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The Role of ChatGPT in EFL Writing: Students' Perspective

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A B S T R A C T

English language instruction is one of the many facets of contemporary life that ChatGPT has affected. The purpose of this study was to investigate ChatGPT's function as a writing aid for EFL students enrolled in writing classes. In particular, it looks at how the students use ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence tool. The study was carried out at one of Jambi's public universities' English departments. This study used a case study methodology in conjunction with a qualitative approach. Five English education students enrolled in writing classes participated in this study. Based on the criteria, the researcher chose the right individuals using purposive sampling. The researcher interviewed the individuals in order to collect data. The researcher applied thematic analysis to the data analysis. According to the study's findings, ChatGPT plays six roles in the writing process. They are gathering ideas, recommending references, identifying the best words and vocabulary, locating an outline or story plot, organizing the writing outcome, and even having discussions on the writing content.

Keywords: *Writing Activity, ChatGPT, Writing Class EFL Learner*

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INTRODUCTION

Many students reveal writing is a skill that is quite difficult to do among the four English skills. Particularly in learning English, it is difficult to produce writing results with perfect grammar. It is important to make a comprehensive writing for a good result. Teachers try several ways to teach writing to students, including practicing writing statements, writing recount texts about their vacation experiences, or keeping a daily diary to practice their writing skills (Young & Ferguson, 2020).

At the college level, students are already faced with a more advanced level, namely the opportunity to take part in elective subjects such as creative writing or writing for academic purposes. There are various activities or tasks that students will face when taking this class, both academic and non-academic writing. Some examples for academic writing activities such as writing an essay, creating a summary of a fiction writing, analyzing and creating an argumentative text from a film to creating a short paper (Andrews, 2003). Some fiction writing activities are also actively enacted such as writing short stories, or continuing story pieces. In an attempt to make the writing activities more interesting, some assign students to write a book project. Either a book of simple teaching materials or an anthology of short stories by the students.

The next concern is how each of the students can do the writing activity well and obtain satisfactory results. About how students can overcome their writing obstacles when doing their writing task or writing project. Today's technological advances are the answer. The emergence of ChatGPT has become popular discussion topic among students ever since AI (Artificial Intelligence) has been trending and widely used in various fields and many aspects of life (Zhou et al., 2022). This technology, known as Chat Generative Pre-Trained

Transformer (abbreviated ChatGPT), has risen to the top of the 2023 agenda of digital technologies. ChatGPT, like many other digital innovations, encourages researchers and language teachers to use high-tech tools to streamline, improve, and maximize learning second and foreign languages (Davies et al., 2013). Even though ChatGPT is a relatively new AI-based technology, it still has benefits and drawbacks, which makes it a viable option for any obstacles that may come up when writing.

Several previous studies have noted how ChatGPT has taken its role as a tool in English learning. The research titled "The Role of ChatGPT as a learning tool in Students' English language learning" (Agustini, 2023) and research discussed about "Exploring the dimensions of ChatGPT in English language learning" (Shaikh et al., 2023). In contrast to the above research, this research will focus more on writing activity, about the experience of Creative Writing Class EFL Learners in using ChatGPT as a supporting media and how they think about the writing results. Based on the background above, the research addresses the following questions such as what are the experiences of EFL learners' writing activity during writing class by using ChatGPT? and how ChatGPT can help the writing process of EFL learners during writing class?

ChatGPT

ChatGPT (Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer) displayed impressive capabilities in comprehending and creating human-like language (Koubaa et al., 2023). Its capacity to answer questions, conduct conversations, and provide coherent and contextually relevant responses was a significant advancement in the development of conversational AI. Furthermore, this product can process the natural interaction between human and machine (Zhou et al., 2022). ChatGPT has currently stolen attention for its implications and potentials in various fields (Thorp, 2023).

ChatGPT also known as a chatbot has significant impacts particularly in education field. ChatGPT's capability may affect changes to academic activities, educational learning objectives, assessment and techniques of evaluation (Ratnam et al., 2023). On the other hand, it can provide student-centered learning experiences that can help students to improve their academic achievements. This is in line with Munoz et al., who stated that utilizing ChatGPT enhance students' language skills (Muñoz et al., 2023). This tool provides more enjoyable and engaging way for learners to discuss, ask questions, receive feedback, enrich vocabulary, and improve their grammar skills. Huang and Li also stated that ChatGPT can produce diverse language contents, comprising sentences, paragraphs, and articles that students can read and comprehend (Li & Huang, 2024). It can help students in enhancing their reading and writing abilities, as well as in gaining insights into grammar principles and expanding their vocabulary.

ChatGPT exist as one of supporting media for writing activity. When using ChatGPT in their writing process, the students should give detail and clear instruction to the chatbot so they can receive the result more accurate. Besides, ChatGPT also can be used for text generation, machine translation, problem solving, content correction, grammar correction, and summarization (Kim et al., 2023). Students are able to explore the information and use the tools and media to facilitate the learning process independently. ChatGPT exist as one of supporting media for writing activity. When using ChatGPT in their writing process, the students should give detail and clear instruction to the chatbot so they can receive the result more accurate. It is in line with Kim et al. who stated that students can provide specific instructions that include domain, type, and length of the intended solution, as well as relevant keywords (Kim, H., Choi & Lee, 2023). It means that more specific instructions will improve response accuracy.

English Skills

Learning a language, in this case English, is the process of gaining pertinent knowledge and abilities for any foreign or second language. Generally speaking, it involves mastering language abilities in speaking, writing, reading, and listening (Klimova, 2011). Reading skills enable individuals to understand and interpret written texts, enhancing vocabulary, grammar knowledge, and critical thinking. Listening skills are essential for understanding

spoken English in various contexts, such as conversations, lectures, and media, which helps in recognizing different accents, intonations, and colloquial expressions. Speaking skills involve the ability to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and fluently, allowing for meaningful interaction and dialogue.

Moreover, Proficient writing is crucial in both academic and professional settings, where it supports the articulation of complex concepts, the creation of persuasive arguments, and the documentation of important information (Hamp-Lyons & Heasly, 2006). In the digital age, where emails, reports, and social media posts are ubiquitous, strong writing skills enhance one's ability to engage and influence a broader audience. Additionally, writing fosters critical thinking and creativity, as it requires the organization and synthesis of ideas (Glazier, 1994).

Creative Writing

Creative writing is a form of artistic expression that goes beyond the boundaries of traditional writing by focusing on narrative craft, character development, and the imaginative exploration of ideas (Harmer, 1992). It encompasses a wide range of genres, including fiction, poetry, and drama, each offering unique ways to engage readers through compelling storytelling. Unlike academic or technical writing, which prioritizes clarity and factual accuracy, creative writing thrives on originality, emotional depth, and the use of literary devices such as metaphors, similes, and symbolism. This type of writing allows writers to experiment with language, structure, and style, making it a powerful medium for personal expression and artistic innovation (Nunan, 1999).

Moreover, Creative writing fosters critical thinking and empathy, as writers must delve into the perspectives and experiences of diverse characters and settings (Hedge, 1991). It serves as a therapeutic outlet, enabling individuals to process and articulate their emotions and experiences in a safe and imaginative environment. Engaging in creative writing also enhances other writing skills by honing one's ability to craft vivid descriptions, develop coherent plots, and convey complex themes (Byrne, 1991).

ChatGPT Role for Creative Writing

ChatGPT can respond accurately if students can provide specific instructions that include the domain, type, and length of the desired solution, as well as relevant keywords. Of course, this allows students to find new ideas or helps them determine the outline of the writing. This was also shown in a previous study entitled "AI technology in the OpenAI ChatGPT application: a review in writing English essays" by (Fitria, 2023). After several trials, ChatGPT can answer all user questions with various topics such as English essays including "descriptive text about Family, personal experiences, unforgettable moments during travel, resolutions in 2023 to become an English teacher, and future careers". Fitria concluded that ChatGPT can help students to create an outline or find interesting topics that can be developed into a complex writing with good results.

Previous Studies

The first research is by Agustini, titled "The Role of ChatGPT as a Learning Tool in Students' English Language Learning" (Agustini, 2023). This study advanced language instruction by shedding light on how ChatGPT might support ELLs in the KMB program's autonomy and individualized learning. Additionally, it gives legislators and language instructors useful suggestions for using ChatGPT into language learning curricula in order to encourage independence and individualized instruction. Next is "Assessing the usability of ChatGPT for formal English language learning" by (Shaikh et al., 2023). A wide range of student volunteers with varying degrees of education, ethnicities, and English language competency were chosen for this study. Participants' experiences with ChatGPT's usability for completing various English language learning tasks, including writing, grammar, vocabulary, and conversation, were clarified by the quantitative analysis of their responses. The results of this study are quite encouraging and show that ChatGPT is a useful instrument for learning English formally.

Overall, by thoroughly evaluating ChatGPT's usability in formal English language acquisition, this study adds to the rapidly expanding field of research on the use of emerging

technologies for this purpose. The last is a study by (Bin-Hady & Al-Tamimi, 2021) titled "Exploring the dimensions of ChatGPT in English language learning". The results of this study demonstrate that ChatGPT can be utilized to help students improve their language proficiency by scaffolding the learning process by giving them feedback on how they use the language and serving as partners in language practice with suggested tasks. A five-dimension model for artificial intelligence-assisted language learning (AIALL) is presented in this work. The paradigm encourages future innovation, celebrates a variety of applications, and incorporates the flexible role of the instructor in fostering learner autonomy and pleasant learning.

METHOD

Research Design

In this study, the researcher will explore Writing class EFL learner' experience in using ChatGPT as a tool for their activity. One characteristic of qualitative research is exploring a problem and developing with detailed understanding (Creswell, 2012). By using this method, the researcher explored the strategies used by the debaters when participating in the debate competition. The researcher used a case study approach. With a case study, researcher explored how the writing process happened, what request they usually use, and how ChatGPT can support the writing process itself.

Research Participants

Participants who contributed are four students in the English department at one public university in Jambi. The number of participants in qualitative research is usually four to ten people (Creswell, 2012). Participants who contributed to this study must ensure that they comply with the desired criteria of the study. As for some of the expected participant criteria; First, the participants who contributed were students who took writing class; Second, the participants from 2021-2022 generation; Last, participants have a desire to contribute to this research.

Data Collection

The interview is divided into structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Dawson, 2002). For this research, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with a list of questions in the interview with the possibility that questions would develop depending on the participant's response and the depth of the discussion based on the questions asked. This can allowed participants to present their answers freely without certain limits. The researcher allowed the interviewee for unanticipated responses and issues to emerge through open-ended questioning (Tod et al., 2011). The interview was conducted using the interview protocol that had been prepared as a guideline. The participants chose to answer the questions in either English or Indonesian.

Data Analysis

The research result was obtained by analyzing all of the data that the researcher had gathered. Data analysis as the process of looking at and analyzing data in order to derive meaning, comprehend, and create empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In order to gather research data, the researcher employed the interview approach, conducting interviews. The researcher employed theme analysis to examine and analyze the data. Thematic analysis is a technique for finding, examining, and summarizing themes in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Searching for Ideas

Searching for ideas with ChatGPT emerged as the most common request mentioned by the participants. This reflects a strong reliance on AI tools during the pre-writing stage, particularly for generating themes and brainstorming content. Among the participants, participant 2 emphasized this role clearly, stating, "ChatGPT takes a big role in my writing process to find out ideas or inspirations." Her statement underscores how ChatGPT

functions not just as a passive tool, but as an active contributor in shaping the initial direction of a writing task. Participant 2 further elaborated that she often asks ChatGPT for possible themes or topics related to the subject she intends to write about. In response, the tool provides a variety of topic recommendations, from which she selects the most suitable one to develop further.

This approach helps her overcome the challenge of idea generation—a common difficulty for EFL students—and enables her to move into the drafting stage with more confidence. The use of ChatGPT in this way aligns with recent perspectives on AI in education, which highlight its potential to support learners' creativity and reduce writing anxiety by offering relevant, structured, and personalized input.

In other side, participant 3 said that "For example, if I'm stuck, if I'm writing a story but I have no ideas at all, I can directly ask ChatGPT about some interesting ideas and ChatGPT recommends a large selection of creative ideas, so there I just have to choose." Those statements in line with the previous research by Fitria about writing essay with ChatGPT (Fitria, 2023). She said that all the accurate request can be responded well by the AI in ChatGPT.

Getting Recommendation for References

In writing academic, or non-fictions, the students asked to use source or references from trusted articles in journals. To find some relevant studies or research, some students use ChatGPT to give them recommendations. For example, participant 2 explained her experience in using ChatGPT, "when I ask a question like "what are the journals related to topic A, can you recommend some journals that were published no more than 5 years ago?" Well ChatGPT will immediately send a list of some journals that are very relevant to what I asked."

Similar with participant 2, Participant 4 also do the same thing when writing essay or paper as their writing assignments. She said "I also used ChatGPT when writing a proposal, but I used it only to find references in writing." This showed that the technology of ChatGPT is useful to help students easier to find some relevant sources for their writing, as long as we can request accurately what we need (Kim et al., 2023).

Finding Out Best Vocabularies

When it comes to creating beautiful fiction writing—such as poems, short stories, or novels—many EFL learners face challenges in selecting appropriate word choices or expressive vocabulary, particularly in mastering diction. In this context, ChatGPT becomes a valuable tool to assist students in enhancing the aesthetic quality of their writing. The AI's language capabilities offer a wide range of synonyms, figurative language, and stylistic suggestions that help learners shape their writing in a more engaging and polished manner.

Participant 1 confidently highlighted the usefulness of ChatGPT in his fiction writing process. He stated, "ChatGPT media can be used as needed to beautify writing, find the right diction." This comment shows that participant 1 sees ChatGPT not only as a language support tool but as a creative partner that contributes to the overall tone and literary quality of his work. He also expressed satisfaction with the results, implying that the tool helped him reach a level of writing he was proud of—something often difficult for EFL learners who are still developing their expressive range in a second language.

Still, this statement is in line with the previous study by (Fitria, 2023), who noted that ChatGPT is capable of providing accurate and relevant responses tailored to user needs. In the context of EFL fiction writing, this means students can explore various linguistic styles and forms, receiving suggestions that reflect the genre, tone, and emotional intent of their stories. For instructors, this highlights the potential of integrating AI tools like ChatGPT into creative writing activities—not to replace original thought, but to support vocabulary expansion, stylistic awareness, and language precision.

Finding Outline/Story Plot

Making interesting outline or story plot is the hardest part, in case to make our writing is not boring. Some of participants mentioned they experience to use ChatGPT as this role to help them during writing. Participant 4 said "In making an outline, it is sometimes

overwhelming, but with the help of ChatGpt I can make an outline more easily, because we only need to explain what we want to write and then ChatGPT will organize the important parts, and this is helpful." Similar, participant 5 also explained "With a clear outline from ChatGPT, my writing becomes more focused and less confused."

Last but not least, participant 1 also answered with his experience in writing short stories, "Then in making storylines, storylines in writing, especially I like to write fiction, and storylines are very important because that's the point of the story, to make the story interesting and as creative as possible, well here ChatGPT helps in designing plots that are unique, interesting and unthinkable, and that's what makes the story not boring and interesting to continue reading." Those statements streghthen the finding from the related previous research by (Kim et al., 2023) about getting outline recommendations from ChatGPT.

Organizing the Writing Result

Sometimes, the students did not feel satisfy with their own writings, to fix it, one of the participants in this research shared her experienced about organize her writing with ChatGPT "From my own experience, for example in making essays, I always after I pour and express my ideas related to a topic, I must immediately arrange it on ChatGPT, in my own opinion it is still not neat and ineffective, for that I use it to tidy up my writings." Supported by (Ratnam et al., 2023) that one of the AI feature can be used from ChatGPT is organize writings and help the students learning process or writing skills.

Discussing About Writing Content

Another key finding is that ChatGPT can effectively replace human interaction in simple discussion contexts, especially during the writing process. Two out of five participants mentioned this, including participant 3, who said, "I've had discussions with ChatGPT about the characters of the story and the conflicts they face until finally how the story develops to the ending. This makes the story I make feel more interesting, fresher ideas and more alive." This shows how ChatGPT can serve as a brainstorming partner, helping EFL students develop characters, plot, and conflict. For learners with limited access to feedback, ChatGPT offers an accessible way to explore and refine creative ideas in real-time, enhancing both confidence and story quality.

Similarly, participant 4 explained how she utilized ChatGPT in her writing process, stating, "I just need to type there, discuss, and they will give the most interesting and most relevant topics for me." This statement reflects how AI tools like ChatGPT serve not only as sources of information but also as interactive collaborators in generating and refining ideas. Those statements in line with (Muñoz et al., 2023) who emphasizes the role of AI in facilitating decision-making and enhancing writing proficiency through personalized suggestions and instant feedback.

CONCLUSIONS

This research recommends that ChatGPT can advance the writing process in EFL writing classes. ChatGPT's individualized support, self-reflection and self-assessment features, language practice, and instant feedback can assist students in gaining the best writing experience with fresh topics, issues, information, or recommendations. However, the capabilities of ChatGPT can sometimes reduce the originality of students' writing, so they need to use it wisely. Using ChatGPT as a tool can definitely motivate EFL learners in writing classes to produce interesting and creative work. In conclusion, the findings highlight several key supports that significantly aid EFL students in writing, including idea generation, vocabulary selection, reference recommendations, outline development, content organization, and writing discussion. These elements not only enhance students' linguistic competence but also support their confidence and creativity. Therefore, EFL writing classes should adopt a process-based approach, integrate vocabulary and organization strategies, and encourage collaborative and reflective practices to better support students in developing effective and coherent written texts.

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