



## ENHANCING SECONDARY-LEVEL STUDENTS' WRITING MOTIVATION USING CHATGPT AS A WRITING ASSISTANT

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### ABSTRACT

Writing has long been recognized as one of the most challenging skills for secondary-level EFL learners. This study explored how ChatGPT, a widely used artificial intelligence tool, can support students' writing development, especially in terms of motivation, confidence, and participation. Conducted through Classroom Action Research with a single cycle, the study involved 24 ninth-grade students at SMP Al-Miftah Silo. The data were gathered through observations, students' writing samples, and a motivation questionnaire administered before and after the intervention. The results indicate that the integration of ChatGPT helped students become more confident in generating ideas, more willing to revise their writing, and more engaged during lessons. Motivation increased from 35% to 70%, participation rose from 30% to 80%, and grammatical accuracy improved with a 60% reduction in errors. These findings suggest that ChatGPT, when used under teacher guidance, offers meaningful support for young EFL learners and encourages a more positive writing atmosphere.

*Keywords:* Writing motivation, ChatGPT, EFL writing, classroom action research, secondary education

### A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely acknowledged as one of the most challenging skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), particularly at the secondary school level. Students are required not only to master linguistic elements such as grammar and vocabulary, but also to generate ideas, organize thoughts logically, and express meaning clearly. Students with these writing difficulties often struggle with the written expression in the process of writing, (Nugraheni & Basya, 2018). For many EFL learners, these demands often result in anxiety, low confidence, and limited motivation to engage in writing activities. Consequently, writing tasks are frequently perceived as stressful and overwhelming, leading to minimal participation and underdeveloped written output. Anxious students with low motivation and confidence tend to



avoid the learning activities that require writing, be afraid of being evaluated, and tend to have negative perceptions toward the writing activity, (Nugraheni, 2023).

Motivation plays a crucial role in shaping students' engagement and success in writing. According to Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), learners are more motivated when they feel autonomous, competent, and supported in the learning process. In writing classrooms, students with high motivation tend to invest greater effort, revise their drafts more willingly, and experiment with language use. In contrast, students with low motivation often hesitate to begin writing, fear making grammatical mistakes, and rely heavily on teacher guidance. Therefore, teachers need to adopt instructional strategies that can reduce students' anxiety and foster a more supportive and motivating writing environment.

In recent years, rapid technological development has significantly influenced English language teaching and learning. Digital tools and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have increasingly been integrated into language classrooms to support learners' language experiences. AI-based tools can provide immediate feedback, personalized assistance, and interactive learning opportunities, which are difficult to achieve through traditional instruction alone. As a result, technology has the potential to enhance learner engagement, autonomy, and motivation in language learning contexts.

One emerging AI tool that has gained considerable attention is ChatGPT, a generative artificial intelligence application designed to produce human-like text responses. In EFL writing instruction, ChatGPT can assist students at various stages of the writing process, such as brainstorming ideas, organizing paragraphs, suggesting vocabulary, and providing feedback on grammatical accuracy. Several recent studies have reported that ChatGPT can help learners improve writing clarity, coherence, and accuracy. However, most existing research has focused on higher education contexts and has primarily examined students' perceptions or writing outcomes, while empirical studies exploring its impact on students' writing motivation at the secondary school level remain limited.

In the Indonesian secondary school context, writing is often regarded as the most difficult English skill due to students' limited vocabulary, low confidence, and fear of making mistakes.

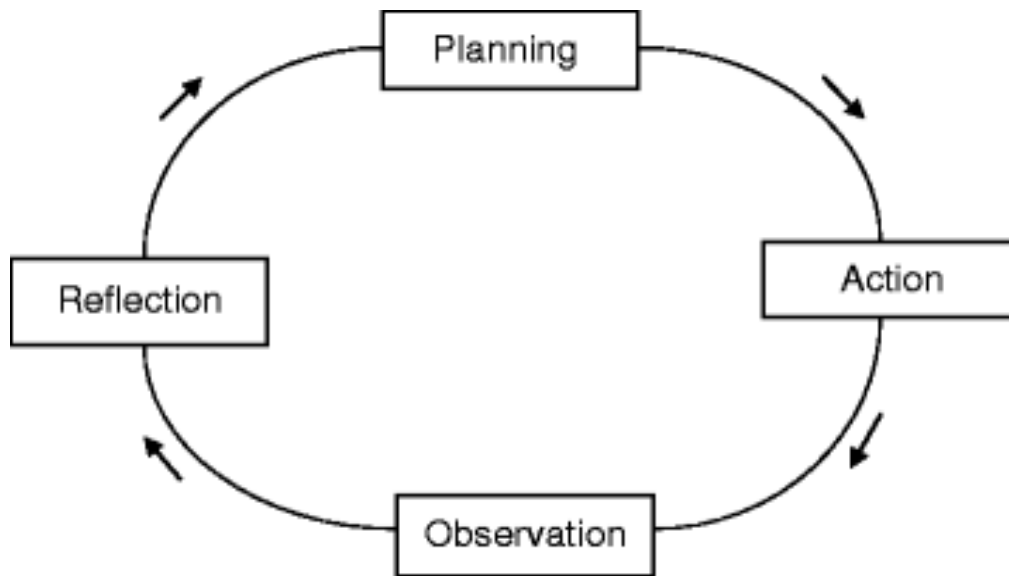


These challenges frequently result in low motivation and passive classroom participation. Responding to this issue, the present study integrates ChatGPT as a guided writing assistant to support ninth-grade students' writing motivation. This study employs Classroom Action Research (CAR) to explore how the use of ChatGPT can enhance students' motivation, participation, and writing performance in a real classroom setting. By focusing on motivational aspects alongside writing development, this study aims to provide practical insights into the potential of AI-assisted writing instruction for secondary-level EFL learners.

## **B. METHOD**

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) following the model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of four main stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Classroom Action Research was selected because it allows teachers to identify classroom problems, implement instructional interventions, and evaluate their effectiveness in improving teaching and learning processes. The study was conducted in one cycle, as the first cycle had already demonstrated significant improvement in students' writing motivation and participation within the available instructional time.

The participants of this study were 24 ninth-grade students of SMP Al-Miftah Silo, East Java, Indonesia. The students had varied levels of English proficiency and writing ability. Prior to the intervention, many students experienced difficulties in generating ideas, organizing sentences, and expressing their thoughts in written English. Writing activities were often characterized by low motivation, minimal participation, and high levels of anxiety. The Classroom Action Research was conducted in three classroom meetings within one cycle.



**Figure 1.** illustrates one cycle of Classroom Action Research (CAR)

Figure 1 illustrates the Classroom Action Research (CAR) cycle adapted from Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), which consists of four main stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The cycle is designed as a continuous and reflective process in which each stage informs the next. In the planning stage, the researcher identified students' writing problems and designed instructional activities integrating ChatGPT as a writing assistant, along with preparing research instruments. The action stage involved implementing the planned teaching activities through guided writing sessions using ChatGPT for brainstorming, drafting, and revising recount texts. During the observation stage, students' motivation, participation, and engagement were systematically monitored using an observation checklist. Finally, in the reflection stage, the researcher analyzed the results from observations, questionnaires, and writing tasks to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Based on the reflection results, one cycle was considered sufficient, as noticeable improvements in students' writing motivation and classroom participation had been achieved.

In the planning stage, the researcher identified students' main writing problems, particularly low motivation and reluctance to write. Lesson plans integrating ChatGPT as a writing assistant were designed. Research instruments, including a motivation questionnaire, observation checklist, and writing tasks, were also prepared.



During the action stage, students participated in three structured writing meetings focusing on Brainstorming and idea generation, Drafting, and Revising and editing. Students were introduced to ChatGPT and guided on how to use it responsibly. They used ChatGPT to generate ideas, seek vocabulary suggestions, check sentence structure, and receive feedback on grammatical accuracy. The teacher closely monitored students' activities and emphasized that ChatGPT should function as a learning assistant rather than a source for direct copying.

In the observation stage, the researcher conducted non-participant classroom observation to record students' behavior and engagement during writing activities. Indicators observed included students' participation, attention, confidence, willingness to write, and interaction with ChatGPT and peers. The observation data were recorded using an observation checklist.

In the reflection stage, the researcher analyzed the data obtained from observations, questionnaires, and students' writing samples. The effectiveness of ChatGPT in enhancing writing motivation and participation was evaluated. The results of this reflection were used to interpret the outcomes of the cycle.

Three main instruments were used in this study: a motivation questionnaire, an observation checklist, and writing tasks. The motivation questionnaire was administered before and after the intervention to measure changes in students' writing motivation and consisted of 10 items covering enjoyment of writing, confidence in expressing ideas, ability to focus, writing anxiety, and willingness to revise drafts; its content validity was ensured through expert judgment based on established motivation theories. The observation checklist was used to document students' classroom behavior during the learning process, particularly their participation, attentiveness, responsiveness, and engagement when using ChatGPT. In addition, writing tasks in the form of recount texts were administered at the beginning and end of the cycle, and the students' writing samples were analyzed to examine improvements in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary use, sentence structure, coherence, and overall organization of ideas.

The validity and reliability of the research instruments were ensured through several procedures. The motivation questionnaire was adapted from established theories of learning motivation, particularly Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and its content



validity was examined through expert judgment. An English education lecturer reviewed the questionnaire items to ensure their relevance, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives, and minor revisions were made based on the feedback.

To support reliability, the questionnaire items were designed using consistent language and a clear Likert-scale format. The questionnaire was administered twice (pre- and post-intervention) under similar classroom conditions to ensure consistency of responses. The observation checklist was also validated through expert review to ensure that the indicators accurately represented students' motivation, participation, and engagement. Reliability of observation data was enhanced through systematic and repeated observations across meetings using the same checklist. Furthermore, the validity of the writing tasks was ensured by aligning them with the instructional objectives and the recount text genre taught during the intervention. The use of multiple instruments strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings through data triangulation.

The data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative and quantitative approaches. Questionnaire results were calculated in percentages to identify changes in students' motivation before and after the intervention. Observation data were analyzed descriptively to capture changes in students' classroom behavior. Writing samples were compared to examine improvements in writing quality across the cycle.

## C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *Findings*

The results of the motivation questionnaire revealed a noticeable improvement in students' writing motivation after the implementation of ChatGPT. Prior to the intervention, many students reported low confidence, high writing anxiety, and limited interest in writing activities. Writing tasks were commonly perceived as difficult and stressful, which resulted in minimal participation during classroom writing sessions.

After the intervention, students demonstrated a more positive attitude toward writing. The percentage of students who enjoyed writing activities increased from 35% before the intervention to 70% after the intervention. Students' confidence in expressing ideas in written

form also increased significantly. In addition, students showed improved ability to focus during writing activities, while writing anxiety decreased substantially.

Observation data supported the questionnaire results. Before the use of ChatGPT, only a small number of students actively participated in writing activities, while most students hesitated to begin writing and relied heavily on teacher assistance. During the implementation of ChatGPT, students became more actively involved in classroom activities. They participated in discussions, asked questions, and interacted more confidently with peers and the teacher. The proportion of actively participating students increased from approximately 30% before the intervention to 80% after the intervention, indicating a more engaging writing classroom environment.

Analysis of students' writing samples further demonstrated improvement in writing performance. Students' final recount texts showed better sentence structure, more accurate use of past tense forms, improved vocabulary choice, and clearer organization of ideas. Grammatical errors were reduced by approximately 60%, and sentence fluency improved compared to the initial writing tasks. These findings indicate that students were able to utilize ChatGPT's feedback and suggestions effectively during the revision process.

**Table 1.** Number of students motivation before and after using ChatGPT

| <b>Indicator</b>           | <b>Before (%)</b> | <b>After (%)</b> | <b>Improvement</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| Active participation       | 30                | 80               | +50                |
| Enjoy writing              | 35                | 70               | +35                |
| Confident expressing ideas | 35                | 75               | +40                |
| Ability to focus           | 30                | 70               | +40                |
| Writing anxiety            | 45                | 25               | -20                |

Table 1 summarizes students' writing motivation before and after the implementation of ChatGPT. The table shows a clear increase in positive motivational indicators such as enjoyment, confidence, focus, willingness to write, and readiness to revise. In contrast, writing anxiety decreased substantially after the intervention. These results reinforce the findings



presented in the motivation chart and confirm that ChatGPT contributed to a more supportive and motivating writing environment.

### ***Discussion***

This study aimed to examine the use of ChatGPT as a writing assistant to enhance secondary-level EFL students' writing motivation through Classroom Action Research. The findings indicate that integrating ChatGPT into the writing process positively influenced students' motivation, classroom participation, and writing performance. The improvement in students' writing motivation can be explained through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). ChatGPT provided students with a sense of competence by helping them generate ideas and reduce grammatical difficulties, which often hinder students at the beginning of writing tasks. When students felt more capable of starting and continuing their writing, their confidence and enjoyment increased, leading to higher motivation.

In terms of classroom participation, ChatGPT contributed to a more interactive learning environment by lowering students' fear of making mistakes. The availability of immediate feedback encouraged students to experiment with language and engage more actively in writing activities. This finding is consistent with previous studies suggesting that AI-assisted tools can reduce learners' affective filters and promote engagement in EFL writing classrooms.

The improvement in students' writing performance further supports the role of ChatGPT as a learning scaffold. The reduction in grammatical errors and improvement in sentence fluency suggest that students did not merely copy AI-generated content but rather learned from the feedback and applied it during the revision process. This finding aligns with earlier research emphasizing the function of AI tools as cognitive scaffolds that support learners in managing complex writing tasks.

These findings align with previous studies such as those by Almusharraf and Bailey (2021), who stated that digital tools can enhance student engagement and reduce anxiety in completing writing tasks. Similarly, Heidari et al. (2023) and Silitonga et al. (2023) found that AI-based platforms like ChatGPT helped students improve their writing accuracy and foster higher intrinsic motivation. Xu et al. (2023) also emphasized that the interactive nature of AI tools



creates a more engaging writing experience. However, concerns raised in this study about potential over-reliance on ChatGPT are supported by Zhang & Dafoe (2019), who suggested that AI use in education should be balanced with conventional methods to prevent dependency and support the development of students' independent thinking skills. This study also supports the findings by Nisa et al. (2025) that students consider ChatGPT to be a useful tool that helps them with a variety of writing-related tasks, such as coming up with ideas, organizing sentences, and fixing grammar. Thus, while this study confirms the benefits of using ChatGPT in improving motivation and writing quality, it is important to ensure that its use is carried out wisely and strategically within the classroom learning context.

Despite these positive outcomes, the findings also highlight the importance of teacher guidance in AI-assisted writing instruction. ChatGPT was most effective when used under clear instructional boundaries that emphasized revision, paraphrasing, and critical evaluation of AI-generated output. Without proper guidance, there is a risk of overreliance on AI tools, which may limit students' independent writing development. Therefore, thoughtful pedagogical integration remains essential.

The findings of this study offer important pedagogical implications for English language teachers, particularly at the secondary school level. First, the integration of ChatGPT in writing instruction should be implemented as a guided learning strategy, with teachers playing a central role in supervising students' use of AI tools. Clear instructions should be provided to emphasize brainstorming, revising, and paraphrasing rather than direct copying of AI-generated text.

Second, ChatGPT can be effectively used to support students who struggle with writing initiation and confidence. By reducing cognitive load during the early stages of writing, AI tools can help students focus on developing ideas and refining language use, thereby fostering higher motivation and sustained engagement in writing activities.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the integration of ChatGPT as a writing assistant to enhance secondary-level EFL students' writing motivation through Classroom Action Research. The findings indicate that the use of ChatGPT had a positive impact on students' writing motivation,



classroom participation, and writing performance. After the implementation, students demonstrated greater enjoyment in writing activities, increased confidence in expressing ideas, improved focus during writing tasks, and reduced writing anxiety. In addition, students' writing performance showed noticeable improvement, particularly in grammatical accuracy, sentence fluency, vocabulary use, and organization of ideas.

The Classroom Action Research revealed that ChatGPT functioned as an effective learning scaffold rather than a replacement for students' thinking. By providing idea prompts, language input, and immediate feedback, ChatGPT helped students overcome common writing challenges such as difficulty in starting, limited vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes. These supports encouraged students to revise their drafts more actively and engage more confidently in the writing process.

Despite the positive outcomes, this study also acknowledges several limitations. The research was conducted in one cycle with a limited number of participants and focused on a single text genre. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to broader contexts. Nevertheless, the results provide meaningful insights into the potential of AI-assisted writing tools in enhancing motivation and engagement among secondary-level EFL learners. The ethical considerations should be explicitly addressed in AI-assisted learning. Teachers need to model responsible AI use by promoting academic integrity, critical evaluation of AI-generated output, and originality in students' writing. This approach ensures that AI tools enhance, rather than hinder, students' cognitive and creative development.

Finally, future research is recommended to explore the long-term impact of ChatGPT in EFL writing instruction through multiple CAR cycles, different text genres, and larger participant groups. Further studies may also investigate students' independent writing development and ethical awareness when using AI tools in diverse educational settings.

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