


Exploring the Role of ChatGPT in Enhancing EFL Students' Writing Skills: A Qualitative Study at Universitas Negeri Semarang

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i6.1560>

*Launia Dzahabiyyah^a 

¹Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: launia1410@students.unnes.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing how teachers and students teach and learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This is also changing how schools work. Current research primarily examines the advantages of various digital writing assistance tools; however, there has been insufficient exploration of ChatGPT, an AI-driven language model, in the context of Indonesian EFL. This study seeks to investigate the influence of ChatGPT on the writing proficiency of eighth-semester students in the English Education Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES). Using a qualitative design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with three subjects and subsequently analyzed thematically. The findings reveals that ChatGPT can enhance students' overall grammatical accuracy, lexical variety, conceptual organization, and writing confidence; while also raising concerns about dependency, originality, and contextual accuracy. The research findings demonstrate that, when employed critically and responsibly in EFL writing instruction, ChatGPT can function as an effective supplementary resource.

Keywords: *Chatgpt, EFL Writing, Qualitative Study, Student Perception, Learning Autonomy*

Article History:

Received 07th October 2025

Accepted 16th December 2025

Published 18th December 2025



INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, schools have reached a strong level of effectiveness in adopting digital learning practices. This has changed the way that students, teachers, and content talk to each other (George & Reddy, 2024). The incorporation of technology into education has significantly transformed educational experiences by enhancing information accessibility and fostering innovative teaching and learning methodologies (Pattnaik & Bhoi, 2024). Using technology is a big step forward, but it also brings up new problems and chances that need to be thought about (Yulianti et al., 2024). In EFL learning, it has a lot of different resources and tools that help students get better at writing and other things (Angraini et al., 2024). Researchers are studying language models that use AI, such as ChatGPT. People believe that making interactions more personal and flexible helps EFL students improve their writing (Wang, 2024).

Most people think of digital devices like computers, tablets, and smartphones as tools that make learning more interesting, easier to get to, and faster (Haleem et al., 2022). But this dependence raises the important question of how it affects students' learning, grades, and brain development (Ma'amor, Nur'ain Achim et al., 2024). Educational technology includes adaptive programs, multimedia resources, and AI-based platforms that claim to make learning more personal and effective (Gligorea et al., 2023).

One of the hardest differences for EFL learners to deal with is learning how to write in English (Muamaroh et al., 2020). To finish a writing assignment, you need to know how to use grammar and vocabulary correctly, as well as how to put your ideas in a logical order (Ali, 2023). Many EFL pupils have still taken the hardest time expressing their perspective in

Exploring the Role of ChatGPT in Enhancing EFL Students' Writing Skills: A Qualitative Study at Universitas Negeri Semarang writing (Taye & Mengesha, 2024). This is where ChatGPT can play a big part. ChatGPT can greatly aid writing instructions as it can provide immediate feedback, recommend better wordings, and direct students toward producing more accurate phrases (Rahman et al., 2024).

While ChatGPT offers exciting prospects for the future, research focusing on its application in EFL writing remains limited. Most of the previous studies concentrated on other technologies, such as word processors and applications for language learning, and only a few attempted to determine the specific impact of AI-based language models (Laili et al., 2025). Emerging studies have suggested that ChatGPT offers personalized learning experiences guided by the learners' individual needs and proficiency levels (Al Shloul et al., 2024). This kind of flexibility makes me hopeful that ChatGPT will help students learn better, especially when it comes to understanding, critical thinking, and getting involved (Heung & Chiu, 2025). ChatGPT is seen as an important tool that can help students with their schoolwork in the age of industry 5.0, when productivity and efficiency are very important (Salmaan, 2023). This represents a gap in the existing literature, especially concerning the impact of ChatGPT on the writing development of EFL students.

Furthermore, investigations evaluate the technical aspects of tool use, with little to no concern about how these have changed the learning outcomes of students (Firdausi, 2024). However, even as research on the topic of AI in education is on the rise, major gaps exist in regard to the effect of ChatGPT on the EFL writing prowess. In this regard, the focus should be on how students utilize ChatGPT and how beneficial this tool becomes for students in improving their writing since these factors are relevant to designing effective teaching strategies (Abdi, 2024). While it has generally been agreed upon that there is plenty of AI assisting in many areas of learning, the enhancement of EFL writing skills through ChatGPT is yet to be studied in detail (Xiao et al., 2025). Therefore, this study sets forth to answer these gaps by investigating the role of ChatGPT in enhancing writing skills among EFL learners and in identifying the challenges they face when using the same.

This study examines the impact on students of English Education at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES). The site was chosen because students are becoming more interested in using technology to learn and because it is important for future English teachers to improve their writing skills as part of their professional development. This study is anticipated to produce findings that are beneficial for theoretical advancement and practical application in English language education in Indonesia.

The objectives are examined via a qualitative methodology, employing in-depth interviews for data acquisition. This provides greater insight into students' overall experiences with ChatGPT, including the challenges and benefits they perceive (Annamalai & Nasor, 2025). The results are expected to provide innovative insights into the effectiveness of ChatGPT in EFL writing instruction and offer recommendations for further improvement. In short, the study builds on what has already been written about technology integration and focuses on writing skills. This study poses several research inquiries, including: (1) What role does ChatGPT play in enhancing the writing skills of EFL students in UNNES. (2) What challenges do the students experience in using ChatGPT to develop their writing skills?

This qualitative study aims to explore the benefits and obstacles of integrating AI in university-level language education in a manner that gives insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers.

METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative research design to examine the phenomenon of ChatGPT application in improving the writing skills of EFL students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES). This methodology allows the researcher to investigate students' experiences and perceptions concerning the use of ChatGPT as a writing assistance tool (Adiyono et al., 2025).

Respondents

In this study, three participants were eighth-semester students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang. The participants were deliberately selected due to their status as students who reported actively utilizing ChatGPT to assist with their academic writing. We chose the eighth-semester students because they had taken most of the writing classes and had enough experience writing for school. These are good examples to think about when you want to know how ChatGPT affects writing growth.

Instruments

The primary methodology employed in this study was semi-structured interviews. The interviews looked into how the participants used ChatGPT, focusing on how it helped them with writing tasks, what they thought were its benefits, and what problems they ran into. An interview guide was created to enhance the accuracy of the interviews and facilitate comparison, while also allowing participants considerable freedom to express their opinions.

Procedures

The data collection process was exclusively executed via comprehensive interviews with three intentionally selected participants. The interviews took place online and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The participants consented to the recording of the interviews, which were subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Ethical standards were maintained, as participants were informed of their rights regarding the research objectives and their right to withdraw at any stage of the process.

Data analysis

So, thematic analysis was how we looked at the data. We had to organize the transcripts into main ideas that showed how ChatGPT helped the students' writing get better. Careful cross-referencing of the new themes among the three participants helped triangulation happen. This analytical technique enabled the researcher to identify both the advantages and disadvantages of ChatGPT, along with the participants' critical perspectives regarding its application in academic writing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section shows the research results from in-depth interviews with three eighth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES). The interviews examined their experiences, perceptions, advantages, and disadvantages of Utilizing ChatGPT as an aid for composing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). A thematic analysis was employed to identify the recurring patterns and themes that emerged, subsequently analyzed in relation to the existing literature (Ahmed, 2025). The six main themes are: (1) how ChatGPT can help people write better, (2) how people see and use ChatGPT, (3) the problems people have when using ChatGPT, (4) the long-term potential of ChatGPT to help learners become more independent, (5) how ChatGPT compares to other tools, and (6) what people expect and suggest for its future use.

The Role of ChatGPT in Enhancing Writing Skills

All three participants have consistently stressed how important ChatGPT has been in helping them improve their English writing skills, especially in grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, and organizing their ideas. People say that ChatGPT is more than just a way to fix mistakes; it's also a great digital assistant that can help you write, learn, and even get you motivated. In their testimonies, they explain how ChatGPT would help them not only find their mistakes but also learn over time what is right about using patterns in a more academic writing style.

R1 described her experience as follows:

"I often use ChatGPT to check my grammar and sentence structure. For example, when I wrote an essay on cultural diversity, I wasn't sure if my sentences were correct. After using ChatGPT, it suggested more accurate sentences, and I realized my grammar mistakes."

The reflection shows that ChatGPT works as a diagnostic tool by pointing out mistakes that might otherwise go unnoticed. He was able to find specific grammar mistakes by comparing his original sentences to ChatGPT's suggestions. This made him more aware of how correct his sentences were. This understanding indicates that ChatGPT functions not only as a

proofreader but also as a conduit for formative feedback, similar to a teacher rectifying and elucidating mistakes (Algaraady & Mahyoob, 2023).

R2, on the other hand, emphasized ChatGPT's role in the initial stages of writing:

"Sometimes I don't know how to start my essay. ChatGPT gives me suggestions on the outline or structure, and that helps me a lot to develop my ideas."

The statement also says that ChatGPT does not just help with grammar; it also helps with structure and scaffolding when coming up with new ideas. ChatGPT is a cognitive partner for students who are having trouble coming up with ideas or who have writer's block. It helps them organize their thoughts into clear outlines. It also serves as a scaffolding device that connects the current capacity of a student to their potential performance in academic writing (Xu & Jumaat, 2024).

Meanwhile, R3 highlighted vocabulary development as the most valuable contribution of ChatGPT:

"ChatGPT helps me to find better vocabulary. For example, instead of using simple words, it suggests more academic ones, and I think this makes my writing look more formal."

These examples show how ChatGPT can help you learn new words. ChatGPT has helped students meet the higher stylistic and lexical standards of academic writing by changing everyday words into words that are more academic and specific to a certain field. ChatGPT is a very personalized lexical resource for R3, giving her writing the feel of being conversationally lofty or how she would write an academic essay.

These results support the claims made by Dja'far & Hamidah (2024), that AI and other tools can improve both the accuracy of language and the depth of vocabulary in academic settings. also said that ChatGPT can be like interactive tutoring and help students learn the rules of writing and find mistakes. But even though the students are making great progress in both mechanical and linguistic areas, it's clear from the context that they are worried about becoming too dependent. If students had to worry about ChatGPT's grammar, structure, and vocabulary, it would be harder for them to come up with new ideas and improve them without AI (Anggeraja & Aeni, 2024).

People should think of ChatGPT's role in improving writing skills in two ways: first, as a way to help students learn how to write better and faster, and second, as a way to make sure that the effects last, students need to be able to control how they use the tool (Jmaiel et al., 2025). If you use it carefully and critically, it can be a great tool for writing. When used too much, it hurts both students' independence and the natural way they learn (Saputra & Syafitri, 2025).

Perceptions and Experiences of ChatGPT Use

People who took part do think that ChatGPT helped them a lot by making them more confident, less anxious, and better at writing. They don't just see ChatGPT as a tool; they see it as a friend who helps them with different parts of writing. Reflections show that the emotional parts of writing, like motivation, anxiety, and confidence, are just as important as the technical parts. He wrapped AI-assisted writing in a complicated, two-sided nature that made people worry about being dependent and loosening the strings to dependency in their learning.

R1 expressed her perception in a way that emphasized the psychological benefits of using ChatGPT:

"When I use ChatGPT, I feel more confident because I know my sentences are correct. It makes me less anxious about making mistakes."

This shows that ChatGPT can help boost confidence by lowering the general fear of making grammatical or structural mistakes, which is especially hard for EFL learners. Many times, students feel like they have to write perfectly, which makes them nervous and sometimes stops them from even trying to write. ChatGPT lowers the affective filter by telling students that their writing is perfect. This lets them focus on the content and how they express themselves instead of worrying about or being scared to make mistakes. So, the fact that ChatGPT gave people psychological comfort might make them pay more attention and keep writing longer (Almulla, 2024).

R2, meanwhile, highlighted efficiency and time management as the most prominent advantages of ChatGPT:

"It really saves my time. Before, I spent hours revising my essay. Now, with ChatGPT, I can write faster and focus on the content."

There is a lot of support in this feedback for ChatGPT as a tool to help people get things done. In terms of R2, the tool has made it easier for the student to edit and revise by checking their grammar, giving them synonyms and interchangeable phrases, and suggesting an outline. Because they don't have as much time to revise, the students can use more mental energy to make the arguments they are building stronger, which deepens the content and encourages more critical thinking. In this way, ChatGPT helps the student move their focus from surface-level issues to deeper, more important writing issues.

R3, however, raised a more critical perspective that reflected ambivalence toward the tool:

"I feel confident, but sometimes I wonder if I'm learning or just copying. It's helpful, but I don't want to depend on it too much."

The author recognized a certain level of risk and the potential advantages of ChatGPT. R3 praised the tool for giving the language user confidence, which makes it hard to tell if they really learned something. Her doubts make me think that she might become too reliant on AI-generated suggestions. R3 thinks that there is a big risk in her case: a tool that could improve short-term performance but then hurt independent language growth if used without thinking about it.

The evidence suggests that ChatGPT could significantly influence students' perceptions of their writing process. Teachers need to make sure that students know that they could become dependent on the tool and that they are motivated enough to see it as a useful resource instead of a way to avoid active learning. The tool gives them psychological comfort and helps them get more done. In this context, it is essential to promote AI literacy, enabling students to utilize AI assistance effectively while also deeply understanding how to critically assess, adapt, and manage their dependence on these tools to preserve their independent writing skills.

Challenges in Using ChatGPT

Participants recognized the considerable utility of ChatGPT while simultaneously highlighting the diverse challenges encountered in its practical implementation. These problems show how AI-powered tools can help students write at school, especially those who are currently on campus and learning English as a foreign language. These tools can help them get better at thinking critically and speaking English. From the interviews, it was clear that there are three main things to think about: how well the expression fits the situation, how original and creative it is, and how natural it sounds.

R1 shared:

"Sometimes ChatGPT provides answers that do not fully match the context of my question, which can be frustrating. For instance, when I asked about Indonesian cultural traditions, the explanation was too general and lacked the depth or accuracy I expected. This makes me realize that while ChatGPT is helpful, I still need to verify the information and compare it with other reliable sources."

ChatGPT's biggest problem is that it can write English sentences that sound pretty good, but it doesn't always think about the context of some information, especially when it comes to cultural and localized content. This worried R1, who asked a more serious question about the difference between globalized AI training data and the local knowledge that is available. Students who want to use culturally appropriate material in their essays may find these problems troubling. EFL learners must augment their drafts derived from AI sources with additional references to ensure contextual accuracy; thus (Tran, 2025).

R2 highlighted a different challenge, focusing on creativity:

"If I rely too much on ChatGPT, I sometimes feel that my writing loses its originality and personal voice. To avoid this, I prefer to begin with my own draft so that the ideas remain authentic and"

reflect my thinking. Afterward, I only use ChatGPT to refine or polish the language, rather than letting it take over the entire process."

In this case, R2 knows that being too dependent can be dangerous. ChatGPT could be a great help, but there is a risk that students will just sit back and let the technology do the writing for them instead of coming up with their own ideas. R2's desire to work on writing as independently as possible before fine-tuning it with ChatGPT shows that they are trying to find a balance between getting help and being original. This shows that you care about academic honesty and the importance of your own voice in writing. To keep things original, it's important to develop metacognitive strategies, like setting limits on when and how to use AI (Yan et al., 2025).

R3 described her frustration:

"There are times when ChatGPT produces sentences that sound unnatural or too complicated. When this happens, I often hesitate and feel uncertain about whether the sentence will actually improve my writing or make it less clear. This confusion sometimes forces me to revise the output on my own, which can be both time-consuming and frustrating."

This makes things worse. ChatGPT can write sentences that are grammatically correct and of high quality, but they might sound too stiff or formal for the classroom where students want to use them. R3's problem shows how hard it is to judge AI suggestions because students don't always know if the wording is in the right academic style. For EFL learners, this could mean having to choose between following AI's advice because they're afraid of making a mistake and being true to themselves.

Long-term Impact and Learning Independence

The interviews also asked about how ChatGPT could change the way students learn and how free they feel over time. There was more agreement that ChatGPT can help people write better right away. People who were interviewed, on the other hand, had different ideas about whether it helps or hurts learning independence. These viewpoints are especially pertinent in higher education, where the emphasis is not solely on generating precise written content but, more crucially, on promoting skill enhancement and student independence.

R1 reflected positively on ChatGPT's role as a learning tool:

"It helps me learn grammar because I compare my sentence with the suggested one. By seeing the differences, I become more aware of my common mistakes, especially in tenses and sentence structures. Over time, this process makes me feel more trained and confident in writing independently."

This description shows that R1 sees ChatGPT as both a tool for correcting mistakes and a partner in the learning process. R1 is doing what scholars call "noticing" by consciously telling the AI about his own suggestions and then comparing them to the AI's. This is an activity that second language learners do to start to see the differences between what they produce and the target-like forms they are trying to reach. This means that ChatGPT can be a useful tool for the student to use wisely to help them become more aware of language and build their skills over time.

R2 saw it differently:

"In the long run, I might become lazy if I always use ChatGPT. I realize that relying too much on it can reduce my creativity and make me less motivated to think critically about my own writing. That's why I try to limit myself and use ChatGPT only as a tool for revision, not as the main source of my ideas."

R2's insight brings to light an important paradox: the tools being made to help people get better can, if not controlled, make them dependent. The word "lazy" here seems to point to a possible reason why the learners aren't engaged; that is, they take the easy way out and go straight to AI answers without trying to solve problems or think critically first. R2, on the other hand, shows that he knows about metacognitive strategies by setting personal limits. By being aware of how often he will use ChatGPT, he is trying to find the right balance between saving time and being disciplined. This suggests that independence comes not only from using that tool but also from how students choose to control their use of it.

R3 balanced the two perspectives:

"I use ChatGPT as a guide, but I still write my draft first. By doing so, I can make sure that my ideas are original and truly reflect my own thinking. This way, I don't feel dependent on ChatGPT, but instead see it as a supportive tool to refine my writing."

R3 here gives a great example of how to use ChatGPT in a way that fits into your work schedule and lets you stay in charge of writing. For R3, who writes down her ideas before using ChatGPT to help her with the creative process, any idea that comes to her would have come from her own thoughts, and ChatGPT would be a second support system for refining those ideas. R3 uses the app as a way to learn and get help with writing. This means that the app doesn't replace learning; it just helps the student write. This shows that AI can be a truly independent tool when students plan their writing around it.

The three points of view show that ChatGPT can help with distance learning in two different ways. For some, it might help them learn and remember the rules of language, but for others, it might make them less motivated and less able to do things on their own. Ultimately, it hinges on the students' proficiency in utilizing the tool and their ability to regulate its application. These findings are very helpful for colleges and universities trying to figure out how AI literacy fits in. Students need to learn how to use ChatGPT correctly, but they also need to learn how to take care of themselves and make their own decisions. ChatGPT would be more like a tool than a place to write if it were like this.

Comparison with Other Tools

Another important theme was putting together a lot of the big information that people who were interviewed gave and comparing ChatGPT's work to that of other digital tools that students usually use, like Grammarly and others. People who took part said that ChatGPT has a much bigger and more active audience than Grammarly, which is a popular tool for checking grammar and making small corrections. People thought about how students had different and complicated ideas about how these tools could work together and against each other after the conversations.

R2 explained his preference for ChatGPT by highlighting its explanatory and instructional nature:

"Perplexity only gives short answers or summaries, but ChatGPT explains why something is wrong and suggests improvements. I find this very helpful because I can understand my mistakes instead of just correcting them. It feels like learning with a tutor who not only fixes errors but also teaches me how to avoid them in the future."

This point is a significant difference. Perplexity is mainly used to help people find and summarize information. It gives the user short answers based on the sources that are available. But a lot of the time, these kinds of answers are given in a simple way that doesn't explain why the information is there. R2, on the other hand, said that ChatGPT gives the answer and then goes on to give more details, examples, and paraphrases. That shows even more that the medium acts more like an interactive teacher that gets students to talk about what they're learning instead of just giving them surface-level answers (Chimbunde & Moreeng, 2025).

R1 supported this perspective by drawing an analogy between the two tools:

"ChatGPT is like a tutor, while Grammarly is just a corrector. Grammarly only points out mistakes without much explanation, but ChatGPT guides me through the reasoning and provides alternatives. That's why I feel ChatGPT plays a bigger role in helping me actually learn while writing."

R1's metaphor here shows how the roles are different. He thought of Grammarly as a proofreading assistant whose only job is to find mistakes and suggest ways to fix them right away, which doesn't always lead to a deeper understanding. He thinks that ChatGPT is more like a tutor than an examiner, which means that it should be used as a guide, in conversation, and in a way that helps students learn. This means that students might like ChatGPT because it helps them with the writing process as well as correcting their mistakes.

R3, however, acknowledged limitations:

"Sometimes Grammarly is more precise for grammar, but ChatGPT is better for ideas. I feel Grammarly works best when I just need quick corrections, while ChatGPT helps me explore and expand my thoughts. For that reason, I often combine both depending on my writing needs."

This reasonable interpretation highlights the harmony that both of these tools offer. ChatGPT is better at giving ideas a context and an expert composition point, while Grammarly still has the hard job of making sure that grammar is correct. Grammarly's algorithm finds subject-verb agreement or section usage problems in every little detail, which ChatGPT might miss or make too simple to recognize. Some people may be cautious about using both tools because Grammarly is a very specific grammar checker and ChatGPT is a general tool that helps with both thinking and creativity. In this case, R3 is the right choice.

Expectations and Recommendations

The participants not only talked about what they were going through right now, but they also made clear what they expected and what they thought ChatGPT should do in the future, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Their answers showed that they really wanted a balanced use of ChatGPT, where it could be a useful tool while still keeping human learning, creativity, and critical thinking at the center.

R1 recommended:

"ChatGPT should be used in class, but teachers must guide us so we don't depend too much on it. I believe it can be a powerful tool to support learning if integrated properly into lessons. However, without teacher supervision, students might overuse it and lose their motivation to think independently."

This point of view shows how important it is for teachers to oversee the classroom. Students know that ChatGPT can help them write better, but they also know that they shouldn't use it too much because it could make them rely on it. R1's idea shows that technology should help, not take the place of, traditional ways of teaching.

R2 suggested:

"It would be better if lecturers gave assignments that require critical thinking, so ChatGPT is only a tool, not the main source. This way, students are encouraged to think deeper and not just copy or depend on the AI. I believe such assignments can help us develop independence while still benefiting from ChatGPT's support."

This statement shows that the people who took part know that using content made by AI can be risky. R2 says that ChatGPT would be a better tool for schoolwork if it had tasks that needed higher-order thinking skills like synthesis, analysis, and evaluation. This is because it wouldn't be the best place to find out what you need to know. Constructivist learning theories say that students need to actively engage with knowledge instead of just taking it in. This fits with those ideas. (Kim & Adlof, 2024).

R3 emphasized:

"Students should be trained to evaluate ChatGPT's answers critically. If they are not guided to question or reflect on the responses, there is a risk that they will simply accept the output as absolute truth. Critical training can help students use ChatGPT more responsibly and integrate its suggestions with their own reasoning."

This comment makes me think about how being able to think critically is a big part of being good with technology. R3 says that ChatGPT gives answers quickly and completely, but not all of its suggestions are good for teaching or fit the situation. Students should be able to look at suggestions and decide which ones to follow, change, or ignore. One way for teachers to make sure that students understand AI is to add lessons on how to use it to the curriculum. This will help students understand what AI can and can't do (Campillo-Ferrer et al., 2025). If students don't think critically, they might just take in information instead of making it themselves.

Most people who used ChatGPT said it helped them write better, feel less stressed, and save time. But there are problems with dependency, originality, and accuracy in context that need to be fixed. These results show the good and bad things about using AI in English as a foreign language writing classes.

Discussion

The results of this study validate previous research regarding the pedagogical efficacy of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting (AlTwijri & Alghizzi, 2024). This study supports earlier research, showing that participants think ChatGPT has a positive effect on many parts of academic writing, especially by improving grammar, expanding vocabulary, and making it easier to organize ideas. These features show that ChatGPT is more than just a way to fix mistakes; it can also help students write school-appropriate texts that are clearer. Besides these well-known benefits, this study also finds some less obvious ways that students use ChatGPT. Most people think it's a good way to help people make fewer language mistakes and feel more confident, but the people who took part were also worried that it could make people too reliant on it. This research illustrates that the overuse of ChatGPT can stifle creativity and originality, especially when students employ it uncritically or as a replacement for their own concepts (Ahmad et al., 2025; Toma & Yáñez-Pérez, 2024). This dual perception shows how learners feel about AI tools: they see them as both ways to improve performance and possible barriers to real learning.

One important thing about this study is that it is based on real-life situations. This study offers empirical evidence from an Indonesian EFL context, specifically among final-year students of Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), in contrast to the predominantly Western perspectives found in much of the existing literature. This group is especially important because they have a lot of experience with academic writing and are getting ready to graduate, so their thoughts on AI integration are very valuable. Their insights go beyond first impressions and focus on the real problems that come up when using ChatGPT in the later stages of EFL writing development.

People see ChatGPT as both a good and bad thing because it can help with language skills, confidence, and getting things done faster. Some people said that ChatGPT helps students learn by making them less stressed and giving them more time. This is also what other studies have found (Monib et al., 2025). Some people, on the other hand, said that relying too much on AI is dangerous and that using it all the time makes it harder to learn more deeply and be independent. The debates about educational technology are all about the choice between being free and being dependent. Adding AI to teaching shows how important it is to use the right tools for the student and the situation.

These results have several implications for teaching. First, ChatGPT shouldn't be thought of as a full replacement for regular teaching in EFL writing classes. People should not see it as a way to get rid of teachers; they should see it as a way to help teachers instead. Teachers should teach students how to think critically about what AI says, pick the right words, and change the outputs so that they stay real and new (Werdiningsih et al., 2024). Second, the people who make the curriculum might want to add AI literacy modules that teach kids how to think about the pros and cons of AI in school. This kind of training could help people use technology safely without thinking about it and make them more likely to use it in a responsible and critical way (Kulesza et al., 2011). Finally, we may need to change the tests we give students so that they have to use higher-order thinking, be creative, and think critically. There are other ways for students to use ChatGPT. They also need to show how they think and come up with their own ideas.

In conclusion, this study confirms the transformative potential of ChatGPT in EFL writing education, while cautioning against uncritical implementation. It stresses the need for teaching methods that balance the benefits of AI with the need to protect students' independence, creativity, and ability to think critically (Kerma, 2025). These insights enhance the academic discourse regarding AI in education by demonstrating the significance of employing contextually appropriate, ethically sound, and student-centered approaches. Finally, ChatGPT should be used in EFL writing classes that teach students how to think critically, use technology safely, and work with old-fashioned teaching methods. This will make sure that technology helps you learn to think for yourself and be independent, not hurt you.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether ChatGPT could assist EFL students at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES) in enhancing their writing skills. These students were in their last year of the English Education program. The results show that ChatGPT is a good way to help people learn new words, feel better about their writing, get help with their grammar, and get their thoughts in order. Students can use ChatGPT to write, edit, and make their schoolwork better. It is also a way to make things better. But the study also makes some important points. Students' opinions were conflicted; although they value ChatGPT's effectiveness, self-assurance, and educational opportunities, they are also conscious of its possible downsides, which include over-reliance, a decline in creativity, and a decline in critical engagement. These observations show that ChatGPT is a tool that needs to be used carefully and under guidance rather than being a neutral one. How teachers and students incorporate it into writing practices will have a big impact on how it affects learning autonomy in the long run. This study's contribution is the empirical data it presents from the Indonesian EFL context, specifically from final-year university students writing in an advanced academic style. Since Western experiences have dominated much of the existing literature, this deepens the global discussion on AI in education. The study clarifies the advantages and disadvantages of implementing AI in areas where EFL learners encounter unique linguistic and academic requirements by concentrating on this context. Despite its contributions, the present study has certain limited. The limited sample size of three participants constrains the generalizability of the results. The qualitative approach provides valuable insights but fails to encompass the entirety of students' experiences across varying proficiency levels. Subsequent research may broaden the participant demographic, utilize mixed-methodological frameworks, or juxtapose ChatGPT with alternative AI-driven writing tools to provide a more thorough and nuanced analysis. Based on these results, teachers should use ChatGPT fairly in writing lessons. Teachers should stress how important critical literacy is and how to use it safely. Students shouldn't just take ChatGPT's word for it; they should also think about what it says. Universities might also want to think about how to teach students how to use AI in their writing in a way that is both responsible and critical. ChatGPT can get the most out of its benefits and cut down on its risks with these kinds of projects. ChatGPT could change how people teach writing in English as a foreign language. It can help students write better by teaching them how to use language correctly, giving them more words to use, and making them feel more confident. But it has to be set up so that people want to be independent, creative, and make their own decisions in order to be helpful. ChatGPT is not a new way to learn. They should see it as a useful tool that can help EFL students learn to be more independent and think for themselves.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The researcher would like to thank the students who took part in the study for being so nice and sharing their time and experiences with us. The researcher independently conducted the study as part of their academic obligations, without external financial support.

REFERENCES

- Abdi, M. M. (2024). Exploring the use of ChatGPT in improving students' paragraph composition skills. *Focus on ELT Journal*, 6(4), 17–36. <https://doi.org/10.14744/felt.6.4.2>
- Adiyono, A., Said Al Matari, A., & Ferdian Dalimarta, F. (2025). Analysis of Student Perceptions of the Use of ChatGPT as a Learning Media: A Case Study in Higher Education in the Era of AI-Based Education. *Journal of Education and Teaching (JET)*, 6(2), 306–324. <https://doi.org/10.51454/jet.v6i2.538>
- Ahmad, MD. Z., Tamang, N., Shrestha, M., Khatri, K., Karki, J. J., Acharya, N., & Parajuli, S. K. (2025). ChatGPT's Impact on Students Creativity and Academic Performance.

- Exploring the Role of ChatGPT in Enhancing EFL Students' Writing Skills: A Qualitative Study at Universitas Negeri Semarang International Journal of Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences*, 3(1), 227–242. <https://doi.org/10.58578/ijhess.v3i1.4751>
- Ahmed, S. K., Mohammed, R. A., Nashwan, A. J., Ibrahim, R. H., Abdalla, A. Q., M. Ameen, B. M., & Khedhir, R. M. (2025). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 6, 100198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198>
- Al Shloul, T., Mazhar, T., Abbas, Q., Iqbal, M., Ghadi, Y. Y., Shahzad, T., Mallek, F., & Hamam, H. (2024). Role of activity-based learning and ChatGPT on students' performance in education. In *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence* (Vol. 6). Elsevier B.V. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2024.100219>
- Algaraady, J., & Mahyoob, M. (2023). ChatGPT's Capabilities in Spotting and Analyzing Writing Errors Experienced by EFL Learners. *Arab World English Journal*, 9, 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/call9.1>
- Ali, B. (2023). A Study of Factors that Affect Learners' English Writing Skill. *Qalaai Zanist Scientific Journal*, 8(4). <https://doi.org/10.25212/lfu.qzj.8.4.49>
- Almulla, M. A. (2024). Investigating influencing factors of learning satisfaction in AI ChatGPT for research: University students perspective. *Heliyon*, 10(11). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e32220>
- AlTwijri, L., & Alghizzi, T. M. (2024). Investigating the integration of artificial intelligence in English as foreign language classes for enhancing learners' affective factors: A systematic review. In *Heliyon* (Vol. 10, Issue 10). Elsevier Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31053>
- Angraini, D., Sulistiyo, U., Haryanto, E., & Riady, Y. (2024). Integration of Technology in EFL Writing Instruction: A Systematic Review of Insights from SIELE Journal Articles. *PPSDP International Journal of Education*, 3(2).
- Annamalai, N., & Nasor, M. (2025). Exploring ChatGPT in education: unveiling learners' experiences through the lens of self-determination theory. *Smart Learning Environments*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-025-00393-2>
- Biswas, S. (2023). Evaluating Errors and Improving Performance of ChatGPT: A Research Paper. *Qieos*. <https://doi.org/10.32388/QDDKV3>
- Campillo-Ferrer, J. M., López-García, A., & Miralles-Sánchez, P. (2025). Student Perceptions of the Use of Gen-AI in a Higher Education Program in Spain. *Digital*, 5(3), 29. <https://doi.org/10.3390/digital5030029>
- Chimbunde, P., & Moreeng, B. B. (2025). Reconfiguring History Teachers' Assessment Practices in the Context of ChatGPT: Charting the New Terrain. *TechTrends*, 69(3), 607–617. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-025-01062-4>
- Fikri Amir Anggeraja, M., & Aeni, N. (2024). The Use of ChatGPT in Enhancing Students Writing Ability. *Journal of Excellence in English Language Education*, 3(3).
- Firdausi, A. R. (2024). Analyzing the Impact of Learning Technology on the Quality of Education in Schools: Potential and Risks. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 1(5). <https://doi.org/10.62872/k3d5gd27>
- George, G., & Reddy, Dr. R. (2024). Digital Empowerment in Education: Exploring the Dynamics and Significance of ICT – a Rview. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management*, 08(01), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.55041/IJSREM28245>
- Gligorea, I., Cioca, M., Oancea, R., Gorski, A. T., Gorski, H., & Tudorache, P. (2023). Adaptive Learning Using Artificial Intelligence in e-Learning: A Literature Review. In *Education Sciences* (Vol. 13, Issue 12). Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13121216>
- Haleem, A., Javaid, M., Qadri, M. A., & Suman, R. (2022). Understanding the role of digital technologies in education: A review. *Sustainable Operations and Computers*, 3, 275–285. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.susoc.2022.05.004>
- Heung, Y. M. E., & Chiu, T. K. F. (2025). How ChatGPT impacts student engagement from a systematic review and meta-analysis study. In *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence* (Vol. 8). Elsevier B.V. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2025.100361>

- Jmaiel, H. A., Abukhait, R. O., Mohamed, A. M., Shaaban, T. S., Al-khresheh, M. H., & AL-Qadri, A. H. (2025). The role of ChatGPT in enhancing EFL students' ESP writing skills: an experimental study of gender and major differences. *Discover Education*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44217-025-00700-6>
- Kerma, M. (2025). The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Algerian Learners' Critical Thinking. *ATRAS*, 6(1), 125–136. <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>
- Kim, M., & Adlof, L. (2024). Adapting to the Future: ChatGPT as a Means for Supporting Constructivist Learning Environments. *TechTrends*, 68(1), 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-023-00899-x>
- Kulesza, J., Dehondt, G., & Nezlek, G. (2011). More Technology, Less Learning? *Information Systems Education Journal (ISEDJ)*, 9(7), 4–13. www.aityp-edsig.org/www.isedj.org
- Laili, R. N., Wirawati, W. A., & Nashir, M. (2025). Student's Perception on the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) ChatGPT in English Language Learning: Benefits and Challenges in Higher Education. *Edu Cendikia: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*, 4(03), 1389–1403. <https://doi.org/10.47709/educendikia.v4i03.5272>
- Leung, C. H. (2025). A flexibility study on the role of ChatGPT in language learning. *Asian Journal of Contemporary Education*, 9(1), 112–130. <https://doi.org/10.55493/5052.v9i1.5427>
- Ma'amor, Nur'ain Achim, H., Ahmad, L., Roszaman, S., Noor, N., Anuar, K., Aqielah, C., Azwa, K., Nabila, S., Rahman, A., Ain, N., Hamjah, A., & Ma'amor, H. (2024). The Effect of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Students' Learning. In *Information Management and Business Review* (Vol. 16, Issue 3S).
- Monib, W. K., Qazi, A., & Mahmud, M. M. (2025). Exploring learners' experiences and perceptions of ChatGPT as a learning tool in higher education. *Education and Information Technologies*, 30(1), 917–939. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-13065-4>
- Muamaroh, M., Mukti, V. C., & Haryanti, D. (2020). The Process and Problems of EFL Learners in English Writing. *Ethical Lingua: Journal of Language Teaching and Literature*, 7(2), 405–418. <https://doi.org/10.30605/25409190.215>
- Pattnaik, M. A., & Bhoi, C. (2024). Enhancing Teacher Education: Cultivating the Architects of Tomorrow's Mind. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, 6(1), 1–14. www.ijfmr.com
- Rahman, H., Siregar, H., Yunita Siregar, D., Sukma, E., & Damanik, D. (2024). Using Artificial Intelligence (Ai) Chatgpt As A Writing Tool: Based On Efl Students' Perceptions. *Humaniora Dan Seni (JISHS)*, 02(4), 754–760. <http://jurnal.minartis.com/index.php/jishs>
- Salmaan, A. F. (2023). Analysis of the Effect of ChatGPT on the Learning Productivity of Secondary School Students. *The Annual International Conference on Education*, 175–181.
- Saputra, N., & Eka Syafitri, S. (2025). Integrating ChatGPT in higher education: Insights into student usage, critical thinking, and independent learning. *IJELR: International Journal of Education, Language, and Religion*, 7(1), 91–102. <https://doi.org/10.35308/ijelr.v7i1.11928>
- Taye, T., & Mengesha, M. (2024). Identifying and analyzing common English writing challenges among regular undergraduate students. *Heliyon*, 10(17). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e36876>
- Toma, R. B., & Yáñez-Pérez, I. (2024). Effects of ChatGPT use on undergraduate students' creativity: a threat to creative thinking? *Discover Artificial Intelligence*, 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44163-024-00172-x>
- Tran, T. T. T. (2025). Enhancing EFL Writing Revision Practices: The Impact of AI- and Teacher-Generated Feedback and Their Sequences. *Education Sciences*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15020232>
- Veri Hardinansyah Dja'far, & Fitria Nur Hamidah. (2024). The Effectiveness of AI Technology in Improving Academic English Writing Skills in Higher Education. *Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 4(3), 579–593. <https://doi.org/10.36312/jolls.v4i3.2031>

Exploring the Role of ChatGPT in Enhancing EFL Students' Writing Skills: A Qualitative Study at Universitas Negeri Semarang

- Wang, J. (2024). In-Service Teachers' Perceptions of Technology Integration in English as a Foreign Language Classrooms in China: A Multiple-Case Study. *ECNU Review of Education*, 7(2), 333–356. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311231193692>
- Werdiningsih, I., Marzuki, & Rusdin, D. (2024). Balancing AI and authenticity: EFL students' experiences with ChatGPT in academic writing. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2392388>
- Xiao, F., Zhu, S., & Wen, X. (2025). Exploring the Landscape of Generative AI (ChatGPT)-Powered Writing Instruction in English as a Foreign Language Education: A Scoping Review. In *ECNU Review of Education*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311241310881>
- Xu, T., & Jumaat, N. F. (2024). ChatGPT-Empowered Writing Strategies in EFL Students' Academic Writing: Calibre, Challenges and Chances. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, 18(15), 95–114. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v18i15.49219>
- Yan, W., Nakajima, T., & Sawada, R. (2025). Beyond tool use: Tracking the evolution of generative AI literacy among university students through a process-oriented investigation. *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.caeai.2025.100465>
- Yulianti, H., Mukni'ah, M., & Iswanto, E. (2024). Use of Technology in Increasing the Effectiveness of Class Management at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri 3 Jember. *Khalifah : Jurnal Pendidikan Nusantara*, 2(1), 23–30. <https://doi.org/10.62523/khalifah.v2i1.10>