

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This section elaborates on the background of the study, research questions, research purposes, research significance, conceptual framework, and previous studies.

#### **A. Background of the Study**

Writing is considered as a crucial skill for English language learners as it plays a role in some students' competencies in their learning. Banat (2007) emphasized that the acquisition of writing skills is essential among language learners, as it plays a crucial role in aiding students in communication and understanding of language structure and function. Students, particularly in this research, English Foreign Learner (EFL) students commonly find challenges in requiring writing skills. Lindsay (2000) pointed out that crafting a cohesive, fluent, and substantial written piece poses a considerable challenge in language, irrespective of whether it is a first, second, or foreign language.

As one of the crucial English skills, writing has several characteristics. Ur (1996) outlined that writing, as a learned skill, involves the creation of permanent, explicit, and dense communication where the author, detached from the reader, predicts responses, organizes content through editing, operates at a slower pace than speech, adheres to standard language, and emphasizes the importance of precise word arrangement for clarity and effective information translation. Moreover, if students are required to master writing skills, there are various skills in general writing components they ought to be proficient in. According to Heaton (1975), multiple abilities are necessary for proficient writing, and those are grouped into five key components: language use for constructing appropriate sentences, mechanical skills for applying conventions like punctuation, content treatment for creative thinking and relevant development, stylistic skills for effective language use, and judgment skills for writing purposefully for a specific audience, involving the selection, organization, and arrangement of relevant information.

Those writing characteristics and proficiencies components are also contained in academic writing activities. In academic writing, authors consistently engage with each other's ideas through frequent references, adhering to structured

guidelines for citation, and substantiating their claims with evidence, necessitating a critical approach to the explored material (Fitzmaurice & Ciara, 2013). Academic writing is one of the English skills used in standard education to allow students to emphasize their thoughts and ideas. According to Oshima and Hogue (2007), writing that is used in high school and college is known as academic writing. Campbell (2019) added that academic writing is essential to English language learners' language development since it requires competence in various areas.

Moreover, academic writing is one of the most difficult assignments that university students must complete, and both local and foreign students find it difficult (Campbell, 2019). Besides, university students are required to finish writing a research proposal before doing a thesis for their final project. Research proposals aim to investigate the effectiveness of utilizing time, financial resources, and effort when a comprehensive thesis proposal faces complete rejection (Nasution, 2009). Students might face challenges in the process of writing a research proposal due to their limitations in academic writing. According to Suryatiningsih (2019), EFL students sometimes face difficulties in writing a thesis proposal, these difficulties were included in the components of a proposal such as the introduction, methodology, literature review, and references.

Based on the pre-observation, it is indicated that several students of the English education department at Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung faced several difficulties in writing their research proposals. Students' motivation such as lacking ideas to start their proposal including the title and topic is the main difficulty they face. Furthermore, it is followed by limited paraphrasing and grammar proficiency, and difficulties in deciding the research questions, purposes, gaps, and scope. The majority of students found it challenging to select the appropriate language features for their research proposals (Rastri et al., 2023). Due to the difficulties they faced, several students decided to use ChatGPT to support their research proposal writing as a solution. AI-supported (artificial intelligence) tools can be utilized to improve students' writing projects and skills (Schmol et al., 2020).

Nowadays, Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly ChatGPT, is widely utilized as a tool in the language learning process. According to De La Vall and Araya (2023), Artificial intelligence (AI) language learning tools are computer programs or software that assist users in learning and enhancing their proficiency in a foreign language through the use of AI algorithms. The Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT) developed by OpenAI ChatGPT is an unsupervised language model that can produce human text on various topics (Taecharungroj, 2023). Furthermore, ChatGPT has been widely used to support students' academic writing and can produce excellent results. According to Mondal and Mondal (2023), ChatGPT can help writers produce high-quality research papers by increasing efficiency and accuracy. However, Mondal and Mondal added that writers should not merely depend on ChatGPT in the process of writing because it has the potential to reinforce biases or errors, especially if it was trained on biased data.

The researcher was motivated to start this research because of the popularity of AI, particularly ChatGPT, in the learning process. Based on the personal questions to the people nearby (EFL students), it is indicated that they use ChatGPT to assist in writing research proposals. This phenomenon also happened at a university in Tulungagung, east Java, Indonesia (Iftanti & Izza, 2023). The study explored how EFL students at a university used AI as supporting tools to write their final project of writing thesis proposals. The results showed that the most AI tool used in students' writing proposals is ChatGPT.

This research proposal, entitled “Exploring the Use of ChatGPT as A Supporting Tool in Writing Research Proposals by EFL Students,” aims to explore how the 8th-semester EFL students of the English Education Department (EED) in Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung perceive ChatGPT to support their writing research proposals process and explore their experiences and challenges during the process.

## **B. Research Questions**

This research aims to explore EFL students' perspectives on using ChatGPT to support their research proposal writing. Therefore, the researcher conveys two correlating research questions as follows:

1. How do the students perceive the use of ChatGPT as a supporting tool in writing research proposals?
2. What are the challenges faced by students in the process of writing research proposals using ChatGPT as a supporting tool?

### **C. Research Purposes**

According to the research questions above, this research has two related purposes to be completed in this research. The two research purposes are:

1. To explore EFL students' perceptions of writing research proposals using ChatGPT as a supporting tool.
2. To figure out EFL students' challenges in the process of writing research proposals using ChatGPT as a supporting tool.

### **D. Research Significances**

This research serves both theoretical and practical significance offering insight into the field of academic writing, especially in writing research proposals using ChatGPT as a supporting tool, as follows:

#### **1. Theoretical Significance**

This research is significant for both educator and student perspectives on the use of recent technology, particularly ChatGPT to support academic and research proposal writing activities.

#### **2. Practical Significance**

On a practical level, the research is significant for educators as it offers actionable insights into integrating ChatGPT-assisted instruction into writing curricula. Understanding the practical implications of ChatGPT tools on students' organizational, coherence, grammar, and vocabulary skills allows educators to make informed decisions about incorporating this technology in the classroom. This research has the potential to guide educators in enhancing teaching methodologies and improving students' overall writing proficiency and motivation.

## **E. Research Scope**

This research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by specifically investigating the use of ChatGPT as a supporting tool in the writing of research proposals by 8th-semester college students majoring in English Education at Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung. Drawing from insights gained in previous studies, the scope includes an exploration of EFL students' perceptions, experiences, and achievements with ChatGPT in the context of research proposal writing. This research employs a case study research design, involving questionnaires distributed to 20 students and semi-structured interviews with six students who earned significant benefits and still keep the chats history of ChatGPT when writing research proposal supported by ChatGPT. By focusing on this specific aspect of academic writing, the research seeks to fill the identified gap and provide practical insights for educators and researchers.

## **F. Conceptual Framework**

In higher education, like university, students should write a research paper or thesis related to their field of study. One of the requirements for completing any academic program at a university is completing a thesis (Karjono, 2020). Writing a research proposal is needed before starting research because it grants advantages. According to Nasution (2009), A proposal stands at how much money, time, and effort can be saved if a thorough thesis proposal is rejected outright. It is necessary to consider the study design before starting a research.

Writing a good research proposal is a requirement for university undergraduate students to ease their future research. An excellent research proposal is the key to conducting successful research, as a research proposal is essentially a strategy for the research (Setyo, 2020). A well-planned proposal enhances the possibility of successful research completion, increasing the probability of approval by the advisor or examiner and, afterward, a higher chance of acceptance for the final project. According to Khondker (2009), a crucial requirement for upholding research quality is the indispensability of a well-structured proposal that demonstrates systematicity, coherence, and practical feasibility.

In academic settings, the utilization of AI (Artificial Intelligence) is gaining popularity these days, especially in language learning. According to De La Vall and Araya (2023), Artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms are used in computer programs or software to help individuals learn and improve their fluency in a foreign language. Nowadays, one of the most popular AI is ChatGPT by open AI. Currently, Open AI's new AI invention, Chat GPT, has amassed 1 million users in just five days (Haque, 2022). According to OpenAI (Meyer et al., 2023), ChatGPT is a chatbot designed to generate responses based on input from users.

On the other hand, ChatGPT is popularly used to support students' language learning, especially in writing projects. ChatGPT is a tool that EFL students use to help them learn and complete school assignments and projects (Iftanti, 2023). Additionally, ChatGPT is able to be an assistant in the writing process. ChatGPT, the most well-known AI tool, has demonstrated the ability to generate logical and convincing writing for questions by predicting the following likely word in a string of words, although the replies are frequently less (Fitria, 2023).

Besides, students' perspectives is the main source of this research. Perspective is an obtaining information process that involves activities (Otter et al., 2013). Another description from Robinson (2003), is that perspective is a directed and interpreted process that begins with the employment of the five senses to receive a stimulus and ends with a comprehension of what is sensed. Accordingly, based on students' perspective, using AI as a supporting writing tool can benefit their English writing proficiency. Iftanti et al. (2023) explained that Students believe that using ChatGPT can help them write better by making it easier for them to collaborate and modify their work.

However, When students rely on ChatGPT for writing assignments, they may miss out on the deep engagement needed to fully understand and synthesize complex concepts, leading to a superficial grasp of the material. Active engagement with the material is crucial for better retention, which is often compromised when students use AI-generated responses instead of deeply understanding the content themselves (AlAfnan et al.,2023). In addition, Baskara (2020) mentioned that there were some issues and concerns with using ChatGPT as a writing assistant tool.

These concerns include the need for careful planning and implementation to ensure effectiveness and ethical concerns around the usage of ChatGPT in the research proposal writing process.

Students in higher education need to know how to write a research proposal to successfully direct their research activities. Maintaining the strength of the proposal is essential to the viability and quality of the research. Furthermore, the use of AI to assist with writing and language learning tasks is becoming more popular. One example of this is ChatGPT from OpenAI. Although ChatGPT facilitates the creation of well-written texts, there are worries that, as a result of lower student engagement, it may promote a superficial grasp of difficult ideas. Optimizing learning results requires finding a balance between the use of AI tools and active student participation.

### **G. Previous Studies**

Numerous research studies have been conducted related to the use of AI and ChatGPT in language learning and writing learning processes. First, there is a study by Song, C and Song, Y (2023) explored the effect of ChatGPT on language writing learning for EFL students. The study employed a mixed-method study to assess the effect of AI-assisted language learning on the writing skills and motivation of Chinese students studying English as a foreign language (EFL). The outcomes indicated notable enhancements in writing skills and motivation among students who underwent AI-assisted instruction, in contrast to the control group. The experimental group displayed improved proficiency in organizational structure, coherence, grammar, and vocabulary. Qualitative findings revealed diverse perspectives, acknowledging AI's innovative instructional role and its positive impact on writing skills and motivation, while also expressing concerns about contextual accuracy and potential over-reliance.

Then, a study was conducted by Alammari and Abdel (2023) entitled “EFL Students’ Perception of Using AI Paraphrasing Tools in English Language Research Projects.” The study aimed to investigate Arabian EFL students of Majmaah University's perceptions of using AI-driven automated paraphrasing tools

(APTs) in their academic writing process. Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed to investigate students' benefits, disadvantages, and perceptions about the employment of APTs. The results showed that EFL students had favorable perspectives about using APTs; they see them as helpful resources that significantly influence their academic writing process.

Additionally, a journal by Iftanti and Izza (2023) studied the use of AI as a supporting learning tool for conducting learning projects. The study aimed to portray how EFL students used AI to support their learning. The study employed a narrative inquiry research design, then carried out by asking five students of the English Department of a state university in Indonesia who used AI to assist them in finishing their thesis proposal writing final project. There were two key findings from this study. In addition to Chat GPT, which is the most often used AI tool, they also utilize Bing Chat and Grammarly, two additional AI programs, to help with learning tasks like writing research proposals.

There is a study about teachers' perspectives on using ChatGPT in EFL writing instruction (Baskara, 2023). The study is based on a survey of related research and studies. The study examined the potential benefits and challenges of integrating ChatGPT into EFL writing instruction. The study results showed that many potential advantages could arise from using ChatGPT in EFL writing education, such as the capacity to offer specific feedback and assistance, sustain students' motivation and interest, and promote language proficiency. However, there are drawbacks and issues with employing ChatGPT as well. These include the necessity for cautious planning and execution to guarantee efficacy and moral issues with the use of artificial intelligence and natural language processing in the classroom.

Another study explored EFL teachers' perspectives toward the use of ChatGPT in writing classes by Nguyen (2023). The study aimed to collect ideas for ChatGPT's implementation and determine what EFL teachers think about using it in writing sessions. This study involved twenty EFL instructors from Van Lang University who taught multiple writing courses and used ChatGPT in their language instruction. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered using an online survey



and a structured interview. The study's findings showed how excited Van Lang University's EFL professors are about integrating ChatGPT into writing classes.

Lastly, a study by Mizanur et al. (2023) studied the use of ChatGPT in academic research. Sites, blogs, published papers, and numerical and visual artifacts were used to collect data for this study. The researchers used an "introductory literature review" to assess, summarize, and explain the data we collected. Based on the results, ChatGPT may be a useful instrument for the preliminary idea-generating stage of academic scientific research.

While previous studies have extensively explored the impact of ChatGPT and AI on language learning and academic writing, there remains a specific gap in understanding the nuanced utilization of ChatGPT as a supporting tool in EFL students' writing of research proposals. Existing research, such as Song, C. and Song, Y.'s (2023) study on the effect of ChatGPT on language writing learning, Abdel and Ammar's (2023) investigation into EFL students' perceptions of AI paraphrasing tools, and Iftanti et al.'s (2023) study on AI as a supporting learning tool for conducting projects, provides valuable insights but primarily focuses on broader language learning aspects. This research discusses EFL students' perspectives on the use of ChatGPT in writing research proposals at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, using a case study approach, aiming to contribute to the understanding, potentiality, and challenges through students' perspectives of using current technology, AI ChatGPT as a supporting tool in writing research proposals.