UZBEK EFL STUDENTS' ETHICAL RESPONSES TO AI-GENERATED FEEDBACK IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Ozodakhon Izzatillaeva

Fergana state university Fergana state university 1-year MA in Foreign languages and literature (English)

ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence is now widely used in academic writing, especially through tools that give automated feedback. AI-generated feedback can help students improve their writing. However, it also raises ethical questions about academic honesty and authorship. This study examines how Uzbek EFL students respond ethically to AI-generated feedback in academic writing. It focuses on their ethical judgments and their writing practices.

The study used a quantitative survey design. Data were collected from 40 Uzbek EFL students studying at universities in Uzbekistan. The questionnaire included scenario-based questions and Likert-scale items. These items were designed based on Rest's model of ethical decision-making and feedback literacy theory. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to identify patterns in students' ethical judgments and actions.

The results show that most students consider AI-generated feedback ethically acceptable when they remain in control of their writing and use the feedback selectively. Many students clearly distinguished between AI-generated feedback and AI-generated text, and they viewed feedback as less ethically problematic. However, many students also reported ethical uncertainty, especially when AI made extensive revisions or when institutional rules were unclear. While many students said they rewrote AI feedback in their own words, some admitted that they accepted AI suggestions without making changes.

This study adds to the limited research on AI ethics in Central Asia. It also shows the need for clearer institutional guidance on the ethical use of AI-generated feedback in EFL academic writing.

KEYWORDS

AI-generated feedback; academic writing; ethical decision-making; feedback literacy; Uzbek EFL students

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethical concerns about AI feedback

Artificial intelligence has quickly become part of academic writing in higher education. Many students now use tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Grammarly, and Write & Improve to get quick feedback on grammar, structure, clarity, and style. Because of this, feedback is no longer given only by teachers. It is increasingly provided by automated systems. Although

AI-generated feedback has clear advantages, like saving time and offering individual support, it also raises ethical concerns about authorship, honesty, responsibility, and fairness in academic work.

Unlike traditional teacher feedback, AI feedback can go beyond correction. It may suggest revisions or even rewritten sentences. This makes it difficult to decide where support ends and unethical assistance begins. As a result, many students feel unsure about how much AI use is acceptable. Previous studies show that students often struggle with questions such as whether they should tell teachers about their use of AI feedback and whether texts revised with AI can still be considered their own work. When clear institutional rules are missing, students usually rely on their own judgment to deal with these ethical issues (Ateriya, 2025). Research from different educational contexts shows similar patterns of uncertainty. Nelson et al. (2025), in a study of Ecuadorian university students, found that learners valued AI tools for grammar correction and improving clarity. However, they were divided on whether AI use should be told explicitly, especially when feedback involved only small changes. European research by Spirgi et al. (2024) reported that students generally accepted AI for surface-level editing but considered it unethical when used to rewrite ideas or full paragraphs. Many students also raised concerns about fairness, believing that unequal access to AI tools could affect assessment results.

Similar findings were reported in Nigeria by Ya'u and Mohammed (2025). Their participants accepted AI help for mechanical corrections but rejected its use for generating ideas or making major changes to texts. These students stressed the importance of authorship and personal responsibility. They also argued that AI feedback should be evaluated critically rather than accepted without thinking. A broader review by Ateriya (2025) supports these results. It shows that while AI can make writing more efficient, it also increases the risk of over-reliance and plagiarism, especially when clear rules are not provided.

Across these studies, several ethical themes appear repeatedly. These include transparency and disclosure, fairness and equal access, responsibility for the final text, and the balance between learning support and dependence on AI tools. Overall, the findings suggest that students are generally aware of ethical limits in AI use, even though these limits are often unclear.

In contexts such as Uzbekistan, these ethical challenges may be even stronger. English is taught as a foreign language, academic writing is often high-stakes, and cultural values such as honesty, effort, and respect for teachers are strongly emphasized. In such settings, students may see AI feedback as both useful and risky, especially when institutional guidance is limited. Despite the growing international research on AI and academic writing, little is known about how students in Central Asia understand and respond to these ethical issues.

Ethical feedback literacy

To understand how students deal with ethical issues related to AI-generated feedback, clear theoretical frameworks are needed. These frameworks help explain how students make ethical judgments and how they use feedback in writing.

One key framework is **Rest's model of ethical decision-making** (Rest, 1986). This model is widely used to study ethical behavior in education. According to Rest, ethical behavior includes three main steps. First, a person recognizes that a situation has an ethical dimension. Second, they judge what is right or wrong. Third, they act based on this judgment. When applied to AI-generated feedback, this model helps explain how students notice ethical concerns, decide whether AI assistance is acceptable, and choose how to use AI suggestions in their writing.

Another important framework is **feedback literacy**, introduced by Carless and Boud (2018). Feedback literacy refers to students' ability to understand feedback, judge its value, and use it effectively to improve learning. In recent research, scholars argue that feedback literacy in the age of AI must also include ethical awareness (Henderson et al., 2023). Students are no longer expected to simply accept feedback. Instead, they must decide whether AI feedback is appropriate and how it should be used. Students remain responsible for the final version of their work and are expected to evaluate AI suggestions critically.

Together, Rest's model and feedback literacy theory form a strong framework for examining students' ethical responses to AI-generated feedback. These frameworks move the focus away from whether AI itself is ethical. Instead, they focus on students' thinking processes and actions when they interact with AI tools.

Despite growing interest in AI and academic integrity, several important research gaps remain. First, most existing studies focus on regions such as Europe, Ecuador, and Nigeria (Nelson et al., 2025; Spirgi et al., 2024; Ya'u & Mohammed, 2025). There is no empirical research on Central Asia or Uzbekistan. Cultural values such as respect for authority, honesty, and collective responsibility may influence ethical reasoning differently in this context.

Second, much of the current research focuses on **AI-generated text**, not **AI-generated feedback**. These two uses involve different ethical processes. Using AI to generate text reduces student control. In contrast, using AI feedback requires students to evaluate suggestions and decide how to apply them.

Third, limited attention has been given to the link between students' ethical judgments and their actual writing practices. In particular, few studies examine how ethical views about AI feedback affect academic honesty in real writing situations.

To address these gaps, this study focuses on Uzbek EFL students' ethical responses to AI-generated feedback in academic writing. The study aims to identify what students consider right or wrong when using AI feedback. It also examines how students' use of AI feedback relates to their choices and actions concerning academic honesty.

The study is guided by two research questions.

- First, what do Uzbek EFL students consider right or wrong when using AI-generated feedback to improve academic writing?
- Second, how do Uzbek EFL students' ways of using AI feedback relate to their decisions and actions about academic honesty?

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study uses a deductive approach. Rest's model of ethical behaviour that is based on subsequent actions: recognizing, judging and acting and feedback literacy theory of Carless and Boud (2018) which focuses on how students understand, judge, and use feedback, are chosen to guide how the questions are written, how the data is collected, and how the findings are interpreted. The study does not build a new theory, it tries to find out how these theories work in the context of Uzbek EFL classrooms.

Research Design

The study uses a quantitative survey design. The main tool is an online questionnaire that includes:

a)   closed questions with Likert scales (for example, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree");

b)   short scenario-based questions where students choose what they would do in a situation.

This design is chosen because it allows the researcher to collect data from a larger number of students in a short time and it provides both numbers (to see general patterns) and responses to scenario-based questions (to capture logical reasoning). It fits the aim of examining ethical judgments and actions in a simple, practical way.

Research Context and Participants

The study is carried out in Uzbekistan, in two EFL settings:

a)   Fergana State University - university students studying English as a foreign language.

b)   Other universities - through online reach out.

Participants are Uzbek EFL students who are 18 or older and have basic experience with AI tools (mostly ChatGPT). They all have used AI at least once to get feedback on their writing (like grammar corrections, suggestions, or comments on their essays).

The sample size is exactly 40 students, because the data collection ended when the required number was reached due to time constraints. Convenience sampling was used for the student selection, so students who were available and agreed to take part were included.

Research Instrument (Online Questionnaire)

The research instrument used in this study was an online questionnaire created on Google forms. The questionnaire was created specifically for this study and was closely tailored to respond to the research objectives, research questions, and theoretical framework: Rest's

model of ethical decision-making and feedback literacy theory of Carless and Boud (2018). Online format was chosen because it allowed easy access for participants, ensured anonymity, and made data collection efficient. The questionnaire was written in clear and simple English to ensure that all participants could easily understand the questions.

The questionnaire consisted of five main sections:

The first section focused on consent. Participants were provided with a brief explanation of the purpose of the study and were asked to confirm their voluntary participation before continuing. The second section collected background information about the participants. This section included questions about the participants' institution (university or language centre), age, self-reported English proficiency level, and frequency of AI use for feedback. The third section included scenario-based questions designed to explore students' ethical recognition and judgment when using AI feedback. Participants were presented with short, realistic scenarios involving AI-generated feedback on academic writing. After each scenario, students selected the action they would most likely take and indicated whether they believed their choice was ethically acceptable. These items were directly linked to the first two stages of Rest's model: recognizing an ethical issue and judging what is right or wrong. The fourth section included Likert-scale statements measuring students' ethical judgments and feedback literacy. Participants indicated their level of agreement on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The statements focused on responsible use of AI feedback, academic honesty, confidence in evaluating feedback, and differences between using AI for feedback and for text generation. The fifth section focused on students' actions related to academic honesty, corresponding to the acting stage of Rest's model. This section included multiple-choice and checkbox questions asking how students usually use AI feedback in practice and whether they ever felt unsure about the honesty of their actions. Overall, the questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data (from multiple-choice and Likert-scale items) and the structure of the instrument ensured that students' ethical recognition, judgment, and actions related to AI-generated feedback were systematically examined in line with the aims of the study.

Data Collection

The data collection process followed these steps:

Permission to share the survey link to the Fergana state university Foreign language and literature faculty 1-4 year students from teachers and lecturers, as well as, administrative body was taken. Likewise, the survey link was shared with groups on telegram whose members consist of only EFL students. Before completing the survey, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the type of questions they would be asked, and how their responses would be used. They were also informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without any negative consequences. The questionnaire was completed online using mobile phones or computers and was expected to take approximately

10–15 minutes. All responses were automatically collected and stored in a secure online database, protected by a password and accessible only to the researcher.

Data analysis

To address the research questions, the data collected through the online questionnaire were analyzed using a systematic quantitative analysis procedure. The analysis focused on identifying patterns in Uzbek EFL students' ethical judgments and actions when using AI-generated feedback in academic writing. The entire analysis process was guided by the research objectives, research questions, and Rest's model of ethical decision-making, which provided a clear framework for organizing and interpreting the data.

The analysis began with data preparation and screening. Responses were downloaded from Google Forms and reviewed carefully. Incomplete questionnaires were removed, and only responses in which participants answered the minimum required number of questions were retained. As a result, 40 valid responses were included in the final dataset. Each response was assigned a numerical identifier to ensure anonymity and to allow systematic handling of the data. Next, the dataset was organized and coded. All survey items were closed-ended; therefore, a deductive coding scheme was applied. Multiple-choice, checkbox, and scenario-based responses were coded numerically based on predefined categories reflecting students' ethical positions and actions. Likert-scale items were coded using a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). This coding process ensured consistency across responses and allowed for accurate quantitative comparison.

Following coding, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for all categorical variables to identify overall response patterns. These analyses were used to describe how often students engaged in particular behaviors, such as revising AI feedback in their own words, using AI only for grammar correction, or accepting AI suggestions without modification. This step provided a clear overview of students' typical practices when interacting with AI-generated feedback. The Likert-scale items were analyzed by calculating mean scores and response distributions. This allowed the researcher to examine students' levels of agreement with statements related to ethical use of AI feedback, academic honesty, and confidence in evaluating feedback. Mean values were used to identify dominant trends in students' ethical judgments, while response distributions highlighted areas of consensus and uncertainty among participants. The scenario-based questions were analyzed in a structured manner by mapping students' selected actions onto the stages of Rest's model. Responses were categorized according to whether they reflected ethical recognition, ethical judgment, or ethical action. The frequency of each category was calculated to show how students evaluated ethical situations and what actions they believed were acceptable in different contexts. This step enabled a direct connection between students' decisions and the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Finally, the results were organized and reported according to the research questions. Findings related to students'

judgments about what is right or wrong when using AI feedback were addressed first, followed by findings related to students' actual practices and choices concerning academic honesty. This approach ensured that the analysis remained focused, systematic, and directly relevant to the aims of the study, while providing a clear foundation for interpretation in the discussion chapter.

RESULTS

Participant Background Information

This section describes the background characteristics of the participants in the study. In total, **40 valid responses** were included in the final analysis. Table 1 presents an overview of the participants' background information. Namely, institutional affiliation, English proficiency level, gender, and frequency of AI use.

Most participants were students at **Fergana State University** (n = 31). The remaining participants studied at different higher education institutions. These included **Webster University in Tashkent**, **Uzbekistan National University**, **Andijan State Medical Institute**, **Uzbekistan State World Languages University**, and the **University of Sydney** (each n = 1). This distribution shows that the sample mainly represents Uzbek EFL university students.

In terms of English proficiency, most participants reported a **C1 level or higher** (n = 23). This was followed by **B2-level** students (n = 15). Only a small number of participants identified as **B1-level** (n = 2). These results indicate that most respondents were advanced English users. This is suitable for a study focused on academic writing and feedback use.

Participants were also asked how often they use AI tools for writing or feedback. The results show that AI tools are commonly used. 17 participants reported using AI tools **often**, while 14 reported using them **sometimes**. 5 participants reported **rare** use, and 3 reported **very often**. Only 1 participant stated that they **never** use AI tools.

Summarizing, these findings show that most participants have regular experience with AI-generated feedback. This makes them appropriate respondents for examining ethical judgments and actions related to AI use in academic writing.

Table 1

Participant Background Information (n = 40)

Variable	Category	n	%
Institution	Fergana State University	31	77.5
	Other universities	9	22.5
Gender	Female	31	77.5

	Male	**9**	**22.5**
English level	**C1 or higher**	**23**	**57.5**
	B2	**15**	**37.5**
	B1	**2**	**5.0**
AI use frequency	**Often**	**17**	**42.5**
	Sometimes	**14**	**35.0**
	Rarely	**5**	**12.5**
	Very often	**3**	**7.5**
	Never	**1**	**2.5**

Ethical Judgments about AI-Generated Feedback (RQ1)

This section reports the findings for Research Question 1. This question examines what Uzbek EFL students consider right or wrong when using AI-generated feedback to improve academic writing. Ethical judgment was measured using scenario-based questions and Likert-scale statements related to AI feedback and academic honesty. **Table 2** summarizes participants' ethical judgments in both the scenarios and the Likert-scale items.

Ethical judgment was first examined through the scenario-based questions. In **Scenario 1**, students received AI feedback that suggested sentence-level changes to their own writing. 21 participants reported that their chosen action was ethically acceptable. 11 participants were unsure, and 8 believed that their action was not ethically acceptable. These results show that while most students viewed this type of AI feedback as acceptable, a noticeable number experienced uncertainty or ethical concern.

In **Scenario 2**, students received more extensive AI feedback. In this case, the AI rewrote almost an entire paragraph, and no clear teacher guidance was provided. Ethical judgments showed slightly stronger acceptance. 25 participants considered their chosen action ethically acceptable. 7 participants judged it as not acceptable, and 7 were unsure. These results suggest that even when AI involvement was greater, many students still believed their actions were ethically acceptable. However, uncertainty remained for a significant group.

Ethical judgments were also examined using Likert-scale items. These items provided a more detailed view of students' attitudes toward AI-generated feedback. As shown in Table 2, the mean scores indicate moderate to strong agreement with controlled and reflective use of AI

feedback. Overall, participants supported the idea that AI feedback should be used responsibly.

The statement *"Using AI feedback is acceptable if I still control the final version of my writing"* received a mean score of **3.28**, showing general agreement. The statement *"Copying AI feedback directly without changes is academically dishonest"* produced a mean score of **3.53**, indicating that most participants recognized direct copying as unethical.

Participants also showed awareness of learning-focused feedback use. The statement *"AI feedback helps me learn when I critically evaluate it, not when I blindly follow it"* received a mean score of **3.58**. This suggests that students understood the importance of active judgment. In addition, the statement *"Using AI feedback feels less dishonest than using AI to generate a full essay"* reached a mean score of **3.63**, showing that many students clearly distinguished between feedback support and text generation.

Finally, participants reported confidence in their ethical decision-making. The statement *"I feel confident deciding which AI feedback is appropriate to use"* yielded a mean score of **3.60**, indicating that most students believed they could make responsible choices.

Summarizing, the findings show that Uzbek EFL students view AI-generated feedback as ethically acceptable when it is used in a controlled and reflective way. However, uncertainty appeared in both scenarios. This suggests that ethical judgment becomes less clear when AI involvement increases or when institutional rules are unclear.

Table 2

Ethical Judgments about AI-Generated Feedback

Scenario	Response	n	%
Scenario 1	**Ethically acceptable**	21	52.5
	Not sure	11	27.5
	Not acceptable	8	20.0
Scenario 2	**Ethically acceptable**	25	62.5
	Not sure	7	17.5

	Not acceptable	7	17.5

Likert-scale ethical judgment items (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

Statement	Mean
Using AI feedback is acceptable if I control the final version	3.28
Copying AI feedback directly without changes is dishonest	3.53
AI feedback helps me learn when critically evaluated	3.58
AI feedback feels less dishonest than AI-generated text	3.63
I feel confident judging which AI feedback to use	3.60

Ethical Actions and Academic Honesty (RQ2)

This section presents the findings for Research Question 2. This question examines how Uzbek EFL students' use of AI-generated feedback relates to their choices and actions about academic honesty. Ethical actions were analyzed using responses to scenario-based choice questions and items describing students' usual practices when using AI feedback. Participants' actions in both scenarios are summarized in **Table 3**.

Participants' actions were first examined in **Scenario 1**. In this scenario, students received sentence-level AI feedback on their own writing. The most common action was accepting some AI suggestions and rewriting them in their own words (n = 18). This was followed by reading the feedback but not using it (n = 11). A smaller number of participants reported accepting all AI suggestions without changes (n = 7). 4 participants chose to copy the suggested sentences directly. These results show that most students used AI feedback carefully. However, a small group reported practices that may raise ethical concerns.

In **Scenario 2**, AI rewrote a paragraph almost completely, and teacher guidance was unclear. Participants' actions followed a similar pattern. Most students chose to rewrite the paragraph in their own words (n = 21). Another 9 participants said they would ask the teacher for clarification. This suggests an effort to resolve ethical uncertainty. However, 6 participants reported that they would use the rewritten paragraph without changes, and 4 chose not to use the AI feedback at all. These results show that while many students tried to protect academic

honesty, some were willing to accept extensive AI involvement.

Students' usual practices when using AI feedback were examined through a multiple-response question. The most common practice was revising AI feedback in one's own words (n = 27). Many participants also reported using AI only for grammar correction (n = 19). At the same time, 10 participants admitted that they sometimes use AI suggestions exactly as given. 12 participants reported that their AI use depends on the assignment. These findings suggest that students' actions vary depending on context and task requirements.

To explore academic honesty further, participants were asked whether they had ever felt unsure about whether their use of AI feedback was honest or dishonest. 29 participants answered yes, while 11 answered no. This shows that ethical uncertainty is common among Uzbek EFL students when using AI-generated feedback. Students' practices and levels of uncertainty are summarized in **Table 4**.

To sum up, the findings show that many students try to use AI feedback responsibly by evaluating and revising suggestions. At the same time, uncertainty and potentially problematic practices remain. Students' actions range from careful and reflective use to direct acceptance of AI-generated revisions. This highlights the complex relationship between AI feedback use and academic honesty.

Table 3

Students' Actions in Scenario-Based AI Feedback Use

Scenario 1 Actions

Action	n	%
Accept some suggestions and rewrite	**18**	**45.0**
Read feedback but not use	**11**	**27.5**
Accept all suggestions without change	**7**	**17.5**
Copy suggested sentences directly	**4**	**10.0**

Scenario 2 Actions

Action	n	%
Rewrite paragraph in own words	**21**	**52.5**

Ask teacher for clarification	9	22.5
Use rewritten paragraph as is	6	15.0
Avoid using AI feedback	4	10.0

Table 4

AI Feedback Practices and Ethical Uncertainty
Usual AI feedback practices (multiple answers allowed)

Practice	n
Revise AI feedback in own words	27
Use AI only for grammar	19
Use AI suggestions exactly as given	10
Depends on the assignment	12

Ethical uncertainty

Response	n	%
Yes, felt unsure	29	72.5
No	11	27.5

DISCUSSION

This study looked at how Uzbek EFL students respond to AI-generated feedback in academic writing. It focused on two things. First, how students decide what is right or wrong when they use AI feedback. And second, how these decisions affect what they actually do in their writing.

The results help us understand students' thinking. They show how students balance learning support and academic honesty. When the findings are viewed through Rest's model of ethical

decision-making and feedback literacy, one clear picture appears: most students are careful. They try to act ethically. However, they are often unsure.

Recognizing ethical issues

The findings for **Research Question 1** show that most Uzbek EFL students see AI-generated feedback as acceptable when it is used carefully. Students usually believe AI feedback is ethical if they stay in control of the final text. They also believe feedback should be checked and evaluated, not followed automatically. This shows that students understand that AI use involves ethical choices.

This awareness fits well with Rest's model. According to the model, ethical behavior begins when people notice an ethical issue. Then they decide what is right or wrong (Rest, 1986). In this study, many students clearly recognized that using AI feedback is not a neutral action. They understood that their decisions matter.

At the same time, the results show that ethical judgment is often unclear. In both scenarios, many students said they were unsure. This uncertainty increased when AI made larger changes or when teachers did not give clear rules. In these situations, students were not confident about what was acceptable. Similar problems have been reported in studies from Ecuador and Europe. In those studies, students also struggled to decide when AI use crossed ethical boundaries or needed to be explained to teachers (Nelson et al., 2025; Spirgi et al., 2024).

These findings suggest an important point. Students do not follow fixed ethical rules when using AI feedback. Instead, they judge each situation separately. Their decisions depend on how much control they feel they still have and how strong the AI's role is in the writing process.

A key finding is the clear difference students made between **AI-generated feedback** and **AI-generated text**. Most students felt that feedback is less problematic than using AI to write a full text. They were more comfortable with grammar correction and small edits. They were less comfortable with AI creating ideas or rewriting large parts of a text. This matches earlier research from Nigeria and Europe (Ya'u & Mohammed, 2025; Spirgi et al., 2024).

This distinction is important because it shows careful thinking. Students are not simply "for" or "against" AI. They try to protect authorship and learning. They accept AI as support, but not as a replacement for their own work.

Ethical Actions and Academic Honesty

The findings related to **Research Question 2** show that students' ethical thinking is often reflected in what they actually do. Many participants reported revising AI feedback in their own words. Others said they rewrote paragraphs instead of copying them or asked teachers for clarification when they felt unsure. These actions show that students often try to act

responsibly. In terms of Rest's model, this reflects the *action stage*, where students act according to what they believe is right.

However, the results also show that ethical awareness does not always lead to ethical action. A smaller but important group of students admitted that they accepted AI suggestions without changes or used AI-generated revisions directly. This supports earlier research showing that even students who understand ethical issues may still take risks. This often happens when they feel time pressure, face unclear rules, or experience strong academic demands (Ateriya, 2025). The fact that almost three-quarters of participants said they had felt unsure about the honesty of their actions shows how unstable ethical decision-making can be when AI is involved.

From a feedback literacy perspective, these findings are especially important. Some students clearly show strong feedback literacy. They evaluate AI feedback, change it, and use it to learn. Other students rely on AI suggestions without modification. This may mean they lack confidence, skills, or guidance on how to use feedback ethically. These differences suggest that feedback literacy among students is uneven. As recent research argues, feedback literacy in the age of AI must include ethical thinking, not only technical skill (Carless & Boud, 2018; Henderson et al., 2023).

Contribution of the study

The Uzbek EFL context helps explain these findings. Cultural values like honesty, effort, and respect for teachers are strongly valued. This explains why many students showed ethical concern and hesitation instead of accepting AI feedback without question. At the same time, the lack of clear rules places the responsibility on students themselves. They are expected to make difficult ethical decisions without clear guidance. Students feel morally responsible, but they are unsure what is acceptable. Similar tensions appear in other contexts, but they may be stronger where teacher authority is especially important.

This study contributes to existing research in several ways. First, it brings attention to Central Asia, a region that has been largely missing from discussions about AI and academic integrity. Second, it shifts focus away from AI-generated text and toward AI-generated feedback. This highlights a different type of ethical challenge, where students must evaluate and apply suggestions rather than produce content. Third, by combining Rest's ethical model with feedback literacy, the study offers a clear way to understand how students move from ethical thinking to real action when using AI tools.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how Uzbek EFL students respond to AI-generated feedback in academic writing. It focused on two main issues. First, what students believe is right or wrong when using AI feedback. Second, how these beliefs influence what they actually do in their writing.

Using a quantitative survey and drawing on **Rest's model of ethical decision-making** and **feedback literacy**, the study shows how students notice ethical issues, judge AI use, and act in relation to academic honesty.

The findings show that most students consider AI-generated feedback acceptable when they stay in control of their writing and use feedback carefully. Many students clearly separated AI-generated feedback from AI-generated text. They saw feedback as less ethically problematic than using AI to write full texts. At the same time, the scenario-based results showed that ethical judgment is often mixed with uncertainty. This was especially clear when AI made major changes or when rules about AI use were unclear.

When looking at actual writing practices, many students reported responsible behavior. They rewrote AI feedback in their own words, used AI mainly for grammar correction, or asked teachers for guidance when unsure. These actions suggest that students try to match their behavior with their ethical beliefs. However, a smaller but important group admitted that they sometimes used AI suggestions without changing them. This shows a gap between ethical awareness and ethical action. The fact that many students felt unsure about whether their AI use was honest highlights how difficult ethical decision-making can be in AI-supported writing.

This study makes several contributions. First, it provides data from **Uzbekistan**, a Central Asian context that has been largely missing from previous research on AI and academic integrity. Second, it focuses on not AI-generated text, but AI-generated feedback. Third, by combining ethical decision-making theory with feedback literacy, the study offers a clear way to understand how students move from ethical thinking to real actions when using AI tools.

The study also has limitations. The sample size was small and limited to mainly one educational settings, which may reduce how widely the findings can be applied. In addition, the study relied on students' self-reports, which may not fully reflect real writing behavior. Future research could include larger and more diverse groups of students, follow students over time, or use mixed research methods to better understand how ethical views develop.

To summarize, the findings show that Uzbek EFL students are not careless users of AI, but they are also not fully confident ethical decision-makers. Instead, they show awareness, make selective choices, and still feel unsure. Reducing this uncertainty requires clear institutional guidelines and direct teaching about ethical AI feedback use. Simply banning AI or allowing unlimited use is not enough. Students need guidance to learn how to use AI feedback responsibly and confidently.

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