

ChatGPT for ESL Writing: A Case Study on Year 6 ESL Pupils' Perceptions

Jeyabavani Jeyraman^{1,2}, Melor Md Yunus² and Nur Ehsan Mohd Said²

¹SJKT Ladang Tumbuk, Tanjung Sepat 4800, Selangor, Malaysia, ²Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi 43600, Selangor, Malaysia

Corresponding Author Email: jeyabavani98@gmail.com

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the perceptions and experiences of Year 6 ESL pupils in a primary school in Kuala Langat, Selangor, Malaysia, regarding the use of ChatGPT to enhance their writing skills. Grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the study examines the impact of ChatGPT on pupils' confidence, creativity, and linguistic competence while addressing usability challenges and risks of over-reliance. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 pupils, focusing on their attitudes toward writing and perceptions of ChatGPT. Findings indicate that ChatGPT significantly improves grammar, vocabulary, and engagement, enhancing linguistic competence and motivation. However, concerns about dependency and accessibility pose challenges to broader implementation. These insights contribute to discussions on AI integration in education, emphasizing the need for balanced approaches to maximize benefits while mitigating drawbacks. The study provides recommendations for educators, policymakers, and developers to optimize ChatGPT use in ESL classrooms, ensuring it supports learning without fostering over-reliance. This research expands knowledge on AI-assisted learning and its transformative potential in education.

Keywords: ChatGPT, ESL Writing Skills, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, AI-assisted learning

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly transforming educational practices, influencing administration, instruction, and learning in significant ways (Chen et al., 2022). AI-driven tools, such as ChatGPT, have introduced innovative methods to support language acquisition, particularly in enhancing English as a Second Language (ESL) writing skills among primary school pupils. Writing proficiency is a critical skill for academic and professional success, requiring learners to communicate ideas coherently while adhering to grammatical, structural, and vocabulary conventions (Thulasi et al., 2022; Yunus & Chan, 2021). However, for ESL learners, mastering English writing remains a challenging task due to its inherent complexity and the precision it demands (Maharani, 2021). These challenges are particularly

pronounced among young learners who are still developing their cognitive, linguistic, and literacy skills.

In the Malaysian context, ESL learners face unique barriers, including limited exposure to English outside the classroom, low confidence in writing, and insufficient personalized feedback owing to large class sizes and resource constraints (Rahman & Ismail, 2024). These challenges underscore the need for targeted interventions to support the development of writing skills among primary-level students. The integration of AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, offers promising solutions to these issues. With its interactive capabilities and immediate, personalized feedback, ChatGPT has the potential to enhance learners' motivation, automate instructional tasks, and address resource limitations effectively (Lim & Tan, 2023; Ibrahim & Kirkpatrick, 2024). However, the role and effectiveness of ChatGPT in primary education, particularly in fostering ESL writing skills, remain underexplored.

Existing research has largely concentrated on the application of AI tools in secondary and tertiary education or among adult learners, leaving a significant gap in understanding their impact on younger pupils (Zhang & Zou, 2024). Young learners have distinct developmental, cognitive, and linguistic needs compared to older students, necessitating tailored research into how AI tools can support their learning experiences (Selvanathan & Muniandy, 2024). While some studies have investigated the use of ChatGPT in English teaching within Malaysia, these often focus on general teaching strategies or higher education contexts, offering limited insights into its application at the primary school level (Chong, 2023). Addressing this gap is crucial for designing effective, age-appropriate AI-assisted learning interventions for young ESL learners.

This case study examines the perceptions and experiences of Malaysian Year 6 ESL pupils in utilizing ChatGPT to improve their writing skills. By exploring learners' perspectives, this study aims to assess the potential benefits and limitations of ChatGPT as a supplementary tool for writing instruction. As AI technologies continue to evolve, understanding their implications for primary education is vital to leverage their capabilities while addressing the challenges they may present. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on AI-assisted learning by focusing on primary-level ESL learners in Malaysia, offering valuable insights into how tools like ChatGPT can support their language acquisition journey. With this aim, this study intends to address the following research questions:

RQ1 : How do Year 6 ESL students perceive the use of ChatGPT in enhancing their writing skills?

RQ2 : What is the role of ChatGPT in enhancing ESL pupils' writing skills?

English Writing Skills in ESL Classrooms

In Malaysia, the emphasis on English proficiency is central to national educational policies, such as the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, which highlights the importance of bilingual proficiency in Bahasa Malaysia and English (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Writing, in particular, stands out as a crucial yet challenging area for ESL learners. Effective ESL instruction often employs methodologies like phonics, interactive speaking activities, and listening comprehension exercises. However, writing is frequently noted for its complexity, requiring mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and idea organization (Hosseini et al., 2021).

Writing proficiency not only enhances language skills but also fosters critical thinking and communication abilities (Hyland, 2021).

Despite its importance, ESL learners face persistent challenges such as limited vocabulary, grammatical weaknesses, and difficulty in organizing ideas (Hosseini et al., 2021). Scholars emphasize the need for targeted strategies to address these challenges. For instance, Teng and Zhang (2020) advocate for process writing approaches, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing, which have been shown to improve linguistic accuracy and build learners' confidence. Similarly, peer feedback and collaborative writing have been effective in enhancing writing coherence and fluency, as evidenced by Nguyen (2022) in her study on Vietnamese ESL classrooms. These methods align with studies on Malaysian ESL learners, where collaborative learning strategies and digital tools are increasingly utilized to improve writing (Wil, Yunus, & Suliman, 2019).

Recent studies also highlight the role of digital tools in developing ESL writing skills. Chen and Lin (2023) found that online collaborative platforms improved writing engagement and idea organization among primary learners, while Smith and Taylor (2022) observed improved essay coherence and grammatical accuracy among high school students using digital writing tools. However, most studies focus on secondary or tertiary education, leaving a gap in understanding how these tools impact primary-level learners. Furthermore, there is limited research on the integration of these tools in Malaysian ESL classrooms, necessitating further exploration to address the unique needs of younger learners in this context (Bayuong, Hashim, & Yunus, 2019).

Artificial Intelligence in Enhancing Writing Skills

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into education has revolutionized language learning, offering personalized learning experiences, immediate feedback, and adaptive content (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). AI tools like Grammarly and other writing assistants have demonstrated their efficacy in improving academic writing. For example, Kumar et al. (2021) found that Grammarly helped university students identify and correct grammatical errors, enhancing overall writing quality. Similarly, Alharbi and Meccawy (2023) reported that AI-driven feedback systems improved linguistic accuracy and fostered learner autonomy and motivation among ESL students.

At the secondary level, Jones and Ahmed (2023) highlighted that AI tools enhanced students' ability to structure arguments and improve writing fluency. Lim and Wong (2022) observed similar benefits at the tertiary level, where AI tools supported dissertation writing, reducing anxiety and increasing efficiency among postgraduate students. However, concerns about over-reliance on AI tools and their potential to diminish critical thinking have been raised (Hockly, 2022). These findings suggest that AI should complement rather than replace traditional instructional methods.

While research at higher education and secondary levels is robust, limited attention has been given to how AI tools can support primary ESL learners. Additionally, the potential of AI tools to address broader aspects of writing, such as tone and coherence, remains underexplored at the primary level. This gap highlights the need for age-appropriate research to assess the

efficacy of AI tools in fostering foundational writing skills among younger learners (Jerry & Yunus, 2021).

ChatGPT as a Learning Tool

ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, is gaining traction as a versatile educational tool with applications in language learning and writing instruction. Its interactive capabilities, such as generating writing prompts and providing detailed feedback, make it a promising aid for writing development (Brown & Wang, 2023). Early studies on ChatGPT's role in writing instruction have yielded encouraging results. For instance, Zhang and Li (2023) found that secondary school students in China using ChatGPT demonstrated significant improvements in essay organization and coherence. Similarly, Davis and Chen (2023) reported that university students in Canada benefited from ChatGPT's guidance in refining thesis statements and enhancing paragraph structure.

In primary education, Ahmed et al. (2023) explored ChatGPT's potential as a writing aid and found that pupils valued its ability to generate ideas and improve sentence structure. Teachers also noted reduced workload due to the tool's preliminary feedback capabilities. Creative writing studies, such as Johnson et al. (2023), highlighted ChatGPT's effectiveness in brainstorming and narrative structuring, enabling primary students to produce more imaginative stories. However, limitations such as contextually inappropriate content and cultural insensitivity have been noted (Kasemsap, 2022). These findings underline the need for teacher guidance in effectively integrating ChatGPT into classrooms.

Despite its potential, research on ChatGPT in primary education remains scarce, particularly in the Malaysian context. Most studies focus on secondary or higher education settings, leaving a significant gap in understanding how younger learners perceive and interact with the tool. Moreover, there is a lack of research examining how ChatGPT can address the specific challenges faced by Malaysian ESL pupils, such as limited exposure to English and low confidence in writing. Addressing these gaps is critical to developing effective, age-appropriate AI-assisted writing interventions for primary learners (Yunus & Abdullah, 2011).

Methods

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to explore the perceptions and experiences of Year 6 ESL students using ChatGPT to enhance their writing skills. Qualitative research was deemed suitable for gaining in-depth insights into complex phenomena, making it appropriate for understanding students' subjective experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study approach enabled a detailed examination of a specific group within a particular context, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of how ChatGPT impacted ESL writing development.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed to select a sample of 10 primary ESL Year 6 students from Kuala Langat, Selangor. This method ensured the inclusion of students who had relevant experiences with the phenomenon under study, which in this case is the use of ChatGPT to enhance writing skills. The sample included an equal representation of genders and a mix of students with varying levels of writing proficiency to reflect diverse experiences.

Research Instrument

To explore the perceptions and experiences of the participants a semi-structured interview was conducted. The semi-structured interviews were divided into three sections that are demographic information, general attitudes towards writing, and experiences of using ChatGPT guided by the TAM. These interviews explored the perceived usefulness, ease of use, and overall acceptance of ChatGPT.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were the main method of data collection, providing flexibility to explore participants' experiences while following a structured framework. Each interview lasted between 15 to 30 minutes each collectively adding up to about 5 hours of interview time. Any non-relevant data that may have been deemed sensitive or irrelevant to the analysis was excluded from the transcription and coding processes.

Table 1

Interview Details and Information

Interviewee ID	Interview Length & Platform
S1	29:19 min; face-to-face
S2	26:52 min; face-to-face
S3	19:33 min; face-to-face
S4	15:16 min; face-to-face
S5	22:29 min; face-to-face
S6	31:17 min; face-to-face
S7	25:35 min; face-to-face
S8	30:20 min; face-to-face
S9	28:19 min; face-to-face
S10	27:43 min; face-to-face

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis. This approach provided a structured and systematic way to identify and interpret patterns within the data. The process began with familiarization, where audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were reviewed multiple times. This step helped the researcher immerse themselves in the data and gain a deep understanding of the participants' responses. This process yielded valuable insights into how ChatGPT influences students' writing experiences, highlighting its perceived usefulness, ease of use, and impact on their writing skills.

Findings

RQ1: How Do Year 6 ESL Students Perceive the Use of ChatGPT in Enhancing Their Writing Skills?

The analysis of the research data revealed seven overarching themes across the two research questions, each shedding light on the nuanced perspectives of ESL learners regarding the role of ChatGPT in enhancing their writing skills. For Research Question 1, which focused on the general attitudes of primary ESL students towards writing in English and their perceptions of ChatGPT's usefulness, four themes emerged, each supported by a set of eight codes that further unpack the students' views.

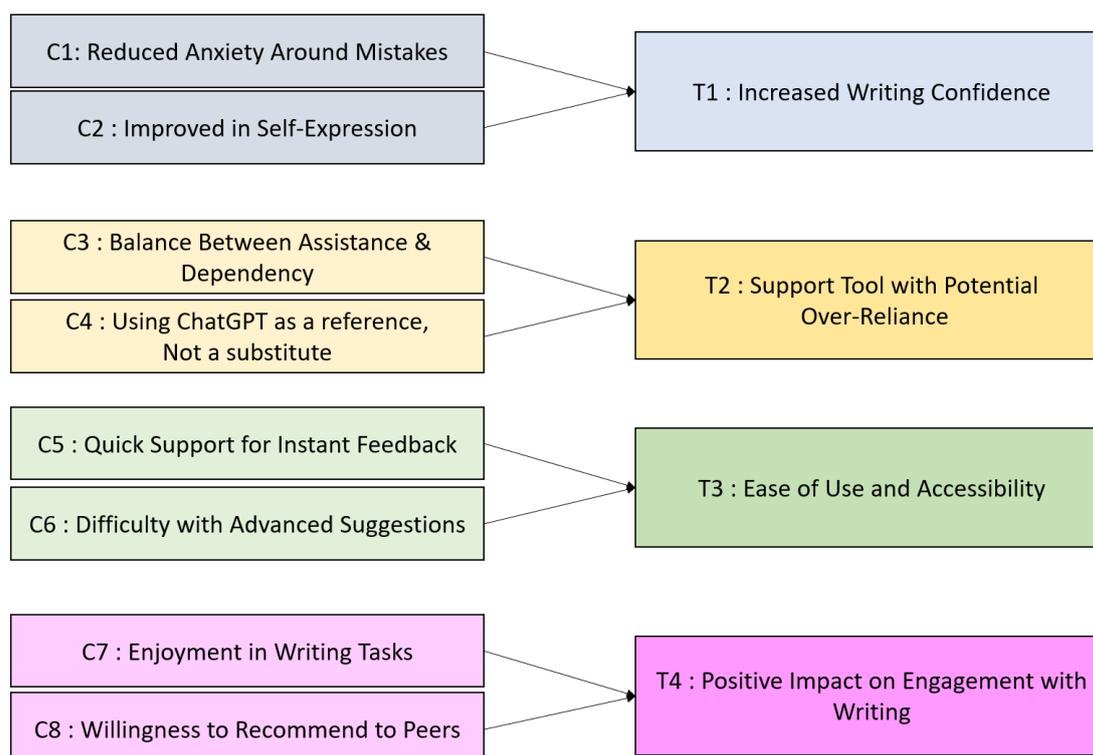


Figure 1 : Themes and codes generated for RQ1

Based on Figure 1, the first theme is Increased Writing Confidence, with codes such as Reduced Anxiety Around Mistakes and Improvement in Self-Expression. The second theme is ChatGPT as a Support Tool with Potential Over-Reliance, including Balance Between Assistance and Dependency and Using ChatGPT as a Reference, Not a Substitute. The third theme is the Ease of Use and Accessibility, with codes like Quick Support for Instant Feedback and Difficulty with Advanced Suggestions and lastly, the fourth theme which is Positive Impact on Engagement with Writing, highlighted by Enjoyment in Writing Tasks and Willingness to Recommend to Peers.

Increased Writing Confidence

The first theme emerging from the data highlights how ChatGPT enhances students' confidence in writing. Many students reported feeling less anxious about writing in English after using the tool. Prior to its adoption, they often struggled with grammatical errors and sentence formation, leading to frustration and a lack of confidence.

Several students emphasized that ChatGPT allowed them to experiment with writing without fear of making mistakes. For instance, S1 noted, *"Before using ChatGPT, I felt nervous about writing in English. It was hard to think of words to tell about something, and I also made many mistakes."* Similarly, S3 shared, *"Writing in English was difficult, and I felt very uneasy because I didn't know how to begin and worried about mistakes and getting so many things wrong."*

After adopting ChatGPT, students described feeling more confident and expressed that the tool served as a "personal helper" that made writing less intimidating. S8 stated, *"Now I feel more confident. ChatGPT gives me ideas and shows me examples."* This reflects the concept of reduced anxiety around making mistakes, as ChatGPT's ability to provide real-time corrections and feedback made students feel more secure in their writing attempts.

While most students experienced a boost in confidence, some highlighted challenges in using ChatGPT. S6 mentioned, *"Using ChatGPT is mostly easy, but sometimes the suggestions are too high level for me. Kinda hard. I think I need to use it many times to be a pro, can do everything."* Similarly, S5 stated that *"it's not always easy because I don't fully understand some of the suggestions."* further confirming this statement.

ChatGPT as a Support Tool with Potential Over-Reliance

The second theme centers on ChatGPT's role as a support tool, which students recognized as both beneficial and potentially problematic. While students consistently praised ChatGPT for its ability to assist with writing challenges, concerns about dependency emerged as a recurring issue.

For example, S3 shared, *"Sometimes I worry that I depend too much on it, and I get lazy. Like, I don't push myself to think as much because got ChatGPT, save my life."* Similarly, S7 noted, *"I recommend it because it can help with grammar and sentence flow. However, I'd also tell them to practice on their own so they don't become overly dependent on it."* These statements reveal a common tension: while ChatGPT supports students when they face difficulties, over-reliance on the tool could limit critical thinking and independent skill development.

Conversely, some students viewed ChatGPT as a guide rather than a complete substitute. S6 remarked, *"I recommend it to my friends, they don't know one. But I also tell them to try on their own also. Or else how to know we good or not"* Similarly, S1 said, *"It's like having a writing buddy. It helps with grammar and ideas, but you still need to think and practice yourself. Then only can become better."* These perspectives highlight that there are students who recognize the importance of balancing ChatGPT's assistance with personal effort.

Ease of Use and Accessibility

The third theme focuses on students' perceptions of ChatGPT's ease of use and accessibility. Many students praised the tool's simplicity and efficiency in providing real-time support for their writing tasks. For example, S8 shared, *"I just type the words I know, and ChatGPT to rephrase them,"* while S7 stated, *"ChatGPT helps me organize my ideas better and shows me how to structure paragraphs."* These accounts highlight how ChatGPT's user-friendly interface makes it an appealing tool for ESL learners by enabling quick feedback and guidance.

Despite these positive experiences, some students encountered challenges that limited their ability to fully benefit from ChatGPT. One notable issue was the complexity of some suggestions, which exceeded their language proficiency. S9 explained, "Sometimes the suggestions are too high-level, and I can't fully understand them." Additionally, technical issues such as slow internet access created barriers to seamless usage. S6 remarked, "It's hard to use ChatGPT when the internet is slow, can borrow my sister's phone only." External environments like connections tends to interfere with students' experience with ChatGPT.

Positive Impact on Engagement with Writing

The fourth theme explores how ChatGPT positively influenced students' engagement with writing, transforming it into a more enjoyable and less intimidating experience. Many students reported that the tool reduced the frustration and cognitive effort associated with writing, enabling them to approach tasks with greater enthusiasm.

S4 shared, "Writing used to be frustrating and slow, but now I feel less headache because ChatGPT gives me ideas to continue." Likewise, S1 stated that "now, I feel more confident. ChatGPT gives me ideas and I feel like I'm getting better. Adding to the theme, S2 also mentioned that "If I don't know how to continue, I type my ideas, and ChatGPT gives examples. It helps me see new ways to say what I want." These accounts highlight ChatGPT's role in making writing tasks more engaging by alleviating cognitive barriers and encouraging thinking. S5 also mentioned the same, by noting that "I used to find writing very hard. I felt uneasy because I didn't know how to begin, and I worried about making mistakes. Most of the time, I just gave up. Now, I feel a bit more comfortable." To further support this theme, S7 also claimed that "Now, I feel much more at ease when writing." which indicated the positive influence that ChatGPT has on student's writing tasks.

RQ2: What Is the Role of ChatGPT in Enhancing ESL Pupils' Writing Skills?

Three additional themes supported by six codes were identified to answer Research Question 2, which focused on analyzing the role of ChatGPT in enhancing students' writing skills.

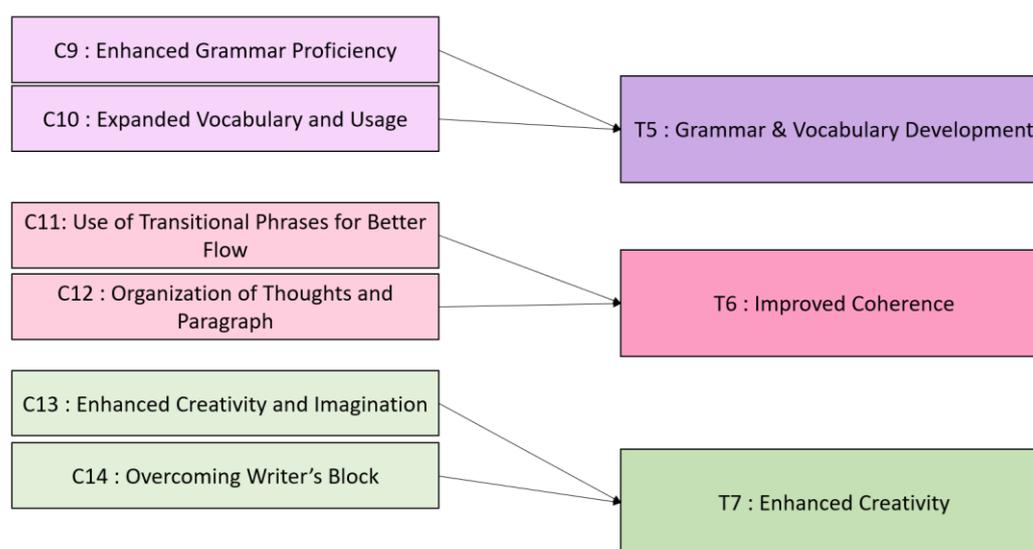


Figure 2: Themes and codes generated for RQ2

Based on Figure 2, the themes provide deeper insight into how ChatGPT contributes to specific writing aspects. This includes, Grammar and Vocabulary Development, featuring Enhanced Grammar Proficiency and Expanded Vocabulary and Usage; Improved Coherence in Writing, supported by Use of Transitional Phrases for Better Flow and Organization of Thoughts and Paragraphs; and Enhanced Creativity, with codes such as Enhanced Creativity and Imagination and Overcoming Writer's Block. Together, these themes and codes offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how ChatGPT influences ESL learners' writing skills.

Grammar and Vocabulary Development

The fifth theme explores how ChatGPT aids students in improving grammar and expanding vocabulary. Students consistently reported that ChatGPT's feedback helped them internalize grammatical rules and adopt more sophisticated vocabulary, which they might not have encountered in their regular curriculum.

Many students highlighted how ChatGPT's real-time corrections improved their grammatical accuracy, particularly with tenses. For example, S2 shared, "I used to mix up tenses, but now I'm better at using the past tense. Like irregular verbs, some can directly change, some words totally different. A bit hard to differentiate." Similarly, S5 stated, "I've improved in my understanding of tenses. I used to mix up past and present tense a lot, but ChatGPT often corrects me, and now I'm more careful when I write."

ChatGPT also enhanced students' understanding of sentence structure. For instance, S1 stated that "ChatGPT has helped me link ideas more effectively. For instance, I've learned how to structure paragraphs so that they flow logically." Besides, S6 mentioned that "It has improved the way I organize my thoughts. ChatGPT shows me how to connect sentences, and now I know how to use transition words to make my paragraphs smoother." These examples demonstrate the tool's effectiveness in addressing common ESL challenges, such as tense usage and sentence connectivity.

In addition to grammar, ChatGPT played a significant role in expanding students' vocabulary. Participants described learning new words and idiomatic expressions that enriched their writing. S1 mentioned, "Yes, got new words like 'fraternity.' I never hear this word before. I also learned a few idioms can use for essay for extra marks." Similarly, S4 shared, "I picked up words like 'articulate' and 'cohesive,' which help me express myself better." These accounts align with the Enhanced Grammar Proficiency and Expanded Vocabulary and Usage codes, reflecting ChatGPT's ability to expose students to advanced language forms in a practical, contextualized manner.

Despite these positive outcomes, a student expressed the desire for more detailed explanations of the grammatical rules and corrections made by ChatGPT. For example, S5 remarked, "It's quite useful, though I don't always understand the corrections it makes. For example, it fixes my grammar, but I sometimes wish I know the reason behind the changes." It is important to note this point, which brings attention to elaborate explanations to comprehend certain details which some might require.

Improved Coherence in Writing

The sixth theme examines how ChatGPT supports students in organizing their thoughts and structuring paragraphs, resulting in more coherent writing. Students consistently reported that ChatGPT helped them improve the flow and clarity of their work by modeling effective writing strategies. Several students emphasized how ChatGPT guided them in structuring their writing. For instance, S8 shared, "ChatGPT helps me organize my writing, like starting with an introduction and adding details, and ending with conclusion." S3 mentioned that, "I learned a few words like to use for each sentences, like when I writing about steps to make an omelette. Then it showed like, for first sentence, then must use next, lastly like that." Similarly, S6 remarked, "Now I use linking words like 'on the other hand' and 'therefore,' which make my writing very smooth." These examples highlight ChatGPT's ability to teach essential organizational skills, such as structuring paragraphs and using transitional phrases to improve writing flow.

Enhanced Creativity

The seventh theme emphasizes ChatGPT's role in enhancing creativity. Students credited the tool with helping them overcome writer's block and inspiring their creative writing through its prompts and descriptive suggestions. For instance, S3 shared, "*When I don't know what to write next, like I'm blank then ChatGPT gives me ideas to continue.*" Similarly, S10 described how ChatGPT helped them craft a story about a magical place: "*I honestly got no idea when suddenly teacher ask to write about it, what is magical land? How to write? So, I tried asking ChatGPT, it gave me interesting ways to describe the place, like the surrounding and the atmosphere and the whole thing.*" Likewise, S9 stated that "*It gave me fun ideas for writing an email. Like to start with catchy words so that more interesting. I used it for my homework that teacher give.*" ChatGPT was also mentioned to assist in creative writing like poem as mentioned by S1 who claimed that "*It helped me write a poem about nature. I didn't know how to start, but ChatGPT gave me an opening line based on theme I put in, then so fast I was done.*" These findings align with the *Enhanced Creativity and Imagination* and *Overcoming Writer's Block* codes. ChatGPT acted as a catalyst for creativity, encouraging students to explore storytelling and descriptive writing with more confidence and originality.

Discussion

ESL Students' Perception on ChatGPT

Year 6 ESL students generally perceive ChatGPT as a transformative tool that significantly boosts their writing confidence and creativity. A major factor contributing to this perception is the reduction of anxiety around mistakes. Students appreciated ChatGPT's non-judgmental and immediate feedback, which made them less apprehensive about grammatical errors. This aligns with Xu et al. (2022), who highlighted that AI tools create low-pressure environments conducive to language experimentation.

The tool's intuitive interface and ease of use were frequently described as "life-saving" and "easy to use." By streamlining complex writing tasks, ChatGPT made the process more manageable and enjoyable. Students particularly valued its ability to aid in idea generation, paragraph structuring, and creative writing, which encouraged a more positive attitude toward writing. These findings are consistent with Godwin-Jones (2019), who noted that intuitive AI tools reduce cognitive load and enhance engagement.

Students also credited ChatGPT with inspiring creativity, especially in brainstorming and crafting vivid descriptions. By overcoming writer's block and providing novel suggestions, the tool encouraged students to experiment with new writing styles. This aligns with Alemi et al. (2022) and Johnson et al. (2023), who observed that AI tools stimulate imagination by breaking down cognitive barriers. However, some students expressed concerns about internet connectivity issues and difficulty understanding overly complex suggestions, consistent with Lin et al. (2021).

Despite its many advantages, students also voiced concerns about potential over-reliance. For instance, one student admitted that using ChatGPT made them "lazy." While its ease of use fosters engagement, this observation highlights the need for balanced use to avoid dependency. Teachers must guide students to leverage ChatGPT as a supplementary tool that enhances, rather than replaces, their creativity and critical thinking.

Role of ChatGPT in Enhancing Writing Skills

ChatGPT plays a multifaceted role in enhancing the writing skills of ESL pupils. It serves as a scaffold within Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, enabling students to perform tasks they could not accomplish independently. By modeling effective writing strategies, ChatGPT facilitates a gradual transition from dependence to independence in writing. However, its effectiveness depends on aligning with students' proficiency levels. Adaptive scaffolding and complementary teaching strategies are necessary to ensure sustained improvement.

One of ChatGPT's most notable contributions is its role in improving grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition. Students reported enhancements in areas such as tenses, linking words, and sentence structure, as well as exposure to sophisticated terms and idiomatic expressions. These findings align with studies by Li et al. (2020) and Zhang and Zou (2022). However, students desired more detailed explanations of corrections, suggesting that step-by-step guidance could further enhance the tool's educational value, as proposed by Park and Kim (2023).

ChatGPT also aids in improving the organization and flow of students' writing. By providing transitional phrases and structural models, the tool guided students in replicating effective organizational strategies, consistent with Chen and Lee's (2021) research. This role as a virtual writing coach not only improved the coherence and quality of students' writing but also increased their confidence in tackling complex tasks.

Additionally, ChatGPT transforms writing from a mundane task into an enjoyable activity by reducing cognitive barriers and encouraging creative expression. By offloading repetitive aspects of writing, it allows students to focus on more complex, imaginative dimensions of their work. These findings align with Vygotsky's perspective on external tools facilitating higher-order thinking and with the Perceived Usefulness construct of TAM (Davis, 1989).

While ChatGPT enhances practical and creative aspects of writing, challenges such as dependency and difficulty navigating advanced suggestions remain. Addressing these issues through targeted improvements, such as simplifying feedback mechanisms and ensuring accessibility, could maximize its impact. Overall, ChatGPT empowers ESL learners to become

more confident, competent, and creative writers, demonstrating its potential as a powerful educational tool.

Conclusion

This study highlights ChatGPT's transformative potential as a valuable tool for enhancing ESL students' writing skills in primary education. By boosting writing confidence, improving grammar and vocabulary, enhancing coherence, and fostering creativity, ChatGPT addresses key challenges faced by young ESL learners. However, the findings emphasize the need to overcome technical and usability challenges to fully realize its educational benefits. Through thoughtful integration, supported by teacher training and ethical practices, ChatGPT can function as both a facilitator of linguistic competence and a catalyst for creative expression. To ensure sustainable skill development, balancing AI reliance with independent practice and teacher-led guidance is crucial. ChatGPT's dual role as a transformative aid and a potential crutch underscores the importance of aligning AI support with students' proficiency levels while addressing barriers such as technical limitations. Future research could explore the long-term effects of ChatGPT and strategies for its integration into diverse learning contexts. By optimizing its use, educators can harness ChatGPT's potential to transform ESL writing instruction, fostering linguistic and cognitive growth while mitigating the risks of over-reliance.

Theoretical and Contextual Significance

This study holds substantial theoretical and contextual significance in the domain of AI-assisted language acquisition. Theoretically, it advances Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory by illustrating how AI, specifically ChatGPT, serves as a dynamic cognitive scaffold, fostering ESL writing proficiency through interactive, adaptive feedback. Simultaneously, it extends the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by critically examining the nexus between perceived usefulness, ease of adoption, and engagement among primary learners. Contextually, this research addresses a pivotal gap in existing scholarship, as prevailing studies on AI-driven ESL instruction predominantly focus on secondary and tertiary education, overlooking the distinct cognitive and linguistic needs of younger learners. Situated within the Malaysian educational landscape, this study offers empirical insights into the pedagogical affordances and constraints of AI-driven writing support. By elucidating student perceptions, efficacy, and potential pitfalls of ChatGPT integration, this research furnishes actionable implications for educators, policymakers, and AI developers, ensuring that AI interventions enhance linguistic competence while mitigating the risks of pedagogical over-reliance and intellectual passivity.

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