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From Ideas to Description: How EFL Students Perceive Chatgpt in Writing Classes

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to explore how first-year Indonesian EFL students perceive the use of ChatGPT for learning and writing descriptive texts, and how this impacts their descriptive writing skills. A total of 28 students from the English Language Studies Program participated in this study, which employed a pre-experimental design. A pre-test was administered to assess the students' initial abilities, followed by an instructional intervention using ChatGPT as a writing aid for descriptive texts, and a post-test. The students' test results were analyzed using SPSS to measure the statistical significance of improvements in writing ability while questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively to know the frequency and average scores of students' perceptions. Descriptive statistics analysis presented the mean total score increased from 33.14 (SD = 14.16) in the pre-test to 43.82 (SD = 16.42) in the post-test. This increase suggests an improvement in overall writing performance following the intervention. The results students' perceptions show that ChatGPT as a helpful learning tool that supported idea generation, vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, and the production of more detailed and well-organized descriptive texts. Students do not view ChatGPT as a replacement for teachers. Although they appreciated the speed and accessibility of AI feedback. They emphasized that teacher guidance remains essential, especially for developing deeper understanding, maintaining ethical writing practices, and preventing overdependence on AI.

KEYWORDS: Writing Skills, Descriptive Writing, ChatGPT, Writing Performance, Descriptive Text

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is universally recognized as a critical skill for academic achievement and effective communication, especially in contexts where English is learned as a foreign language (EFL) (Munigarim & Khatimah, 2024). In academic settings, writing is not only a medium for expressing ideas but also a tool for developing higher-order thinking, organizing information, and engaging in various discourses. Numerous studies have shown that writing activities can significantly enhance students' critical thinking skills (Gupta et al, 2015). Eaton and Wade (2014) found that writing activity, when combined with peer review, can encourage students to critically engage with course content and deepen their reasoning and problem-solving abilities. Writing also plays a crucial role in the organization of knowledge and information. As students articulate their thoughts in writing, they need to structure arguments, connect concepts, and clarify understanding. These are stages of processes that foster metacognitive awareness and knowledge retention (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Klein & Boscolo, 2016). Hyland (2012) argues that through writing, students not only acquire content knowledge but also develop their academic identity.

Descriptive writing is challenging for many EFL students because it demands clear details, well-organized ideas, and accurate word choice and grammar. Common difficulties such as using adjectives correctly, applying proper tenses, and using correct punctuation and spelling, often occur due to limited vocabulary and grammar knowledge and unfamiliarity with the structure of descriptive texts (Hartina et al., 2024; Nurfidoh & Kareviati, 2018). Additionally, students often struggle to generate ideas and develop coherent paragraphs (Murbarani, 2024). Intrinsic factor includes motivation can also affects performance because when students are less interested in English, they tend to put less effort in writing. This could lead to weaker writing production (Nuralisaputri & Megawati, 2023). In composing a descriptive text, students must describe things, people, or places they are often unfamiliar with. Describing something, especially unfamiliar or local ones, can be particularly hard. Students face challenges in selecting appropriate vocabulary, using the correct adjectives, and organizing their thoughts clearly (Mulyasin et al., 2023).

First-year Indonesian university students are often struggling with academic writing. Many struggle to think beyond simple descriptions and create coherent, well-structured paragraphs with a variety of terminology because their high school writing training was more focused on grammar rules and tests rather on a multitude of text genres (Emilia, 2011). These difficulties are heightened by large class sizes, limited instructional time, and an emphasis on final tests or products rather than

focusing on feedback and revision opportunities (Rahmawati & Ertin, 2020). While national standards and CEFR-aligned curricula place a strong emphasis on text awareness and communicative competence, classroom practices often come up short. As descriptive writing is rarely adequately modeled or scaffolded, students are forced to rely on memorized templates rather than creating real, in-depth writings. Additionally, research shows that both high school and university students continue to struggle with writing structure, concept development, vocabulary, and grammar (Asnas, 2022; Yuniar & Siswana, 2023).

Many instructors also face challenges since not all EFL teachers have enough training in teaching genre-based writing or using process writing methods. Because of this, feedback often focuses only on grammar and spelling instead of bigger issues like developing ideas, organizing writing, and engaging readers. Without helpful feedback and chances to revise, students often did not see writing as a process where they can improve over time (Richards & Renandya, 2002). These problems add up to a common gap in descriptive writing skills among first-year Indonesian EFL students. Even if students have basic English skills, they often do not feel confident or have the language tools and thinking strategies to write good descriptive texts. To fix this, teachers need to use learner-centered methods that go beyond traditional teaching, encouraging students to be creative with language, get useful feedback, and reflect on their progress.

Other studies confirm these points, showing that many teachers lack genre knowledge and struggle to give effective feedback (Sari & Sudibyo, 2017), and that students benefit when writing is taught as a process, including drafting and revising (Putra & Ramadhani, 2021). Research also highlights the importance of building students' confidence and language awareness through interactive writing activities (Fitria & Ananda, 2020) and notes that reflective practices help students become more aware of their writing strengths and weaknesses (Handayani & Kusuma, 2019).

In recent years, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT has changed how students learn and write. ChatGPT offers quick help with language, giving feedback and ideas in real time (Munigarim & Khatimah, 2024; Safitri & Fithriani, 2025). Around the world, students increasingly use ChatGPT for writing, summarizing, and solving problems. In Indonesia, research shows that students find ChatGPT easy to use and helpful, especially for generating ideas, choosing words, and correcting language, although it sometimes struggles with more complex tasks (Silalahi, 2023). Another study found that ChatGPT can improve essays by helping with vocabulary, grammar, and organization, and can support planning and reducing writing anxiety. However, students need to learn how to give good prompts to get the best results (Arifin et al., 2024).

Descriptive writing, which requires detailed descriptions and clear organization, is especially difficult for students. Several recent studies show that ChatGPT helps students come up with ideas, improve vocabulary, fix grammar, and organize their texts better (Najah & Ghozali, 2024; Anggeraja et al., 2024; Al-Akbar, 2025). Still, these benefits depend on students' digital skills, English level, and how often they use the tool (Abdullah et al., 2025; Vacalares et al., 2024). Most studies report positive student views, seeing ChatGPT as a useful helper for brainstorming and revising. But some concerns remain about relying too much on it, accuracy issues, and whether it really motivates students to improve their writing (Munigarim & Khatimah, 2024; Lee & Cakir, 2024). Overall, the research suggests that ChatGPT can improve writing if used carefully, with good guidance, and when students are ready to use it well.

Studies from around the world support these findings. For example, Han et al. (2023) created a platform called "RECIPE" where ChatGPT acts like a teacher, and students said they had good learning experiences using it. Arifin et al. (2023) described ChatGPT as a tutor for EFL writing and discussed how it could be used in teaching. In Indonesia, postgraduate students use ChatGPT carefully to help with vocabulary, grammar, ideas, and organizing their writing. This fits well with learning theories like scaffolding and shared thinking (Werdiningsih et al., 2024).

Most existing research has focused on postgraduate students or academic writing in general, rather than on first-year Indonesian EFL students learning to write descriptive texts (Emilia, 2011; Rahmawati & Ertin, 2020). While previous studies highlight both the benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT (Munigarim & Khatimah, 2024; Silalahi, 2023), little is known about how beginner-level learners specifically perceive its impact on their writing development—especially in descriptive writing, which relies heavily on imagination, detail, and clear structure (Najah & Ghozali, 2024; Anggeraja et al., 2024).

Despite the growing interest in AI tools, there's still a lack of detailed research on how ChatGPT supports descriptive writing skills among Indonesian first-year EFL students. We do not yet understand how these students accept or rely on ChatGPT, how they balance its help with their own creativity, or how they view its role in their learning process (Abdullah et al., 2025; Lee & Cakir, 2024). This leaves a gap that makes it harder to use AI tools effectively in early university EFL courses.

This study aims to fill that gap by exploring how first-year Indonesian EFL students perceive using ChatGPT to learn and write descriptive texts. It looks at what they see as its benefits, such as helping with ideas and vocabulary, as well as challenges, such as depending too much on the tool or dealing with incorrect responses (Arifin et al., 2024; Munigarim & Khatimah, 2024). It also examines whether ChatGPT helps students become more independent writers, eases their writing anxiety, and supports key skills for descriptive writing like vivid detail and clear organization (Putra & Ramadhani, 2021; Nuralisaputri & Megawati, 2023).

By focusing on this specific group and genre, the study not only adds to our understanding of AI literacy in language teaching but also offers practical guidance for Indonesian educators and curriculum developers. The findings can help them decide when and how to use ChatGPT thoughtfully, offering advice on prompt design, genre awareness, and how best to support

students. Evidence that ChatGPT boosts students' confidence, reduces anxiety, or improves vocabulary can help shape teaching approaches that embrace technology while still encouraging students to take charge of their own learning (Handayani & Kusuma, 2019; Fitria & Ananda, 2020).

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a pre-experimental design to examine the impact of ChatGPT on the descriptive writing skills of first-year Indonesian EFL students. A pre-test and post-test were administered to measure changes in students' writing abilities after six treatment sessions, where they practiced descriptive writing using ChatGPT as a digital writing aid. The use of a pre-experimental design, which involves testing a single group before and after an intervention without a control group, is common in educational research to explore the effects of new teaching methods (Creswell, 2012; Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). The sample consisted of 28 students from the English Education Study Program, selected through purposive sampling to focus on beginner-level learners who had limited prior exposure to AI-assisted writing tools. Purposive sampling is appropriate in educational settings to target participants who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Data collection included the writing tests scored on criteria such as content development, coherence, vocabulary, grammar, and organization, following established writing assessment frameworks (Weigle, 2002). Additionally, a perception questionnaire was administered after the treatments to capture students' attitudes and experiences with ChatGPT. The questionnaire featured Likert-scale items and three closed-ended questions, enabling quantitative analysis of learners' views (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2017).

Quantitative data from the pre- and post-tests were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests with SPSS to determine the statistical significance of writing improvements. This statistical test is commonly used to compare means from related groups before and after an intervention (Pallant, 2020). Questionnaire responses were analyzed descriptively in SPSS to summarize frequencies and mean scores regarding students' perceptions. This combination of data analysis techniques provides a comprehensive understanding of both performance outcomes and learner attitudes towards AI integration in EFL writing instruction.

III. RESULT

This study evaluated the writing skills of 28 students before and after a specific intervention by comparing their pre-test and post-test scores. Each student's total writing score was calculated by summing five components: Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Language Use, and Mechanics. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. The mean total score increased from 33.14 (SD = 14.16) in the pre-test to 43.82 (SD = 16.42) in the post-test. This increase suggests an improvement in overall writing performance following the intervention.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Scores

Test	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	28	10	62	33.14	14.16
Post-test	28	16	81	43.82	16.42

A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine if the observed difference between pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant (see Table 2). The results revealed a significant increase in total writing scores, with a mean difference of 10.68 points ($t(27) = 6.17$, $p < 0.001$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the intervention significantly improved students' writing performance.

Table 2. T-Test Result

Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
10.68	9.16	1.73	6.17	27	<0.001

The detailed analysis of the writing components reveals that the intervention led to significant and meaningful improvements across all aspects of students' writing skills. The most pronounced gains were observed in the content aspect, where the average score rose markedly from 11.5 in the pre-test to 16.0 in the post-test, reflecting a stronger ability to develop and present relevant ideas effectively. Similarly, language use showed substantial progress, increasing from 6.9 to 9.4, indicating enhanced grammatical accuracy and syntactic control that contribute to clearer and more precise communication. Improvements were also notable in the organization aspect, with scores rising from 7.5 to 10.2, demonstrating that students were better able to structure their writing logically and coherently. While the vocabulary aspect showed moderate growth, increasing from 7.0 to 9.8, this suggests that students expanded their lexical choices and used words more appropriately. Lastly, although the aspect of mechanics showed only a slight increase from 1.8 to 2.5, this still represents meaningful progress in spelling, punctuation, and

overall writing conventions, highlighting an area for continued focus. Taken together, these results compellingly illustrate that the intervention effectively strengthened students' writing abilities, particularly in the critical areas of idea development and language use, which are foundational to clear and impactful writing.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perception of ChatGPT in Writing Descriptive Text

No.	*Statement*	*Mean*	*Std. Dev*
1	ChatGPT is a helpful tool for improving my overall writing skills.	4.50	0.74
2	Using ChatGPT makes the writing process easier and more efficient.	4.67	0.67
3	ChatGPT helps me generate ideas when I face writer's block	4.60	0.68
4	I feel more confident in my writing after using ChatGPT	4.28	0.89
5	ChatGPT encourages me to write more often	4.17	0.81
6	ChatGPT has improved my ability to describe scenes, people, or objects effectively	4.39	0.87
7	The feedback from ChatGPT was easy to understand.	4.53	0.74
8	ChatGPT helped me identify and correct my grammar mistakes	4.60	0.78
9	ChatGPT helps me create more vivid and detailed descriptions of the object I write about	4.46	0.74
10	I learned new vocabulary and expressions for descriptive writing by using ChatGPT	4.46	0.69
11	ChatGPT provides useful examples of descriptive writing	4.35	0.73
12	ChatGPT provides feedback that helps me improve my writing	4.25	0.88
13	ChatGPT helps me understand my writing mistakes	4.53	0.69
14	ChatGPT motivates me to revise and improve my writing drafts	4.32	0.81
15	I use ChatGPT to check the grammar and clarity of my writing	4.60	0.73
16	ChatGPT helps me become more independent in improving my writing	4.14	0.70
17	ChatGPT made the learning process more engaging	4.28	0.76
18	Using ChatGPT increased my motivation to write in English	4.42	0.79
19	I would like to continue using ChatGPT in future writing activities	4.32	0.81
20	I rely too much on ChatGPT for writing tasks	4.00	0.90
21	I am worried that the lecturers or the institution may view the use of ChatGPT as plagiarism	3.96	1.10
22	I still need guidance from a teacher to improve, even when using ChatGPT	4.64	0.62

The analysis of the questionnaire responses revealed several key themes reflecting students' perceptions of ChatGPT's role in improving their writing performance. The data showed that students' views were organized around five major thematic areas: (1) the general usefulness of ChatGPT in supporting writing development, (2) its role in stimulating idea generation and motivation, (3) its contribution to enhancing descriptive writing ability, (4) the quality and usefulness of its feedback and language support, and (5) students' awareness of potential risks and the continued need for human guidance. Each of these themes highlights different aspects of how learners interact with and benefit from ChatGPT during the writing process. Together, they provide a comprehensive understanding of how AI-assisted writing tools can enhance students' confidence, creativity, and linguistic competence while also revealing their concerns about overreliance and ethical use.

a. General Perception of the Usefulness of ChatGPT in Writing

Students demonstrated a very positive perception of ChatGPT as a writing tool, particularly in improving their overall writing ability and self-confidence. The results show that most respondents agreed that ChatGPT was helpful for enhancing their writing skills (M = 4.50, SD = 0.75). They also strongly believed that using ChatGPT made the writing process easier and more efficient (M = 4.68, SD = 0.67), which was among the highest-rated items in the questionnaire. This indicates that ChatGPT was seen as a practical and effective platform that simplified the process of generating, organizing, and refining ideas.

In addition, students reported feeling more confident in their writing after using ChatGPT (M = 4.29, SD = 0.90). The immediacy of feedback and the continuous support provided by the AI tool likely contributed to this increase in self-assurance. Furthermore, students believed that ChatGPT encouraged them to become more independent learners, enabling them to revise and improve their writing without relying heavily on instructors (M = 4.14, SD = 0.70).

Overall, these findings reveal that students view ChatGPT as an empowering and accessible learning companion that enhances both writing performance and learner autonomy. The combination of practical assistance, motivation, and instant feedback contributed to an improved perception of writing as a more manageable and enjoyable process.

b. Idea Generation and Writing Motivation

Another major finding concerns the role of ChatGPT in facilitating idea generation and enhancing writing motivation. Students strongly agreed that ChatGPT helped them generate ideas when facing writer's block (M = 4.61, SD = 0.69). This suggests that ChatGPT serves as an effective stimulus during the brainstorming stage, allowing students to overcome creative stagnation and explore alternative perspectives.

In addition to assisting with idea development, ChatGPT also encouraged students to write more often (M = 4.18, SD = 0.82). The accessibility and supportive nature of the AI tool seemed to make writing less intimidating, thereby increasing students' willingness to practice. ChatGPT also motivated students to revise and improve their drafts (M = 4.32, SD = 0.82), demonstrating its role in fostering a process-oriented approach to writing rather than a product-oriented one.

Importantly, students agreed that using ChatGPT increased their motivation to write in English (M = 4.43, SD = 0.79). This finding highlights the significance of ChatGPT as a motivational and linguistic resource in second-language (L2) learning contexts. The majority also expressed a desire to continue using ChatGPT in future writing activities (M = 4.32, SD = 0.82), showing that they viewed the tool as a long-term writing partner rather than a temporary aid.

Taken together, these results indicate that ChatGPT not only assists in generating ideas and overcoming writing barriers but also enhances student engagement, creativity, and motivation to write—factors essential for developing a consistent and productive writing habit.

c. Descriptive Writing Improvement

The results of the third construct directly correspond to the main focus of this study which is enhancing descriptive writing ability. Students reported that ChatGPT helped them describe scenes, people, and objects more effectively and with greater confidence(M = 4.39, SD = 0.88). The tool appeared to help them structure their ideas more coherently and use language that vividly captured details and sensory impressions.

Similarly, students indicated that ChatGPT helped them create more vivid and detailed descriptions (M = 4.46, SD = 0.74), demonstrating that the AI output models can provide examples of specific, descriptive, and vivid language use. Another key aspect identified was vocabulary acquisition. Students strongly agreed that ChatGPT helped them learn new vocabulary and expressions relevant to descriptive writing (M = 4.46, SD = 0.69). Exposure to lexical variety through ChatGPT's responses expanded their linguistic resources and improved the sophistication of their written output.

Additionally, students appreciated that ChatGPT provided useful examples of descriptive writing (M = 4.36, SD = 0.73), which served as models for how to organize and express ideas effectively. These findings suggest that ChatGPT served an important pedagogical function in improving students' descriptive writing by facilitating vocabulary development, richer elaboration, and clearer organization. In this sense, ChatGPT functioned not only as a tutor but also as a writing model, guiding students to internalize effective descriptive writing strategies.

d. Feedback and Language Support

One of the strongest areas of benefit identified in the study was ChatGPT's feedback and language support features. Students found that the feedback provided by ChatGPT was easy to understand (M = 4.54, SD = 0.74), suggesting that the explanations were accessible even to learners with limited proficiency. They also strongly agreed that ChatGPT helped them identify and correct grammatical mistakes (M = 4.61, SD = 0.79), highlighting its reliability as a grammar-checking assistant.

In addition, students confirmed that ChatGPT's feedback contributed meaningfully to improving their overall writing (M = 4.25, SD = 0.89) and helped them understand their writing mistakes (M = 4.54, SD = 0.69). This finding indicates that students did not merely copy corrections but learned to recognize and analyze their linguistic errors with the help of AI explanations.

Furthermore, a majority of students stated that they used ChatGPT to check the grammar and clarity of their writing (M = 4.61, SD = 0.74). It shows a tendency to rely on ChatGPT as a supportive tool for proofreading and editing, particularly to improve language accuracy and overall coherence.

Collectively, these findings suggest that ChatGPT's feedback function is one of its most valued features. Students perceived it as an intelligent writing assistant capable of enhancing grammar accuracy, sentence clarity, and overall writing quality, ultimately supporting their linguistic development and self-correction skills.

e. Perceived Risk and the Need for Support

While the results indicate overwhelmingly positive attitudes, students also demonstrated awareness of potential limitations and ethical considerations in using ChatGPT. Some students acknowledged a tendency to rely too much on ChatGPT for writing tasks (M = 4.00, SD = 0.90), which suggests the need for balance between technological support and independent learning.

Students also expressed moderate concern that lecturers or institutions might view the use of ChatGPT as plagiarism (M = 3.96, SD = 1.11). This highlights the uncertainty surrounding institutional policies on AI-assisted writing and the importance of establishing clear ethical guidelines.

Nevertheless, students maintained that teacher guidance remained essential even when using ChatGPT (M = 4.64, SD = 0.62). This finding is crucial because it demonstrates that while students appreciate ChatGPT's utility, they do not perceive it as a

replacement for human feedback. Instead, they view it as a complementary tool that enhances but does not replace the pedagogical role of instructors.

Overall, this category illustrates a balanced perspective—students embrace ChatGPT's benefits while recognizing its boundaries. They value human interaction and ethical awareness as integral components of responsible AI integration in academic writing.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that first-year Indonesian EFL students generally perceive ChatGPT as a beneficial tool for learning descriptive writing, particularly in supporting idea generation, language accuracy, and writing confidence. These perceptions align with a growing body of research in applied linguistics and educational technology suggesting that generative AI can function as a form of cognitive and linguistic mediation in second language writing (Zhai, 2022; Kohnke, Zou, & Zhang, 2023). From a sociocultural perspective, ChatGPT appears to act as a scaffold that assists learners during cognitively demanding stages of the writing process, especially planning and drafting, where EFL learners often struggle to transform ideas into coherent text (Vygotsky, 1978; Swain, 2005).

Students' strong agreement on ChatGPT's usefulness for generating ideas and overcoming writer's block suggests that the tool helps reduce cognitive load and lowers the difficulty of starting a text. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that intelligent writing tools can free learners' attentional resources, enabling them to focus more on meaning development rather than linguistic form (Hafner & Miller, 2019; Chen et al., 2021). In descriptive writing, where learners are required to balance rich content development with accurate language use, this type of support can be especially beneficial. Nevertheless, research in second language acquisition cautions that although reduced cognitive load may enhance fluency, meaningful learning outcomes still depend on the depth of learners' processing and their active engagement with the language they produce (Schmidt, 1990; Norris & Ortega, 2009). Therefore, ChatGPT is most effective when it is used within teaching practices that encourage students to think critically about the suggestions it provides and to revise them carefully, rather than accepting them without reflection.

The students' perceived improvement in vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, and descriptive detail further supports earlier findings that AI-assisted tools can help raise language awareness by exposing learners to rich and meaningful language input (Hyland, 2019; Zhao, 2023). Students' positive responses to ChatGPT's feedback suggest that the tool may work in a way similar to automated writing evaluation systems, which are known to help improve surface-level accuracy and make the revision process more efficient (Li, Link, & Hegelheimer, 2018). Nevertheless, research in writing studies emphasizes that feedback is most effective for learning when it is dialogic, interpretive, and closely integrated with instructional guidance (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Without this kind of guidance, learners may focus too much on being correct rather than expressing meaning, which can result in writing that sounds polished but is formulaic and does not truly show real language development.

The motivational improvements reported by students represent another important aspect of the findings. Increased confidence, a greater willingness to revise, and stronger motivation to write in English are affective factors that have long been associated with better writing engagement and persistence (Graham & Perin, 2007; Lee, 2020). The immediate and non-judgmental responses provided by ChatGPT may help reduce writing anxiety, especially for beginner EFL learners who often worry about making mistakes or being negatively evaluated. This is in line with previous studies showing that supportive technologies can lower emotional barriers and encourage learners to take risks when using a second language (Reinders & Wattana, 2015; Sun & Zhang, 2024). However, motivation by itself does not ensure long-term improvement. As Larsen-Freeman (2022) points out, language development is a complex and ongoing process that requires repeated practice, reflection, and conscious learning strategies, all of which are strongly influenced by effective instructional design.

The study also shows that students are aware of possible risks, especially becoming too dependent on ChatGPT and concerns related to plagiarism. This mixed view reflects a tension that has been discussed in recent research on the use of generative AI in education (Rudolph, Tan, & Tan, 2023; Lee & Cakir, 2024). Although AI tools can support learner autonomy, overuse may limit opportunities for productive struggle, which is important for developing higher-level writing skills and metalinguistic awareness (Perin, 2012). Students' strong agreement that teacher guidance is still necessary highlights the continuing importance of human involvement in writing instruction. This finding supports previous arguments that technology should support, not replace, teacher feedback, especially when teaching complex aspects of writing such as idea development, genre awareness, and rhetorical effectiveness (Warschauer & Kern, 2020; Li & Zhang, 2021).

Overall, the findings suggest that ChatGPT has strong potential to support EFL writing when it is used carefully in teaching. It should not be seen as an independent tutor, but as a supporting tool that works together with teacher guidance, ethical awareness, and student reflection. Future studies should move beyond students' perceptions by using longer-term research, analyzing students' written texts, and comparing results with control groups. This would help clarify how AI-assisted writing

affects learners' language development over time. When used in a critical and pedagogical way, ChatGPT can meaningfully support the development of descriptive writing skills while still keeping teachers at the centre of the learning process.

V. CONCLUSION

This study explored first-year Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in descriptive writing classes and found generally positive responses across cognitive, linguistic, and emotional aspects of writing. The results show that students viewed ChatGPT as a helpful learning tool that supported idea generation, vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, and the production of more detailed and well-organized descriptive texts. These benefits were also reflected in higher confidence, stronger motivation, and greater engagement in writing, suggesting that AI-assisted tools can help reduce common difficulties faced by beginner EFL writers.

At the same time, the findings indicate that students do not see ChatGPT as a replacement for teachers. Although they appreciated the speed and accessibility of AI feedback, students emphasized that teacher guidance remains essential, especially for developing deeper understanding, maintaining ethical writing practices, and preventing overdependence on AI. This balanced view highlights ChatGPT's role as a supportive tool rather than an independent tutor in writing instruction.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study suggests that ChatGPT can be effectively used in EFL writing classrooms when it is supported by clear learning goals, guidance on ethical use, and tasks that encourage students to think critically about AI-generated output. Teachers play an important role in guiding students to interpret, evaluate, and revise AI-supported texts, ensuring that technology strengthens rather than reduces students' active involvement in the writing process.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. It used a pre-experimental design, involved a relatively small number of participants, and relied mainly on self-reported data. Future studies should use longer-term and experimental designs, include direct analysis of students' written work, and examine how factors such as language proficiency and digital literacy influence the use of AI in writing. Exploring teachers' perspectives and classroom practices would also provide a more complete understanding of how generative AI can be used responsibly in EFL education.

In conclusion, ChatGPT shows strong potential as a supportive tool for teaching descriptive writing in EFL contexts, especially for beginner university students. When used thoughtfully and critically, it can improve writing performance, learner motivation, and independence, while still keeping teachers at the centre of language learning.

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