CZU: 81’25:378-057.87:[001.89:004.8] https://doi.org/10.59295/teia2025.02

EXPLORING HUMAN-AI INTERACTION IN ACADEMIC WRITING: INSIGHTS FROM TRANSLATION STUDENTS

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This article examines the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools by second- and third-year translation students in research projects and diploma papers. Tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, and DeepL support content generation, paraphrasing, terminology management, and coherence, enhancing linguistic accuracy and argumentative clarity. Drawing on studies in AI-assisted education, the article highlights how students use AI to refine argumentation, strengthen academic language, and clarify theoretical frameworks, while addressing concerns about academic integrity, overreliance, and authorship. To respond to these challenges, a pedagogical framework promoting ethical AI use, student autonomy, and critical awareness is proposed, supported by qualitative insights from student work and instructor observations during the diploma writing process and defence at the Translation and Interpreting program, Moldova State University.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence (AI), academic writing, translation studies, undergraduates, ethics*

INTERACŢIUNEA OM–IA ÎN SCRIEREA ACADEMICĂ: PERSPECTIVE ALE STUDENŢILOR LA TRADUCERE

Prezentul articol analizează utilizarea instrumentelor de inteligență artificială (IA) de către studenții din anii doi și trei ai programului de traducere, în cadrul proiectului de cercetare și a tezei de licență. Instrumente precum ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini și DeepL sprijină generarea de conținut, parafrazarea, gestionarea terminologiei și coerența textului, îmbunătățind acuratețea lingvistică și claritatea argumentării. Pe baza studiilor privind educația asistată de IA, acest studiu evidențiază modul în care studenții utilizează IA pentru a perfecționa argumentarea, a consolida limbajul academic și a clarifica cadrele teoretice, abordând în același timp probleme legate de integritatea academică, supra-dependență și autorat. Pentru a răspunde acestor provocări, propunem un cadru pedagogic care promovează utilizarea etică a IA, autonomia studenților și conștientizarea critică, susținut de perspective calitative obținute din lucrările studenților și observațiile cadrelor didactice în timpul redactării și susținerii publice a tezelor de licență în cadrul programului de Traducere și Interpretare la Universitatea de Stat din Moldova.

Cuvinte cheie : *Inteligență artificială (IA), scriere academică, traductologie, studenți, etică*

Introduction. International AI guidelines and Moldova State University realities

Although certain studies conducted in recent years are more categorical in their assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of using Artificial intelligence (AI) in academic settings, they emphasise "the need to increase the integration of AI into translation studies education" [1, p. 151], while also pointing out that "the use of AI weakens memory and leads to laziness […] and that AI undermines the teacher-student relationship" [1, p. 151]. In contrast, other studies underline the interdependent relationship between Translation Studies and AI, stressing the need for collaboration between both fields [2, p.179]. Additionally, a significant change in the attitudes of academic institutions is evident, as they are not only accepting but also supportive of AI incorporation. They are "welcoming ChatGPT into educational programs through curriculum integration" and "creating regulations which would help teachers exploit AI resources properly", while promoting "discussions of its restrictions" to safeguard "intellectual authenticity" in student assignments [3, p. 68].

Artificial intelligence is a branch of computer science focused on creating systems and algorithms that can mimic, comprehend, and replicate certain aspects of human intelligence. It encompasses the capacity to gain knowledge from experience, to address issues, and to adjust to novel circumstances. "Many AI systems exist and are operating behind the scenes in large numbers affecting a variety of aspects. However, a significant development in AI occurred in November 2022 when the San Francisco based company OpenAI released to the public their Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer: ChatGPT. ChatGPT is a Large Language Model (LLM) chatbot that uses Natural Language Processing (NLP) to create human-like responses to users' prompts." [4, p.1].

The year 2023 saw a swift growth of AI tools like ChatGPT in Moldova, where they gained popularity in both academic and professional environments. These resources have been more widely embraced in education, creating both excitement and concern about their impact on teaching, learning, and academic honesty. Research indicates that students view ChatGPT as an interactive, inspiring, and helpful educational tool, appreciating its transparency, organisation, and human-like communication [5]. However, worries remain about the reliability of sources, the accuracy of citations, and the use of idiomatic expressions [6, p. 4].

Although higher education institutions acknowledge the potential of AI, they encounter difficulties in upholding academic integrity. D. R. E. Cotton, P. A. Cotton, and R. J. Shipway [7, p. 229-230] stressed the importance of balancing the opportunities and risks linked to AI, calling on universities to create robust policies that tackle ethical and academic issues. Likewise, G. M. Currie emphasised ChatGPT's tendency to produce mistakes and false data, which compromises professionalism and academic integrity [8]. S. Vaccino-Salvadore additionally contended that ethical factors such as privacy, bias, reliability, and authenticity should steer AI implementation in educational settings [9].

Several reviews and empirical studies have addressed the transformative capabilities of ChatGPT in higher education. D. Baidoo-Anu and L. O. Ansah reviewed literature showcasing its potential to promote individualised, interactive learning and assist forma-

tive assessment, while cautioning about misinformation, data bias, and privacy concerns. The authors suggest cooperation among educators, researchers, and policymakers to guarantee the safe and effective use of AI in education [10, p. 55-57].

In practical educational settings, N.T.T. Huong investigated the use of ChatGPT in translation education, finding that the tool successfully aided students' translation activities and involvement, although it needed instructional oversight to promote responsible usage [11, p. 605-606].

Together, these studies indicate that although ChatGPT provides significant educational benefits, its drawbacks, including factual errors and ethical as well as cognitive issues, require careful consideration and established institutional guidelines for responsible implementation in higher education. Numerous educational organisations are developing policies that require students to disclose or properly cite AI assistance. However, the *New Guide for University Ethics* (*Noul Ghid de etică universitară*), published on Moldova State University's website and institutional communication platforms in September 2025, lacks mention of AI or best practice recommendations to assist educators and learners in ethically and effectively utilising AI in education. Currently, there are no policies or institutional guidelines that cover these provisions. Conversely, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj has released and made public the perspective of its Scientific Council regarding artificial intelligence in scholarly writing. The *Annex to the Decision on recommendations for the use of artificial intelligence in academic writing from Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj (2024)* outlines provisions concerning training and education regarding the use of AI in generating knowledge and in academic writing, intellectual property and responsibility [12]. The Annex also lists a set of principles, requirements and recommendations for the responsible use of AI [12, p.7-8].

At international level, several universities have also implemented policies and guidelines to regulate the use of AI in education. The Russell Group has developed a set of principles for the use of generative AI tools in education, aimed at helping students and staff become AI-literate and use such tools effectively and appropriately in the learning process, while maintaining academic rigour and integrity [13]. Similarly, the University of Oslo upholds important principles for educators, emphasising the safe and responsible use of AI, the integration of tools that support students' learning outcomes, and the development of critical thinking when assessing AI-generated material [14]. Stanford University has introduced an Honor Code policy on the use of generative AI, specifying that AI assistance should be treated like help from another person unless the course instructor states otherwise [15]. Harvard University has also introduced a set of Guidelines for the use of generative AI tools, aligned with its existing Code of Honor, which commits the academic community to producing knowledge ethically and responsibly [16]. Similarly, Erasmus University Rotterdam has established a set of "golden rules" for the use of generative AI (GenAI), which share common elements with policies at universities in other countries, particularly regarding permissible uses of AI [17]. In educational contexts, students are required to be transparent about AI usage; any work generated with a GenAI tool without proper acknowledgment is considered academic fraud. Students are also encouraged to seek the instructor's permission to clarify whether and how GenAI may be used in their coursework and research. These guidelines are jus-

tified primarily on the grounds of data security and privacy protection, aiming to prevent the potential loss or misuse of sensitive information. Additionally, Erasmus University Rotterdam has issued specific guidelines on the legitimate and responsible use of GenAI in PhD research.

At a broader European level, the European University Association's Learning and Teaching Steering Committee has outlined key considerations for higher education in response to the widespread concern and debate surrounding ChatGPT and similar AI tools. The committee emphasises that banning AI and other innovative digital technologies would be impractical and unlikely to succeed. Instead, educational institutions should adapt their teaching, learning, and assessment practices to ensure the meaningful and appropriate integration of AI [18]. Recital 56 on high-risk AI systems in education states that "The deployment of AI systems in education is important to promote high-quality digital education and training and to allow all learners and teachers to acquire and share the necessary digital skills and competences, including media literacy, and critical thinking, to take an active part in the economy, society, and in democratic processes." [19].

Turning to potential risks, Kovari Attila highlights the limitations associated with the use of AI. He argues that, while generative AI tools such as ChatGPT offer substantial benefits, they simultaneously pose a real risk of facilitating scientific misconduct. Despite their potential advantages, the integration of ChatGPT into educational settings raises serious ethical concerns, particularly in relation to its capacity to promote plagiarism and other forms of academic fraud [20]. Therefore, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers must continuously monitor and critically examine the evolving landscape of ChatGPT and other generative AI technologies.

Methodology of the study

The present study focuses on investigating the impact of AI on the academic writing of undergraduates at the Department of Translation, Interpretation and Applied Linguistics, Moldova State University. It explores the extent to which AI tools influence students' linguistic competences, and overall research skills and writing proficiency. By assessing these dimensions, the study aims to generate insights beneficial to educational institutions, teachers, and students alike. Furthermore, this study highlights both advantages and limitations associated with the integration of ChatGPT in the academic environment, offering concrete recommendations for its effective and responsible implementation within educational settings to enhance student learning outcomes.

To evaluate the impact of AI on the quality and effectiveness of academic writing and research among undergraduates in Translation Studies, the study employed a research design combining a review of relevant literature with direct observational research and analysis of student survey responses. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and completed by the respondents in November 2025. In the *Discussion and observations* section below, we present and analyse selected excerpts of student work, such as official correspondence via email, research projects, and diploma papers, drawn from the academic writing of second- and third-year students during the 2024-

2025 academic year. Drawing on the survey findings, the research question guiding this study is: *In what ways do students from the Translation and interpreting program at Moldova State University perceive and use AI tools in academic writing, and how do these tools influence their writing quality, confidence, and ethical awareness?*

Discussions and observations

Following the description of the research design and methodology, this section presents the discussions and observations derived from both the survey data and direct observations. By examining concrete examples of student writing, the study seeks to highlight how AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, are being used in practice, and the potential implications for academic writing quality, research skills, and ethical conduct. Observations from student-teacher interactions and diploma paper submissions indicate that AI is increasingly employed not only for generating content in diploma papers but also for communicating with the scientific coordinator. A notable trend is the use of highly formalised and polished email language, which suggests AI-assisted writing. *Exhibit 1* below shows overly polite forms of address, formal phrasing, and near-perfect grammar and lexis.

Exhibit 1. Sample of AI-generated email to the scientific coordinator (third-year student)

- Good evening,
"I am respectfully submitting Chapter 1 of my thesis for your review. I would be most grateful if you could kindly take a look at it at your convenience.
Please accept my apologies for sending this on a Saturday evening and at such a late hour. You will notice that certain pages have been intentionally left blank, as they are placeholders for sections I intend to complete in the upcoming stages of the thesis.
Thank you very much for your time, attention, and the guidance you continue to provide.
With highest regards"

While AI can support the refinement of email communication, its use should be transparent and accompanied by awareness of potential ethical considerations. Moreover, given the high volume of emails that teachers receive, it may be advisable for students to write formal but more concise messages.

Referring to the second-year research project, in academic writing, particularly within the theoretical framework, chapter titles should progress from general to specific and from conceptual definitions to applications or evaluations, ensuring logical flow and clarity for the reader. The table of contents presented in Exhibit 2 demonstrates a lack of cohesion.

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Exhibit 2. AI-generated Table of contents for a research project (second-year student)

Subchapter 1.3, which outlines theoretical approaches to translation, should follow 1.1, as it provides the analytical frameworks for subsequent discussion. Similarly, 2.1, "Classification of Food Idioms in English", is primarily theoretical and descriptive, and would be more appropriately placed within the theoretical chapter rather than the practical analysis. In subchapter 2.2, "Case Study: English-Romanian Translation of Selected Food Idioms", supervisory tutorials revealed that the student did not have a clear understanding of the concept of a case-study methodology, including its implications and how to apply it effectively within the research framework.

Suspicions about the use of AI in producing the paragraph in *Exhibit 3* arose due to the student's reliance on sophisticated vocabulary, such as "referential integrity", and the presence of syntactically correct but stylistically uncharacteristic sentences.

The translation employs descriptive equivalence, a procedure often used for culturally specific or non-standard terms. By rendering the Romanian botanical name into a vivid, image-rich English phrase, the translator ensures clarity and maintains the term's referential integrity. This approach avoids ambiguity by prioritising transparency in the target culture. It exemplifies Newmark's principle of balancing accuracy with accessibility when dealing with obscure flora.

Exhibit 3. Illustrative AI paragraph for the diploma paper's practical chapter

Furthermore, the paragraph above lacks concrete linguistic evidence to support its claims, which casts doubt on the authenticity of the text. Given the teacher's awareness of the student's typical academic writing style and linguistic proficiency, these inconsistencies intensified concerns. When asked whether the text was generated with ChatGPT, the student admitted using it and promised to revise the content by adding personal input to ensure alignment with their own style.

The fragment in *Exhibit 4* displays several stylistic and structural features indicative of an AI-generated introduction to the diploma paper. The content is very descriptive, imprecise, lacking engagement with specific theoretical implications and omitting references or citations.

This theoretical and empirical investigation establishes several fundamental conclusions that underscore the inherent complexity and dynamic nature of audiovisual translation, particularly within the specialized domain of crime language.

The analysis confirms that audiovisual translation, particularly subtitling, operates as a fundamentally polysemiotic communication process where meaning construction depends on the intricate interplay of verbal, visual, and auditory elements. This multimodal characteristic distinguishes AVT from traditional text-based translation, requiring subtitlers to navigate complex semiotic relationships while operating under severe spatial, temporal, and technical constraints. The subtitler must simultaneously process linguistic content, visual narratives, sound effects, and musical scores to produce coherent target-language subtitles that preserve both semantic accuracy and pragmatic effectiveness.

Exhibit 4. AI-generated introduction to the diploma paper (third-year student, excerpt)

Although the student refers to an "empirical investigation", no methodological elaboration is provided in the paper. Similarly, the so-called "fundamental conclusions" are overly general and lack analytical depth. Additionally, several technical expressions such as "polysemiotic communication process", "operating under severe constraints", and "pragmatic effectiveness" are introduced without definition, contextualisation, or further development within the text.

Students are constantly reminded that the conclusion of their diploma paper should directly address the research aim and objectives, and that the findings should present concrete, verifiable data derived from their own investigation. However, *Exhibit 5a,* illustrates the use of generic, unspecific statements that fail to demonstrate any original research contribution.

This study explored the complexities of translating humour and culture-bound references in Moldovan short films, focusing on the specific challenges and strategies involved in transferring such elements from Romanian into English through subtitling. The research underlined the essential role of humour in film as a cultural and linguistic phenomenon that often reflects local traditions, social norms, and historical contexts. Given the inherently subjective nature of humour, its translation requires more than mere linguistic expertise, it demands a profound understanding of the cultural and contextual framework within which the humour is embedded.

The study also reinforced the importance of context-sensitive translation practices, where the subtitler's role extends beyond mere linguistic conversion to that of a cultural mediator. This mediation ensures that the humour resonates with international audiences while respecting the cultural authenticity of the original work. In the case of Moldovan cinema, where the humour often serves to critique societal norms or reflect national identity, the subtitler must navigate delicate cultural nuances, balancing between fidelity to the source and accessibility for the target audience.

Exhibit 5a. AI-generated conclusions to the diploma paper (third-year student, excerpt)

Linguistic units such as *"The research underlined the essential role of humour [...]"* and *"The study also reinforced the importance of [...]"* exemplify content without ana-

lytical depth or personal input. Additionally, *Exhibit 5b*, contains vague formulations that obscure rather than clarify the discussion.

words. In some cases, the same idea can be found in both Romanian and English, and the translation can be done easily. But in other cases, the translator must use a different proverb, rewrite the meaning, or explain it in a simple sentence. What matters most is that the translated version keeps the same message and moral value as the original. Proverbs often express important values like honesty, responsibility, respect, patience, and wisdom. These values are universal, but the way they are said can be different from one culture to another. For example, a Romanian proverb may use an image from the countryside or from traditional life, while an English one may be more general or direct. Even if the values are the same, the words and images are not. This is why translators must find the best way to express the idea in the target language, without losing the meaning or the feeling of the original. The paper also presented several translation strategies that can help in this process. Some of them are literal translation, adaptation, paraphrase, and functional equivalence. In the practical part of the paper, we saw how these strategies can be

Exhibit 5b. AI-generated conclusions to the diploma paper (third-year student, excerpt)

Such approximations like *"specific challenges and strategies", "in some cases", "in other cases", "the paper presented several translation strategies"* and *"some of them are"* indicate a lack of critical engagement with the subject matter and weaken the empirical value of the findings.

Transitioning to the student survey responses, we found that all participants reported at least some experience with using AI tools in academic writing. The frequency of use varies considerably (Fig. 1): while the majority (42.5%) claim using it only occasionally or rarely (12.5%), some rely on AI daily (12.5%) or weekly (30%).

Fig. 1 How often do you use AI tools for academic writing (essays, individual work reports, research project (2nd year), diploma paper (3rd year)?

40 responses

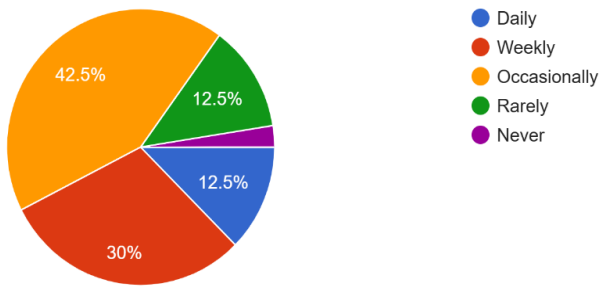


Figure 1. Frequency of using AI tools in academic writing

According to the data in Figure 2, the most intensively used tools by our students are ChatGPT (55%) and DeepL (22.5%).

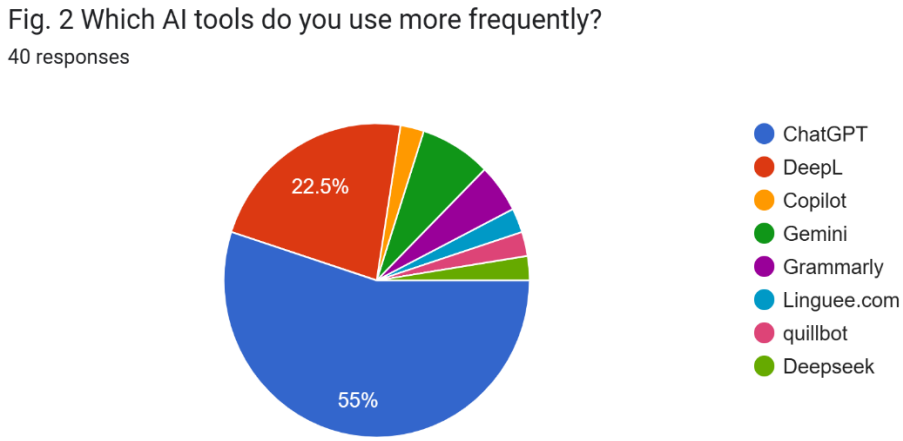


Figure 2. Types of tools used by undergraduates.

Also, students tend to use AI for a limited but academically significant set of activities as reflected in Figure 3.

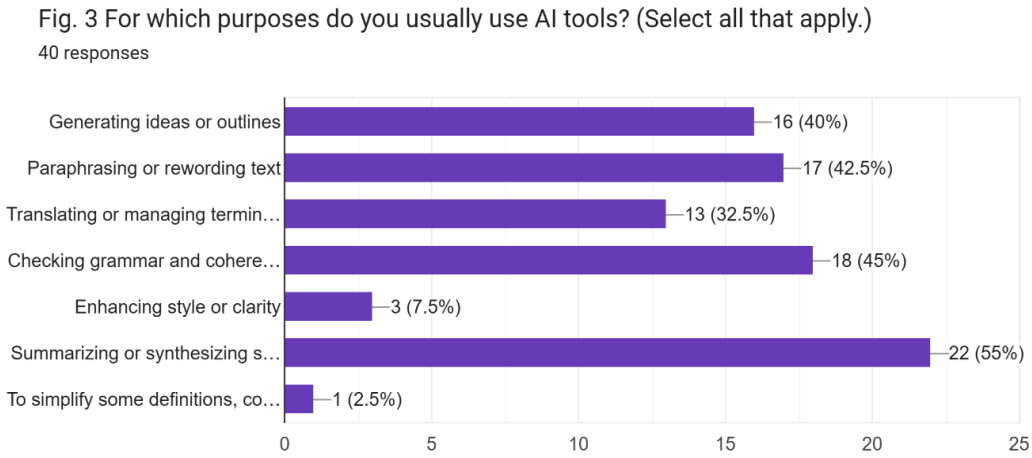


Figure 3. Purposes for which undergraduates use AI in academic writing.

The most common purposes include: summarising or synthesising information (55%), checking grammar and coherence (45%), paraphrasing or rewording (42.5%), generating ideas or outlines (40%).

According to *Figure 4*, AI is used primarily for editing (27.5%), conducting literature review (27.5%), and drafting (20%) during the preparation of research projects or diploma papers.

Fig. 4 At which stage of your research project/ diploma paper writing process have you used AI most?

40 responses

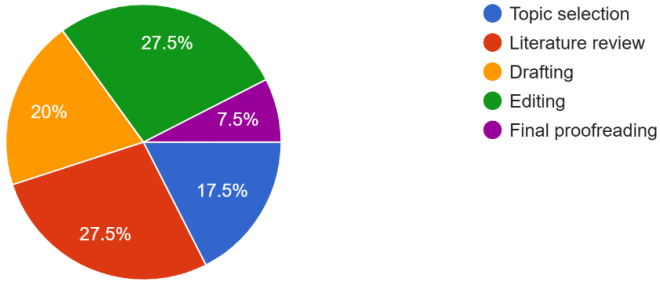


Figure 4. Stages at which students use AI in the academic writing process

Figure 5 below reflects the way students conceptualise their attitude to AI.

Fig. 5 How would you describe your overall attitude toward using AI in academic writing?

40 responses

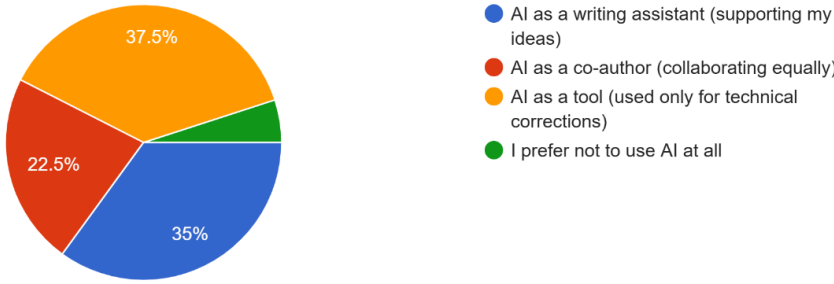


Figure 5. Students' perceptions about using AI

37.5% of respondents view AI strictly as a technical tool for grammar and terminology checks, while 35% describe it as a writing assistant that supports idea development. A smaller but noteworthy group (22.5%) consider AI a co-author, particularly when they use it to structure arguments, generate draft content, or expand sections of their papers. Only one respondent expressed a clear preference for not using AI at all.

Looking at all responses, a few advantages were reiterated: time-saving, especially when searching for theoretical sources or editing drafts; improved clarity, coherence, and academic tone; faster access to ideas, terminology, and conceptual explanations; support in organising complex information and structuring chapters; expanded vocabulary and stylistic enhancement; assistance with paraphrasing and understanding difficult theoretical passages. Some students also reported that AI enabled them to quickly locate useful resources, generate bibliographical suggestions, and obtain help with formatting tasks or glossaries.

Despite the perceived usefulness, students consistently expressed concerns about the following risks of using AI: inaccurate, vague, or fabricated information; wrong or

non-existent references; risk of plagiarism or unintentional academic misconduct; loss of originality, creativity, or critical thinking due to over-reliance on AI; errors in terminology, especially in specialised translation contexts; overly general or repetitive ideas produced by the system; degradation of individual writing skills. Many students reported mixed experiences: while AI could explain difficult concepts clearly, it sometimes provided misleading facts or invented sources, requiring constant verification.

When asked about their motivations for using AI, students reported relying on these tools to check grammar and style, paraphrase and summarise texts, generate ideas for academic writing, translate and clarify terminology, locate bibliographical sources, and organise content.

Referring to the positive versus negative experience with AI, students reported that AI tools primarily supported idea generation, structuring, and time-saving in academic writing, helping with grammar, paraphrasing, summarising, and finding sources. Positive experiences also included clearer understanding of complex concepts, improved coherence, and drafting support. Negative experiences centered on inaccurate or fabricated information, occasional errors in outputs, reduced originality, and the risk of overreliance. Overall, AI is seen as a useful support tool, but students emphasised the need for supervision and fact-checking to ensure academic integrity.

Conclusions

Analysing undergraduates' academic writing demonstrates that AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, are becoming a practice, often extending beyond text generation to email communication and document structuring. While students benefit from improved fluency, formality and linguistic accuracy, our observations have revealed recurring patterns of over-polished language, vague argumentation, and insufficient methodological grounding which are features typical of AI-generated content. These raise concerns related to authenticity, academic integrity, and the undermining of essential research skills, such as critical analysis, argument development, and understanding of research methodology.

The fact that AI tools have become an integral part of our students' academic writing process is reflected in the results obtained after collecting the answers from the participants in the survey. While AI tools are valued for their efficiency and linguistic support, students remain cautious about the risks of inaccuracy, plagiarism, and overdependence. The findings highlight a clear need for AI literacy, for institutional guidance on proper AI use, ethical boundaries, and verification strategies. This reflects both the transformative potential of AI in academic contexts and the challenges it poses for academic integrity and skill development.

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ANNEX. *Survey on the use of AI in academic writing*

Dear 3rd year students,
This survey aims to collect information on how you use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT, DeepL, Claude, etc.) in the process of academic writing. Your answers will remain confidential and will only be used for academic research purposes.
Thank you for your participation.

1. Have you ever used any AI tools during your studies?
2. Which AI tools do you use more frequently?
3. How often do you use AI tools for academic writing (essays, individual work reports, research project (2nd year), diploma paper (3rd year)?
4. For which purposes do you usually use AI tools? *(Select all that apply.)* At which stage of your research project/ diploma paper writing process have you used AI most?
5. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *AI tools help me improve my academic writing quality. (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3= neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree) **
6. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *AI tools save me time when writing or revising.*
7. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *AI tools help me develop more coherent and structured arguments.*
8. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *AI tools assist me in finding accurate terminology and phrasing*.
9. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *Using AI increases my confidence in academic writing.*
10. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *I am concerned about plagiarism and errors when using AI tools.*
11. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *Relying too much on AI may reduce my own writing skills, analytical and critical thinking*.
12. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *The boundaries between my work and AI-generated content are sometimes unclear*.
13. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *Universities should provide clearer guidelines on the ethical use of AI.*
14. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: *AI tools sometimes generate inaccurate or fabricated information ("hallucinations"), which limits their reliability in academic writing.*
15. How would you describe your overall attitude toward using AI in academic writing?
16. In your opinion, what are the main advantages of using AI in writing your diploma paper?
17. What are the main risks or disadvantages you perceive when using AI in academic writing?
18. Please describe any positive and/or negative experiences you have had while using AI in your research project/ diploma writing process.
19. List three prompts that you gave to an AI tool to receive support with academic writing tasks.
20. Overall, how would you rate your experience with AI tools in academic writing?