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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

The sector of education has seen substantial changes in recent years due to technological breakthroughs. The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents a significant advancement in technology, now extensively utilized in many educational activities. Among various AI-based tools, ChatGPT has become one of the most noticeable innovations for teachers and students in different countries. According to Kirmani in Lund et al (2020: 574) stated that ChatGPT is a publicly accessible application created by OpenAI, which operates based on Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (GPT). ChatGPT operates as a conversational AI capable of generating human-like language, offering explanations, rectifying grammatical faults, and aiding users in composing essays or various forms of English documents.

In English Language Teaching (ELT), writing especially essay writing is an important skill that every student must master. According to Febriani (2022: 83), essay writing ability is essential aspect of writing skills that students need to master, as they are often given academic assignments that require them to write essays. Consequently, essay writing entails more than merely assembling words. It necessitates the capacity to systematically arrange thoughts, employ suitable syntax and terminology, and articulate opinions with clarity. However, based on the researcher's initial observation in an essay writing class in the English Study Program at Islamic University of Indragiri, many students experienced



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difficulties in writing essays. These difficulties include generating ideas, developing paragraphs, organizing essays and maintaining grammatical accuracy.

During the learning process, the researcher observed that several students used ChatGPT while completing essay writing tasks in the class. This observation indicated that ChatGPT was not only used outside the classroom, but also during the essay writing learning process. However, from this initial observation alone, the researcher could not clearly understand the extent to which ChatGPT was used by students, including how frequently it was used and for what purposes it was applied in essay writing.

To gain a clear understanding of this phenomenon, the researcher conducted a preliminary questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed to investigate students' experiences with ChatGPT in essay writing, encompassing usage frequency and application purpose. The findings indicated that numerous students utilised ChatGPT often during essay composition tasks. Some students used ChatGPT very often or often, while others used it sometimes. In terms of purpose, ChatGPT was mainly used to generate ideas, improve grammar, develop paragraphs, and organize essays. These data revealed that ChatGPT has become a popular tool among students during critical stages of the essay writing process.

Currently, ChatGPT is available in several versions, including the standard (free) version and the paid versions, such as ChatGPT Plus and ChatGPT Pro, which provide more advanced features and capabilities. However, this research specifically focused on the standard (free) version of ChatGPT because it was



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publicly accessible and the version most commonly used by students in their daily learning activities. Therefore, this research was not compared the different versions of ChatGPT but focused on students' perceptions of using the standard version of ChatGPT in learning essay writing.

Academically, this phenomenon attracted the researcher's attention because the increasing use of ChatGPT in higher education should be supported by empirical evidence regarding students' perceptions toward its use. Although ChatGPT has been widely adopted as a learning tool, students may have different perceptions regarding its benefits, limitations, and appropriate use in essay writing. Understanding these perceptions were important because they influenced how students accepted, understood and interpret educational technology in the learning process.

In this context, the concept of perception becomes important. According to Suyadi and Aisyah (2021: 1152), perception is a process that enables a person to recognize and understand various information received about something. Moreover, Qiong in Aisyah (2017: 1152) stated that perception is a conscious process that occurs in the human mind to recognize and interpret the surrounding environment. This process involves understanding the meaning of stimuli received when a person observes objects, events or relationships between phenomena, which are then processed by the brain. In this study, students' perceptions mean how students view, feel, and respond toward the use of ChatGPT in learning essay writing.



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Understanding students' perception was crucial because it could affect how they used the technology in their learning process. Positive perceptions could increase students' motivation and willingness to use ChatGPT effectively, while negative perceptions could cause resistance or misuse. Therefore, it was critical to investigate how students regarded the use of ChatGPT in essay writing, particularly in the English Study Program at Islamic University of Indragiri.

Several previous studies have investigated students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in English language learning. However, the most of these studies focused on English learning in general, vocabulary learning, or writing activities without specifically examining essay writing in the English Study Program. In addition, previous studies were conducted in different educational settings, making it necessary to investigate this phenomenon in the context of the English Study Program at Islamic University of Indragiri. Therefore, this research attempted to fill the gap by specifically describing students' perceptions of using standard version of ChatGPT in learning essay writing.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher conducted a study entitled *"The Students' Perceptions of Using ChatGPT in Learning Essay Writing in English Study Program at Islamic University of Indragiri."*

B. Identification of the Problems

Based on the background above, several problems can be identified as follows:

1. Students still had difficulties in writing essays effectively.
2. Students had different experiences in using ChatGPT in learning essay writing.



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3. Students still had limited understanding of the appropriate use of ChatGPT in learning essay writing.
4. Students used the standard (free) version of ChatGPT in learning essay writing, but their perceptions of using this version had not been clearly identified.

C. Limitation of the Problem

In this research, the researcher focused the research on students' perceptions of utilizing ChatGPT to learn essay writing in the English Study Program at the Islamic University of Indragiri.

D. Research Question

Based on the limitations of the problem mentioned above, the research question for this research was defined as follows: "What is the students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in learning essay writing in English Study Program at Islamic University of Indragiri?"

E. Objective of the Research

The research goal was to determine students' perceptions of using ChatGPT to learn essay writing in the English Study Program at the Islamic University of Indragiri.

F. Significance of the Research

This research was expected to provide both theoretical and practical benefits as follows:

1. Theoretical Significance

The result of this study was expected to provide information about students' perception of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) in learning, especially in writing. It was also expected to contribute to a better



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understanding of how AI tools like ChatGPT help students learn languages in the classroom.

2. Practical Significance

The result of this study was expected to give benefits to both students and teachers. For students, it could help them use ChatGPT more effectively to improve their essay writing skills. For teachers, the findings could serve as a reference in guiding students to use AI tools responsibly and creatively in learning English writing.

G. Definition of the Key Terms

This study included a number of essential terms. To prevent misunderstanding, the terminology used are defined as follows:

a). Students' Perceptions

According to Lindawati et al (2021: 393) stated that perception refers to an individual's response or impression of an object that is receive through the senses, then organized, interpreted and evaluated to form an understanding or meaning of that object. As a result, students' perception is how they view and interpret their experience utilizing ChatGPT to practice essay writing. In this research, the students' perceptions were centered on their use of ChatGPT to learn essay writing.

b). ChatGPT

According to Kirmani in Lund et al (2022: 574), ChatGPT is a publicly accessible platform developed by OpenAI that is built on GPT technology. Text generation, machine translation, content correction, issue solving, summarization, grammatical correction, and question answering are just a few



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of the tasks that ChatGPT can be used for. (Kim et al, 2023: 82). By utilizing deep learning techniques and complex algorithms, GPT can understand the context of a text and produce human-like responses, making it distinct from other language processing tools. In this research, ChatGPT focused on its use as a learning assistant to help students generate ideas, improve grammar and organize essays in essay writing activities.

c). Essay Writing

According to Dalman in Helaluddin (2017: 16), writing is a communication activity that involves using written language to communicate ideas, messages, and information to other parties. Furthermore, according to Suparsa et al (2023: 2430) stated that essay writing is a part of writing skills material taught in the curriculum. This suggests that essay writing is not just a part of the curriculum, but also a cognitive process for expressing their ideas. Essay writing demands pupils to recognize ideas rationally, apply proper syntax, and communicate arguments properly. In this research, essay writing focused on students' academic writing activities when they use ChatGPT as a supporting tool in learning essay writing.