Pre-University TESL Students' Perspectives on ChatGPT Use: Influencing Factors and Limitations

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Abstract
The study explores Pre-University students' perspectives on the use of ChatGPT and its limitations as an educational tool. While much existing research highlights the advantages of ChatGPT in education, few studies focus on its potential drawbacks. Employing a qualitative research design, this study investigates the experiences of five Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) students who have been using ChatGPT in their writing classes. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing a richer analysis on their experience in using ChatGPT. The findings revealed that ChatGPT aided the students to brainstorm, personalize learning, simplify complex ideas and paraphrase. However, limitations such as inaccurate information, false citations and time consumption were identified, all of which affect its educational effectiveness. These findings highlight the need for further research into the broader implications of using other AI tools in education and underscore the importance of developing ethical guidelines for responsible AI use.
Keywords: ChatGPT, Influencing Factors, Limitations, Pre-University, TESL students

Introduction
As stated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint, it is envisioned that every child becomes proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and English language, in addition to learning a new language (Malaysia Education Blueprint, 2013, p.23). As for Malaysia's new education blueprint, set to be implemented next year, aims to transform the education system to meet future demands. According to Fadhlina Sidek, the plan focuses on strengthening the quality, accessibility, and relevance of education for all students across the country. Some key initiatives include providing schools with greater guided autonomy, supporting holistic student development, and integrating digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) into teaching and learning. The plan focuses on strengthening the quality, accessibility, and relevance of education for all students across the country. Some key initiatives include providing schools with greater guided autonomy, supporting holistic student development, and integrating digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence into teaching and learning (Bernama, 9 January 2025). The goal of education today is to produce graduates who are not just consumers of technology, but tech-savvy and critical users who can harness innovations to solve problems,

think creatively, and contribute to society. In this context, AI offers a powerful opportunity for students to become more proficient and adaptable in a rapidly changing world. By integrating AI into their studies, students can learn to leverage data and generate new knowledge. This prepares them to become forward-thinking graduates who can make the most of technology in their future careers and endeavours.

While many students view AI as a convenient aid in their studies, they often overlook its limitations and potential pitfalls. The ease of generating content can create opportunities for academic dishonesty, poor or missing citations, and overdependence on automated answers without developing critical thinking skills. This highlights the need for responsible and ethical use of AI, all while developing the judgment and ethical awareness needed to use these tools responsibly.

Problem Statement

With the rising applications of technology in education, AI has emerged as the most used tool to aid fellow educators and students in Teaching & Learning, especially in writing. Based on the researcher's observation, Pre-University learners are still struggling in writing coherent content, developing mature ideas and effective language use. Taye & Mengesha (2024) reported that many students possess an average level of writing proficiency with vocabulary and grammar as the most difficult areas. The results also showed that the students do not have enough time to develop writing skills. It is pertinent for Pre-University learners to know how to ethically utilize AIs with the hope that they can improve their Academic Writing achievement and coincidentally enhance their language and writing competency.

Based on previous studies, there is a significant positive impact on students' academic writing skills of undergraduate ESL students with the use of ChatGPT as a feedback tool (Mahapatra 2024). Another study by Abdi, Ananta & Nurbatra (2024) identified the benefits and challenges from learners' perspectives of using this AI in writing contexts. The findings showed positive input from the usage of ChatGPT as a supporting study 'partner' in grasping writing concepts and offering feedback on students' work. However, the study also identified challenges such as inconsistencies that were observed between the students' questions and ChatGPT's responses, which may hinder its educational usefulness.

Therefore, in this study the researcher will address the perspectives of Pre-University TESL students from a local university on the factors influence the use of ChatGPT and its limitations.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the factors that affect Pre- University TESL students' use of ChatGPT.
2. To explore the limitations of ChatGPT as experienced by Pre- University TESL students.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors that affect Pre- University TESL students' use of ChatGPT?
2. What are the limitations of ChatGPT as experienced by Pre- University TESL students?

Theoretical Framework
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

According to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), perceived benefits such as usefulness and ease of use influence people's intentions to adopt new technologies. TAM is known for being effective, reliable and useful in explaining and predicting what influences users to adopt new technologies (Al-Shahrani, 2022). Perceived usefulness is concerned with how using a system will improve an individual's experience, whereas perceived ease of use refers to the difficulty or complexity of using a specific technology (Davis & Venkatesh, 1996). Both factors have a significant impact on people's intentions and actions regarding the adoption of new technologies. As mentioned by Alshammari and Rosli (2020), TAM consists of five key constructs that affects acceptance of applications and technologies by the user: perceived ease of use (PEU), perceived usefulness (PU), attitude towards use (ATT), behavioural intention (BI) and actual use (AU).

Past Studies on Use of ChatGPT
The use of ChatGPT has allowed the creation of personalised and adaptive learning, enhancing students' productivity and support, enriching students' overall learning experience and helps minimising cognitive effort needed to complete tasks (Alshammari & Alshammari, 2024; Albayati, 2024; Bin-Hady et al., 2023; Niloy et al., 2024). Users can tailor immediate instruction and feedback to individual needs which in turn enhance productivity and encourages continuous development. Furthermore, ChatGPT as a formative feedback tool (Mahapatra, 2024; Abdi, Ananta & Nurbatra, 2024).

Past studies also showed that ChatGPT helps in students' writing and other assessments. ChatGPT's paraphrasing and brainstorming abilities influence students to use it (Mahapatra, 2024; Sok & Heng, 2023; Kavak, Evis & Ekinci, 2024). A more extensive finding from Rahman & Watanobe (2023) showed that ChatGPT is a flexible tool that helps students by improving their writing, offering clear explanations and giving personalised guidance. Studies on the impact of ChatGPT in writing assessments also found that the tool helps to improve grammar, coherence, writing accurate sentences which enhance students writing skills (Palakova & Ivenz, 2024; Phienchang, 2024).

Past Studies on Limitations of ChatGPT
Despite its advantages, ChatGPT also possesses some drawbacks due to its limitations. Some users are not given precise responses due to poorly written prompts. Students especially, do not have the training or experience asking accurate prompts that could cater their requests. A study conducted by Abdi, Ananta & Nurbatra (2024) reported that the effectiveness of ChatGPT might be affected due to discrepancies between the questions asked and feedback given. Apart from that, ChatGPT can pose challenges and create problems due to its tendency to produce inaccurate information and struggle with understanding abstract or complex instructions, making it suitable only for specific types of texts (Baskara & Mukarto, 2023; Ozcelik & Eksi,2023).

From another point of view, the capacity of AI to produce creative ideas resembling human work in literature, art and music has sparked discussions about originality and authenticity. At the same time, it has raised ethical concerns related to ownership, misleading information, over-reliance and the need to uphold academic integrity (Kumar, Kumar, Bhoyar & Mishra

2024; Sok & Heng, 2023). To add, Abbas (2023) and Giray (2023), students may misuse ChatGPT by cheating on assessments, copying without proper credit, over-relying on responses, which can lead to misunderstanding the subject and committing academic dishonest.

Methodology
This qualitative study was done to investigate students' perspective on the limitation and challenges of ChatGPT to Pre-University TESL Learners. Five Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) students from a public university were purposely chosen as participants. Five participants allow for richer data collection and provide a more extensive analysis on individual experiences and perspectives of using ChatGPT. All participants involved in this study have the experience of using ChatGPT as a tool during writing lessons. The aid was only used during practice sessions and to prepare essay outlines.

Data was collected through a semi-structured interview. The interview session was more flexible than a structured interview where if there is a need for the interviewer to acquire a more in-depth explanation, the setting allows one to do that (Chua, 2018). All the questions were constructed by the researchers based on the objectives of the study and the relevant theoretical framework. The interview questions were designed to address the research questions and then validated by a content expert. In this study, data was analysed using thematic analysis, a method that is used to examine qualitative data, providing a structured method for analysing and interpreting emerging themes and patterns within the data (Ahmed, et. al, 2025).

Interview Questions
Factors to use ChatGPT
1. Can you describe specific situations where you used ChatGPT for writing purposes?
2. When evaluating the usefulness of ChatGPT for writing essays, which aspects of the tool do you find most appealing or helpful?

Limitations of ChatGPT
1. Have you ever encountered concerns or drawbacks associated with ChatGPT while using it?

Findings
This section discusses the findings based on the two research questions presented in the previous section.

Research Question 1: Factors that affect the Pre – University TESL students' use of ChatGPT
This section presents the results for research question 1. There are four themes emerged from the interview; a tool for brainstorming, personalized learning, simplify explanation from complex ideas and paraphrasing.

Table 1
Factors affecting students' use of ChatGPT

	Key Concepts	Themes
1	Generate creative activities, ideas/brainstorming / Saves time / Adaptability and customisation	Brainstorming & Personalised learning
2	Simplify complex information/Paraphrasing is faster and easier/Generate ideas/Available in different languages/ Ability to provide simple or deeper explanations	Brainstorming, Simplified Information & Paraphrasing Assistance
3	Preparing notes for examination/revision/ Visualisation when studying	Brainstorming & Personalised learning
4	Generating ideas/Brainstorming/For creative ideas/Personalised responses	Brainstorming & Personalised learning
5	When encountering a difficult task/Paraphrasing/A source of information	Simplified Information & Paraphrasing Assistance

ChatGPT as a Brainstorming Tool
Three participants expressed that ChatGPT is very useful in doing assessments. It has proven effective in gathering and organizing ideas according to their preference and need of assessment.
"I find it really useful during the brainstorming phase. Sometimes when I'm staring at a blank page, not knowing how to start an essay, I'll use ChatGPT or Google for help" (P1)
Participant 2 and 4 also mentioned a similar situation.
"For brainstorming, it's effective. It doesn't replace my own ideas, but it helps to clarify my thoughts. I sometimes face difficulty in this area because I want to put a lot of things in my essay. (P2)
"It's actually pretty helpful when I'm brainstorming ideas for essays or in any writing. I am not that creative. Hmm, it helps me to start writing….." (P4)

ChatGPT to Personalize Learning
Majority of the participants shared their thoughts on how ChatGPT assist their learning through different ways tailored to individual students' needs and proficiency levels. It allows learners to explore at their own pace and receive support in simple language when needed.
"I can ask specific questions, like improving my sentences to my liking. It's like I have a writing coach and I can ask my coach any time I want" (P1)
"If I need help to make my support stronger, I can ask ChatGPT to do it for me based on what I ask. It gives me control over how I learn and lets me focus on areas I need to improve" (P3)
"It doesn't work all the time, but when I try to give accurate description of what I need, it actually responds to my writing. I hope that makes sense" (P4)

ChatGPT to Simplify Complex Ideas
    "I use it to break ideas down so I can understand and explain them better. I do this for Literature assignments. Certain texts have different meanings, ideas…it's complicated for me" (P2)
"I love using it because of this. It's like having someone there to translate academic words and structures to a dummy like me. I can write more confidently with it" (P5)
"I'll copy a passage and ask it to explain in simpler terms. It makes it easier for me to rephrase and apply the idea in my essays" (P2)

ChatGPT to Paraphrase
Two participants expressed that ChatGPT can help students to express ideas in different ways, making writing more formal or academic. This makes it useful for enhancing writing quality and avoiding plagiarism.
"*Sometimes it's hard to paraphrase original ideas using my own words, and it helps me to start. I can tweak the phrasing to make sure it fits my writing style" (P2)*
"Yes it's helpful. Helps me to avoid plagiarism and I can learn from it too…learn how to restate ideas, word choice and others" (P5)

Challenges and Limitations of ChatGPT
The table below shows the challenges and limitations of ChatGPT face by the participants.

Table 2
Challenges and Limitations of ChatGPT

	Key Concepts	Themes
1	Inaccurate examples or explanations/Time consuming when the explanations are inaccurate	Inaccuracy, Misinformation & Time Consuming
2	False references/Inauthenticity/Inaccuracy	Inaccuracy & Misinformation
3	Inaccuracy/Nonsensical ideas/Paid version is not worth the money	Inaccuracy & Misinformation
4	Inaccuracy/Too limited (responses/ideas)/Time consuming	Inaccuracy & Time Consuming
5	Unoriginal idea/Not authentic	Inaccuracy & Misinformation

Limitation 1: Produce Inaccurate Information
According to the participants, they have to be cautious and verify important details from reliable sources because the AI can occasionally produce inaccurate or incorrect information.
"You cannot trust the feedback 100%. You always need to fact check. Once, my lecturer showed examples when ChatGPT gave incorrect info, ideas with fake citations..from that moment on, I know I can't fully rely on it" (P1)
"I noticed that it gives me a lot of irrelevant ideas after that has nothing to do with my topic after using it for a long time. (P3)

Limitation 2 : Fake Citations
Meanwhile, Participant 2 and 5 shared a concern in ChatGPT's habit to generate fake citations or references. This can be considered as an act of academic dishonesty.
"I treat it as a helpful starting point but I always verify to make sure my writing is accurate"(P2)
"It sometimes generates citations that don't actually exist. It looks real, but when I try to find the sources, I can't find any" (P5)

Limitation 3: Time Consuming
Besides that, several participants revealed that using ChatGPT may be time-consuming when participants need to refine prompts, ask follow-up questions and other requests.
"I often have to spend a lot of time phrasing my responses to get what I want. It gets tiring." (P1)
"It's useful for generating ideas or clearing confusion, but you have to be patient and know what to ask from it" (P1)
"I have to sift through the suggestions and adjust them myself. It actually makes my task to be completed longer than I expected. Ideas can be too general or specific…even out of context." (P4)

Conclusion
Summary of Findings and Discussions
It is evident that ChatGPT is a powerful tool for learners to master any skill or language. Although Covid-19 is no longer a world health issue, the impact of it on education remains and is growing. The adoption and assimilation of technology learning tools is inevitable, and educators must put the effort to provide a quality online environment as this study showed that ChatGPT, an AI tool, has a positive impact on student's learning.

The conclusion of this study is that ChatGPT supports students' learning, particularly in writing and assessment tasks. Its strength lies in its ability to brainstorm, paraphrase and highlights is flexibility and effectiveness in boosting productivity. These findings are in line with previous studies where they showed ChatGPT helps in students' writing and other assessments. ChatGPT's paraphrasing and brainstorming abilities influence students to use it (Mahapatra, 2024; Sok & Heng, 2023; Kavak, Evis & Ekinci, 2024). Not only that, Rahman & Watanobe (2023) expressed that ChatGPT is a versatile tool that supports students by enhancing their writing and delivering tailored guidance.

Unfortunately, there are spots even on the sun. While ChatGPT offers many benefits in supporting student learning, it also has limitations. Findings include providing inaccurate

information where previous studies stated that ChatGPT can pose challenges and create problems due to its tendency to produce inaccurate information and struggle with understanding abstract or complex instructions, making it suitable only for specific types of texts (Baskara & Mukarto, 2023; Ozcelik & Eksi, 2023). Other than that, the use of ChatGPT may lead to academic dishonesty with the raising concerns of fake citations and plagiarism. This finding is consistent with Abbas (2023), where students may use it to cheat on assessments, plagiarise content without proper citation, which can result in a poor understanding of the subject and violations of academic integrity.

To sum up, ChatGPT offers values as an educational aid and its usefulness reflects the growing role of digital tools in education after the pandemic. Nevertheless, challenges such as the spread of inaccurate information and potential misuse for academic dishonesty underscore the importance of using ChatGPT responsibly, with proper oversight from educators to maintain academic standards.

Theoretical and Contextual Contributions
The study contributes theoretically by reinforcing and extending current understandings of AI integration in education, particularly highlighting how ChatGPT can support students' writing. Contextually, this study offers timely insights into the evolving expectations and needs of both students and educators on the practical use of ChatGPT. Finally, the findings inform educators, policy makers about its potential to enhance learning while also emphasizing the need to promote its ethical use in academic settings.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research
The study highlights key areas for improving the educational use of ChatGPT. Clear guidelines and AI literacy training are essential to ensure ethical use and prevent overreliance. Enhancing the tool's accuracy and contextual relevance can address limitations related to misinformation. To mitigate the lack of critical thinking in AI-generated responses, ChatGPT should be used as a supplementary resource alongside human instruction.

Future research should explore the long-term impact of ChatGPT on students' cognitive and academic development, particularly in areas such as critical thinking, creativity, and independent learning. Finally, examining students' and educators' evolving perceptions of AI in education can inform policy and ethical guidelines for responsible AI use in learning environments.

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