Jurnal Pena Edukasi ISSN 2407-0769 (cetak)
Vol. 13, No. 2, Mei 2026, hlm. 72 – 79 ISSN 2549-4694 (online)
Available online at http://jurnal.goretanpena.com/index.php/JPE

EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING VOCABULARY THROUGH THE USE OF CHATGPT

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Abstract: The development of artificial intelligence technology, particularly ChatGPT, has opened up new opportunities in English language learning, especially in vocabulary acquisition. This study aims to explore the use of ChatGPT, student perceptions, learning motivation, learning activity, and the limitations of ChatGPT in English vocabulary learning. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method involving EFL students from Cokroaminoto University Palopo as research subjects. Data from respondents were collected through semi-structured interviews. The results show that ChatGPT is used as a tool to find word meanings, word classes, synonyms and antonyms, as well as examples of vocabulary usage in context. Students have a positive perception of ChatGPT because it is considered practical, fast, and easy to use, as well as capable of increasing motivation and learning activity. However, this study also found several limitations of ChatGPT, such as overly general explanations, potential inaccuracy of information, and dependence on internet connection. In short, this study shows that ChatGPT has the potential to support English vocabulary learning and student learning motivation, but it needs to be used critically and accompanied by educators so that its use is more effective and responsible.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligent; ChatGPT; EFL students; vocabulary.

INTRODUCTION

Fitria (2025) states that English is widely used in diverse countries and across cultures as a common means of exchanging ideas, information, and knowledge. English serves as a global lingua franca, facilitating communication among diverse linguistic backgrounds in fields such as business, science, diplomacy, education, and technology (Sharma, 2022). In smaller areas, English is often found in smartphone menus, technology-based household appliances, product packaging, and so on. Therefore, English is an important language to learn.

There are four English language skills that students must master to improve their learning process at school: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Nhu & Quyen (2021) argue that in language learning, vocabulary affects reading, writing, speaking, listening, and other forms of oral communication such as discussions, conversations, or prepared speeches. Students who are learning English will experience difficulties in their learning process if they do not have a good command of vocabulary.

For students, a good command of vocabulary is very important so that they have the practical skills needed and are

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Diajukan: 25 Februari 2026; Direvisi: 11 Mei 2026; Diterima: 13 Mei 2026

able to interact in a global context. However, in practice, many EFL students still have difficulty enriching and using English vocabulary appropriately. These difficulties are often caused by limited exposure to the language and low student motivation to learn. Students employ various methods to strengthen their vocabulary mastery, one of which is by utilizing technology as a learning aid.

It is not surprising that human life today has undergone tremendous transformation due to technological advances, which have driven technological changes in various fields, including education. This technological transformation has not only affected human activities in general, but also at a more specific level, one of which is related to how students learn. Arridho et al. (2023) outlined the benefits of technology in education, which include improved learning abilities, additional information, more interesting delivery of material, easy access to learning, increased interest in learning, and new learning methods.

Various forms of technology have become part of the learning process, including artificial intelligence (AI) technology, which has recently become increasingly popular. According to Pratiwi et al. (2024), artificial intelligence (AI) technology is a subfield of computer science that focuses on the development of machines and systems that are capable of thinking and working like humans. AI is designed to mimic human cognitive abilities, such as thinking, analyzing, problem solving, and decision making. As a form of technology, AI has become an important part of various sectors, including the education sector. Digitalization of education has increased over the last few years, with AI being integrated into variety of educational activities (Pacala, 2024). AI's ability to analyze data, provide automatic feedback, tailor material to individual needs, and manage the learning process makes it one of the technologies with great potential to improve the quality of education.

One of these Artificial Intelligence is ChatGPT which is defined by Yildiz, (2023) as a language-based Artificial Intelligence model developed by OpenAI to understand and generate dialogue naturally like a human in response to user input. Nita et al. (2023) stated in their research that AI, including ChatGPT, has begun to be positioned as an innovative learning medium based on Artificial Intelligence that plays a direct role in the context of education. According to them, ChatGPT is an intelligent machine that has been trained to mimic human conversation with the help of Natural Language Processing (NLP) technology. Through these capabilities, ChatGPT is able to generate structured, coherent text that resembles academic writing produced by humans. As a learning medium, ChatGPT not only presents information, but also serves as an interactive tool that can be used by educators and students in the teaching and learning process. This marks a shift from conventional learning media to AI-based smart digital media.

In the context of language learning, ChatGPT can be categorized as an implementation of the Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) theory, which emphasizes the use of digital technology to improve language skills. The integration of ChatGPT in language learning, including English, benefits students as it provides a flexible and low-pressure language practice partner. However, the use of this technology cannot be separated from the various views and perceptions of students as its main users. Some students may view ChatGPT as an interesting and helpful

learning medium, while others may find it difficult, feel uncertain, or even become overly dependent on this technology.

Therefore, it is important to understand how EFL students view the use of ChatGPT in English vocabulary learning. Understanding students' views can provide an overview of the extent to which ChatGPT is accepted, its perceived benefits, and the challenges students face during its use. Research with a qualitative descriptive approach is considered appropriate for exploring students' experiences, opinions, and perceptions in a deep and contextual manner. Therefore, this study aims to describe EFL students' views on the use of ChatGPT in English vocabulary learning.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach that aims to describe and deeply understand EFL students' views on the use of ChatGPT in English vocabulary learning. This approach allows researchers to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and opinions in a contextual and natural manner without manipulating the research variables. The subjects of this study were selected through purposive sampling, and four EFL students from the English Education Department at Cokroaminoto University in Palopo who had used ChatGPT as a supporting medium in English vocabulary learning were selected.

To collect data, this study used interviews to obtain in-depth data on students' views, experiences, and assessments of the use of ChatGPT in vocabulary learning. The interviews were semi-structured, with items adopted and modified from the studies by Losi et al., (2024) and Laili et al. (2025). After that, the data will be analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Researchers only select data that is considered necessary for this study. Next, researchers will present the selected data descriptively and then conclude with a conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were obtained from the responses of four research subjects regarding the use of ChatGPT in English vocabulary learning. The data covers aspects of aspects of usage, perception, motivation, activity, and shortcomingsof ChatGPT usage.

Table 1. Research Findings

Topic	Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4
Question 1: ChatGPT Usage	Using ChatGPT primarily to search for word meanings, word classes, synonyms and antonyms, idioms, and examples of word usage in sentences	Using ChatGPT while doing college assignments and learning new, difficult vocabulary	Using ChatGPT to understand the meaning, word class, synonyms, antonyms, and usage of words accurately according to context	Using ChatGPT to find synonyms, rarely used phrases, and to translate

Question 2: Perceptions about ChatGPT	Consider ChatGPT to be very helpful because it is fast, clear, practical, and efficient	Consider ChatGPT is helpful, but the results depend on the quality of the prompt	Consider ChatGPT to be fast, easy to understand, and suitable for your needs	Consider ChatGPT to be very helpful and the results often exceed expectations
Question 3: Motivation for using ChatGPT	Motivated because ChatGPT provides answers quickly	Motivated because the answers meet my needs and provide additional material	Motivated because we can ask questions anytime without fear of being wrong.	Less motivated because ChatGPT's appearance is monotonous and lacks visuals
Question 4: Activeness in using ChatGPT	Become more active in exploring new vocabulary	Feeling that ChatGPT provides further explanations automatically	Become more active in searching for and learning new vocabulary	Finding ChatGPT's appearance boring
Question 5: Shortcomings of ChatGPT	The explanation is too general and depends on the internet connection	The answers sometimes do not match the material, so detailed prompts are needed.	The explanation is too general and needs to be verified with other sources	Information is sometimes outdated and inaccurate

ChatGPT Usage

Research findings show that ChatGPT is predominantly used as a tool for learning English vocabulary, particularly for finding word meanings, word classes, synonyms and antonyms, examples of usage in sentences or phrases, idioms, and differences in meaning between similar words. In addition, ChatGPT is also used in academic contexts, such as completing college assignments and understanding new vocabulary that is considered difficult. This pattern of use indicates that ChatGPT serves as a multifunctional lexical resource that supports direct and contextual language learning needs.

Theoretically, the use of ChatGPT, which focuses on the meaning, form, and usage of words, is in line with the concept of vocabulary knowledge proposed by Nation, which emphasizes that vocabulary mastery encompasses the aspects of form, meaning, and usage. By providing instant explanations and example sentences, ChatGPT enables learners to integrate these three aspects simultaneously. This shows that ChatGPT has the potential to support deeper vocabulary learning, not just memorization of word meanings.

In addition, the variations in ChatGPT usage demonstrated by respondents indicate differences in learning needs and individual strategies for vocabulary acquisition. Some students

use ChatGPT for exploratory purposes, such as expanding their vocabulary and understanding nuances of meaning, while others use it instrumentally to complete academic assignments. These differences show that ChatGPT is adaptive to users' learning styles and can accommodate learners with different language proficiency levels. Thus, ChatGPT has the potential to support personalized vocabulary learning, which has been a challenge in English language learning in large classrooms.

Perceptions about ChatGPT

In general, respondents have a positive perception of ChatGPT as a learning medium. ChatGPT is seen as helpful because it can provide quick, clear, easy-to-understand, practical, and efficient explanations. ChatGPT's flexibility in tailoring answers to user needs is also an appreciated aspect, although some respondents emphasized the importance of being able to formulate the right prompts so that the results obtained are as expected.

This positive perception can be explained through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) framework, particularly in terms of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. When students consider ChatGPT useful and easy to use, they tend to accept and utilize it in the learning process. In the context of English language learning, this perception has implications for increased learning engagement, as students feel assisted by technology that is responsive to their linguistic needs.

Furthermore, positive perceptions of ChatGPT also reflect a change in the role of learning resources in English language learning. Whereas learners previously relied heavily on printed dictionaries or explanations from lecturers, ChatGPT is now seen as a quick and easily accessible alternative learning resource. However, dependence on this technology needs to be approached critically so as not to diminish the role of pedagogical interaction between lecturers and students. Therefore, positive perceptions of ChatGPT should be directed towards strengthening, rather than replacing, conventional learning practices that emphasize social interaction and direct feedback.

Motivation for Using ChatGPT

In terms of motivation, most respondents showed interest and enthusiasm in using ChatGPT to learn English vocabulary. This motivation was triggered by the speed of response, ease of access, and freedom to ask questions at any time without fear of making mistakes. ChatGPT is perceived as a safe and non-judgmental learning space, encouraging students to explore new vocabulary.

However, the findings also show that motivation is not uniform. One respondent revealed that ChatGPT's monotonous and minimal visual display actually reduced their interest in learning. This shows that although ChatGPT is effective from a cognitive perspective, affective and visual aspects still play an important role in maintaining learning motivation. Thus, learning motivation through ChatGPT is influenced by a combination of functional factors (speed and practicality) and learning media design factors.

Activeness in Using ChatGPT

The use of ChatGPT encourages students to be more active in exploring English vocabulary. Respondents stated that they became more active in searching for the meaning, usage, and example sentences of new vocabulary because

ChatGPT enables a continuous question and answer process. ChatGPT's responses, which often provide further explanations, also encourage broader and deeper exploration of vocabulary.

These findings indicate that ChatGPT has the potential to foster learner-centered learning, where students play an active role in directing their own learning process. This activity is in line with the principle of autonomous learning, which emphasizes the role of learners in controlling learning goals, materials, and strategies. However, findings that ChatGPT's display was considered boring by some respondents indicate that learning activity can still be improved through the development of more varied visual and interactive features.

Student engagement in using ChatGPT also indicates a shift from passive learning to more interactive and reflective learning. By asking follow-up questions and exploring vocabulary independently, students not only receive information but also engage in the process of knowledge construction. However, this activity is still individual and technology-based, so it needs to be integrated with collaborative activities in the classroom. Such integration can expand the benefits of ChatGPT by combining independent learning and social interaction, both of which are important in English language learning.

Shortcomings of ChatGPT

Although it offers many benefits, ChatGPT also has a number of limitations identified by respondents. Explanations that are too general or not relevant to the user's needs are the most frequently cited weaknesses. In addition, respondents highlighted the potential for inaccurate information, outdated data, and dependence on a stable internet connection. These limitations require users to double-check the information obtained.

From a pedagogical perspective, these limitations emphasize that ChatGPT cannot be positioned as the sole source of learning. Instead, ChatGPT needs to be used critically as a supporting tool. The need to double-check information can actually be used as a means of training students' critical thinking and digital literacy skills. With appropriate pedagogical guidance, ChatGPT's limitations can be turned into opportunities for more reflective and responsible learning.

CONCLUSION

The use of ChatGPT shows positive potential as a supporting medium in improving EFL students' vocabulary mastery and learning motivation. ChatGPT is used to understand the meaning and use of vocabulary in context. It is perceived as a useful, easy-to-use, and efficient tool that encourages active and independent learning because it allows students to learn without pressure and with quick feedback. However, limitations such as overly general explanations, potential inaccuracies in information, and dependence on internet connection indicate that ChatGPT cannot yet replace the role of educators, but rather needs to be positioned as a learning aid. Therefore, the integration of ChatGPT in English vocabulary learning needs to be accompanied by pedagogical and digital literacy guidance so that its use is effective, critical, and responsible.

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