Research Article

CHATGPT AS A TOOL FOR ENGLISH ESSAY WRITING: EXPERIENCES OF INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS

RENTAULI MARIAH SILALAHI[1*]
[1]*Institut Teknologi Del, Toba, Sumatra Utara, Indonesia*
**Corresponding author: rentaulisilalahi@gmail.com*

Abstract

ChatGPT has been widely used by university students for assignments, including writing English essays. This study aims to contribute to the literature on Indonesian students' perceptions of ChatGPT's ease of use and usefulness as an assistant for writing their English essays. A mixed-methods approach was employed to collect data from 123 undergraduate students, both IT and non-IT majors, at a private university in Indonesia using both closed-ended and open-ended survey questions. The closed-ended survey data were analyzed descriptively, while the open-ended survey data were analyzed thematically. The Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) was used to examine the students' perceived ease of use and usefulness of ChatGPT 3.5 (free version). The findings from both analyses indicate that students find ChatGPT easy to use, as it requires no special skills and can understand their prompts. Students reported that ChatGPT was useful for generating ideas, finding resources, and addressing language issues in their essays. However, limitations in ChatGPT's ability to understand complex prompts, leading to inaccurate responses, were identified as a reason for caution when using the tool. This study indicates that ChatGPT has a positive impact on assisting English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in their English essay writing, despite concerns related to work originality and over-reliance on the application. The findings suggest that educators and curriculum designers should adopt ChatGPT to enhance student learning and improve teaching practices, while educational institutions should also develop clear guidelines for its effective use, addressing potential academic integrity concerns.

Keywords: *ChatGPT; English as a Foreign Language (EFL); English Essays; Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)*

Article History:
Submitted : 22 July 2024
Revised : 27 February 2025
Accepted : 27 March 2025
Published : 30 April 2025

How to cite this article:
Silalahi, R. (2025). Chatgpt As A Tool For English Essay Writing: Perceptions Of Indonesian Efl Students . *English Language, Linguistics, and Culture International Journal*, *5*(01), 17–37. https://doi.org/10.24252/elstic-ij.v4i03.49949

Copyright *© 2025 by the Authors. Published by ELSTIC-IJ, UPT Pusat Pengembangan Bahasa, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar. This is an open-access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (CC BY-SA 4.0): https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/.*

INTRODUCTION

Aiming to benefit humanity, OpenAI, an organisation founded in 2015 by Elon Musk, Sam Altman, and other visionaries, has advanced its services to offer society a more sophisticated version of ChatGPT, namely ChatGPT-3.5, which is freely accessible. This development builds on its original version, Generative Pre-trained Transformer 1 (GPT-1) (Ray, 2023). ChatGPT quickly gained popularity among users from diverse backgrounds

following its launch in November 2022 due to its ability to understand and generate human-like text and provide almost instant responses on a wide range of topics (Adiguzel, 2023). This capability is a direct result of advancements in artificial intelligence, specifically in the field of natural language processing (NLP). NLP is 'a technology that enables a machine to comprehend, analyse and interpret natural human languages' (Adiguzel, 2023, p. 3). Since then, it has evolved into the current paid version, ChatGPT-4.0. The latest iteration, ChatGPT-4.0, is not free but is touted as more advanced than ChatGPT-3.5 (OpenAI, 2024). ChatGPT-4.0 offers improved coherence and speed. According to OpenAI (2024), ChatGPT-4.0 can generate more accurate and insightful responses and is nine times faster than ChatGPT-3.5. However, ChatGPT-3.5 is still widely used to this date due to its free access.

In recent years, studies have increasingly explored the use and usefulness of ChatGPT in educational contexts, especially among EFL students. ChatGPT has proven to be a valuable resource for EFL students with limited English skills, particularly when completing writing assignments. EFL students often find writing in English challenging due to their non-native background and limited exposure to the language (Alsalami, 2022; Sasi & Lai, 2021). In such contexts, ChatGPT has proven valuable, offering support in generating ideas, checking grammar, and providing writing assistance (Kayaalp et al., 2024). However, the majority of studies on ChatGPT's impact have focused on EFL students in public universities or foreign language institutions (Nugroho et al., 2023, 2024; Marzuki et al., 2023). While these studies are informative, they overlook an important gap: the perspectives of students from private institutions, especially those majoring in fields like Information Technology (IT) and non-IT disciplines. This gap is crucial as it remains underexplored in the literature, particularly regarding how ChatGPT impacts students from a broader range of academic disciplines.

The majority of EFL students have positive attitudes towards ChatGPT and readily adopt the tool for their English learning. They find ChatGPT easy to use due to its straightforward instructions (Xu et al., 2024), although it does require users to provide appropriate prompts for more relevant responses (Huang, 2023). Studies conducted in non-native English-speaking countries such as China and Vietnam have found that EFL students believe ChatGPT offers various benefits. These include generating ideas, checking vocabulary, grammar, and syntax (Bašić et al., 2023), providing immediate feedback, real-time individualized writing assistance, lexical enrichment, grammar precision (Ge, 2024) and enhancing writing abilities (Thao et al., 2023). However, using ChatGPT effectively requires

good internet speed and digital devices like computers, smartphones, or laptops (Habibi et al., 2023).

To investigate EFL students' views on using ChatGPT for English essay writing, several studies have applied the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This model is used to assess students' perceptions regarding ChatGPT' usefulness and user-friendliness. TAM is claimed appropriate for evaluating university students' willingness to use ChatGPT, as the perceived effectiveness and simplicity of the tool are key factors in its adoption (Shaengchart, 2023). Moreover, TAM offers a thorough framework for comprehending and analyzing how university students adopt ChatGPT for their English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing tasks.

Technology Acceptance Model, rooted in the psychological Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), serves as a critical framework for understanding what drives people to either embrace or reject technology (Davis, 1993; Davis & Venkatesh, 1996; Granić & Marangunić, 2019). Developed by Fred Davis in the mid-1980s while under contract with IBM Canada, Ltd., TAM was created to gauge the market potential of new PC-based applications, such as multimedia, image processing, and pen-based computing, to steer investment in new product development (Davis & Venkatesh, 1996). According to TAM, three primary factors influence a user's decision to adopt a system or technology: the perceived ease of use, the perceived usefulness, and the overall attitude towards its use. These elements are encapsulated in the TAM model, which highlights the core motivational variables: attitude toward using, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1993; Davis & Venkatesh, 1996).

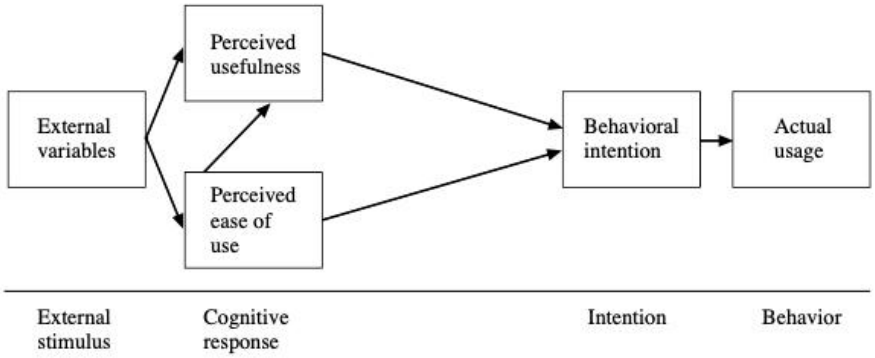


Figure 1. Technology Acceptance Model (adopted from Davis & Venkatesh, 1996, p. 20)

Davis (1993) introduced the Technology Acceptance Model while investigating the user acceptance of electronic mail. The study used the model to examine how employees perceived electronic mail as a helpful tool in the workplace, requiring no particular skills, easy to navigate, and free from physical or mental strain. The model also assessed

employees' perceived usefulness of electronic mail in terms of work quality, effectiveness, productivity, and job performance. Additionally, it explored how employees believed electronic mail enabled them to complete their tasks more quickly. Similar studies were conducted later by Davis and Venkatesh (1996), who investigated university students' intention to use WordPerfect, as well as their perceived usefulness and ease of use of the application for their studies.

Several studies employing the Technology Acceptance Model as a theoretical framework have shown that EFL students find ChatGPT both easy to use and beneficial for their English studies. For instance, Xu et al. (2024) discovered that Chinese undergraduate and postgraduate students considered ChatGPT user-friendly and useful, significantly enhancing their academic performance. This finding is consistent with other research indicating that the majority of EFL students adopt ChatGPT to achieve high academic performance (Habibi et al., 2023; Obenza et al., 2023; Strzelecki, 2023). In another study, Bonsu and Baffour-Koduah (2023) investigated the perceptions and intentions of Ghanaian university students regarding ChatGPT. They found that students appreciated ChatGPT's ease of use, convenience, and ability to provide helpful responses.

Exploring the viewpoints of Brazilian university students on the integration of ChatGPT in educational settings via a mixed-method inquiry, using the Technology Acceptance Model, Silvestre et al. (2023) uncovered a positive sentiment towards ChatGPT. Students acknowledged its utility across various academic domains, including boosting productivity, aiding organization and study planning, facilitating coding tasks, and refining writing skills. Similarly grounded in TAM, Ge's (2024) quantitative study investigating Chinese university students' acceptance of ChatGPT in EFL writing found that the students used ChatGPT because it is helpful in providing them with immediate feedback, real-time individualized writing assistance, lexical enrichment, and grammar precision. Conducting qualitative research to explore Vietnamese undergraduate students' perceptions and experiences with ChatGPT in their writing exercises, Thao et al. (2023) found that ChatGPT enhances students' engagement in writing tasks, improves writing skills, fosters learner autonomy, and exposes students to diverse language uses.

In the context of Indonesian higher education, several studies have uncovered consistent findings regarding the use of ChatGPT. Harunasari (2023) reported that Indonesian students at foreign language institutions in Indonesia find ChatGPT helpful in generating ideas, providing references or resources, and assisting with language issues such as grammar and spelling. Additionally, Marzuki et al. (2023) found that Indonesian EFL teachers

appreciate ChatGPT for helping students organize their arguments, thereby improving the clarity of their writing. Nugroho et al. (2023, 2024) confirmed similar findings to Harunasari (2023) and Marzuki et al. (2023) but highlighted additional language support that ChatGPT offers to Indonesian students in public universities, including translation, syntax correction, sentence structure checking, and paraphrasing. Nevertheless, both studies also identified some drawbacks to using ChatGPT. These include the inaccuracy of responses due to the lack of appropriate sources and citations, the tendency of ChatGPT to provide verbose, repetitive, and monotonous answers, and the risk of being identified as cheating (Nugroho et al., 2023, 2024). Furthermore, Marzuki et al., (2023) highlighted other disadvantages of using ChatGPT, such as limiting students' creative thinking and causing an over-reliance on the tool.

Similar to the findings from studies conducted in Indonesia regarding the limitations and downsides of adopting ChatGPT, Xu et al. (2024) highlighted concerns about its reliability and safety, especially regarding personal information security. In Vietnam, Thao et al. (2023) discovered that Vietnamese undergraduate students were concerned about over-reliance on technology, content accuracy and appropriateness, limitations in creative expression, and ethical and privacy issues. Likewise, in Brazil, Silvestre et al. (2023) identified concerns related to the risk of dependence, potential laziness or overreliance, the possibility of overlooking sources, the tool's limited knowledge base, and ethical considerations regarding its use.

Although similar studies have been conducted in Indonesian higher education settings, yielding comparable results, the studies have primarily focused on participants from public universities (Nugroho et al., 2023, 2024), foreign language institutions In Indonesia (Harunasari, 2023), or EFL teachers (Marzuki et al., 2023). Research on university students from private institutions, particularly those majoring in Information Technology and non-IT, remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring the perceptions of Indonesian EFL students regarding the ease of use and usefulness of ChatGPT as a tool for composing English essays. By focusing on students from private institutions and across different majors, this study will contribute to existing literature, offering a more comprehensive understanding of ChatGPT's role in enhancing English writing skills in varied academic context. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of EFL students regarding the ease of use of ChatGPT?

RQ2. How do EFL students perceive the usefulness of ChatGPT in composing their English essays?

Addressing these questions, this research seeks to offer valuable insights into the effective use of ChatGPT by students from diverse disciplines, providing guidance to educators and institutions on how to successfully integrate AI tools into their teaching strategies.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection. According to Gay et al. (2012), mixed-methods research involves the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a more holistic analysis of a phenomenon. Specifically, this study adopted an explanatory sequential design, in which quantitative data was collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to provide deeper insights into the initial findings (Gay et al., 2012). According to Biesta (2017) and Cohen et al. (2018), a mixed-methods design enhances the robustness of the study by enabling triangulation of both numerical data and qualitative insights, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of students' perceptions. Hence, employing a mixed-methods approach is particularly effective in enhancing the validity and reliability of the research findings, as it allows for a more thorough exploration of students' perceptions regarding the ease and usefulness of using ChatGPT in their essay composition.

The data were gathered using a survey that included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were designed to capture quantifiable data on participants' experiences and perceptions, providing a broad overview of trends and patterns in students' views. In contrast, the open-ended questions allowed respondents to elaborate on their answers in their own words, offering deeper insights into individual experiences, perceptions, and the contextual factors shaping those perceptions. This mixed-methods approach enhances the validity of the research by combining the objectivity of quantifiable data with the richness of subjective insights.

Respondents

This study collected data from both IT and non-IT students at a private university in Indonesia. Non-IT students in this context are those not enrolled in any language-related fields. Out of the 234 students enrolled in the targeted study programs (IT and non-IT, non-language studies), 150 students completed the survey, but only 123 responses were deemed valid. To ensure the validity of the data, the respondents were required to confirm their use of ChatGPT for their essay assignments and complete all survey questions in full. This criterion

was important to maintain the integrity of the dataset and ensure that the analysis reflected only those students who actively used ChatGPT for their academic writing.

Instruments

The primary data collection tool for this study was a self-administered survey that included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions, designed to gather quantitative data, were based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), allowing for a clear measurement of students' attitudes towards the ease of use and usefulness of ChatGPT in their English essay writing. The closed-ended questions focused on two key constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model—perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness—as outlined by Davis (1993) and Davis and Venkatesh (1996). These constructs are well-established in the literature as critical drivers of technology adoption (Davis, 1993). The inclusion of these constructs ensured the alignment of the survey with established theoretical frameworks and enhanced the content validity of the instrument.

The open-ended questions provided qualitative data that allowed students to express their perceptions and experiences with ChatGPT in their own words. The open-ended responses were later analyzed to gain insights into the nuanced views and personal experiences of the respondents. This qualitative approach was crucial for capturing the complexity and variety of student experiences that quantitative data alone would not fully uncover. Additionally, the survey included demographic questions to gather contextual information on students' gender and study program. Importantly, for ethical reasons, specific majors were not disclosed, but students were broadly categorized as IT or non-IT. This categorization was intentional, as the study did not aim to make direct comparisons between these two groups but sought to understand the overall perceptions of ChatGPT within the broader student body. This ensures the focus of the study remains on the perceptions of ChatGPT, without any undue emphasis on the differences between the groups.

Procedures

The survey was distributed via Google Forms to participants and remained open for three weeks. Students were informed about the survey's voluntary nature during their classes, and the survey's first page explicitly communicated that participation was voluntary, with an assurance of confidentiality for all data provided. This procedural transparency and ethical clarity were crucial for ensuring informed consent and minimizing any potential biases related to participant reluctance or confusion.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study consisted of both quantitative and qualitative techniques, providing a comprehensive understanding of the students' perceptions. Descriptive statistics were applied to the closed-ended survey questions. The data were analyzed to calculate the mean and standard deviation of respondents' ratings, assessing the overall perceptions of the ease of use and usefulness of ChatGPT. This statistical approach provides clear, objective measures of student attitudes towards the tool, offering insights into how widely agreed upon the perceptions of ease of use and usefulness are across the sample. Descriptive analysis was also employed to quantify the percentage of respondents who agreed or disagreed with each statement, allowing for a clearer understanding of the distribution of opinions.

The open-ended survey responses underwent thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2013). This approach allowed for a structured yet flexible method to explore the rich qualitative data generated by the open-ended questions. The process began with an initial coding of the data, identifying key phrases or concepts that emerged from the student responses. These codes were then grouped into themes, which were reviewed and refined through an iterative process. This rigorous review ensured that the final themes accurately represented the students' experiences and perceptions of using ChatGPT. Thematic analysis also facilitated the identification of emergent themes, such as specific concerns about ChatGPT's limitations, which might not have been captured through closed-ended questions alone. This process ensured the reliability and depth of the analysis, providing insights into the complexities of students' experiences with ChatGPT.

The choice of a mixed methods design in this study was essential to provide a comprehensive understanding of EFL students' perceptions. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, the study enhances its validity through triangulation, which allows for the corroboration of findings from different types of data. The closed-ended questions provided a structured way to measure general trends in students' perceptions, while the open-ended questions allowed for deeper exploration of individual experiences. Additionally, the thematic analysis of qualitative data was crucial in identifying more subtle, nuanced views that might have been overlooked in purely quantitative studies. This methodological approach not only strengthens the research's validity but also ensures that the study provides both broad and in-depth insights into the topic of ChatGPT's use in academic writing.

By using this mixed-methods approach and integrating both descriptive and thematic analysis techniques, the study achieves a comprehensive and balanced examination of the

research questions, while ensuring that the data analysis process is transparent, rigorous, and methodologically sound.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Findings

Students' demographics

The study gathered data from 123 students, who can be categorized into IT and either IT or language majors. Table 2 illustrates that the majority of respondents are from IT majors, constituting 74.80% of the participants. Regarding gender distribution, the data indicates a predominance of male students, with more than fifty per cent of participants being male. However, unlike the disparity in study programs, the difference between male and female students is not significant, with female students comprising more than 40% of the participants. The following table presents the demographic information of the students.

Table 1. Demographic information of the students

Characteristic	**N (123)**	**%**
Gender		
Male	71	57.72
Female	52	42.28
Study programme		
Neither IT nor language majors	31	25.20
IT	92	74.80

Students' perspectives on the ease of use of ChatGPT

Table 2. Students' perspectives on the ease of use of ChatGPT

Perceived ease of use	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
I find the ChatGPT cumbersome to use.	29.27	23.58	20.33	23.58	3.25	2.48	1.23
Learning to operate the ChatGPT is easy for me.	0	3.25	24.39	40.65	31.71	4.01	0.83
Interacting with the ChatGPT is often frustrating.	12.20	25.20	50.41	8.13	4.07	2.67	0.94
I find it easy to get the ChatGPT to do what I want it to do.	0.81	4.88	47.15	37.40	9.76	3.50	0.77
The ChatGPT is rigid and inflexible to interact with.	4.07	33.33	43.90	15.45	3.25	2.80	0.87
It is easy for me to remember how to perform tasks using the ChatGPT.	0.81	8.94	42.28	39.84	8.13	3.46	0.80
My interaction with the ChatGPT is clear and understandable.	0.81	4.07	47.15	38.21	9.76	3.52	0.76
I find it takes a lot of effort to become skilful at using ChatGPT.	13.82	26.02	43.09	13.01	4.07	2.67	1.00

Note. Values in the SD–SA columns are percentages of respondents (N = 123). SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree; Std Dev = standard deviation.

The analysis of student feedback on the ease of use of ChatGPT, as shown in Table 2 above, reveals a range of experiences and perceptions. The statement "I find ChatGPT cumbersome to use" had a mean score of 2.48, with more than 50% disagreeing, indicating that while some students experience difficulties, this is not a majority sentiment, as reflected by a standard deviation of 1.23. However, students generally found learning to operate ChatGPT to be straightforward. The statement "Learning to operate ChatGPT is easy for me" received a mean score of 4.01 with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.83, and a majority of students, totalling 72.06%, agree with the statement, indicating that despite initial challenges, students generally adapt well to the platform's interface and functionalities. However, some frustrations were noted in the interaction. The statement "Interacting with ChatGPT is often frustrating" had a mean of 2.67 with a standard deviation of 0.94, and about 50.41% felt neutral. In comparison, almost 40% disagreed, indicating a mixed but slightly negative experience among the students.

Students' ability to make ChatGPT perform desired tasks was also evaluated. The mean score for "I find it easy to get ChatGPT to do what I want it to do" was 3.50, with a standard deviation of 0.77, and 47% agreed that ChatGPT could do what they ask, suggesting a generally positive experience but with some variability. The rigidity and inflexibility of ChatGPT was another aspect explored. The statement "ChatGPT is rigid and inflexible to

interact with" had a mean score of 2.80, with a standard deviation of 0.87, and 18.7% of the students agreed with the statement. This indicates a moderate level of agreement, but not overwhelmingly so. In terms of task retention, the statement "It is easy for me to remember how to perform tasks using ChatGPT" scored a mean of 3.46, with a standard deviation of 0.80. Most students, 42.28%, feel neutral about the ease of remembering how to perform tasks, with 39.84% agreeing and 8.13% strongly agreeing that it is easy. Only a small percentage, 0.81%, strongly disagree, and 8.94% disagree. This suggests that students generally find it easy to recall how to use the system after initial learning.

The statement "My interaction with ChatGPT is clear and understandable" had a mean of 3.52, with a standard deviation of 0.76. A majority of 47.15% remain neutral, while 38.21% agree and 9.76% strongly agree that their interactions are clear, indicating that students generally find their interactions with ChatGPT to be clear. Lastly, the statement "I find it takes much effort to become skilful at using ChatGPT" had a mean score of 2.67, with a standard deviation of 1.00. Around 43.09% are neutral, while 26.02% agree and 13.82% strongly agree that it requires a lot of effort, suggesting a mixed response, with some students finding it more effortful than others to achieve proficiency.

In summary, while the overall feedback suggests that students find ChatGPT relatively easy to learn and use, a significant number still perceive it as effort-intensive. There are notable areas where the user experience could be improved, particularly in reducing frustration and perceived rigidity.

Students' perspectives on the usefulness of ChatGPT

Table 3. Students' perspectives on the usefulness of ChatGPT

Perceived usefulness	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev
Using ChatGPT improves the quality of the essay I write.	0.81	5.69	47.15	35.77	10.57	3.50	0.79
Using ChatGPT gives me greater control over my essay.	4.07†	11.38	43.90	34.96	5.69	3.27	0.89
ChatGPT enables me to accomplish the writing task more quickly.	4.88	0	39.02	36.59	19.51	3.66	0.96
Using ChatGPT increases my productivity in writing essay.	2.44	8.13	47.15	32.52	9.76	3.39	0.86
Using ChatGPT improves my writing performance.	4.07	8.94	39.02	38.21	9.76	3.41	0.93

Using ChatGPT allows me to accomplish more writing task than would otherwise be possible.	2.44	4.88	43.90	34.96	13.82	3.53	0.88
Using ChatGPT enhances my effectiveness on writing the essay.	0.81	5.69	34.96	51.22	7.32	3.59	0.75
Using ChatGPT makes it easier to write an essay.	2.44	5.69	27.64	49.59	12.20	3.68	0.88

Note. Values in the SD–SA columns are percentages of respondents (N = 123). SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree; Std Dev = standard deviation. † Printed as 4.7 in the original; corrected to 4.07 so that the row totals 100%.

The analysis of student feedback regarding the perceived usefulness of ChatGPT in essay writing provides insightful data on its impact on their writing tasks, as shown in Table 3 above. Students generally agree that using ChatGPT improves the quality of their essays. This is reflected in a mean score of 3.50, with a standard deviation of 0.79, and with 35.77% agreeing and 10.57% strongly agreeing, indicating a relatively consistent perception among students about quality improvement. In terms of control over their essays, students reported a mean score of 3.27 for the statement "Using ChatGPT gives me greater control over my essay," with a standard deviation of 0.89, and 43.90% of users feel neutral, while 34.96% agree and 5.69% strongly agree. This suggests that while students feel some level of increased control, there is variability in this perception.

ChatGPT's efficiency in helping students accomplish writing tasks more quickly was highly rated, with a mean score of 3.66, supported by a standard deviation of 0.96, where 36.59% agree and 19.51% strongly agree with the statement. This indicates that students largely agree that ChatGPT enables them to complete their writing tasks faster. Regarding productivity, the statement "Using ChatGPT increases my productivity in writing essays" had a mean score of 3.39 with a standard deviation of 0.86, and 32.52% agree and 9.76% strongly agree. This suggests a generally positive impact on productivity, though experiences vary somewhat among students, as 47.15% remain neutral.

When it comes to writing performance, students reported a mean score of 3.41 for the statement "Using ChatGPT improves my writing performance," with a standard deviation of 0.93. More than 38% agree, and 9.76% strongly agree that ChatGPT improves their performance. This indicates a positive perception, albeit with some variability. Students also acknowledged that ChatGPT allows them to accomplish more writing tasks than would otherwise be possible, with a mean score of 3.53 and a standard deviation of 0.88, with 34.96% agreeing and 13.82% strongly agreeing. This suggests that ChatGPT significantly enhances their writing capacity.

The effectiveness of ChatGPT in writing essays is highlighted by a mean score of 3.59 with a standard deviation of 0.75, with 51.22% agreeing and 7.32% strongly agreeing that ChatGPT enhances their effectiveness. This indicates a strong positive perception of its effectiveness. The statement "Using ChatGPT makes it easier to write an essay" received a mean score of 3.68, supported by a standard deviation of 0.88, with 49.59% agreeing and 12.20% strongly agreeing. This suggests that students find ChatGPT significantly simplifies the essay-writing process.

In summary, the findings strongly suggest that students perceive ChatGPT as a valuable tool that improves the quality and efficiency of their essay writing, enhances their control and productivity, and makes the writing process easier and more effective.

Qualitative Findings

Simplicity and ease of use

A significant number of students found ChatGPT to be straightforward and user-friendly. The ease of use was frequently attributed to the minimal effort required to input prompts and receive relevant responses. Students could type in their queries, and ChatGPT would promptly provide an answer. This simplicity made the tool accessible and less intimidating, encouraging more frequent use. Comments such as, “Yes, because using ChatGPT is simply inputting what I want to do” (Student 2) and “Yes, it's easy, because I just type and enter, and the results will come out” (Student 10) underscore the positive perceptions of ChatGPT's ease of use.

Efficiency and timesaving

Another common theme was the efficiency and timesaving benefits of using ChatGPT. Students reported that ChatGPT assisted them in completing tasks, particularly essay writing, more quickly and effectively. This efficiency was highly valued, especially in academic settings where time management is crucial. Statements such as, "It can save me time to write essays with ChatGPT" (Student 21), "ChatGPT enables me to accomplish writing tasks more quickly" (Student 5), "Using ChatGPT was easy for me. It provided a straightforward interface where I could input my questions or prompts, and it responded quickly with relevant suggestions" (Student 101), and "Easy, because it makes me more able to understand the main idea of the paragraph I give for analysis" (Student 60), illustrate how students found the tool beneficial in enhancing their productivity. The ability to swiftly obtain answers and

insights helped students manage their workload more efficiently. Moreover, students found the tool's ability to respond to different prompts a significant advantage.

Conditional usability

Despite the generally positive feedback, some students encountered challenges when using ChatGPT. Issues related to the tool's understanding and the accuracy of its responses were common concerns. Some students found that ChatGPT occasionally misunderstood their prompts or provided answers that were not relevant to the topic. Comments like, "Sometimes ChatGPT can't understand what I ask" (Student 14) and "Sometimes the answers and explanations are wrong or not appropriate to the topic I am asking," (Student 29) reflect these frustrations.

Some students found the ease of using ChatGPT to be contingent on their ability to formulate precise prompts and comprehend the tool's limitations. They observed that successful use necessitated a clear understanding of how to phrase questions and what to anticipate from the responses. For example, Student 50 stated, "In my opinion, it's quite easy, because we only need to ask ChatGPT according to our needs and it will provide the information we request". Conversely, Student 32 remarked, "It's a bit difficult to use, because if you miswrite the prompt, it will affect the output provided". These comments underscore the importance of user input skills and understanding of the tool's functionality for optimal results.

Idea generation and conceptualisation

Many students express positive perceptions regarding ChatGPT's assistance in various aspects of essay composition. One recurring theme is its facilitation of idea generation and conceptualization, as confirmed by a student who said, "ChatGPT is useful in providing various ideas that I had not previously thought of" (Student 41). Students find ChatGPT helpful in brainstorming topics and structuring their essays logically. It provides valuable insights and suggestions for content refinement and ensures clarity and coherence in their writing. One student said, "ChatGPT helps me to find new ideas for writing essays" (Student 16), and another mentioned, "ChatGPT gave me ideas that help me brainstorm" (Student 32).

Language support

Another prevalent theme is ChatGPT's role in language support. Students found that ChatGPT assisted them with translation, grammar correction, and vocabulary improvement. For example, some students said, "ChatGPT is useful in writing my essay, to translate my

essay into English, to explore the vocabulary that I use in my essay" (Student 47), and "ChatGPT helps me improve my grammar" (Student 11).

ChatGPT also aids students in paraphrasing and summarizing essays, making them more concise and understandable. Students use ChatGPT to address difficulties in combining sentences, understanding complex concepts, and adhering to essay writing rules. Additionally, students find it helpful to locate references and resources to support their arguments, thereby enhancing the quality of their essays. They stated, "ChatGPT helps me find easy explanations and references" (Student 10) and "ChatGPT is helpful to give me some resources I need to answer the questions" (Student 45).

Students also highlight the importance of paraphrasing ChatGPT's suggestions to ensure clarity and adherence to language conventions. For instance, they mentioned, "Using ChatGPT, it's easier for me to summarize and paraphrase essays" (Student 56) and "ChatGPT helps me paraphrase my sentences to be more concise and easily understandable in everyday language" (Student 7).

Discussion

The thematic analysis in this study confirms the findings from the descriptive analysis, providing a robust triangulation of data. Both analyses indicated that participants found ChatGPT to be user-friendly and helpful in assisting them with writing English essays. However, concerns about the tool's limitations in understanding complex instructions or prompts, which can result in incorrect or irrelevant answers, were raised. The simplicity of inputting prompts and receiving immediate responses significantly contributed to its positive reception.

A considerable number of students reported that they found it easy to learn how to use ChatGPT, which suggests growing confidence in using the tool and frequent utilization. This ease of use can be attributed to ChatGPT's intuitive design, a feature noted in previous studies on its usability (Xu et al., 2024). Additionally, students highlighted increased efficiency in essay writing, particularly in generating ideas and addressing language challenges. This finding aligns with other research (Harunasari, 2023; Marzuki et al., 2023; Nugroho et al., 2023, 2024), which points to ChatGPT's role in assisting non-native English speakers with grammar, sentence structure, and vocabulary revisions.

For non-native English-speaking students, especially those with limited exposure to English, completing essay assignments can be especially challenging. ChatGPT offers these students an opportunity to enhance their writing skills at their own pace and convenience,

underscoring its potential for wider integration in educational settings. However, the growing reliance on ChatGPT could potentially lead to students' disengagement from original reading materials. If students begin to rely heavily on ChatGPT for information, they may acquire superficial knowledge, potentially hindering deeper learning and critical thinking skills. This highlights the need for educators to promote balanced use of AI tools alongside traditional learning methods.

Concerning data accuracy, this study corroborates previous research highlighting concerns about the precision of ChatGPT's responses, as it may not consistently provide relevant answers to users' queries (Nugroho et al., 2023, 2024; Thao et al., 2023). Therefore, students' advice to carefully craft prompts or inputs for ChatGPT to avoid undesired responses aligns with earlier findings, emphasizing that ChatGPT's usefulness hinges on users' ability to provide it with appropriate prompts (Huang, 2023; Sabzalieva & Valentini, 2023). Thus, developing critical usage skills with ChatGPT involves understanding both its capabilities and limitations (Kayaalp et al., 2024).

Students' adoption of ChatGPT is inevitable due to its widespread accessibility on any internet-connected digital device, such as computers, smartphones, or laptops (Habibi et al., 2023). Participants in the studies did not report issues with internet connectivity or digital skills, suggesting the absence of a digital divide (van Dijk, 2020) among them - all possess the necessary devices, skills, and willingness to use the application effectively.

With readily accessible digital devices and Internet connections, students can utilize ChatGPT whenever needed to assist with assignments in the future. However, regardless of the reasons for integrating ChatGPT into education, its use should aim to improve learning efficiency, effectiveness, and student engagement (Adiguzel, 2023). It is crucial to ensure that students stay independent of the tool (Bekou et al., 2024; Shakil & Siddiq, 2024; Steele, 2023; Thao et al., 2023). On the other hand, the adoption of ChatGPT as an assistant for assignments should be regulated by academic guidelines. This includes providing clear instructions on how and when ChatGPT can be used, reviewing assessment and evaluation methods to safeguard academic originality, and updating policies concerning academic integrity (Sabzalieva & Valentini, 2023).

Regarding long-term effects on learning, it is important to consider how repeated use of ChatGPT could impact students' critical thinking, information retention, and deeper engagement with the material. While ChatGPT can improve efficiency in writing tasks, there is concern that over-reliance on the tool may limit students' ability to independently conduct research or analyze complex topics. Future studies should explore how long-term use of

ChatGPT influences students' academic growth and their ability to engage with source materials critically, as well as how its use might shape their writing abilities over time.

Concerning critical engagement strategies with AI, while ChatGPT has demonstrated utility in enhancing writing skills, it is essential to promote critical thinking about how the tool is used. This includes developing students' ability to identify and correct any inaccuracies in the AI-generated content, as well as fostering a deeper understanding of when and why certain information may not be appropriate. Teaching students how to critically engage with AI tools is essential for them to become discerning users who understand the tool's limitations and potential for misinformation. As Kayaalp et al. (2024) suggest, fostering critical usage skills with ChatGPT involves not only understanding its capabilities but also recognizing its limitations, thereby ensuring students are equipped to use the tool effectively and responsibly.

Regarding socio-economic factors, the study found no significant issues with internet connectivity or digital skills among participants, suggesting that all students had access to the necessary devices and infrastructure to utilize ChatGPT effectively. However, it is important to acknowledge that this might not be the case in all educational contexts, especially in regions with digital divides. While students in this study had access to smartphones, laptops, and a reliable internet connection, there may be disparities in access among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds or rural areas. Further research should investigate how socio-economic status influences students' ability to access and utilize AI tools like ChatGPT, as disparities in technology access could exacerbate educational inequalities.

Academic integrity is a crucial consideration in the adoption of ChatGPT and other AI tools in education. While ChatGPT offers benefits in terms of efficiency and support, it also presents challenges to maintaining academic integrity. For instance, students may be tempted to use ChatGPT inappropriately, relying on the tool to complete assignments rather than engaging in the learning process themselves. This issue underscores the importance of establishing clear academic guidelines for AI usage. As Sabzalieva and Valentini (2023) suggest, academic institutions must revise assessment and evaluation methods to ensure they uphold academic originality and authenticity. This could involve providing clear instructions on when and how ChatGPT can be used, along with the development of new policies that address AI use in academic settings. A balanced approach to AI integration in education is essential to prevent over-reliance on the tool while preserving the integrity of academic work.

Furthermore, while this study did not explore socio-economic factors in-depth, future research should consider how students from diverse backgrounds might face different

challenges in accessing or using ChatGPT. Socio-economic disparities, including access to digital devices and reliable internet, could influence the effectiveness of ChatGPT as a learning tool. Investigating these factors in future studies will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the global applicability and challenges of AI integration in education.

In summary, while ChatGPT presents a promising tool for enhancing language learning and essay writing, it is essential to carefully consider its long-term effects on learning, promote critical engagement strategies, and address potential socio-economic disparities in access to the tool. Additionally, academic integrity policies must evolve to incorporate clear guidelines on AI usage in educational contexts. By addressing these challenges, the integration of AI tools like ChatGPT can contribute to more effective and equitable educational practices.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that EFL students perceive ChatGPT as an easy-to-use and helpful tool for writing English essays, which significantly enhances their confidence and productivity. The findings address the first research question, indicating that the simplicity of ChatGPT's user interface and its prompt-based responses contribute to its positive reception among students. This suggests that students are generally favourable towards using the tool, finding it accessible and practical for their writing tasks.

Furthermore, the study highlights that students find ChatGPT useful in addressing specific challenges related to grammar, sentence construction, vocabulary, and idea generation, directly answering the second research question. A majority of participants reported that ChatGPT was instrumental in helping them overcome these common obstacles in writing English essays, making it a valuable resource, particularly for those with limited English proficiency. This support can substantially aid in the development of students' language skills, facilitating more efficient learning in writing tasks.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study have significant pedagogical implications for EFL instruction. Given ChatGPT's demonstrated utility in enhancing students' writing skills, it can serve as an important tool for EFL instructors. Teachers can integrate ChatGPT into writing workshops or independent study sessions to assist students in improving their grammar, vocabulary, and writing fluency. Additionally, educators might consider

incorporating ChatGPT in formative assessments to provide students with immediate feedback, which could help them refine their writing skills outside of traditional classroom settings.

For curriculum designers, this study underscores the potential for AI tools like ChatGPT to complement conventional teaching methods. By including AI-supported platforms in the curriculum, instructors can offer students more personalized learning experiences and better support for language acquisition. Furthermore, policymakers can consider integrating AI-driven tools into national education strategies, promoting more accessible and engaging language learning methods. However, it is essential that such integration be accompanied by clear guidelines on ethical use, ensuring that AI tools are employed responsibly while maintaining academic integrity.

Future Research Directions

This study opens several avenues for future research. Long-term effects of ChatGPT's use on students' writing skills remain largely unexplored. Future research could examine how sustained use of ChatGPT influences the development of students' writing abilities over time, particularly regarding their critical thinking and ability to engage with original sources. Additionally, it would be valuable to compare the effectiveness of ChatGPT with more traditional instructional methods, exploring whether AI tools lead to better language outcomes or whether a blended approach of traditional teaching and AI integration offers the best results.

Another area for future research involves exploring the potential limitations and challenges of using ChatGPT in EFL education, especially regarding academic integrity, students' dependency on the tool, and the development of critical thinking skills. Investigating how students can engage critically with AI-generated content will help ensure that they use the tool not as a substitute for learning but as a complementary resource. Furthermore, socio-economic factors such as access to digital devices and internet connectivity should be explored to understand how these factors influence students' ability to benefit from AI tools, particularly in regions with limited resources.

Lastly, more research is needed to assess the global applicability of ChatGPT in different educational contexts. While this study focuses on Indonesian students, similar investigations in diverse educational settings could yield valuable insights into the broader effectiveness and challenges of AI-assisted language learning.

AI USE AND DISCLOSURE

Grammarly and ChatGPT was used during manuscript preparation to support language editing, including grammar correction, proofreading, and enhancement of sentence clarity. The authors critically reviewed and verified all suggested revisions and accept full responsibility for the manuscript's content, accuracy, and integrity.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT

Prior to data collection, authorization to conduct the research was obtained from the relevant institution. All participants were provided with clear information about the research objectives and their involvement, and their informed consent was obtained before participation. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw without negative consequences. To safeguard privacy, identifying details were omitted from the research records, and codes were used instead of participants' names in the presentation of findings. The collected data were kept confidential, securely maintained, and accessed only for research purposes.

CRediT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Rentauli Mariah Silalahi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

REFERENCES

Adiguzel, T. (2023). Revolutionizing Education with AI : Exploring the Transformative Potential of ChatGPT. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, *15*(3), 1–13.

Alsalami, A. I. (2022). Challenges of Short Sentence Writing Encountered by First-Year Saudi EFL Uundergraduate Students. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, *13*(1), 534–549.

Bašić, Ž., Banovac, A., Kružić, I., & Jerković, I. (2023). ChatGPT-3.5 as Writing Assistance in Students ' Essays. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *10*(750), 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02269-7

Bekou, A., Mohamed, B. M., & Assissou, K. (2024). Exploring Opportunities and Challenges of Using ChatGPT in English Language Teaching (ELT) in Morocco. *Focus on ELT Journal*, *6*(1), 87–106.

Biesta, G. (2017). Mixing methods in educational research. In J. Coe, R., Waring, M., Hedges, L. V., Arthur (Ed.), *Research Methods & Methodologies in Education* (2nd editio, pp. 159–166). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Bonsu, E. M., & Baffour-Koduah, D. (2023). From the Consumers' Side: Determining Students' Perception and Intention to Use ChatGPT in Ghanaian Higher Education. *Journal of Education, Society and Multiculturalism*, *4*(1), 1–29.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.

Davis, F. D. (1993). User Acceptance of Information Technology: System Characteristics, User Perceptions and Behavioral Impacts. *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies*, *38*, 475–487.

Davis, F. D., & Venkatesh, V. (1996). A Critical Assessment of Potential Measurement Biases in the Technology Acceptance Model: Three Experiments. *International Journal of Human-Computer Science*, *45*, 19–45.

Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2012). *Educational Research*. Pearson Education, Inc.

Ge, T. (2024). Assessing the Acceptance and Utilization of ChatGPT by Chinese University Students in English Writing Education. *International Journal of Learning and Teaching*, *10*(1), 166–170. https://doi.org/10.18178/ijlt.

Granić, A., & Marangunić, N. (2019). Technology acceptance model in educational context: A systematic literature review. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, *50*(5), 2572– 2593. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12864

Habibi, A., Muhaimin, M., Danibao, B. K., Wibowo, Y. G., Wahyuni, S., & Octavia, A. (2023). ChatGPT in Higher Education Learning : Acceptance and Use. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, *5*, 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2023.100190

Harunasari, S. Y. (2023). Examining the Effectiveness of AI-integrated Approach in EFL Writing: A Case of ChatGPT. *International Journal of Progressive Sciences and Technologies (IJPSAT)*, *39*(2), 357–368. https://doi.org/10.52155/ijpsat.v39.2.5516

Huang, J. (2023). Engineering ChatGPT Prompts for EFL Writing Classes. *International Journal of TESOL Studies*, *5*(4), 73–79.

Kayaalp, M. E., Ollivier, M., Winkler, P., Dahmen, J., Musahl, V., Hirschmann, M., & Karlsson, J. (2024). Embrace Responsible ChatGPT Usage to Overcome Language Barriers in Academic Writing. *Knee Surgery, Sports Traumatology, Arthroscopy*, *32*(1), 5–9. https://doi.org/10.1002/ksa.12014

Marzuki, Widiati, U., Rusdin, D., Indrawati, I., & Indrawati, D. (2023). The Impact of AI Writing Tools on the Content and Organization of Students ' Writing: EFL Teachers' Perspective. *Cogent Education*, *10*(2), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2236469

Nugroho, A., Andriyanti, E., Widodo, P., & Mutiaraningrum, I. (2024). Students' Appraisals post-ChatGPT Use: Students' Narrative after Using ChatGPT for Writing. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703297.2024.2319184

Nugroho, A., Putro, N. H. P., & Syamsi, K. (2023). The Potentials of ChatGPT for Language Learning: Unpacking its Benefits and Limitations. *Register Journal*, *16*(02), 224–247. https://doi.org/10.18326/rgt.v16i2.224-247

Obenza, B. N., Salvahan, A., Rios, A. N., Solo, A., Alburo, R. A., & Gabila, R. J. (2023). University Students' Perception and Use of ChatGPT: Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Higher Education. *International Journal of Human Computing Studies*, *5*(12), 5– 18. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10360697

OpenAI. (2024). *Chat with GPT-4o*. OpenAI. https://chatbotapp.ai/landing-gpt4o?utm_source=GoogleAds&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=%7Bcampaign%7D&utm_id=21124457886&utm_term=163298305114&utm_content=702307790819&g ad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjwjqWzBhAqEiwAQmtgT88fOTx8s0o1-rvm8PF-3AlDRhmmE_4bAUaGej9ILYYZUKelG6_xYxoCfF8QAvD_BwE)

Ray, P. P. (2023). ChatGPT: A Comprehensive Review on Background, Applications, Key Challenges, Bias, Ethics, Limitations and Future Scope. *Internet of Things and Cyber-Physical Systems*, *3*(March), 121–154. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iotcps.2023.04.003

Sabzalieva, E., & Valentini, A. (2023). *ChatGPT and Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education: Quick Start Guide*. UNESCO.

Sasi, A. S., & Lai, J. C. M. (2021). Error Analysis of Taiwanese University Students' English Essay Writing: A Longitudinal Corpus Study. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, *6*(4), 57–74.

Shaengchart, Y. (2023). A Conceptual Review of TAM and ChatGPT Usage Intentions Among Higher Education Students. *Advance Knowledge for Executives (AKE)*, *2*(3), 1–7.

Shakil, E., & Siddiq, D. S. (2024). ESL Teachers' Perceptions about ChatGPT as a Threat to Analytical Writing Abilities of ESL Learners at Graduate Level. *Pakistan Languageas and Humanities Review*, *8*(1), 115–128.

Silvestre, A. S. S., Amaral, E. L. de M., Holanda, M. E., & Canedo, E. D. (2023). Students ' Perception about ChatGPT' s Impact on their Academic Education. *Congresso Brasileiro de Informatica Na Educacao*, 1260–1270.

Steele, J. L. (2023). To GPT or not GPT? Empowering our students to learn with AI. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, *5*, 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2023.100160

Strzelecki, A. (2023). To Use or not to Use ChatGPT in Higher Education? A Study of Students ' Acceptance and Use of Technology. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 1–14.

Thao, L. T., Hieu, H. H., & Thuy, P. T. (2023). Exploring the Impacts of ChatGPT in EFL Writing: Student Perceptions of Opportunities and Challenges in Vietnamese Higher Education. *Kognisi: Jurnal Ilmu Keguruan*, *1*(2), 107–124.

van Dijk, J. (2020). *The digital divide*. Polity Press.

Xu, X., Su, Y., Zhang, Y., Wu, Y., & Xu, X. (2024). Understanding Learners' Perceptions of ChatGPT: A Thematic Analysis of Peer Interviews among Undergraduates and Postgraduates in China. *Heliyon*, *10*, 1–13.