Vietnamese Lecturers' Emotional Responses and Regulatory Strategies Towards AI in L2 Writing

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ABSTRACT

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly changed the picture of L2 writing teaching and learning. This qualitative study explores this emotional dichotomy, drawing data from interviews and narrative frames (Barkhuizen, 2014) with nine writing lecturers of English majors from five different universities in Ho Chi Minh City. Findings reveal that positive emotions, such as excitement and satisfaction, can be observed during lesson planning and content preparation. In contrast, negative feelings of frustration, anxiety, and being overwhelmed arose from concerns over academic integrity and the decline of students' critical thinking skills. To manage these challenges, teachers are developing strategies like requiring in-class, handwritten work, establishing clear AI usage policies, and blending AI suggestions with peer and teacher feedback. This research highlights the significant emotional labor in AI adoption and underscores the urgent need for professional development that equips teachers to navigate these new pedagogical and emotional demands.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, L2 Writing, Emotion, Narrative frame

Introduction

Background of the study

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Grammarly, into educational settings has fundamentally transformed language teaching methodologies. In the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), AI has emerged as a powerful assistant for both learners and educators (Dinh & Nguyen, 2025; Zhao et al., 2025). For teachers, these tools offer unprecedented support in lesson preparation, generating discussion prompts, and facilitating decision-making processes, thus enhancing teaching practice (Almaki et al., 2025). These AI platforms greatly reduce teachers' time and effort on time-consuming administrative work, thus helping them dedicate more time to teaching innovation (Do, 2025).

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In the context of L2 writing teaching in Vietnam, teachers have employed AI for a range of purposes including content generation, language refinement, and paraphrasing (Nguyen, 2026). More significantly, ChatGPT has also been employed to support the writing grading process among a group of English teachers in Hanoi. These teachers found that ChatGPT consistently assesses students' completion of writing tasks and evaluates the flow of their ideas (Tran & Le, 2025). Impressively, the students really benefit from this GenAI intervention. Two Vietnamese researchers conducted a study to measure the effectiveness of ChatGPT in a seven-week writing course. The results showed that ChatGPT effectively helps enhance students' performance (Truong & Tran, 2024). Consequently, English writing teachers are experiencing a significant paradigm shift—moving away from traditional knowledge delivery toward guiding students on how to critically apply and interact with AI-generated information.

Problem Statement

Second language teaching is inherently an emotional profession, and introducing new, disruptive technologies like AI often engenders strong emotional responses from educators (Shen & Guo, 2024). As teachers navigate AI in writing instruction, they experience a complex emotional spectrum; they frequently report excitement, joy, pride, motivation, satisfaction, accomplishment, and confidence regarding the innovative pedagogical affordances of AI. At the same time, they experience anxiety, stress, apprehension, disappointment, and frustration stemming from feelings of technological inadequacy, a lack of clear institutional policies, and deep concerns over students' academic dishonesty, loss of creativity, and over-reliance on AI generators (Dinh & Nguyen, 2025; Shen & Guo, 2024).

Despite the abundance of studies that mostly investigate students' perceptions of the use of GenAI, there seems to be a lack of focus on teachers' emotions. In fact, teachers' emotions play a critical role in shaping their well-being, making sound instructional choices, and helping lecturers engage students (Xu et al., 2026). For this reason, a good understanding of teachers' emotions should be prioritized as a foundational step for developing sustainable institutional policies and professional development frameworks that mitigate burnout in the age of AI.

Research Objectives

This study aims to explore the emotional experiences of Vietnamese EFL teachers utilizing AI tools in L2 writing instruction. Specifically, the research objectives are:

1. To identify the specific AI tools utilized by L2 writing teachers and the pedagogical purposes for which they are employed
2. To explore the positive and negative emotions experienced by teachers when integrating AI into their L2 writing classrooms
3. To investigate the specific strategies L2 writing teachers employ to regulate and manage their AI-induced emotional states

Literature review

GenAI in education

Generative AI (GenAI) refers to the computational technique that cannot only generate images, text, and audio, but also act as a good assistant in finding materials or answering questions

(Feuerriegel et al., 2024). GenAI is a powerful educational tool because it can provide immediate feedback and support self-learning, though it still requires pedagogical training (Badger et al., 2026). GenAI is driving a paradigm shift by transforming traditional teaching and learning environments (Yang & Zhao, 2024). Generative AI tools and writing assistants such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot are now widely utilized by teachers and students in most of the writing process, providing support with brainstorming, paraphrasing, structuring ideas, and giving automated grammatical corrections (Do, 2025).

For educators, these GenAI tools offer unprecedented support, especially in saving time on paperwork and reducing administrative workload, thereby accelerating the lesson preparation process (Zhao et al., 2025). However, the integration of AI in teaching, especially in writing skills, brings some challenges for educators and learners. Teachers must play a critical role in warning students against plagiarism, academic dishonesty and hallucinations or inaccurate information (Shen & Guo, 2024)

Teachers' emotions

Language teaching is an inherently emotional profession, and disruptive technologies like GenAI can trigger a complex spectrum of affective responses among educators (Shen & Guo, 2024). On the positive side, teachers frequently report experiencing enjoyment, excitement, satisfaction, relief, passion, confidence, and pride when using GenAI (Zhao et al., 2025) . Conversely, teachers grapple with a range of negative emotions, predominantly anxiety, stress, worry, apprehension, and frustration(Shen & Guo, 2024). To navigate these emotional demands, teachers deploy various emotion regulation strategies. Grounded in Gross's Process Model of Emotion Regulation, these strategies are categorized into antecedent-focused and response-focused techniques (Seyri & Ghiasvand, 2025).

Narrative frames

To understand teachers' emotions, a suitable framework is needed. This study employed the narrative frame introduced by Barkhuizen & Wette (2008). A narrative frame is a written story template consisting of incomplete sentences (see Fig. 1). Each has a starter sentence and blank spaces. One example can be found in (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008, p.385)

The use of a narrative frame elicits information in a completely different way from interviews or focus groups. The primary purpose of this instrument is to scaffold self-reflective writing, providing essential guidance for participants who might otherwise struggle to produce coherent, free-flowing reflective narratives (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). Unlike open-ended journals, narrative frames ensure all participants touch upon the same themes (e.g., emotions, regulation strategies). This makes it significantly easier for researchers to perform thematic analysis or cross-case comparisons across different lecturers. By carefully designing the prompts, researchers can embed contextual cues that ensure the generated stories possess crucial spatiotemporal dimensions, thereby firmly grounding the reflections within specific educational settings and timeframes (Barkhuizen, 2014).

Figure 1

Sample of narrative frame (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008, p.385)

I remember once in my classroom I had a very difficult time trying to

_____

_____

_____

_____. The main reason for this problem was that _____

_____

_____.

I tried to solve the problem by _____

_____

_____.

_____. It would have been very helpful if _____

_____

_____

_____. In relation to this difficulty, the type of

research I'd like to do would _____

_____

_____.

The aim of the research would be to _____

_____

_____

_____. A major constraint, though, might be that _____

_____

_____.

Teachers' emotions in using GenAI

Many researchers have begun to explore teachers' emotions in the era of applying GenAI in education. In the context of China, 50 EFL Chinese teachers in Hangzhou city participated in one study (Shen & Guo, 2024). The teachers reported experiencing seven positive emotions, with enjoyment, excitement, and motivation as the three most frequently reported feelings. At the same time, these teachers acknowledged their feelings of stress, anxiety, worry, and frustration, mainly due to their unreadiness for the arrival of new technology. In fact, another study on Chinese teachers' acceptance revealed that interpersonal relationships, mass media, and teacher innovativeness are the strongest positive drivers of AI adoption in teaching (Zhao et al., 2025).

Another study recruited 21 Iranian EFL teachers who were familiar with using GenAI in teaching (Seyri & Ghiasvand, 2025). The study used semi-structured interviews and written narrative frames to unpack EFL teachers' emotions specifically during AI-powered speaking and writing instruction. Besides the positive feelings mentioned by the Chinese lecturers in the

previous study, these Iranian lecturers added the feeling of confidence, joy, pride and engagement. On the negative sides, the same feelings of stress and frustration were reported. In Algeria, 21 university EFL teachers reported having no severe negative emotions toward learning to use AI, yet, they express significant concern that the tools contribute to student dependency and laziness (Benaissa, 2024). Similarly, in the context of Asia, a group of researchers explored the perspectives of Indonesian EFL teachers on various AI writing tools (such as Quillbot, WordTune, and ChatGPT). The participants confirmed that these tools improve the content and organization of students' writing, though teachers cautioned against the risks of over-reliance (Marzuki et al., 2023).

GenAI in the Vietnamese context

In the Vietnamese context, research has increasingly centered on how educators and students navigate the benefits and limitations of AI tools in language learning. One study was conducted with master students at the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City (IUH), Faculty of Languages. The researchers utilized a mixed-methods approach to show that AI tools (like ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quillbot) significantly assist postgraduate students in checking grammar, developing ideas, and paraphrasing, though students face challenges such as costly subscriptions and the risk of lower writing ability due to over-reliance (H. N. Tran et al., 2025). Another study explored the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) tools on the development of argumentation skills through debates among third-year English majors at a public university in Vietnam (Bui et al., 2025). The findings showed that ChatGPT was a valuable assistant in helping students generate ideas and select relevant evidence. Students also confirmed that AI helped them shape their own arguments and find responses for counterarguments.

Yet, little research has focused solely on the emotions of teachers who must teach in the era of AI. The only existing literature so far that focuses on teachers' emotions is the study by Dinh & Nguyen (2025). The study employed semi-structured interviews with 10 female Vietnamese lecturers working at one university. The study found that while teachers are excited about AI's potential to support teaching and research, they feel deep frustration over a lack of institutional support, unreliable AI-detection tools, and concerns about academic integrity.

With this gap in mind, this study aims at teachers' emotions. Using a narrative framework to collect data, the study will recruit lecturers from various schools in Ho Chi Minh City, with a particular focus on teachers who teach writing skills. The study aims to examine how AI is used in these classes, teachers' emotions, and their specific emotion-regulation strategies.

Research Questions

RQ1: What AI tools do L2 writing teachers use, and how do they integrate these tools into their lesson preparation and L2 writing instruction?

RQ2: What positive and negative emotions do L2 writing teachers experience as a result of teaching L2 writing skills through AI?

RQ3: What specific emotion regulation strategies do teachers utilize to manage the emotional impacts of AI integration in their classes?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study took place in Ho Chi Minh City, the primary economic and educational hub of Vietnam. HCMC is a critical site for this research because of its dense concentration of diverse higher education institutions, ranging from prestigious public research universities to private and international entities. This environment provides an advantageous setting to examine teachers' emotions when using AI in teaching writing, as the city often serves as a gateway for integrating global educational trends and emerging technologies within the Vietnamese context.

The participants consisted of nine experienced lecturers currently teaching in HCMC. To ensure a comprehensive perspective across different institutional frameworks, the researcher recruited participants with at least 10 years of teaching experience, especially in academic writing, from different universities, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Demographics of participants

Participants	*Affiliation*	*Years of experience*
1	Free-lance lecturer	11 years
2	Hochiminh City University of Education	25 years
3	Hong Bang University	20 years
4	Hochiminh City University of Education	10 years
5	International University, Vietnam National University, HCMC	14 years
6	University of Economics and Finance	14 years
7	Free-lance lecturer	12 years
8	International University, Vietnam National University, HCMC	15 years
9	International University, Vietnam National University, HCMC	16 years

Design of the Study

The study employs a qualitative methodology. Data were collected through narrative forms delivered to all participants, as well as follow-up interviews. This qualitative methodology is best suited to understanding participants' stories and experiences. By utilizing a multi-institutional participant pool, the study adopts a phenomenological lens to identify shared patterns and unique challenges within the HCMC academic community.

Data collection & analysis

All participants were fully informed of the study's purposes and asked to sign their consent form before data collection began. They were then asked to complete the narrative form (see Appendix). This method ensures that participants follow the same procedure and include the necessary elements of the study, while still allowing them the freedom to express their experiences. After completing the narrative form, the researcher invited the willing participants to join the follow-up interview. All 9 participants agreed to attend the interviews.

The researcher recorded the interviews and transcribed them for analysis. The resulting transcripts, along with the narrative frames, underwent thematic analysis. This involved initial coding, identifying recurring patterns, and categorizing themes to directly address the 3 research questions. This dual-method approach provided a robust triangulation of data, enhancing the credibility and richness of the study's findings.

Findings and discussion

AI tools and lecturers' integration in teaching writing

Participants mentioned several AI tools, including ChatGPT, Gemini, Grammarly, QuillBot, DeepSeek, and Google Classroom. They were grouped into two main functions: lesson preparation and writing instruction. Table 2 summarizes the specific tools and their functions.

Table 2

AI tools and their functions

AI tools	Lesson preparation	Writing instructions
ChatGPT	Brainstorming lesson ideas, creating outlines, designing quizzes, developing discussion questions or warm up activities	Generating sample essays, giving writing prompts, suggesting vocabulary for unfamiliar topics
Gemini	Summarizing long readings from books, verifying word meanings, assisting in creating lessons outline and worksheets	Checking grammar, improving sentence structures, helping students to revise their essays
DeepSeek and AI image generator	Generating images to match the lesson	Generating images for the writing tasks
Turnitin	Not mentioned	Checking originality in students' essays
Google classroom	Organizing resources and streamlining communication	Automating the grading process

It can be seen from Table 2 that all lecturers employ more than one AI tool to serve different steps in the teaching writing process. Each AI tool was used effectively to get the most from it. On the one hand, lecturers use AI tools to brainstorm and structure content, create worksheets, or even summarize long readings. This can be seen from the interview response of participant 6

> *Participant 6: "I checked for simple words: meanings, the usage, pronunciation. I use it to help me summarize long lesson in books (I read the book but I would like to make sure the summary match what I read); it also helps me prepare test and consolidation questions"*

On the other hand, lecturers use these AI tools during the teaching writing procedure, mainly for giving writing prompts as well as giving language corrections and feedback.

Teachers' emotions in using AI tools

Positive emotional responses

In the interview section, participants were asked to list 5 positive emotions they experienced when using AI tools to teach writing. The researcher grouped the responses into terms the participants used, then calculated the frequency. Among the responses, 8 out of 9 participants reported excitement. The next most frequently reported positive feelings included satisfaction, curiosity, confidence, and relief. Below is the summary of the responses.

Table 3

Teachers' positive emotions

Positive Emotions	Frequency (N)
Excitement (incl. "exciting")	8
Satisfaction	5
Curiosity	5
Confidence	5
Relief (incl. "less stressed")	4
Inspiration	4
Fascination (incl. "fascinating")	3
Engagement	2
Optimism	2
Creativity	1
Connection	1
Pride	1
Appreciation	1
Helpfulness	1
Convenience	1
Total	45

The researchers continued analyzing the participants' narrative frames to get closer insight into the positive emotions of these nine participants. The emotions they expressed in the narrative frames correlate highly and, in some cases, perfectly with their interview responses. More importantly, these participants explained the reasons behind their choice of positive feelings. Participant 1 admitted feeling excited since AI tools help her *"prepare my lessons faster and find visual aids which perfectly fit my teaching context"*. Participant 4 explained that her feeling of excitement and pride came from *"seeing my students become more confident and creative*

with their writing - watching them use AI to explore new ideas or refine their language made lessons feel fresh and dynamic".

The findings of the study align with thosee of ￼ of Dinh & Nguyen (2025), who identified excitement as one of the three most frequently experienced emotions among Chinese and Vietnamese EFL teachers. Iranian EFL teachers also reported feelings of joy, confidence, and pride (Seyri & Ghiasvand, 2025). These parallels highlight the importance of AI tools as the driving force for teachers' motivation.

Negative emotional responses

Similarly, participants were asked to list 5 nouns or adjectives to represent the negative emotions they experienced. The researcher grouped anxiety and worry into one category, since they expressed the same feeling. This was the most frequently reported emotion, which occurred 10 times among the 9 participants. In fact, one participant used both adjectives to describe this emotion. The next negative feelings included disappointment and dissatisfaction, followed by doubt, overwhelmed, surprised, fear, isolation, and burned out. Below is the summary of the responses from the interview.

Table 4

Teachers' negative emotions

Negative Emotions	Frequency (N)
Anxiety/Worry	10
Disappointment/ Dissatisfaction	8
Doubt	5
Overwhelmed	5
Surprised	5
Fear	5
Isolation	4
Burned out	3
Total	45

The analysis of the narrative frame gives the researcher the chance to explore the situations that lead to the adverse emotional responses. Participant 1 noted the burden of *"checking my students' essays because many of them use AI to finish their homework"*. Participants 4 and 6 both highlighted negative experiences regarding students being *"so dependent on AI tools"* and relying *"too heavily on AI,"* leading to an inability to *"practice critical thinking skills"*. The negative emotions expressed in the narrative frames demonstrate a very strong, often perfect, correlation with what the teachers shared during their interviews. These reported negative emotions correlated with the findings by Shen and Guo (2024) and Dinh and Nguyen (2025).

Teachers' emotion regulation strategies

Several regulation strategies were identified in the responses of the participants. Firstly, teachers recommended changing the assessment type rather than using traditional tests to avoid students' reliance on AI. Participants 1 and 4 both shared:

> "*I employed different strategies such as encouraging in-class activities and practice exercises and assigned only oral tests as homework before and after experiencing such emotional states due to AI" (Participant 1).*
>
> *"I employed different strategies such as assigning tasks that encouraged students to use their own stories" (Participant 4)*

The next strategies shared by the teachers included setting up rules and giving students a chance to openly share what they have employed AI for. This helps mitigate teachers' doubtful feelings about the work of the students.

> *"Creating a friendly classroom atmosphere where students feel free to share their work and clearly state the part supported by AI or having open discussions on what I myself and my students have learnt and improved thanks to AI." (Participant 4)*
>
> *"Establishing transparent rules about responsible AI use" (Participant 5)*
>
> *"Explaining to my students how the feedback from AI assists them" (Participant 8)*

Furthermore, to prevent the negative feeling of isolation when working with non-human assistance, teachers suggested combining human and machine in solving tasks, such as

> *"Seeking feedback from students to adapt my teaching methods and mindfulness techniques to manage stress and maintain focus" (Participant 3)*
>
> *"Combining AI suggestions with peer and teacher feedback" (Participant 5)*

Finally, teachers mentioned practicing mindfulness and reflection to manage their own stress including overwhelming and maintaining focus during the teaching practice.

Implications and limitations

The study brings up several pedagogical implications. Regarding professional development, there is an urgent need for institutions to provide teachers with professional training to deal with the emotional states. Especially, teachers should shift from the roles of sole knowledge provider to AI-assisted facilitator. Next, to prevent teachers' feelings of doubt and uncertainty, the schools should establish clear and transparent policies for AI academic usage. Most importantly, to adapt to the era of AI, teachers should develop new teaching methods and assessment to encourage students' ability to use AI as assistance, while maintaining critical thinking skills.

Even though the study brings up several insights, the size of the participants was quite small. Even though different teaching institutions were chosen, the sample only centered in Hochiminh City. Besides, the narrative frames and interviews were well conducted, yet all lecturers involved are in the field of English teaching. This does not help generalize the big picture of teaching in AI context. Finally, as AI is a rapidly evolving field, the emotional states recorded reflect a specific moment in time, the academic year 2025-2026. Longitudinal research is needed to determine how these emotions and strategies evolve as AI becomes more deeply embedded in the curriculum.

Conclusion

This study explored how Vietnamese EFL teachers from different universities in Hochiminh City use AI tools to teach writing. The study has come up with several beneficial findings. Teachers employed different AI tools, including ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepSeek, AI image generators, Turnitin, and Google Classroom. Teachers also reported a mix of positive and negative emotions, with excitement and anxiety listed as the top feelings. Several ways were proposed to help teachers overcome the negative emotions and adapt to the AI teaching era. By recognizing and addressing these affective demands, institutions can better equip teachers to lead the paradigm shift toward an AI-enhanced pedagogical future.

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Biodata

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Appendix

Appendix A

Narrative Frame

As an English teacher with the experience of teaching L2 writing skills through AI tools and bots, I have experienced several positive emotions such as ……
……
……..…….. and negative emotions including ……
……
……..…….
. These emotional experiences were very significant in my teaching because ……
……
……..……..
Consequently, I employed different strategies such as ……
……
……..……..
and ……
……
……..……..
before and after experiencing such emotional states due to AI.

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Have you worked with Artificial Intelligence (AI) bots and tools to prepare for your teaching lessons? Which tools have you used? Can you explain what you do with each tool?
2. Have you used AI-tools in teaching L2 writing skills in your classes? What exactly do you use AI tools for?
3. What positive emotions have you experienced when teaching L2 writing skills through AI? (Name your emotions with nouns, at least 5)
4. What negative emotions have you experienced when teaching L2 writing skills through AI? (Name your emotions with nouns, at least 5)