

Reclaiming the Argument: Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT's Role in Constructing Argumentative Texts in the Age of AI

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the perceptions of undergraduate students from the Indonesian Language Education program at Universitas Bosowa regarding the use of ChatGPT in constructing argumentative texts. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis of student writing. Fifteen participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their experience using ChatGPT in academic writing. Thematic analysis revealed four key findings: (1) ChatGPT was perceived as a valuable support tool for structuring and developing arguments, (2) concerns emerged about overreliance and loss of personal voice, (3) students reported noticeable improvements in vocabulary and grammatical accuracy, and (4) perceptions were divided regarding the impact of ChatGPT on critical thinking development. While students acknowledged the tool's efficiency in enhancing technical aspects of writing, many emphasized the need for balanced use and pedagogical guidance to avoid dependency. The study concludes that ChatGPT holds pedagogical potential when integrated critically and ethically into writing instruction. It highlights the need for AI literacy, ethical frameworks, and revised assessment strategies to ensure that generative AI enhances, rather than undermines, student learning outcomes.

KEYWORDS: ChatGPT, argumentative writing, student perception, AI-assisted writing

I. INTRODUCTION

The advent of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, particularly ChatGPT, has significantly transformed academic writing practices. These tools offer students unprecedented assistance in generating ideas, structuring arguments, and refining language. While such capabilities can enhance writing efficiency, they also raise concerns about the potential erosion of critical thinking and originality in student work (1).

Argumentative writing, a cornerstone of academic discourse, requires students to engage in critical analysis, construct coherent arguments, and present evidence-based reasoning. The integration of AI tools like ChatGPT into this process prompts questions about their impact on students' development of these essential skills. Some educators argue that reliance on AI may hinder the cultivation of independent thought and analytical abilities (2).

Conversely, proponents suggest that when used judiciously, AI can serve as a valuable aid in the writing process. For instance, ChatGPT can assist in brainstorming, outlining, and providing feedback, potentially enhancing students' writing proficiency (3). However, the extent to which students perceive these tools as beneficial or detrimental remains underexplored.

Recent studies have begun to investigate students' perceptions of AI-assisted writing. Findings indicate a spectrum of attitudes, with some students appreciating the support AI provides, while others express concerns about over-reliance and the authenticity of AI-generated content (4-5). Notably, Malik emphasizes the importance of understanding these perceptions to inform pedagogical strategies and ensure that AI integration supports, rather than undermines, educational objectives (6).

Given the growing prevalence of AI in educational settings, it is imperative to examine how students perceive the role of ChatGPT in constructing argumentative texts. This study aims to explore these perceptions, shedding light on the benefits and challenges associated with AI-assisted writing. By understanding students' experiences and attitudes, educators can better navigate the integration of AI tools in academic writing instruction, ensuring that such technologies enhance, rather than compromise, the development of critical thinking and argumentation skills.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT in Argumentative Writing

The integration of ChatGPT into academic writing has elicited diverse responses from students. Many perceive it as a valuable tool that aids in generating ideas, structuring arguments, and refining language, thereby enhancing the writing process (7). Students appreciate ChatGPT's ability to provide immediate feedback and suggestions, which can be particularly beneficial during the drafting stages of argumentative essays (8-9).

However, concerns have been raised regarding the potential over-reliance on AI tools. Some students express apprehension that excessive dependence on ChatGPT may hinder the development of their critical thinking and analytical skills. The fear is that the convenience offered by AI might lead to superficial engagement with the writing process, thereby compromising the depth and originality of arguments presented. Ethical considerations also play a significant role in shaping students' perceptions. Issues such as plagiarism, authenticity of work, and the moral implications of using AI-generated content are frequently cited concerns (10). Students are often caught between leveraging technological advancements and adhering to academic integrity standards.

Despite these concerns, a segment of the student population remains optimistic about the potential of ChatGPT. They argue that, when used judiciously, AI can serve as a supplementary tool that enhances learning outcomes without replacing the essential cognitive processes involved in argumentative writing (11-12). This perspective emphasizes the importance of balanced integration of AI tools in academic settings.

B. ChatGPT and the Development of Critical Thinking Skills

The integration of ChatGPT into educational settings has prompted widespread concern about its impact on students' cognitive engagement. Several scholars argue that the convenience of AI-generated content may lead to cognitive offloading, a condition in which students rely on external sources for thinking processes instead of engaging critically with the material (13-14). This passive engagement may result in a superficial understanding of topics, thus weakening students' abilities to evaluate arguments, synthesize information, and construct their own perspectives (15).

On the other hand, when implemented within a structured pedagogical design, ChatGPT can potentially stimulate critical thinking. According to Bartolomé and Steffens, guided use of ChatGPT—where students are asked to critique, revise, or compare AI responses—can promote metacognitive reflection (16). This process enables students to assess the quality of arguments, question assumptions, and refine their reasoning, thereby strengthening their evaluative and inferential skills (17).

Empirical support for this potential is offered by Dawson, who conducted a classroom-based study involving undergraduate students tasked with debating AI-generated essays (18). The findings revealed that students exposed to AI-assisted discourse showed significant improvement in analytical clarity and argument structuring. Similarly, Gunawan found that ChatGPT, when embedded within problem-based learning, encouraged learners to frame counterarguments and evaluate multiple sides of an issue (19).

Despite these benefits, scholars caution that uncritical use of ChatGPT may hinder students' intellectual autonomy. As emphasized by Kohnke, Zou, and Wang, students who overly depend on ChatGPT without teacher mediation may struggle to develop original thinking habits (20). Consequently, educators are encouraged to adopt scaffolding strategies that integrate AI critically while maintaining student centered inquiry (21). This ensures that ChatGPT remains a tool for intellectual development rather than a shortcut to academic output.

C. Ethical and Pedagogical Implications of AI-Assisted Writing

The integration of ChatGPT in writing instruction presents pressing ethical questions, particularly around academic integrity and authorship. The capacity of AI to generate fluent, coherent text blurs the boundaries between student work and machine-generated content. The opacity of AI systems complicates the attribution of intellectual ownership, raising concerns about plagiarism and misrepresentation (22). Moreover, many students are unaware of the fine line between "assistance" and "substitution," leading to ethical grey zones in academic submissions (23).

Institutions are now compelled to rethink assessment strategies to prevent over-reliance on generative tools. Traditional forms of assessment—especially written tasks—may no longer adequately measure individual learning outcomes in the age of AI (24). Consequently, there is growing advocacy for oral assessments, process portfolios, and collaborative tasks that emphasize learning processes over polished products (25). These shifts reflect a broader pedagogical need to restore human-centric dimensions in evaluation.

From a curriculum design perspective, educators must incorporate AI literacy into instruction to equip students with the ability to critically engage with these tools. Teaching students how to ethically and strategically use AI in writing fosters not only digital competence but also metacognitive awareness (26). This approach enables learners to question, refine, and verify AI-

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generated content, thereby enhancing their judgment and reflective capabilities. Such pedagogy promotes AI as a partner in cognition rather than a replacement for it.

Finally, the pedagogical landscape must contend with issues of equity and access. Students from under-resourced institutions may lack access to premium AI tools, resulting in disparities in writing support and academic performance (27). Furthermore, algorithmic biases embedded in large language models could perpetuate stereotypes and exclusion if not critically addressed in classroom practices. Addressing these challenges requires collaborative policymaking that includes educators, developers, and students to build an ethical infrastructure for AI use in education.

III. METHOD

A. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to explore university students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in constructing argumentative texts. This approach is deemed appropriate to capture participants' nuanced experiences, insights, and reflections regarding AI-assisted academic writing. The goal is to understand how students interact with ChatGPT, how they perceive its benefits and limitations, and how it influences their writing processes, particularly in argumentative discourse.

B. Research Participants

The participants in this study were undergraduate students enrolled in the Indonesian Language Education Study Program at Universitas Bosowa, Makassar. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 15 students who had actively used ChatGPT for academic writing, specifically for argumentative texts. The criteria for selection included: (1) being in the 4th or 6th semester, (2) having experience using ChatGPT as a writing support tool for at least one semester, and (3) voluntarily agreeing to participate in the study.

The demographic profile of the participants included 11 female and 4 male students. Their ages ranged from 20 to 23 years old. All participants had completed coursework in academic writing and argumentation and were familiar with AI tools in educational contexts, either through assignments or self-directed learning. Most participants used ChatGPT via mobile or desktop applications and had utilized it for revising drafts, generating vocabulary, or checking grammar.

C. Data Collection Techniques

Two primary data collection techniques were used: (1) semi-structured interviews and (2) document analysis of student-produced texts. The interviews aimed to uncover participants' experiences and perspectives regarding their use of ChatGPT in writing argumentative essays. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent. In addition, students were asked to submit one sample of their argumentative writing that was produced with the help of ChatGPT for content analysis.

D. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework, which involves six stages: familiarization with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report (28). The themes were identified both inductively from participant narratives and deductively based on prior studies on AI and academic writing. Data credibility was enhanced through source triangulation and member checking.

IV. RESULT

The analysis of interviews and student writing samples revealed three major themes related to students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in argumentative writing: (1) ChatGPT was perceived as a valuable support tool for structuring and developing arguments, (2) concerns emerged about overreliance and loss of personal voice, (3) students reported noticeable improvements in vocabulary and grammatical accuracy, and (4) perceptions were divided regarding the impact of ChatGPT on critical thinking development. These themes are illustrated below with representative excerpts and narrative interpretations.

A. ChatGPT as a Support for Structuring and Argument Development

A key finding of the study revealed that students perceive ChatGPT as a helpful tool for organizing their argumentative essays. Most participants stated that the AI provided structural clarity, especially during the prewriting and drafting phases. ChatGPT was often used to generate outlines, formulate thesis statements, and scaffold arguments in a logical sequence.

"Sometimes I don't know how to start a paragraph or what kind of example fits. ChatGPT gives me options, and I choose the one that makes more sense for my topic." (P7, Female, Semester 6)

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Several students emphasized that ChatGPT served as a brainstorming partner. Rather than copying the generated responses directly, they used it to generate multiple directions for their arguments. This process enabled them to explore a variety of perspectives before selecting and developing the most relevant ideas.

"I asked ChatGPT to list pros and cons of my topic, and from there I built my own arguments. It saved time and helped me focus on writing, not just thinking what to say." (P2, Male, Semester 6)

Others mentioned that ChatGPT helped improve cohesion within their essays by offering effective transition phrases and connective devices. Students expressed that they often struggle with paragraph unity and coherence—two areas in which ChatGPT's suggestions proved particularly useful.

"I used to write random paragraphs, but ChatGPT helps me connect them. It gives examples of how to move from one idea to the next with transition words." (P13, Female, Semester 4)

Additionally, participants highlighted how ChatGPT assisted them in identifying weak or unclear arguments. For some, using ChatGPT as a reviewer allowed them to revise and strengthen their reasoning.

"I paste my paragraph and ask ChatGPT: 'What's wrong with this argument?' Then it gives suggestions, like missing evidence or unclear position. That helps me fix it before submitting." (P6, Female, Semester 6)

Overall, students viewed ChatGPT as a functional tool to support the cognitive workload of planning and developing argumentative texts. However, they tended to retain agency by modifying and selecting responses rather than using AI-generated content as-is. This suggests that ChatGPT, when used intentionally, can scaffold students' abilities in constructing organized and persuasive arguments.

B. Concerns About Overreliance and Loss of Original Voice

Although students acknowledged the practical benefits of using ChatGPT in their writing processes, many expressed significant concerns regarding overreliance on the tool and the potential erosion of their authentic writing voice. Several participants admitted that extensive use of ChatGPT made their essays feel less personal and overly polished, causing a sense of disconnection from their work.

"After editing with ChatGPT, my essay feels perfect but it doesn't sound like me anymore. I feel like I'm submitting someone else's work." (P5, Female, Semester 4)

Some students also raised fears that frequent dependence on AI-generated suggestions could diminish their writing skills over time. They reported that while ChatGPT facilitated faster writing, it often discouraged them from critically thinking through their own ideas or revising drafts independently.

"I notice that when I use ChatGPT too much, I don't try to fix my own mistakes first. I just depend on it to correct everything, and that's scary." (P12, Male, Semester 6)

Another recurring concern was related to ethical boundaries in academic writing. Several participants were uncertain whether using AI-generated content constituted partial plagiarism, especially when little to no modification was made to the output. This uncertainty led to a cautious approach among some students when integrating ChatGPT assistance.

"Sometimes I wonder if what I submit is really my work, or if it's cheating because ChatGPT helped too much. It's confusing what is still 'my writing.'" (P3, Female, Semester 6)

Furthermore, a few students noted a decrease in motivation to practice fundamental writing skills, such as brainstorming and drafting, after becoming accustomed to the instant availability of ideas through ChatGPT.

"Before ChatGPT, I spent hours thinking about how to arrange my points. Now, I just ask the app. I worry that my brain is getting lazy." (P10, Male, Semester 4)

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These concerns illustrate a complex relationship between students and AI tools: while ChatGPT can undoubtedly facilitate the writing process, unchecked reliance risks undermining personal engagement, skill development, and the authenticity of student-produced texts. The findings suggest a need for clear educational guidelines on ethical use and critical integration of AI in writing practices.

C. Improvement in Vocabulary and Grammatical Accuracy

Another dominant theme that emerged from the data was the perceived improvement in students' vocabulary and grammatical accuracy as a result of using ChatGPT. Many participants noted that ChatGPT served as an accessible reference tool that helped them vary their word choices, use more academic expressions, and correct recurring grammatical mistakes in their writing.

"When I use ChatGPT to revise my sentences, I notice how it changes simple words into more formal ones. I learn new vocabulary by seeing how it rewrites my ideas." (P8, Female, Semester 4)

Several students described how they developed a better sense of sentence structure and coherence by comparing their original writing to ChatGPT's suggestions. This form of comparative learning helped them internalize correct grammatical patterns and adopt more effective syntactic strategies.

"I always make the same grammar mistakes, but when I check my paragraph with ChatGPT, I understand what's wrong. Now I pay more attention to tenses and punctuation." (P1, Male, Semester 6)

Students also appreciated ChatGPT's role in real-time feedback, particularly for self-editing purposes. Rather than waiting for lecturer or peer feedback, they used ChatGPT to immediately check their drafts, thus enhancing their writing autonomy.

"It's like having a personal editor. I can write one paragraph, check it instantly, and improve it before continuing to the next." (P14, Female, Semester 6)

Furthermore, students reported that repeated interactions with ChatGPT helped them retain and reuse improved vocabulary and sentence constructions in future writing tasks. Some even mentioned mimicking ChatGPT's lexical patterns as a way to develop a more academic tone in their compositions.

"The more I use ChatGPT, the more I start writing like it. I copy how it arranges sentences or uses connectors, and now I feel more confident in formal writing." (P9, Female, Semester 4)

Overall, students viewed ChatGPT not only as a grammar-checking tool but also as a language model that could expose them to new linguistic patterns. These findings suggest that, beyond argument structure, AI interaction may foster micro-level language development when used reflectively and intentionally.

V. DISCUSSION

This study explored the perceptions of Indonesian Language Education students at Universitas Bosowa regarding the use of ChatGPT in constructing argumentative texts. The findings reveal a complex and dynamic interaction between the affordances of AI tools and students' cognitive, linguistic, and ethical considerations. Four major themes emerged from the data: structural support for argument development, concerns about overreliance and loss of authentic voice, improvement in vocabulary and grammatical accuracy, and mixed perceptions regarding critical thinking development.

The participants' recognition of ChatGPT as a structural aid aligns with existing research highlighting AI's potential to scaffold academic writing processes (29-30). Students in this study reported using ChatGPT to generate outlines, topic sentences, and cohesive links between ideas. This suggests that AI can serve as an external cognitive tool that supports the planning and organization phases of writing (31). However, consistent with studies that students did not entirely outsource the thinking process to ChatGPT; instead, they engaged in critical selection and adaptation of AI-generated suggestions. This finding underscores the value of framing ChatGPT as a *collaborative assistant* rather than as an *authoritative source* in academic settings.

Concerns about overreliance and the loss of original voice reflect deeper tensions between technological efficiency and the educational ideal of fostering authentic expression. Students' testimonies about feeling disconnected from AI-polished texts resonate with Zhao's warning that excessive AI mediation may lead to "authenticity erosion" in student writing (32). Moreover,

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the fear of diminished effort and skill development echoes Mercier's concept of *cognitive laziness*, where reliance on external computational resources impedes the cultivation of independent intellectual capacities. The ethical confusion reported by participants further illustrates that current institutional policies have not yet fully adapted to the ethical challenges posed by AI integration in writing instruction (33)

Students' perceived improvement in vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, and sentence fluency aligns with earlier findings by Lee and Huang, who observed that AI-assisted writing fosters micro-level linguistic enhancements (34-35). ChatGPT appears to function as an on-demand language tutor, offering real-time feedback that enables learners to refine their lexical and syntactic choices (36). Importantly, students' reports of consciously imitating AI-modeled structures suggest a process of incidental language learning, where repeated exposure to more advanced forms triggers internalization. Nevertheless, these benefits depend largely on students' active engagement in noticing and applying corrections, reinforcing the idea that AI should be positioned as a learning *mediator*, not a *producer*.

The findings regarding critical thinking development were notably ambivalent. While some students used ChatGPT to explore counterarguments and strengthen reasoning, others described passively accepting AI-generated ideas without critical examination. This split mirrors findings AI's convenience can either stimulate or suppress higher-order thinking depending on user engagement (37-38). The study supports the view that critical thinking cannot emerge automatically from AI use; rather, it must be *explicitly cultivated* through instructional design. Tasks that require students to critique, compare, evaluate, or refute AI outputs are crucial to ensure that ChatGPT interaction enhances, rather than diminishes, critical reasoning (39).

The findings suggest several pedagogical imperatives. First, educators should integrate explicit AI literacy training into writing instruction, guiding students on when and how to critically engage with AI-generated content. Second, assessment models should evolve to emphasize the writing *process*—including brainstorming, drafting, and revision—over the final product. Third, ethical literacy regarding authorship, attribution, and academic honesty in AI-mediated environments must become an integral part of the curriculum (40).

Furthermore, the results highlight the need for differentiated strategies based on students' proficiency levels. While novice writers may benefit more from linguistic support, advanced students should be challenged to critically assess the reasoning quality and rhetorical strength of AI-generated arguments.

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The sample was limited to students from a single program at one university, which may affect the generalizability of findings. Moreover, the reliance on self-reported data and interviews may introduce bias. Future research should consider larger, cross-institutional samples and incorporate longitudinal designs to assess the long-term effects of ChatGPT usage on critical thinking and writing development. Experimental studies comparing AI-assisted and non-AI writing groups could also provide stronger causal inferences.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined the perceptions of students from the Indonesian Language Education program at Universitas Bosowa regarding the use of ChatGPT in constructing argumentative texts. Through qualitative analysis of interviews and writing samples, the research revealed that while students generally view ChatGPT as a helpful tool in organizing ideas, improving language quality, and providing alternative perspectives, they also harbor concerns related to overreliance, authenticity, and critical thinking development.

The findings suggest that ChatGPT plays a significant role as a structural and linguistic scaffold in students' academic writing. It assists students in planning their arguments, expanding vocabulary, and refining grammatical accuracy. However, these benefits are counterbalanced by a risk of diminished personal engagement, ethical ambiguity, and passive learning habits when the tool is used uncritically or excessively.

Students' experiences demonstrate that the educational value of ChatGPT depends not only on the tool itself but on how it is introduced, mediated, and reflected upon in learning environments. When supported by pedagogical guidance and ethical awareness, ChatGPT can serve as a catalyst for deeper thinking and more effective writing. Conversely, without instructional scaffolding, it risks becoming a shortcut that undermines the very skills academic writing is meant to develop. As generative AI continues to transform educational practices, this study underscores the urgent need for institutions to revise writing pedagogy, develop AI literacy curricula, and establish clear ethical guidelines for academic use. Further research is necessary to investigate long-term impacts on student cognition and to explore discipline-specific applications of AI in writing instruction.

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