

## **The Limitations of Navigating ChatGPT as Writing Assistance Tools in EFL Writing Activities**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The process of learning languages has experienced and improved rapidly as a result of the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. A specific area that has shown the improvement is the integration of this AI in EFL learning. The purpose of this systematic review is to investigate and to explore current research on the limitations of using ChatGPT as a writing assistance tool for EFL writing activities from different nations in the world. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 checklist was employed in this research. DOAJ, ERIC, and Google Scholar as international article databases were used to select research articles being analyzed. Fifteen articles that met the inclusion criteria were selected. The analysis of these articles showed that ChatGPT has three main limitations in writing area. First, 7 of 15 articles report that it cannot fully assist students throughout the writing process. Secondly, 10 of 15 articles present an issue concerning over-reliance and writing originality. Finally, 4 of 15 articles mention that the feedback given by ChatGPT is inaccurate in some cases. In sum, this systematic review highlights the limitations of ChatGPT as writing assistance tools revealing incomplete assistance, attitude of writing originality, and inaccurate feedback. It contributes to careful AI use in EFL teaching in the future by concerning the necessity of guidance and directions to students.

**Key words:** ChatGPT; Limitations; Writing Assistance Tools; EFL Writing Activities

### **INTRODUCTION**

The development of artificial intelligence (AI) technology has made an important effect on many aspects of human life, including language learning. This AI-based developed rapidly each year. Its new features and functions give a significant impact on a number of language learning elements, including teachers, learners, language learning instruction, learning resources, learning method/techniques, learning assessments, and language curriculum. It is important to note that the development of AI-based technology has reached its potential in the field of language learning. Many language learning institutions around the world use

technological platforms for distance learning or hybrid learning to ease the learning instruction. Various factors should be considered to implement technology in language learning institutions.

One of the areas of language learning that is receiving the impact of AI is the English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. The integration of AI has provided a new innovation to improve the learning experience for EFL students. Some research reports the utilization of AI-based technology in various aspects of English language learning, including grammar instruction, vocabulary, and overall language skills. Dialog chatbot as one of AI tools enhance learning vocabulary in English (Qasem et al. 2023). This chatbot was useful and becomes a good tool to help students engage and learn English vocabulary. Another example is the role of AI for improving English listening skills. By engaging in real-time conversations with virtual chatbots, the students can actively practice their listening comprehension. The chatbot's responses allows users to expose them to a variety of English vocabulary, speech patterns, and accents, helping them become more familiar with natural English language usage(Xing 2023). Finally, AI tools can offer a wide range of context-specific writing assistance such as idea generation, outlining, content improvement, organization, editing, proofreading, and post-writing reflection (Wang 2024). These technologies enable the development of intelligent writing assistants that can provide real-time feedback, suggestions, and even generate content to support EFL learners (Marzuki et al., 2023).

In the aspect of writing activities in EFL learning, the majority of activities carried out by students are using AI platforms as writing assistance tools. A well-known and very popular AI platform for writing assistance is ChatGPT. Research shows that a growing number of EFL students and educators use ChatGPT for various writing tasks, like brainstorming, checking grammar, improving sentence structure and vocabulary, and receiving content feedback. For instance, a study by Alshammri (2024) found that most of students reported using ChatGPT to assist with their writing. Another research by Slamet (2024) reported that teachers acknowledged integrating it as part of their classroom activities.

While using writing assistance tools driven by AI has numerous advantages, there are several problems as well. The possibility that content produced by AI would lack the complexity and originality of content created by humans is one of the main issues. Furthermore, difficulties concerning the authenticity and originality of their work may arise regarding the accuracy and dependability of AI-powered feedback. This also applies to the use of ChatGPT as the platform most accessed by EFL students as writing assistance.

To this end, this systematic review aims to explore and to investigate recent research from various nations on the limitation of ChatGPT as a writing assistance tools in EFL writing activities. Such research can provide valuable insights into how these tools can be utilized responsibly and effectively in EFL class. By identifying and knowing the limitations of ChatGPT as one of widely used writing assistance tool,

it expected that both the EFL teacher and the students manage and navigate the use of these powerful tools as their personal assistant wisely for their writing activities. Particularly, this research will help ensure that the integration of AI in language learning can be monitored and considered properly, guiding both teachers and students toward more effective and ethical use of these tools.

Although ChatGPT as one of famous writing assistance tool are increasingly being used in EFL writing, this systematic review identifies some gaps. This research specifically focuses in limitations ChatGPT to provide writing help, but lacks exploration into the usefulness of it in writing contexts. In addition, there is also limited research on how ChatGPT could be used maximally in different EFL students' academic levels and profiles. There is such opportunities for future researcher to address this gap and explore possible strategies for navigating and incorporating AI in EFL learning.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing with the help of ChatGPT provides convenience for learners. The facility is in the form of information and knowledge that can be used as a source of writing (Salvagno, Taccone, and Gerli 2023; Lingard 2023). The presence of ChatGPT becomes a new space for learners to be able to enrich information and knowledge on issues that will and are being written. The more information and knowledge obtained through ChatGPT, this provides a way to deepen and master many issues that can be written about (Mondal and Mondal 2023; Castellanos-Gomez 2023). When we or learners lose and run out of ideas or topics to write about, ChatGPT helps provide a way so that we do not experience information and knowledge deadlock.

As long as ChatGPT is used correctly and appropriately to provide stimulation for strengthening learners' knowledge in writing, it is an appropriate and correct choice (Su, Lin, and Lai 2023; Zohery 2024). As long as the tool is utilized to enrich their knowledge and deepen the issues they write about, the learners are in the right position that they are utilizing ChatGPT to increase their knowledge (Bašić et al. 2023). However, ChatGPT also has a weakness that cannot be ignored in which the information and knowledge it facilitates is an anonymous data (Jarrah, Wardat, and Fidalgo 2023). Consequently, we cannot know where it comes from. The source inauthenticity is actually another issue that arises from the advantages and disadvantages of ChatGPT helping to provide knowledge sources to learners who are learning to write and compose. Therefore, the important thing to understand in this context is that positioning ChatGPT as a tool for collecting topic-relevant information is a necessity.

It is important for learners to select and decide which information and knowledge to choose and use to strengthen the topic of the writing (Imran and Almusharraf 2023). Not all information offered and provided by the ChatGPT tool can be fully executed as the main source in writing. The ability to select relevant data or

knowledge is important for good, quality, and responsible writing academically. ChatGPT is only a machine that cannot provide information responsibly because it is only tasked with finding information from any sources without mentioning the source of reference (Slamet 2024). ChatGPT provides initial information that needs to be verified in further manner. In addition, the information provided needs to be re-analyzed and given strong reasoning in order to be accountable.

The effort to use ChatGPT wisely need to be understood to produce good and qualified writing product. Therefore, learners need to utilize the tools as a means of finding information and knowledge to help the writing process and activities (Huang and Tan 2023). Writing is critical thinking work. With ChatGPT in use, the knowledge gained can help to bring discussion and argumentation to every writing process and activity to be weighty and meaningful (Zuckerman et al. 2023; Huang and Tan 2023). Because writing is expected to bridge the expectations of the topic created and the description of knowledge obtained through the ChatGPT tools, there needs to be an interaction between the purpose of the topic written with the knowledge material presented through ChatGPT. Finally, this gives birth to writing that is packaged and written with full argumentation and reasoning (Yang 2024).

## **METHOD**

This systematic review employed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 checklist. It consisted of a 27-item checklist and a four-phase flow diagram to review and analyze the article. As this research aims to explore the limitations of ChatGPT as writing assistance tools in EFL writing activities, fifteen related articles were identified from online databases. Four phases research steps were involved: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion phases.

### **1. Identification Phase**

This phase referred to the activity in which the researcher selected and collected the investigated articles from a comprehensive database. The researcher used three types of worldwide article databases: Google Scholar, Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ), and Education Resources Information Center (ERIC). Google Scholar was a freely accessible web search engine that indexes the full text or metadata of scholarly literature. The website address of this tool was <https://scholar.google.com/>. Second, DOAJ was employed as an extensive index of diverse open access journals from around the world that can be visited in <https://doaj.org/>. Finally, ERIC was used as a searchable full-text database of education research and information (<https://eric.ed.gov/>). Using three types of worldwide article databases, the researcher used the related keywords needed, as presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Keywords for Searching the Research Articles*

No	Databases	Keywords for Searching the Articles
1	Google Scholar	AI AND EFL writing, artificial intelligence AND ChatGPT, ChatGPT AND writing assistance tools
2	DOAJ	Limitations AND ChatGPT in writing, ChatGPT AND its limitation in writing, ChatGPT AND limitations as writing assistance tools, ChatGPT AND limitations
3	ERIC	ChatGPT as writing assistance tools, ChatGPT AND EFL writing, limitations of ChatGPT AND writing assistance

After searching for relevant articles related to the use of ChatGPT as writing assistance tool in EFL writing, the researcher then categorized the articles according to inclusion and exclusion criteria. It was carried out to make sure that the selected articles were in line with the framework that needed to be reviewed in this research. The criteria are presented in Table 2 as follows:

*Table 2. The Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Searching the Articles*

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
a. Journal articles b. Articles published between 2023-2024 c. Discuss about using ChatGPT in EFL writing activities d. Sample of respondents from both secondary school level and higher education level e. The types of the research are descriptive, case-study, action research, explanatory, and experimental with quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method f. Open-access article	a. Proceeding papers, literature books, review and meta-analysis paper b. Published articles beyond 2023-2024 c. Non-English language published articles d. Close-access article

Table 2 above showed that the researcher specified the criteria for the selected articles being investigated. The full articles that meet the criteria were downloaded and listed as having complete paper identities.

## 2. Screening Phase

The selected articles from the Google Scholar, DOAJ, and ERIC databases were reviewed by the researcher. The titles of the articles were checked to see if they matched the keywords. Then, each article's abstract was analyzed and identified. While choosing the articles based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the abstracts of the publications were read. This activity was carried out to make sure that the abstracts of articles meet the research topic.

### 3. Eligibility Phase

This was the activity after the screening article process. All articles were examined, and their eligibility was verified during this phase. Articles must meet the inclusion and exclusion standards listed in Table 2. The full articles were downloaded, and the selected articles should meet the research questions.

### 4. Exclusion Phase

This is the last step to refine the searching process for the relevant articles of the use of ChatGPT as writing assistance tools in EFL writing. All the articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria were removed. After this process was finished, the researcher found fifteen articles in final selection that meet the inclusion criteria to be analyzed. The details are summarized from the searching process using PRISMA flow chart in Figure 1.

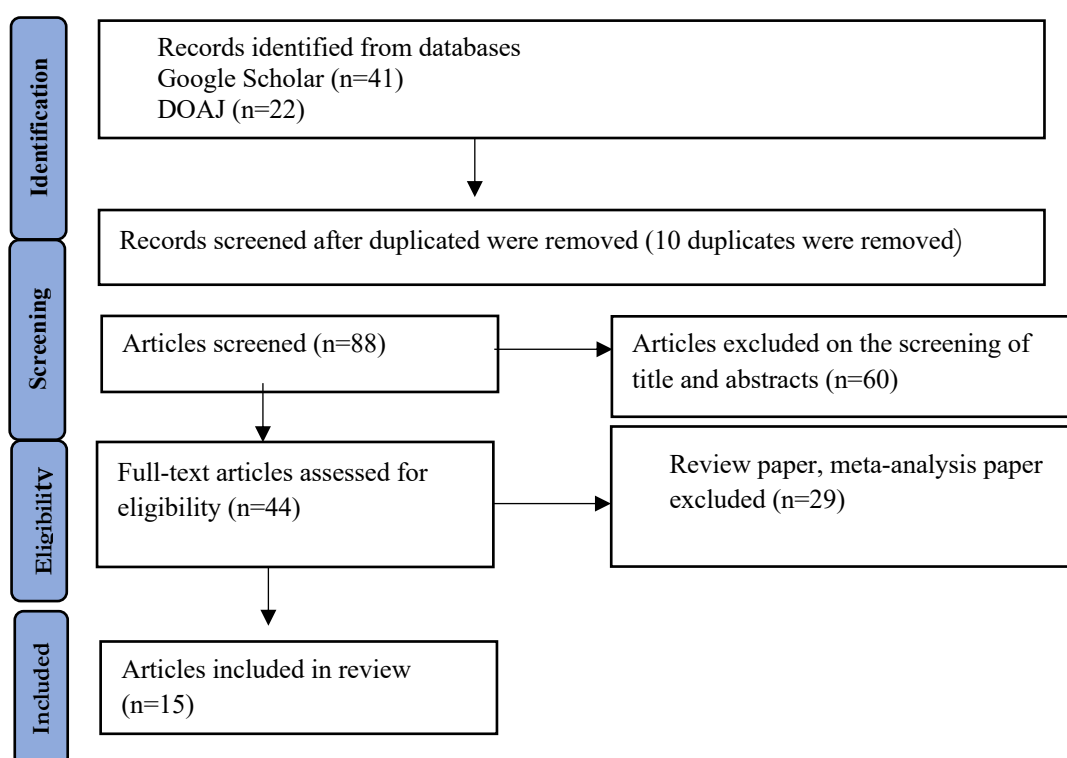


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Article Selection

## RESULT AND DISUSSION

There are fifteen articles from three online article databases investigated in this research as shown in the previous section. All the articles were then analyzed and categorized based on the area where ChatGPT has limitations as writing assistance tools in EFL writing activities. They were specifically shown as follows:

*Table 3. The Result of Reviewed Articles on Students' Writing Process using ChatGPT*

<b>No</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Countries</b>	<b>Findings from the Research</b>
1	Algaraady & Mahyoob, (2023)	Yemen and Saudi Arabia	ChatGPT successfully identified most surface-level errors but it was unable to identify writing problems pertaining to deep structure or pragmatics in students' writing. It cannot replace the human instructors' proficiency in detecting more complex aspects of writing
2	Bok & Cho (2023)	Korea	ChatGPT did not automatically offer an explanation about error correction in students' writing. Writing feedback which is given by Chat GPT often resulted in misleading. The vocabulary proposed by ChatGPT was sometimes too advanced or difficult for students to employ
3	Harunasari et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Some students have difficulties in exporting and downloading their ChatGPT history data. There were also distractions and engaged in activities unrelated to their writing activities
4	Li et al. (2023)	China	Low proficiency students have difficulties in constructing the effective prompt to ChatGPT for getting appropriate assistance. Besides that, the use of ChatGPT potentially cause limited improvement in writing proficiency
5	Alzahrani & Alotaibi (2024)	Saudi Arabia	The use of ChatGPT revealed an unexpected decrease in grammatical range and accuracy on students' writing. The ChatGPT algorithm unable to address complex grammatical structures in it.
6	Nguyen et al. (2024)	Vietnam	The overgeneralized information that ChatGPT provided is not helpful for students. Some other times, it comes up with details that are nonsense and off-topic.
7	Seo (2024)	Korea	Errors corrected by ChatGPT include surface-level issues only. ChatGPT does not address all issues in writing activities

*Table 4. The Result of Reviewed Articles on the Reliance and Dishonesty about Writing Originality*

<b>No</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Findings from the Research</b>
1	Harunasari et al. (2023)	Indonesia	Some students expressed their agreement with incorporating ChatGPT in the classroom, citing concerns about excessive dependence on them.
2	Li et al. (2023)	China	Low-proficiency learners may overly rely on AI feedback, neglecting the development of their writing and revision skills
3	Song & Song (2023)	China	The use of ChatGPT potentially cause unintended plagiarism risks
4	Alshammri (2024)	Saudi Arabia	The use of ChatGPT is potential to foster academic dishonesty among students. It poses a risk of misuse, including the creation of plagiarized information in students' writing
5	Hoa & Khoa (2024)	Vietnam	The students should be responsible when using ChatGPT in their writing. They should use it to serve reasonable needs and not relying on it in all cases of their writing activities
6	Nguyen et al. (2024)	Vietnam	Relying too heavily on ChatGPT for idea generation may stifle students' ability to think independently and develop original arguments
7	Tica & Krsmanović (2024)	Serbia	ChatGPT performs the potential inconsistency in information and its inability to handle more complex tasks as writing assistance tools
8	Werdiningsih et al. (2024)	Indonesia	ChatGPT potentially undermine the students' ability to independently engage with content and refine their writing. It also can potentially blur the line between assistance and plagiarism
9	Xu & Jumaat, (2024)	China	The possibility that the users might present the text generated by ChatGPT as their study that implies to plagiarism
10	Mun (2024)	Korea	Relying on ChatGPT can be problematic since it never states impossibilities



*Tabel 5. The Result of Reviewed Article on the Way of ChatGPT Provide Feedback to Students' Writing*

<b>No</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Results</b>
1	Song & Song (2023)	China	ChatGPT feedback sometimes does not match with the individual writing styles and contexts of learners
2	Zeevy-Solovey (2024)	Israel	ChatGPT helped the students a lot with making the writing good, but it cannot be used to replace the human editing and feedback. ChatGPT cannot provide possible feedback to students' writing
3	Xu & Jumaat (2024)	China	ChatGPT presents lack of provision of source references and even when prompted by users, the feedback given may be incomplete or inaccurate
4	Seo (2024)	Korea	ChatGPT sometimes gave wrong answers or feedback to students' writing drafts. They disapproved of the comments given by ChatGPT in their writing

Based on the analysis from fifteen articles above, three main concerns have been identified regarding the limitations of using ChatGPT as a writing assistance tool in EFL writing activities. The first limitation is the inability of ChatGPT to fully support students' writing processes. Next, attitudes of reliance and dishonesty concerning writing originality become the next limitation that students should be aware of. Finally, the inaccuracy of ChatGPT in providing feedback on students' writing is an important consideration when using it. All these results indicated that ChatGPT has technical drawbacks that the teacher and the students should pay attention on it.

As mentioned in the previous section, this research aims to investigate the limitations of ChatGPT as writing assistance tools in EFL writing activities. The result of reviewing and investigating fifteen research articles show there are three main concerns can be identified related to the limitation of ChatGPT in writing assistance. They are: (1) the inability of ChatGPT to fully support students' writing processes; (2) the attitudes of reliance and dishonesty concerning writing originality; and (3) the inaccuracy of ChatGPT in providing feedback on students' writing. These limitations present that the AI-based technologies have possible drawbacks that need to be concerned carefully as the learning tools.

As the ChatGPT has inability to fully support students writing process, it is more important to know what kind of writing help the students instruct to this tool. A total of 7 out of 15 research discussed that ChatGPT has only detect the surface lever errors the students made in their writing. Others mention that it is difficult to get the point what ChatGPT has done due to overgeneralized information given

based on the instruction. It indicates that in some cases, it is not able to give guidance clearly and with measurability what to do in ChatGPT activities. When this application is utilized as the tool to define dealing with the terms asked by the students, it is weak to create the specific writing contexts as instructed by students as the users. The process of writing by mentioning the terms in such tool does not work well. The existence of this tool does not provide adequate information the students need based on the context of their writings. Because of this condition, while the students learn to write and attempt to start writing through ChatGPT tool, there is over-generalized information delivered by this tool. ChatGPT tends to generalize from the data it was trained on, which can lead to inaccuracies (Hua, Jin, and Jiang 2024).

Furthermore, it is also essential to remember that when writing, we should always start with clear and measurable topic. Good writing begins from the topic and supporting sentences relevant, coherent, and cohesive. However, since ChatGPT is a machine, it does not happen to it. ChatGPT tends to follow a specific structure. It typically starts with a definition and a brief history of the concept. Then, it mainly discusses the body and summary of main points, final thoughts, and call to action as the conclusion. Unnecessary information that sometimes given by ChatGPT relevant to topic is one thing that happen and it blurs the main topic discussed in this writing. No full and complete information provided during writing process is a problem that causes the students fail to arrange the sentences coherently and cohesively.

The over-generalized information that ChatGPT provides on students' writing is in line with the research conducted by Punar Özçelik and Yangın Ekşi (2024) that ChatGPT created problems with logging in or regenerating answers. It made corrections incorrectly or confusingly for them who had a relatively lower English level. This research also reported that ChatGPT struggled with conjunctions and sometimes made sentences more complex. It added unnecessary or unrelated items to the text so that they have difficulties in correcting what ChatGPT's suggested correction. Moreover, students in this research also felt that ChatGPT focused more on grammar and punctuation than vocabulary. Thus, even if some of students get writing help for their formal writing, other did not want to use it for their informal writing. Because of this, we need to be aware that ChatGPT cannot take role of a human user. The position of ChatGPT in such context of not full supporting students' writing processes indicates that this tool only gives general help to writing process and writing activities (Barrot 2023). ChatGPT is just a machine giving background knowledge the students should develop by themselves to produce better writing.

The second issue concerning the limitation of ChatGPT as a writing assistance tool is attitudes of reliance and dishonesty concerning writing originality in students' writing product. The only depending on such tools makes the process of writing activities not run well. Looking at the abilities developed through ChatGPT, such as creating well-structured papers, essays, and journals, this raises severe concerns

about writing dishonesty. It has the ability to make students inactive and hinder critical thinking skills. ChatGPT may also mislead them in working with examinations, articles, journals, essays, and other academic writing assignments (Murtiningsih, Sujito, and Soe 2024).

As the over-reliance on ChatGPT makes the students less productive in writing, such a condition drives the students' inability to use their mind in thinking and responding to social phenomena in their environment. The inability to think and to write creatively and critically are caused by the reliance of such tools. Dealing with dishonesty in writing, there is unclear writing ideas originality. Using ChatGPT, the ideas of writing comes from various digital resources. The original source as the roadmap of individual thinking is hesitated. All the information provided from ChatGPT is the reflection of all ideas generated from various types of sources that should be verified independently and critically by students themselves.

For the beginners, ChatGPT can be said effective to facilitate them in finding, identifying, mapping, and determining the topic and ideas to write. It is also useful for getting the relevant information or data used to develop and strengthen the writing ideas. Nevertheless, such tool creates new tradition to depending on it that potentially contribute to laziness of thinking and generating ideas from their own thinking process. For those who frequently use this tool without any caution, there is a lack of critical thinking process as well as lack of motivation to think because they use ChatGPT merely as the main source to get ideas and information (Hasanein and Sobaih 2023). The more machine dependence is the impact of over reliance on ChatGPT existence so that students are weak to think critically and to gather information in their own. This has an impact on their lack of upgrading their literacy skills in writing process. This part is consistent with the research conducted by Essel et al. (2024) that incorporating ChatGPT influences the students' critical, reflective, and creative thinking skills. This research mentions that AI chatbot like ChatGPT model could occasionally decline students' creative thinking because of their higher cognitive load demands.

The last issue that become the limitations of ChatGPT as a writing assistance tools is the inaccuracy on the feedback given to students' writing. Providing students with formative feedback during the writing process is a key instructional practice that helps students improve as writers. In conventional writing classroom, the teacher should evaluate and assess the students' writing by providing individual feedback to improve their writing skills. The existence of ChatGPT that allows in providing feedback to students writing are sometimes utilized during the writing process. A total of 4 out of 15 research in this study reveal that feedback given by ChatGPT can be overwhelming, overly long, and difficult for students to understand the point. This is because ChatGPT relies on replicating patterns from its training data rather than performing true syntactic analysis, thereby failing to offer substantive feedback in this regard. In particular work, ChatGPT gives feedback that lack of human touch and emotional understanding. As a result, it is too difficult to understand the content created by ChatGPT (Teng 2024).

The inaccuracy of ChatGPT in providing the feedback as expected by students is inline with a research conducted by Ngo (2023). This research reports that many of students acknowledged that ChatGPT is unable to verify the quality and reliability of the sources given. Moreover, it can sometimes provide feedback with unreliable information with few citations that potentially cause false factual references. Students may struggle to comprehend and implement feedback due to language barriers also. As such, it is recommended for EFL teachers as human experts to provide culture-aware feedback to students related to students' writing content. Despite technological advancements and ChatGPT's potential as a written corrective feedback tool, it is important to note that even after students receive feedback from the tool and make possible modifications, the teacher may still notice the mistake in their writing. ChatGPT and other language models must be used in conjunction with human editing and feedback to ensure the most accurate and effective results (Zeevy-Solovey 2024).

The novelty of this research lies in its critical examination of ChatGPT's limitations as a writing assistance tool specifically for EFL students, an area that has received limited attention. By systematically identifying key challenges such as incomplete writing support, over-reliance, and inaccurate feedback, the study provides new insights into the specific barriers AI technologies face in language learning. Unlike most research that focuses on AI's potential benefits, this study highlights the importance of careful, supervised integration of AI in educational contexts, providing a new viewpoint on optimizing its function in EFL writing.

Finally, ChatGPT and its limitations are inevitable amidst the current advancement of AI-based technology. Instead of blaming the existence of AI, the teacher as a key center of supervisor should maximally assist and control their students in working with this. Specifically addressing on EFL writing, teachers may need to employ more communicative writing-focused activities into the classroom, such as collaborative writing, peer-review, and group writing projects. Teachers can also provide more individualized feedback by fostering a convenience learning environment based on the students needs. Thus, coexisting with technology does not make it a substitute for the role of the teacher.

## **CONCLUSION**

This systematic review aims to explore recent research from various countries on the limitations of ChatGPT as a writing assistance tool in EFL writing activities. Research indicates that ChatGPT cannot be fully utilized in three key areas: its inability to adequately support the entire writing process, concerns about over-reliance and dishonesty regarding writing originality, and the inaccuracy of the feedback provides on students' writing. The results demonstrate that the use of ChatGPT should be approached with caution. Both EFL teachers and students should be aware that ChatGPT is merely a tool that can assist as one of many writing aids, but it is not a decision-making tool when it comes to determining the

appropriateness of content and context in the writing process. Although ChatGPT has limitations in these areas, the existence of this tools in assisting both EFL students and the teachers is undeniable. Many recent studies report its potential in facilitating the teaching and learning process. This review equips EFL teachers with knowledge on how to continually guide and advise students when they engage in writing activities using technological advances.

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