

AI Meets BORDER: Using ChatGPT-Generated Model Essays to Support Process-Based Writing among Low-Achieving EFL Students

Nguyen Hoang Phuong Mai^{1*}

¹International University, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

*Corresponding author's email: nhpmai@hcmiu.edu.vn

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0644-4804>

 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ictep.26118>

® Copyright (c) 2026 Nguyen Hoang Phuong Mai

Received: 30/05/2026

Revision: 13/09/2026

Accepted: 16/09/2026

Online: 21/09/2026

ABSTRACT

Keywords: ChatGPT, English writing, Process-based Writing, BORDER

Since its introduction in November 2022, ChatGPT has become a valuable tool for supporting second language learning, particularly in English writing teaching and learning. However, most existing studies have focused on the role of chatbots during the feedback stage. This study examines students' attitudes toward using ChatGPT-generated model essays within a newly suggested process-based writing framework for low achievers - **BORDER** (*Brainstorming, Outlining, Reading* (individualized AI-generated model essays), *Drafting, Editing, and Revising*). Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 23 undergraduate students in an English writing course after two writing cycles through writing papers, questionnaires, and reflective journals. The findings reveal that most students hold positive emotional, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT-generated model essays, especially in the writing preparation stage, where the personalized models supported not only language use and organizational structure but also content development. The study highlights the pedagogical potential of integrating AI tools to enhance process-based writing instruction for lower-proficiency learners while preventing their overreliance on AI – captured in the motto: “*Writers cross the BORDER with AI, from ideas to finished work.*”

Introduction

Background

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed many aspects of human life, particularly how people learn and work. In the field of language education, generative AI has been widely discussed and recognized as a valuable support tool for both students and teachers (Montenegro-Rueda et al., 2023). One of the most prominent features of AI in language learning is its ability to provide rapid, accurate feedback on learners' language performance. While researchers and educators initially embraced this capability with considerable enthusiasm, they have also raised concerns about its potential implications and limitations (Montenegro-Rueda et al., 2023a; Barrot, 2023; Aljohani, 2026).

Since its introduction, much of the existing literature has primarily focused on the technological capabilities of AI tools, such as what they can accomplish and how they should be integrated into classroom instruction, rather than on learners themselves, who should remain at the center

of educational practices and pedagogical innovation. In academic writing instruction, AI has proven effective at correcting errors, providing comments and feedback, and generating high-quality texts (Aljohani, 2026). Nevertheless, these advantages do not necessarily translate into the training of better writers. One possible explanation is that students often overlook AI-generated feedback and may not engage in sufficient reflective or analytical activities after receiving automated feedback.

This paper approaches chatbots, particularly ChatGPT, from another perspective by defining them as “writing coaches” that provide model academic essays learners can analyze and adapt in their own writing. ChatGPT has been recognized as the pioneer chatbot that has reshaped the landscape of education since 2022. With its capacity to provide prompt, personalized instructions, interactions, and feedback, ChatGPT has become an important assisting tool in language teaching and learning (Montenegro-Rueda et al., 2023; Aljohani, 2026). The researcher proposes that, rather than intervening in the later stages of the writing process during editing and revising, AI should be incorporated earlier, particularly in the pre-writing stage. This approach may be especially beneficial for low-achieving students, who often struggle to initiate writing.

Problem statement

One persistent challenge in academic writing instruction is how to effectively support struggling writers in developing their writing competence. Although students are required to complete placement tests upon entering university, discrepancies in writing proficiency across classes remain inevitable. As a result, some students who fall behind may need to repeat the same writing course multiple times without demonstrating substantial improvement.

Aldayel et al. (2026) suggested from their study findings that, in order to effectively support students’ academic writing development, linguistic instruction alone is not sufficient. Instead, a combination of cognitive, linguistic, and affective interventions is required. In this regard, struggling students may particularly benefit from individualized instruction, scaffolded guidance, and personalized modeling. However, providing such tailored support is often difficult and impractical in university contexts characterized by large class sizes and limited instructional time. This is when AI may offer valuable pedagogical support. Specifically, ChatGPT can function as a teaching assistant in a process-based writing classroom by providing tailor-made model essays for students to analyze and emulate. This study therefore addresses what remains under-explored and investigates students’ attitudes toward using AI-generated model essays in the pre-writing stages within BORDER, a recommended writing process consisting of *Brainstorming*, *Outlining*, *Reading* (individualized AI-generated model essays), *Drafting*, *Editing*, and *Revising*.

The study findings may contribute to both pedagogical practice and academic research in several ways. First, they may inform university curriculum designers and writing instructors of an alternative framework for integrating AI into a writing class. Second, it may suggest a more balanced and strategic approach for students to incorporate AI into their learning without becoming overly dependent on chatbot technologies. Finally, the study may contribute to the existing literature on the application of generative AI in language teaching and learning.

Literature review

Writing in a Second Language and Process-based Approach in Teaching Writing

Writing, specifically writing in a second language, is a complicated process that involves the writer's negotiation and monitoring of the communicative purposes, mechanics, and conventions of written language, rhetorical organization, linguistic as well as non-linguistic features of the target language which may not exist in their first language (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2013; Hedge, 2011). The whole process is demanding for language learners, as it is not easy to achieve the final result - a good piece of writing that satisfies both form-focused and meaning-focused criteria. According to Richards & Renandya (2013), to evaluate whether a text is well written, evaluators usually consider its content (meaning), organization (form), and language use (form).

Writing plays a significant role in a person's personal and social life as it showcases their educational capacity, achievement, and recognition (Hyland, 2022). How to teach and learn writing effectively has therefore long interested both teachers and learners. According to Hyland (2022), three main approaches to teaching writing exist: one focusing on the writing's *products*, one on the writers and the *processes* they use, and one emphasizing the roles of the *audience*. The second approach, rooted in the cognitive perspective, treats a writing task as a problem and views writers as applying a solution to address it. In such a solution, there are some stages for writers to follow. An influential writing solution was first introduced by Flower & Hayes (1981) with three main linear stages: (i) *Planning* involving sub-processes such as generating ideas, organizing meaningful structures, and Goal setting, (ii) *Translating* or Writing, and (iii) *Reviewing*, depending on evaluating and revising as two sub-processes. A simplified, updated model for teaching writing using a process-based approach was then suggested, comprising six stages in a cycle: pre-writing, drafting, responding, revising, editing, and publishing (Hyland, 2022). The model was later simplified and commonly referred to as a mnemonic: "You should have POWER in your writing," meaning "You should have *Pre-writing*, *Outlining*, *Writing*, *Editing*, and *Revising* stages in your writing." A substantial body of research supports a process-based approach to teaching writing; some of the benefits include making teachers aware of the writing process, respecting students' individual differences, and encouraging learner autonomy (Hyland, 2022; Nation & Macalister, 2021). However, process-based writing is also reported to be time-consuming and may not work well under classroom time constraints (Harmer, 2011). Moreover, few empirical studies have examined students' progress when this approach is used in writing instruction (Hyland, 2022).

Low-achieving students and the recommended BORDER framework

Writing has long been identified as a challenging skill for ESL/EFL students in general and Vietnamese students in particular. The reported difficulties lie in their deteriorating attitudes and beliefs towards the skill, their ignorance of the writing process especially the planning and editing stages, and the complicated nature of classroom instructions (Ngo & Truong, 2023). Low-achieving students or low achievers in ESL are defined as those who struggle with both receptive and productive skills in comparison with their normally achieving peers. (Chakrabarty & Saha, 2014). The reason for falling behind can be traced back to both internal and external

factors, and research has shown that these students usually experience difficulties in understanding the writing process - narrowing down the topic and brainstorming ideas, planning and outlining ideas, producing and organizing texts, and editing and revising their writing (Harris & Graham, 2009).

Writing is a critical tool for today's world. Poor writing skills can put a student at a disadvantage in their personal, educational, and work life. Therefore, developing effective interventions to help these low-achieving students improve their writing is of the utmost importance. The researcher suggests introducing a modified six-stage writing process to help these students write and build their confidence: "Writers cross the BORDER with AI, from ideas to finished work". The mnemonic suggests that struggling writers should start by *brainstorming* the ideas, *outlining* the ideas and put them in an organization, *Reading* individualized model essays generated by ChatGPT based on their detailed outline, *Drafting* the text, and finally to *Editing* and *Revising* the text to check if the text is relevant, logical, coherent, cohesive, and error-free.

ChatGPT in Language Teaching and Learning

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the mimicking of human cognitive processes by computers. AI has recently developed at an astonishing rate and has affected almost all aspects of life. In the field of education, AI holds great potential as it allows personalization in learning and accommodates individual learners' needs and interests (Montenegro-Rueda et al., 2023). ChatGPT, known as a "Generative Pre-trained Transformer", is an AI-powered chatbot created by OpenAI that can understand and simulate human communication to answer questions, complete tasks, and have conversations based on a given prompt or input. ChatGPT was recognized as the pioneering chatbot that startled the whole world upon its release. Since its introduction in 2022, ChatGPT has proven to be a valuable supporting tool for language teaching and learning, as it can engage and motivate learners well by offering effective, authentic, individualized instructions and interactions with prompt feedback (Montenegro-Rueda et al., 2023; Aljohani, 2026). In the Vietnamese context, university students have recognized ChatGPT as a useful tool for facilitating language learning, particularly because of its potential to engage students actively in the learning process and enhance their knowledge retainment (Pham & Le, 2024). Many university lecturers also showed their enthusiasm and willingness to use this chatbot for their teaching, especially writing lessons (Nguyen, 2023). ChatGPT was therefore selected as the focus of this study because of its widespread use in Vietnamese educational research, its familiarity among Vietnamese lecturers and students, and its accessibility.

ChatGPT in Teaching and Learning Writing

In the domain of ESL/EFL writing, the literature has seen a rapidly growing number of studies investigating ChatGPT's two-fold role as an auxiliary instruction tool and an assessment tool. Zhang & Chen (2026) collected and analyzed 19 papers conducted between 2023 and 2025 using a meta-analysis method and came to the conclusion that, though implemented in various writing stages - instructing, scoring, and giving feedback- ChatGPT was recognized as most useful when used as an instructional aid. It was also found that students' self-confidence, self-efficacy, and motivation were reportedly enhanced, which ultimately led to their writing

improvement. In other words, ChatGPT helps students complete writing tasks in a more positive and engaging learning environment than traditional methods (Zhang & Chen, 2026).

However, that does not mean ChatGPT does not have any shortcomings. In her article, Barrot (2023) identified several pitfalls associated with using ChatGPT in teaching and learning writing and recommended solutions for both teachers and learners. First of all, AI-generated responses are not always trustworthy and reliable, as it has been reported by both developers and users that accurate and intelligible answers are not always generated. Furthermore, ChatGPT poses some concerns about academic integrity. This is observed when dependent and unmotivated students rely too much on ChatGPT to complete writing assignments. This detrimentally affects the students' ability to think creatively and critically and to express ideas coherently and communicatively. To address these potential issues, teachers should emphasize the value of the writing process and set clear rules and expectations for students to follow.

Previous Studies

In empirical research on ChatGPT and writing, many papers have focused on ChatGPT's provision of prompts and individualized feedback on students' writing. Generally, teachers and students hold positive perceptions and attitudes towards AI-generated writing feedback (Asadi et al., 2025). However, it is unclear whether this speedy, high-quality, personalized feedback actually produces better writers, as it is not clear what students need to do with the feedback *they receive*. This observation advances the idea that AI needs to be integrated into the writing process, but it should be tailored and used with a more critical and reflective approach. This aims to minimize students' overreliance on technology and the lack of originality in writing while still meeting learners' specific needs, especially those of low achievers. With this view, ChatGPT is not considered a standalone tool, but rather a part of a broader instructional context where interaction and reflection are highlighted (Hong & Shin, 2025). Below are three recent studies that correspond with this view.

In Meniado et al. (2024)'s mixed-methods study of EFL learners' perceptions of the use of ChatGPT in second language writing learning, the researchers found, from 357 Thai and Vietnamese participants, that ChatGPT was perceived positively as a useful aid for their writing, with Vietnamese students holding a higher level of positive perception. Participants perceived ChatGPT as beneficial for generating relevant, useful, and interesting ideas and *examples, and for synthesizing* information. Students reportedly used ChatGPT for many stages of the writing process, namely brainstorming, organizing ideas, polishing outlines, clarifying concepts, and revising and editing texts.

Huang & Wang (2025) investigated a more specific collaborative role of ChatGPT in learning a particular writing task. Nine upper-intermediate Chinese EFL learners were involved in this inductive qualitative study. Data from interaction logs, think-aloud protocols, argumentative writing texts, and semi-structured interviews revealed that when students took control and collaborated with ChatGPT to improve idea generation, develop arguments, suggest evidence, and model language use, they perceived ChatGPT as a more helpful partner than peers. This is because ChatGPT allows learners to access a vast amount of information and an advanced linguistic repertoire conveniently and flexibly. Nonetheless, processing this very vast amount

of knowledge was also reported as a challenge by the students when collaborating with ChatGPT in their writing.

With regard to different levels of using AI as an instructional tool for writing and the outcomes, a study was conducted with three groups of Korean college students by Hong & Shin (2025). In these three groups, the Control group did not use ChatGPT, the Guided group used ChatGPT under supervised conditions, and the Free group had free access to ChatGPT throughout the course. Results demonstrated the potential of integrating AI into the curriculum and pedagogy design, as the Guided and Free groups yielded much better outcomes compared to the Control group. The significant difference between the Guided and Free groups was observed in the quality of content under structured guidance, but not in such areas as organization and language use. The implication of the study is that ChatGPT can scaffold learning instead of replacing learning if implemented thoughtfully and tactfully.

In these studies, ChatGPT was used at various stages of the writing process, which can be a bit confusing to low-achieving learners who may struggle to follow the writing process and who may lack autonomy. This study therefore suggests a writing framework that places AI and chatbots in a subordinate role: providing modeled texts using personalized prompts based on students' outlined ideas, and it explores students' attitudes toward this framework. This stage is suggested to happen after the Brainstorming and Outlining stages, but before the Drafting and Editing and Revising stages, so that the writers still have to think on their own about the content but receive necessary help with organizational and linguistic clues from ChatGPT.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate low-achieving students' attitudes towards the use of AI-generated model essays tailored to individual learners during the pre-writing stage of the writing process through the lens of the ABC model of attitudes (Breckler, 1984). According to Breckler (1984), attitudes are constructed upon three distinct yet interrelated pillars: **A**ffect (feelings), **B**ehavior (actions), and **C**ognition (beliefs). Accordingly, the study examines participants' affective, behavioral, and cognitive attitudes toward the use of AI-generated model essays. Moreover, students' self-reported benefits and challenges associated with incorporating AI into the writing process are also explored.

Research Questions

To achieve the stated objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are low-achieving students' attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT-generated model essays in learning writing?
2. What benefits and challenges do low-achieving students perceive in using ChatGPT-generated model essays for learning writing?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at a state university in Ho Chi Minh City with 23 participants who

were undergraduate sophomores majoring in English. Though the students passed the University Entrance Exams/ Conditions to be admitted to the program, some English-major students do not possess the language proficiency as expected. These students need to take an English placement test, and depending on the test results, they will spend the first one or two semesters completing the intensive English program before taking the major's foundation courses. In this study, these students are considered low-achieving students because they do not perform as well as other normally achieving peers in the same program. The population was chosen using purposeful sampling because respondents were deliberately selected based on criteria significant to the study (Creswell, 2014). Participants were low achievers in English writing who completed a one-year intensive English course and are now second-year students who have started the Foundation Writing 1 course, where students learn to structure and compose different types of academic essays through a writing process.

Design of the Study

This study utilized a mixed-method research design, involving both quantitative and qualitative data. According to Creswell (2014), combining quantitative and qualitative data in a single study allows researchers to gain both generalizable findings and deeper insights. In this study, the quantitative data (e.g., survey results on the attitudes of the respondents toward the use of ChatGPT-generated model essays in the writing process) were combined with qualitative data (e.g., reflective written responses on participants' perceived benefits and challenges) to achieve a more holistic and nuanced understanding of how struggling writers cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally view the use of model essays created by AI in their writing learning.

The study's main instrument is a questionnaire based on the tripartite model of attitude (Rosenberg et al., 1969), which proposes attitude as consisting of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components. The instrument consists of 17 Likert-scale items assessing students' attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT's model essays in writing activities and one short reflective writing task with 6 prompt questions. The survey was conducted online via Google Forms for its convenience. There are 3 sections in the instrument: the first part collects participants' demographics, the second part, comprising seventeen 5-point Likert-scale questions, tries to explore the participants' affective, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes towards the use of ChatGPT's model essays, and the third section aims to gain insights into the research topic by asking the students to write a short paragraph based on 6 prompt questions. The questionnaire demonstrated its internal reliability by achieving $\alpha=0.892$ points in the Cronbach's Alpha test, indicating high internal consistency.

Data collection & analysis

The research went through two writing cycles in class, practicing two academic essay types, namely cause-and-effect and comparison essays, which were followed by questionnaires and reflective journals. Each writing cycle spanned 2 weeks, with 6 contact hours. In the first week of the cycle, the students (i) received instruction on the organization of the essay type, (ii) got a topic to brainstorm in pairs or small groups, and (iii) made a detailed outline from the generated ideas. One week later, the students were asked to (iv) follow the researcher's guide and write prompts for ChatGPT to generate individualized model essays based on the students' own

detailed outline, (v) read the model essays attentively, and finally (vi) draft the essay without having the model essays in hand. At the end of each cycle, students were encouraged to read their peers' essays and give comments and feedback using a guided template. After two writing cycles, participants completed an online survey. The questionnaire and the reflective writing tasks were completed in approximately 15 minutes.

The quantitative data were examined using descriptive analysis, with means, standard deviations, and score ranges indicating positive or negative attitudes. The qualitative data were then analyzed using a thematic analysis framework and compared with the quantitative results to explore how they strengthened and deepened understanding of the quantitative findings.

Results/Findings and discussion

Findings from Quantitative Data

Regarding the first component of the Tripartite Model of Attitudes, the results show that participants generally held positive emotional attitudes toward using ChatGPT-generated model essays in the essay-writing process, as the mean values sit securely above 3.50 (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Participants' Affective Attitudes towards ChatGPT-generated Model Essays in the Writing Process

Item	Question	Mean	SD
A1	Using ChatGPT's model essays makes the writing activities in this course more enjoyable .	3.65	0.83
A2	Using ChatGPT's model essays makes me feel more comfortable when writing in English.	3.74	0.81
A3	Using ChatGPT's model essays increases a confidence in my writing ability.	<u>3.83</u>	0.94
A4	Using ChatGPT's model essays reduces my anxiety when I write in English.	3.61	<u>1.16</u>

Among the four items shown in Table 1, item A3 relating to **confidence** received the highest mean score ($M = 3.83$), which means that participants perceived ChatGPT and its generated model essays as helpful in boosting their confidence in writing. Meanwhile, item A4 on **anxiety**, though still positive, showed the highest standard deviation ($SD = 1.16$), indicating greater polarization in participants' responses about whether AI assistance reduced writing tension. This variation will be further examined through the qualitative findings.

In sum, it is suggested by the above results that using ChatGPT model essays can create a psychologically secure environment for low-achieving students to practice writing, as students reported being more confident and comfortable with their presence. *This agrees with Meniado et al. (2024)'s study findings that students held positive perceptions of using ChatGPT as a useful assistant for their writing.*

The results from 7 questions investigating the participants' cognitive attitudes towards the use of AI-generated model essays in the writing process also revealed a universally positive shift, as all mean scores were around or above 4.00 on the 5-point Likert scale, and the standard deviations were quite low – ranging from 0.60 to 0.77 (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Participants' Cognitive Attitudes towards ChatGPT-generated Model Essays in the Writing Process

Item	Question	Mean	SD
C1	ChatGPT's model essays help me generate ideas relevant to a given writing topic.	<u>4.26</u>	0.75
C2	ChatGPT's model essays help me organize my ideas more effectively.	4.0	0.74
C3	ChatGPT's model essays help me use an appropriate organizational structure for different types of essays.	3.91	<u>0.60</u>
C4	ChatGPT's model essays help me connect ideas to produce a coherent piece of writing .	4.0	0.67
C5	ChatGPT's model essays help me develop ideas into sentences and paragraphs that follow appropriate language conventions .	4.04	0.77
C6	ChatGPT's model essays help me choose appropriate language and vocabulary for a specific essay type.	4.13	0.63
C7	ChatGPT's model essays help me produce higher-quality writing overall .	3.87	0.69

Among the three components – content, organization, and language use – as can be seen in Table 2, in producing a good essay (Richards & Renandya, 2013), **content development** received the highest mean score, as can be seen in item C1 with $M = 4.26$. This suggests a strong belief among participants that chatbots help them generate ideas. Notably, although model essays were provided only after the Brainstorming and Outlining Stage in the suggested BORDER framework, students still recognized the usefulness of AI in developing essay ideas. This is probably due to ChatGPT's capacity to elaborate on the given main ideas and illustrate more examples for the students' outline input. This will be examined later using the participants' reflective responses.

It is also of interest to the researcher that while students strongly believe that ChatGPT aids specific writing sub-skills like generating ideas, structuring the essay, and choosing the language (see Table 2), they are slightly more reluctant when evaluating whether simply reading an AI model essay can help them produce an **overall high-quality piece of writing**, as item C7 received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.87$). This will be investigated further using the qualitative data.

Generally, the participants displayed a high consensus about AI-generated essays enhancing

specific features of an essay: content development, organizational structure, and linguistic conventions. This finding aligns with the previously reviewed studies' results carried out by Meniado et al. (2024), Hong & Shin (2025), and Huang & Wang (2025), demonstrating that ChatGPT is reportedly useful for almost all stages of the writing process, especially when used as a collaborator under a guided or free level of teacher's guidance to enhance the writing's quality of the content.

Regarding participants' behavioral tendencies, the results show moderately positive attitudes toward using ChatGPT-generated model essays in the writing process. This received the lowest mean score range (from 3.43 to 3.87) in comparison with two other components – affective and cognitive (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Participants' Behavioral Attitudes towards ChatGPT-generated Model Essays in the Writing Process

Item	Question	Mean	SD
B1	Using ChatGPT's model essays motivates me to complete writing assignments.	3.43	0.90
B2	Using ChatGPT's model essays encourages me to practice writing more frequently.	3.43	<u>1.16</u>
B3	I intend to continue using ChatGPT's model essays in my future writing practice.	3.61	0.89
B4	I know how to use chatbots strategically when working on writing assignments.	<u>3.87</u>	0.97
B5	I feel confident in my ability to use chatbots effectively for writing tasks.	3.61	0.89
B6	I can decide when and how to use ChatGPT appropriately during the writing process.	3.74	1.05

Table 3 shows that among these domains, item B4 regarding **strategic knowledge** received the highest mean score ($M = 3.87$), indicating that participants perceived themselves as relatively capable of using chatbots purposefully during writing tasks. This is consistent with the results of item B6 concerning students' self-regulated metacognition in having AI assistance for learning ($M = 3.74$). The results may suggest the usefulness of having a clear writing framework for the students to follow – BORDER, where AI should be used minimally in the middle stage of the process only.

Meanwhile, the items B1 and B2 regarding the **intent to complete and practice writing more frequently** showed the lowest mean scores in the behavioral group ($M = 3.43$), with the execution intent displaying the highest standard deviation ($SD = 1.16$). This indicates that while students explicitly recognize the emotional and intellectual value of referring to ChatGPT-generated model essays in their writing process, translating that recognition into increased, self-

motivated writing practice remains unclear.

Findings from Qualitative Data

Table 4.

Coded Themes of Qualitative Data

Category	Coded Theme	Number of Occurrences	Percentage
Benefits	Ideas Development	17	74%
	Language Use Suggestion	12	52%
	Structural and Organizational Clues	8	35%
	Confidence Boost	7	30%
Drawbacks	Dependence and Laziness	14	61%
	Limiting Creativity and Critical Thinking	8	35%
Challenges	Model Essays Quality: Vagueness, Irrelevance, Too Advanced	6	26%
	Inaccuracies & Misunderstandings	3	13%
	No difficulties	6	26%

As shown in Table 4, the qualitative responses on perceived **benefits** confirm the quantitative findings about participants' positive attitudes toward using ChatGPT-generated model essays. Of the 23 responses, 17 explicitly noted that the advantages of using ChatGPT include its ability to “*generating ideas*” and develop ideas (74%). About half of the responses mentioned “*vocabulary*” and “*grammar*” as improved areas and viewed chatbots as a useful linguistic reference. Also, ChatGPT is reported to be helpful in making the students “*understand the (essay) structure*” and “*improve organization*,” in 35% of the responses. In terms of emotional benefits, 7 participants recognized reduced anxiety and a boost of confidence in using AI's model essays, as in the following response: “*They increased my motivation, reducing anxiety about starting an essay and giving me more confidence to write independently.*”

However, the participants also realized some **drawbacks** of using model essays generated by AI. The most prominent concern in the responses is over-dependence and laziness. The problem of becoming “*too dependent on AI*” and getting “*lazy to think*” was emphasized in 14 occurrences. Moreover, 8 participants noted that there may be a lack of “*originality*”, “*critical thinking*”, and “*creativity*”. A small group expressed their worry about fading out their core writing skills, as pre-made essays can “*make us forget the way to write out the essay*”. This somehow explains the findings from the quantitative survey about the participants' mixed opinions regarding anxiety reduction when having AI-generated model essays. To some students, getting help from AI can produce secondary anxieties - feelings of guilt or fear of becoming over-dependent on a machine.

Responses about perceived challenges in using AI within the new writing framework provide further insight into participants' behavioral attitudes. About one third of students reported no difficulties implementing AI in BORDER. However, around 40% of the participants said that AI assistance was not always effective, as the generated essays were sometimes overly vague, broad, or too advanced for their levels. Another reported challenge involved the inaccurate or inappropriate responses resulting from misunderstandings, as reflected in one student's comment: “*sometimes it gives me wrong information*”. These qualitative findings further

support the previously identified moderate level of positivity in participants' behavioral intentions toward applying AI in the BORDER framework, as only a relatively small proportion of students perceived the process as entirely free of difficulties.

Overall, the findings from qualitative data and thematic analysis about ChatGPT's merits are in accordance with the quantitative results as well as previous studies that ChatGPT was supposed to assist learners well in various stages of the writing process, especially when it is used under guidance and structured monitoring (Hong & Shin, 2025; Huang & Wang, 2025; Meniado et al., 2024). In addition, reported concerns about declining learning motivation, academic integrity, creativity, and inaccurate or level-inappropriate outputs align with cautions raised in previous studies.

Conclusion

Based on the findings from both statistical and thematic analysis, low-achieving students generally held positive affective, cognitive, and behavioral attitudes toward the use of ChatGPT-generated model essays within the BORDER writing framework. The strongest positive perceptions were found in the cognitive domain, particularly regarding idea development, language use, and essay organization. Participants also reported increased confidence and reduced anxiety when engaging in writing tasks. Qualitative findings further confirmed that AI-assisted model essays were especially helpful in developing ideas and improving linguistic awareness. Nevertheless, secondary concerns regarding overdependence, reduced creativity, vagueness, and occasional inaccuracies were also identified. These findings broadly align with previous research claiming that students hold positive attitudes and perceptions toward using ChatGPT to help them generate and organize ideas and polish their language use in writing (Huang & Wang, 2025; Meniado et al., 2024). The findings also align with Hong & Shin's (2025) argument that students would benefit more academically from guided use of ChatGPT. This is reflected in the introduction of the assigned role of AI within the suggested BORDER framework. These findings suggest that AI can serve as a supportive writing coach when integrated strategically and cautiously into process-based writing instruction, particularly given the mixed behavioral intentions among participants about continuing to use this function in their future writing practices. For struggling writers, ChatGPT and AI can serve as a personal writing assistant that helps them to feel relaxed and overcome the initial difficulty of translating ideas into written texts. By prompting AI to develop their own ideas into a model text, critically examining it, and reconstructing the text in their own words, students will probably take one step closer to becoming independent and competent writers.

Nonetheless, the study's findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. This limitation is partly attributable to the fact that low-achieving students typically constitute only a small proportion of the overall student population. Second, the study relied primarily on participants' self-reported responses. Although self-report data provide valuable insights into students' perceptions and attitudes, they may also introduce subjectivity and response bias, thereby

limiting the objectivity of the findings. As this is only a small "exploratory" study and further empirical evidence is needed, it is still premature to support this AI capacity within the recommended alternative writing framework BORDER. It therefore proposes a cautious and informed approach to AI integration in writing instruction. Future research is recommended to involve a more extensive and more varied sample of participants to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, subsequent studies should incorporate multiple data sources, such as writing performance assessments, classroom observations, interviews, or longitudinal data, to provide more comprehensive and objective evidence on the effectiveness of AI-assisted writing frameworks.

References

- Aldayel, H. S., Pravitasari, H., & Fadillah, N. (2026). Factors Affecting Academic Writing Difficulties among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) University Students. *Acta Psychologica*, 263, 106250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2026.106250>
- Aljohani, N. J. (2026). ChatGPT in Language Learning: A Systematic Review of Applications and Challenges. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 13, 102357. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.102357>
- Asadi, M., Ebadi, S., & Mohammadi, L. (2025). The Impact of Integrating ChatGPT with Teachers' Feedback on EFL Writing Skills. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 56, 101766. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2025.101766>
- Barrot, J. S. (2023). Using ChatGPT for Second Language Writing: Pitfalls and Potentials. *Assessing Writing*, 57, 100745. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2023.100745>
- Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (Eds.). (2013). *The Psychology of Written Composition* (0 ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203812310>
- Breckler, S. J. (1984). Empirical Validation of Affect, Behavior, and Cognition as Distinct Components of Attitude. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47(6), 1191–1205. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.47.6.1191>
- Cheng, X., Liu, Y., & Wang, C. (2023). Understanding Student Engagement with Teacher and Peer Feedback in L2 Writing. *System*, 119, 103176. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103176>
- Chakrabarty, A. K. & Saha, B. (2014). Low Achievers at Elementary Stages of EFL Learning: The Problems and Possible Way-outs. *International Journal on New Trends in Education and Their Implication*, 5(3), 160–165.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Fan, Y., & Xu, J. (2020). Exploring Student Engagement with Peer Feedback on L2 Writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 50, 100775. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2020.100775>
- Flower, L., & Hayes, J. R. (1981). A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing. *College Composition & Communication*, 32(4), 365–387. <https://doi.org/10.58680/cc198115885>

- Harmer, J. (2011). *How to teach writing* (9. impr). Longman, Pearson Education.
- Harris, K. R., & Graham, S. (2009). Self-regulated Strategy Development in Writing: Premises, Evolution, and the Future. In V. Connelly, A. L. Barnett, J. E. Dockrell, & A. Tolmie (Eds.), *BJEP Monograph Series II: Part 6 Teaching and Learning Writing*. British Psychological Society. <https://doi.org/10.1348/978185409X422542>
- Hedge, T. (2011). *Writing* (8. print). Oxford University Press.
- Hong, S., & Shin, Y. K. (2025). Effects of Three Levels of AI Integration on Second Language Academic Writing: Evaluating Restricted, Guided, and Free Use of ChatGPT. *System*, 134, 103820. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103820>
- Huang, Y., & Wang, D. (2025). Can ChatGPT Serve as a Writing Collaborator? Insights from Chinese EFL Learners. *System*, 133, 103775. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103775>
- Hyland, K. (2022). *Teaching and researching writing* (Fourth edition). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Meniado, J. C., Huyen, D. T. T., Panyadilokpong, N., & Lertkomolwit, P. (2024). Using ChatGPT for Second Language Writing: Experiences and Perceptions of EFL Learners in Thailand and Vietnam. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 7, 100313. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100313>
- Montenegro-Rueda, M., Fernández-Cerero, J., Fernández-Batanero, J. M., & López-Meneses, E. (2023). Impact of the Implementation of ChatGPT in Education: A Systematic Review. *Computers*, 12(8), 153. <https://doi.org/10.3390/computers12080153>
- Nation, I. S. P., & Macalister, J. (2021). *Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing* (Second edition). Routledge.
- Ngo, P. A. N., & Truong, T. N. (2023). Difficulties of Vietnamese Students in Learning Academic Writing. *International Journal of Asian Education*, 4(2), 106–114. <https://doi.org/10.46966/ijae.v4i2.340>
- Nguyen, T. T. H. (2023). EFL Teachers' Perspectives toward the Use of ChatGPT in Writing Classes: A Case Study at Van Lang University. *International Journal of Language Instruction*, 2(3), 1–47. <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.23231>
- Pham, V. P. H., & Le, A. Q. (2024). ChatGPT in Language Learning: Perspectives from Vietnamese Students in Vietnam and the USA. *International Journal of Language Instruction*, 3(2), 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.24325>
- Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (Eds.). (2013). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (1st publ., 17. print). Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Rosenberg, M. J., Hovland, C. I., & MacGuire, W. J. (1969). *Attitude, Organisation and Change: An Analysis of Consistency among Attitude Components* (4th print). Yale U. P.
- Zhang, R., & Chen, J. (2026). The effects of ChatGPT on EFL Students' Writing Skills: A Meta-analysis. *System*, 140, 104043. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2026.104043>

Biodata

Nguyen Hoang Phuong Mai is currently a lecturer at the International University, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City. She holds a Master's degree in TESOL from the University of Queensland, Australia. With over ten years of experience in teaching English to Vietnamese students at various levels, she has developed a strong interest in research on the Affective Filter in Second Language Acquisition and Innovative Approaches to Language Teaching. Her goal is to continuously enhance her teaching effectiveness and contribute to the development of English language education in Vietnam.