



The use of ChatGPT on students' writing organization at English education study program of Universitas Negeri Padang

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Abstract:

This study investigates the use of ChatGPT among students in an English Language Education program, focusing on how they integrate writing organization as an essential element in essay writing. The study employed screen-recording observation to collect data from ten students as they used ChatGPT to support and improve the organization of their essays. The findings show that students used ChatGPT in four main ways: as a tool for essay structure development, organizational revision, mixed writing support, and direct essay generation. Most students used ChatGPT to help develop their ideas, arrange supporting details, and organize their thoughts into a more coherent and structured essay. In this sense, ChatGPT functioned as a supportive writing assistant that helped students clarify their thinking, improve paragraph arrangement, and strengthen the logical flow of their essays. However, the study also found contrasting practices, particularly among students who relied on ChatGPT to generate complete essays with minimal personal contribution. This practice raises concerns about over-reliance on artificial intelligence, reduced critical thinking, and passive learning behavior. Therefore, while ChatGPT can offer meaningful support in improving writing organization, its use should be guided by pedagogical awareness. Students need to be encouraged to use ChatGPT as a learning tool rather than as a substitute for their own writing process, creativity, and critical engagement.

Keywords:

ChatGPT, writing organization, structure, process

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1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing is one of the most important skills in English language learning because it enables learners to communicate ideas, arguments, and information in a clear, logical, and academically acceptable form. For students in an English Language Education program, writing is not only a language skill but also an academic competence that supports their ability to participate in scholarly communication. Through writing, students are expected to demonstrate their understanding of a topic, construct arguments, organize information, and present ideas in a coherent text.

Nowadays, writing has become easier with the help of AI tools. According to Sharma (2024), AI helps users through feedback systems that encourage faster progress of writing and more targeted guidance, especially where traditional method lacks one-on-one support. Several AI tools are commonly used to enhance writing. For grammar and clarity, tools like Grammarly, Wordtune and DeepL Write help improve sentence structure, tone and fluency. For rewriting and paraphrasing, QuillBot is especially useful. Academic writing and research benefit from SciScpare Copiot and Elicit, which helps explain scientific text and summarize papers. Among all these, ChatGPT stands out as the most frequently used due to its all-in-one capabilities. ChatGPT not only assists with grammar, rewriting, and summarizing but also supports idea development and organization, making it especially useful for planning and structuring written work. One of the key benefits of ChatGPT in writing process is its ability to support writing organization. Students often struggle to organize their thoughts logically, especially when dealing with complex academic tasks. According to Wang (2024), students frequently turned to ChatGPT to restructure disorganized argument and clarify the logical flow of their essays, effectively using it as a thinking partner. According to Sudrajad et al. (2024) ChatGPT is perceived as a valuable tool for enhancing various aspects of the writing process, including organizing, increasing drafting speed, facilitating revision, and improving overall editing quality.

Preliminary research through informal interviews indicates that some students in the English Department have actively incorporated ChatGPT into their writing tasks. Students reported using ChatGPT particularly when generating ideas or when they found it difficult to begin or logically structure their ideas. Compared to other AI tools, students appear to favor InChatGPT due to its flexibility and conversational nature, which makes it easier to craft prompts and communicate what they want to convey. With the increasing use of ChatGPT among students in the English Department at Universitas Negeri Padang (UNP), interviews and the author's observations indicate that many students rely on ChatGPT to help in organizing their writing ideas. This study aims to explore on how UNP students utilize ChatGPT to structure their ideas into coherent, cohesive and easily comprehensible written text the classroom context.

Organization is a crucial yet complex component of academic writing. With the emergence of ChatGPT, students increasingly use artificial intelligence tools to support the organization of their ideas during the writing process. This study focuses on how students utilize ChatGPT to organize ideas in academic writing. Specifically, it aims to examine the ways in which students engage with ChatGPT to structure their thoughts, develop coherent arguments, and arrange ideas logically in their written work. In addition, the findings may contribute to the development literacy in higher education by illustrating how students make decision when interacting with generative AI during writing. Understanding these interaction patterns can help universities formulate policies and instructional practices that encourage ethical, transparent and effective use of AI technologies in academic contexts. Therefore, the research question guiding this study was: How do students use ChatGPT to organize their ideas in academic writing?

1.1. ChatGPT in education and writing

The integration of ChatGPT into educational contexts has generated a significant shift in how students interact with language-based tasks, especially in writing. ChatGPT, developed OpenAI, is a generative language model that uses natural language processing to produce human-like responses. In educational settings, it is increasingly utilized to support students in improving their writing performance by offering grammar correction, vocabulary suggestion and structural enhancements (Selim, 2024). As Sharma (2024) states, the use of AI tools in higher education can enhance academic writing quality by helping students express their ideas more clearly and

confidently. ChatGPT is particularly beneficial in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, where students may face language barriers that hinder effective communication.

Several studies emphasize the practical advantages of ChatGPT in supporting learners' writing development. Bibi & Atta, (2024) found that students had favorable view of ChatGPT's role in enhancing their writing process, citing improvements in fluency, vocabulary use, and overall satisfaction with writing tasks. In a similar vein, Dasgupta & Patki, (2024) observed that ChatGPT could provide real-time feedback, reduce anxiety about making errors and boost learners' confidence, particularly in large classrooms where individual teacher feedback is limited. This feedback mechanism plays a crucial role in encouraging students to revise and improve their work iteratively, thereby reinforcing writing as process rather than product.

From teaching perspective, educators acknowledge both the usefulness and limitations of ChatGPT. Marzuki et al., (2023) in study involving EFL teachers in Indonesian universities, reported that AI tool like ChatGPT had a clear positive impact on students' writing quality, especially in term of content clarity and organization. Teachers highlighted that ChatGPT helped students generate and arrange ideas more coherently, contributing to improved logical flow in their essays. However, some limitations were also noted. A systematic review by Aulia et al., (2024) revealed concerns over students over reliance on ChatGPT, which may lead to reduced originality and weaker critical thinking if not supervised carefully.

Despite the limitations, ChatGPT's utility as a writing assistant is widely recognized across various academic disciplines. According to (Xu, 2025) ChatGPT dominates the academic use of AI writing tools, with 77% of declared usage across scholar articles. The tool is primarily used for improving readability (51%) and grammar checking (22%), suggesting its strong relevance for supporting the mechanics of writing. Moreover, Alberth, (2023) highlights that ChatGPT's potential lies not only in generating grammatically correct text but also in stimulating ideas and organizing them into structured academic discourse, when used ethically and collaboratively and collaboratively with human input.

The collective findings of these studies suggest that ChatGPT plays a valuable, if supportive, role in educational writing practices. While it cannot replace the cognitive and interpretive work involved in academic composition, it can significantly facilitate the process by providing linguistic and structural scaffolding. Thus, responsible integration of ChatGPT into educational writing tasks—especially for EFL learners—can improve the quality and efficiency of student learning outcomes, as long as educators remain involved in guiding its use. (Marzuki et al., 2023; Selim, 2024; Dasgupta & Patki, 2024).

1.2 Writing organization

Writing organization refers to the way ideas are arranged and connected in a written text so that the reader can understand the writer's message clearly. Swales & Feak, (2012) place organization as one of the main considerations in academic writing, along with audience, purpose, style, flow, and presentation. They also explain that information should be presented in a structured and predictable format so that readers can follow the text more easily.

In this research, the concept of writing organization is limited to three main aspects: unity, coherence, and cohesion. These three aspects are closely related because a good piece of writing should focus on one central idea, develop ideas logically, and connect sentences smoothly. Oshima and Hogue (2006) support this view by discussing unity and coherence as important features of paragraph writing, while also explaining devices such as repetition of key nouns and transition signals to help ideas flow smoothly. Boardman and Frydenberg (2008) also emphasize that English writing tends to follow a clear organizational pattern: the writer introduces the topic, develops it, and then concludes or restates the main point.

Unity means that all ideas in a paragraph or essay are related to one main idea. A unified text does not include irrelevant information. Every sentence should support the topic sentence or thesis statement. In paragraph writing, unity helps the writer stay focused on the controlling idea, while in essay writing, unity helps all body paragraphs support the main thesis.

Coherence refers to the unity of meaning and the clarity of relationships between ideas within a text. It concerns the extent to which a reader can follow the writer's ideas as a whole without confusion. Ruegg & Sugiyama, (2013) describe coherence as the semantic connection that unifies all parts of the text, while Bachman & Palmer, (2010) emphasize that coherence depends on appropriate rhetorical organization, namely the sequencing of ideas in a manner that supports the communicative purpose of the text.

Cohesion relates to the use of cohesive devices to link sentences and paragraphs. These devices include linking words or phrases such as however, in addition, on the other hand and therefore. According to Bachman & Palmer (2010) cohesion also involves the accurate use of reference and substitution to avoid unnecessary repetition, maintain variety, and ensure a clear connection between different parts of the text. In this study, the cohesion parts that are emphasized are transition signals and repetition of key nouns. Transition signals are words or phrases that show the relationship between ideas. They help readers understand whether the writer is adding information, giving examples, showing contrast, explaining cause and effect, or concluding an idea. Examples of transition signals include first, furthermore, however, therefore, for example, and in conclusion. Repetition of key nouns is another cohesive device that helps maintain clarity in writing. A key noun is an important word related to the main topic. Repeating key nouns can remind readers of the topic being discussed and prevent confusion, especially when pronouns may be unclear.

2. METHOD

This research used a qualitative approach based on phenomenological stance, which explores the lived experiences by focusing on how they interact with a particular phenomenon, in this case the emergence of ChatGPT in the student learning process Marshall et al., (2022) Phenomenology sought to uncover the essence of these experiences as described by the participants themselves. According to Marshall et al., (2022) qualitative researchers were particularly concerned with understanding the intricate nature of social interactions as they occur in daily life, as well as the meanings that individuals assign to these interactions. Making this approach especially suitable for capturing the depth and nuance of subjective experiences.

The use of qualitative methods in this study was aligned with the aim of exploring and understanding how students use ChatGPT to organize their ideas in writing academic text. As Creswell & Creswell, (2018) states, qualitative research was used when the goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, especially when little is known about it or when existing studies are limited in specific context.

2.1. Data and source of data

The data for this research were collected through students' screen-recording activity that showed how they used ChatGPT while working on academic essay. The essay topic was "Why Algorithms Make Social Media a Battlefield for Politics." The activity logs contained students' prompts, ChatGPT responses, and students' observable follow-up actions, such as asking for outlines, requesting thesis statements, inserting drafts, asking for revisions, checking paragraph connections, improving transitions, and asking for final checking.

The data source came from ten English Language Education students who used ChatGPT to complete an essay writing assignment. This study focused on observable student interactions

with ChatGPT. Therefore, this analysis did not attempt to measure the exact quality of the final essays. This was because not all students' final drafts were fully visible in the activity log. Instead, this study focused on how students used ChatGPT during the writing process, particularly in relation to organizing ideas, essay structure, coherence, cohesion, and revision.

2.2. Participants

The participants in this study were ten students from the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang. The participants were selected through purposive sampling. Purposeful sampling is an intentional approach used to select participants who can provide rich and relevant information for a detailed study Patton (2014). This sampling technique was used because the researcher needed participants who met specific criteria related to the purpose of the study. The criteria were:

- The students were from the English Education Study Program,
- The students used ChatGPT during the writing process, and
- The students' ChatGPT activities were available through screen-recording logs.

2.3. Instrumentation

In this study, data were collected using observation technique by observing the students' activities while they used ChatGPT during the essay-writing process. Observation is a qualitative data collection method where researcher collects information by actively watching a phenomenon Creswell & Creswell, (2018). The primary instrument used in this study was instructional writing task sheet designed to guide students in complete a writing task with the assistance of ChatGPT and to documenting their writing process through screen recording that conducted during the writing process. It contained the essay topic, writing structure, length requirement, guidelines for using ChatGPT, stages of the writing task, and submission requirements. The data obtained from this instrument were students' screen recordings of their ChatGPT interactions and their final essays.

2.4 Technique of data collection

The data were collected through screen-recording documentation submitted by student participants while using ChatGPT to assist in essay writing tasks on the topic "Why Algorithms Make Social Media a Battlefield for Politics." The students used ChatGPT for topic explanation, requesting ideas, creating outlines, developing thesis statements, revising drafts, checking grammar, improving transitions, and checking coherence. The screen recordings were transformed into written activity logs organized from S1 to S10, then selected based on writing organization aspects such as idea generation, outline development, paragraph structure, coherence, cohesion, and revision. Finally, the data were prepared for coding and thematic analysis, and the students' names were replaced with codes to protect their privacy.

2.5 Technique of data analysis

The data analysis of this study were based on the guide of Creswell & Creswell, (2018) that followed by six steps. The data analysis process involved several steps: (1). Organize and prepare the data. (2). Read through all the data and segmentation. (3). Begin the coding process. (4). Generate Themes or categories. (5). Interpreting the meanings of themes, and (6). Presenting the findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings and discussion of the study. Data were obtained from screen recording activity logs of students using ChatGPT to write an academic essay titled "Why Algorithms Make Social Media a Political Battlefield." The analysis focused on how students used ChatGPT to improve the organization of their writing.

3.1. ChatGPT as essay structure development

The first theme is ChatGPT for Essay Structure Development. This theme describes how students use ChatGPT to transform a general essay topic into a clearer academic writing plan. In this theme, students use ChatGPT to understand the topic, generate ideas, create an outline, develop a thesis statement, organize body paragraphs, and prepare supporting details. This pattern is mostly found in S1, S2, S7, and S8.

S1 frequently uses ChatGPT to help organize and develop her essays. The student began by asking ChatGPT to explain the topic in simpler terms and provide some initial ideas before he began writing. Afterward, she asked for suggestions on the main argument, topic sentence, supporting details, essay outline, thesis statement, and revisions to better suit her own writing style. In later stages, she added his own drafts for the introduction and body paragraphs, then asked ChatGPT to review and revise them while maintaining her original ideas and the student's distinctive writing style.

This indicates that S1 used ChatGPT not only for generating ideas, but also for arranging the essay from the initial planning process until the development of each paragraph. Most of her prompts were closely connected to essay organization, as they dealt with the thesis statement, body arguments, conclusion, outline, and checking whether the essay met the required criteria.

S2 also used ChatGPT to help develop the structure of her essay, although the student use was mainly focused on the connection between the thesis statement and the body paragraphs. At first, ChatGPT was asked to explain what points should be discussed based on the essay topic. After that, the topic was clarified by asking whether the essay needed to explain the reasons why algorithms make social media a space for political conflict. She then requested an outline, wrote her own thesis paragraph in Indonesian, and asked ChatGPT to translate and improve it. During the body paragraph stage, her draft was repeatedly checked through ChatGPT to see whether it was still related to the thesis statement and whether the connector used was appropriate.

This indicates that ChatGPT was used by S2 to review the logical link between her thesis statement and the supporting paragraphs. Her prompts also show that she understood the importance of making each body paragraph support the thesis. In addition, attention was given to the use of connectors because they were needed to make the ideas flow more smoothly.

S7 demonstrated stronger control over her writing process. At the beginning, ChatGPT was asked to provide general idea about the topic, but the focus was later narrowed to TikTok due to its large user base. Then, the student requested an outline that she could develop independently. The essay was also limited to two body paragraphs because simpler essays were preferred. She then requested a simpler thesis statement related to the younger generation, selected the thesis statement she wanted to use, requested a simple body paragraph, revised the introduction, and requested that it discuss social media before directly addressing TikTok. She also combined several sentences in the first paragraph. In the final stage, ChatGPT was asked to add transitions and check the essay for coherence and cohesion.

S7's activity shows that ChatGPT can help the student to develop her own structure of essay. She narrowed the topic, selected the thesis, controlled the number of body paragraphs,

decided the hook, and asked for coherence and cohesion checking while still stick to her decision.

S8 used ChatGPT primarily during the pre-writing and organization stages of her essay. She began by asking for the meaning of the word "battlefield" and the overall meaning of the essay topic. Then, the title "The Role of Algorithms in Shaping Political Conflict on Social Media" was chosen, and ChatGPT was asked to create a draft or outline based on a thesis paragraph, an argument paragraph, and a recap paragraph. She also requested the addition of major and minor supporting details. She then requested a revision of the essay's structure so that each minor supporting detail could be made more relevant to the major supporting details.

The activities of S1, S2, S7 and S8 show that ChatGPT helped students organize broad ideas into academic essay components. In this theme, ChatGPT functioned as a structure-building tool. It helped students decide what to write, how to arrange ideas, and how to connect thesis statements, arguments, and supporting details

3.2. ChatGPT as organizational revision

The second theme is ChatGPT for Organizational Revision. This theme describes how ChatGPT was used by students to revise and improve certain parts of their academic essays. Different from the first theme, which mainly focused on planning and arranging the essay structure, this theme showed a higher level of student control. In this theme, ChatGPT was not only asked to generate ideas. Instead, specific instructions were given, drafts were revised, preferred options were selected, ChatGPT's responses were questioned, and improvements in coherence, cohesion, and transitions were requested. This pattern was found in S4 and S9.

S4 demonstrated organizational revision by repeatedly working on the structure of her thesis paragraph and argument paragraph. At first, ChatGPT was asked to help find ideas for the thesis paragraph, including the thesis statement, general statement, and possible ideas for each argument paragraph. After that, she asked ChatGPT to focus only on the first paragraph and create an outline for the thesis paragraph. More importantly, she explained that the thesis paragraph would be written by herself first, and ChatGPT would be used later to revise or improve it. Her thesis draft was inserted several times and revisions were requested. In the next stage, she asked for a more detailed outline for the first argument paragraph, which included the topic, topic statement, major details, minor details, supporting details, and a transition to the second argument paragraph.

This shows that S4 used ChatGPT as a revision partner at the paragraph level. She controlled the writing process by writing her own draft first and then using ChatGPT to improve the structure. Her prompts were not general; they were specific to paragraph organization and transition.

S9 also indicate of using ChatGPT as a revision partner, particularly to improve transitions and cohesion in her essay. She started by giving her own opinion that social media becomes a political battlefield because emotional content is often liked by users, fake news is easily spread, and people are mostly exposed to opinions that match their own beliefs. After that, ChatGPT was asked to create an outline. When the introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion had been drafted, she repeatedly asked whether all important points had been included. The clearest evidence of revision was shown when she questioned the repeated use of transition signals. She asked whether the phrase "another reason" could be used more than once, and then requested ChatGPT to make the transitions sound more natural and to connect one sentence with another. When "consequently" was used too often by ChatGPT and later replaced with "as a result," she questioned it again because the transition still sounded repetitive.

S9's case is significant because it shows that ChatGPT's output can be evaluated critically by students. She did not simply ask ChatGPT to add transition signals. Instead, the transitions were judged based on whether they sounded natural, varied, and appropriate for the paragraph. Therefore, ChatGPT was used not only to support paragraph development, but also to improve cohesion between sentences and paragraphs.

Overall, this theme indicates that ChatGPT gave stronger support to students' writing organization when it was used in an interactive and critical way. S4 and S9 did not use ChatGPT as a tool that directly provided final answers. Rather, it was used as a revision tool to improve thesis paragraphs, paragraph structures, hooks, transitions, coherence, and cohesion.

3.3. ChatGPT as mixed writing support

The third theme is ChatGPT for Mixed Writing Support. This theme describes students who used ChatGPT for both essay organization and language improvement. Some of their prompts were related to organizational aspects, such as outlines, transitions, flow of ideas, and sentence connections. However, support was also requested for language-related aspects, including grammar, simplification, translation, naturalness, and word count. This pattern was found in S3, S6, and S10.

S3 used ChatGPT to explore ideas and create a complete essay outline, which included the thesis paragraph, two body paragraphs, and the conclusion. After that, a draft was written in Indonesian based on the ideas suggested by ChatGPT, and ChatGPT was asked to connect and improve the sentences by adding suitable transitions. She also questioned the structure of the thesis paragraph by asking whether it should contain at least three sentences. Later, the essay length was adjusted with ChatGPT's help so that it could meet the required word count of 500–700 words.

S3's use of ChatGPT reflects a mix of organizational and language-related support. ChatGPT was used to help create the outline and add transitions, which were connected to essay organization. At the same time, support was also requested to connect sentences, improve word choice, and adjust the total word count. Because of this, her use of ChatGPT was not only focused on organization.

S6 used ChatGPT in a simpler and more basic way. She asked ChatGPT to create a framework or chart that could guide her in writing an essay based on the assigned title. After that, ChatGPT was asked to explain the second body paragraph in more detail, make the explanation simpler, and clarify the issue of lack of verification in the third body paragraph. This indicates that S6 used ChatGPT to help her understand and develop the essay content. Although the first prompt was related to the structure of the essay, the next prompts were more focused on explanation and simplification. Therefore, ChatGPT was used as a general writing assistant rather than as a tool specifically for revising essay organization.

S10 also showed the use of ChatGPT for mixed writing support. At the beginning, ChatGPT was asked to create an essay outline with the title "Why Algorithms Make Social Media a Battlefield for Politics." After her own draft had been written, she asked ChatGPT to revise the text by checking grammar errors, improving the flow, and making the writing sound more natural.

In general, this theme indicates that several students used ChatGPT as a general writing assistant. ChatGPT helped them arrange their ideas, especially by providing outlines, improving transitions, and revising the flow of writing. However, their use of ChatGPT was also combined with more basic language needs, such as checking grammar, simplifying sentences, making the writing sound more natural, and adjusting the word count.

3.4. ChatGPT as direct essay generation

The fourth theme is ChatGPT for Direct Essay Generation. This theme describes the use of ChatGPT to create a full essay from a single prompt. This pattern was shown by S5.

S5 used only one prompt when interacting with ChatGPT. In the prompt, she asked ChatGPT to write an essay consisting of a thesis paragraph, two supporting arguments, and a reiteration paragraph. She also provided the topic, "Why Algorithms Make Social Media a Battlefield for Politics," and requested the essay to be around 500 words. The prompt given to ChatGPT was: *"pls help me to make an essay include thesis paragraph, two arguments and reiteration paragraph. the theme of the essay is about why alogarithms make social media a battlefiled for politics. the length is 500 words"*

This prompt was connected to organization because S5 clearly stated the expected essay structure, which included a thesis paragraph, two supporting arguments, and a reiteration paragraph. However, the activity did not include any follow-up prompts, revision process, evaluation, or further interaction with ChatGPT's response. This indicates that the student had limited cognitive engagement in the writing process. In this case, ChatGPT was used to produce a complete and well-organized essay, rather than to assist the student gradually through each stage of writing.

This finding is meaningful because it shows that a prompt focusing on essay organization does not always mean that the student is deeply learning how to organize ideas. A student may ask ChatGPT to write an essay with a clear structure, but without revision or evaluation, the activity does not prove that the student practiced arranging ideas independently.

Therefore, S5 can be seen as a contrasting case. While most students used ChatGPT to plan, develop, revise, or check their ideas, S5 mainly used it to generate a complete essay. This shows a more passive use of ChatGPT, where the focus was more on the final product than on the writing process.

The findings reveal that students used ChatGPT in various ways to help them organize ideas in academic writing. First, several students used ChatGPT to develop essay structure. They used it to understand the topic, make outlines, create thesis statements, organize body paragraphs, and include supporting details. Second, some students used ChatGPT for organizational revision. This included revising thesis paragraphs, improving hooks, connecting sentences, adding transitions, and checking coherence and cohesion. Third, some students used ChatGPT for broader writing support by combining organization-related prompts with other needs, such as grammar correction, sentence simplification, naturalness, translation, and word count adjustment. Fourth, one student used ChatGPT for direct essay generation by asking it to write a complete essay through only one prompt.

These findings suggest that ChatGPT was not only used as a grammar-checking tool, but also as a tool to help students organize their academic ideas. However, the effectiveness of its use depended on how students interacted with ChatGPT. Students who provided specific prompts, included their own drafts, chose preferred suggestions, questioned ChatGPT's responses, and requested revisions showed a stronger use of ChatGPT for organization. On the other hand, students who only used ChatGPT once or used it for general assistance showed more limited involvement in the process of organizing ideas.

Therefore, ChatGPT can support students' writing organization when it is used to plan, structure, revise, and connect ideas. However, when students use it only to generate a complete essay, ChatGPT may produce a well-organized text, but it does not clearly show that the students have actively practiced organizing academic ideas by themselves

3.3. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that students used ChatGPT in different ways to support the organization of academic writing. Four patterns were identified: ChatGPT as essay structure development, ChatGPT as organizational revision, ChatGPT as mixed writing support, and ChatGPT as direct essay generation. These patterns show that ChatGPT was not only used for grammar correction, but also for understanding topics, generating ideas, creating outlines, developing thesis statements, arranging body paragraphs, adding supporting details, and revising coherence and cohesion. However, the findings also reveal that the effect of ChatGPT depended on how students interacted with the tool. Students who gave specific prompts, inserted their own drafts, selected preferred options, questioned ChatGPT's responses, and requested revisions showed deeper engagement than students who only asked ChatGPT to generate a complete essay.

This finding is in line with the idea that ChatGPT can function as a learning support or scaffolding tool. According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, learning can be supported through assistance that helps learners perform tasks beyond what they can do independently (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, students such as S1, S2, S7, and S8 used ChatGPT to move from a broad topic to a clearer essay plan. This suggests that ChatGPT supported students in the pre-writing stage by helping them organize ideas into academic writing components. This also supports Kasneci et al. (2023), who state that large language models can support education by helping learners generate content, improve engagement, and personalize learning experiences, although students still need critical literacy to understand the limitations of AI-generated responses.

The findings also support the cognitive process theory of writing. Flower and Hayes (1981) explain that writing is not a linear activity, but a recursive process involving planning, translating ideas into text, and revising. The students who used ChatGPT for outlining, thesis development, paragraph organization, and revision showed that ChatGPT was integrated into different stages of the writing process. For example, S4 and S9 used ChatGPT not only to generate ideas, but also to revise thesis paragraphs, improve transitions, and check coherence. This indicates that ChatGPT can support writing development when it is used as part of the writing process rather than as a tool to produce a final text instantly.

The theme of organizational revision shows the strongest evidence of meaningful ChatGPT use. S4 and S9 demonstrated critical engagement because they evaluated ChatGPT's suggestions, revised their drafts, questioned repeated transition signals, and asked for more natural sentence connections. This finding is consistent with Zhan and Yan's (2025) discussion of student engagement with ChatGPT feedback. They argue that effective use of ChatGPT feedback requires cognitive and metacognitive engagement, including the ability to judge, adapt, and selectively use AI-generated feedback. In this study, students who questioned ChatGPT's output showed stronger feedback literacy because they did not simply accept AI suggestions as final answers.

The mixed writing support theme also shows that students used ChatGPT for both higher-order and lower-order writing concerns. Students such as S3, S6, and S10 used ChatGPT to create outlines, add transitions, connect ideas, simplify explanations, check grammar, translate sentences, and adjust word count. This supports Memarian and Doleck's (2023) argument that ChatGPT has several educational potentials, including feedback, personalized learning, asynchronous communication, and task support. However, their review also notes that ChatGPT may create risks such as misuse, plagiarism, lack of learning, and cognitive offloading. Therefore, although ChatGPT can help students improve their writing, its benefit depends on whether students remain active in making decisions during the writing process.

The case of S5 provides a contrasting finding. S5 used only one prompt to ask ChatGPT to write a complete essay with a thesis paragraph, two arguments, and a reiteration paragraph. Although the prompt included essay structure, there was no evidence of follow-up interaction, revision, evaluation, or independent development of ideas. This finding supports the concern that ChatGPT may lead to passive learning when students depend on it to complete the task. In this case, ChatGPT may produce a well-organized essay, but it does not necessarily show that the student has practiced organizing academic ideas independently. This is related to the issue of cognitive offloading, where students transfer thinking tasks to AI instead of using AI to support their own thinking (Memarian & Doleck, 2023).

Overall, the findings suggest that ChatGPT has both positive and negative effects on students' academic writing. Positively, ChatGPT can help students plan essays, develop thesis statements, organize body paragraphs, revise transitions, and improve coherence and cohesion. These effects were most visible when students used ChatGPT interactively and critically. Negatively, ChatGPT may reduce students' cognitive involvement when it is used only to generate a complete essay. Therefore, the effect of ChatGPT is not determined only by the tool itself, but also by the quality of student interaction with the tool.

Pedagogically, these findings suggest that students need guidance in using ChatGPT responsibly. Teachers should not only focus on whether ChatGPT is allowed or prohibited, but also teach students how to write specific prompts, evaluate AI-generated responses, revise based on their own goals, and maintain their own voice in writing. This is in line with Trust et al. (2023), who argue that educational responses to ChatGPT should focus on responsible integration rather than simple exclusion. Thus, ChatGPT can be a useful tool for academic writing organization when students use it as a collaborative assistant, but it may limit learning when it becomes a substitute for students' own thinking.

4. CONCLUSION

This study examines how students in the English Language Education Study Program at Padang State University use ChatGPT to organize their ideas in academic writing. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that ChatGPT plays a significant role in supporting students during various stages of the writing process, particularly in organizing ideas, developing essay structure, revising inter-paragraph relationships, and improving coherence and cohesion. The findings indicate that students do not use ChatGPT in a fixed way. Instead, four usage patterns were identified: ChatGPT for essay structure development, ChatGPT for organizational revision, ChatGPT as a mixed writing support, and ChatGPT for direct essay creation.

Most students used ChatGPT as a tool during the planning and drafting stages of their writing. They used it to understand essay topics, generate ideas, create an outline, develop a thesis statement, organize body paragraphs, and prepare supporting details. Some students also used ChatGPT critically by revising drafts, requesting alternative transitions, checking for coherence and cohesion, and questioning whether the resulting responses sounded natural and appropriate. These interactions demonstrate that ChatGPT can function as a collaborative writing assistant, supporting students in organizing their ideas into clearer and more logically connected academic text.

The findings also revealed that ChatGPT's effectiveness depended on how students interacted with the tool. Students who provided detailed prompts, entered their own drafts, selected preferred responses, and revised ChatGPT's suggestions demonstrated stronger engagement in the writing process. In this sense, ChatGPT supported students' thinking and helped them improve the organization of their writing. On the other hand, students who used only one prompt to produce a complete essay demonstrated more passive engagement.

Although ChatGPT produced structured essays, the interaction did not clearly indicate that students independently practiced organizing ideas or developing arguments.

Overall, this study concludes that ChatGPT can positively support students' writing organization when used interactively, critically, and responsibly. ChatGPT is not only useful for grammar correction, but also for helping students develop coherence, cohesion, paragraph structure, logical flow, and idea development in academic writing. However, this study also highlights the importance of maintaining students' active participation and critical thinking throughout the writing process so that ChatGPT functions as a learning support tool and not as a substitute for students' own writing skills. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate the four ChatGPT usage patterns identified in this study in different educational contexts to validate and refine these patterns and expand understanding of students' use of generative AI in academic writing.

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