Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues, 8 (2), page 193 - 208, 2025
ISSN: 2615-3920 EISSN: 2685-4473
DOI: 10.21043/jetli.v8i2.33798

# Perceiving and Reimagining Sources: EFL Students' Reflections on AI-Mediated Report Writing in an Islamic State University

**Amin Basir[1], Hendi Hidayat[2]**

[1,2] Faculty of Tarbiyah & Teacher Training, UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, Indonesia

| Contact: | Amin Basir | aminb@uinssc.ac.id |
|---|---|---|

**How to cite:**

Basir, A., & Hidayat, H. (2025). Perceiving and reimagining sources: EFL students' reflections on AI-mediated report writing in an Islamic state university. *Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues*, *8*(2), 193–208. https://doi.org/10.21043/jetli.v8i2. 33798

## ABSTRACT

This qualitative descriptive study examines how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students utilize artificial intelligence (AI) tools to source and integrate online information for academic report writing. The study involved 32 third-semester students who wrote reports on Cirebon wedding traditions, utilizing various online sources and self-selected AI tools, including ChatGPT, Quillbot, and Grammarly. Data were gathered through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with eight students. Thematic analysis revealed six key themes: the strategic use of multiple AI tools, source selection based on accessibility and relevance, AI-assisted simplification, the evolution of voice and authorship, ethical awareness, and learning transfer. Students displayed a reflective and critical approach, viewing AI not merely as a shortcut but as a dialogic partner in the writing process. The findings highlight how AI not only enhances textual production but also fosters intercultural understanding within EFL contexts. This study contributes to the discourse on digital literacy by providing a localized perspective on AI usage and calls for pedagogies that promote ethical and strategic authorship in AI-mediated academic writing.

**KEYWORDS:**
AI-mediated;
Intertextuality;
Report text;
Sources;
Web-based;
Writing

**ARTICLE HISTORY:**
Received:
July 11, 2025
Accepted:
December 3, 2025

## Introduction

When a student employs ChatGPT to describe a local wedding tradition, it raises important questions about authorship, voice, and epistemic agency. Who can be considered the true author: the human, the algorithm, or the cultural corpus from which the information is derived? In the age of generative artificial intelligence (AI), academic writing cannot be understood as a linear act of text production, but rather as a dialogic practice shaped by interactions among student agency, machine-generated discourse, and web-based cultural knowledge. For EFL learners, this shift entails not only technological adaptation but also a reconfiguration of how knowledge is sourced, interpreted, and revoiced within academic genres, implicating epistemological, rhetorical, and cultural dimensions of writing.

Copyright © 2025 The Author(s). Published by Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues (JETLI).
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0), which permits to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format. It also allows remixing, transforming, and building upon the material for any purpose.

The choice of wedding traditions as the focal writing topic in this study is neither incidental nor purely thematic. Wedding rituals represent one of the most textually rich, socially shared, and culturally codified events within local communities, making them pedagogically productive sites for EFL writing. Unlike funerary practices, which are often private, emotionally sensitive, and ethically constrained in classroom discourse, wedding traditions are publicly narrated, visually documented, and frequently mediated through digital platforms such as blogs, tourism websites, and social media archives. This abundance of web-based representations positions weddings as accessible cultural events through which students can practice source selection, intertextual negotiation, and cultural explanation. In the context of Cirebon, wedding traditions further embody a layered intersection of Javanese, Sundanese, Islamic, and coastal cultural influences, allowing students to engage with localized knowledge while translating it for an academic audience beyond their immediate community. Thus, the topic functions as a strategic pedagogical bridge between local culture promotion and global academic literacy, rather than as a generic descriptive exercise.

The growth of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Quillbot, and Grammarly, in student writing contexts presents both potential and peril. Rather than functioning merely as technical supports, these tools increasingly operate as epistemic and rhetorical mediators that shape how knowledge is accessed, interpreted, and articulated in academic writing. ChatGPT facilitates idea generation and source interpretation, while Quillbot assists in rephrasing and cohesion. Grammarly polishes grammar and clarity. Through these functions, AI intervenes in meaning-making processes, influencing how students construct arguments, position themselves as authors, and negotiate textual authority. These tools mediate writing not only at the surface level but also at the level of voice, argument, and identity. As Canagarajah (2015) argues, academic voice is a hybrid construct emerging through dialogic engagement with multiple discourses, agents, and ideologies. In this dialogic ecology, AI does not simply correct linguistic form but actively participates in shaping epistemic stance and rhetorical choice, thereby co-constructing meaning with the learner. In this light, AI becomes part of the dialogic ecology of writing, co-constructing meaning rather than merely correcting form.

However, as noted by Palermo and Wilson (2020), reliance on Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) systems can either enhance or diminish students' engagement, depending on the depth of feedback processing. When viewed through the lens of EFL students' reflective practices, this distinction becomes critical: AWE tools support learning not solely through automated correction, but through learners' reflective decisions about whether, how, and why to accept, revise, or resist AI-generated feedback. Thus, the pedagogical value of AWE lies in its capacity to prompt metacognitive reflection and rhetorical judgment, rather than in the efficiency of error reduction.

Digital literacy frameworks, including Ng's (2012) triadic model, which comprises technical, cognitive, and socio-emotional components, continue to serve as a foundational reference. However, they must now be revisited in the context of generative AI. In contrast to static information retrieval, today's digital tools generate textual meaning, often blurring the boundaries between comprehension, production, and ownership (Gozali et al., 2024; Tardy, 2022). The urgency addressed by this study arises from this blurring, in which students increasingly rely on AI-generated paraphrases of cultural content without fully understanding how knowledge is transformed, whose voices are amplified, and which cultural meanings are simplified or distorted. This redefinition must also account for learner agency, including how students resist, revise, or internalize the authority of AI over knowledge. Research by Kennedy et al. (2008) and Margaryan et al. (2011) suggests that without explicit pedagogical

scaffolding, students often underutilize the creative and academic potential of technology, limiting it to transactional purposes rather than reflective engagement.

Given these conceptual tensions, recent scholarship has called for more dialogically oriented writing pedagogies, where technologies are framed not as mere aids but as interlocutors (Alexander, 2020; Helin, 2019; Wegerif & Major, 2019). This call implicitly exposes the limitations of traditional digital literacy models, which tend to conceptualize technology as neutral tools for accessing, evaluating, and producing information, while overlooking how generative AI actively participates in the construction of meaning. The notion of dialogically informed composition in this study extends such pedagogies by focusing not only on social interaction among peers but also on the rhetorical dialogues students engage in with AI-generated content, web-based sources, and culturally situated topics. Conventional frameworks struggle to capture how AI reshapes epistemic authority, authorship boundaries, and rhetorical decision-making, particularly when texts are co-produced through algorithmic suggestions rather than retrieved from static sources. In line with Bakhtin's conception of heteroglossia, Hamston (2006) suggests that writing becomes a site where the voices of the student, the machine, and the culture interact, overlap, and at times come into conflict. This dynamic exceeds the explanatory scope of literacy models grounded in pre-generative digital environments.

Digital literacy, once primarily concerned with accessing and evaluating information, has undergone a paradigm shift as writing technologies have evolved from retrieval-based systems to generative and interactive platforms. Ng's (2012) triadic model comprising technical, cognitive, and socio-emotional dimensions continues to offer a foundational framework; however, scholars argue that such models require reinterpretation in light of AI-mediated writing environments (Hyland, 2016; Omid, 2022). In generative contexts, students no longer interact with texts solely as readers or producers, but as dialogic agents who continuously evaluate, modify, accept, or reject AI-generated language during the composing process. These technologies are increasingly shaping not only what students write but also how they conceptualize writing itself, blurring the distinctions between comprehension and production (Gozali et al., 2024; Tardy, 2022).

According to Williams and Beam (2019), writing instruction must now respond to the realities of digital authorship, where multimodality, interactivity, and automated assistance alter genre conventions and learner roles. Dialogue with AI-generated text, in this sense, is enacted through specific practices: students prompt AI for initial drafts or explanations, critically assess the relevance and adequacy of the output, revise linguistic form to align with personal voice, and selectively resist suggestions that conflict with their intended meaning or ethical judgment. Strobl et al. (2019) further assert that digital tools offer individualized scaffolding and intelligent feedback that, if used reflectively, can enhance both linguistic output and rhetorical control. Elola and Oskoz (2017) emphasize the need for instructional redesign that acknowledges new genres and literacies emerging from L2 learners' engagement with social writing platforms. Zheng and Warschauer (2017) even suggest that digital writing tools can cultivate learner identity and autonomy, provided the technological interface supports meaningful authorship. Complementarily, Weng and Chiu (2023) argue that AI-assisted environments must be grounded in purposeful instructional design to promote critical engagement, rather than passive consumption. Together, these studies reframe digital literacy not only as a set of functional skills but also as a transformative pedagogical space where learners negotiate meaning, authorship, and identity in complex, mediated ecologies.

The practice of source use in academic writing has increasingly been theorized through dialogic and intertextual lenses, particularly as students encounter hybrid textual landscapes shaped by both human and algorithmic voices. Kaufer and Ishizaki (2022) offer a developmental typology comprising reactive, connective, and integrative categories, highlighting how students move from imitative reproduction of source texts to strategic integration and novel argumentation. Shi and Han (2014) identify disparities in students' ability to transform sources, with lower-performing writers tending toward surface-level borrowing, while more advanced learners demonstrate synthesis and critical repositioning. Lundström (2015) emphasizes the rhetorical agency students exercise as they interpret and reshape source material in light of their audience, purpose, and voice, thereby challenging the assumption that citation is merely a procedural matter. This view aligns with Tardy (2022), who notes that AI-generated content complicates traditional intertextual frameworks by producing language that mimics authorial coherence, thereby questioning the origins and ownership of textual meaning. Zhang and Hyland (2018) observe that students benefit most from feedback models that integrate automated tools and human guidance, ensuring that intertextual engagement remains reflective rather than mechanical.

Strobl et al. (2019) argue, however, that overreliance on AI tools may obscure the critical deliberation that authentic integration demands. Successful instruction must shift from focusing solely on citation mechanics to fostering deep rhetorical understanding of voice, stance, and source transformation (Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Williams & Beam, 2019). The convergence of these insights suggests that intertextual competence is best cultivated not through rigid adherence to form, but through pedagogical attention to the socio-rhetorical processes by which students encounter, negotiate, and revoice the multiple authorities embedded in their writing environments.

Despite growing interest in these dynamics, there is a paucity of research situated in Asia, especially Indonesia, where digital infrastructure is rapidly expanding but pedagogical frameworks for AI use remain underdeveloped (Degeng et al., 2024; Zeleke, 2022). A preliminary classroom survey at the Islamic state higher education institution in Cirebon, Indonesia, found that over 70% of third-semester students used AI tools independently in writing assignments, without receiving any formal training or ethical guidance. Such patterns suggest that AI integration in academic writing emerges organically and often operates beneath formal instruction, embodying a hidden curriculum that has been insufficiently explored in EFL research. This condition constitutes the core pain point addressed by the present study: students engage intensively with AI-mediated sources while lacking structured opportunities to reflect on authorship, cultural representation, and ethical transformation of sources in academic writing.

This study investigates how Indonesian EFL students perceive and reimagine their engagement with web-based sources in the context of AI-mediated report writing. Grounded in the intersection of digital literacy (Ng, 2012), intertextuality (Canagarajah, 2015; Tardy, 2022), and feedback literacy (Carless & Boud, 2018; Er et al., 2021), the research explores how students select, interpret, and integrate culturally embedded online content while navigating AI tools. Importantly, it also interrogates how students experience voice, authorship, and ethics in a multilingual, post-digital classroom.

By centering Cirebon’s wedding traditions, the study foregrounds cultural events that are locally grounded yet discursively portable, enabling analysis of how AI mediates cultural narration rather than abstract information alone. The focus is not intended to universalize wedding practices across Indonesia, but to examine how a specific local cultural event

becomes recontextualized, simplified, or reframed through AI-assisted writing processes. In doing so, this research contributes to emerging discussions on AI, authorship, and intercultural meaning-making in EFL writing. The findings advocate for pedagogies that treat AI not as a shortcut to textual fluency but as a co-participant in the construction of academic voice, one that must be engaged with critical awareness, ethical literacy, and rhetorical agency (Canagarajah, 2015; Murphy et al., 2018; Wegerif, 2013).

## Method

### *Research Design*

This study employed a qualitative case study design with a reflective narrative orientation to explore how EFL students perceive and reflect on their use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in sourcing, interpreting, and integrating web-based information during academic report writing. Rooted in reflective writing pedagogy, the study aimed to capture learners' self-reported strategies, authorship positioning, and ethical considerations in navigating AI-mediated composition. This design was chosen to allow for rich, nuanced insights into students' lived experiences and meaning-making processes, as appropriate for an emerging phenomenon in a culturally specific context.

### *Context and Participants*

The research was conducted at an Islamic state higher education institution in Cirebon, Indonesia, a digital university offering fully online English Language Teaching (ELT) programs. The participants consisted of 32 third-semester EFL students enrolled in a compulsory course titled "Writing for Academic Purposes". As part of the course assessment, students were tasked with composing an academic report on Cirebon wedding traditions, using a variety of online sources, including local blogs, news sites, and cultural documentation platforms. Although no formal instruction on AI tools was provided, students were allowed to use ChatGPT, Quillbot, and Grammarly independently during the writing process. These tools were not integrated into the curriculum, making their use self-directed and informal; thus, they offered a naturalistic lens into students' digital writing behavior.

### *Data Collection*

Data were gathered through two qualitative instruments: the first is a reflective questionnaire. After submitting their academic reports, all participants were invited to complete an open-ended reflective questionnaire designed to elicit detailed narratives about their experiences with AI tools. The questionnaire probed tool usage patterns, strategies for source evaluation, intertextual integration, and ethical awareness. The questions were aligned with the study's research questions and allowed students to articulate their reflections in their own words.

The second instrument is semi-structured interviews. To deepen the insights gained from the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants who were purposively selected. Selection criteria included variation in writing confidence and AI engagement levels, as assessed through self-report and instructor observations. The interviews explored students' decision-making processes, their perceptions of authorship, and their critical reflections on the role of AI. Interviews were conducted online, recorded with prior consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### *Data Analysis*

Data from both the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. Initially, themes were generated deductively, based on the study's research questions: selection, interpretation, and integration of sources. These themes were later refined inductively to accommodate patterns emerging directly from the data. Coding focused on identifying student strategies, dilemmas, and metacognitive reflections related to AI-mediated writing. Coding of findings was guided by key conceptual lenses, including dialogic writing by Wegerif and Major (2019) and AI-mediated writing frameworks by Gozali et al. (2024), with a focus on how students negotiated authorship, rhetorical agency, and intertextual relations. To enhance trustworthiness and analytical rigor, a second coder independently reviewed a subset of the data. Discrepancies were discussed until consensus was reached. Analytical memos and codebooks were maintained throughout the process to ensure transparency and traceability.

### *Ethical Considerations*

This study adhered to established ethical guidelines for educational research. Participants were informed of the research purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. All names have been replaced with pseudonyms, and identifying information has been removed to protect participants' anonymity. Digital data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes in accordance with institutional protocols.

## Results

To address the research questions, data from reflective questionnaires (n = 32) and semi-structured interviews (n = 8) were thematically analyzed. Drawing from both deductive categories (selection, interpretation, integration) and inductively emerging insights, the analysis yielded six interrelated themes that reflect students' engagement with AI tools in academic report writing: (1) AI Tool Usage Patterns, (2) Source Selection Strategy, (3) AI-Assisted Comprehension, (4) Authorship and Voice, (5) Ethical Awareness, and (6) Learning Transfer. These themes encapsulate not only students' pragmatic strategies but also their evolving critical awareness, ethical reasoning, and voice negotiation as they navigate web-based sources and AI-generated content. The table below synthesizes key patterns across the two data sources and provides an interpretive commentary on each theme.

**Table 1.** *Analytical Themes from Questionnaire and Interview Data on AI-Mediated Report Writing*

| Analytical Theme | Questionnaire Findings (N = 32) | Interview Insights (S1–S3) | Interpretive Synthesis |
|---|---|---|---|
| AI Tool Usage Patterns | 63% used 2–3 tools simultaneously; ChatGPT was the most dominant, followed by Grammarly and Quillbot. | "I started with ChatGPT to brainstorm, then Quillbot to make it smoother, and Grammarly at the end." (S2) "I used ChatGPT and Grammarly at the same time in different tabs." (S1) | Students show emerging strategies in combining AI tools sequentially or in parallel. Multitool use reflects pragmatic experimentation in writing processes. |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Source Selection Strategy | Eighty-one % preferred accessible sources, such as blogs and cultural websites; readability and relevance were key. | "I chose a blog because it was simple and focused on local traditions." (S3) "After finding an article, I double-checked its meaning using ChatGPT to avoid misunderstanding." (S2) | Students combine human judgment in source selection with AI support for interpretation and analysis. They rely on relevance and simplicity of language as selection criteria. |
| AI-Assisted Comprehension | 78% said AI tools helped simplify complex content; 34% mentioned the risk of generalization or oversimplification. | "ChatGPT sometimes gave too basic explanations—it helped, but I still had to read the real site." (S3) "Quillbot helped me rewrite long sentences from articles into shorter ones." (S1) | AI facilitates decoding and restating information, especially from web texts. However, students remain aware of AI's generalizing nature and seek more profound clarity. |
| Authorship and Voice | 59% questioned their voice when using AI; 41% revised AI output to make it more personal. | "Sometimes I did not know if it was my sentence or AI's." (S2) "I changed the AI's suggestions to match my style, especially in the conclusion." (S1) "I mixed both, but edited heavily." (S3) | The use of AI creates a blurred authorship boundary. Students are developing strategies to preserve their voice, signaling a growing self-awareness of ownership in academic texts. |
| Ethical Awareness | 88% found AI acceptable if appropriately revised; 69% became more attentive to paraphrasing and attribution. | "AI is okay if we don't depend too much and we paraphrase." (S2) "I always changed the words so it's not plagiarism." (S3) "I never copied directly from ChatGPT." (S1) | Students show increasing ethical sensitivity. Use of AI is normalized but tempered with a developing understanding of academic integrity and responsibility. |
| Learning Transfer | Reflected in their stated intentions to apply AI more critically in future tasks, editing more, integrating sources better. | "I'll use AI again, but this time I'll edit more carefully." (S1) "AI made me realize how to connect ideas and not just summarize." (S3) "I want to explore how to use better prompts next time." (S2) | The AI experience fosters metacognitive growth. Students gain not only linguistic support but also reflective awareness of how writing and research strategies evolve. |

### *AI Tool Usage Patterns with Pragmatic Orchestration and Dialogic Ecologies*

Findings indicate that students did not rely on a single AI application but instead constructed individualized workflows by coordinating the use of multiple tools. Questionnaire data indicate that 63% of participants used two to three AI tools simultaneously, with ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quillbot being the most frequently combined platforms. This quantitative pattern is substantiated by interview accounts that illuminate how such combinations were operationalized during the writing process. Student 2 explained, "I started with ChatGPT to brainstorm, then Quillbot to make it smoother, and Grammarly at the end," while Student 1 reported, "I used ChatGPT and Grammarly at the same time in different tabs."

These responses suggest that students approached AI as a set of differentiated resources rather than a monolithic system. The sequencing of tools reflects an implicit decomposition of the writing task into cognitive phases, in which ideation, textual cohesion, and linguistic accuracy are treated as separable yet interrelated concerns. ChatGPT was

primarily positioned at the front end of the process to generate ideas and outline content, whereas Quillbot and Grammarly were used to refine textual flow and surface-level correctness. This orchestration indicates pragmatic experimentation driven by task demands, not by formal instruction or predefined models of AI use.

The way students shifted between tools points to a dialogic interaction with technology. Each tool produced feedback that informed subsequent decisions, prompting students to revisit, adjust, or extend their drafts. Rather than accepting outputs uncritically, students navigated between AI suggestions and their own judgments, creating a recursive loop of production and revision. In this dialogic ecology, AI functioned as a responsive co-participant in the writing process, shaping how students paced their work, evaluated alternatives, and maintained control over the evolving text.

### *Source Selection Strategy focusing on Local Relevance, Simplicity, and Intersemiotic Mediation*

Students' source selection practices reveal a consistent preference for texts that are linguistically accessible and culturally proximate. As Student 3 explained, "I chose a blog because it was simple and focused on local traditions" (S3). This choice pattern suggests that readability and contextual familiarity operate as primary evaluative criteria, often outweighing considerations of academic authority or textual depth. Rather than indicating a deficit in academic judgment, this tendency reflects a pragmatic alignment between task demands, linguistic confidence, and available interpretive resources. Students prioritized sources that allowed them to engage meaningfully with content before addressing formal academic conventions.

Questionnaire data reinforce this pattern, showing that a substantial proportion of students favored blogs and culturally grounded websites. Interviews clarify that these selections were not arbitrary. Students demonstrated awareness of the communicative purpose of their writing, particularly when engaging with local cultural themes such as Cirebon traditions. Source choice thus served as an initial act of meaning alignment, ensuring that the content could be understood, interpreted, and subsequently transformed into academic discourse.

Students did not rely on AI to locate sources. Instead, AI was positioned downstream in the process, serving an interpretive rather than a curatorial role. As Student 2 noted, "I double-checked its meaning using ChatGPT to avoid misunderstanding" (S2). This indicates that AI was employed as a clarification layer, mediating between informal or culturally embedded texts and the expectations of academic writing. In this configuration, AI acted as a semiotic bridge, enabling students to reframe locally grounded knowledge into linguistically and rhetorically acceptable forms.

Such practices highlight students' active role as meaning-makers rather than passive information collectors. They navigated between cultural knowledge, human-authored texts, and AI-mediated explanations to construct understanding. The analytical significance lies in how AI-supported intersemiotic mediation translates experiential and cultural meanings into academic registers. This function is particularly salient in EFL contexts, where students must negotiate not only language but also genre and epistemic norms. The data suggest that AI facilitated this negotiation without displacing student agency, positioning technology as a mediator rather than an authority.

### *Authorship and Voice through Amalgamated Expression and Emerging Self-Positioning*

Reflections on authorship and voice surfaced consistently in students' accounts of AI-assisted writing. Several students expressed uncertainty about textual ownership, particularly when AI-generated sentences blended seamlessly with their own writing. As Student 2 stated, "Sometimes I didn't know if it was my sentence or AI's" (S2). This comment highlights a moment of tension where authorship becomes less clearly defined, prompting students to question the origin of their language. Such uncertainty does not signal loss of agency; instead, it marks the emergence of reflective awareness about voice in an AI-mediated environment.

At the same time, students described intentional efforts to reassert personal expression through revision. Student 1 explained, "I changed the AI's suggestions to match my style, especially in the conclusion" (S1), while Student 3 noted, "I mixed both, but edited heavily" (S3). These practices indicate that AI output was treated as a provisional resource rather than an authoritative text. Students positioned themselves as editors and decision-makers, shaping tone, emphasis, and phrasing to align with their intended meaning and perceived audience expectations.

The resulting texts can be understood as amalgamated expressions, formed through the selective integration of human and machine contributions. Voice emerged not as a fixed or purely individual trait, but as something negotiated through iterative engagement with AI suggestions. Students actively evaluated which formulations felt aligned with their identity as writers and which required modification or rejection. This evaluative process suggests an emerging sense of self-positioning, in which students increasingly recognized their responsibility for claiming ownership of the final text.

### *Ethical Awareness in Navigating Academic Integrity in the AI Era*

Ethical considerations related to plagiarism and dependency emerged clearly in students' reflections on their use of AI tools. Several students articulated explicit strategies to avoid direct copying. Student 3 stated, "I always changed the words so it's not plagiarism" (S3), while Student 1 emphasized, "I never copied directly from ChatGPT" (S1). These remarks demonstrate a fundamental understanding of academic integrity norms, particularly in relation to originality and textual ownership. Ethical judgment at this stage appears procedural, centered on observable actions such as paraphrasing and rewriting rather than on deeper engagement with questions of authorship or epistemic responsibility.

Questionnaire findings reinforce this pattern, showing that 88% of students considered AI acceptable when revised properly. This suggests that students draw a clear boundary between assisted writing and misconduct, with revision functioning as the primary ethical safeguard. The AI output was not treated as the final authority, but rather as material requiring human intervention before being included in academic work. Students described practices of modifying wording, adjusting structure, and integrating ideas selectively, signaling an emerging ethic of responsible use grounded in active engagement rather than avoidance.

This ethical reflexivity developed without formal instruction, explicit policy guidance, or structured discussion of AI ethics within the course. Students relied on personal judgment, peer norms, and perceived academic expectations to determine what was considered acceptable use. Such self-regulated ethical reasoning, while promising, remains uneven and potentially fragile, particularly when driven more by concern over rule-breaking than by a principled understanding of integrity. Nonetheless, the data show that students did not

approach AI as a shortcut to bypass academic effort. Instead, they demonstrated growing attentiveness to responsibility, attribution, and the need to maintain control over the final text.

### *Learning Transfer through the Shift from Procedural Use to Metacognitive Awareness*

One of the most salient outcomes of students' engagement with AI tools was their expressed intention to modify and refine future practices. Interview data indicate a forward-looking orientation, in which students reflected not only on what they had done but also on how they planned to do it differently. Student 1 stated, "Next time I'll edit more carefully" (S1), while Student 2 remarked, "I want to explore how to use better prompts" (S2). These statements suggest a shift beyond procedural repetition toward conscious strategy development. Students began to articulate goals for planning, monitoring, and improving their own use of AI, rather than merely applying tools as before.

This emerging awareness is further reflected in how students reconceptualized the role of AI in writing. Rather than viewing AI solely as a means to correct language or speed up task completion, students described more profound learning effects related to idea development and organization. As Student 3 explained, "AI made me realize how to connect ideas and not just summarize" (S3). This comment points to an evolving understanding of writing as a process that involves coherence building, argument development, and relational thinking. The use of AI appears to have prompted students to attend to higher-level textual concerns, shifting their focus away from surface correctness alone.

Notably, these reflections indicate evidence of learning transfer. Students did not confine their insights to the immediate task but projected them onto future academic work. They expressed intentions to engage more critically with AI output, to refine prompts, and to assume greater responsibility in revision. Such anticipatory adjustments suggest that students are internalizing lessons from their current experience and applying them as guiding principles for subsequent tasks. Writing, in this sense, is no longer approached as a fixed routine but as a practice open to refinement through reflection.

### *Learning Transfer through Critical Reapplication and Strategic Refinement*

Evidence of learning transfer is reflected in students' articulated intentions to modify their approach to engaging with AI in subsequent academic tasks. Rather than describing AI use as fixed or routine, students projected their current experiences into future practices. Student 1 stated, "I'll use AI again, but this time I'll edit more carefully" (S1), signaling heightened attention to revision quality and personal responsibility in shaping the final text. This forward-looking stance suggests that students did not view AI as a one-time solution, but rather as a tool whose effectiveness depends on how it is managed and refined over time.

Other students emphasized changes in how they conceptualize writing itself. Student 3 reflected, "AI made me realize how to connect ideas and not just summarize" (S3). This statement suggests a shift from surface-level engagement toward deeper consideration of coherence and relational meaning. Writing is no longer approached merely as the accumulation of information but as an act of organizing ideas into a connected whole. Such reflection demonstrates that the use of AI contributed to changes in students' understanding of what constitutes effective academic writing, extending beyond linguistic correctness.

Strategic awareness was also evident in students' attention to the formulation of the prompt. Student 2 remarked, "I want to explore how to use better prompts next time" (S2), indicating recognition that the quality of AI output is closely tied to the quality of human input.

This awareness reflects growing control over the interaction itself, where students see themselves as active agents who shape outcomes through deliberate choices. The interaction with AI thus becomes a site of strategy development, not passive consumption.

The six themes together portray a compelling landscape of student-AI interaction as dialogic, ethical, and strategic. Far from being dependent users, students in this study are seen developing nuanced practices of AI-assisted academic authorship that are responsive to genre, task, voice, and local knowledge. The context of writing about Cirebon wedding traditions further adds a cultural translation dimension: AI tools are not only linguistic aids, but mediators between local identity and global academic norms.

The findings support a reimagining of writing pedagogy in AI-integrated classrooms, not as a site of opposition between human and machine but as a dialogic partnership that demands critical literacy, cultural sensitivity, and ethical awareness (Canagarajah, 2015; Simpson, 2016; Wegerif & Major, 2019). In this view, AI is neither a savior nor a threat, but a site of pedagogical possibility, provided that educators are willing to design reflective spaces where technology serves learning rather than providing shortcuts.

## Discussion

The findings show that students are developing strategic approaches to AI use by combining different tools in sequence or parallel to fulfill distinct rhetorical purposes. ChatGPT is often employed for content generation, Quillbot for paraphrasing, and Grammarly for editing, indicating that learners are developing functional digital literacy without formal training. This orchestrated use aligns with Ng's (2012) digital literacy triad and supports Gozali et al. (2024), who emphasize the pedagogical benefits of Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tools when used in conjunction with feedback awareness. Furthermore, such tool integration illustrates the dialogic ecology theorized by Wegerif and Major (2019), where AI becomes an agent in co-constructing meaning. The students' intentional multitool sequencing echoes the findings that emphasize genre-responsive, scaffolded engagement with writing technology (Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Strobl et al., 2019). This sophistication stands in contrast to the shallow, entertainment-driven use of technology (Kennedy et al., 2008; Margaryan et al., 2011). Furthermore, learners construct their own dialogic learning ecologies in the absence of institutional guidance (Farooq & Benade, 2019).

Students' approach to source selection reveals how digital literacy intersects with contextual familiarity and linguistic accessibility. Most students preferred culturally relevant and readable sources, such as local blogs and news sites, over academically dense materials, prioritizing accessibility and local resonance. This supports the notion of context-aware evaluation models (Ivone et al., 2020; Omid, 2022; Weng & Chiu, 2023). Notably, AI was not the source of information but the interpreter, helping students clarify and translate information into academic language. This positioning of AI as an intermediary between informal knowledge and academic discourse reflects Bernstein's theory of recontextualization (Jesson et al., 2016) and highlights its role in facilitating intercultural meaning-making (Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Zheng & Warschauer, 2017). Moreover, this dynamic demonstrates that students do not rely solely on AI for retrieval but actively mediate meaning, consistent with the framework of intentional, situated source use (Canagarajah, 2015; Kaufer & Ishizaki, 2022; Tardy, 2022).

AI-facilitated comprehension was another salient theme, especially in helping students simplify or decode complex texts. Learners utilized ChatGPT and Quillbot to restate challenging passages and summarize lengthy sentences, demonstrating their ability to apply

branching and photo-visual literacies (Eshet, 2004). However, students also demonstrated a critical awareness of AI limitations, acknowledging that some AI explanations were overly simplistic or contextually inaccurate. This dual stance supports Carless and Boud's (2018) notion of feedback literacy, in which learners interpret, assess, and modify the feedback they receive, including from machines. Such awareness aligns with Helin's (2019) dialogic theory of writing, where meaning-making is an ongoing negotiation between internal understanding and external input. It also affirms AI's potential as a metacognitive scaffold, enabling learners to refine comprehension through iterative reflection and cross-verification (Alexander, 2020; Murphy et al., 2018; Williams & Beam, 2019).

The interplay between authorship and voice emerged as a complex and evolving terrain. Students expressed uncertainty about the ownership of AI-revised sentences, yet many described strategies to rephrase AI output to better reflect their personal style, particularly in more interpretive sections, such as conclusions. This illustrates Canagarajah's (2015) theory of dialogic voice, where student identity emerges through negotiated alignment with multiple discourses. Similarly, it resonates with Bakhtin's heteroglossia as elaborated by Hamston (2006), which frames student writing as an amalgamation of multiple voices—including those of AI systems. The deliberate revision of AI suggestions demonstrates rhetorical agency, aligning with Zhang and Hyland's (2018) call for integrative feedback practices that combine automated and human judgment. These findings also support the distinction made by Shi and Han (2014) between surface-level and transformative engagement with sources, showing that some students are progressing toward the latter through active voice construction and reflexive authorship.

Ethical engagement with AI was prevalent, although students' understanding varied in depth. While many reported paraphrasing to avoid plagiarism, their ethical reasoning often leaned toward procedural compliance rather than epistemic awareness. This mirror concerns raised by Liu et al. (2022), who caution that trust in AI must be accompanied by critical discernment. Encouragingly, most students affirmed the acceptability of AI use when accompanied by substantial revision and personalization, suggesting a growing internalization of academic integrity norms. This emphasizes the importance of co-regulated learning and dialogic feedback in cultivating ethical authorship (Er et al., 2021; Gozali et al., 2024). Moreover, in the absence of institutional policy or structured instruction, these self-directed ethical practices suggest a latent feedback culture, where students develop integrity not through prohibition but through peer discourse and emergent norms (Murphy et al., 2018; Simpson, 2016; Strobl et al., 2019).

The emergence of metacognitive awareness and learning transfer further confirms the pedagogical potential of AI in EFL writing. Students indicated a desire to refine their prompt design, revise more deeply, and attend to coherence in future writing tasks—hallmarks of self-regulated learning as described by Butler and Winne (1995). This transition from procedural to reflective engagement reaffirms the value of dialogic pedagogy in AI-mediated environments (Alexander, 2020; Wegerif, 2013). Additionally, the culturally anchored topic of Cirebon wedding traditions provided a meaningful canvas for students to practice intercultural authorship, allowing AI to function as a bridge between local identity and global academic norms (Canagarajah, 2015; Tardy, 2022; Zheng & Warschauer, 2017). The synthesis of digital literacy, ethical reasoning, rhetorical voice, and cultural negotiation suggests that AI use, when approached critically and reflectively, has the potential to transform student writing from a task of replication into an act of meaning-making and identity formation (Gozali et al., 2024; Hyland, 2016; Jesson et al., 2016).

## Conclusion

This study has explored how EFL students at the Islamic state higher education institution in Cirebon, Indonesia, engaged with AI tools to source, interpret, and integrate web-based information during academic report writing. The findings reveal that students employed AI tools not passively but strategically, sequencing ChatGPT, Quillbot, and Grammarly according to distinct rhetorical purposes. Beyond mere automation, these tools became dialogic partners in textual production, shaping students' understanding of authorship, voice, and ethical writing. Notably, students demonstrated emerging metacognitive awareness and reflective decision-making, even in the absence of formal institutional guidance. These practices suggest that AI-mediated writing, when approached critically, can cultivate digital literacy, intercultural authorship, and self-regulated learning in meaningful ways.

For future researchers, several pathways are worth pursuing. Longitudinal studies could track how students' voice, ethical reasoning, and writing autonomy evolve across semesters when using AI tools. Comparative research across different institutional settings, such as traditional and online universities, may also shed light on how pedagogical design influences engagement with AI. Moreover, future work might investigate how AI-mediated writing affects students' genre awareness, citation practices, or engagement with multilingual sources. Finally, given the culturally situated nature of academic writing, future researchers should consider how AI tools mediate not only language but also the negotiation of identity, locality, and global discourse norms across diverse EFL contexts.

## References

Alexander, R. (2020). *A dialogic teaching companion*. Routledge. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351040143

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Butler, D. L., & Winne, P. H. (1995). Feedback and self-regulated learning: A theoretical synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, *65*(3), 245–281. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/1170684?urlappend=%3Futm_source%3Dresearchgate.net%26utm_medium%3Darticle

Canagarajah, A. S. (2015). "Blessed in my own way:" Pedagogical affordances for dialogical voice construction in multilingual student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *27*, 122–139. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2014.09.001

Carless, D., & Boud, D. (2018). The development of student feedback literacy: Enabling uptake of feedback. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *43*(8), 1315–1325. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354

Degeng, P. D. D., Hamamah, H., Emaliana, I., Hapsari, Y., & Fadillah, A. C. (2024). Exploring a web-based interactive writing assessment WISSE: User experiences. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, *11*(2), 141–160. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v11i2.20386

Elola, I., & Oskoz, A. (2017). Writing with 21st century social tools in the L2 classroom: New literacies, genres, and writing practices. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *36*, 52–60. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2017.04.002

Er, E., Dimitriadis, Y., & Gašević, D. (2021). A collaborative learning approach to dialogic peer feedback: A theoretical framework. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, *46*(4), 586–600. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1786497

Eshet, Y. (2004). Digital literacy: A conceptual framework for survival skills in the digital era. *Journal of Educational Multimedia and Hypermedia*, *13*(1), 93–106. https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/4793/

Farooq, S., & Benade, L. (2019). Constructing a dialogic pedagogy in virtual learning environments: A literature review. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, *16*, 7–13. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24135/teacherswork.v16i1and2.292

Gozali, I., Wijaya, A. R. T., Lie, A., Cahyono, B. Y., & Suryati, N. (2024). Leveraging the potential of ChatGPT as an automated writing evaluation (AWE) tool: Students' feedback literacy development and AWE tools integration framework. *The JALT CALL Journal*, *20*(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.29140/jaltcall.v20n1.1200

Hamston, J. (2006). Bakhtin's theory of dialogue: A construct for pedagogy, methodology, and analysis. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, *33*. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03246281

Helin, J. (2019). Dialogical writing: Co-inquiring between the written and the spoken word. *Culture and Organization*, *25*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2016.1197923

Hyland, K. (2016). Methods and methodologies in second language writing research. *System*, *59*, 116–125. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2016.05.002

Ivone, F. M., Jacobs, G. M., & Santosa, M. H. (2020). Information and communication technology to help students create their own books the dialogic way. *Beyond Words*, *8*(2), 78–91. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.33508/bw.v8i2.2545

Jesson, R., Fontich, X., & Myhill, D. (2016). Creating dialogic spaces: Talk as a mediational tool in becoming a writer. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *80*, 155–163. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2016.08.002

Kaufer, D., & Ishizaki, S. (2022). Computer-aided close reading: Visualizing contrastive persuasion strategies. In *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Persuasion* (pp. 505–524). Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780367823658-36/computer-aided-close-reading-david-kaufer-suguru-ishizaki

Kennedy, G. E., Judd, T. S., Churchward, A., Gray, K., & Krause, K.-L. (2008). First year students' experiences with technology: Are they really digital natives? *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, *24*(1). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14742/ajet.1233

Liu, H., Wang, Y., Fan, W., Liu, X., Li, Y., Jain, S., Liu, Y., Jain, A., & Tang, J. (2022). Trustworthy AI: A computational perspective. *ACM Transactions on Intelligent Systems and Technology*, *14*(1), 1–59. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1145/3546872

Lundström, U. (2015). Teacher autonomy in the era of New Public Management. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy*, *2015*(2), 28144. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3402/nstep.v1.28144

Margaryan, A., Littlejohn, A., & Vojt, G. (2011). Are digital natives a myth or reality? University students' use of digital technologies. *Computers & Education*, *56*(2), 429–440. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2010.09.004

Murphy, P. K., Greene, J. A., Firetto, C. M., Hendrick, B. D., Li, M., Montalbano, C., & Wei, L. (2018). Quality talk: Developing students' discourse to promote high-level comprehension. *American Educational Research Journal*, *55*(5), 1113–1160. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831218771303

Ng, W. (2012). Can we teach digital natives digital literacy? *Computers & Education*, *59*(3), 1065–1078. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2012.04.016

Omid, M. (2022). Review of research on the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in ELT-related academic writing classrooms. *Journal of Language and Education*, *8*(2 (30)), 165–178. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2022.13395

Palermo, C., & Wilson, J. (2020). Implementing automated writing evaluation in different instructional contexts: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of Writing Research*, *12*(1), 63–108. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2020.12.01.04

Shi, W., & Han, J. (2014). Research on writing samples from the perspective of metadiscourse. *English Language Teaching*, *7*(11), 151–158. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n11p151

Simpson, A. (2016). Designing pedagogic strategies for dialogic learning in higher education. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, *25*(2), 135–151. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2015.1038580

Strobl, C., Ailhaud, E., Benetos, K., Devitt, A., Kruse, O., Proske, A., & Rapp, C. (2019). Digital support for academic writing: A review of technologies and pedagogies. *Computers & Education*, *131*, 33–48. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.12.005

Tardy, C. M. (2022). English for academic purposes. In *Handbook of Practical Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 55–67). Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003106609-5/english-academic-purposes-christine-tardy

Wegerif, R. (2013). *Dialogic: Education for the internet age*. Routledge. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203111222?urlappend=%3Futm_source%3Dresearchgate.net%26utm_medium%3Darticle

Wegerif, R., & Major, L. (2019). Buber, educational technology, and the expansion of dialogic space. *AI & Society*, *34*(1), 109–119. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-018-0828-6

Weng, X., & Chiu, T. K. F. (2023). Instructional design and learning outcomes of intelligent computer assisted language learning: Systematic review in the field. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, *4*, 100117. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2022.100117

Williams, C., & Beam, S. (2019). Technology and writing: Review of research. *Computers & Education*, *128*, 227–242. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2018.09.024

Zeleke, Y. D. (2022). Investigating the implementation of process approach to the teaching and learning of writing skills: The case of Ethiopian university. *Journal of English Teaching and Learning Issues*, *5*(1), 63–80. https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.21043/jetli.v5i1.13649

Zhang, Z. V., & Hyland, K. (2018). Student engagement with teacher and automated feedback on L2 writing. *Assessing Writing*, *36*(5), 90–102. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2018.02.004

Zheng, B., & Warschauer, M. (2017). Epilogue: Second language writing in the age of computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *36*, 61–67. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2017.05.014

***This page intentionally left blank***