

An Investigation into Third-Year ELT Students' Perceptions of Using ChatGPT as an AI Writing-Assistant Tool: A Case Study in Vietnam

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Abstract: Technology integration in education has revolutionised language learning. Writing proficiency, often regarded as a challenging skill to acquire, has witnessed transformative potential through technological innovations. The emergence of ChatGPT, with its unique capabilities, has demonstrated considerable promise in supporting student learning writing skill. The current study aims to investigate the current level of familiarity and usage of third-year English Language Teaching students towards ChatGPT as an Artificial Intelligence writing-assistant tool, examining their perceptions towards the adoption and providing suggestions for effective utilisation. The study involved 46 third-year ELT students at the University of Danang - University of Foreign Language Studies and employed a sequential explanatory mixed-method design. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire which was developed mainly based on the Technology Acceptance Model while qualitative data were obtained from semi-structured interviews to deepen and triangulate the findings from quantitative data. The results show a generally positive perception among third-year ELT students towards ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool with a notable level of familiarity with its usage. However, there are some challenges identified in its implementation. Several solutions are proposed for better utilisation of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool.

Keyword: Artificial Intelligence writing-assistant tool, ChatGPT, English Language Teaching students, perception, Technology Acceptance Model

I. INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that during the past century, technology integration in education is revolutionising traditional teaching methods. Mobile apps, educational software, and online platforms not only boost interaction between teachers and students but also enhance students' autonomy in learning, fostering engagement and participation. These technological resources have been creating a flexible and diverse learning environment, promoting creativity and exploration among students. From interactive lessons to virtual simulations, technology in education caters to various learning styles, preparing students for the challenges of the digital age. This development has further evolved since the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI). In various ways, AI holds significant potential to promote advancement and innovation within the educational environment. Through AI-driven personalised learning systems, students benefit from customised instruction tailored to their individual needs and learning progress. AI-powered tools facilitate efficient grading and assessment, assisting educators to provide timely feedback and valuable insights to students. AI algorithms analyse extensive educational data, allowing educators to make informed, data-driven decisions to improve teaching and learning outcomes. One of the emerging AI tools that can be efficiently employed for educational purposes is ChatGPT (Generative Pre-trained Transformer). ChatGPT is developed as an AI chatbot designed to engage users in human-like conversation. Following its launch on November 30, 2022, the number of ChatGPT users remarkably increased by over one million within just a week [1]. This large language model has the capability to generate appropriate responses to context and participate in natural-sounding conversation [2].

Writing is a form of productive capacity utilised across various circumstances, from business to academic contexts, and it undoubtedly plays an integral role in second language acquisition [3]. Educators consider writing to be one of the most challenging skills to acquire in second language learning, because it involves

multiple processes such as idea generation, outlining, drafting, and revising [4]. As a result, providing thorough instructions, guidance and consistent feedback in writing is considered to be of great significance [5].

In tertiary education, ChatGPT serves a multifaceted role beyond assisting in designing assessment, essay generation, and translation, it enables users to ask and answer various questions, summarise texts, and interact with it like peers [6]. For learning writing skill, such a model could also exhibit creativity, producing convincing content across various formats, from paragraphs to research articles [7], [8]. Thus, it could be argued that ChatGPT has the potential to be a useful AI writing-assistant tool in education. However, many researchers have argued that ChatGPT also presents significant downsides [7], [9], including lacking practical sense and inaccurate information [10]. Therefore, it becomes obvious that the existence of this leading AI tool has both benefits and limitations. Hence, to evaluate the effectiveness of the utilisation of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool and suggest suitable improvement strategies, it is crucial to explore students' perceptions of this adoption. Students are the centre of the lesson, which has an influence on the effectiveness of any innovation in language teaching and learning. Understanding students' perceptions and how they interact with the AI tool is crucial for students' effective integration into educational settings, educators' tailoring of strategies to meet students' need and policy makers' timely establishment of supportive policies that facilitate the beneficial utilisation in education.

This research aims at investigating the perceptions of third-year English Language Teaching (ELT) students regarding the utilisation of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool at The University of Danang – University of Foreign Language Studies (UD-UFLS). For the aim of the study to be achieved, the following research questions are set:

1. What is the third-year ELT students' current level of familiarity and usage of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool?
2. What is the third-year ELT students' perception towards ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool?
3. What should be done to improve the utilisation of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool for third-year ELT students?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Artificial Intelligence (AI)

There is a consistency in the way researchers formulated their views on artificial intelligence (AI). AI is commonly referred to as Machine Intelligence [11], which is capable of simulating human-like activities [12] and exhibiting human-like cognitive processes [13]. This viewpoint finds support in the assertions of Kaur and Gill, who argued that AI represents a digital pursuit aimed at achieving human-level intelligence via the usage of various computerised technologies [14]. More precisely, it is explained that AI systems are designed to learn from their environment and make decisions based on the data they receive.

2.2. ChatGPT

ChatGPT is a significant advancement in natural language processing (NLP), developed by the AI research laboratory OpenAI based on the Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT-3), which was built for language generation work, such as machine translation [15], [16]. ChatGPT is designed to generate human-like text based on a specific request [17]. Beyond only text, it can also generate code, stories, poems, and other types of content. GPT-3 is the largest language model, which is capable of performing these tasks at a high level, due to its 175 billion training parameters [18]. Unlike earlier AI language models, ChatGPT is a generative AI that can produce new ideas and materials by improving its learning from user feedback and expressing it in real-time conversations. With the new development approach, ChatGPT may now respond to follow-up inquiries, acknowledge mistakes, refuse erroneous assumptions, and reject inappropriate queries [19]. To perform the mentioned tasks, ChatGPT has been trained on large databases of conversational text, including chat transcripts, forum records, and social media posts [17].

2.3. AI Writing-assistant Tool

Writing assistant tools were initially aimed to improve post-editing and revision based on linguistic principles using linguistic resources. Then, there was an exploration that it is the support during writing that was preferred, not in a separate post-editing phase [20]. Over the years, these tools have expanded to cater to writing-specific needs, aiming to enhance creativity by automating mundane tasks using NLP techniques [20]. Writing-assistant tools, with recent advancements in AI, have now evolved significantly [21]. A number of AI writing-assistant tools have been developed, integrating main functions of the mentioned tools, to facilitate

English writing practices and to enhance writing skills, as well as promote self-directed learning by users, particularly in higher education [22].

2.4. Previous Studies on the Use of ChatGPT as an AI Writing-Assistant Tool

The adoption of ChatGPT has been a controversial topic that has drawn the attention of several researchers. There are numerous studies related to the application of this platform that have been undertaken. Concerning the adoption of ChatGPT in the educational setting, a study in the Vietnamese context conducted by Duong and Tran examined the impact of ChatGPT usage among students in universities, analysing both the benefits and challenges [27]. The results revealed that students believed ChatGPT had a positive influence on their learning process and their grades. Many benefits of ChatGPT usage among students include the convenience of instant information access and language support for various English proficiency levels. However, the study also unveiled several drawbacks that are the reliability of information provided by Chat GPT and overreliance of students on the tool. The study emphasised the importance of integrating Chat-GPT as a supplementary resource rather than a primary source of information, providing ongoing training and awareness programs for students about its limitations and the importance of cross-referencing information, and establishing ethical instructions for data privacy and responsible usage of AI tools in learning. In contrast, Naweed employed the TAM framework to thoroughly assess teachers' perceptions towards using ChatGPT in educational contexts [28]. The findings indicated while teachers acknowledged the capacity of ChatGPT, they also expressed concerns about academic integrity and the possibility of students relying on chatbots, hindering their independent thinking and creativity capacity. To address these concerns, teachers and institutions should provide clear guidelines for assignments and assessments.

Delving specifically into students' perceptions of utilising ChatGPT in language learning, studies indicated different results. A study conducted by Niloy et al. indicated that students in higher education frequently use ChatGPT based on the belief that the platform enriches their existing knowledge [29]. The study by Ali et al. on how ChatGPT impacted learning English with students indicated that ChatGPT generally increases the motivation of learners in writing skills, grammar and vocabulary and that ChatGPT should be employed as a learning tool [30]. The study by Firat revealed that students have a positive view, agreeing on ChatGPT's efficacy in supporting their learning by giving quick access to information and personalised learning experiences, thus increasing motivation, engagement and soft skill development [31]. Another study conducted by Limna et al. revealed similar results that students generally hold a positive perception towards ChatGPT in education, appreciating its immediate feedback, question answering, and support features [32]. In contrast, a study by Sánchez showed that students generally expressed reluctance to ChatGPT in academic activity [33]. A minority of the respondents had used ChatGPT in their school practices and a significant proportion did not consider the use of this tool suitable for their educational tasks while a majority of students did not witness improvements in their research and data analysis skills. However, the research by Albayati showed a contrasting result in that ChatGPT has become heavily used by everyone, especially among undergraduate students [34].

Within the scope of adopting ChatGPT in learning writing skill, some studies have shed light on the perceptions of teachers and students. A study by Özçelik and Ekşi indicated that students showed interest and engagement in using ChatGPT as a learning assistant for writing tasks [35]. The results of the study also stated that ChatGPT has the potential to assist students in developing their writing abilities, particularly in formal registers. The use of ChatGPT as a learning assistant has the potential to help students improve their skills in writing, especially self-editing. It is also reported that ChatGPT might be beneficial for beginner writers and might not be so beneficial if students had a higher level of English, as they could do the same things without any help from ChatGPT. Regarding ChatGPT's adoption by Vietnamese educational institutions, Nguyen conducted a study focusing on teachers' perspectives towards integrating ChatGPT into writing class [36]. Data analyses underscored the importance of providing instructions for students how to use ChatGPT as a supportive tool in learning writing such as generative prompt and to analyse the information suggested by ChatGPT, enhancing users' understanding of the limitations and potential risks associated with ChatGPT, contributing to its effective implementation.

Imran and Almusharraf showed that academic writing has both opportunities and challenges in adopting ChatGPT as an AI assistant [37]. The need is to understand its role as an aid and facilitator for both the learners and instructors, as chatbots are relatively beneficial devices to facilitate, create ease and support the academic process. The results added that ChatGPT cannot harm writing classes as it can offer significant assistance in generating text, initial drafts, brainstorming ideas, and summaries, but it cannot replace or be considered like a human writer in various skills and knowledge. However, there should be updates in students' and teachers'

training, policies, and assessment ways in writing courses for academic integrity and originality, such as plagiarism issues.

In terms of the utilisation of ChatGPT as a writing-assistant, there have been various investigations into its benefits. Kasneci et al. emphasised its role in aiding tertiary students with writing assignments, fostering critical thinking, and improving problem-solving skills [38]. Guo et al. also emphasised that ChatGPT usually defines the core concept and then proceeds to provide detailed answers step by step, before finally offering a summary, helping students to gradually develop their ideas about a matter [39]. Zhai highlighted ChatGPT's assistance in producing logical, accurate and systematic writings [40]. The researcher also highlighted ChatGPT's ability in assessing student performance through automatic grading, feedback provision, proofreading and revising the written work. Similarly, Rudolph et al. also emphasised the assistance of ChatGPT in analysing and grading student writing, and providing valuable recommendations tailored to individual students [41]. Baidoo-Anu and Owusu also stated that ChatGPT may also give feedback on students' work, helping them to improve their writing [42]. Whatmore, in a study by Yan, the results indicated that ChatGPT tool showcased an automatic workflow that could maximise the efficiency in composing writing [43].

On the other hand, using ChatGPT as an assistant in writing has several drawbacks regarding academic integrity, which encompasses six core values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. In addition, ChatGPT is less competent with content that requires higher-order thinking such as critical or analytical thinking. Another drawback of ChatGPT is the quality of generated answers [10]. While responses may sound plausible in some instances, they may lack practical sense, or the information provided may be inaccurate. Besides, several studies have raised concerns regarding the reliance of students on ChatGPT [38]; nevertheless, by recognizing the benefits of incorporating ChatGPT as a supplementary tool in the learning, users can potentially mitigate these challenges [44].

In the face of challenges ChatGPT poses in the adoption, there have been several suggestions for students to adapt to changing paradigms. One of the most important requirements is that students should improve AI literacy - a set of competencies that enables individuals to critically evaluate AI technologies, communicate and collaborate effectively with AI, and use AI as a tool online, at home, and in the workplace [45]. AI literacy skill set is described by Davi et al. [46] as: Know & understand AI (Knowing the basic functions of AI and how to use AI applications; identifying the limitations of AI and the human role in AI; communicating successfully with AI including creating effective prompts); Use & apply AI (Applying AI knowledge and applications in different scenarios; knowing when and how to use AI tool in work); Evaluate AI (Evaluating the accuracy of information generated by AI and make informed decisions about its use in individual work); AI ethics (Concerning human-centred considerations such as fairness, ethics while using AI; Discussing course-specific and discipline-specific intersections of ethical AI use; knowing these boundaries and applications). This skill set is agreed by many researchers. Ge and Lai stated that students should have critical thinking skills and the capacity to evaluate the credibility and relevance of information to ensure that the information by AI is accurate and ready to use [47]. Laupichler et al. added that AI literacy encompasses the ability to understand and assess AI materials, the ability to synthesise and adapt this information [48]. Students should also develop a critical awareness of how computers learn from data and the impact this has and the capacity to protect one's online privacy and security [48] and develop an awareness of what AI might be able to do in the future [47].

It is clear that the current studies have attempted to discover the general perceptions of teachers and students towards the use of ChatGPT in language education. However, there have been few studies investigating specifically writing skills. Furthermore, there remains a notable lack of consensus among these studies, resulting in conflicts in their findings about the perceptions among students, the effectiveness of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool, and the intention to use ChatGPT in the future. In addition, while there have been studies conducted in Vietnam regarding the perspectives towards ChatGPT's application in writing class, they have put the focus on teachers, rather than students. This gap is substantial because understanding students' perceptions and how they interact with the AI tool is crucial for students' effective integration into educational settings, educators' tailoring of strategies to meet students' need and policy makers' timely establishment of supportive policies that facilitate the beneficial utilisation in education. Consequently, there is a need for a deeper exploration of the students' perceptions towards ChatGPT, benefits the tool offers to students and challenges they encounter while utilising it. Furthermore, no research in Vietnam has yet focused on utilising the TAM model to evaluate students' perceptions towards the use of ChatGPT. Therefore, to address these gaps, this study aims to employ the TAM model to assess third-year ELT students' perceptions towards the utilisation of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool.

2.5. Technology Acceptance Model

As AI continues to gain popularity across diverse fields, researchers have shown a keen interest in understanding the factors that influence individuals' acceptance or rejection of this technology. In pursuit of this understanding, various models have been developed. Among these, TAM introduced by Davis and his colleagues in 1989 has emerged as a pivotal blueprint for gauging user adoption and behavioural patterns linked to technological platforms [23]. Within this model exists a holistic framework, diligently striving to decode the variables that affect people' acceptance of new technologies and explaining users' acceptance behaviour [24].

TAM was adopted from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) in 1975 [25]. Based on the strengths and limitations of TRA, Devis developed TAM, which distributes more accurately predicting the acceptability of the technology system. As theorised in TAM, the process of adoption of a specific technology based on five factors Perceived Usefulness (PU), Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU), Attitude towards Using (ATU), Behavioural Intention to Use (BI) and Actual Use (AU). PU refers to the extent to which an individual is convinced that a certain system would amplify their professional effectiveness. PEOU signifies how much an individual is of the view that deploying a specific system won't demand strenuous effort. ATU is defined as the feelings, opinions, and favourable or unfavourable assessments about the use of technology. BI is the extent to which certain technology users have developed a plan of intent to continue utilising or not utilising a particular technology with their future behaviour. AU is a term that refers to the frequency of use of the technology by the individual. PU and PEOU are the main antecedents of the model [26] conditioning the attitude towards the use, which in turn, conditions behavioural intention to use which would be the factor leading to the actual use of technology.

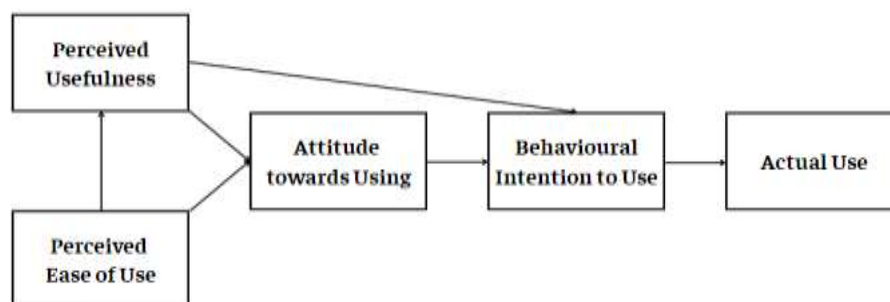


Figure 1: Technology Acceptance Model (Davis et al., 1989)

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

In order to produce accurate results, the study used the mixed method, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods [49]. In the mixed method, the study opted for the sequential explanatory design, which consists of two main phases. In the first one, quantitative data was collected and analysed. Then, qualitative data was collected and analysed. This approach proves beneficial for researchers when quantitative studies create unexpected results [50]. In such cases, qualitative data collection allows researchers to carefully examine the results without being bound by specific theoretical perspectives [49].

3.2. Research Participants

The study population comprises third-year students majoring in English Language Teaching, all of whom share mostly the same C1 English language proficiency level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). They have just completed all Language Skill courses in writing, whose objectives were to provide students with the theory and practice of different types of writing across specific proficiency. Throughout the courses, students were introduced to a range of techniques and skills focusing on layout, register, style, cohesive devices, methods of development, supporting techniques for successful writing.

Considering the small population and the fact that all members of the population have completed the writing classes, the researchers utilised the total population sampling technique, wherein every member of the population is considered a sample. This technique guarantees survey precision and minimises research duration [51]. The sample size in the quantitative data collection phase was 46. After that, in the second phase, 7 students were selected randomly from the respondents to participate in the qualitative data collection.

3.3. Data Collection

The research utilised questionnaire and semi-structured interview as the data collection instruments. The questionnaire was adapted from the one by Jipada, who had previously examined and confirmed the instrument's

credibility and reliability [52]. Qualitative data was gained through semi-structured interviews to triangulate the quantitative findings and obtain in-depth information. The interview questions were developed based on the questionnaire results. Prior to the interviews, participants were assigned numbers from I1 to I7.

3.4. Data Analysis

Employing an explanatory sequential mixedmethod design, the research incorporated both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were analysed by the use of SPSS 26 to generate the descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation and frequency. For the qualitative data, the researcher employed thematic analysis with a three-step approach by Creswell [49]. Initially, the transcripts were thoroughly read to become acquainted with the entire dataset. Then, initial codes were generated to systematically organise meaningful segments of data. Subsequently, these codes were classified into broader themes related to research questions. Prior to drafting the analysis, both themes and codes underwent review to ensure accuracy and relevance.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Findings

4.1.1. Third-year ELT Students' Current Level of Familiarity and Usage of ChatGPT as an AI Writing-Assistant Tool

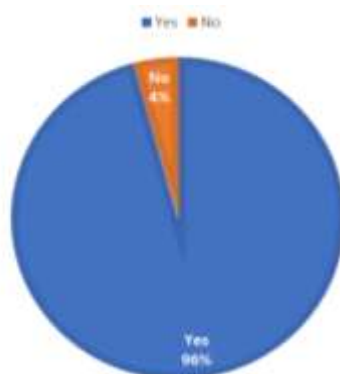


Figure 2: Students' familiarity with ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool

According to Fig. 2, 96% of students responded affirmatively. Meanwhile, 4% said they had never used ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool. When asked about their reluctance to employ ChatGPT to assist their writing, they cited several concerns, including fear of becoming dependent on the tool, potential for plagiarism, lack of motivation to explore other resources, and a deterioration in their critical thinking.

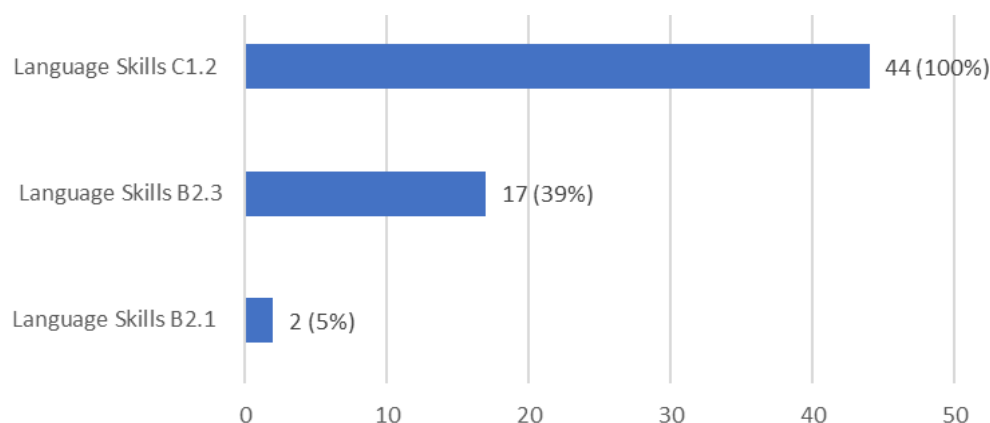


Figure 3: The writing courses students used Chat GPT as an AI writing-assistant tool

As depicted in Fig. 3, only a few students used ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool in Language Skills B2.1. Among 44 students who reported using ChatGPT as a writing-assistance tool, only 5% students confirmed their usage in B2.1. This number significantly increased to 17 students (39%) in Language Skills B2.3. Among third-year ELT students, the predominant use of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool was observed in

Language Skills C1.2, with 44 responses indicating usage. This upward trend in ChatGPT usage over time suggests its increasing popularity as a writing assistance tool among students. During the interview, most students shared:

I3: *Due to time constraints in class, our teachers usually assigned extra writing practice to complete at home. With the help of ChatGPT, I can complete these tasks more effectively.*

I6: *I saw my friends using it a lot, so I decided to give it a try too.*

I7: *As the writing topics become more challenging, I find myself encountering areas where I am not very familiar. Using ChatGPT for assistance allows me to gain additional perspectives on the issue and suggests useful words and collocations for my writing.*

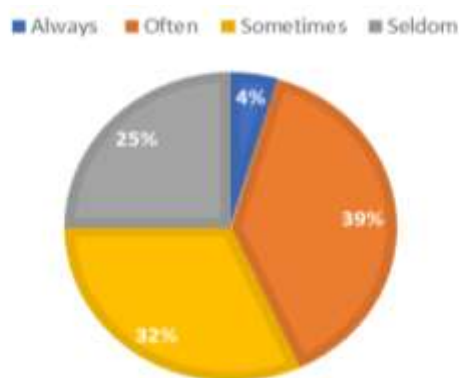


Figure 4: The frequency of students using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool

The pie chart illustrates the varying degrees of ChatGPT usage among third-year ELT students for their writing tasks, ranging from frequent to infrequent utilisation. Among the surveyed students, 4% reported always utilising ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool. Nearly 40% of the students claimed to often employ the tool for the writing tasks. The percentage of students who sometimes used ChatGPT accounted for 32% whereas a quarter of the surveyed students reported that they seldom use ChatGPT for their writing tasks.

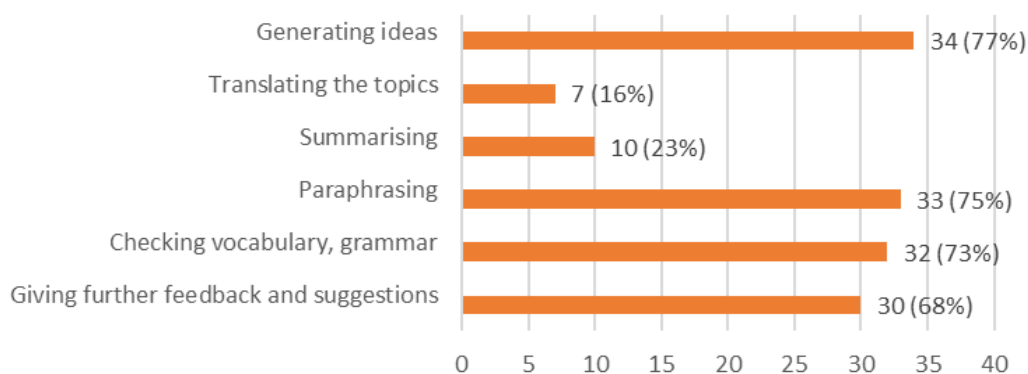


Figure 5: The purposes of students using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool

Third-year ELT students utilised ChatGPT as assistance for various purposes in writing, from idea generation to feedback provision. The majority of students employed it for generating ideas, with 34 students (77%). Closely following, 33 students (75%) utilised ChatGPT for paraphrasing their work and 32 students (73%) used it for checking vocabulary and grammar. This was followed by using ChatGPT to give feedback and suggestions with 30 students (68%). In contrast, the least common uses were for summarising and translating the topic, chosen by only 10 (23%) and 7 students (16%) respectively. Reflecting on their writing with the assistance of ChatGPT, some interviewees clarified that:

I3: *I mainly use it for generating ideas. When I receive a writing topic, I brainstorm potential ideas first. Then, I check on ChatGPT and pick out the outstanding ones to outline my content.*

I5: *I brainstorm ideas first and then turn to ChatGPT for more. However, if the topic is completely unfamiliar to me, I will search for some ideas on the bot first.*

I4: *I consider myself quite creative, so I do not use ChatGPT for pre-writing; I use it for editing after I have written. It points out lexical and grammatical errors and suggests better alternatives. I also ask for feedback on fully developing ideas, such as adding more details or connecting between them.*

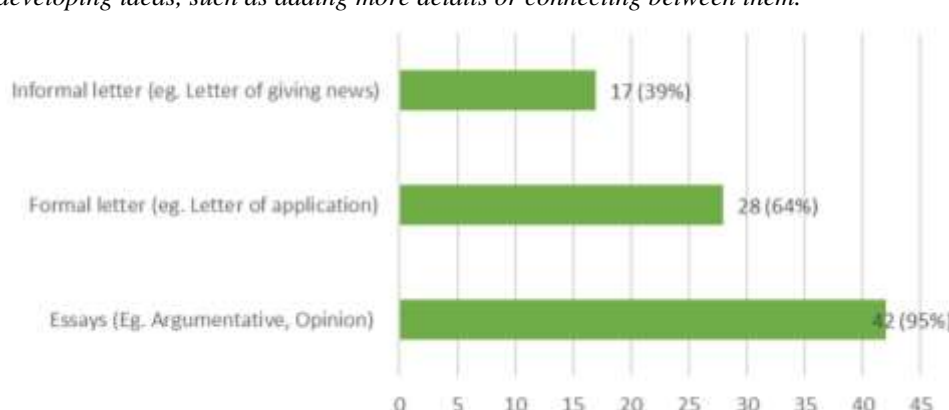


Figure 6: Types of writing in which students use ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool

As depicted in Fig. 6, ChatGPT was predominantly utilised for assistance in crafting essays such as argumentative essay, opinion essay, with 42 students (95%) leveraging its capabilities in this genre. Formal letters, such as the letter of application, ranked second in terms of ChatGPT usage as writing-assistant, with 28 students (64%) choosing to utilise the tool. ChatGPT was less favoured to be used for the informal types of letter writing, with only 17 students (39%) opting to use it. It is explained in the interview:

I1: *ChatGPT can suggest formal language and advanced vocabulary for my essays.*

I5: *I do not use it for writing informal letters because they do not require overly complex ideas. The topics are very familiar, so I can write them on my own.*

I6: *Although I asked ChatGPT to suggest informal language such as colloquial phrases to write letters to friends, they still turn out formal, or too casual to be included in the written work.*

4.1.2. Third-year ELT Students' Perceptions of Using ChatGPT as an AI Writing-Assistant Tool

Table 1: Third-year ELT Students' perceptions towards adopting ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool under the construct of Perceived Usefulness

Items	M	SD	Frequency				
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I think using Chat GPT as an assistant improves my productivity in writing tasks.	3.89	0.69	1 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	7 (15.9%)	31 (70.5%)	5 (11.4%)
2. I think using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool makes my tasks easier to complete.	4.05	0.77	1 (2.3%)	1 (2.3%)	5 (11.3%)	26 (59.1%)	11 (25%)
3. I think using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool provides value for my work.	3.75	0.75	1 (2.3%)	1 (2.3%)	10 (22.7%)	28 (63.6%)	4 (9.1%)

The descriptive data analysis showed positive results when it comes to participants' perceptions under the construct of perceived usefulness. The first item "I think using Chat GPT as an AI writing-assistant tool improves my productivity in writing tasks" was agreed by most of the surveyed respondents (11.4% Strongly Agree and 70.5% Agree). The qualitative results further confirm that ChatGPT saves time for students in the idea generating and revising steps.

I3: *It helps me reduce the amount of time spent on the pre-writing stage. Before, I spent a lot of time searching various online sources to find satisfying ideas. But now, with a prompt on ChatGPT, the efficiency of my writing process has greatly increased.*

I7: *I can ask ChatGPT for feedback, pointing out grammar errors and word choices in my writing quickly. This saves time for me to revise and edit my work.*

Moreover, according to the results, 26 (59.1%) students agreed and 11 (25%) students strongly agreed that ChatGPT as an assistant for writing made their tasks easier to complete (item 2). It was mentioned in the semi-structured interview:

I1: *ChatGPT allows me to ask follow-up questions. If the information is not clear enough, I can ask it to explain further, making it more understandable for me.*

I5: *I often encounter issues with word choice when writing, wondering if a word fits the context. ChatGPT can explain it thoroughly and provide me with appropriate vocabulary suggestions.*

Concerning the impacts of ChatGPT as an assistant on their writing, a majority of students stated that they had gained value from the tool (item 3) with 9.1% Strongly Agree and 63.6% Agree.

I2: *I do not know whether using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool could improve my academic results. However, while using ChatGPT, I can pick up more vocabulary used for higher writing level.*

I5: *My critical thinking skills have improved a lot. I needed to identify which idea provided by ChatGPT is appropriate with my work. Sometimes, I also double-check it with reliable sources before using it in my writing.*

Table 2: Third-year ELT students' perceptions towards adopting ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool under the construct of Perceived Ease of Use

Items	M	SD	Frequency				
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. I think learning to operate ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool does not require significant effort.	3.39	1.13	2 (4.5%)	9 (20.5%)	10 (22.7%)	16 (36.4%)	7 (15.9%)
5. I think using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool does not need special knowledge.	3.61	0.75	1 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	18 (40.9%)	21 (47.7%)	4 (9.1%)
6. I think it is easy to get ChatGPT to do what I want it to do in writing.	3.27	1.01	2 (4.5%)	9 (20.5%)	13 (29.5%)	15 (34.1%)	5 (11.4%)

Generally, the results showed that participants' perceptions under the construct of Perceived Ease of Use were relatively positive. To be precise, in the fourth item, a very high proportion of the students asserted that learning to operate ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool does not require significant effort (15.9% Strongly Agree and 36.4% Agree).

I1: *I do not need much time to get familiar with using ChatGPT to assist my writing. Just after 2-3 uses, I got the hang of it.*

I5: *It is quite user-friendly. I just input a question to make the tool run. The main challenge is ensuring the prompt is specific enough to receive the expected results.*

However, regarding item 5, while 47.7% of the students agreed that using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool does not require special knowledge, 40.9% provided a neutral response. In addition, there are various views on whether it is easy to get ChatGPT to perform desired tasks in writing (item 6: SD = 1.01). More precisely, 20.5% of students disagreed, 29.5% remained neutral, 34.1% agreed, and 11.4% strongly agreed with the statement. Some interviewees reflected:

I5: *Actually, I didn't learn special knowledge to use it. After a few times of entering the wrong prompt, I just learn from experience, or ask until I get the results I need.*

I7: *I don't think it's about special knowledge but rather our thinking when prompting. Sometimes, I take for granted that it can understand what I mean, but I realise I need to specify for ChatGPT to know my writing purposes and readers, thus giving appropriate suggestions. However, I admit that watching tutorials online can help grasp how ChatGPT operates and prompts effectively.*

I4: *I want to further personalise the suggestions for my own level and needs, so I learn how to prompt in more detail to get the expected results. I have to go to the Open AI library to see sample prompts or instructions on how to prompt.*

Table 3: Third-year ELT students' Perceptions towards adopting ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool under the construct of Attitude towards Using

Items	M	SD	Frequency				
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
7. I feel positive about using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool in my study.	3.59	0.87	1 (2.3%)	4 (9.1%)	11 (25.0%)	24 (54.5%)	4 (9.1%)
8. I feel comfortable in my ability to use ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool effectively.	3.70	0.73	1 (2.3%)	1 (2.3%)	11 (25.0%)	28 (63.6%)	3 (6.8%)
9. I feel using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool is beneficial for completing tasks.	3.77	0.83	1 (2.3%)	3 (6.8%)	6 (13.6%)	29 (65.9%)	5 (11.4%)

Examining learners' perceptions under the category of Attitude toward Using revealed several noteworthy reflections. A majority of students had positive feelings about utilising ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool in their study (item 7: 9.1% Strongly Agree and 54.5% Agree). A substantial portion of surveyed respondents (63.6% Agree and 6.8% Strongly Agree) feel comfortable in their ability to effectively utilise ChatGPT for writing assistance (item 8). Furthermore, most of the students claimed using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool is beneficial for accomplishing their tasks (item 9: 65.9% Agree, 11.4% Strongly Agree). Two interviewees shared:

I2: *It's a very useful tool. What matters is how we exploit it.*

I6: *It outweighs previous tools for writing. Instead of using Quillbot for synonyms and paraphrases, Google Translate for difficult words in samples or writing topics, now I can use just one tool, ChatGPT. It integrates features from various previous tools.*

Table 4: Third-year ELT students' Perceptions towards adopting ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool under the construct of Behavioural Intention to Use

Items	M	SD	Frequency				
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
10. I am likely to continue using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool in the future.	3.98	1.02	1 (2.3%)	4 (9.1%)	5 (11.4%)	19 (43.2%)	15 (34.1%)
11. I am likely to recommend ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool to others.	4.00	0.96	1 (2.3%)	3 (6.8%)	5 (11.4%)	21 (47.7%)	14 (31.8%)
12. I plan to use ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool for my tasks in the future.	3.68	0.91	1 (2.3%)	3 (6.8%)	12 (27.3%)	21 (47.7%)	7 (15.9%)

Table 4 illustrates the descriptive data from the questionnaire concerning participants behavioural intention to use. It is obvious that most third-year ELT students had the intention to continue using ChatGPT as an assistant for their writing (item 10). This statement was supported by 43.2% of participants, and 34.1% of individuals strongly agreed. The results of the semi-structured interviews consolidated the quantitative data.

I2: *This tool will greatly support my writing in the future, especially when working on my thesis.*

I6: *ChatGPT will be of help when I self-learn writing, getting prepared for the English proficiency exam.*

I7: *For my personal writing task and for giving feedback for my future students' written work.*

The survey data also indicates a significant tendency among students to recommend ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool to others (item 11: M = 4.0). A notable 47.7% of surveyed students agreed with this statement, while 31.8% expressed strong agreement. Nevertheless, there remained a subset of students, comprising 11.4%, who exhibited some level of uncertainty or hesitation regarding this recommendation. It is reflected in the interview that:

I7: *I would recommend it to my younger siblings and perhaps to future students.*

I3: *I am willing to recommend it to my younger siblings or friends who are not tech-savvy. However, I am concerned if they are still young or lack critical thinking skills, they might overuse ChatGPT-created products. It could reduce their creative thinking abilities and make them dependent.*

I4: *I will recommend and guide friends on effectively using ChatGPT to improve writing skills. However, I will not recommend it to those who are not self-motivated learners or do not have control over their self-study because they might become overly reliant on the bot.*

I6: *I will suggest it to other people, but only to those with an intermediate level. I suppose that ChatGPT's language might be difficult to understand for many beginners. Effective use may require users to be at least at a B1 level.*

As depicted in Table 4, a majority of students stated that they planned to use ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool for their tasks in the future (item 12: 15.9% Strongly agree and 47.7% Agree). The results of the semi-structured interviews consolidated the qualitative data. When being asked whether they planned for their future usage of ChatGPT for writing-assistance, most interviewees shared:

I3: *I plan to create and train each section to specialise in different purposes, such as idea generation and feedback.*

I2: *I am currently training the bot to adapt its responses better to my current writing level, my strengths and weaknesses in writing.*

I4: *I think I will use it a lot in the future. Besides its current purposes as an AI writing-assistant tool, I might use it to support thesis writing and check students' written work.*

4.1.3. Suggestions for Effectively Utilising ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool among Third-year ELT Students

The interviewees provided various suggestions on how to use ChatGPT as a writing assistance tool efficiently. It is first and foremost mentioned that students should understand that ChatGPT is meant to support them in their writing education, not to take the place of their own intellectual prowess. It is predicated on the correct recognition that are capable of making appropriate use plans.

I7: *Before using the tool, students should acknowledge that ChatGPT is a supplement to learn writing skills, enhancing productivity and efficiency in writing capacity rather than writing the essays for them.*

I6: *Their awareness influences student behaviour. Students need to understand that ChatGPT is just a writing support tool. You should not copy it verbatim.*

I1: *Students should understand that ChatGPT is not to be used during examinations, so they should learn to write on their own and can avoid over-reliance or misuse.*

Besides, a majority of students emphasised one of the most common issues is the quality and relevance of the ChatGPT's responses. These problems can be resolved if students think independently before searching on ChatGPT and critically evaluate the quality and relevance of the responses they receive before using them in their written assignments. In terms of the relevance, according to the explanation given in the interview, students stated that the reason for the relevance is that the prompt they provide to ChatGPT might not be precise enough. Therefore, they recommended that their fellows acquire a few fundamental writing prompts in order to use the tool more effectively for writing-assistance.

I6: *Never fully trust the ideas provided by ChatGPT. We should be critical about what we need, whether the information or feedback is appropriate, thus filter out useful and relevant ideas to include in our work.*

I1: *I have realised that there are many online communities using ChatGPT to support academic learning, and even OpenAI itself has a library to assist with prompts for reference.*

In addition, the students hoped that the teachers could give more time on enhancing their ability to develop arguments and connecting ideas.

I7: ChatGPT effectively corrects vocabulary and grammar errors, but it does not provide specific feedback on idea development and cohesion for students to improve. It can only suggest better versions based on the students' written work, leaving students to explore and learn on their own. I hope for more guidance from teachers on cohesion.

I5: Class time is usually limited for finishing one writing from idea generation, outlining, drafting, revising to editing, so I believe teachers could let students revise minor grammar or language errors (the ones that do not cause confusion for readers) themselves or seek support from ChatGPT. Meanwhile, teachers could provide more assistance on argumentation, idea development and connection for students.

The interviewees also made suggestions for the institutions to organise more workshops and training sections on effectively integrating ChatGPT to support learning in the future.

I4: I participated in a workshop on AI tools and ChatGPT in language teaching at university last year. It was incredibly useful as it provided me with insights from leading experts and educators on approaches and usage of ChatGPT on teaching and learning language. However, I regret that there have not been many similar events, so I hope that the university will organise more activities like that.

I7: ChatGPT has become more popular within the English-learning student community. I believe there should be more courses and training sessions to help us make the most of it in our learning.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. Third-year ELT Students' Current Level of Familiarity and Usage of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool

The study's findings reveal that third-year ELT students generally exhibit familiarity with ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool, with a majority of students reporting its use for writing assistance. This contrasts with the results presented by Sánchez [33], which showed that only a minority of the students had used ChatGPT in their school practices, with a significant portion considering it unsuitable for their academic tasks. However, the current study's findings are supported by Albayati [34], who observed widespread adoption of ChatGPT, particularly among undergraduate students. Similarly, Özçelik and Ekşi [35] agreed with these findings, noting students' interest and active engagement in utilising ChatGPT as a learning assistant for writing tasks. The study also highlighted that there are varying degrees of ChatGPT usage among third-year ELT students for their writing tasks, from frequent to infrequent. Moreover, it was also reported that the students utilised ChatGPT as assistance for diverse purposes in writing, including idea generation, paraphrasing, vocabulary and grammar checking and receiving suggestions. As pointed out in the results, ChatGPT was mainly utilised for assistance in writing essays and formal letters while it was less favoured to be used for informal letter writing. The reason is informal letters typically involve fewer complex ideas, thus reducing the need for ChatGPT's assistance in idea generation. Additionally, ChatGPT does not provide proper informal language for students to use in their writing. Despite students' requests for colloquial phrases to enhance informal letters, the output often veered towards formality. If not, the language becomes too casual to be included in the written work. This aligns with the findings of Özçelik and Ekşi [35] that ChatGPT has the potential to assist students in developing writing abilities, particularly in formal registers.

4.2.2. Third-year ELT Students' Perceptions towards Adopting ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool

The utilisation of ChatGPT as a writing assistant tool received diverse views from the third-year ELT students at UFLS-UD. Generally, the majority viewed the tool positively, appreciating its contribution to their writing tasks.

Most students reported that using Chat GPT as an AI writing-assistant tool enhances their productivity in writing tasks since it reduces the time spent on the idea generation and revision. This observation aligns with the findings of Yan [43] who noted that employing ChatGPT as an assistant could amplify the efficiency in composing writing. The investigation by Özçelik and Ekşi [35] also found that the use of ChatGPT as a learning assistant has the potential to help students improve their writing skills, especially in the ability of self-editing.

In the current study, third-year ELT students stated that using Chat GPT made their tasks easier by providing follow-up responses for clarifications and offering additional suggestions to their existing written

work. These functions of ChatGPT have been examined by Zhai [40], Rudolph et al. [41], Baidoo-Anu and Owusu [42].

In addition to writing assistance, students highlighted the benefits of using ChatGPT, noting improvements in vocabulary and the orderly presentation of ideas. Guo et al. [39] also emphasised that ChatGPT typically defines the core concept, then provides detailed step-by-step answers, and finally offers a summary, aiding students in gradually developing their understanding of a topic. This finding aligns with the study by Niloy et al. [29], which indicates that students in higher education frequently use ChatGPT, believing that the platform enhances their existing knowledge. Similarly, Duong and Tran [27] found that students perceive a positive impact of ChatGPT on their learning process, with some reporting improved grades. However, in the current study, while many participants recognized the utility of ChatGPT, a majority expressed uncertainty about the direct correlation between their use of ChatGPT and their academic performance.

In line with previous studies's findings by Firat [31], Imran and Almusharraf [37], Limna et al. [32] and Ali et al. [30], the current research indicates that students have a positive perception of the usage of ChatGPT as writing-assistant as it has many functions that are beneficial for their writing learning. Specifically, the study by Imran and Almusharraf [37] also stated that ChatGPT had benefited writing classes as it can offer significant assistance in generating text, initial drafts, brainstorming ideas, and summaries. Similarly, Ali et al. [30] pointed out that ChatGPT generally increases the motivation of learners in writing skills with the aid of grammar and vocabulary. However, the study by Sánchez [33] showed contrasting results, revealing students' general reluctance and scepticism regarding the integration of ChatGPT into their academic activities.

The current study also pointed out that learning to operate ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool does not require students significant effort as it has a user-friendly interface. However, considering the specialised knowledge needed for its usage, divergent opinions emerge. While some opine that students can develop proficiency through experiential learning, thus negating the need for formal training, others advocate for a basic understanding of how to craft effective prompts to maximise the tool's efficacy.

Moreover, the study suggests a likelihood that third-year ELT students will continue to use ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool, particularly in thesis writing, preparation for English proficiency exams, and in their future teaching roles. Additionally, there is a tendency among students to customise ChatGPT to cater to their personal needs in the future. Considering recommendation to other people, students expressed intentions to suggest ChatGPT to peers, younger siblings, and future students. However, some students expressed reservations about recommending ChatGPT for learning writing to those lacking self-motivation or self-regulation, due to concerns about potential over-reliance on the tool. The findings also highlighted students' apprehensions regarding ChatGPT's suitability for beginners and young learners, due to linguistic complexities and concerns about their capacity for critical analysis in processing the provided information. This is in contrast with the findings by Duong and Tran [27], who indicated that ChatGPT provided language support for various English proficiency levels. The present study's results also conflict with Özçelik and Ekşi [35], who underscored the benefits of ChatGPT for beginner writers while disputing its impact on advanced English learners, arguing that the latter group can navigate tasks independently without assistance from ChatGPT.

4.2.3. Suggestions for Effectively Utilising ChatGPT as an AI Writing-Assistant Tool among Third-year ELT Students

The study discovered several valuable suggestions from third-year ELT students' viewpoints. Davi et al. [46] and Pavlik [44] contended that for better use of AI, users should recognize its limitations and the critical role humans play in employing these tools. Imran and Almusharraf [37] further highlighted that ChatGPT cannot replace or be considered like a human writer's various skills and knowledge. These findings were supported in the present study where interviewees in the semi-structured shared the similar ideas. Students should acknowledge that ChatGPT serves as an aid in their writing process with the students themselves taking the lead in leveraging this tool. ChatGPT is not intended to supplant their intellectual efforts. Furthermore, the study reveals that by recognizing both the capabilities of ChatGPT and the essential role of human input, students can devise effective strategies for using ChatGPT to enhance their writing skills. In addition, to improve the students' usage of ChatGPT as writing assistance, the findings underscore the importance of critically evaluating the quality and relevance of the ChatGPT's responses before incorporating them into their written work. These results matched those of earlier investigations conducted by Ge and Lai [47], Davi et al. [46], Duong and Tran [27] and Laupichler et al. [48]. Moreover, the findings recommend that students should develop a foundational

understanding of writing prompts to enhance their utilisation of ChatGPT as a writing assistance tool effectively.

For educational institutions, the results put forward the idea of organising workshops and training sessions to facilitate ChatGPT's smooth incorporation into English learning, especially to enhance writing skills. This suggestion aligns with the findings by Nguyen [37], who advocated for educators to equip students with instructional guidance, including the use of generative prompts, to optimise the use of ChatGPT as a supplementary tool for writing. This alignment underscores the importance of strategies in harnessing the potential of AI-based writing aids to enhance learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study recommended the implementation of multiple evaluation tests for students, with an emphasis on ensuring consistent scoring across all assessments and without the use of ChatGPT to prevent over-reliance on the AI tool and ensure fairness in the evaluation process. This result is aligned with the results by Naweed [28] who proposed the recommendations that teachers and institutions implemented measures to restrict chatbot usage and provide clear guidelines for assignments and assessments.

Besides, there were some novel discoveries the study obtained. Students suggested the adoption of the latest version of ChatGPT for improvement in the language quality. In addition, students expressed their desire for increased support from teachers in enhancing their ability to construct, articulate arguments and effectively connect ideas, which are not much supported by ChatGPT.

V. CONCLUSION

The investigation had yielded an array of absorbing results. The results demonstrated that students are familiar with the adoption of ChatGPT for writing-assistance. They use the tool for various purposes in writing including idea generation, paraphrasing, vocabulary and grammar checking and receiving suggestions. ChatGPT was mainly utilised for assistance in writing essays and formal letters while it was less favoured to be used for informal letter writing. The data analysis also demonstrated the positive perception of third-year ELT students towards the use of ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant tool. However, they also encountered some challenges while using the tool. Hence, several suggestions were suggested for students to better utilise this AI-based tool to assist the process of writing.

For future studies, it is recommended that investigators should identify the particular variables within the TAM framework that have the greatest impact on students' perceptions towards using ChatGPT as an AI writing-assistant. By identifying the main influences on how people view educational technologies, targeted interventions and techniques to support their successful integration in learning environments can be timely developed.

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