

Integrating Artificial Intelligence in Creative Writing: Boon or Barrier for EFL Students?

Sara BOULANOUAR¹
M'sila University (Algeria)
sara.boulanouar@univ-msila.dz

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Abstract: The present exploratory study investigates EFL students' perceptions of AI tools in the context of creative writing, focusing on how these technologies influence students' creativity, motivation, and skill development. Conducted with Master 1 students at Batna 2 University, the research used a mixed-methods approach to collect quantitative and qualitative data through an online questionnaire. Findings reveal that while a majority of students use AI tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Microsoft Copilot for grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, and idea generation, they remain cautious about the implications for originality and academic integrity. Students viewed AI as a support tool rather than a replacement for their own creativity, expressing concerns about over-reliance. The results highlight the need for thoughtful integration of AI into EFL pedagogy, guided by clear ethical frameworks and a focus on fostering learner autonomy and critical engagement.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, creative writing, motivation, originality, academic integrity.

Résumé : La présente étude examine les perceptions des étudiants anglais langue étrangère concernant les outils d'intelligence artificielle dans le contexte de l'écriture créative, en mettant l'accent sur l'influence de ces technologies sur leur créativité, leur motivation et le développement de leurs compétences écrites. Menée auprès d'étudiants en première année de Master à l'Université de Batna 2, la recherche a adopté une approche méthodologique mixte pour recueillir des données quantitatives et qualitatives via un questionnaire en ligne. Les résultats révèlent que, bien que la majorité des étudiants utilisent des outils d'IA tels que ChatGPT, Grammarly et Microsoft Copilot pour la correction grammaticale, l'enrichissement du vocabulaire et la génération d'idées. Les étudiants restent prudents quant aux implications sur l'originalité et l'intégrité académique. Ils perçoivent l'IA comme un outil d'accompagnement utile, plutôt que comme un substitut à leur propre créativité, exprimant des inquiétudes face à une dépendance excessive. Les résultats soulignent la nécessité d'une intégration réfléchie de l'IA dans la pédagogie de la langue étrangère, guidée par des cadres éthiques clairs et axée sur le développement de l'autonomie des apprenants et de leur esprit critique.

Mots-clés : Intelligence artificielle, écriture créative, motivation, originalité, intégrité académique.

Introduction

The increasing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in educational settings, particularly in the field of language and writing pedagogy, is reshaping how students engage with the writing skill. AI-powered tools, such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot among others, are now widely accessible, offering instantaneous grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, idea generation, and text generation for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). These means have the potential to bridge gaps in language proficiency and reduce the cognitive effort associated with creative expression in a second language learning setting (Ahmed et al., 2024; Alzubi et al., 2025).

However, this technological headway also brings new educational and ethical dilemmas. Critics argue that while AI can frame and support the writing process, it may also undermine learners' development of critical thinking, voice, and originality which are key components of creative writing (Hidayat & Sujarwati, 2024). Additionally, there is growing concern about over reliance on AI tools and the potential decrease of students' motivation to develop and improve their own writing skills (Wang et al. , 2023).

In writing, where originality, creativity, and personal voice are essential, the use of AI-generated content raises concerns about authorship and academic integrity. Numerous educational institutions are still grappling with whether AI should be accepted in writing assessments (Berk & Aydin, 2025).

While AI writing tools are increasingly integrated into EFL classrooms, much of the existing research focuses on their effectiveness in grammar correction and structural improvement. However, less attention has been given to how these tools impact learners' creative expression and motivation to write in a second language. EFL learners often struggle not just with accuracy, but with finding inspiration and self-confidence in their writing. AI tools, especially those with generative capabilities, have the potential to act as catalysts for creativity and sustained motivation. This study seeks to explore how AI can enhance, not replace, students' creative engagement in writing, and how it affects their motivation to write in English. To fulfil this objective the following questions have been raised:

1. To what extent do English language learners use AI tools in their writing practice?
2. How do learners perceive the usefulness of AI tools in improving their English writing and creativity?
3. How does AI influence students' motivation and confidence in developing their own writing skills?

1. Methodology

Using a mixed-methods design, this exploratory study investigates how EFL Master 1 students at Batna 2 University engage with AI-powered tools in EFL writing, with a particular focus on their motivation and creative expression. Data were collected through an online questionnaire administered via the university's Moodle platform during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. The questionnaire remained accessible for a period of 10 days, allowing respondents ample time to participate at their convenience.

1.1. The Research Instrument

The questionnaire was designed with five sections that support the study's three central research questions.

The first section elicited demographic information related to students' English proficiency level and the frequency of their creative writing practice.

The second section investigated the use of AI tools, asking whether students employed applications such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, or Microsoft Copilot, and for what purposes (grammar correction, vocabulary enrichment, idea generation, or paraphrasing).

The third section examined students' perceptions of AI in writing through Likert-scale items measuring the extent to which they believed AI improved English writing, enhanced creativity, equaled human creativity, limited originality, or posed ethical challenges in academic contexts.

The fourth section explored students' attitudes toward the use of AI in evaluative settings by asking whether AI-generated text should be permitted in writing competitions.

The fifth section addressed the influence of AI on learners' motivation and skill development by probing whether reliance on AI reduced their incentive to improve their writing independently.

In addition to these closed-ended items, several open-ended questions invited participants to reflect on the perceived benefits, limitations, and ethical considerations of AI-assisted writing, thereby providing qualitative depth to the data.

1.2. Population and Sampling

The population for the study is Master One- Language and Culture (LC) students at Batna 2 University. A total of 56 out of 89 enrolled students in this section completed the questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of approximately 63%. According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), a response rate above 60% is generally considered acceptable for ensuring sample representativeness in educational research, thereby supporting the reliability of the study's findings.

1.3. Data Analysis Procedure

Quantitative data from the closed-ended questions were analyzed using SPSS software to generate descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages.

Open-ended responses were analyzed following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework. After repeated reading for familiarity, initial codes (e.g., AI as tutor, loss of originality, confidence booster, and ethical ambiguity) were generated. Related codes were grouped to form broader themes, which were then refined and clearly defined. Three main themes emerged: (1) AI as a supportive tool, (2) concerns about creativity and originality, and (3) ethical and motivational challenges. These themes were integrated into the findings to provide deeper insight into students’ perceptions of AI in creative writing.

2. Findings

2.1. English Proficiency and Writing Habits

Table 01 English Proficiency and Writing Habits

Question	Response	Percentage
English Proficiency	Intermediate	57.7%
	Beginner	26.9%
	Advanced	15.4%
Frequency of Creative Writing in English	Occasionally	53.8%
	Rarely	34.6%
	Frequently	11.5%

Table 1 shows that participants are at an intermediate level, with relatively infrequent creative writing practice. This suggests a demographic that may benefit from support tools like AI to build confidence or bridge skill gaps.

2.2. Use of AI Tools

Table 2 Use of AI Tools in Writing

Used AI Tools for Writing	Yes	76.9%
	No	23.1%

Findings in Table 2 reveal that there is strong adoption of AI tools, with practical applications focused on low-level language mechanics and idea development rather than full-content creation. Most commonly used tools:

ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Copilot. The mentioned AI tools are primarily used for:

- Improving grammar and vocabulary
- Generating ideas
- Rewriting or paraphrasing

2.3. Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence in Writing

Table 3 Students' Attitudes towards the Use of AI in EFL Learning

Theme	Mean	SD
AI helps improve English writing	3.04	0.96
AI improves creative writing	3.38	0.98
AI is as creative as human writing	2.58	1.17
AI limits creativity by providing ready-made ideas	3.42	1.45
Using AI for assignments is academic dishonesty	3.04	1.43
Reliance on chatbots for writing	2.58	1.27

1= completely disagree, 2= disagree 3=agree, 4= completely agree

Data from Table 3 reveal that students generally view AI tools as beneficial for supporting their English writing skills, with a mean score of 3.04 indicating moderate agreement. Similarly, there is slightly stronger agreement (mean = 3.38) that AI tools contribute positively to creative writing, suggesting that learners find AI moderately helpful in generating ideas and enhancing expression. However, participants largely disagreed with the notion that AI is as creative as human writers (mean = 2.58), emphasizing a belief in the superiority of human originality.

Concerns about AI's potential to stifle creativity are notable, with a relatively high mean score of 3.42, indicating that students are aware that relying too heavily on ready-made ideas could limit their own creative thinking. Ethical perceptions were mixed, as shown by the mean score of 3.04 regarding the use of AI for assignments being considered academic dishonesty, reflecting a lack of clear consensus.

Finally, the relatively low mean score of 2.58 on reliance on chatbots suggests that while students appreciate AI support, they do not heavily depend on it, treating it more as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for their own writing efforts. Overall, the results point to a cautious optimism: students recognize the supportive role of AI but remain mindful of its creative and ethical limitations.

Table 4 Students’ Views on the Use of AI in Competitions

Should AI-generated Text Be Allowed in Competitions?	No	53.8%
	Yes	46.2%

As shown in Table 4, the fact that 53.8% of participants said “No” and 46.2% said “Yes” to the question “*Should AI-generated text be allowed in competitions?*” suggests a near-even split in student opinion, highlighting the ethical and creative tension surrounding AI’s role in evaluative or high-stakes writing contexts.

2.4. Impact on Motivation & Skill Development

Table 5 AI impact on Motivation

Using AI Reduces Motivation to Develop Writing Skills?	Sometimes	46.2%
	Yes	30.8%
	No	23.1%

Table 5 shows that the majority of participants (46.2%) responded with “Sometimes”, while 30.8% said “Yes”, and only 23.1% said “No” to whether using AI reduces their motivation to improve their writing skills.

This distribution indicates that many students experience ambivalence in their use of AI. AI does not appear to inherently diminish motivation. However, it may at times reduce students’ inclination to practice independently. This effect is particularly evident when tasks are perceived as repetitive or when the output generated by AI is considered sufficiently adequate. While AI serves as a valuable tool, excessive reliance on it may compromise learner autonomy. Over time, this reliance could also hinder the development of long-term skills.

3. Discussion

3.1. English Proficiency and Creative Writing Habits

The participants in this study were largely intermediate English users, who reported only occasional engagement with creative writing. This indicates a learner group that is still developing both fluency and confidence in written expression. These findings are consistent with Alzubi et al. (2025), who found that intermediate-level EFL learners are more inclined to seek technological support, particularly when facing challenges such as vocabulary limitations, writer’s block, or idea formulation. Occasional creative writing practice also suggests that these learners may benefit from tools that scaffold the writing process and provide cognitive and/or linguistic support.

3.2. Use of AI Tools for Writing

A substantial majority of participants reported having used AI tools like ChatGPT, Grammarly, or Microsoft Copilot. Most students used these tools for grammar correction, vocabulary enhancement, idea generation, and paraphrasing. These findings confirm that AI was seen primarily as a writing assistant rather than a content creator. This aligns with Ahmed et al. (2024), who observed that students tend to use AI for surface-level or structural support rather than relying on it for composing entire texts.

Qualitative responses reinforced this perception. Students described AI as a "tutor" or "assistant" that helped reduce the cognitive load of writing. Several students shared that AI assisted in idea generation, refine sentence structures, and expand vocabulary, making the writing process more efficient and manageable. These reflections illustrate how AI tools are being meaningfully integrated into the writing process by learners who still want to maintain control over their work.

3.3. Perceived Benefits and Limitations of AI in Writing

Quantitative data showed moderate agreement that AI contributes positively to writing skills and creative writing, indicating that students perceive AI as helpful, though not transformational. However, participants disagreed with the notion that AI is as creative as humans, and expressed concern that it might limit creativity. This mixed perception reflects cautious optimism: learners appreciate AI's assistance but remain skeptical of its ability to match human originality.

These findings resonate with Hidayat and Sujarwati (2024), who reported that students valued AI tools for editing and generating ideas but feared overuse could suppress their own creative thinking and voice. Open-ended responses echoed these concerns, with students expressing worry about becoming dependent on AI or losing their authorship identity. One student noted, *"I feel like it's not really my work if I use it too much,"* highlighting a perceived loss of originality when relying heavily on AI support.

Additionally, some students pointed out those AI-generated responses can feel generic or out of context, requiring critical thinking and modification to adapt to the assignment effectively. This suggests that while AI can modernize parts of the writing process, it still demands detailed prompt and interpretation from the user. This is a sign that learners are not passively accepting AI input but are thinking critically about how to integrate it meaningfully.

3.4. Motivation and Ethical Considerations

Another notable theme was the effect of AI use on learners' motivation and perceptions of academic integrity. Participants felt that AI reduced, to some extent, their motivation to improve independently. These findings raise concerns about long-term skill development and learner autonomy. As Zhao (2023) argue,

while AI tools can lower barriers to writing, they can also risk creating a false sense of mastery if learners begin to outsource cognitive effort rather than build their skills over time.

The ethical implications of AI use were also explored. Opinions were divided on whether using AI for writing assignments constituted academic dishonesty. A large number of students did not support allowing AI-generated content in writing competitions. This ethical ambivalence mirrors concerns raised in recent literature about authorship, plagiarism, and originality in AI-assisted writing (Smutny & Schreiberova, 2020; Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020). Open-ended responses further emphasized this unease, with several students expressing uncertainty about the boundaries of acceptable AI use in academic contexts. This ambiguity signals an urgent need for clearer institutional policies and guidance to help students navigate the ethical landscape of AI writing.

Together, the quantitative and qualitative findings describe students who are both eager and cautious: they recognize the benefits of AI in overcoming linguistic and structural challenges; yet remain deeply concerned about originality, creativity, and ethical responsibility. These insights support the growing consensus in EFL literature that while AI tools can democratize access to writing support, they must be embedded in a pedagogical framework that emphasizes agency, critical thinking, and ethical literacy (Erol., 2025).

Educators should consider incorporating structured AI use into writing instruction, encouraging reflective practice, guided exploration, and awareness of both the strengths and risks of these technologies. Institutions should also prioritize the development of culturally responsive and transparent AI policies that clarify expectations around academic integrity and responsible tool use.

Conclusion

The study confirms patterns observed in current literature, revealing that while learners are increasingly embracing AI as a support tool, they continue to express apprehensions about its impact on creativity, motivation, and integrity. This reflects a broader controversy in education between leveraging technological tools for efficiency and conserving the authenticity of the teaching/learning process. While AI holds transformative potential in EFL learning, and its integration is not devoid of substantial challenges. Dominant among these are concerns surrounding creativity, originality, and assessment integrity. As learners increasingly rely on AI tools for language production, the risk of homogenized thinking and diminished personal voice becomes more noticeable.

Furthermore, distinguishing between a student's authentic work and AI-generated output complicates unbiased evaluation and feedback. To truly enhance language learning, teachers must strike a careful balance by leveraging AI's abilities while actively promoting critical thinking, self-expression, and ethical

practices. Given the widespread use of AI among students, it is essential that we shift our approach, not by resisting its presence, but by learning new ways to integrate and accept it productively. This includes rethinking pedagogical methods and assessment strategies to reflect the realities of a technologically dominant learning environment.

Despite the valuable insights provided into EFL learners' insights of AI-assisted creative writing, the study bears several limitations. First, the sample size was relatively small, consisting of only 56 EFL students from Batna 2 University in Algeria. This narrow scope limits the generalizability of the findings, making it difficult to apply conclusions to a broader population. Second, the exploratory nature of the study means it only aims at identifying general trends and attitudes rather than establish cause-and-effect relationships. Employing more in-depth qualitative methods, such as a detailed analysis of writing tasks, could provide richer, more nuanced results of how learners utilize AI in their creative writing. In addition, the study relied on self-reported data from students, which may have been influenced by social desirability bias or inaccurate recall, and therefore may not fully reflect their actual writing practices. Lastly, data were collected exclusively through an online questionnaire, which limited the depth of responses; the inclusion of complementary methods such as interviews, classroom observations, or analysis of writing samples could have provided richer insights

To build on these findings, future research should consider expanding the participants' group to include EFL learners from other universities and different educational backgrounds. This would enable broader generalizations and a deeper understanding of global learner perspectives towards AI-assisted writing. Furthermore, incorporating the perspectives of teachers would be essential to apprehend how AI is being integrated into teaching practices. Classroom-based investigation or pedagogical experiments would be able to shed light on both the prospects and challenges AI presents in real-time classroom settings.

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