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## Examining students' perceptions of ChatGPT for essay writing among english language education students at UIN Mataram

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**Abstract.** The rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has created new opportunities and challenges in EFL essay writing. Among AI-powered tools, ChatGPT has gained increasing attention as a writing assistant that supports idea generation, language development, and writing efficiency. This study investigated students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for essay writing in the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Mataram through the constructs of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes toward using, and behavioral intention derived from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). This study employed a descriptive quantitative design, while qualitative responses from open-ended questions were used to enrich the interpretation of the quantitative findings. The participants were 42 fourth-semester students who had experience using ChatGPT for essay-writing activities. Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting of 28 Likert-scale items and three open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, while qualitative responses were analyzed thematically. The results revealed generally positive perceptions across all four constructs. Perceived ease of use received the highest mean score ( $M = 3.86$ ), indicating that students generally found ChatGPT easy to use for essay-writing activities; this finding was further supported by 69.0% of students expressing positive responses. Other highly rated aspects included enjoyment of use ( $M = 3.79$ ; 64.3%), idea generation ( $M = 3.76$ ; 66.7%), and vocabulary enhancement ( $M = 3.71$ ; 64.3%). These findings suggest that students perceived ChatGPT as a practical and accessible tool that supports various stages of the essay-writing process. In contrast, behavioral intention obtained comparatively lower mean scores, indicating that although students appreciated the benefits of ChatGPT, they were more cautious about its long-term use. Open-ended responses further revealed concerns regarding inaccurate information, overdependence on AI, plagiarism, and reduced originality. Overall, the findings suggest that students perceived ChatGPT as a useful and accessible supplementary tool for EFL essay writing, while highlighting the importance of responsible AI use, AI literacy, and lecturer guidance to support its effective integration into writing instruction.

**Keywords:** ChatGPT, essay writing, EFL students' perceptions, Technology Acceptance Model, artificial intelligence

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed educational practices across various levels of education. AI technologies have increasingly been integrated into teaching, learning, assessment, and academic support systems, creating new opportunities for personalized and technology-enhanced learning. More recently, the emergence of generative AI has accelerated this transformation by enabling users to interact with systems capable of generating human-like responses, explanations, and written content (Tlili et al., 2023; Lim et al., 2023; Deng & Yu, 2023). As higher education continues to embrace digital innovation, AI-powered technologies are becoming an integral component of students' academic experiences, particularly in activities involving information processing, problem-solving, content creation, and knowledge construction.

Among recent generative AI applications, ChatGPT has attracted considerable attention in

educational settings. Since its public release, ChatGPT has been increasingly adopted by students and educators for brainstorming, summarizing information, language learning, academic writing, and research-related tasks (Kasneci et al., 2023; Lo, 2023; Chan & Hu, 2023). Unlike conventional educational technologies that primarily provide access to information, ChatGPT offers interactive and conversational support, allowing users to engage in real-time dialogue and receive immediate feedback. Such characteristics make the platform particularly attractive in language learning contexts where learners frequently require guidance, clarification, and opportunities for independent practice (Zhai, 2023; Yan, 2023).

The growing popularity of ChatGPT has been especially evident in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Writing is widely recognized as one of the most challenging language skills because it requires learners to integrate linguistic competence, critical thinking, organization, and creativity simultaneously (Hyland, 2019; Richards, 2022). In higher education, essay writing represents a fundamental academic activity through which students construct arguments, synthesize information, evaluate evidence, and communicate ideas effectively. Successful essay writing therefore requires more than grammatical accuracy; it also demands coherent organization, appropriate vocabulary selection, logical reasoning, and audience awareness (Weigle, 2002; Graham, 2023).

Despite its importance, many EFL learners continue to experience difficulties in essay-writing tasks. Common challenges include generating ideas, organizing arguments coherently, developing supporting details, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and maintaining grammatical accuracy throughout the writing process (Richards, 2022). These challenges often affect students' confidence and motivation, making writing one of the most demanding language-learning activities. Similar difficulties have been reported across various higher education contexts, where students frequently seek technological support to facilitate writing processes and enhance learning experiences (Guo et al., 2024; Su et al., 2024).

In response to these challenges, ChatGPT has emerged as a potentially valuable writing assistant. Recent studies suggest that generative AI tools may support learners during multiple stages of the writing process, including brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, and editing (Imran & Almusharraf, 2024; Guo et al., 2024). ChatGPT can generate topic suggestions, provide examples, recommend alternative vocabulary, explain grammatical structures, and assist students in organizing essay content. Furthermore, its accessibility allows learners to obtain support whenever needed, potentially facilitating more flexible and autonomous learning experiences (Ali et al., 2024; Baidoo-Anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023).

A growing body of literature has reported positive educational outcomes associated with ChatGPT use. Students frequently perceive the platform as useful for idea generation, language support, vocabulary development, and writing efficiency (Baidoo-Anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023; AlAfnan et al., 2023). In addition, generative AI tools have been associated with increased engagement and greater willingness to participate in writing activities because they provide immediate, personalized, and readily accessible support (Su et al., 2024; Essel et al., 2024). These findings suggest that ChatGPT may serve as a supplementary learning resource that supports students throughout the writing process.

The potential benefits of ChatGPT extend beyond linguistic assistance. The platform may encourage learner autonomy by enabling students to practice writing independently outside formal classroom settings. Through repeated interactions and instant feedback, students can explore ideas, refine drafts, and revise their writing more efficiently. Previous studies have similarly suggested that AI-assisted learning environments may contribute to greater engagement, confidence, and self-directed learning among students (Essel et al., 2024; Baidoo-Anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023; Guo et al., 2024). Such potential has contributed to increasing interest in integrating generative AI technologies into language education and writing instruction.

Despite these advantages, the growing use of ChatGPT in academic writing also raises important pedagogical and ethical concerns. One frequently discussed issue involves the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated content. Although ChatGPT often produces coherent and convincing responses, it may occasionally generate inaccurate information, fabricated references, or misleading explanations, a phenomenon commonly referred to as AI hallucination (Cotton et al., 2024; Kasneci et al., 2023). Such limitations may become problematic when students rely on AI-generated content without critically evaluating the information provided.

Additional concerns relate to academic integrity and the development of higher-order

thinking skills. The accessibility of generative AI tools creates opportunities for students to submit AI-generated content without sufficient modification or attribution. Scholars have argued that excessive dependence on AI-generated texts may reduce originality, weaken critical thinking, and limit opportunities for learners to develop independent writing abilities (Rudolph et al., 2023; Cotton et al., 2024). Consequently, while ChatGPT offers substantial educational potential, its integration into academic writing requires careful consideration of ethical principles, responsible use, and pedagogical guidance.

Given the growing influence of AI technologies in education, researchers have increasingly examined students' acceptance and perceptions of ChatGPT. Many studies have adopted the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which proposes that technology acceptance is primarily influenced by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis, 1989). According to TAM, technologies perceived as useful and easy to use are more likely to generate positive attitudes and stronger intentions for continued use (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Recent studies applying TAM in AI-assisted learning environments have similarly reported that students are more likely to adopt AI technologies when they perceive them as beneficial, accessible, and supportive of their learning goals (Abdallah et al., 2024; Chiu, 2024; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

Although existing studies have contributed valuable insights into the educational use of ChatGPT, several areas warrant further investigation. Much of the current literature has focused on writing performance, learning outcomes, or general technology adoption in educational settings (Imran & Almusharraf, 2024; Guo et al., 2024). Comparatively less attention has been devoted to students' perceptions specifically within EFL essay-writing contexts. Furthermore, many studies emphasize either the benefits or the challenges of ChatGPT, whereas fewer investigations explore both perspectives simultaneously. As a result, a more balanced understanding of how students perceive the opportunities and concerns associated with ChatGPT—including issues related to academic integrity, originality, critical thinking, and responsible AI use—remains necessary.

Context also deserves greater attention. Most empirical studies concerning ChatGPT have been conducted in technologically advanced educational environments outside Indonesia. Comparatively limited evidence is available from Indonesian higher education institutions, particularly Islamic universities, where educational cultures, technological access, and learning expectations may differ from those reported in previous studies. Since students' acceptance of educational technologies is often shaped by contextual and institutional factors, examining their perceptions in local settings may provide valuable insights for the effective and responsible integration of AI-assisted writing tools.

Building upon previous research, the present study investigates students' perceptions of ChatGPT for essay writing through four constructs derived from the Technology Acceptance Model: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes toward using, and behavioral intention. In addition to examining students' acceptance of ChatGPT, the study also considers concerns related to responsible and ethical AI use in academic writing. By addressing these dimensions simultaneously, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how EFL university students perceive the role of ChatGPT in essay-writing activities.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate students' perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes toward using, and behavioral intentions toward ChatGPT for essay writing among students of the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Mataram. The findings are expected to contribute to ongoing discussions regarding the responsible integration of generative AI technologies into EFL writing instruction and higher education learning environments.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive quantitative design to investigate students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for essay writing in the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Mataram. Descriptive quantitative research is appropriate for examining participants' perceptions, attitudes, and response tendencies through the systematic analysis of numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study was guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989), which suggests that users' acceptance of a technology is largely influenced by their perceptions of its usefulness and ease of use. Building on this framework, the study examined four constructs related to students' acceptance of ChatGPT: perceived usefulness, perceived

ease of use, attitudes toward using, and behavioral intention. These constructs have been widely applied in studies investigating technology adoption and AI-assisted learning in educational contexts (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Chiu, 2024).

The primary data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire designed to capture students' perceptions of ChatGPT for essay-writing activities. In addition, responses to several open-ended questions were collected to provide contextual insights and support the interpretation of the quantitative findings. Accordingly, the study primarily relied on quantitative analysis while utilizing qualitative responses as supplementary evidence to enhance understanding of students' experiences and perspectives regarding ChatGPT use in essay writing.

### **Participants**

The participants were 42 fourth-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Mataram during the 2025/2026 academic year. The fourth-semester cohort consisted of 192 students. This group was selected because the students had completed the Paragraph Writing course in the third semester and were currently taking the Essay Writing course, providing them with relevant experience in academic writing.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which is appropriate for recruiting individuals with experiences relevant to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). The primary inclusion criterion was prior experience using ChatGPT for essay-writing activities. Consequently, only students who had used ChatGPT and voluntarily agreed to participate were included in the study.

Given their experience with both essay writing and AI-assisted learning, the participants were considered well-positioned to provide informed responses regarding the usefulness, ease of use, attitudes, and behavioral intentions associated with ChatGPT use in EFL essay-writing contexts.

### **Instruments**

The primary instrument used in this study was a questionnaire designed to examine students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for essay writing. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The Likert scale was selected because it is widely used in educational and perception-based research to measure participants' attitudes and response tendencies systematically (Joshi et al., 2015).

The questionnaire consisted of 28 close-ended items and 3 open-ended questions. The instrument was developed based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework proposed by Davis (1989), particularly the constructs of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which have frequently been adapted in studies concerning educational technology acceptance. Additional constructs related to attitudes toward using and behavioral intention were also adapted from previous studies on AI-assisted learning and technology adoption in educational contexts (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

The close-ended items were divided into four major aspects. The first aspect, Perceived Usefulness, examined students' perceptions regarding idea generation, grammar support, vocabulary improvement, essay organization, writing quality, and writing efficiency. The second aspect, Perceived Ease of Use, focused on accessibility, interaction, ease of learning, interface simplicity, and prompt-writing ability. The third aspect, Attitudes Toward Using, explored students' confidence, motivation, satisfaction, and interest in using ChatGPT for essay-writing activities. The final aspect, Behavioral Intention, investigated students' intentions to continue using ChatGPT, recommend it to peers, and support its integration into writing instruction.

In addition, three open-ended questions were included to obtain deeper insights into students' experiences, perceived benefits, challenges, and opinions regarding the integration of ChatGPT into essay-writing classes. The inclusion of open-ended questions allowed participants to express perspectives that might not be fully captured through close-ended questionnaire items.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to fourth-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Mataram using Google Forms.

The online format was chosen to facilitate accessibility and encourage participation among students who had experience using ChatGPT for essay-writing activities.

Prior to completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential and be used solely for research purposes. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were encouraged to provide honest answers based on their actual experiences using ChatGPT.

The questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items and open-ended questions administered within a single form. The Likert-scale items generated quantitative data regarding students' perceptions of ChatGPT, while the open-ended questions provided additional insights into students' experiences, perceived benefits, challenges, and views on the use of ChatGPT in essay-writing activities. These responses were used to support the interpretation of the quantitative findings.

### Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the Likert-scale questionnaire were analyzed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, and mean scores to identify students' response tendencies toward the use of ChatGPT in essay writing. Descriptive statistical analysis is commonly applied in survey-based educational research to summarize and interpret participants' perceptions systematically (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The mean score for each questionnaire item was calculated using the following formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

where:

- $\bar{x}$  = mean score (nilai rata-rata)
- $\sum X$  = jumlah seluruh skor responden
- $N$  = jumlah responden.

The response tendencies were interpreted using Likert-scale categories adapted from Joshi et al. (2015), which are widely applied in educational research.

**Table 1.** Likert-scale categories

$\bar{x}$	Interpretation
4.21–5.00	Strongly Positive
3.41–4.20	Positive
2.61–3.40	Neutral
1.81–2.60	Negative
1.00–1.80	Strongly Negative

To complement the interpretation of the mean scores, the percentage of responses was calculated using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

where:

- P = percentage,
- F = frequency of responses,
- N = total number of respondents.

Meanwhile, qualitative data obtained from the open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. The responses were reviewed repeatedly and grouped into several recurring themes such as benefits, challenges, ethical concerns, and recommendations regarding ChatGPT use in academic writing. Thematic analysis was employed because it allows researchers to identify meaningful patterns and themes within qualitative data systematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The qualitative responses were used to support, clarify, and strengthen the interpretation of quantitative findings, particularly regarding students' experiences, concerns, and expectations related to AI-assisted writing practices in EFL higher education contexts.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Students' Perceived Usefulness of ChatGPT

The findings from the perceived usefulness construct indicate that students generally perceived ChatGPT as a useful tool for supporting essay-writing activities. Positive responses were observed across all usefulness indicators, suggesting that students considered ChatGPT beneficial for various stages of the writing process, including idea generation, vocabulary development, grammar support, essay organization, and writing quality. However, participants also expressed concerns regarding information accuracy and excessive dependence on AI-generated content, indicating a balanced perspective toward the use of ChatGPT in academic writing.

The strongest positive response was found in idea generation ( $M = 3.76$ ). This finding suggests that students perceived ChatGPT as a practical brainstorming tool that facilitated topic development, argument construction, and the generation of supporting details. Such support is particularly relevant in EFL essay-writing contexts, where students often experience difficulties initiating writing and developing content before drafting. Consistent with this interpretation, 66.7% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT helped them generate ideas for writing English essays. Previous studies similarly reported that generative AI tools assist learners in overcoming writer's block and supporting pre-writing activities (Yan, 2023; Imran & Almusharraf, 2024). Supporting this finding, one participant noted that ChatGPT helped them "get ideas, structure my essay, fix grammar, and write faster."

Vocabulary enhancement received the second-highest mean score ( $M = 3.71$ ). This result indicates that students viewed ChatGPT as a useful source of lexical support, particularly in providing alternative vocabulary, synonyms, and more formal academic expressions. For EFL learners, exposure to a wider range of vocabulary may facilitate clearer expression of ideas and more effective academic communication. Notably, 64.3% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT helped improve their vocabulary in English essays. Similar findings have been reported by Zhai (2023) and Farrokhnia et al. (2024), who observed that AI-assisted writing tools can support vocabulary development through contextualized language suggestions and examples.

Despite these positive perceptions, some participants emphasized the importance of using AI-generated vocabulary critically. Several responses suggested that excessive reliance on AI-generated expressions might reduce opportunities for independent language exploration and vocabulary development. This observation highlights the need to balance technological support with active language-learning practices.

Grammar assistance also received a positive mean score ( $M = 3.52$ ). The result suggests that students perceived ChatGPT as a useful resource for improving sentence structure, tense usage, and grammatical accuracy. Such support may be particularly valuable for EFL learners who frequently encounter linguistic challenges during the drafting process. More than half of the participants (57.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT helped reduce grammatical errors in essay writing. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that AI-assisted writing tools are commonly used as language-support resources in second-language learning environments (Ali et al., 2024; Rudolph et al., 2023).

At the same time, students expressed some reservations regarding the reliability of AI-generated corrections. One participant stated that "sometimes the information is wrong or not accurate enough," suggesting that grammatical suggestions provided by ChatGPT were not always accepted without verification. Similar concerns regarding inaccurate outputs and hallucinated information have been discussed in recent studies on generative AI in education (Cotton et al., 2024; Tiili et al., 2023). These responses indicate that students generally recognized the need to evaluate AI-generated content critically.

Perceptions regarding essay organization were also positive ( $M = 3.64$ ). This finding suggests that students considered ChatGPT helpful in understanding essay structure, arranging ideas logically, and organizing paragraphs coherently. Such assistance may be particularly beneficial for EFL learners who are still developing familiarity with English academic writing conventions. A similar tendency was reflected in the responses, with 54.8% of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that ChatGPT helped them organize essays effectively. Similar observations have been reported by Chan and Hu (2023), who found that students frequently use ChatGPT to generate outlines and structure writing tasks more systematically.

Essay quality improvement also received a positive mean score ( $M = 3.60$ ). This result indicates that students generally perceived ChatGPT as contributing positively to the overall writing process through support in language use, organization, and idea development. However, the moderate level of agreement suggests that students did not attribute essay quality solely to AI assistance and continued to recognize the importance of their own writing skills and judgment. This tendency is reflected in the 54.8% of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT helped improve the quality of their English essays.

Writing efficiency received the lowest mean score among the usefulness indicators, although it remained within the positive category ( $M = 3.55$ ). This finding suggests that students generally perceived ChatGPT as helping them write faster and more efficiently through support in brainstorming, grammar checking, and vocabulary enhancement. Half of the respondents (50.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT made essay writing faster and more efficient, while a considerable proportion reported neutral perceptions. Nevertheless, some respondents reported spending additional time verifying information, revising AI-generated content, or reformulating prompts to obtain more relevant responses. These observations suggest that the efficiency of AI-assisted writing depends not only on the technology itself but also on students' ability to evaluate and refine generated outputs. Similar findings were reported by Lo (2023), who argued that generative AI may increase productivity while simultaneously requiring stronger critical evaluation skills.

Overall, the findings suggest that students perceived ChatGPT as a useful supplementary tool for essay-writing activities. Positive perceptions were most evident in idea generation and vocabulary enhancement, followed by essay organization, essay quality improvement, grammar assistance, and writing efficiency. These findings indicate that ChatGPT may help address several common challenges encountered by EFL learners during the writing process. At the same time, students remained aware of concerns related to information accuracy, overdependence, and originality, highlighting the importance of using AI-assisted writing tools critically and responsibly in academic contexts.

### **Students' Perceived Ease of Use of ChatGPT**

The findings related to students' perceived ease of use of ChatGPT indicate that students generally perceived ChatGPT as easy to use for essay-writing activities. Positive responses were observed across all indicators of perceived ease of use, suggesting that most participants considered the platform accessible, understandable, and manageable for academic purposes. Nevertheless, several students also reported challenges related to prompt formulation, internet connectivity, and the reliability of AI-generated responses.

The strongest response was found in students' perceptions of ChatGPT as an easy-to-use tool for essay writing ( $M = 3.86$ ). This finding suggests that students generally experienced few difficulties when using the platform to support various stages of the writing process. The simplicity of interaction and the immediate availability of responses may have contributed to these positive perceptions. Notably, 69.0% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT was easy to use for essay-writing activities. Similar findings have been reported by Kasneci et al. (2023) and Tlili et al. (2023), who found that students tend to perceive conversational AI tools as intuitive and manageable learning resources.

Accessibility emerged as the second strongest indicator ( $M = 3.83$ ). This result indicates that students valued the flexibility of accessing the platform through smartphones and laptops both inside and outside the classroom. Such accessibility is particularly important in EFL essay-writing contexts because students often require immediate support during brainstorming, drafting, revising, and language-checking activities. A majority of respondents (64.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT was easy to access whenever they needed assistance with essay writing. Consistent with this finding, previous studies have emphasized that ease of access plays a significant role in shaping students' acceptance of AI-assisted learning tools (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Farrokhnia et al., 2024). One participant similarly stated that ChatGPT could be used "whenever I have difficulties in writing."

Prompt formulation also received a relatively high mean score ( $M = 3.81$ ). This finding suggests that most students felt capable of communicating their needs to the system and obtaining relevant responses. The ability to formulate prompts effectively is particularly important because the quality of AI-generated responses is often influenced by the clarity and

specificity of user instructions. As students become more familiar with AI-assisted learning tools, their confidence in interacting with the platform may increase accordingly. This tendency was reflected in the responses, with 61.9% of the respondents reporting that it was easy to write prompts or questions for ChatGPT.

Students also reported positive perceptions regarding the comprehensibility of ChatGPT's responses ( $M = 3.71$ ). This result suggests that students generally perceived the language and explanations provided by ChatGPT as clear and accessible. In EFL learning environments, comprehensible feedback is essential because it allows students to identify errors, understand suggestions, and apply improvements to their writing more effectively. Correspondingly, 59.5% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the responses generated by ChatGPT were easy to understand. Similar observations have been reported in previous studies highlighting the importance of understandable AI-generated feedback in supporting language learning (Lo, 2023; Chiu, 2024).

The ability to interact with ChatGPT without difficulty also received a positive mean score ( $M = 3.64$ ). This finding indicates that students generally felt comfortable engaging in conversational exchanges with the system. The interactive nature of ChatGPT allows users to ask follow-up questions, request clarification, and revise prompts during the writing process. A similar trend emerged in the questionnaire responses, where 57.1% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they could interact with the platform easily. Supporting this result, one participant commented, "When I do not understand something, I can ask immediately and get an explanation quickly." Such immediacy may create a more supportive learning environment, particularly for students who hesitate to ask questions in traditional classroom settings.

The lowest mean score within this construct was found in perceptions of the platform's user-friendly interface, although the score remained within the positive category ( $M = 3.60$ ). This finding suggests that students generally considered the platform intuitive and easy to navigate. The simplicity of the interface, which relies primarily on text-based interaction, may explain why students adapted to the platform relatively quickly. Familiarity with chat-based communication technologies likely reduced technological barriers and encouraged more frequent use. This perception was also evident among respondents, with 54.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing that ChatGPT had a user-friendly interface for learning purposes.

Despite the overall positive responses, several students expressed reservations regarding ease of use. Some participants reported difficulties in generating effective prompts, while others noted challenges related to internet connectivity, premium feature limitations, and occasional inaccuracies in AI-generated responses. These concerns indicate that ease of use does not necessarily eliminate students' awareness of the limitations of AI-assisted systems. Similar observations have been reported by Ali et al. (2024) and Cotton et al. (2024), who emphasized that successful use of generative AI requires not only technological accessibility but also adequate AI literacy and critical evaluation skills.

Overall, the findings suggest that students perceived ChatGPT as easy to use for essay-writing activities, with the strongest responses observed in ease of use, accessibility, and prompt formulation. Positive perceptions were also evident in the comprehensibility of responses, interaction quality, and interface design. These findings indicate that the platform's simplicity, flexibility, and conversational features contributed positively to students' learning experiences. At the same time, students recognized the importance of developing digital literacy and critical evaluation skills to use AI-assisted writing tools effectively and responsibly in EFL essay-writing contexts.

### **Students' Attitudes Toward ChatGPT**

The findings related to students' attitudes toward using ChatGPT indicate generally positive perceptions of the platform for essay-writing activities. As reflected in the attitudes construct of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), positive responses were evident across indicators related to enjoyment, motivation, satisfaction, confidence, and interest. Nevertheless, the moderate level of agreement observed in several items suggests that students' attitudes were not entirely uncritical, reflecting both appreciation of ChatGPT's benefits and awareness of its limitations.

The strongest positive response was found in students' enjoyment of using ChatGPT for essay writing ( $M = 3.79$ ). This finding suggests that students generally viewed ChatGPT as an

engaging learning tool that made the writing process more manageable and less intimidating. In EFL contexts, enjoyment is an important affective factor because positive learning experiences may encourage greater participation and persistence in writing activities. This positive tendency was also reflected in the responses, with 64.3% of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they enjoyed using ChatGPT in essay-writing activities. Similar findings have been reported by AlAfnan et al. (2023) and Guo et al. (2024), who found that students often perceive generative AI tools as engaging and supportive learning companions. Supporting this finding, one student stated that ChatGPT made writing "easier and faster," while another explained that the platform helped them understand difficult concepts more quickly.

Motivation represented the second strongest indicator of students' attitudes ( $M = 3.67$ ). This result suggests that students perceived ChatGPT as a source of encouragement during the writing process. The availability of immediate assistance may reduce frustration commonly experienced during writing tasks and encourage students to engage more actively in independent practice. Correspondingly, 57.1% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT motivated them to practice essay writing more frequently. Previous studies similarly reported that AI-assisted learning environments may contribute to greater learner motivation by providing personalized and accessible support (Ali et al., 2024; Essel et al., 2024).

Students also perceived ChatGPT as making essay writing more interesting ( $M = 3.60$ ). This finding indicates that students generally viewed the platform as a novel and engaging learning resource. The interactive nature of ChatGPT may have contributed to this perception by enabling students to receive immediate responses and explore ideas through conversational interaction. In EFL learning contexts, such engagement may help sustain students' interest in writing tasks that are often perceived as demanding and time-consuming. A similar pattern emerged in the questionnaire responses, where 54.8% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT increased their interest in essay-writing activities.

A similar mean score was found regarding students' evaluation of ChatGPT as a useful educational innovation ( $M = 3.60$ ). This result suggests that students generally viewed the platform positively and recognized its potential to support academic writing activities. Such perceptions are consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model, which proposes that positive evaluations of technology contribute to favorable attitudes toward its use (Davis, 1989; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). More than half of the respondents (52.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that using ChatGPT in essay writing was a good idea.

Satisfaction with ChatGPT as a writing assistant also received a positive mean score ( $M = 3.57$ ). Students appeared to appreciate the platform's ability to provide support during various stages of essay writing, including idea generation, vocabulary development, grammar checking, and essay organization. Although the mean score indicates a positive perception, satisfaction was not universal. This was evident from the responses, where 57.1% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with ChatGPT as a writing assistant. Several participants reported concerns regarding inaccurate information, limited contextual understanding, and occasional inconsistencies in AI-generated responses. These observations indicate that students valued ChatGPT as a supplementary tool while remaining aware of its limitations.

Confidence represented another positive but relatively moderate aspect of students' attitudes ( $M = 3.57$ ). This finding suggests that students perceived ChatGPT as a source of support that helped reduce uncertainty during writing tasks. Access to immediate feedback, language suggestions, and organizational guidance may have contributed to students' confidence when composing essays. This tendency was also reflected in the responses, with 52.4% of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that ChatGPT increased their confidence in writing English essays. Similar findings have been reported in studies suggesting that AI-assisted learning tools can help learners feel more supported during language-learning activities (Baidoo-Anu & Owusu Ansah, 2023; Su et al., 2024).

The lowest mean score was observed in students' support for integrating AI tools into essay-writing classes, although it remained within the positive category ( $M = 3.45$ ). While this result still reflects a generally favorable tendency, it also indicates greater caution compared with other attitude indicators. Consistent with this observation, 47.6% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that AI tools such as ChatGPT should be incorporated into essay-writing instruction. Responses to the open-ended questions revealed that many students supported

integration only if clear guidelines and lecturer supervision were provided. Several participants emphasized that ChatGPT should function as a learning aid rather than a replacement for students' thinking and writing processes. One respondent explained that ChatGPT should be integrated "as a learning tool, not a substitute for students' own thinking and writing."

This cautious attitude reflects students' awareness of issues related to academic integrity, originality, and overdependence on AI-generated content. Similar concerns have been highlighted in recent discussions regarding responsible AI use in education (Cotton et al., 2024; Rudolph et al., 2023). These findings suggest that students generally support the educational use of ChatGPT but also recognize the need for ethical guidelines and critical engagement when using AI-assisted writing tools.

Overall, the findings indicate that students expressed generally positive attitudes toward ChatGPT for essay-writing activities. Positive attitudes were most evident in enjoyment and motivation, followed by interest, satisfaction, confidence, and positive evaluations of ChatGPT as a writing tool. At the same time, students demonstrated a more cautious stance regarding the integration of AI into formal writing instruction. These findings suggest that students appreciated the benefits of ChatGPT while remaining aware of the importance of maintaining critical thinking, originality, and responsible AI use in EFL essay-writing contexts.

### **Students' Behavioral Intention Toward ChatGPT**

The findings from the behavioral intention construct indicate that students generally demonstrated a positive intention to continue using ChatGPT for essay-writing activities, although the level of agreement was lower than that observed in the constructs of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and attitudes toward using. This pattern suggests that while students recognized the benefits of ChatGPT and expressed favorable attitudes toward the platform, they also exhibited a degree of caution regarding its long-term use in academic contexts.

The highest mean score within this construct was found in students' intention to use ChatGPT as a regular learning tool ( $M = 3.50$ ). This finding suggests that students generally viewed ChatGPT as a potentially valuable resource beyond individual writing assignments. The relatively favorable mean score indicates that students recognized the platform's usefulness for supporting independent learning, accessing explanations, and obtaining writing-related assistance when needed. This tendency was reflected in the responses, with 42.9% of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they planned to use ChatGPT regularly for learning purposes.

Students also showed a positive tendency toward using ChatGPT when working on English essays ( $M = 3.48$ ). The availability of immediate feedback, language suggestions, and organizational assistance may explain why many participants preferred using the platform during the writing process. Consistent with this perception, 42.9% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they preferred using ChatGPT when completing essay-writing tasks. Nevertheless, the moderate level of agreement suggests that students did not rely exclusively on ChatGPT and continued to use other learning resources and personal strategies.

A comparable response was observed in students' willingness to recommend ChatGPT to their peers ( $M = 3.44$ ). Although the mean score was slightly lower than that of regular use, it reflects a generally favorable disposition toward the platform. Notably, 47.6% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend ChatGPT to their classmates for essay-writing activities. Recommendations to peers may reflect students' positive experiences with idea generation, vocabulary support, and writing assistance. Previous studies have similarly reported that students who perceive educational technologies positively are more likely to recommend them to others (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Chiu, 2024). Supporting this observation, one participant described ChatGPT as "a useful tool to learn and improve writing skills," while another emphasized that it helped them write more efficiently.

A similar mean score was found regarding students' support for integrating ChatGPT into writing instruction ( $M = 3.44$ ). This finding suggests that students generally viewed ChatGPT as a helpful supplementary learning resource that could provide immediate assistance during essay-writing activities. Correspondingly, 42.9% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT should be incorporated into writing instruction. One participant explained that ChatGPT should be integrated because it "can help students understand writing more easily and develop

ideas more effectively." Such responses suggest that students generally supported guided integration of AI tools into educational settings.

However, support for classroom integration was accompanied by certain reservations. Several participants emphasized that ChatGPT should function as a learning aid rather than a replacement for students' own thinking and writing processes. One respondent stated that ChatGPT should be used "to assist learning, not to replace students' efforts." These responses indicate that students were aware of concerns related to academic integrity, originality, and overdependence on AI-generated content. Similar concerns have been highlighted in recent discussions on responsible AI use in education (Cotton et al., 2024; Rudolph et al., 2023).

The lowest mean score within the behavioral intention construct was observed in students' intention to use ChatGPT frequently in future writing activities ( $M = 3.34$ ). Although this score remained close to the positive category, it was noticeably lower than the other behavioral intention indicators. Only 33.3% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would frequently use ChatGPT in future writing activities. This relatively lower level of agreement may reflect students' awareness of the limitations of AI-assisted writing, including concerns about inaccurate information, excessive dependence, and the need for critical evaluation of AI-generated content.

Responses to the open-ended questions further reinforce this interpretation. Several students acknowledged the usefulness of ChatGPT while emphasizing the importance of maintaining independent thinking and writing skills. One participant commented that "ChatGPT is helpful, but we still need to think and write by ourselves." This response illustrates a balanced perspective in which students appreciate the advantages of AI-assisted learning while recognizing the need to preserve academic responsibility and originality.

Overall, the findings suggest that students demonstrated a generally positive behavioral intention toward ChatGPT. Positive tendencies were most evident in the intention to use ChatGPT as a regular learning resource, followed by preference for using the platform in essay-writing activities, willingness to recommend it to peers, and support for its integration into writing instruction. At the same time, students expressed greater caution regarding frequent long-term use. Compared with the higher levels of positivity observed in perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and attitudes toward using, behavioral intention received more moderate responses. These findings suggest that students appreciated the benefits of ChatGPT while remaining mindful of the importance of responsible AI use, critical evaluation, and maintaining their own writing and thinking skills in EFL essay-writing contexts.

## Conclusion

This study investigated students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for essay writing among fourth-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program at UIN Mataram through four constructs derived from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM): perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes toward using, and behavioral intention. Overall, the findings revealed that students generally perceived ChatGPT positively as a supplementary tool for essay-writing activities. The highest levels of agreement were found in idea generation, vocabulary enhancement, ease of use, accessibility, and enjoyment of using ChatGPT. These findings suggest that students viewed ChatGPT as a practical resource that could support various stages of the writing process, particularly in helping them develop ideas, expand vocabulary, organize essays, and obtain immediate assistance during writing tasks.

The findings further showed that students generally considered ChatGPT easy to access and interact with, indicating favorable perceptions of its usability in EFL essay-writing contexts. Positive attitudes were also reflected in students' enjoyment, motivation, satisfaction, and confidence when using the platform. However, behavioral intention scores were comparatively lower than the other constructs, suggesting that although students appreciated the benefits of ChatGPT, they remained cautious about relying on it extensively for future academic writing activities. Responses to the open-ended questions revealed concerns regarding information accuracy, overdependence on AI-generated content, reduced critical thinking, and issues related to academic integrity and originality. These concerns indicate that students recognized both the opportunities and limitations associated with AI-assisted writing tools.

The study highlights the importance of integrating ChatGPT into EFL writing instruction in a responsible and pedagogically meaningful manner. Rather than functioning as a substitute for

students' thinking and writing processes, ChatGPT should be positioned as a supportive learning tool that facilitates idea development, language assistance, and independent learning. Therefore, lecturers are encouraged to provide clear guidance regarding the ethical and responsible use of AI in academic writing, including information verification, critical evaluation of AI-generated content, citation practices, and academic integrity. In addition, AI literacy should be incorporated into writing instruction to help students use generative AI technologies critically, effectively, and responsibly. Future research may involve larger samples, multiple institutions, or mixed-methods approaches to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences and the long-term implications of AI-assisted writing in higher education.

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