



Investigating Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT's Role in Supporting Writing Skills

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Abstract

This study investigated second-semester students of the English Education Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi perception of the role of ChatGPT in improving their English writing skills. A descriptive qualitative design was employed, with data collected over 2 days in July 2025 through semi-structured interviews. From a preliminary survey of 25 students, 8 were selected based on their active use of ChatGPT on smartphones for writing activities. Data were analysed using a phenomenological approach to capture students lived experiences and perceptions. The findings revealed that students generally held positive views of ChatGPT, particularly in generating ideas, enriching vocabulary, improving grammar awareness, constructing sentences, and building confidence. ChatGPT was also valued for its accessibility and efficiency, often functioning as a virtual tutor that fostered self-directed learning boosted writing confidence. Despite these advantages, several challenges were identified, such as overreliance on the application, restricted access to premium features, and minor inconsistencies in generated outputs. The study concludes that ChatGPT offers meaningful support for developing writing competence among EFL learners, provided that its use is guided critically and integrated with traditional pedagogical strategies to maintain learners' creativity, accuracy, and analytical reasoning.

Keywords: *ChatGPT, students' perception, writing skills*

Introduction

As the education system continues to evolve, attaining mastery in writing skills is fundamental not only for achieving academic goals but also for advancing professional growth. As noted by (Asiah et al., 2020) the development of writing ability is vital since it enables students to articulate their emotions, knowledge, and ideas in written form. Proficiency in written communication plays a significant role in allowing learners to engage with complex issues, contribute to

academic communicate effectively and achieve competence across different fields of knowledge. According to (Villar Faller, 2018) writing is a complex activity that demands both cognitive engagement and linguistic proficiency. Despite its importance, the writing process also presents a range of challenges and considerations. For example, many ESL learners face challenges concerning word formation, the use of punctuation marks, and grammatical accuracy while producing written texts or compositions in English (Nur Fitria, 2020). Such mistakes often happen unconsciously, since learners are generally not aware of their own writing errors (Fitria, 2018).

As noted by (Mammadova, 2019) online tools for grammar and spelling correction support English language instruction and acquisition. The rapid advancement of modern technology has led to the development of accessible and efficient tools, including those that integrate artificial intelligence (AI). Among these innovations, ChatGPT serves as an AI-powered writing assistant designed to assist various types of writers, from beginners to professionals and creative authors. Created by OpenAI, ChatGPT has gained widespread acknowledged as a valuable tool for handling language-related activities, particularly in the educational application of artificial intelligence. Furthermore, (Malik et al., 2023) observed that many Indonesian learners use various AI-powered platforms to improve their writing abilities. Moreover, machine translation tools have become increasingly common across multiple stages of learning, including reading, interpretation, and text production (Zhao et al., 2024).

Although many people express valid concerns that AI might reduce students' attentiveness to the writing process, others have pointed out its possible advantages. This viewpoint aligns with the framework of the AI-Educational Development Loop (AI-EDL), highlighting AI's capacity to deliver immediate and continuous feedback that fosters critical reflection, autonomous learning, and stronger involvement in writing activities (Yu et al., 2025). In a similar vein, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) suggests that learners' willingness to adopt AI is largely influenced by how useful they perceive the technology to be, which in turn shapes their motivation and readiness to incorporate AI tools into their writing practices (Zhang, 2025).

The present study offers a comprehensive exploration of the perceptions held by second-semester students in the English Education Department at Muhammadiyah University of Kotabumi concerning the utilization of ChatGPT. It aims to reveal the intricate connections among learners' perceptions, experiences, and their whole sense of satisfaction in enhancing their English composition proficiency. As stated by (Fiske, 1992) the concept of perception can be classified into several types, including perceptual, societal, self-related, and relational dimensions. Each of these aspects can generate either favourable or unfavourable responses, influenced by both internal and external factors, for instance, mental processes and human interactions.

According to (Rivera et al., 2019), Positive perception is strongly associated with a sense of authenticity, defined as the experience of being genuine and true to oneself. Their findings reveal that individuals who possess a favourable view of themselves, particularly in terms of personality and self-expression, tend to report higher levels of authenticity than those with neutral or negative self-perceptions. Positive perception is not merely a positive bias but is also characterized by the capacity to acknowledge personal limitations without harsh self-denial, an emphasis on individual strengths as well as capabilities, together with a willingness to gain understanding through mistakes absent of a sense of being unsafe, along with genuine and coherent self-expression that reflects one's individual sense of self a balanced and positive sense of self-assurance, accompanied by a hopeful perspective on the future and resilience in confronting difficulties.

Otherwise, a negative perception refers to the inclination to view experiences or stimuli through a critical, doubtful, or pessimistic lens. Such perceptions are often shaped by adverse emotional conditions, mental distortions, or prior unpleasant experiences. According to the revised version of the Cognitive Framework explaining Depression, (Rivera et al., 2019) explain that individuals who hold deeply rooted negative beliefs tend to process information in a biased manner, focusing on threats, failures, and rejection, which ultimately strengthens maladaptive emotional responses and behavioural patterns.

A preliminary survey involving 25 second-semester students from the English Study Program revealed that only 8 students actively utilized ChatGPT, as evidenced by the installation of the app on each of the students' personal devices. All active users noted primarily depended on ChatGPT to enhance their writing proficiency, particularly in areas such as grammar, vocabulary, and sentence construction. Nevertheless, several students also expressed concerns about developing a sense of dependency and experiencing occasional inconsistencies in the tool's generated responses. These observations suggest that students possess varied perceptions of ChatGPT, influenced by both its perceived advantages and the difficulties encountered during its use

Hence, evaluating ChatGPT's function through learners' viewpoints on how it aids in improving English proficiency becomes crucial. Drawing from the prior discussion, this study intends to explore learners' perspectives regarding the use of ChatGPT as an educational medium for enhancing their writing competence in English, emphasizing two main aspects: favorable and unfavorable perceptions. Consequently, the research endeavors to address these guiding questions: "1. What are students' perspectives on how ChatGPT assists them in addressing challenges encountered during the writing process? and "2. To what extent can ChatGPT assist in fostering the development of students' writing abilities, especially in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure?

An overview examining previous studies concerning students' perceptions of ChatGPT for enhancing their writing in English reveals that merely a few studies have been carried out in Indonesia. Among these are the studies conducted by (Hasanah & Nurcholis, 2024), (Artiana & Fakhurriana, 2024), as well as (Nurul Khofifah Lubis et al., 2025). Most comparable research was carried out in international contexts. To date, there appears to be no study that has examined students' attitudes toward ChatGPT in supporting their writing in English within the Lampung region. Due to the scarcity of studies in this area in Indonesia, this topic requires more attention. Consequently, this study seeks to fill that gap and contribute to the existing literature by carrying out research at Muhammadiyah University of Kotabumi entitled "Investigating Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT's Role in Supporting Writing Skills."

Method

The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the ways in which ChatGPT supports the writing proficiency of second-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi. A descriptive, interpretive approach aims to offer a thorough, precise, comprehensive examination of a specific occurrence, particularly when the intention is to portray nuanced representations of individuals' lived encounters within real-world authentic contexts (Kim et al., 2017). Considering its inquiry-oriented nature. The qualitative approach was regarded as suitable for investigating the multifaceted experiences and personal perceptions of students interacting with and utilizing AI-based tools as part of academic learning practices.

The participants in this study consisted of 8 out of 25 second-semester students enrolled in the English Education Program. Participants were selected using the outcomes of a preliminary survey, which confirmed that each participant actively used the ChatGPT application through mobile devices to support their composition activities. As stated by Sugiyono (2017), the main tools typically employed in qualitative studies consist of observation forms, interview guides, field journals, audio or video recording equipment, and other documentation resources, all intended to gather thorough and detailed information.

Given the focus and objectives of the present study, the instruments employed included the researcher themselves, a semi-structured interview guide that had undergone expert review, and the use of audio and video recording tools. In the context of qualitative studies, the study's researcher serves as the primary tool, being engaged directly in data gathering, analyzing, and interpretation within a situational and reflective framework (Garcia et al., 2013). The researcher assumes responsibility for is tasked with selecting participants, defining the study's focus, gathering data, reporting findings, and interpreting the experiences shared by participants.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. This method was chosen as it is appropriate in situations where researchers face time constraints but intend to investigate participants' perceptions of a phenomenon. The data collection was conducted over 2 days in July 2025. Prior to the interviews, each participant was provided with an information sheet about the study and gave verbal consent to participate. Their identities were anonymized using codes to ensure confidentiality. Each interview lasted around 7–10 minutes. The questions included: "How does ChatGPT help you overcome limitations in writing English?" and "Why do you trust or doubt the information provided by ChatGPT? Have you ever questioned its reliability as a learning tool?" Data saturation was reached by the 7 interviews, as no new themes emerged. The 8 interviews merely confirmed the findings that had already been identified.

The data analysis method employed in this study was phenomenological analysis, which aims to explore individuals lived experiences in order to understand the ways in which they construct significance from particular events. According to Hewitt et al. (2018), an analytical approach enables researchers to investigate participants deliberate experiences in a structured manner by revealing their perceptions, emotions, and comments concerning the topic being examined. According to (Collins et al., 2021), semi-structured interviews hold significant value within phenomenological studies since they provide a uniform framework for all participants yet retain the flexibility required to capture the richness and individuality of each person's experience. In a similar vein, (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019) stress how semi-structured interviews function effectively in investigating personal interpretations and perceptions, thus providing an appropriate means to reveal the central aspects of participants' lived experiences within qualitative inquiry.

To enhance the credibility of the study, the researcher applied an audit trail technique. The entire research process was systematically documented, beginning with pre-survey records, interview guidelines, interview transcripts, and continuing through the process of data analysis. Interview recordings and data reduction results were stored in an organized folder system. This documentation ensured that each step of the study could be retraced, thereby guaranteeing transparency and consistency in the interpretation of the findings.

Results

Interviews and data analysis were conducted with 8 second-semester students of the English Education Study Program (3 male and 5 female). They are all at the beginner level based on the interview results, which indicate that they still need and actively use the ChatGPT application on their smartphones to support their writing skills. To maintain confidentiality, each participant was assigned a code (DMS, ASP, ALF, PDH, DRA, JHN, TSY, and AMR), which is used consistently throughout the presentation of results. They revealed that ChatGPT

played an important role in supporting them in overcoming writing challenges, and Students' perceptions of employing ChatGPT to enhance their English writing abilities were classified into positive and negative categories. The interview data were compared, analyzed, and subsequently reduced.

6 out of 8 students DMS, PDH, DRA, ALF, JHN, and TSY stated that the tool helped them overcome difficulties in writing English by providing ideas and examples. According to (DRA), *"When asked to describe something, sometimes I run out of ideas and do not know what to write, and ChatGPT helps me to generate further ideas"*. *"ChatGPT serves as a virtual tutor that simplifies complicated concepts and offers simpler choices whenever I struggle with difficulties putting sentences together"* (TSY). It was also noted that ChatGPT contributed to the development of students' writing abilities in certain aspects, especially in vocabulary use and grammatical accuracy.

According to DMS, PDH, DRA, JHN, TSY, and ALF, they experienced notable progress in improvement in their vocabulary repertoire, grasping various tense forms, and constructing sentences with greater complexity. According to (DMS), *"During the use of ChatGPT in learning English, I found that I could discover informal words or phrases that are difficult to find in formal books such as academic texts, and afterward I felt an improvement as I was able to practice them in producing not only formal but also informal writing"*.

Furthermore, ChatGPT was viewed as a practical and readily available tool. Several participants, DMS, ALF, DRA, JHN, and TSY valued ChatGPT for being practical, quick feedback, and accessibility through both the website and smartphones at any moment. According to (DRA), *"ChatGPT is easy to access, and it can provide many references or word choices, making it adaptable to context"*. This ease of access made ChatGPT a favored option compared to other programs perceived as less effective.

Using ChatGPT also appeared to enhance students' self-assurance in their writing abilities. DMS, DRA, JHN, TSY, and AMR reported that the support they gained, in terms of involved brainstorming ideas, enhancing vocabulary, or refining sentence formation, it increased students' confidence in finishing writing tasks and tackling scholarly difficulties. According to PDH, *"Since this is an AI, its knowledge comes from multiple sources, and of course, we are given many options from the outputs generated by ChatGPT"*.

Despite these benefits, negative perceptions were also noted. The first issue was concern over limited features mentioned by ASP, PDH, and JHN, related to the limited functionality of the platform, as several premium options prevented users from gaining full access to its features. Moreover, a few students voiced dissatisfaction when ChatGPT's answers did not meet their expectations or strayed from the intended topic. As JHN stated, *"Sometimes the results provided by ChatGPT are out of context and do not match the questions we asked"*.

The second issue that emerged was a growing tendency toward dependence on ChatGPT. ALF, AMR, and TSY acknowledged that they used the tool frequently and, in some instances, became reliant on it whenever they experienced struggles to generate new thoughts or faced particular difficulties. However, the majority of participants clarified they were not fully reliant on completing all of their assignments. As AMR confessed, *“Yes, I rely on it usually when I run out of ideas or can’t find other sources, so I end up turning to ChatGPT.”*

Overall, the findings suggest that most students held positive perceptions of ChatGPT, recognizing it as a helpful tool for enhancing word choice, grammatical awareness, and sentence organization, while also assisting students in overcoming difficulties in generating ideas and strengthening their self-assurance in writing. Nevertheless, certain drawbacks were still noted, including limited functions, the possibility of overreliance, and concerns regarding the accuracy of the responses. To illustrate these findings, Table 1 presents a summary of the frequency of themes mentioned by participants.

Table 1: Summary Of the Frequency of Themes

No	Participants	Main theme	Frequency
1	Helping to generate ideas	DMS, PDH, DRA, ALF, JHN, TSY	6
2	Improving vocabulary & grammar	DMS, PDH, DRA, JHN, TSY, ALF	6
3	Practical & easily accessible	DMS, ALF, DRA, JHN, TSY	5
4	Improving writing confidence	DMS, DRA, JHN, TSY, AMR	5
5	Limitations of premium features	ASP, PDH, JHN	3
6	Dependency of ChatGPT	ALF, AMR, TSY	3
7	Irrelevant or off topic responses	ASP, JHN	2

Discussion

This study’s findings reveal ChatGPT is widely recognized as a valuable resource for facilitating learning for overcoming writing-related difficulties among students in the English Education program. The positive experiences shared by participants, including improvements in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence formation, these results align with (Hasanah & Nurcholis, 2024) and showing that ChatGPT enhances students’ ease and flow in writing while reducing challenges in completing academic compositions. Likewise, (Nurul Khofifah Lubis et al., 2025) emphasized that ChatGPT supports the development of ideas and

elevates the overall standard of EFL students. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with a study involving English learners in Japan, in which (Schmidt-Fajlik, 2023) noted that ChatGPT provides highly valuable grammatical support, often outperforming other grammar-checking tools in helping EFL learners identify and correct grammatical errors.

In addition, this study offers important implications for teaching practice. English lecturers and teachers may integrate ChatGPT as a guided writing exercise, for instance by assigning essays that students later revise based on ChatGPT's feedback. The role of educators remains essential, particularly in fostering digital literacy so that students are able to critically evaluate AI outputs and avoid overreliance on technology.

From a conceptual perspective, the results may be explained using the self-perception framework (Fiske, 1992), illustrating that students' understanding of their own learning experiences shapes their drive and actions. If learners view ChatGPT as a helpful aid, they tend to feel more assured and motivated to write. This echoes (Rivera et al., 2019) Positive perceptions contribute to greater genuineness, self-assurance, and stronger learning engagement.

Nevertheless, the study also revealed negative perceptions, such as concerns regarding accuracy and the risk of dependency. These concerns are consistent with (Rief & Joormann, 2019), who warned of the potential decline in critical thinking skills when external tools are overused. Students' doubts about ChatGPT's reliability demonstrate a critical awareness of the technology's limitations. This view resonates with (Zhao et al., 2024), who emphasize the importance of reflective judgment in the use of AI to avoid misleading information. Despite these insights, the present study faces certain limitations. The small number of participants (8 out of 25 students) limits the generalizability of the findings, and the reliance on interviews alone means that students' actual writing behaviors when using ChatGPT were not fully captured.

To address these challenges, one recommended step is to provide digital literacy training that not only focuses on verifying information but also emphasizes balancing the use of technology with creativity and critical thinking. In this way, ChatGPT can be positioned as a learning companion rather than a substitute for the learning process itself. Looking ahead, the integration of AI in language education carries broader implications. The use of ChatGPT is likely to influence not only classroom practices but also curriculum design and assessment policies. Therefore, clear regulations and ethical guidelines are required to govern AI implementation in education.

Cultural factors also play a role in shaping how students perceive ChatGPT. In the Indonesian context, where traditional learning often positions lecturers or teachers as the primary authority, some students may be cautious about fully relying on AI. This contrasts with Western contexts, which place stronger emphasis on learner autonomy. Consequently, strategies for using ChatGPT in Indonesia need to take into account local norms and interaction patterns.

Overall, the discussion highlights that ChatGPT holds considerable potential to strengthen students' writing skills while also building their confidence. However, its successful integration depends on adequate digital literacy training and students' ability to combine AI-generated output using their personal creativity and independent reasoning skills.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that second-semester students of the English Education Department at Muhammadiyah University of Kotabumi tended to have a positive perception of using the ChatGPT tool to enhance their writing abilities. Many students stated that the platform assisted them in expanding their vocabulary, improving grammatical accuracy, constructing clearer sentences, and gaining greater assurance in expressing their ideas through writing. In addition, ChatGPT was regarded as a convenient, readily available, and time-saving learning aid, functioning much like a virtual tutor that encouraged self-directed learning and inspired students to accomplish their academic work with better efficiency. Nevertheless, several negative perceptions also surfaced.

Some students admitted that they became overly dependent on ChatGPT when struggling to develop ideas, whereas some students mentioned the constraints of the unpaid version and voiced doubts regarding the reliability of certain answers. These findings highlight the need to use ChatGPT thoughtfully and to complement its application through additional trustworthy scholarly sources.

This study also recognizes certain limitations that should be taken into account in future research. Therefore, several suggestions are presented. For students, ChatGPT should serve as an assistive medium to help develop ideas, broaden vocabulary, and review grammar, rather than acting as a replacement for students' creativity and critical reasoning, lecturers are encouraged to integrate the use of ChatGPT within writing-related tasks as an educational aid that provides constructive responses and enhances the overall quality of learners' compositions, while also directing them toward responsible and principled application. Finally, for upcoming scholars, broadening the research coverage by engaging a larger and more diverse sample of participants is suggested, employing in-depth or mixed approaches like interviews and observational techniques, and conducting extended studies to examine the progression of students' perceptions over a certain timeframe.

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