IMPLEMENTING Cici AI APP IN WRITING PRACTICE FOR FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS AT A UNIVERSITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

Nguyen Thi Hong Minh*, Trinh Thu Trang and Dinh Viet Tu
Faculty of Foreign Languages Education,
Thai Nguyen University of Education, Viet Nam

ABSTRACT
Artificial intelligence (AI) significantly transforms various aspects of life, particularly education, by enhancing efficiency, accessibility, and personalized learning. In English language teaching and learning, since students often struggle with writing skills, teachers need to find ways to help, and using Cici AI as an online learning tool could be an effective solution. This study was conducted to determine the effect of the Cici AI tool on the writing abilities of English major students at a University of Education in Vietnam. For this purpose, a pre-experimental research design was adopted with 36 freshmen majoring in English language education taking part in using Cici AI to improve writing proficiency. The participants took a writing pre-test, post-test and a questionnaire to provide some insights about the improvement of their writing ability and their opinions towards the implementation of the Cici AI application. The findings of the pre-test and post-test indicated that the students' writing ability had improved moderately after engaging in using the Cici AI app to practice writing. Findings from the questionnaire also revealed that the utilization of the Cici AI tool appeals to students' interests in improving their writing skills. Therefore, it is recommended that the Cici AI tool be used more frequently in practicing writing English to enhance the writing ability of freshmen.

Keywords: Writing skills, Attitudes, Artificial intelligence, Cici AI.

1. INTRODUCTION
Learning English is critical among all individuals considering it is a universal language that spans national boundaries and brings people together from all over the world. Since many jobs nowadays demand communication in English between partners, studying the language might benefit students' future career prospects and strengthen the probability of getting promoted. However, most students find it a long and difficult process to grasp university-level English knowledge, particularly writing proficiency.

Writing is a complicated process combining cognitive and linguistic skills (Maharani, 2018). Students need to understand the topic well and have a good collection of vocabulary and grammar to forge a proper essay. English writing can be a challenging process for English as Foreign Language (EFL) writers, who often face language barriers (Zhao, 2023). Especially for Vietnamese students, they have to face many challenges due to the differences in culture and historical context. The teaching methodology of English in Vietnam is heavily based on grammar. Despite being one of the compulsory subjects from grade 3 to grade 12, students do not have much chance to practice writing skills inside and outside of class (Nguyen, 2020). This, when combined

with students' negative mindsets toward writing, such as anxiety and nervousness, can affect their ability to write (Akhtar, 2020).

Freshmen of English language education at the mentioned teacher education institution often struggle with academic writing due to the limited emphasis on writing in Vietnam's upper secondary English curriculum and the complexity of developing such skills. Because of time limitations, some teachers may avoid diving too deep into English academic writing during class, and the time-consuming nature of the act of writing may further discourage students from practicing this vital skill. Moreover, grammar usage in academic writing also remains a significant challenge (Tran, 2018), highlighting the need for more engaging and effective teaching methods.

Nowadays, as science and technology progress, applications of artificial intelligence are constantly growing in both quantity and quality, bringing about efficiency and prosperity. In education, AI tools are being used by students as assistants, providing them with knowledge and guidance in studying. Being fast, accurate, and available at all times, AI applications helped many students overcome their fear of studying or researching extensively. With said advantages, AI app usage is rapidly growing among students of all ages and levels of education.

English language majors in the mentioned university recognize the potential of AI in learning and research, facilitated by easy access to AI information through the Internet and social networks. Despite this awareness, students' actual experience with AI is limited due to factors such as insufficient IT infrastructure and resources, lack of effective AI integration in curricula, and students' financial constraints in acquiring necessary equipment and software. The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of AI tools on English majors at the university, specifically investigating the students' perceptions of these tools and how AI tools improve their conversational abilities.

As science and technology advance, artificial intelligence (AI) applications are rapidly expanding in both quantity and quality, bringing efficiency across various fields, including education. AI tools are used by students as learning assistants, offering them knowledge and guidance in studying. Being fast, accurate, and available at all times, AI helps many students overcome the fear of studying or conducting research. In this institution, AI's potential to help students learn and conduct research is acknowledged. However, their actual use of AI remains limited due to inadequate skills, lack of curricular integration, and financial constraints.

Cici AI, along with other AI apps, are gaining popularity. Offering a wide variety of services to its users including providing information, generating content, translating languages, and engaging in conversations at no charge, Cici AI is trusted by many students. The multifunctionality of Cici AI ensures an engaging and immersive experience for its users, which can encourage students to practice their writing skills. Learners can ask Cici AI academic questions for detailed answers, summarize books to save reading time, or casually chat as friends. This application is available at any time during the day, has customizable characteristics, and is completely free, so learners can enjoy their personal assistant at no charge. This study aims to explore the impact of Cici AI on English majors at the university, focusing on students' attitudes and how Cici AI supports their writing skills.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions: (i) To what extent does Cici AI affect students' writing proficiency? (ii) What are the students' attitudes towards the use of Cici AI in writing practice?

2. METHODS OF STUDY

The study adopted a pre-experimental design to illustrate and evaluate the impact of the Cici AI tool on the process of improving and developing writing skills among 36 first-year English majors at the aforementioned university.

This study utilized a mixed method, which was conducted by a combination of the use of tests providing quantitative data about students' writing performance and the use of an open-ended questionnaire to collect qualitative information on the effects of Cici AI in enhancing students' writing competence and exploring their learning attitudes after the implementation of this app.

3.FINDINGS

The impacts of Cici AI on students' writing proficiency

The task in the pre-test was for students to write a formal letter to respond to a situation. Based on the criteria including task fulfillment, organization, vocabulary, and grammar on a scale from 0 to 10, the participants' scores were classified into five levels: Excellent, Good, Fairly Good, Average, and Weak. This allows for an evaluation of the writing ability of the students.

Table 1: The classification of students' scores on the pre-test

No	Classifications	Score ranges	Respondents	
			Frequency	**Proportion**
1	Excellent	9.0 - 10	0	0%
2	Good	8.0 – 8.9	5	13.9%
3	Fairly good	7.0 – 7.9	15	41.7%
4	Average	5.0 – 6.9	16	44.4%
5	Weak	4.0 – 4.9	0	0%
6	Very weak	>4.0	0	0%
Total			**36**	**100%**

From the data above, it can be seen that before the application of the Cici AI tool in writing, very few students were classified as "Good," with only 5 students falling into this category, accounting for 13.9%. The highest percentage was recorded in the "Average" category, with 16 students,

making up 44.4% of the sample. Meanwhile, 41.7% of the students were classified as "Fairly Good." The narrow range between the highest and lowest scores suggests a moderately consistent level of writing proficiency, with few extreme outliers.

Table 2: The classification of students' scores on post-test

No	Classifications	Score ranges	Test	
			Frequency	**Proportion**
1	Excellent	9.0 - 10	0	0%
2	Good	8.0 – 8.9	18	50%
3	Fairly good	7.0 – 7.9	15	41.68%
4	Average	5.0 – 6.9	3	8.32%
5	Weak	4.0 – 4.9	0	0%
6	Very weak	>4.0	0	0%
Total			**36**	**100%**

Based on the data, after the implementation of the Cici AI app in practicing writing skills, there were significant improvements in the average scores achieved by the students. The average score rose to 7.63, a difference of 0.8 compared to the pre-test score. 18 students were classified as "Good", taking up a proportion of 50%, which was the biggest group statistically. The number of students categorized as "Fairly Good" stayed the same at 15 (41,68%), while the number of "Average" students dropped to 3 (8.32%). Neither student falls under the "Excellent" nor the "Weak" and "Very Weak" category. This highlights a significant change in the scores achieved by this research.

Table 3: The comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	Mean score	**Classification**	**Mean score**	**Classification**
Test	6.83	Average	7.63	Fairly good

The table above shows that the average score of participants was classified as "Average" before using the Cici AI tool, with scores of 6.83. After using the Cici AI tool, significant disparities are observed in the pre-test and post-test mean scores. After the post-test, the scores of the writing skills are classified as "Fairly good" with scores of 7.63. This means after using the Cici AI tool

in the writing skills, the results showed improvement and development in the participant's outcome.

Additionally, participants' writing skills were moderately advanced after undergoing treatment. In other words, students benefit greatly from the Cici AI tool in terms of education and improving writing ability. This development is shown by the disparity of 0.8 between the participants' pre-test and post-test mean scores. This means that with the help of Cici AI after the 14-week period, the writing ability and writing knowledge of the students had changed positively.

Students' attitude towards the use of Cici AI for writing development

Besides writing proficiency, students' attitudes are also measured using an open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts to gather information on their experience and perception of the implementation of Cici AI, along with the technical and non-technical difficulties they encountered during its use.

All 36 students responded that they had experienced significant changes in their writing ability and felt more confident when writing in English when they did the tasks in their school curriculum, since they were using the Cici AI tool. More importantly, the participants expressed that they felt more enjoyable in practicing writing English than in the past and it should be introduced to other English learners because Cici AI provided them with a great tool to improve their writing English essays. They also found that the Cici AI tool was an effective method that motivated them to practice writing English, something that used to cause them a lot of fear. Hence, the participants also gave several ideas for the developers to improve the quality of the Cici AI tool and attract more people's attention.

The first impact could be seen in the participants' attitudes: Cici AI enhances participants' satisfaction with the writing process through the quick and accessible support to ensure that learners get instant guidance tailored to their needs, boosting their confidence and helping them learn faster, which is expressed by the feedback below.

"Using Cici AI can make learning English writing more enjoyable because it feels more like a conversation with a helpful friend rather than studying from a textbook. It gives instant feedback, suggestions, and even creative ideas, which keeps you motivated and curious. For example: If you write a short paragraph, Cici AI can help you improve your sentences by suggesting better word choices or correcting grammar in a friendly way."

"Cici AI makes learning English writing more fun because it provides instant suggestions and feedback, like having a virtual tutor available at all times. For example, when I write a grammatically incorrect sentence, Cici AI will point out the mistake and suggest how to fix it, helping me learn faster instead of feeling frustrated"

"Using Cici AI makes learning English writing more enjoyable because it provides instant feedback and suggestions for improvement. For example, when I write essays or letters, Cici AI helps correct my grammar mistakes and offers better vocabulary choices. It also gives me ideas for organizing my writing more clearly, which makes the learning process smoother and more fun."

The findings from the questionnaire above suggest that using the Cici AI tool to develop writing skills can have positive effects on various aspects. The use of Cici AI makes learning English writing more enjoyable by providing instant feedback, personalized suggestions, and creative exercises. It seems that users are participating in a discussion with a helpful friend rather than grasping knowledge from a textbook, which keeps learners motivated and curious. Moreover, it provides grammar corrections, vocabulary improvement, and organizing ideas, making the writing process smoother and more enjoyable, reducing the fear of writing, and allowing students to experiment without being afraid of making mistakes. Additionally, the platform offers exciting interactive exercises, such as storytelling or word games, which make learning more engaging.

Notably, the questionnaire results showed that most users reported no major technical problems, with the platform loading quickly and responses being fast and smooth and logins were generally easy, providing a seamless learning experience. Their feedback was quoted as below.

"While using Cici AI, I did not experience any major technical problems. The system loaded quickly, and the responses were fast and smooth. I also did not face any login errors or connection issues. Overall, the platform worked well and provided a good learning experience"

"I did not experience any major technical problems while using Cici AI. The platform loaded quickly, and the responses were fast and accurate. Logging in was also smooth and easy'

"Besides tech issues, Cici AI sometimes: Misunderstands intent and gives suggestions that don't match what I meant. Gives generic feedback: Suggestions aren't specific enough to help. Struggles with abstract ideas: Feedback isn't great for creative writing. Can influence my writing style: I might start writing like the AI if I use it a lot. Doesn't always get the context: Misses some of the hidden meaning."

However, some students experienced occasional loading issues, which were often attributed to internet connection problems. Additionally, a few users mentioned that the AI sometimes misunderstood their intentions or provided generic feedback, which lacked specificity and did not fully address their mistakes. Some users also noticed that the AI struggled with abstract or creative writing tasks, occasionally offering suggestions that did not align with their meaning. Moreover, frequent use of the platform could potentially influence students' writing style, reducing the individuality of students' work. Overall, while technical performance was generally good, there were occasional limitations in feedback quality and contextual understanding.

The participants also expressed their desire to develop the function of the Cici AI to attract people's attention and help people become more interested in using this app to enhance their writing ability:

"If I could improve one thing about how Cici AI is used in teaching writing, I would make the feedback more detailed and personalized. For example, it could explain more clearly why a sentence needs to change and suggest different ways to rewrite it. This would help learners understand their mistakes better and improve faster."

"If I could improve one thing, it would be for Cici AI to provide clearer explanations about why certain corrections are suggested, including the relevant grammar rules. This would help learners understand the underlying principles better."

"I would improve the feedback to be more detailed and give examples, so it's easier to understand how to make corrections."

As can be seen from the statement above, participants suggested several improvements for Cici AI to enhance the writing learning experience. They recommended making the feedback more detailed and personalized, with clearer explanations of corrections and relevant grammar rules. Some also proposed adapting feedback to individual writing goals, such as academic or creative writing. Additionally, there were requests to make the platform more visually engaging, with a colorful and eye-catching design, and to improve its human-like interaction style. Other suggestions included providing culturally relevant examples to better address tone and context, as well as helping users write in a more natural and fluid style.

4. DISCUSSION

The study revealed that students faced challenges in English writing, such as anxiety, lack of vocabulary, and difficulties in grammar, ideas, cohesion, and coherence. However, using the Cici AI tool provided significant benefits to students. Students who participated in the project reported a positive attitude towards this AI platform, noting improvements in their vocabulary range, grammar, topic ideas, and accuracy. The AI tools also increased students' interest in practicing writing English, a skill they previously found challenging and intimidating. Frequent engagement with the AI tools helped students become more confident and enthusiastic in writing essays, contributing to a successful enhancement of their written communication skills.

The use of the Cici AI app has significantly improved students' English writing proficiency in many regards, including organization, vocabulary, and grammar. Cici AI provided students with relevant synonyms and antonyms, and corrected grammar mistakes, allowing students to write more accurate sentences and with more diverse vocabulary. Post-test gain scores suggest that using the Cici AI tool in writing practice helped improve students' writing skills to some extent. This aligns with the outcomes of an experiment involving 73 English education students at an Islamic university in Indonesia, where the integration of AI and technology tools shows a rise in students' understanding of grammatical rules and vocabulary acquisition, resulting in more cohesive and coherent essays (Zulfa et al., 2023). Furthermore, the improvement in learners' conversational skills supports the findings of Al Mahmud (2023), who noted that using AI tools in writing tasks was particularly beneficial for enhancing lexical and syntactic aspects as well as the overall quality of essays written by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students.

Previous research has confirmed the benefits of using AI tools in enhancing writing skills. Phan (2023) found that students responded very positively to the application of AI-based apps in writing sessions. With the help of incorporated apps, students could translate their ideas from their mother tongue to the target language, which would solve their difficulty in expressing their own ideas on paper; they could also ask AI applications to generate extra ideas to improve their writing. Huang and Tan (2023) recognized that ChatGPT can improve writing performance by giving instant feedback and alternative sentences. However, over-reliance on ChatGPT's generated text may

undermine language learners' writing skills, and unedited generated content could result in plagiarism problems that need to be properly addressed.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study highlights the importance of implementing the Cici AI app in practicing writing skills for a group of English majors at a teacher education university. The benefits of the AI tool and how it is put into use should be communicated clearly by teachers to encourage participation and ensure proper application of students. The implementation of Cici AI can help ease students' difficulty in writing, including providing ideas, relevant vocabulary, and suitable grammar. Students should use the tool to practice writing both in the classroom and at home, aiming to excel further in writing proficiency. However, the act of using AI in writing should also be closely monitored to avoid students' dependence on generated content, which diminishes their creative and critical thinking abilities.

The benefits of AI tools like the Cici AI app in enhancing students' English writing skills are significant. The implementation of AI tools in classroom activities can help reinforce the learning experience and provide students with new ways of thinking and vocabulary, along with command prompts that help get the most out of the application. Teachers should play a supportive role, providing insights, comments, and guidance when needed. This support helps direct students to a more balanced way of practicing, keeping the influence of Cici AI in check while maintaining their presence. The integration of Cici AI into the curriculum can reinforce students' academic writing abilities and improve their critical thinking skills. Future research should dive deeper into the long-term impact of the AI tool on students' literacy proficiency and examine other applications for a newer perspective and comparison.

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