adoption of AI in Malaysian higher education holds promise for enhancing learning outcomes and preparing students for the future job market, it also presents significant challenges. It is crucial to address these challenges through comprehensive policies and practices that ensure the ethical and effective use of AI, promote the development of essential skills, and safeguard student data.

Benefits of GenAI in L2 Writing

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has been associated with various benefits in second language (L2) writing, particularly in enhancing writing skills and providing personalised feedback. GenAI tools offer enhanced writing assistance by generating human-like text and suggestions, which help L2 learners brainstorm ideas, compose essays, and improve their overall writing proficiency (Smith & Johnson, 2023). These tools also provide immediate feedback and assessment, allowing students to identify and correct errors, leading to better writing accuracy and fluency. Additionally, GenAI can scaffold the writing process by offering step-by-step guidance and generating writing samples for analysis, helping learners understand the structure and components of effective writing (Wang, 2024). The use of GenAI in L2 writing instruction not only enhances writing skills but also fosters a more engaging and supportive learning environment (Smith & Johnson, 2023). Recent studies have also highlighted the broader benefits of GenAI in L2 writing, including increased student engagement, motivation, and exposure to diverse linguistic and cultural contexts (Lee et al., 2024). Wang (2024) conducted a systematic review that highlighted how GenAI tools can aid in developing critical thinking skills and GenAI literacy among students. These tools can serve as writing assistants, supporting student writers by producing human-like text and suggestions, thereby facilitating the writing process and improving overall writing quality.

Risks and Challenges

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools offer significant benefits in L2 writing by providing enhanced brainstorming, feedback, and writing support. However, despite these advantages, there are notable risks and challenges associated with their use. One significant issue is the bias in assessment. Tan, Wang, and Xu (2025) found that teachers often exhibit biases against AI-assisted work, leading to lower grades for students who disclose their use of GenAI tools. This bias raises concerns about the fairness and objectivity of writing assessments. For example, a student who uses GenAI to enhance

their writing might receive a lower grade simply because the teacher perceives the work as less authentic or less reflective of the student's true abilities (Tan, Wang, & Xu, 2025).

Another challenge is the risk of students becoming overly reliant on AI tools, which can hinder their development of essential writing and critical thinking skills. Wang (2024) highlighted that excessive dependence on AI can lead to "cognitive offloading," where students rely on AI to perform tasks that they would otherwise do themselves. This can result in diminished problem-solving abilities and a lack of independent analytical skills (Wang, 2024).

Additionally, GenAI tools are not infallible and can sometimes generate inaccurate or misleading information. This issue, known as "AI hallucination," can lead students to incorporate incorrect data into their writing, which can undermine the quality and credibility of their work. For instance, an AI tool might generate a plausible-sounding but factually incorrect statement, which a student might then include in their essay without verification (Wambsganss, 2024).

Cultural and linguistic bias is another concern. GenAI tools can perpetuate the biases present in the data used to train these models. This can result in writing that unintentionally reinforces stereotypes or excludes certain cultural perspectives. For example, an AI tool might generate text that favours Western writing styles and norms, which might not be suitable or fair for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Wambsganss, 2024). The use of GenAI tools also raises ethical questions about authorship and originality. There is a fine line between using AI as a tool for assistance and relying on it to the extent that it compromises academic integrity. Students might be tempted to pass off AI-generated content as their own, which can lead to issues of plagiarism and dishonesty (Royce & Bennett, 2025).

Finally, effective integration of GenAI tools in L2 writing requires adequate teacher training and adaptation. Teachers need to be equipped with the skills to use these tools effectively and to understand their limitations. Without proper training, teachers might struggle to incorporate AI tools into their teaching practices in a way that enhances learning rather than detracting from it (Smith & Johnson, 2023). In conclusion, while GenAI tools offer significant benefits for L2 writing, it is crucial to address these risks and challenges to ensure they are used effectively and ethically. Balancing the use of AI with traditional teaching methods and fostering critical thinking skills remains essential for the holistic development of L2 learners.

Ethical and Trust Issues

The ethical dilemmas and trust issues surrounding the use of AI in education are significant. Huff (2024) reported that 78% of parents believe the use of AI generative tools in school assignments constitutes cheating. This perception highlights the ethical concerns and trust issues that can arise when students disclose their use of AI tools. Clear guidelines and policies are needed to ensure the ethical use of AI in academic settings and to build trust between students and educators.

One of the primary ethical concerns is the potential for AI tools to undermine academic integrity. The perception that using AI generative tools equates to cheating can lead to distrust between students and educators. For instance, if a student uses an AI tool to assist with their writing and discloses this to their teacher, they might face accusations of dishonesty or receive lower grades due to biases against AI-assisted work (Huff, 2024). This situation underscores the need for clear policies that define acceptable uses of AI in academic work and ensure fair assessment practices.

Moreover, the reliance on AI tools can raise questions about the authenticity and originality of student work. There is a fine line between using AI as a supportive tool and allowing it to dominate the creative process. This can lead to ethical dilemmas regarding authorship and the true extent of a student's contribution to their assignments (Royce & Bennett, 2025). For example, a student might use an AI tool to generate ideas or structure their essay, but if the AI's input is too substantial, it could be argued that the work is no longer entirely the student's own.

Privacy and data security are also critical ethical issues. AI tools often require access to large amounts of personal data to function effectively, which can raise concerns about how this data is collected, stored, and used. Ensuring that AI systems comply with data protection regulations and respect student privacy is essential to maintaining trust in these technologies (Nguyen et al., 2023).

Additionally, the potential for algorithmic bias in AI tools can exacerbate existing inequalities in education. AI systems trained on biased data can produce outputs that reflect and reinforce these biases,

leading to unfair treatment of certain groups of students (Mahendra, 2024). For instance, an AI tool might favour certain linguistic styles or cultural references, disadvantaging students from diverse backgrounds.

To address these ethical dilemmas and build trust, it is crucial to develop comprehensive guidelines and policies for the use of AI in education. These should include clear definitions of acceptable AI use, strategies for ensuring data privacy and security, and measures to prevent and mitigate algorithmic bias. Educators and policymakers must work together to create an environment where AI tools can be used ethically and effectively, fostering trust and enhancing the learning experience for all students.

Limitations of Previous Studies

Previous studies have provided valuable insights into the benefits and challenges of AI in education, but they also have limitations. Many studies focus on short-term impacts and do not address the long-term effects of AI dependence on students' writing and critical thinking skills. Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive research on the broader implications of AI on student-teacher trust and the ethical use of AI in academic settings (Tan, Wang, & Xu, 2025; Wang, 2024).

Future Directions

This article aims to fill these gaps by exploring the risks associated with students being transparent about their use of GenAI tools in L2 writing. First, it will examine the impact of AI disclosure on grading and student-teacher trust. Second, it will analyse the potential over-reliance on AI and its effects on students' writing and critical thinking skills. Third, it will provide recommendations for educators and policymakers to ensure theethical and effective integration of AI in education.

3.   Methodology

This study utilised a qualitative research approach based on an extensive review and critical analysis of existing literature. The methodology consisted of the following steps:

1. **Data Collection**: Academic sources, including peer-reviewed journals, books, and reports, were systematically retrieved from databases such as Scopus, PubMed, and Google Scholar. Search terms like "Generative AI," "L2 writing," "AI-assisted writing," and "ethical implications in education" were employed to ensure the inclusion of relevant publications.
2. **Inclusion Criteria**:
    o   Articles focusing on the use of Generative AI in education, particularly in second language (L2) writing.
    o   Studies that addressed ethical, cognitive, and pedagogical implications of AI use.
    o   Publications written in English and published between 2010 and 2024.
3. **Thematic Analysis**: A thematic analysis was conducted to identify key patterns and recurring themes. These included biases in grading, over-reliance on AI tools, trust dynamics between students and educators, and the ethical challenges of GenAI integration in academic contexts.
4. **Contextual Exploration**: The findings were examined within both global and local contexts, particularly highlighting Malaysia's adoption of AI in education. This included analysing its potential to address existing educational challenges while identifying risks specific to cultural and systemic factors.
5. **Critical Review of Secondary Data**: Existing statistical data, such as Huff's (2024) survey on parental perceptions and Tan et al.'s (2025) study on grading biases, were incorporated to support the analysis. These data points offered insights into prevailing trends and stakeholder perceptions.
6. **Ethical Considerations**: As the research relied solely on secondary data, no direct human participation was required. The study adhered to ethical research standards by ensuring accurate attribution of all sources and maintaining objectivity in the analysis.

4.   Result

The findings of this study provide critical insights into the risks and implications of transparency in the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools in second language (L2) writing.

1. **Bias in Grading**: Analysis confirms that transparency regarding the use of GenAI tools negatively impacts grading outcomes. Consistent with prior studies (Tan, Wang, & Xu, 2025), educators were found to exhibit biases against AI-assisted work. Students disclosing their use of GenAI often faced reduced grades due to perceptions of inauthenticity or diminished effort. This bias undermines equitable assessment practices and raises concerns about fairness in academic evaluation.

2. **Over-Reliance on AI Tools**: The findings highlight a concerning trend of cognitive offloading, where students excessively depend on GenAI tools for writing tasks. This reliance poses a risk to the development of critical thinking and independent writing skills, aligning with concerns raised in the literature (Wang, 2024). Rather than engaging with the writing process, students using AI tools demonstrated a reduced ability to formulate original arguments and analyse ideas critically.

3. **Trust and Ethical Concerns**: Transparency about GenAI usage has been shown to erode trust between students and educators. Echoing Huff's (2024) findings, a significant proportion of educators and parents viewed the use of AI generative tools as a form of academic dishonesty, even when disclosed. This perception not only fosters distrust but also places students in a dilemma, caught between transparency and potential penalisation.

4. **Limitations of GenAI Tools**: The study also identifies limitations in the accuracy and cultural adaptability of GenAI tools. Issues such as AI hallucination—where incorrect or fabricated information is generated—were observed, which compromised the quality of student submissions. Additionally, biases inherent in the training data of AI systems led to a preference for Western writing norms, potentially disadvantaging students from non-Western linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Wambsganss, 2024).

5. **Broader Implications**: The findings underscore a broader challenge: the integration of GenAI tools risks exacerbating existing systemic issues in education, such as the lack of emphasis on creativity, problem-solving, and higher-order thinking. Rather than addressing these gaps, GenAI adoption might amplify them without proper pedagogical and policy interventions.
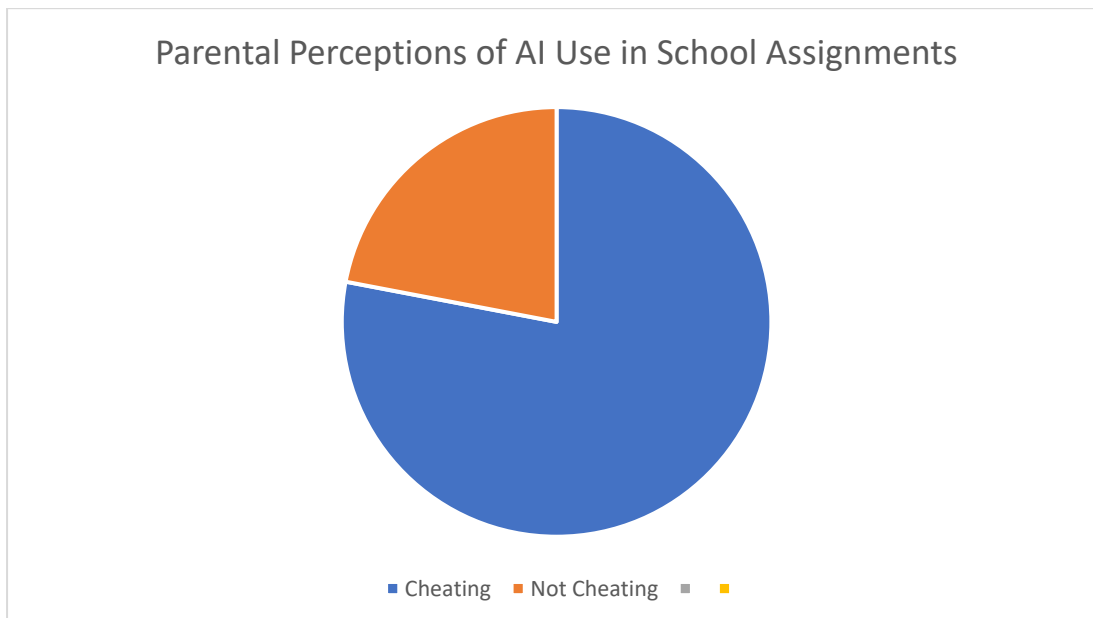
Figure 2: Parental Perceptions of AI Use in School Assignments

Figure 2 shows the pie chart titled "Parental Perceptions of AI Use in School Assignments" illustrates the significant concern among parents regarding the use of AI generative tools in education. According to the data, a substantial majority of parents (78%) believe that the use of AI in school assignments constitutes cheating. This perception highlights the ethical dilemmas and trust issues associated with AI in academic settings. Only 22% of parents do not view AI use as cheating, indicating a minority perspective.

Huff (2024) reported that 78% of parents perceive the use of AI generative tools in school assignments as a form of cheating. This statistic underscores the pressing need for clear guidelines and policies to address these ethical concerns and to build trust among students, parents, and educators. By establishing transparent and fair practices for AI usage in education, schools can ensure these tools are employed to enhance learning while safeguarding academic integrity.

While GenAI tools offer substantial benefits in L2 writing, such as improved accuracy and efficiency, their uncritical adoption presents significant challenges. Biases against AI-assisted work and over-reliance on these tools risk undermining the development of critical thinking and independent writing skills. This study emphasises the importance of adopting balanced approaches that integrate GenAI tools ethically and effectively, fostering essential skills while maintaining fairness and trust in educational practices.

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5. Conclusion

This study critically explores the risks and implications of transparency in using Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools in second language (L2) writing. The findings reveal that while GenAI offers notable benefits, such as enhanced writing assistance and personalised feedback (Smith & Johnson, 2023), its use also presents significant challenges. The disclosure of AI use negatively impacts grading due to educator biases, undermining fairness in assessment (Tan, Wang, & Xu, 2025). Furthermore, the study highlights the danger of over-reliance on AI, which may hinder the development of essential critical thinking and writing skills (Wang, 2024). Ethical concerns, including academic integrity and trust between students, parents, and educators, further compound these issues (Huff, 2024).

The importance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the ethical and practical challenges of integrating AI in education, particularly in Malaysia, where AI adoption is rapidly growing. Malaysia's higher education institutions, such as Universiti Teknologi MARA and Universiti Putra Malaysia, are increasingly incorporating AI into their curricula to enhance learning outcomes and prepare students for the future job market (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2024). However, concerns about the over-reliance on AI tools and the lack of critical thinking skills among graduates remain pressing issues (Ahmad & Ismail, 2024). By addressing these challenges, this study provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers to ensure the ethical and effective use of AI in education.

To address these risks, it is crucial to establish clear, fair, and transparent policies that guide the ethical use of AI in education. Educators must balance the integration of AI tools with traditional methods to foster holistic skill development while preserving academic integrity. Future research should explore interdisciplinary strategies to mitigate biases and ensure the effective and ethical adoption of GenAI in educational contexts, particularly in L2 learning environments. Ultimately, these efforts are essential to maximising the benefits of AI while safeguarding the foundational values of education.

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