

AI In Academic Publishing for Non-Native English Speakers: The Good, the Bot, and the Ugly

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study investigated the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) tools on academic publishing for non-native English-speaking researchers. Through a mixed-methods convergent parallel design, it examined how these scholars utilize AI tools, their perceived benefits, and concerns regarding AI's influence on academic publishing. Data were collected from 105 non-native English-speaking academics coming from 25 language backgrounds. Participants primarily employed AI tools for grammar improvement, writing style enhancement, and translation, while maintaining control over higher-level intellectual tasks such as organizing manuscripts. Three key dimensions of the perceived impact of AI were identified in this study: the good, reducing linguistic inequalities by improving paper quality and decreasing language-related challenges; the bad, involving inaccurate or misleading AI suggestions, over-reliance on AI tools, and diminished engagement with manuscripts; and the ugly, characterized by failure to disclose AI use, lack of clear guidelines for responsible AI integration in research, homogenization of academic writing, and the emergence of new forms of inequality. The study concluded with several recommendations for individual researchers, academic institutions, and publishers and journals to promote the ethical and effective use of AI in academic publishing.

1 | Introduction

Today, English is the main global language for academic communication (Gordin 2015; Tardy 2004). However, this dominance creates difficulties for researchers who are not native English speakers, especially when writing papers for prestigious journals (Hwang et al. 2023; Martinez 2018). These challenges often lead to delays in publishing, more rejections, and added emotional stress, all of which may negatively affect researchers' careers and the spread of their work (Amano et al. 2023; Carlsson et al. 2024; Ramírez-Castañeda 2020).

Recently, artificial intelligence (AI) tools have emerged as helpful resources for addressing the language-related challenges non-native English speakers face in academic writing (Allen and Mizumoto 2024; Giglio and Costa 2023). For instance, Giglio and Costa (2023) discussed that tools like *ChatGPT*, *Grammarly*, and *Writefull* could save time and effort by automating grammar

checks, improving vocabulary, and ensuring style consistency. This allowed researchers to concentrate more on the content of their work instead of language issues, an especially important advantage for those writing in a second language.

However, the use of AI in academic writing also raises important concerns, such as questions about academic integrity, authorship, plagiarism, and misinformation (Barrot 2023; Božić 2023; Dwivedi et al. 2023; González-Padilla 2023; Khalifa and Albadawy 2024; Lund 2025; Lund and Naheem 2024; Malik et al. 2024; Ugwu et al. 2024; van Dijk 2020).

To better understand both the benefits and challenges of using AI in academic publishing, we surveyed non-native English-speaking researchers from various language backgrounds and academic disciplines. This study explored how these researchers actually use AI tools, what advantages they see, and what concerns they have. By bringing together views from different

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Key Points

- AI significantly aids non-native English speakers in academic writing, improving quality and reducing language barriers.
- Concerns exist regarding AI accuracy, over-reliance, potential for misinformation, and the deskilling of researchers.
- Clear guidelines are essential for responsible AI integration in academic publishing to maintain integrity and trust.

academic fields, this exploratory study offers useful insights into how AI is currently being used and perceived in academic publishing. In particular, this study foregrounds the experiences of non-native English-speaking researchers, a group that remains underrepresented in empirical research on AI in academic publishing.

1.1 | Struggles of Non-Native Academic Writers

English is currently the main language used for scientific communication around the world (Gordin 2015; Tardy 2004). As Bahji et al. (2023) pointed out, although only about 7% of the global population speaks English as their first language, nearly 75% of all scientific papers are written in English. This highlights a major imbalance. That is, most researchers publish in English, but many are not native English speakers.

While Hyland (2016) argued that non-native English speakers are not at a disadvantage compared to native speakers, several scholars (Drubin and Kellogg 2012; Flowerdew 2019; Hanauer et al. 2019; Martinez 2018) challenged this perspective. For example, Flowerdew (2019) stated that writing in a second language is naturally more difficult than writing in one's first language. Similarly, Martinez (2018) observed that non-native English speakers often use different language patterns in their academic writing. These language-related challenges make it harder for non-native English-speaking researchers to publish and share their work (Amano et al. 2023; Carlsson et al. 2024; Drubin and Kellogg 2012; Hwang et al. 2023; Ramírez-Castañeda 2020; Yakhontova 2020).

Hwang et al. (2023) found that non-native English writers face difficulties not only with grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure, but also with higher-level writing skills like linking ideas, organizing paragraphs, and structuring the overall text. In a similar way, Yakhontova (2020) described the linguistic (grammar, punctuation, and stylistic) and organizational (textual) problems that non-native English researchers experience when preparing their manuscripts. Beyond linguistic and structural challenges, non-native English writers often struggle with feelings of inferiority, stemming from their limited vocabulary range and perceived inability to convey ideas as clearly or confidently as native speakers (Carlsson et al. 2024; Ramírez-Castañeda 2020).

The consequences of these challenges can be significant. For example, Amano et al. (2023) reported that compared to

native English speakers, non-native speakers took 91% more time to read English-language papers and 51% more time to write them. They also needed help editing the English in more than 75% of their articles, and when they submitted their work, they were asked to revise it 12.5 times more often than native speakers.

Overall, these linguistic challenges can lead to delays in submitting papers, frequent rejections, and emotional stress, ultimately affecting non-native speakers' visibility in global research and limiting their opportunities for recognition and academic career advancement (Carlsson et al. 2024; Ramírez-Castañeda 2020).

1.2 | Boosting Academic Writing With AI

In recent years, academic writing has changed significantly with the rise and widespread use of AI-based tools. Research has shown that students across different contexts increasingly rely on AI to support various stages of the writing process. For instance, studies involving Turkish, Japanese, and Chinese students indicate a growing interest in and positive perceptions of AI tools like *ChatGPT* for tasks such as translation, idea generation, editing, and proofreading (Allen and Mizumoto 2024; Wang et al. 2024; Yılmaz Virlan and Tomak 2024). These tools are often favored over traditional methods because they provide immediate, helpful feedback and improve clarity, organization, and overall writing quality. Moreover, AI assistance has been found to reduce the time required for writing (Golan et al. 2023; Lund et al. 2023; Roberts et al. 2024).

AI tools do more than just correct grammar or word choices—they also help with deeper aspects of writing, such as developing ideas, organizing content, and choosing a suitable tone and style. For example, the *Hemingway Editor*, an AI-powered tool, offers suggestions based on a large collection of published academic texts. This helps users adopt a more suitable academic tone and style. AI tools have also been recognized for their capacity to address more cognitive and affective challenges in the writing process. For instance, several studies (Altmäe et al. 2023; Hwang et al. 2023) emphasized their potential to help users overcome writer's block, commonly known as blank page syndrome.

More importantly, recent studies have shown that AI tools are being increasingly used in academic publishing. For example, Gray (2024) estimated that about 60,000 scientific articles, or 1% of all published papers in 2023, included content generated by large language models (LLMs), such as *ChatGPT*. He argued that in certain fields, the prevalence may be even higher, with evidence of AI use in up to 17.5% of papers in computer science. AI tools have been found to support various stages of the academic writing process beyond simple proofreading. For instance, they can assist with drafting and organizing ideas, making it easier for researchers to produce initial versions of their work (Salvagno et al. 2023). These tools are also useful for revising and enhancing clarity and coherence, particularly in challenging sections such as introductions and discussions, an especially valuable aid for non-native English speakers (Hwang

et al. 2023). Additionally, AI has been shown to improve writing productivity by enabling researchers to write more quickly and produce higher-quality texts (Noy and Zhang 2023). Overall, AI tools contribute to a more efficient and organized writing process.

1.3 | The Dark Side of AI in Academic Publishing

While AI tools are becoming more and more useful for writing in academic and scientific fields, it is crucial to use them with care. Research highlights several key issues with AI use in academic writing, including authorship problems, plagiarism risks, threats to academic integrity, misinformation, deskilling and over-reliance, and the need for clear guidelines and policies (Barrot 2023; Božić 2023; Carobene et al. 2024; Dwivedi et al. 2023; González-Padilla 2023; Khalifa and Albadawy 2024; Lund 2025; Lund and Naheem 2024; Malik et al. 2024; Ugwu et al. 2024; van Dijk 2020).

One of the most serious ethical problems is the question of authorship in AI-assisted writing. Hosseini et al. (2023) discussed that while AI can help with writing and editing, it cannot be considered an author because it does not have free will or moral responsibility. This means that human writers must take full responsibility for the work and clearly state if they used any AI tools. Similarly, the publisher Taylor & Francis does not allow AI tools to be listed as authors, since they cannot be held accountable. Academic publishers now have special policies to ensure transparency in AI use. For example, Springer Nature requires authors to clearly explain which parts of the work were done by humans and which by AI. Elsevier asks authors to name the AI tools used, describe how they were used, and confirm that the authors are fully responsible for the content.

AI tools have created new challenges for traditional understanding of plagiarism. ‘AIgiarism’ (AI-driven plagiarism) refers to situations where AI outputs copy or rephrase existing content without proper attribution to original sources (Chan 2024; Khalaf 2025). Ghio (2024) warned that while AI can improve writing efficiency, using it to generate content directly challenges the authenticity of academic contributions, especially because the distinction between human and machine-generated text becomes increasingly difficult to identify.

AI tools pose a threat to academic integrity due to their potential misuse by predatory publishers, who exploit these technologies to mass-produce low-quality, pseudo-academic papers (Carobene et al. 2024; Dwivedi et al. 2023; Kendall and Teixeira da Silva 2024). These publications often bypass weak editorial reviews and make their way into reputable databases like Scopus and PubMed, undermining scientific discourse quality. This spread of AI-generated content weakens trust in academic publishing systems, making it increasingly difficult for researchers and readers to access trustworthy information.

Another serious issue with AI writing tools is ‘hallucination’, when AI systems produce incorrect or nonsensical information. Homolak (2023a, 2) warned that AI-generated manuscripts can be ‘misleading, based on non-credible or completely made-up

sources’, highlighting the dangers of uncritical reliance on these tools. Silverman et al. (2023) documented that AI sometimes creates references to studies or sources that do not exist. Without proper human review, AI-generated content risks spreading misinformation within scholarly discourse, potentially reducing public trust in scientific research (Ugwu et al. 2024; van Dijk 2020).

There are also concerns that AI’s widespread use could lead to the deskilling of researchers, reducing their need to develop writing, critical thinking, and analytical skills (Carobene et al. 2024; Dwivedi et al. 2023; Gendron et al. 2022; Hwang et al. 2023; Roberts et al. 2024). The fear is that the extensive use of AI tools for tasks such as drafting text, summarizing literature, or even assisting with data analysis can lead to a decline in researchers’ fundamental skills. For example, Roberts et al. (2024) argued that AI assistance might lead skills to ‘grow rusty, and finally over time they may be lost or worse, never developed’ (p. 2).

In addition, the unequal use of and access to AI resources and the high cost of advanced tools can deepen existing disparities and create new forms of inequality in academia (AlZaabi et al. 2023; Božić 2023). Researchers with access to these tools can accelerate their writing and publication processes, while those without access are left at a disadvantage. These disparities are further intensified in regions where access to certain AI tools is restricted or outright prohibited by national policies (Ghio 2024).

In response to these concerns, rather than calling for a complete ban on AI, scholars advocate for the establishment of clear guidelines that encourage transparency while maintaining academic standards. Gupta (2023), for instance, suggested limiting AI use to non-substantive tasks, such as improving writing, checking grammar and sentence structure, and suggesting alternative phrasing. This way, AI can support writers while human authors keep control of the main content. Similarly, in their review of ethical guidelines from seven leading academic publishers, Ugwu et al. (2024) found common principles including required disclosure of AI involvement, exclusion of AI as authors, prohibitions against using AI to fabricate research data, and limits on AI-generated visual content.

Citation practices are evolving as AI becomes more common in academic work. Chan (2024) explained that both APA and MLA now require detailed information when citing AI tools, such as the version, dataset, and the organization that developed the model. While major publishers have taken steps to define ethical AI use, Malik et al. (2024) pointed out that many universities are still slow to create clear policies. Gönülal (2026) also noted this delay and suggested several ways institutions can respond. He recommended offering training to improve AI literacy, creating clear and balanced policies that involve both students and staff, and recognizing the differences between AI tools like *Grammarly* and *ChatGPT*.

1.4 | The Present Study

Although there has been a growing interest in the application of AI in academic writing and publishing, we still know so little about how non-native English-speaking researchers, who

potentially benefit most from these technologies, actually use AI tools in their work. As such, this study addresses this gap by exploring how non-native English-speaking researchers from various fields and backgrounds use AI tools, what they think about the benefits of AI in academic publishing, and how they believe these tools affect scholarly communication and academic integrity. The following research questions guided this study:

1. To what extent do non-native English-speaking researchers find AI tools useful in academic publishing?
2. What are the perceived impacts of AI tools on academic publishing?

2 | Methods

In this study, a mixed-methods convergent parallel research design was employed. This approach involves collecting both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently during a single phase of data collection, analysing each dataset separately, and then integrating the results during interpretation (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018). This design was selected to provide complementary perspectives on the research questions, with quantitative data offering breadth of understanding across a larger sample and qualitative data providing additional depth through participants' descriptions of their experiences and perceptions.

2.1 | Instrument

A comprehensive survey was used as the data collection instrument. The survey was developed through a rigorous multi-stage process. Initially, the researchers conducted a comprehensive literature review on AI use in academic writing, linguistic challenges faced by non-native English speakers, and ethical considerations in AI-assisted publishing. Based on this review, an initial pool of 55 items was generated to address the research questions. To establish content validity, the draft survey was reviewed by four experts with extensive experience in both AI use and academic writing. These experts evaluated each item for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness. Based on their feedback, several items were modified, combined, or eliminated, resulting in a survey comprising 45 questions. Next, the survey was piloted with eight participants (who were not included in the analyses). Following the pilot, one additional question was removed, and a few minor wording revisions were made (see [Supporting Information](#) for the final version of the survey). Forty-two closed-ended questions addressed participants' demographic and academic background, familiarity with AI writing tools, frequency of use, perceived benefits, and challenges in the context of research activities. Two open-ended questions explored non-native English-speaking researchers' perspectives on the use of AI writing tools in academic publishing and their predictions about the long-term impacts of these tools on the quality and equity of academic publishing. To encourage a consistent interpretation of AI tools throughout the survey responses, a working definition of AI tools was given (i.e., *In this study, AI tools refer to any AI-powered applications [e.g., Grammarly, ChatGPT, QuillBot, Writefull, and Hemingway] that assist with various aspects of the writing process.*).

2.2 | Procedure

The data were collected from non-native English-speaking academics with experience using AI tools for academic writing. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the inclusion of participants who had relevant experience with AI in academic writing and publishing. Participants were recruited through academic networks, listservs (e.g., *LinguistList Listserv*), and snowball sampling. Additionally, keyword searches were conducted on Google Scholar to identify potential participants who come from different linguistic backgrounds and work in various fields ranging from health to economy. While priority was given to researchers who explicitly reported using AI in their writing or had direct experience with AI in the preparation of their scholarly work, individuals demonstrating a high degree of interest in AI were also invited to participate. Approximately 2000 invitations were distributed via academic listservs and professional networks. Due to the use of listserv distribution and snowball sampling, an exact response rate could not be calculated. However, it is estimated to be approximately 1%–2%. This low rate may reflect researcher hesitancy to disclose AI use in a climate where established criteria for 'acceptable' use are still evolving. As an incentive, five randomly selected participants were rewarded with a \$50 Amazon gift card.

2.3 | Participants

Initially, 115 participants completed the survey. However, 10 respondents reported having no prior experience with AI use in academic writing and were therefore excluded from the analysis, resulting in a final sample of 105 participants. The sample was linguistically and geographically diverse, representing 25 different language backgrounds, including Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Turkish, and working in various countries such as Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, The Netherlands, Türkiye, UK, and USA. The largest proportions of participants were based in Europe (39%) and Asia (33%). The most commonly spoken first languages were Turkish, Chinese, and Spanish.

As shown in Table 1, the gender distribution was nearly equal. Most participants were relatively young or mid-career, with approximately half aged between 35 and 44 and 27% between 25 and 34. Participants received their highest degrees recently, with a median graduation of 2020. The majority (73%) of them held a Ph.D. degree. A quarter of the participants were assistant professors and almost another quarter were associate professors. Only 2% were professors. The majority (89%) of the participants worked at a public institution at the time of the study. 19% of the institutions were reported to be research-oriented, and 14% were teaching-oriented. In terms of academic disciplines, education and applied linguistics were most strongly represented, followed by medicine and computer science. Participants demonstrated substantial research experience, reporting a median of 10 years in academic writing (Mdn = 10, $M = 10.87$, IQR = 8.25, $SD = 6.83$), and a median of 9.5 peer-reviewed publications (Mdn = 9.5, $M = 20.02$, IQR = 22, $SD = 30.79$).

TABLE 1 | Demographic and academic background.

Category		N	%
Gender	Male	55	47.6
	Female	50	52.4
Age	Under 25	4	3.8
	25–34	28	26.7
	35–44	56	53.3
	45–54	13	12.4
	55 and above	4	3.8
Degree	Bachelors	4	3.8
	Masters	24	22.9
	Doctorate	77	73.3
Academic role	Assistant professor	26	24.8
	Associate professor	23	21.9
	Lecturer	15	14.3
	Post doc	15	14.3
	Ph.D. student	10	9.5
	Professor	2	1.9
	Research assistant	10	9.5
Institution	Other	4	3.8
	Public	93	86.6
	Private	5	4.8
	Research-oriented	20	19
	Teaching-oriented	15	14.3
Fields of research	Education	37	35.2
	Applied linguistics/ Linguistics	31	29.5
	Medicine	6	5.7
	Computer science & informatics	6	5.7
	Psychology & cognitive sciences	5	4.7
	Management and Marketing	5	4.7
	Others (e.g., engineering, sociology, economy, regional planning etc.)	15	14.2

Although only 21% of participants reported that they had received formal training or guidance in using AI tools, the average AI familiarity was 3.53 (SD=0.88), and the average AI use frequency in academic writing was 3.41 (SD=0.96) out of 5. Participants aged 25–34 reported the highest average AI familiarity ($M=3.71$), followed by those aged 35–44 ($M=3.54$). When co-authoring, 35% of participants tended to use AI tools less

frequently compared to writing alone, while 44% reported using AI tools with the same frequency. Only 10% reported using AI tools more frequently when co-authoring.

Regarding their use of AI tools for academic writing assistance, among over 25 different AI tools mentioned, *ChatGPT* emerged as the most popular AI tool (80%), followed by *Grammarly* (41%) and *QuillBot* (21%). Other commonly used AI tools by the participants include *DeepL* (12%), *Gemini* (10%), and *DeepSeek* (9%).

2.4 | Data Analysis

For the qualitative data, basic descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, and percentages), visual representations, and correlations were used to analyse participants' AI use habits and orientations, as well as their perceptions of the effectiveness of AI writing tools in academic publishing. Given the purposive, non-random sampling, p -values are reported alongside effect sizes as a conventional metric to evaluate whether the observed associations within this specific sample might simply be due to chance. However, they are not intended to imply statistical generalizability to the entire population of non-native English speakers.

The qualitative data coming from 97 participants' responses to two open-ended questions were analysed using a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis followed a six-phase approach: familiarization, initial code generation, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining/naming themes, and producing the report. More specifically, initial codes were generated inductively from the data and iteratively refined through multiple readings. Codes were then grouped into broader themes based on conceptual similarity. Given the limited number of open-ended questions, the analysis aimed to identify recurring patterns rather than achieve full data saturation. To reduce potential researcher bias, coding decisions were revisited and themes were cross-checked for internal consistency. Following the convergent parallel design, quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during the interpretation phase. This integration involved identifying areas of convergence (where qualitative themes supported quantitative findings) and complementarity (where qualitative themes provided explanations for quantitative findings).

3 | Results

3.1 | Quantitative Results

When asked to rate the amount of AI use in their most recent papers (see Figure 1), more than half of the participants (55%) reported using AI tools for only minimal assistance in their academic writing. While a notable portion (25%) reported using AI moderately, substantial and extensive AI use was less common.

Figure 2 shows the participants' motivations for using AI tools in academic writing. A great majority of them used AI tools with the hope of improving their writing quality (84%) and saving time (77%) when writing up their papers. About half (52%) of the participants employed AI tools to address language barriers.

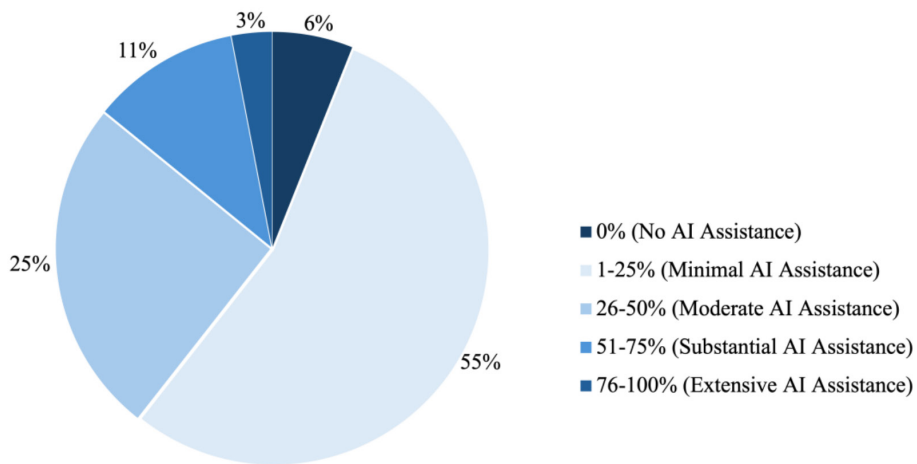


FIGURE 1 | AI use amount in most recent papers.

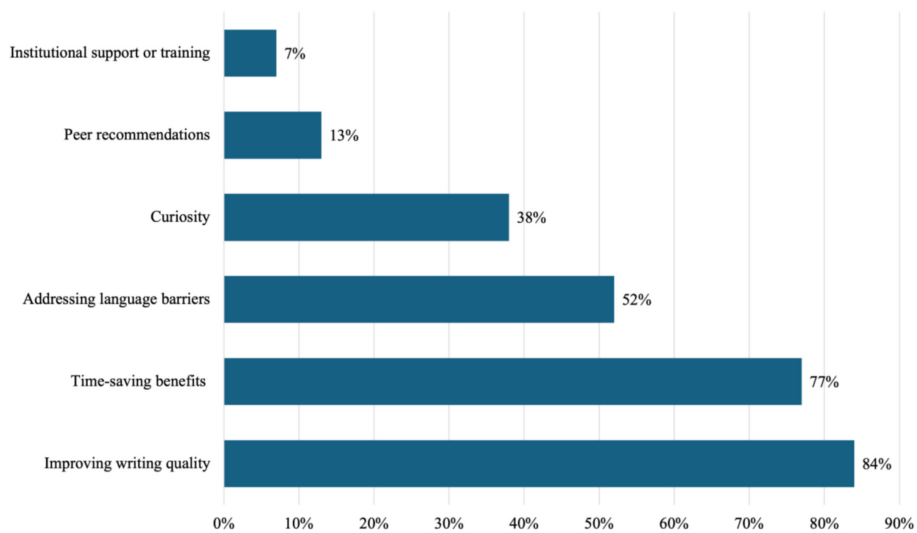


FIGURE 2 | Participants' motivations for using AI tools in academic writing.

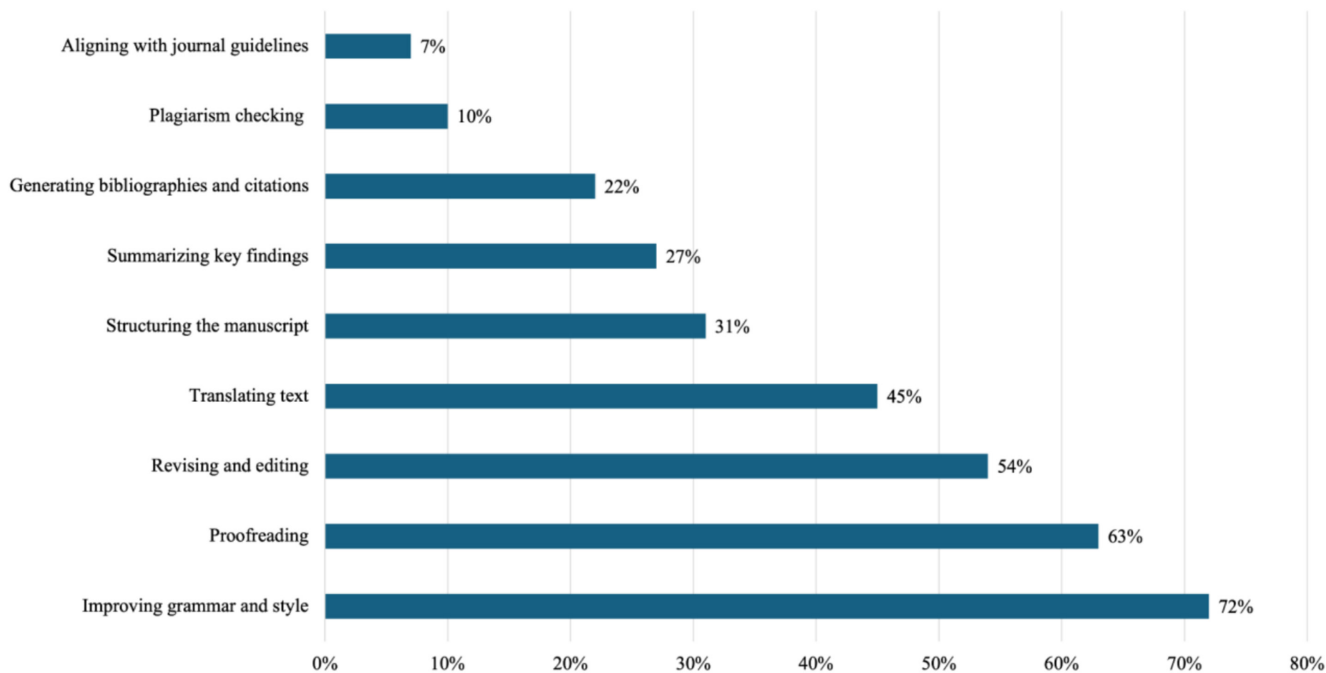


FIGURE 3 | Stages of academic writing AI tools typically used.

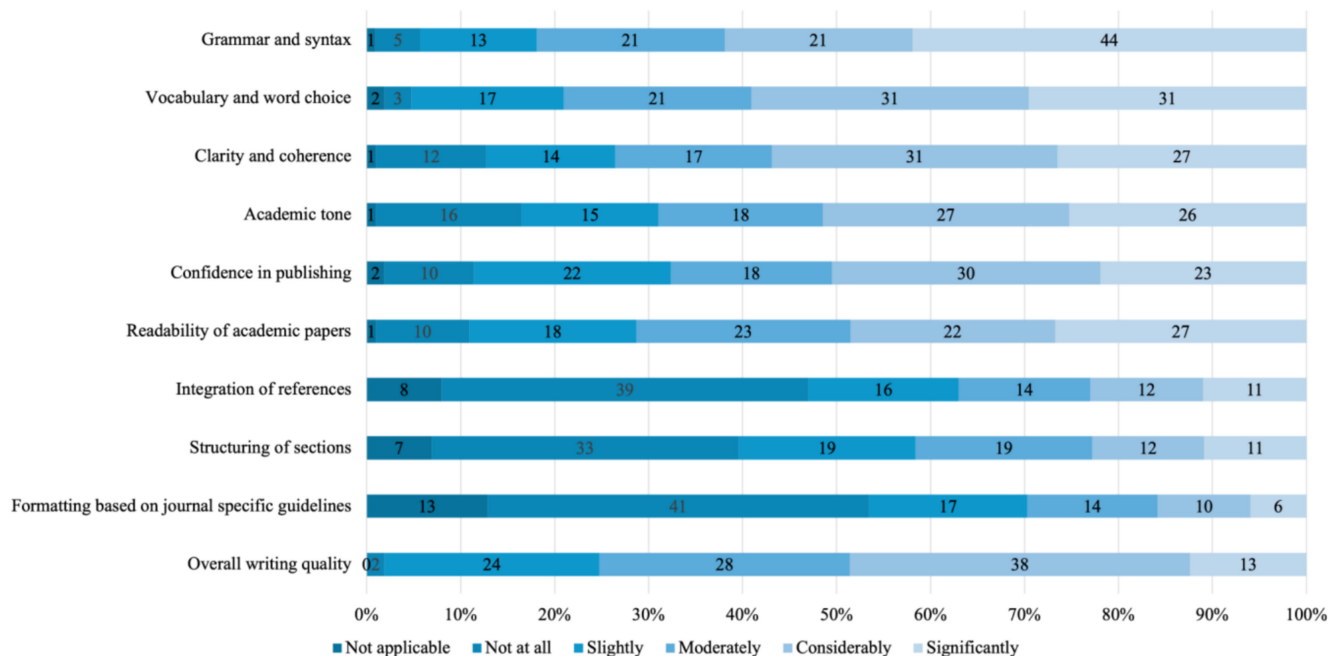


FIGURE 4 | Perceived AI impact on academic writing.

In closer looking at the stages of academic writing where they typically tended to use AI tools (see Figure 3), AI tools were reported to be utilized most for improving their grammar and style (72%) and proofreading (63%) of their manuscripts. Revising and editing were also frequent applications (54%), followed by translation (45%) and structuring manuscripts (30%). Less common uses included summarizing findings (27%), generating bibliographies and citations (22%), plagiarism checking (10%), and aligning with journal guidelines (7%).

In looking at the participants' perceptions regarding the extent to which AI tools were really effective in their academic papers (see Figure 4), participants reported that AI assistance was perceived as primarily beneficial for improving fundamental writing skills. Participants rated AI's impact most positively on areas like grammar, vocabulary, clarity and coherence, and academic tone, with over half of participants seeing significant or considerable improvement. However, AI's perceived effectiveness diminishes when it comes to more specialized academic tasks. Aspects such as formatting according to journal guidelines, integrating references, and structuring sections were seen as areas where AI offered less value, with many participants reporting that AI tools were not helpful in these aspects. Most of the participants believed that AI tools directly contributed to improving the overall quality of their academic papers.

When compared to academic papers written without any AI assistance, the vast majority of participants (81%) reported that their manuscripts were of better quality when written with AI tools, with most indicating a slight improvement (59%) and a significant portion reporting substantial improvement (23%). Only 18% of participants perceived no difference in quality between AI-assisted and non-AI-assisted manuscripts.

When comparing AI tools to professional editing services, participants with experience in both options showed a clear preference for AI. A combined 59% of participants found AI tools to

be either 'somewhat' or 'much' better, while only 23% favoured professional editing. Similarly, when comparing AI tools to feedback from peers/mentors, AI tools were again favoured, albeit by a smaller margin. 48% of participants found AI tools to be more effective, compared to 35% favouring peers/mentors. 18% of participants found both methods equally effective.

When looking at the quality of AI-suggested feedback, most participants exhibited a moderate level of trust in AI-generated suggestions, with 'moderately' being the most common response (48%). However, a significant portion (77%) acknowledged encountering inaccuracies or misleading suggestions. To address these errors, the vast majority (77%) reported relying on personal revision, while others (35%) avoided using AI for critical writing tasks, consulting with peers (29%), or used multiple AI tools for cross-checking (26%). Notably, 40% of participants reported that they 'never' accepted AI-suggested significant changes without review. Despite these concerns, a strong majority (83%) would recommend AI tools to other researchers in their field.

Additionally, AI tools were generally perceived to increase participants' confidence in publishing academic papers in English. Just over half (51%) reported a considerable or significant confidence boost, suggesting that AI plays a meaningful role in helping them overcome language or writing challenges in academic publishing.

Furthermore, just over a third (36%) of participants believed that AI tools positively impacted their ability to target prestigious journals. Only about one-fifth (22%) of them definitively stated that AI tools did not improve their ability to target high-impact journals. 42% of participants remained uncertain about whether AI writing tools improved their ability to target high-impact journals.

The majority (60%) of participants did not observe any noticeable change in the speed or efficiency of the publication process since they started using AI writing tools. However, a combined 40% of participants experienced some improvement in publication

speed, with about a quarter reporting that the process became somewhat faster, and 15% indicating a significant improvement in speed.

When the participants were asked about their experiences with journal editors and reviewers (see Figure 5), the majority (57%) of participants reported no change in editor/reviewer feedback since using AI tools while a notable portion experienced positive shifts. Specifically, there were fewer comments on grammar and language (32%), an increased focus on content (17%), and a reduction in desk rejections (14%).

When examining the changes participants experienced following their drafting of AI-assisted manuscripts (see Figure 6), the most frequently reported change was a decrease in the time spent revising manuscripts (56%), closely followed by an improvement in manuscript quality (54%). While a considerable portion of participants (24%) reported no noticeable change, a notable percentage (19%) observed a decrease in journal rejections due to poor language. Less frequent changes included an increase in the number of submissions to journals (13%) and an increase in the number of accepted publications (8%).

The bar graph in Figure 7 shows a potential correlation between participants' AI familiarity and perceived benefits in academic writing processes. As familiarity increased from 'slightly' to 'extremely,' participants reported progressively greater improvements across all categories. While time efficiency (decreased revision time) and improved manuscript quality were widely reported benefits across all familiarity levels, concrete publication gains (increased submissions and acceptances, and decreased language rejections) were primarily experienced by highly familiar users. Notably, reports of 'no noticeable change' drop sharply from 31% among slightly familiar users to just 7% among extremely familiar users, suggesting that greater AI proficiency led to more substantial and diverse benefits in academic writing and publishing.

When looking into the perceived level of authorship, participants (72%) largely maintained a sense of complete authorship when using AI tools in their academic papers, with shared authorship reported by a smaller percentage (18%). Most researchers rarely or never felt a diminished connection to their writing (34% for both). In collaborative settings, the majority (40%) believed AI tools did not reduce their individual contribution, though a significant portion (31%) perceived a slightly reduced contribution.

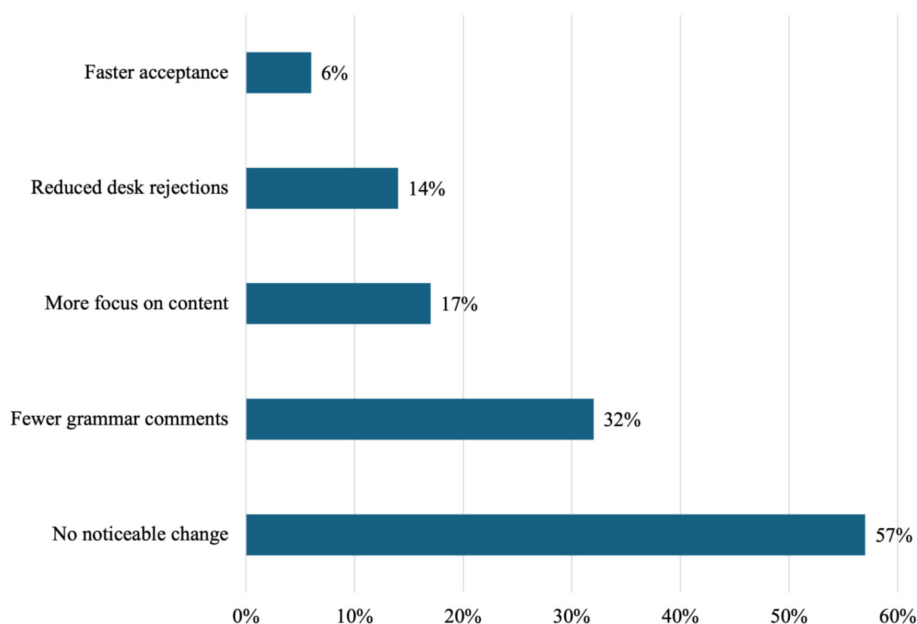


FIGURE 5 | Experience with journal editors and reviewers.

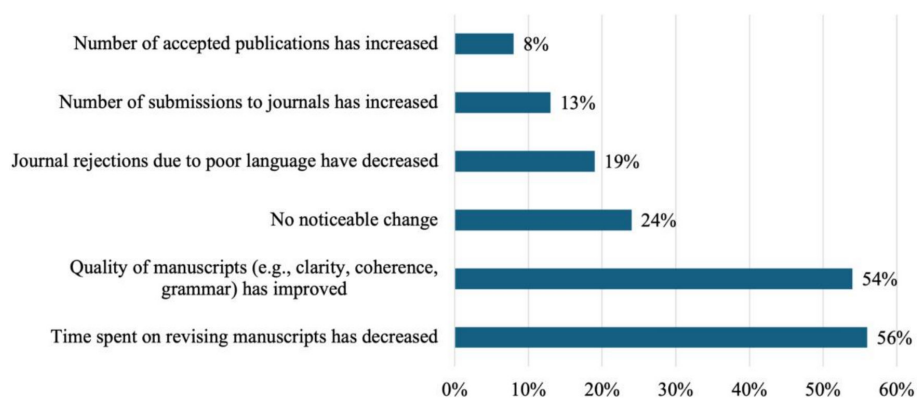


FIGURE 6 | Changes in academic writing processes.

As expected, a significant negative correlation was observed between the extent of AI use and the perceived level of authorship (*Spearman's rho* = -0.47, *p* < 0.001). This moderate effect suggests that higher reliance on AI tools is associated with a lower sense of individual authorship. As illustrated in Figure 8, a clear pattern emerged: as researchers increased their dependence on AI, their perceptions of authorship shifted dramatically from complete to shared, and eventually to reduced. A notable finding was that when AI assistance exceeded 75%, no participants reported feeling complete authorship over their work. Similarly, in instances where no AI tools were used, all participants maintained a sense of

complete authorship, which suggests a clear relationship between these variables. The data further indicate that the transition from a predominantly complete authorship to one of shared authorship occurred at the moderate usage level (26%–50%). This finding suggests that this specific range may represent a psychological threshold where researchers begin to perceive a fundamental change in their role within the writing process.

Similarly, as presented in Figure 9, a significant positive correlation was found between AI use amount and losing connection to writing (*Spearman's rho* = 0.27, *p* = 0.036). The figure shows this

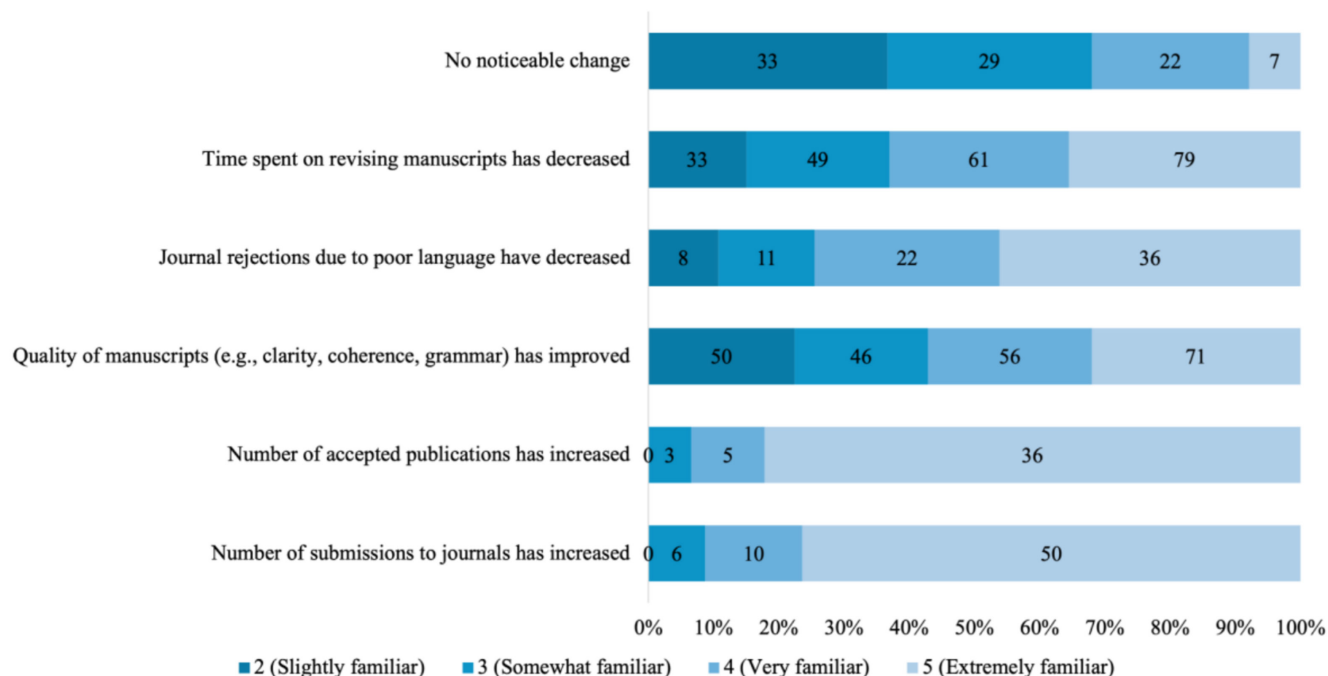


FIGURE 7 | AI familiarity and changes in academic writing processes.

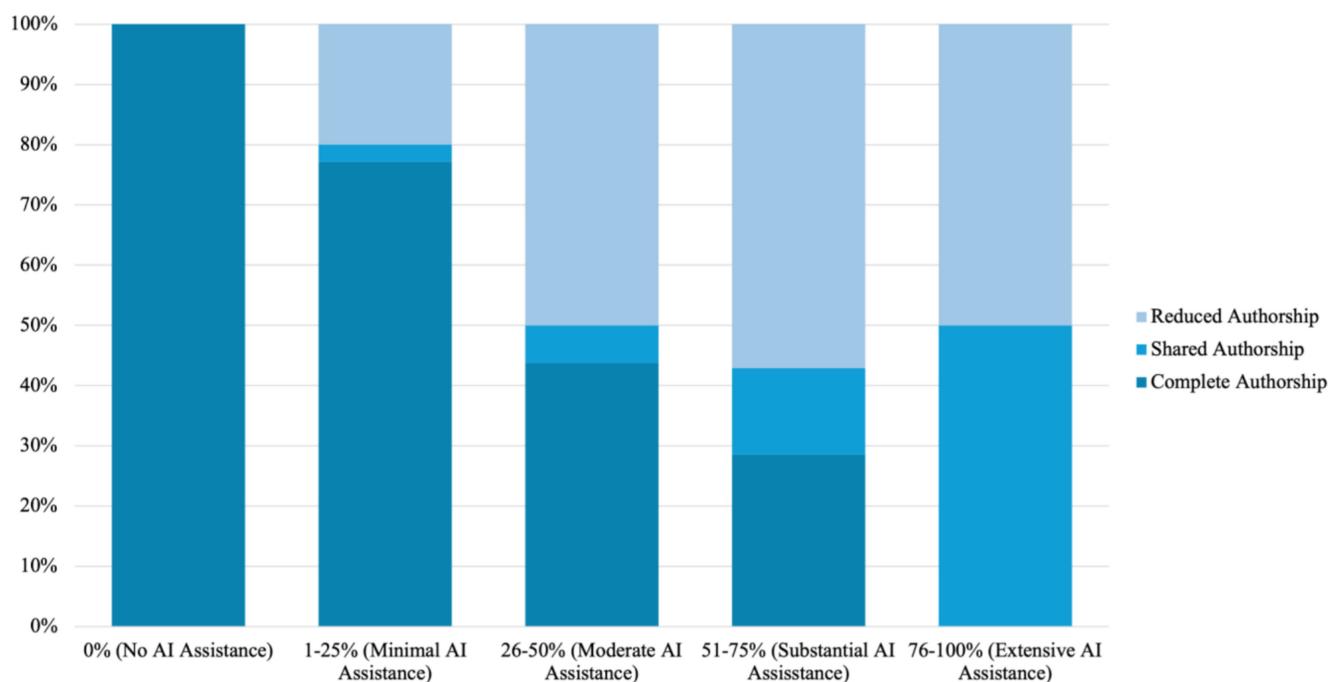


FIGURE 8 | AI use amount and perceived level of authorship.

clear pattern: as participants increased their reliance on AI tools in their academic papers, they tended to have frequent losses in connection to their academic writing.

In looking at the AI use transparency, participants predominantly did not explicitly acknowledge AI-generated contributions in their academic papers, with ‘Never’ (26%) and ‘Rarely’ (23%) being the most common responses. However, a significant majority (60%) believed that journals should require authors to disclose AI tool usage in their work, while a substantial portion (27%) was unsure. Additionally, there was a strong consensus (91%) among participants that academic institutions should provide training on the ethical use of AI tools in research.

3.2 | Qualitative Results

A total of 97 participants responded to the open-ended questions at the end of the survey, sharing their perceptions of AI tool usage and their projections for the future of academic publishing. These responses yielded 5041 words for qualitative analysis. While a quantitative view of the data, averaging approximately 52 words per respondent, might suggest limited volume, a qualitative analysis reveals that many participants provided highly substantive and effective insights regarding their experiences with and opinions of AI. A thematic analysis of this data identified four primary themes, which largely converge with the quantitative findings.

3.2.1 | Bridging the Linguistic Gap

This theme reflects a perceived shift in how non-native English-speaking researchers experience academic publishing. AI tools appear to be providing non-native speakers with capabilities that were previously unavailable or prohibitively expensive. These tools may serve as a bridge across the linguistic divide, allowing researchers to express their ideas with greater clarity and precision in English. For example, most of the participant comments pertained to this theme, which focuses on the impact

of AI tools on language proficiency, particularly for non-native English speakers, and the resulting changes in accessibility in academic publishing. Example comments included:

- We are now at less of a disadvantage compared to native speakers, and it is the content, not our language, that plays the most important role. Whereas before, we could be rejected solely based on the quality of our language, which was quite unjust.
(a Russian applied linguist with some AI familiarity)
- It increased the chance of competing with native speakers in academic publishing.
(a Turkish educationist with some AI familiarity)
- I think AI tools can help non-native speakers produce native-like quality writing. I feel native-English speakers sometimes have it ‘easier’ to a certain degree (in the sense that academia is a tough world and being a native speaker might come with a little privilege).
(a Spanish linguist with some AI familiarity)
- It helps non-native speakers about language issues which are generally significant problems when publishing in high-quality journals.
(a Turkish educational technologist with high AI familiarity)

3.2.2 | Enhancing Writing Efficiency and Increasing Confidence

This theme addressed how AI tools are transforming the practical and psychological dimensions of academic writing for non-native English-speaking researchers. AI tools are dramatically reducing the time burden by automating many aspects of the

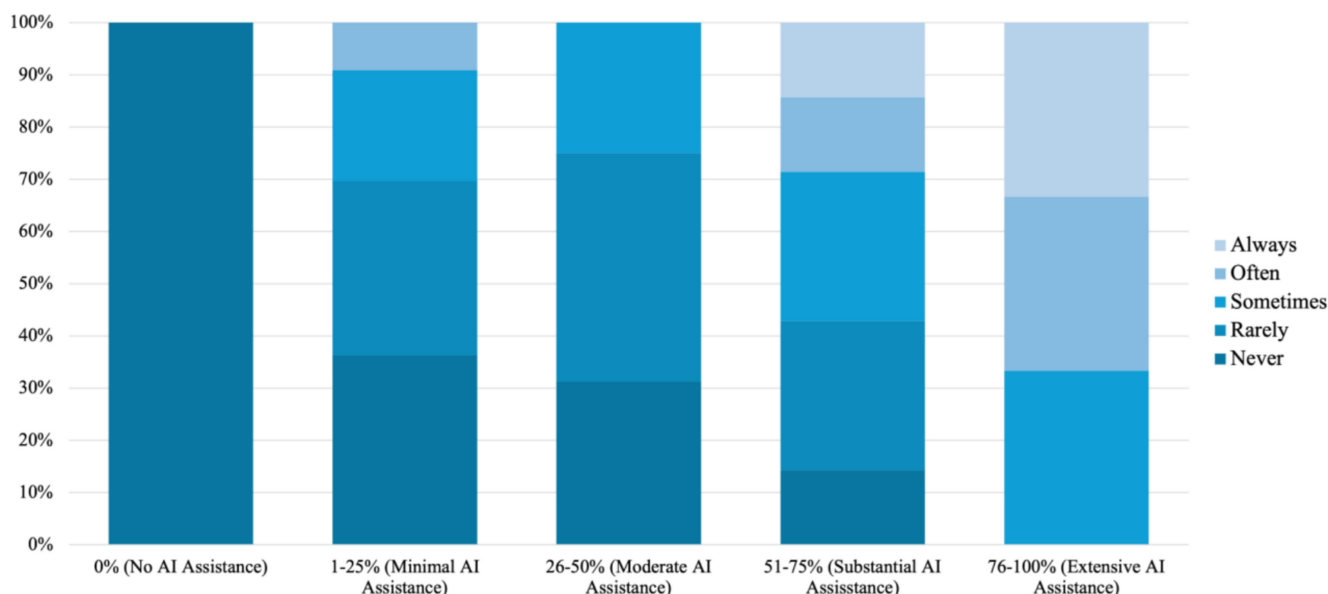


FIGURE 9 | AI use amount and losing connection to writing.

writing process. Participants in this study made comments regarding how AI tools impacted the speed and ease of academic writing, affecting revision, submission, and overall workflow. For example, some participants made such comments:

■ It [AI] has helped us to better organize our texts.
(a Portuguese linguist with high AI familiarity)

■ AI tools have tremendously helped shape a better manuscript...
(a Filipino philosopher with some AI familiarity)

■ It [AI] greatly helps with grammar and better choice of words.
(a Bengali computer scientist with high AI familiarity)

■ ...Also, AI tools reduced the time of writing, by providing suggestions on grammar and punctuation. Before AI tools, non-native speakers would have to resolve grammar issues by searching them online or looking for the correct spelling of certain words in the dictionary...
(a Spanish psycholinguist with high AI familiarity)

■ I think it [AI] helps reduce the language barrier. It helps in producing grammatically correct and error-free text.
(a Turkish medical doctor with some AI familiarity)

Beyond the practical benefits, these tools also offer significant psychological support by boosting researchers' confidence in their writing abilities. Several participants (19%) specifically mentioned that using AI tools increased their confidence in academic publishing:

■ AI helps me feel more confident when presenting my research, whether in written form (abstracts, manuscripts, posters) or spoken form (presentations, conferences).
(a Spanish applied linguist with some AI familiarity)

■ I avoided paying a lot of money for proofreading and editing. I increased my self-confidence and motivation before and after submitting a paper.
(a Persian applied linguist with high AI familiarity)

■ A lot. Probably not so much about the actual quality of the paper, but more about the feeling of confidence—feeling less like an ‘impostor’ (e.g., ‘I’m not good enough,’ ‘I don’t write well enough’).
(a French cognitive scientist with high AI familiarity)

■ ...I do notice that they [AI tools] have boosted my confidence in the quality of my academic writing...
(a Chinese applied linguist with some AI familiarity)

3.2.3 | Concerns Over Overdependence, Originality, and Ethics

Conversely, multiple participants (40%) made comments regarding the apprehensions and ethical considerations surrounding the use of AI, including over-reliance, lack of originality, and a decline in critical thinking skills:

■ When it comes to chatbots like ChatGPT, looking at my peers and students, I worry that many have grown too reliant on AI. It is especially problematic for students who are still getting used to academic writing. I feel that it robs them of the opportunity to grow, and there is a high possibility that it dulls the abilities of researchers...
(an Arabic applied linguist with some AI familiarity)

■ I fear [there may be] too much homogenization of academic style and a loss of creativity maybe.
(a French linguist with some AI familiarity)

■ If used carelessly or relied upon blindly, AI can contribute to misinformation and hinder the development of academic writing skills. It should serve as a supportive tool, not a substitute for critical thinking and independent writing.
(a Spanish applied linguist with some AI familiarity)

■ I am very skeptical about the extensive use of AI in academia. While some researchers use it cautiously and acknowledge AI tools, there will be many researchers who use AI tools as paper mills. I think academia will face a large number of retracted or misleading articles in the future...
(a Turkish applied linguist with high AI familiarity)

3.2.4 | Lack of Guidelines

In line with these concerns, participants also commented on the need for clear guidelines and institutional training regarding how to use AI tools responsibly in academic research and publishing. This theme highlights the institutional and regulatory vacuum surrounding AI use in academic publishing. Despite the rapid adoption of these tools, universities and institutions have been slow to develop comprehensive policies and ethical frameworks to guide their use. This creates uncertainty for researchers:

■ ...I do believe AI should not be avoided by any chance because if you don't go with AI you will ‘die’, but I believe there should be specific training programs, guidelines, ethical, privacy, and legal discussions, and AI communities of practice on how to properly adopt AI in academic publishing.
(a Croatian information scientist with high AI familiarity)

...The use of AI in academic writing raises questions about responsible usage. Journals and institutions need to form clear guidelines on disclosure, ethical use of AI, and its role in academic writing.

(a Turkish educationist with some AI familiarity)

...because of the unclear ethical guidelines and policies, the quality and equity of academic publishing might be negatively impacted in the future.

(a Turkish applied linguist with high AI familiarity)

It is necessary to train researchers to ethically use AI tools. The publishers also should include a section in articles' templates so the researchers could explicitly state in what extension AI contributed to the manuscript.

(a Portuguese educationist with high AI familiarity)

As shown, participants' open-ended responses reflected a complex and thoughtful perspective on AI's role in academic publishing. Many emphasized its potential to break down language barriers, improve the writing process, and make academic work more accessible to a wider audience. However, they also expressed significant concerns, including the risk of overreliance on AI tools, the potential erosion of individual creativity and originality, and the ethical challenges surrounding authorship, accountability, and integrity.

4 | Discussion

This exploratory study provides a comprehensive analysis of how non-native English-speaking researchers utilize AI tools in academic publishing and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness and impact of these tools. The findings reveal a multifaceted picture of AI's role in academic publishing.

In terms of how AI tools are used, participants most frequently used them to improve grammar (72%), writing style and proofreading (63%), and translation (45%). This suggests that many researchers depend on AI tools for support with language-related tasks. These results are consistent with previous studies (Allen and Mizumoto 2024; Hwang et al. 2023; Salvagno et al. 2023; Yılmaz Virlan and Tomak 2024, among others), which also found that writers benefit more from AI in areas like grammar and style than in developing content from scratch. In contrast, fewer participants used AI for more complex tasks such as organizing papers (30%) or summarizing findings (27%), indicating that researchers prefer to manage higher-level thinking themselves. Overall, this selective use of AI supports Gupta's (2023) view that it is acceptable for academics to use AI for non-substantive tasks while maintaining control over their intellectual contributions.

While the quantitative findings confirm that AI is used primarily for linguistic support, the qualitative data provide a novel lens into the psychology of publishing. For instance, the transition from 'imposter' to 'confident researcher' through AI use

represents a shift in academic identity that goes beyond mere grammatical correction.

We now turn to the perceived impact of AI tools on academic publishing, focusing on their benefits, the challenges they introduce, and the serious ethical and practical concerns they raise—a framework we describe as 'the good, the bot [bad], and the ugly'.

4.1 | The Good: Reducing Linguistic Inequalities

One of the most significant positive effects of AI tools found in this study is their potential to reduce linguistic inequalities in academic publishing (Carlsson et al. 2024; Ghio 2024; Hanauer et al. 2019; Hwang et al. 2023; Martinez 2018; Ramírez-Castañeda 2020). The growing use of AI tools appears to be changing the situation for non-native English-speaking researchers. Most participants (81%) reported that their papers improved in quality when they used AI tools. Specifically, almost a third (32%) received fewer comments from editors and reviewers about grammar and language issues after using AI tools. Also, almost a quarter (19%) observed a decrease in journal rejections due to poor language. Furthermore, just over a third (36%) believed that AI tools positively impacted their ability to target prestigious journals. In addition, almost half (40%) of the participants experienced some improvement in publication speed when they got AI assistance in their papers. A notable portion (43%) experienced positive change in editor and reviewer feedback after using AI tools. These perceived impacts suggest that AI tools appear to be genuinely helping non-native English speakers by allowing the focus to shift toward the quality of their research, rather than their command of English, when it comes to getting published. As one participant in our study explicitly stated, 'We are now at less of a disadvantage compared to native speakers, and it is the content, not our language, that plays the most important role'.

Similarly, our findings revealed that more than half (56%) of participants experienced a decrease in revision time. This finding echoes other studies (Amano et al. 2023; Golan et al. 2023; Lund et al. 2023; Noy and Zhang 2023; Roberts et al. 2024; Wang et al. 2024) reporting that AI tools can significantly reduce the time and effort required for non-native English speakers to draft and revise manuscripts. These perceived efficiency gains appear to allow researchers to focus more on the substantive aspects of their work rather than linguistic challenges, potentially democratizing access to prestigious publication venues (Ghio 2024).

The positive impact of using AI tools extends to the psychological dimension of academic writing as well. Several researchers (Carlsson et al. 2024; He 2025; Ramírez-Castañeda 2020) have pointed out that non-native English speakers often experience anxiety and impostor syndrome when using English in academic contexts. Our findings suggest that AI tools may help alleviate these psychological barriers, with over half of the participants quantitatively reported experiencing a considerable boost in confidence when publishing in English. Similarly, in the qualitative data, several participants

specifically mentioned increased confidence and reduced feelings of inadequacy. As one participant noted ‘I increased my self-confidence and motivation before and after submitting a paper’, while another participant stated that AI tools helped with ‘feeling less like an impostor (e.g., I’m not good enough, I don’t write well enough)’.

In short, these findings suggest that AI tools may support non-native English-speaking researchers by improving writing quality, saving time, and boosting confidence. These tools may help create a fairer and more inclusive academic publishing environment where the focus is more on ideas and research than on language ability.

4.2 | The Bad: Accuracy Problems and Loss of Academic Skill

Although AI tools offer many benefits, they come with some significant limitations. These challenges can complicate the writing process for researchers who rely on AI in their academic work.

The main concern is the reliability of AI-generated content. In this study, 77% of the participants reported encountering inaccuracies or misleading suggestions when using AI tools. As several scholars (Homolak 2023a, 2023b; Silverman et al. 2023) pointed out, these technologies can generate inaccurate information. These inaccuracies highlight the importance of human oversight in the use of AI tools, as emphasized by 77% of our participants who reported relying on personal revision to address AI errors.

Another problem is the risk of becoming too dependent on AI tools. One participant commented, ‘...I worry that many have grown too reliant on AI...I feel that it robs them of the opportunity to grow, and there is a high possibility that it dulls the abilities of researchers’. This concern is supported by earlier studies (Carobene et al. 2024; Dwivedi et al. 2023; Gendron et al. 2022; Hwang et al. 2023; Roberts et al. 2024) which found that excessive reliance on AI systems can harm academic writing skills and reduce critical thinking. When researchers rely too much on AI, they may miss chances to develop their own academic voice and writing ability.

Our findings also indicate a changing view of authorship. Our findings show a clear relationship between AI use amount and perceived level of authorship, with a dramatic shift from complete to shared to reduced authorship as AI reliance increases. When AI use reached 75% or more, none of the participants felt they had complete authorship over their papers. The transition from predominantly complete authorship to predominantly shared authorship appeared to begin at 26%–50% of AI use, indicating that this may be a critical threshold where participants began to perceive a meaningful shift in their relationship with AI tools in the writing process. Supporting this finding, Gönülal’s (2026) study found that university students considered 25%–30% AI assistance to be an acceptable limit for academic tasks. This 25%–30% range might be considered a psychological boundary for researchers, beyond which they begin to feel a diminished sense of authorship.

Similarly, as participants increased their reliance on AI tools, they tended to experience more frequent losses of connection to their writing. As Lund and Naheem (2024) and Roberts et al. (2024) argued, this kind of psychological distance can make it harder for early-career researchers to build a strong academic identity and voice.

These challenges highlight the need for a balanced approach to AI use in academic writing. As Altmäe et al. (2023) questioned whether AI is a ‘friend’ or a ‘foe’, our findings suggest it can be both, depending on how it is used. The key appears to be maintaining human control over the writing process while using AI selectively for tasks where it offers clear benefits.

4.3 | The Ugly: Ethical Concerns and Unintended Consequences

The third dimension of AI’s impact on academic publishing involves ethical concerns and unintended consequences, including failure to disclose AI use, lack of clear guidelines, homogenization of academic writing, and the emergence of new forms of inequality.

Our study found that participants predominantly did not explicitly acknowledge AI-generated contributions in their academic papers, with ‘Never’ (26%) and ‘Rarely’ (23%) being the most common responses. This lack of transparency is concerning, especially given that 60% of participants believed journals should require authors to disclose AI tool usage. This discrepancy suggests a gap between researchers’ ethical beliefs and practices. As Ugwu et al. (2024) noted, many major academic publishers already have clear rules requiring authors to disclose AI use—but researchers do not always follow them.

The absence of clear guidelines for AI use in academic writing emerged as a significant concern in our qualitative data. Almost all (91%) of participants believed academic institutions should provide training on the ethical use of AI tools in research. Although some publishers have created their own guidelines (Ugwu et al. 2024), there seems to be limited institutional training and guidance. Malik et al. (2024) argued that higher education has been slow to respond, and Gönülal (2026) stressed the importance of training programs to educate students and faculty on ethical AI use.

There is also a concern that AI tools might homogenize academic writing style, reducing creativity and diversity of expression. One participant stated ‘I fear [there may be] too much homogenization of academic style and a loss of creativity maybe’. This worry reflects a larger debate about whether AI tools might unintentionally standardize academic writing, potentially diminishing the diversity of voices and perspectives that enrich scholarly communication (Carobene et al. 2024; Dwivedi et al. 2023; Kendall and Teixeira da Silva 2024).

Finally, there is the question of whether AI tools truly democratize academic research or simply create new forms of inequality. Ghio (2024) argued that while AI tools can reduce some language barriers, they may create new forms of

inequality based on AI literacy and access. Our findings support this concern, as only 21% of participants reported receiving formal training in AI tool use, suggesting that the benefits of these technologies may be unevenly distributed based on institutional resources and individual technical proficiency, which may result in digital divides (AlZaabi et al. 2023; Božić 2023; van Dijk 2020).

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, our purposive sampling approach, which targeted participants with experience using AI in academic writing and publishing, may have introduced selection bias by favouring participants with stronger opinions about AI. Given the non-random sampling strategy and low estimated response rate, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory and context-specific rather than broadly generalizable. Future research should employ more systematic sampling strategies to ensure a broader representation of non-native English-speaking researchers. Second, our reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, including recall errors. Participants may have over-reported positive outcomes and under-reported ethically questionable practices. Future research could incorporate more objective measures of AI impact, such as a comparative analysis of publication rates or textual analysis of AI-assisted versus non-assisted writing. Third, while our mixed-methods approach provided complementary perspectives, the qualitative component was limited to two open-ended questions. More in-depth qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, would allow for deeper exploration of researchers' experiences and decision-making processes regarding AI use. Fourth, our study focused exclusively on non-native English-speaking researchers' perspectives. Comparative studies including both native and non-native English speakers would help clarify whether the patterns observed are specific to linguistic status or reflect broader trends in academic publishing. Fifth, the survey was administered exclusively in English. Although participants likely possessed sufficient proficiency for comprehension, conveying subtle or emotional insights in a second language remains challenging. While native language use was not explicitly prohibited, and some Turkish participants did respond in their own language, professional translation for 25 different backgrounds was logistically unfeasible. Consequently, some qualitative depth may have been lost through the inherent limitations of second-language expression. Finally, future research should also explore the long-term effects of AI use on researchers' writing skills and academic development. As Roberts et al. (2024) noted, there is a concern that extensive AI use might lead to skill atrophy over time. Longitudinal studies tracking researchers' writing abilities and publication outcomes would provide valuable insights into this issue.

5 | Conclusion

This exploratory study offers a detailed examination of how non-native English-speaking researchers engage with AI tools in the context of academic publishing, as well as their views on the tools' effectiveness and impact. Our findings offer valuable insights into the current state of AI use in academic publishing and point to important considerations for the future.

The good aspects, such as helping researchers overcome language barriers, saving time on revisions, and increasing confidence, suggest that AI tools may help make academic publishing more inclusive as they help bridge gaps in writing proficiency and promote greater equity in academic communication.

However, the bad aspects, such as the AI fallibility and the academic skill loss, remind us that these technologies are still evolving and require careful human oversight. The high percentage of participants who encountered inaccuracies in AI suggestions and the negative impact on academic development and growth highlight the need for realistic expectations about what AI tools can currently achieve. As Altmäe et al. (2023) questioned whether AI is a 'friend' or a 'foe,' our findings suggest it can be both, depending on how it is used.

The ugly aspects, such as ethical concerns, and other unintended consequences including academic monotony and digital divides, require urgent action from researchers, institutions, and publishers. The lack of transparency about AI use, the potential for homogenization of academic discourse, and the creation of new forms of inequality all represent significant challenges that must be addressed through clear guidelines, ethical standards, and institutional support. As several scholars (Gönülal 2026; Malik et al. 2024; Ugwu et al. 2024) noted, journals and publishers must now create new policies and practices to address the challenges and opportunities that AI tools bring.

The implications of these findings extend to multiple stakeholders in academic publishing. For individual researchers, our results suggest the importance of strategic and reflective AI use that draws on linguistic benefits while maintaining intellectual ownership. Researchers should critically review AI-generated content and be transparent about its use. Building AI literacy is also key to using these tools effectively and ethically. For academic institutions, there is a need to provide targeted training programs, establish clear policies on responsible AI use, and ensure equitable access to tools and resources. For publishers and journals, our findings highlight the importance of requiring disclosure of AI use. In addition, clear guidelines on acceptable AI use should also be made available to authors.

In conclusion, AI tools represent neither a panacea for linguistic inequalities nor an inevitable threat to academic integrity. Rather, their impact depends on how they are implemented, regulated, and integrated into existing scholarly practices. By addressing the challenges identified in this study through thoughtful policy development, comprehensive training, and ongoing research, we can work toward an academic publishing ecosystem that is more accessible to linguistically diverse researchers while maintaining the core principles of scholarly integrity.

Author Contributions

Talip Gönülal: conceptualization, investigation, writing – original draft, methodology, validation, visualization, writing – review and editing, software, formal analysis, project administration, data curation, supervision, resources. **Ramazan Güçlü:** writing – original draft, writing – review and editing, data curation, methodology. **Salih Güçlü:** writing – original draft, writing – review and editing, data curation, methodology.

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Ethics Statement

The authors confirm that the study adhered to all ethical guidelines and received full approval from the institutional ethics committee. Ethical approval was granted on 31/01/2025 under protocol number 01/23. All participants provided informed consent prior to their involvement in the study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section. **Data S1:** Supporting Information.