

Students' Perception of ChatGPT use for Vocabulary Mastery at Junior High School

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*Risky Nurain, Mochtar Marhum, Sukmawati Sadilia, Mukrim^{abcd} 

¹²³⁴Tadulako University, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: riskynurain635@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study addresses the limited English vocabulary mastery of junior high school students and the potential of ChatGPT as a supportive learning tool in a rural school context. This study aims to investigate how junior high school students use ChatGPT for vocabulary learning and to explore their perceptions of its usefulness in improving vocabulary mastery. A qualitative descriptive exploratory design was employed with three ninth-grade students selected purposively because they had experience using ChatGPT for vocabulary learning and were able to provide rich and relevant information related to the focus of the study. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, documentation, and field notes, then analyzed descriptively. The findings show that students use ChatGPT to find word meanings, learn through example sentences, and simplify difficult instructions. The students also hold generally positive perceptions of ChatGPT, citing its usefulness, ease of use, and ability to increase motivation and confidence, although they also noted internet limitations and the need for teacher guidance. The study concludes that ChatGPT can support vocabulary learning in rural schools when integrated with teacher supervision

Keywords: ChatGPT, Students' Perception, Vocabulary Mastery, English Learning, Artificial Intelligence

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INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary is one of the most essential components of English language learning because it supports learners' ability to communicate effectively in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. A sufficient vocabulary allows students to understand information and express their ideas more accurately. Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, learners may experience difficulties in understanding texts, following conversations, and communicating their thoughts. Therefore, vocabulary development plays an important role in supporting students' overall English proficiency (Bangun & Simanjuntak, 2022; Nation, 2001, 2024; Zuhairi & Mistar, 2023).

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, vocabulary learning is particularly important because learners often have limited opportunities to use English in their daily lives. Unlike learners in English-speaking environments, EFL students mainly encounter English through classroom instruction and learning materials. This limited exposure can make it difficult for students to acquire and retain new vocabulary. Consequently, teachers and researchers need to identify learning approaches and resources that can provide students with additional opportunities to encounter, understand, and practice English vocabulary (Afini et al., 2023; Amar et al., 2025; Hidayatullah et al., 2022).

The rapid development of digital technology has changed the way students access information and engage in learning. Various digital platforms and applications have been introduced to provide learners with flexible and accessible learning resources. These developments have also encouraged the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into language learning. One of the most widely recognized AI-based tools is ChatGPT, which can interact with users and provide immediate responses to their questions. This technology offers new

possibilities for students who need additional support beyond conventional classroom learning (Alharbi & Khalil, 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Hyeon Jo et al., 2024).

ChatGPT has several features that may support vocabulary learning. It can provide word meanings, synonyms, example sentences, contextual explanations, and immediate feedback based on students' questions. Students can also ask ChatGPT to explain unfamiliar words in simpler language or provide additional examples to help them understand how words are used. Such features may allow learners to access vocabulary-related assistance more quickly and independently. Research has indicated that ChatGPT-based interaction can facilitate vocabulary learning by providing contextualized language input and individualized assistance (Chen & Li, 2023; Ngo, 2024; Ruyat et al., 2024). In the context of SMPN SATAP Lik Layana Indah, where students face limited vocabulary mastery, restricted learning resources, and low exposure to English, ChatGPT therefore has the potential to serve as a supplementary resource for vocabulary learning.

Previous studies have reported promising contributions of ChatGPT to language learning. Kasneci et al., (2023) stated that ChatGPT has strong potential as a learning support tool, although teacher supervision remains necessary to ensure its appropriate use. Trinh (2024) explained that ChatGPT can support vocabulary acquisition by providing comprehensible input and reducing cognitive load, which may help learners understand unfamiliar words more easily. (Aldowsari & Aljebreen, 2024) further examined ChatGPT-based applications in relation to EFL students' vocabulary mastery, while Abdelhalim and Abdelhalim & Alsehibany (2025) highlighted the potential of AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, for enhancing vocabulary learning among EFL learners. These findings indicate that AI-supported interaction can provide learners with additional opportunities to encounter and process vocabulary according to their individual learning needs.

Other studies have highlighted students' positive perceptions of ChatGPT in English learning. Wahdah et al., (2024) found that students perceived ChatGPT as useful and easy to use, particularly for supporting their understanding of English vocabulary. Similarly, Isnaini et al. (2025) reported that students viewed ChatGPT as helpful for learning vocabulary more independently, quickly, and confidently. (Hasanah & Safitri, 2024) also investigated students' perceptions of ChatGPT in relation to writing and vocabulary development, while (Moheno, 2024) examined the influence of perceived enjoyment and usefulness on students' willingness to use ChatGPT. These findings suggest that students may benefit not only from the information provided by ChatGPT but also from the flexibility, perceived usefulness, and independence it offers during the learning process.

Despite these findings, several gaps remain in the existing research. Many previous studies have focused on university students or employed quantitative approaches to examine the effectiveness or perceptions of ChatGPT. For example, Isnaini et al., (2025) focused on university students, while Losi et al. (2024) examined Generation Z perceptions of ChatGPT in EFL vocabulary learning. Fewer studies have explored how junior high school students actually use ChatGPT during vocabulary learning and how they perceive its usefulness in their own learning context. Furthermore, rural schools require particular attention because students may experience different educational conditions, including limited internet access, fewer digital learning resources, and limited exposure to English outside the classroom. These contextual factors may influence both students' experiences with ChatGPT and their perceptions of its usefulness (Durazno et al., 2024; Sallam et al., 2024).

Therefore, the present study focuses on the use of ChatGPT for vocabulary learning among students at SMPN SATAP Lik Layana Indah. Specifically, the study investigates how students use ChatGPT in their vocabulary learning process and explores their perceptions of its usefulness in improving vocabulary mastery. By examining students' experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges, this study is expected to provide a more contextual understanding of AI-assisted vocabulary learning among junior high school students in a rural EFL setting. The findings may also provide useful insights for teachers and schools in considering the appropriate integration of ChatGPT as a supplementary resource for English vocabulary learning, particularly because effective AI integration requires attention to

students' autonomy, engagement, and appropriate use of technology (Adiyono et al., 2025; Firdaus et al., 2025).

METHOD

This chapter presents the research method used in this study. It explains the research design, research setting, respondents, instruments, procedures, and data analysis. The purpose of this chapter is to describe how the research was conducted systematically to answer the research questions.

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with an exploratory approach. Qualitative research was chosen because the study aimed to explore students' experiences and perceptions in depth, while the descriptive approach was used to explain their use of ChatGPT in vocabulary learning in a clear and detailed way.

The research was conducted at SMPN SATAP Lik Layana Indah, a rural school where students still had limited vocabulary mastery and needed additional support in learning English. The participants of this study were three ninth-grade students aged 14 to 15 years old who were selected through purposive sampling. They were chosen because they had experience using ChatGPT for vocabulary learning, were willing to participate, and had very limited English ability, which made them relevant participants for this study.

To obtain the data, the researcher used semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, documentation, and field notes. The collected data were then analyzed descriptively to identify students' use of ChatGPT and their perceptions of its role in improving vocabulary mastery.

Respondents

The participants of this study consisted of three ninth-grade students of SMPN SATAP Lik Layana Indah. They were selected through purposive sampling because they had experience using ChatGPT in their vocabulary learning process. The choice of these participants was intended to obtain rich information related to the focus of the study. Since this research used a qualitative descriptive design, the small number of participants was considered appropriate to explore students' experiences and perceptions in depth.

Instruments

The data in this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, documentation, and field notes. These instruments were used to gain information about how students used ChatGPT in learning vocabulary and how they perceived its use in improving vocabulary mastery. The interview guide was used to explore students' answers in detail, while observation was used to see students' behavior and activities during learning. Documentation and field notes were used to support the data and record important information during the research process.

Procedures

Data collection in this study was carried out by conducting interviews, observation, documentation, and field notes. The researcher interviewed the participants to obtain information about their experiences in using ChatGPT for vocabulary learning. The interviews were also recorded so that the data could be transcribed accurately. In addition, the researcher observed students' activities during the learning process and collected documentation in the form of supporting evidence related to the use of ChatGPT. All collected data were then organized and prepared for analysis to answer the research questions.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed descriptively to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences and perceptions regarding the use of ChatGPT. After the interview data were transcribed, the researcher read and selected the important information related to the research focus.

Then, the data from interviews, observation, documentation, and field notes were compared and interpreted based on the research questions. The researcher grouped similar responses, identified the main patterns, and organized the findings into several themes that reflected students' use of ChatGPT and their perceptions of its usefulness.

After that, the researcher reviewed the data repeatedly to make sure that the interpretation was consistent with the participants' answers and the research findings. This process helped the researcher present the data in a clear and systematic way so that the meaning of each response could be understood properly.

In conclusion, the data analysis in this study was conducted descriptively to describe students' use of ChatGPT in vocabulary learning and their perceptions of it. Through this process, the researcher was able to answer the research questions and present the findings in a narrative form based on the collected data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Using ChatGPT to Understand Vocabulary

Students used ChatGPT to help them understand unfamiliar words and find their meanings. They often relied on it when they encountered difficult vocabulary in tasks, textbooks, or teacher explanations. One student explained, ChatGPT helps me when I find difficult words because it explains the meaning. Another student said, If I don't know the meaning, I just ask ChatGPT and it answers quickly. A third student added, Sometimes I ask ChatGPT just to make sure the meaning is correct. These statements show that ChatGPT was considered a practical tool because it gave quick clarification when students were confused by new words.

Besides finding word meanings, students also used ChatGPT to get example sentences and understand how vocabulary is used in context. One participant stated, it gives example sentences, so I know how to use the word. Another said, if there is a sentence example, I can remember the word more easily. A third participant explained, I copy the pattern first, then I change it with my own words. In addition, students used ChatGPT to understand English instructions and short texts more clearly, especially when word-by-word translation was not enough.

Students' Perceptions of ChatGPT

The students generally had positive perceptions of ChatGPT because they considered it useful and easy to use. One participant said, ChatGPT is useful because it explains difficult words clearly. Another explained, It makes learning more fun, not like only memorizing from book. A third student added, If I ask ChatGPT, I can learn quickly because the answer is direct. For them, ChatGPT acted as a learning assistant that made English vocabulary easier to understand.

The students also said that ChatGPT increased their motivation and confidence in learning English. One student said, I am not shy to ask many times because ChatGPT doesn't get angry. Another stated, I feel more excited because it is not boring. A third participant explained, after using ChatGPT, I feel more confident in English class. However, they also noticed some limitations, such as long explanations, uncertain accuracy, and the need for teacher guidance. Overall, ChatGPT was viewed as a helpful tool for vocabulary learning, but it still needed to be used carefully and with supervision

Interview Results from Each Participant

The interview results showed that all participants used ChatGPT for similar learning purposes, but each of them had slightly different experiences. Student 1 mainly used ChatGPT to find difficult word meanings and felt that it helped her complete tasks more easily. Student 2 enjoyed ChatGPT because it made learning more fun and less boring, while Student 3 used it to confirm meaning, understand instructions, and practice making sentences.

Although their experiences were different, all participants agreed that ChatGPT was helpful in vocabulary learning. They also stated that it improved their confidence and made

them more independent in learning English. At the same time, they mentioned problems such as internet connection, overly long answers, and the need for teacher supervision to ensure the correctness of information.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that ChatGPT was used as a supportive learning tool in vocabulary learning. Students mainly used it to translate vocabulary, learn word usage through example sentences, and understand short English texts. This indicates that ChatGPT supported students in learning vocabulary in a more practical and flexible way.

The students' positive perceptions are consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model [Davis \(1989\)](#). Students accepted ChatGPT because they believed it was useful and easy to use. In this research, students felt that ChatGPT helped them learn vocabulary faster, understand difficult words, and reduce confusion.

This finding is also supported by [Trinh \(2024\)](#), who stated that ChatGPT can support vocabulary learning by providing comprehensible input and reducing cognitive load. In this study, students felt that ChatGPT explanations and examples made vocabulary learning easier and more understandable. They also reported that ChatGPT helped them remember vocabulary because they could see examples in context.

However, the findings also show that the rural context influenced the use of ChatGPT. Limited internet access became the main obstacle, especially for learning outside the classroom. Students also doubted the accuracy of some answers, which shows that ChatGPT cannot fully replace teachers.

This condition supports [Kasneci et al., \(2023\)](#), who emphasized that AI tools should be used as learning support rather than replacing teachers. Teachers are still needed to provide guidance, confirm information, and help students develop critical thinking. Overall, ChatGPT can be a useful tool for vocabulary learning at SMPN SATAP Lik Layana Indah, but it must be used wisely and supported by teacher guidance.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, the number of participants was limited to three ninth-grade students at SMPN SATAP Lik Layana Indah, so the findings cannot be generalized to a wider population. Second, the study focused only on vocabulary learning and students' perceptions of ChatGPT, so it did not examine other English skills such as speaking, reading, writing, or grammar.

In addition, the study was conducted in a rural school context where internet access and technology use were still limited. This condition may have influenced how students used ChatGPT and how often they could access it outside the classroom. Therefore, the findings should be understood as a contextual description of students' experiences rather than a universal conclusion. Future researchers are recommended to involve a larger number of participants so that the findings can provide a broader picture of students' perceptions and use of ChatGPT in vocabulary learning. It would also be useful to include students from different grade levels or school settings to compare how context influences the use of AI tools in learning. Future studies may explore the use of ChatGPT in improving other English language skills, such as speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. Researchers can also examine how teacher guidance, internet access, and learning environment affect the effectiveness of ChatGPT in classroom practice.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that ChatGPT can serve as a useful supporting tool for vocabulary learning among ninth-grade students at SMPN SATAP Lik Layana Indah. Students mainly used ChatGPT to find the meanings of unfamiliar words, learn vocabulary through example sentences, and understand English instructions or short texts. The students also showed positive perceptions, considering ChatGPT useful because it provided quick, clear, and easy-to-understand explanations. Its ease of use made learning more comfortable

and less intimidating, while also supporting students' motivation and confidence. This study contributes to understanding how ChatGPT can support vocabulary learning in a rural junior high school context characterized by limited learning resources and low exposure to English. It also provides practical insights for teachers and references for future researchers. However, ChatGPT should be used as a complementary learning aid, with teacher guidance remaining essential to ensure its effective and appropriate use.

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