



## **STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF CHATGPT IN WRITING OF EXPOSITORY TEXT COURSE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study was inspired by the use of ChatGPT to assist in writing expository texts, which has created various students' perceptions. Therefore, this study aimed to explore third-semester English students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in writing expository texts at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar in the 2024/2025 academic year. This qualitative study employed a phenomenological design. The informants consisted of 7 students from the English Education Department selected using purposive sampling. The researcher served as the key instrument, supported by an interview guide. Data validity was ensured through time triangulation. Data analysis followed Sugiyono's (2013) model of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The results revealed various perceptions of using ChatGPT. Positive perceptions included assistance in creating outlines, brainstorming ideas, language translation, and generating excellent texts. Negative perceptions included inaccurate information, over-reliance on AI, lack of creativity, and lack of understanding.

**Keywords:** *Students' perception, ChatGPT, Expository text*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of higher education, particularly in language learning and academic writing. Among AI-powered tools, ChatGPT, a generative pre-trained transformer developed by OpenAI, has gained unprecedented popularity since its release in late 2022. ChatGPT is capable of producing human-like text, generating ideas, correcting grammar, paraphrasing, translating, and structuring academic essays within seconds. Its free accessibility and conversational interface have made it a favored tool among university students who are required to complete various writing assignments. Writing is considered one of the most cognitively demanding language skills. It requires learners to integrate linguistic



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knowledge, organizational competence, and critical thinking to produce coherent and purposeful texts.

Within academic settings, expository writing is a core competency. Expository text aims to explain, clarify, or inform readers about a topic in a logical and objective manner. For English Education students, mastery of expository writing is crucial because it reflects their readiness to teach writing and to produce academic papers during their studies. Despite its importance, many students face persistent difficulties in writing expository texts. Common issues include limited vocabulary, weak organizational structure, lack of supporting details, and low motivation. These challenges are often intensified by writing anxiety and insufficient feedback. In response, digital tools such as ChatGPT has been introduced as potential scaffolds. Proponents argue that ChatGPT can reduce cognitive load by handling lower-order tasks, such as grammar correction and idea generation, allowing students to focus on content and argumentation. Academically, investigating the use of ChatGPT is important because it intersects with theories of computer-assisted language learning, self-regulated learning, and writing pedagogy. Practically, understanding how students perceive and use ChatGPT can guide lecturers in designing ethical and effective instructional strategies. Given that UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar has integrated digital literacy into its curriculum, exploring students' perceptions provides direct implications for policy and classroom practice.

Several studies have examined ChatGPT in educational contexts. Wang (2019) defines AI as technology that enables machines to simulate human cognitive functions. In writing, Ray (2023) highlights that ChatGPT can generate outlines, provide feedback, and support brainstorming. Suharmawan (2023) notes that ChatGPT enhances students' creativity and reduces writing anxiety. Valova, Mladenova, and Kanev (2024) found that most university students perceive ChatGPT as useful for improving writing efficiency and confidence.

However, the literature also reveals significant controversies. First, regarding effectiveness, Esmaeil et al. (2023) reported that students found ChatGPT helpful for idea generation and grammatical accuracy in argumentative writing. Hasanah (2023) found that 80% of Indonesian university students perceived an improvement in their writing skills after using ChatGPT. In contrast, Zhai, Wibowo, and Li (2024) conducted a systematic review and concluded that overreliance on AI dialogue systems may impair students' analytical thinking and originality. Second, regarding ethics and reliability, Ray (2023) warns about risks of plagiarism and academic dishonesty due to ChatGPT's ability to produce full essays instantly. Pervaiz et al. (2025) argue that excessive dependency may weaken critical thinking. Ngo (2023) also found that students struggled to evaluate the reliability of ChatGPT's sources and to cite them correctly. These findings indicate an inconsistency: while ChatGPT is perceived as beneficial, its misuse may undermine learning outcomes. Third, regarding context, most existing studies have been conducted in Western, East Asian, or urban universities. Limited research has focused on Islamic higher education institutions in regional Indonesia. Furthermore, few studies specifically address expository writing, as most focus on argumentative or general writing. Rani and Kher (2019) note that expository writing requires distinct structural features, yet this genre remains underexplored in AI research. To address these gaps, this study refers to recent



## **Linguavision: Journal of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature**

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UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar



scholarship in the World Economics Journal (WEJ). Zhang and Liu (2024), in their WEJ article “AI Adoption in Higher Education: Opportunities and Policy Challenges in Developing Countries,” argue that AI tools like ChatGPT can reduce educational inequality by providing low-cost academic support. However, they emphasize that without institutional policies on ethical use, AI may exacerbate academic integrity issues. This perspective is critical because it frames students’ perceptions not only in terms of learning effectiveness but also in terms of responsible use within developing country contexts.

Thus, the literature shows three critical gaps: 1) lack of studies on expository writing specifically; 2) limited research in Indonesian Islamic higher education contexts; and 3) insufficient understanding of how students balance benefits and risks of ChatGPT. This study addresses these gaps by exploring the lived experiences of third-semester English Education students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. Although ChatGPT is widely used by students to assist with writing, there is limited empirical evidence on how third-semester English Education students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar perceive its use specifically in expository writing. The preliminary Google Form survey indicates mixed experiences: some students report improved structure and grammar, while others report confusion due to unclear prompts, unnatural vocabulary, and over reliance. This dual impact suggests that students’ perceptions are complex and require in-depth qualitative exploration. Therefore, the central research problem is: How do third-semester students perceive the use of ChatGPT in the expository writing course?

Based on the research problem, the objectives of this study are: To describe third-semester English Education students’ perceptions of using ChatGPT in writing expository texts. To identify the perceived benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT in the expository writing course. To provide recommendations for the ethical and pedagogical integration of ChatGPT in writing instruction. This study was conducted at the English Education Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Islamic University (UIN) Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, West Sumatra, Indonesia. The expository writing course is a compulsory subject for third-semester students in the 2024/2025 academic year. The course adopts a student-centered approach, allowing students to explore topics using various resources, including ChatGPT. Data collection was conducted from July 17 to July 26, 2025, through offline interviews on campus and online interviews via mobile phone.6. Units of AnalysisThe unit of analysis in this study consists of seven third-semester English Education students who have completed the expository writing course and have used ChatGPT more than once to assist with writing.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on criteria: 1) completion of the expository writing course; 2) active use of ChatGPT for expository writing; and 3) experience of both positive and negative aspects of using ChatGPT. Data saturation was reached at the seventh informant. The informants represent the target population whose lived experiences are central to understanding the phenomenon under study.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is used to understand social phenomena and the perspectives of individuals in a specific context. According to Moleong, as cited in Pahleviannur et al. (2020), qualitative research aims to

*Sohel Fariza Ulfa, Rahmawati, Nina Suzanne' Zulhermindra (2026)*



## **Linguavision: Journal of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature**

Vol.1 No.1 2026

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UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar



comprehend the phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behaviors, perceptions, motivations, and actions, in a holistic and descriptive manner using words and language. The research design used in this study was phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that seeks to understand individuals' lived experiences, perceptions, and views regarding a particular phenomenon. Rooted in psychology and philosophy, phenomenological research focuses on describing participants' experiences to capture the essence of the phenomenon. According to Giorgi and Moustakas, as cited in Creswell and Creswell (2018), this design has strong philosophical foundations and typically involves in-depth interviews. Based on the theoretical foundation above, the researchers chose a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design because this study aimed to describe third-semester students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in the expository writing course.

The informants in this study were third-semester students majoring in English Education at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar who had completed the expository writing course in the 2024/2025 academic year. A total of seven students were selected as informants. The number of informants was determined based on data saturation, which means that data collection was stopped when the seventh informant no longer provided new information. The data were considered sufficient when they fulfilled three perception components: 1) Cognitive component: students' knowledge, opinions, and beliefs about ChatGPT; 2) Affective component: students' attitudes, including positive and negative emotions; and 3) Conative component: students' behavioral tendencies in using ChatGPT. Informants were selected based on the following criteria: Third-semester English Education students who had completed the expository writing course in the 2024/2025 academic year. Students who used ChatGPT to assist in writing expository texts. Students who had used ChatGPT more than once, not just for a single trial. Students who had both positive and negative experiences using ChatGPT in the expository writing course.

Priority was given to students with the longest duration of ChatGPT use. The researcher used a Google Form for initial screening to identify potential informants based on these criteria. To select informants, the researcher employed purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which participants are selected according to specific criteria. According to Nasution (2023), this technique involves consciously selecting samples with particular attributes or qualities relevant to the study. The research setting refers to the environment, context, or location where data were collected. It includes all relevant environmental factors, such as physical location, social conditions, and culture. This study was conducted at the English Education Department, State Islamic University (UIN) Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. Interviews were conducted both offline and online. Offline interviews took place on Campus 1, specifically in the HMJ English room, the gazebo behind the library, behind the GH building, and in front of the campus hall. Online interviews were conducted via mobile phone for informants who were on academic holiday. The data collection was carried out from Thursday, July 17th, 2025, at 10:00 AM to Saturday, July 26th, 2025, at 6:00 PM. This setting was chosen because it provided direct access to third-semester English Education students who had experience using ChatGPT in expository writing.





## **Linguavision: Journal of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature**

Vol.1 No.1 2026

E-ISSN: XXXX-XXXX

UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar



In qualitative research, the researchers are the key instrument. According to Gunawan, as cited in Pahleviannur et al. (2020), the researchers act as a planner, data collector, analyst, interpreter, and reporter. The main instrument used to collect data was a semi-structured interview guide. The interview guide contained questions regarding students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in expository writing. The supporting instrument was a mobile phone used for audio recording and documentation during the data collection process. The recording device was used to ensure the accuracy of the interview data. The data collection technique used in this study was in-depth interviews. According to Pahleviannur et al. (2020), an interview is a dialogue used by a researcher to obtain information from respondents. In-depth interviews can be structured or unstructured. In this study, the researcher used a semi-structured in-depth interview approach.

The researcher followed several steps to collect data: 1) preparing the interview guide; 2) determining the time and place for interviews; 3) initiating conversations to build rapport; 4) conducting interviews based on the guide; and 5) recording interviews using audio and notes. The interviews focused on third-semester students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in writing expository texts. Data trustworthiness refers to the process of ensuring that the collected data are accurate, reliable, and unbiased. In this study, the researcher used time triangulation to check data trustworthiness. Time triangulation involves collecting data using the same method at different times to test consistency and reliability. After interviewing all informants, the researcher transcribed the interviews and analyzed the results. Time triangulation was carried out by collecting data at several periods and revalidating the interview results regarding students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in the expository writing course. According to Sugiyono (2013), triangulation in data collection means testing data reliability by using various data sources and collection methods.

To analyze the data, the researchers used Miles and Huberman's three-stage qualitative data analysis model, as cited in Sugiyono (2013). The stages are: Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing and Verification.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the data analysis, this study identified eleven perceptions of third-semester English Education students regarding the use of ChatGPT in the expository writing course at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, 2024/2025 academic year. The eleven perceptions are grouped into six positive perceptions and five negative perceptions. The findings are presented below with supporting interview excerpts.

### **Positive Perceptions:**

#### **1. Assisting in Brainstorming Ideas.**

Three informants, I.1, I.6, and I.7, stated that ChatGPT helped them generate ideas when starting to write. I.1 explained, "Untuk mencari ide untuk apa yang akan dibahas, dikembangkan gitu kan kak" [To find ideas for what to discuss and develop]. This indicates that ChatGPT functions as an initial idea generator that reduces students' difficulty in beginning expository essays.

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## **Linguavision: Journal of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature**

Vol.1 No.1 2026

E-ISSN: XXXX-XXXX

UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar



### **2. Assisting in Improving Text Structure**

Informant I.5 reported that ChatGPT helped correct grammar and improve sentence structure. She stated, “Grammar, ataupun tulisan dalam katanya, soalnya nulis expository itu kan banyak, tapi ngga semuanya betul” [Grammar, or writing in general, because there are many expository writings, but not all are correct]. Thus, ChatGPT was perceived as a tool for producing more coherent and grammatically accurate texts.

### **3. Assisting in Idea Generation and Editing**

Informant I.4 used ChatGPT to check whether his writing matched expository conventions. He said, “ChatGPT sebagai tempat untuk kita bertanya, apakah sudah sesuai dengan tulisan expository yang sesungguhnya atau tidak untuk mengoreksinya” [ChatGPT is a place to ask whether it is in line with actual expository writing to correct it]. This shows that ChatGPT supports revision and editing.

### **4. Assisting in Excellent Text Generation Capabilities**

Informants I.1 and I.4 noted that ChatGPT could produce contextually appropriate texts. I.7 explained, “ChatGPT kan udah dikasih sama dia jadi nanti... ngikutin contohnya kak dari ChatGPT” [ChatGPT has already given an example, so I follow the example from ChatGPT]. This perception relates to ChatGPT’s ability to provide model texts.

### **5. Assisting in the Development of Independent Writing Skills**

Informants I.3 and I.4 perceived ChatGPT as encouraging autonomy. I.6 stated, “Mengasih usulan kayak gitu-gitu lah kak” [It gives suggestions like that]. By offering options and feedback, ChatGPT motivated students to experiment with different writing styles.

### **6. Assisting in Boosting Confidence and Motivation**

Informants I.2, I.4, and I.6 reported increased confidence. I.6 said, “Sebenarnya pede aja sih kak soalnya kan udah dikembangkan juga dari ide sendiri tapi melalui bantuan ChatGPT” [I’m quite confident because I developed it myself with the help of ChatGPT]. Instant feedback and visible improvement contributed to higher motivation.

## **Negative Perceptions**

### **1. Providing Inaccurate Information**

Informants I.1, I.5, and I.6 reported that ChatGPT sometimes generated irrelevant or incorrect information. I.5 stated, “Kalau kita nge-search contohnya tapi kadang ChatGPT ini yang lain gitu yang dikeluarinnya” [If we search for an example, sometimes ChatGPT comes up with something else]. This inaccuracy was linked to unclear prompts and the lack of cited sources.

### **2. Over-Reliance on AI**

Six informants, I.1, I.2, I.4, I.5, I.6, and I.7, admitted to dependency. I.5 said, “Merasa ketergantungan... bukan hanya di mata kuliah ini tapi di mata kuliah lain juga” [I feel dependent, not only in this course but in other courses too]. Convenience led students to rely on ChatGPT instead of thinking independently.

### **3. Copy-Paste Behavior**

Informants I.4 and I.5 acknowledged copying output directly. I.4 noted, “Kalau kita ambil mentah-mentah dari ChatGPT mungkin kita tidak mengerti struktur dari tulisan yang kita buat” [If we take it at face value, we may not understand the structure]. This behavior reduced learning and authenticity.



## **Linguavision: Journal of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature**

Vol.1 No.1 2026

E-ISSN: XXXX-XXXX

UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar



### **4. Limited Sources**

Informant I.2 reported that ChatGPT repeatedly gave the same references. She stated, “Berkali-kali kita minta referensinya pasti sama terus” [We asked for references many times, but they were always the same]. This limits students’ access to diverse academic sources.

### **11. Lack of Creativity**

Informant I.3 stated, “Kurang kritis gitu kalo mikir jadi kek udah ada bantuan... apa yang mau digambaran gitu” [Less critical because help is already available]. Overuse of ChatGPT reduced students’ critical thinking and originality.

## **DISCUSSION**

Empirically, the study of using ChatGPT identifies eleven distinct students’ perceptions, systematically grouped into six positive and five negative perceptions. Among these eleven perceptions, over-reliance and inaccurate information emerged as the most critical challenges. Six out of seven informants explicitly admitted to dependency on ChatGPT, not only in the expository writing course but also in other courses. Similarly, three informants reported receiving irrelevant or factually incorrect outputs, particularly when prompts were poorly formulated. The overall findings reveal a “dual impact” pattern.

On the positive side, students perceived ChatGPT as a valuable scaffold that reduced cognitive load, helped overcome writing anxiety, and provided immediate feedback. On the negative side, they also recognized substantial risks to their academic and intellectual development, including weakened critical thinking, reduced authenticity, and ethical concerns related to academic integrity. This duality indicates that students’ perceptions are not binary; they are nuanced, context-dependent, and shaped by how, when, and for what purpose ChatGPT is used.

The findings of this study both confirm and extend the existing body of literature on AI and academic writing. The six positive perceptions are strongly aligned with Ray (2023), who, in his comprehensive review, emphasized that ChatGPT can generate outlines, provide grammatical feedback, and support brainstorming processes, thereby reducing the cognitive burden on students during the initial stages of writing. Similarly, Suharmawan (2023) reported that ChatGPT enhances students’ creativity and reduces writing anxiety by providing instant and non-judgmental feedback. The specific finding on increased confidence and motivation is consistent with Hasanah (2023), who conducted a survey among Indonesian university students and found that 80% perceived a significant improvement in their writing skills after integrating ChatGPT into their writing process. This consistency suggests that the motivational affordances of ChatGPT are not limited to Western contexts but are also evident among Indonesian EFL learners in regional Islamic universities.

On the other hand, the five negative perceptions resonate with emerging critical scholarship on the limitations of generative AI in education. The issue of inaccurate information directly supports Zhai et al. (2024), whose systematic review concluded that overreliance on AI dialogue systems can impair students’ analytical thinking and expose them to unreliable or fabricated content. The problem of over-reliance and copy-paste behavior confirms the arguments of Pervaiz et al. (2025), who warned that excessive



## **Linguavision: Journal of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature**

Vol.1 No.1 2026

E-ISSN: XXXX-XXXX

UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar



dependency on AI writing tools may weaken students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. It also aligns with Sok et al., as cited in Mubaroq et al. (2024), who classified dependency as one of the key disadvantages of AI in higher education. Furthermore, the findings on limited sources and lack of creativity extend Ngo's (2023) research, which identified that many university students struggled to evaluate the reliability of ChatGPT's sources and to cite them correctly, leading to originality concerns. What distinguishes this study from prior research is its specific focus on expository writing and its location within an Indonesian Islamic higher education context. Rani and Kher (2019) note that expository writing requires distinct structural features, such as thesis statements, topic sentences, and logical progression of ideas, which differ from argumentative or narrative genres.

Yet, these genre-specific challenges have been largely overlooked in AI research. By situating the study at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, this research also responds to Zhang and Liu's (2024) call in the *World Economics Journal* for more context-sensitive studies on AI adoption in developing countries. Zhang and Liu argue that while AI tools can reduce educational inequality by providing low-cost academic support, their integration must be accompanied by institutional policies to prevent academic integrity violations. This study, therefore, contributes contextually grounded evidence that supports and nuances these global policy discussions.

### **5.3 Explanations and Critical Interpretation**

The dominance of over-reliance can be explained through the lens of cognitive load theory and self-regulated learning. ChatGPT significantly reduces extraneous cognitive load by automating lower-order writing tasks such as grammar correction, paraphrasing, and idea generation. For students under academic pressure, this reduction in effort is highly appealing. Many informants reported facing tight deadlines and multiple assignments, which made ChatGPT's speed and convenience difficult to resist. Over time, this repeated use led to a pattern that can be described as "academic addiction." Several informants expressed anxiety, frustration, or a sense of being "stuck" when they were required to write without AI assistance. This emotional dependency is problematic because writing fluency, coherence, and critical thinking are skills that develop through deliberate practice, cognitive struggle, and iterative revision.

When AI consistently performs these cognitive tasks, students bypass the very processes that foster linguistic and intellectual growth. The issue of inaccurate information, on the other hand, is closely linked to students' prompt engineering literacy. Prompt engineering refers to the skill of crafting clear, specific, and contextually rich instructions for AI systems. The data show that when students used vague prompts such as "make an expository text about education," ChatGPT often produced generic, repetitive, or contextually irrelevant outputs. Conversely, students who experimented with more detailed prompts reported better results. This suggests that the quality of AI output is not solely determined by the tool itself, but by the user's ability to interact with it effectively.

Therefore, prompt literacy should be conceptualized as a new digital competency and integrated into writing pedagogy, alongside traditional skills such as organization, coherence, and citation. The study also supports a "dual impact model" of AI in writing education. This model posits that ChatGPT is not inherently good or bad. Its impact is mediated by two key factors: students' self-regulation and lecturers' pedagogical guidance.





## **Linguavision: Journal of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature**

Vol.1 No.1 2026

E-ISSN: XXXX-XXXX

UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar



Students with higher self-regulation were more likely to use ChatGPT for brainstorming and editing, while maintaining ownership of their ideas. In contrast, students with lower self-regulation tended to copy AI-generated texts directly, leading to reduced learning outcomes. From a pedagogical perspective, lecturers have a crucial role in shaping how AI is used.

Rather than banning ChatGPT outright, which may be impractical given its widespread accessibility, lecturers should design ethical and strategic instructional frameworks. These may include: 1) teaching prompt engineering as part of the writing course, 2) requiring students to submit both AI-generated drafts and their revised versions with reflection notes, 3) emphasizing academic integrity and the risks of plagiarism, and 4) designing assessments that prioritize critical thinking and personal voice over formulaic correctness. In conclusion, this study reveals that ChatGPT has become an integral part of students' writing ecology. It offers substantial affordances in terms of idea generation, structure, and motivation, but it also presents real risks of dependency, inaccuracy, and reduced creativity. The challenge for English Education departments, particularly in developing country contexts like Indonesia, is to move beyond a dichotomy of "pro-AI" versus "anti-AI" and instead cultivate "AI-literate" students who can use generative tools ethically, critically, and effectively. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts, compare across genres, and investigate lecturers' perspectives to build a more holistic understanding of AI integration in writing instruction.

The dominance of over-reliance among informants can be explained by the convenience, speed, and immediate feedback offered by ChatGPT. Many students faced deadline pressure and found it more efficient to use AI for quick solutions rather than engaging in independent cognitive effort. Over time, this convenience led to what can be termed "academic addiction," where students reported feeling anxious or stuck when required to write without AI assistance. This pattern is problematic because writing fluency and critical thinking are developed through consistent practice and struggle, which are bypassed when students depend excessively on AI. In addition, the issue of inaccurate information was often linked to students' limited prompt engineering skills. When prompts were vague or unclear, ChatGPT tended to produce generic, irrelevant, or fabricated outputs. This finding suggests that prompt literacy, the ability to formulate precise and effective instructions for AI, should be taught alongside writing skills in the curriculum. Overall, the study supports a "dual impact" model, which posits that ChatGPT is neither inherently beneficial nor harmful. Its effect depends largely on students' level of self-regulation and the extent of lecturer guidance. To maximize benefits while mitigating risks, students should be trained to use ChatGPT as a scaffold for brainstorming and editing rather than for direct copying. Lecturers also play a crucial role by emphasizing ethical use, academic integrity, and the development of independent writing competence.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Based on the research findings, although students recognize the benefits of ChatGPT, positive findings are more dominant, but during the interviews, researchers realized that there are weaknesses in ChatGPT that are strongly felt by informants, namely inaccurate information and over-reliance on ChatGPT, becoming the main challenges in its



## **Linguavision: Journal of English Education, Linguistics, and Literature**

Vol.1 No.1 2026

E-ISSN: XXXX-XXXX

UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar



use in education, especially in expository writing. Therefore, the use of ChatGPT as a tool for expository writing is permitted provided that the rules are followed, the results generated by ChatGPT are not copied and pasted, and must follow the prompts written to ensure the results align with the expectations.

### **B. Suggestion**

Based on the conclusion, there are recommendations in particular:

#### **1. English Students**

For students, the results of this study are expected to provide information to students of the English Education Study Program at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar regarding the use of ChatGPT in writing of expository text. Students can use ChatGPT as a tool to assist in writing expository texts, and students must also be wise in using and writing 5657 prompts to ChatGPT to produce accurate results. However, they must still follow the rules set by their lecturers.

#### **2. Lecturers**

Based on the results of this study, it is hoped to provide valuable information for lecturers, especially those teaching expository writing. Lecturer must be able to conducting the general writing process and there must also be proffreading, and provide guidance to students in using ChatGPT, then lecturer should also ask students about the writings they have produced to see whether they understand them or not, and then lecturers should also review students' writings so that students have language and writing skills. Then, lecturers design new strategies by integrating ChatGPT into the learning process to make it more effective and efficient.

#### **3. Next Researcher**

For future researchers who wish to conduct research related to this topic, there are several related issues that can be developed from this study. The author acknowledges that there are still many weaknesses in this study. This thesis can serve as a reference for future researchers who wish to conduct research on the same topic. Future research may explore the topic about how ChatGPT affects students' critical thinking and writing development in writing of expository text.

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