



# Journal of Educational Sciences

Journal homepage: <https://jes.ejournal.unri.ac.id/index.php/JES>



P-ISSN  
2581-1657

E-ISSN  
2581-2203

## English Study Program of Universitas Riau Students' Perceptions of Using ChatGPT in Improving Their Writing Skills

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: 05 Jan 2026

Accepted: 28 April 2026

Available Online: 05 May 2026

#### Keywords:

ChatGPT,  
Writing skills,  
Perceptions,  
EFL learners

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#### Article Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.10.5.p.346-354>

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated first-year English Study Program students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in improving their writing skills at Universitas Riau. Writing remains a challenging skill for many EFL students, particularly in generating ideas, organizing content, and using appropriate language. A quantitative descriptive design was employed involving 39 students from Class 2A who had prior experience using ChatGPT. Data were collected using a 30-item Likert-scale questionnaire covering five indicators: idea development, organization and structure, language use and vocabulary, confidence and motivation, and ethical awareness and critical thinking. The findings revealed overall positive perceptions, with the highest mean in ethical awareness and critical thinking ( $M = 4.51$ ) and language use and vocabulary ( $M = 4.18$ ). Students reported that ChatGPT helped generate ideas, enrich vocabulary, improve sentence structure, and increase writing confidence. The study concludes that ChatGPT can serve as a supportive tool for writing improvement while complementing students' critical thinking and creativity.

## 1. Introduction

Writing is an essential skill for academic success, particularly for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). In higher education, proficiency in writing not only facilitates effective communication but also reflects cognitive, linguistic, and critical thinking abilities (Ghosh et al., 2021). For EFL learners, writing presents numerous challenges, including limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, difficulties in organizing ideas, and maintaining coherence (Ghaith, 2002). These challenges are compounded by external factors such as insufficient guidance, lack of motivation, and inadequate practice opportunities. In the context of Universitas

Riau, first-year students in the English Study Program often face these obstacles while completing assignments such as essays and research papers, highlighting the need for effective tools to support their writing development.

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, particularly ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, has created new opportunities for enhancing students' academic writing. ChatGPT is a large language model that can generate human-like text, provide feedback, and assist with grammar and content organization (Aljanabi, 2023; Haque, 2023; Hariri, 2023). ChatGPT applications in education include supporting individualized learning, improving writing proficiency, and fostering student autonomy (Dimeli & Kostas, 2025; Elmotri et al., 2025). ChatGPT allows students to practice writing independently and receive immediate guidance during the writing process.

Previous studies generally reported positive perceptions of ChatGPT in writing, including benefits in motivation, grammar support, and writing assistance, although concerns about overreliance and source verification remain (Hasanah & Nurcholis, 2024; Hoa & Khoa, 2024; Thi Thuy, 2023; Zebua & Katemba, 2024). These findings indicate that ChatGPT has considerable potential as a learning support tool. However, students still require guidance from lecturers to use the technology critically and responsibly in academic contexts.

In addition, studies published in the *Journal of Educational Sciences* highlight the growing role of artificial intelligence in EFL learning. Yusriani and Fithriani (2025) found that ChatGPT supports autonomous learning and enhances students' engagement. Amara et al. (2025) reported that AI-based tools assist students in improving paraphrasing and academic writing skills. Similarly, Al Farizy et al. (2025) found that students generally have positive perceptions of AI use in language learning. Other studies also emphasize that AI integration promotes innovative teaching and learning practices and improves language competence (Mardhiah et al., 2025; Septiani Pinkan et al., 2025). These findings indicate that AI tools have strong potential in supporting language learning, particularly in writing. Despite its benefits, ChatGPT also presents challenges in educational settings, including overreliance, plagiarism, and limited critical thinking development (Alberth, 2023; Chan & Hu, 2023; Miah et al., 2024).

Writing proficiency involves multiple interconnected dimensions, including idea development, organization and structure, language use and vocabulary, confidence and motivation, and ethical awareness and critical thinking (Ariyanti, 2016; Crossley et al., 2016; Rofiqoh et al., 2022). ChatGPT has the potential to support these dimensions by providing suggestions, generating ideas, correcting grammatical errors, and promoting reflective engagement with writing tasks. However, the extent to which students perceive these benefits and incorporate them into their learning practices remains unclear, particularly for first-year EFL learners at Universitas Riau.

The objective of this study is to investigate the perceptions of first-year students of the English Study Program at Universitas Riau regarding the use of ChatGPT in

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improving their writing skills. This study also aims to examine how students perceive ChatGPT's role in supporting idea development, structuring written content, refining language use, boosting confidence and motivation, and maintaining ethical writing practices. By exploring these perceptions, this study seeks to provide insights into effective strategies for integrating AI tools into EFL writing instruction, highlighting both opportunities and challenges for academic learning in the digital era.

## **2. Methodology**

This study used a quantitative descriptive research design to investigate first-year students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in improving their writing skills. Quantitative descriptive research allows data to be collected and presented numerically in order to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon without researcher intervention (Kothari C.R, 2014). This study was conducted at the English Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Riau.

The population of this study consisted of 116 first-year students of the English Study Program at Universitas Riau. Purposive sampling was applied to select respondents who had prior experience using ChatGPT for writing tasks. This sampling technique was considered appropriate because the study required participants who were familiar with the use of ChatGPT. Based on these criteria, 39 students from Class 2A were selected as the sample (Sugiyono, 2019).

The primary instrument was a structured questionnaire with 30 closed-ended items using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" (Joshi et al., 2015). The questionnaire covered five aspects adapted from previous studies: idea development, organization and structure, language use and vocabulary, confidence and motivation, and ethical awareness and critical thinking (Aineh & Ngu, 2024; Chan & Hu, 2023; Elmotri et al., 2025; Fitria, 2023; Thi Thuy, 2023; Zebua & Katemba, 2024). Validity was tested using Pearson Product-Moment correlation, and all items were found valid ( $r > 0.349$ ). Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha and produced a coefficient of 0.916 (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data were collected through Google Forms, and clear instructions were provided to all participants before they completed the questionnaire. Each participant responded individually to ensure independent answers. After the responses were collected, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Individual scores were calculated as percentages of the maximum possible score, while the mean score for each aspect was computed to interpret students' perceptions. The interpretation of the mean followed a Likert-based classification: very positive (4.51–5.00), positive (3.51–4.50), neutral (2.51–3.50), negative (1.51–2.50), and very negative (1.00–1.50) (Joshi et al., 2015; Sugiyono, 2019).

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### 3. Results and Discussion

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using mean scores to identify students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in improving their writing skills. The results are presented based on five indicators: idea development, organization and structure, language use and vocabulary, confidence and motivation, and ethical awareness and critical thinking. The overall results of students' perceptions are presented in Table 1. This provides a quick overview of how students rated all five indicators of ChatGPT's role in improving writing skills before exploring the detailed results for each category.

Table 1. Overall Result of Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT

No	Indicators	Mean Score	Category
1	Idea Development	3.96	Positive
2	Organization and Structure	4.03	Positive
3	Language Use and Vocabulary	4.18	Positive
4	Confidence and Motivation	4.05	Positive
5	Ethical Awareness and Critical Thinking	4.51	Positive
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4.15</b>	Positive

The overall results show that all five indicators were categorized as positive, with an overall mean score of 4.15. This indicates that students had favorable perceptions of using ChatGPT to improve their writing skills. Among the five indicators, ethical awareness and critical thinking obtained the highest mean score (4.51), showing students' strong awareness of responsible AI use. Language use and vocabulary also received a high score (4.18), indicating that students appreciated ChatGPT's contribution to improving grammar, vocabulary, and writing style. The detailed results for each indicator are presented in Tables 2–6.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions on Idea Development

No	Statements	Mean
1	ChatGPT helps me generate ideas for my writing topics.	4.00
2	I find it easier to express my ideas after using ChatGPT.	3.85
3	ChatGPT inspires me in creating engaging introductory paragraphs.	3.95
4	ChatGPT helps me express ideas that are difficult to explain.	4.28
5	I feel more creative in writing after using ChatGPT.	3.72
	<b>Total Average</b>	<b>3.96</b>

The idea development indicator obtained a mean score of 3.96, categorized as positive. This indicates that students perceived ChatGPT as helpful for generating and expressing ideas in writing tasks. The highest score was item P4 (4.28), showing that ChatGPT helped students explain difficult ideas. Meanwhile, the lowest score was item P5 (3.72), suggesting that ChatGPT supports idea generation but does not replace students' creativity.

Table 3. Students' Perceptions on Organization and Structure

No	Statements	Mean
1	I can organize my arguments more systematically with ChatGPT's help.	4.21
2	I get help organizing the structure of my academic writing.	3.85
3	ChatGPT provides good suggestions for paragraph transitions.	4.13
4	ChatGPT helps me improve sentence arrangement.	4.23
5	My writing structure is more logical after ChatGPT's feedback.	3.62
6	I can identify structural errors in my writing thanks to ChatGPT.	4.00
7	ChatGPT helps me create an effective writing outline.	4.18
<b>Total Average</b>		<b>4.03</b>

The results of students' perceptions on organization and structure are presented in Table 3. The organization and structure indicator obtained a mean score of 4.03, categorized as positive. This shows that students considered ChatGPT useful for organizing ideas and improving the structure of their writing. The highest score was item P4 (4.23), indicating that ChatGPT effectively supported sentence arrangement. The lowest score was item P5 (3.62), suggesting that some students still relied on their own judgment to maintain logical flow.

Table 4. Students' Perceptions on Language Use and Vocabulary

No	Statements	Mean
1	ChatGPT improves my understanding of grammar usage.	4.21
2	I learn new vocabulary through ChatGPT.	3.95
3	ChatGPT suggests more academic word choices.	4.33
4	ChatGPT enriches my writing style.	4.18
5	ChatGPT helps me avoid repetition in my writing.	4.21
6	ChatGPT helps me distinguish between formal and informal sentences.	4.21
<b>Total Average</b>		<b>4.18</b>

The results of students' perceptions on language use and vocabulary are presented in Table 4. The language use and vocabulary indicator obtained a mean score of 4.18, categorized as positive. This indicates that students perceived ChatGPT as helpful in improving grammar, vocabulary, and writing style. The highest score was item P3 (4.33), showing that ChatGPT was effective in suggesting more academic word choices. The lowest score was item P2 (3.95), indicating that vocabulary improvement was positive but slightly lower than other items.

Table 5. Students' Perceptions on Confidence and Motivation

No	Statements	Mean
1	I feel more confident in completing writing assignments after using ChatGPT.	4.05
2	ChatGPT motivates me to write more.	4.00
3	I am more comfortable writing in English with ChatGPT's assistance.	4.00

4	I am not afraid to make mistakes because ChatGPT helps me correct them.	4.05
5	I see ChatGPT as a good tool for independent learning.	4.10
6	ChatGPT makes me feel more prepared for academic writing tasks.	4.08
<b>Total Average</b>		<b>4.05</b>

The results of students' perceptions on confidence and motivation are presented in Table 5. The confidence and motivation indicator obtained a mean score of 4.05, categorized as positive. This shows that students felt more confident and motivated when using ChatGPT in writing tasks. The highest score was item P5 (4.10), indicating that students considered ChatGPT a useful tool for independent learning. Overall, ChatGPT was perceived as helping reduce anxiety and strengthen students' self-confidence in writing.

Table 6. Students' Perceptions on Ethical Awareness and Critical Thinking

No	Statements	Mean
1	I always review ChatGPT's output before using it.	4.44
2	I do not copy ChatGPT's responses word-for-word.	4.51
3	I understand that ChatGPT is not a replacement for my own thinking.	4.49
4	I think critically about the suggestions given by ChatGPT.	4.54
5	I realize the importance of originality even when using AI.	4.49
6	I believe ChatGPT should be used ethically and responsibly in academic writing.	4.56
<b>Total Average</b>		<b>4.51</b>

The ethical awareness and critical thinking indicator obtained the highest mean score of 4.51, categorized as positive. This indicates that students strongly recognized the importance of using ChatGPT responsibly and critically in academic writing. The highest score was item P6 (4.56), showing strong agreement that ChatGPT should be used ethically. Overall, students demonstrated awareness of originality, careful judgment, and responsible use of AI tools. The overall findings indicate that students had positive perceptions of ChatGPT across all five indicators. Students considered ChatGPT helpful in generating ideas, organizing written content, improving grammar and vocabulary, and increasing confidence in writing tasks. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which reported that AI tools can support writing development, motivation, and learner autonomy (Aineh & Ngui, 2024; Nelson et al., 2025; Thi Thuy, 2023).

The highest mean score was found in ethical awareness and critical thinking, indicating that students understood the importance of reviewing AI-generated content critically and using ChatGPT responsibly in academic writing. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing that AI should function as a learning aid rather than a substitute for human thinking (Chan & Hu, 2023; Dimeli & Kostas, 2025). Overall, ChatGPT can be beneficial for EFL writing development when used ethically and appropriately.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study concludes that students of the English Study Program at Universitas Riau hold positive perceptions of using ChatGPT in improving their writing skills. Students considered ChatGPT helpful for generating ideas, organizing written content, improving vocabulary and sentence structure, increasing confidence, and supporting ethical awareness in academic writing. The findings also show that students viewed ChatGPT as a supportive learning tool rather than a replacement for their own creativity and critical thinking.

Overall, ChatGPT can help students overcome common writing difficulties by providing suggestions, feedback, and guidance during the writing process. Its use may increase motivation and assist students in producing clearer and more organized academic writing when used appropriately. For future research, it is recommended to involve participants from different academic programs or levels and to combine quantitative and qualitative methods in order to obtain deeper insights into the impact of ChatGPT on students' writing development.

#### Acknowledgement

The researcher would like to express sincere gratitude to the English Study Program, Universitas Riau, for the support and facilities provided. Appreciation is also extended to all students who participated in this study and to the supervisors for their valuable guidance.

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How to cite this article:

Aisy, S. R., Supriusman., & Erni. (2026). English Study Program of Universitas Riau Students' Perceptions of Using ChatGPT in Improving Their Writing Skills. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(5), 346-354.

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