



Comparing ChatGPT's and Teacher's Feedback in Improving EFL Students' Narrative Writing

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Abstract: *The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has created new opportunities for providing feedback in writing instruction. This study examined the effect of ChatGPT-generated feedback on students' narrative writing performance and compared its effectiveness with teacher feedback. A quasi-experimental design was conducted with two groups of Grade XI students at SMAN 65 Jakarta. The experimental group received feedback from ChatGPT, while the control group received teacher feedback. Students completed pre-tests and post-tests consisting of narrative writing tasks assessed using Jacobs' ESL Composition Profile Rubric. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and Mann-Whitney U Test due to non-normal distribution. The results showed that ChatGPT-generated feedback significantly improved students' writing performance ($p < 0.05$). However, no significant difference was found between the improvements achieved by the ChatGPT and teacher-feedback groups ($p = 0.285$). These findings indicate that ChatGPT can be a useful supplementary tool in writing instruction, while teacher feedback remains essential for providing personalized guidance.*

Keywords: ChatGPT; EFL students; narrative writing; teacher feedback; writing performance

Abstrak: Perkembangan pesat kecerdasan buatan (Artificial Intelligence/AI) telah menciptakan peluang baru dalam pemberian umpan balik pada pembelajaran menulis. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh umpan balik yang dihasilkan oleh ChatGPT terhadap kemampuan menulis teks naratif siswa serta membandingkan efektivitasnya dengan umpan balik guru. Penelitian menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimental yang melibatkan dua kelompok siswa kelas XI di SMAN 65 Jakarta. Kelompok eksperimen menerima umpan balik dari ChatGPT, sedangkan kelompok kontrol menerima umpan balik dari guru. Siswa mengikuti pre-test dan post-test berupa tugas menulis teks naratif yang dinilai menggunakan Rubrik ESL Composition Profile Jacobs. Data dianalisis menggunakan Uji Wilcoxon Signed-Rank dan Uji Mann-Whitney U karena data tidak berdistribusi normal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa umpan balik yang dihasilkan oleh ChatGPT secara signifikan meningkatkan kemampuan menulis siswa ($p < 0,05$). Namun, tidak ditemukan perbedaan yang signifikan antara peningkatan kemampuan siswa pada kelompok ChatGPT dan kelompok umpan balik guru ($p = 0,285$). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa ChatGPT dapat menjadi alat pendukung yang bermanfaat dalam pembelajaran menulis, sementara umpan balik guru tetap penting dalam memberikan bimbingan yang lebih personal.

Kata kunci: ChatGPT; siswa EFL; teks naratif; umpan balik guru; kemampuan menulis

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In Indonesia, as in many other EFL settings, writing instruction poses unique challenges. Students across levels often struggle with not only grammatical accuracy and sentence structure, but also coherence, organization, and creativity (Ariyanti, 2016; Korban et al., 2025). This challenge becomes particularly significant in the context of narrative essay writing, a genre that demands both linguistic competence and storytelling skills (Rozimela, 2016). Effective feedback is essential in helping students improve in those aspects (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, as cited in Makwana, 2025), but teachers in

Indonesian public schools are frequently faced with the reality of large class sizes and limited instructional time, making it difficult to provide detailed, personalized feedback to every learner (Adam et al., 2021).

In the evolving landscape of education, technological advancements have introduced new tools and platforms aimed at enriching both teaching and learning experiences. Among these innovations, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a powerful ally, offering assistance in a wide range of areas from automated assessment to personalized learning (Pariyanto & Tungka, 2024). One area where AI has shown increasing promise is in the teaching of writing, a skill that is both essential and challenging to master, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (Ghafar et al., 2023).

AI-based tools such as ChatGPT, which can generate text and provide real-time feedback, are increasingly used by higher education students to improve their writing, offering potential to bridge feedback gaps in classrooms (Escalante et al., 2023; Pariyanto & Tungka, 2024). Previous studies show that while teacher feedback is generally more effective for overall writing quality and fluency, AI feedback contributes to improvements in areas such as lexical complexity, coherence, and writing proficiency, with some studies finding no significant difference between the two (Ajabshir & Ebadi, 2023; Escalante et al., 2023; Makwana, 2025; Teng, 2024; Wang & Han, 2022). However, each has limitations: AI lacks contextual understanding and emotional sensitivity and raises ethical concerns, whereas teacher feedback, though more personalized, is often limited by time (Chetwynd, 2024; Vieriu & Petrea, 2025). Overall, both forms of feedback play complementary roles in supporting students' writing development.

In essence, previous studies consistently show that AI feedback, such as those of ChatGPT's, improves writing quality and confidence of learners in higher education level. It can enhance the feedback process by making it more accessible, consistent, and immediate. However, questions remain: Would the approach be effective if it was to be implemented on other levels such as high schools? Could it help ease the burdens of teachers in overburdened classrooms such as those of SMAN 65 Jakarta? There is a growing need for innovative approaches that help teachers provide timely, specific, and constructive feedback to support students' writing development, despite the large number of students.

From a pedagogical standpoint, this investigation is timely and relevant. Firstly, the Indonesian national curriculum, the *Kurikulum Merdeka*, emphasizes the development of communicative competence and creativity (Kemendikbud, 2024), both of which are fostered through narrative writing. Secondly, with the global momentum toward digital literacy and AI-integrated curricula (Bellas et al., 2023; Chiu & Chai, 2020; Ejjami, 2024; Lin & Van Brummelen, 2021), Indonesia is following suit. The Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Abdul Mu'ti, announced that coding and artificial intelligence (AI) will be introduced into the national curriculum beginning in the 2025/2026 academic year (Dhanya. Defara, 2025) although the subject remains optional at the time of writing.

However, this initiative appears to be in tension with a more recent policy. The government has issued national guidelines for the use of digital technology and artificial intelligence in education through the signing of a Joint Decree (SKB) of seven ministers, which restricts the use of instant AI, such as ChatGPT, for educational purposes at the elementary to high school levels (Martyr, 2026). This policy aims to prevent a phenomenon known as brain rot, defined as a decline in thinking ability due to overdependence on technology, as well as to avoid cognitive debt, or a reduction in cognitive capacity resulting from thinking processes being frequently replaced by technology.

All in all, the utilization of artificial intelligence, particularly tools such as ChatGPT, offers promising potential in fostering students' narrative essay writing. However, it also presents risks, including brain rot, cognitive debt, and unethical use. Amid these conflicting perspectives and policies surrounding AI in education, understanding how ChatGPT can meaningfully enhance Indonesian high school students' narrative writing skills is crucial for informing balanced, evidence-based policy decisions on integrating AI into teaching and learning practices. Based on this background, the researcher conducted the current quasi-experimental study in which two groups of Grade XI students from SMAN 65 Jakarta engaged in narrative essay writing tasks. One group receives teacher feedback, while the other receives AI feedback using ChatGPT. The aim is to observe which method leads to greater improvement in the students' writing.

1.2. Research questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- a. To what extent does ChatGPT-generated feedback affect the narrative essay writing performance of Grade XI students at SMAN 65 Jakarta?
- b. Is there a significant difference between the effects of ChatGPT-generated feedback and teacher feedback on the narrative essay writing performance of Grade XI students at SMAN 65 Jakarta?

1.3. Significance of the study

This study is expected to offer several significant contributions from theoretical, practical, and pedagogical perspectives, as outlined below.

- a. Theoretical Significance

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on the integration of artificial intelligence in language education, specifically in the area of narrative essay writing feedback. It aims to provide empirical evidence on how ChatGPT-generated feedback influences EFL students' writing performance and to compare the learning outcomes with those of students who receive teacher feedback. Furthermore, this research offers a theoretical framework for understanding the effects of these two feedback mechanisms.

- b. Practical Significance

The findings of this study may provide schools with insights into the potential role of artificial intelligence tools, such as ChatGPT, in supporting writing instruction. This may assist educational institutions in considering the responsible and effective integration of AI technologies into classroom learning activities.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, quasi-experimental design to compare the effects of ChatGPT's feedback with those of teacher feedback on students' narrative writing performance. This quasi-experimental design was chosen because it allows for the investigation of causal relationships in educational settings where true random assignment is not always feasible. The design enables a comparison of the effectiveness of two types of feedback in supporting students' writing development, providing practical insight into how AI tools can be integrated into classroom instruction.

Below is the visualization in the form of a diagram:

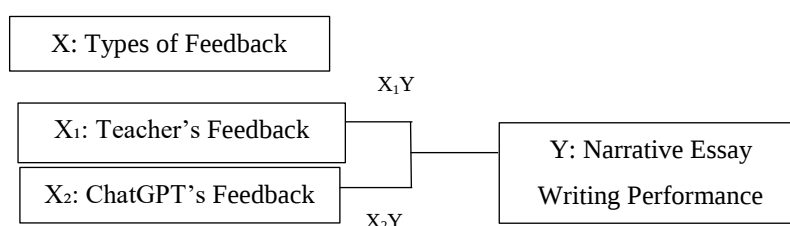


Figure 1 Research Design of the Study

2.2. Samples/Participants

The population of this study comprises eleventh-grade students at SMAN 65 Jakarta during the academic year 2024/2025. This population was selected because the students are expected to develop their English narrative writing skills as part of the curriculum.

The sample consists of two intact classes, each comprising approximately 36 students. These two classes were selected purposively, based on recommendations from the English teacher and school administrators, to ensure relatively comparable levels of English proficiency. The selection was informed by students' recent English grades, classroom performance, and the teacher's professional observation. In this study, the experimental group received ChatGPT-generated feedback, and the control group received teacher feedback.

2.3. Instruments

To collect the data needed for this quasi-experimental research, the following instruments were used:

a. The Writing Tasks (Pre-test, Practice Task, and Post-test)

The study utilized three distinct writing tasks as adapted from Wang & Han (2022). The first task functioned as a pre-test to evaluate the participants' initial English writing proficiency. Since by the time the pre-test was administered the school had an annual festival called 'GEPETRA' (Gerakan Peduli Tradisi), the topic "*GEPETRA — The School Festival*," was selected since it reflects a real experience they likely remember clearly. As this was their first narrative writing task, a topic drawn from their familiar and relatable everyday school life was expected to lower anxiety and allow them to focus on expressing ideas, organizing the text, and applying basic narrative structure.

The second task, titled “*An Environmental Figure Who Inspired Me,*” was designed as a practice activity that incorporates feedback and allowed students to revise their work. This topic was selected to align with the unit they would be studying at the time of the research, which focuses on Indonesian Environmental Figures. It provides an opportunity for personal storytelling and emotional expression, making it an ideal context for implementing feedback.

The final task, “*The Efforts I’ve Made for the Environment,*” served as a post-test to assess students’ writing proficiency after the intervention. This prompt aligns with the unit theme on Indonesian Environmental Figures and complements the previous task. It encourages students to reflect on their own contributions to environmental preservation, allowing them to demonstrate maturity in their narrative writing while providing rich material for evaluating structure, language use, and coherence. Each task required students to write approximately 150-200 words and adhere to a four-paragraphs structure: an introduction, body, conclusion, and coda.

b. Writing Scoring Rubric

Jacobs’ ESL Composition Profile Rubric which assesses the five writing aspects: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics was used to assess students’ narrative writing, ensuring consistency and reliability in grading. The same rubric was used consistently across pre-tests, practice task, and post-tests for both classes. This rubric has also been adopted and utilized by Yulianti et al. (2024) to score narrative writing for their study.

c. Guiding Prompt

A guiding prompt was provided to the experimental group, as done by Pariyanto & Tungka (2024) and Teng (2024). The prompt was designed to elicit feedback on structure, language use, and clarity while avoiding generic or vague suggestions and formulated based on the five writing aspects listed in Jacobs’ ESL Composition Profile Rubric. This standardized prompt ensured fairness and comparability across participants.

Table 1. Summary of the Data Collection Procedure

Two Classes	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Meeting 3	Meeting 4
Control (Teacher Feedback)	Students completed the first writing task (pre-test of narrative writing proficiency)	Students completed the second writing task and submitted their essays to the English teacher to	Students revise their first draft based on the teacher's feedback	Students completed the third writing task (post-test of narrative writing proficiency).

		receive teacher's feedback.		
Experiment (ChatGPT's Feedback)	Students completed the first writing task (pre-test of narrative writing proficiency).	Students completed the second writing task and send their essays to ChatGPT using the provided standardized prompt to receive ChatGPT's feedback.	Students revise their first draft based on ChatGPT's feedback.	Students completed the third writing task (post-test of narrative writing proficiency).

Adapted from: Wang & Han (2022)

2.4. Data analysis

To determine the effect of the two different feedback types (teacher vs. ChatGPT), students' pre-test and post-test scores were statistically analyzed using Google Sheets and SPSS software through the following steps:

a. Descriptive statistics

Means (M), standard deviations (SD), and score distributions were calculated for each group to provide a summary of students' writing performance before and after the treatment.

b. Assumption Testing

Before conducting inferential statistical analysis, assumption testing was carried out to ensure the appropriateness of the chosen statistical procedures.

1) Normality Test

The normality of the data distribution was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk Test, as the sample size for each group is less than 50. From the test, it was found that the p-value is less than 0.05 so the data is considered not normally distributed.

2) Homogeneity of Variance Test

Levene's Test was used to determine whether the variance of scores between the experimental and control groups is equal. If the p-value > 0.05, equal variances are assumed, and the standard independent sample t-test will be used. If $p < 0.05$, equal variances cannot be assumed.

c. Inferential Statistics (Hypothesis Testing)

To answer the research questions regarding the effectiveness of ChatGPT's and teacher feedback in improving students' narrative writing performance, inferential

statistical analysis was conducted. Based on the results of the normality test, the data was not normally distributed so non-parametric alternatives such as the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and Mann-Whitney U Test were used instead of the t-test.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Findings

To examine the effect of ChatGPT-generated feedback on the experimental group and compare it with teacher feedback in the control group, the students' pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using SPSS software.

a. Descriptive Analysis

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Experimental Group	36	50	90	79.19	10.607
Post-test Experimental Group	36	50	95	81.69	10.031
Pre-test Control Group	36	50	95	78.94	7.437
Post-test Control Group	36	58	95	83.14	7.152

As illustrated in Table 2, the descriptive statistics show the students' writing performance in both the experimental and control groups. In the experimental group, the mean score increased from 79.19 in the pre-test to 81.69 in the post-test, indicating an improvement of 2.50 points. The minimum score remained the same at 50, while the maximum score increased from 90 to 95. The standard deviation slightly decreased from 10.607 to 10.031, suggesting a more consistent performance among students after the treatment.

In the control group, the mean score increased from 78.94 in the pre-test to 83.14 in the post-test, showing a higher improvement of 4.20 points. The minimum score increased from 50 to 58, while the maximum score remained constant at 95. The standard deviation decreased from 7.437 to 7.152, indicating a slight reduction in score variability.

Overall, both groups demonstrated improvement in their writing performance. However, the control group showed a greater increase in mean score compared to the experimental group.

b. Assumption Testing

1) Normality Test

As presented in Table 4.4, all significance values are less than 0.05. This indicates that the data are not normally distributed. Therefore, non-parametric statistical analysis was used for hypothesis testing.

Table 3. Normality Test Results (Shapiro–Wilk)

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pre-test Experimental Group	0.824	36	<0.001
Post-test Experimental Group	0.843	36	<0.001
Pre-test Control Group	0.841	36	<0.001
Post-test Control Group	0.883	36	0.001

2) Homogeneity Test

The results presented in Table 4 and 5 below show that the significance value for the pre-test was 0.046, indicating that the variance was not homogeneous. Meanwhile, the post-test yielded a significance value of 0.087, which indicates that the variance was homogeneous. These results suggest that the spread of students' scores between the two groups was different at the beginning of the study but became more comparable after the treatment.

Table 4 Homogeneity of Variance of the Students' Pre-tests (Levene's Test)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
	F	Sig.
Pre-test	4.117	0.046

Table 5. Homogeneity of Variance of the Students' Post-tests (Levene's Test)

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
	F	Sig.
Post-test	3.011	0.087

c. Inferential Analysis (Hypothesis Testing)

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed to examine the improvement within the experimental group, while the Mann–Whitney U Test was used to compare the differences between the experimental and control groups. The analysis procedures were based on standard statistical guidelines, following recommendations from Pallant (2016) and Field (2024), particularly when the data are not normally distributed.

1) Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test show that the significance value is less than 0.001, which is lower than 0.05. This indicates that there is a statistically

significant improvement in students' writing performance after receiving ChatGPT-generated feedback.

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Summary (Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test)

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. ^{a,b}	Decision
1	The median of differences between pre-test and post-test equals 0.	Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	<0.001	Reject the null hypothesis.

2) Mann Whitney U Test

To more directly examine the effect of feedback, gain scores were compared using the Mann Whitney U Test. The results showed that the significance value was 0.285, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in improvement between students who received ChatGPT-generated feedback and those who received teacher feedback.

Table 7. Hypothesis Test Summary (Mann–Whitney U Test)

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig. ^{a,b}	Decision
1	The distribution of gained score is the same across categories of Group.	Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test	0.285	Retain the null hypothesis.

3.2. Discussion

The findings indicated that ChatGPT-generated feedback significantly improved students' narrative writing performance. This result is consistent with the previous study by Pariyanto & Tungka (2024), which reported that AI-generated feedback can enhance students' writing quality by providing immediate and structured guidance during the revision process.

However, the Mann–Whitney U Test revealed no statistically significant difference between the improvement of students who received ChatGPT-generated feedback and those who received teacher feedback. This finding supports Escalante et al. (2023), who similarly found no significant difference in writing outcomes between AI-generated and human feedback.

Although the statistical results showed no significant difference, the descriptive analysis revealed that the control group demonstrated a slightly higher mean gain compared to the experimental group. A similar pattern was also reported by Escalante et al. (2023). This suggests that students who received teacher feedback may have experienced slightly greater improvement, although this difference was not statistically significant. This pattern suggests that while ChatGPT can effectively support students'

writing development, teacher feedback may offer additional benefits through its personalized and context-sensitive nature (Teng, 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that ChatGPT can function as a valuable supplementary tool in writing instruction. Nevertheless, teacher feedback remains important in supporting students' learning, indicating that AI should be integrated as a complement to, rather than a replacement for teacher-guided instruction.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the effect of ChatGPT-generated feedback on students' narrative writing performance and to compare its effectiveness with teacher feedback among Grade XI students at SMAN 65 Jakarta. The findings revealed that ChatGPT-generated feedback had a significant positive effect on students' narrative writing performance. This was indicated by the results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, which showed a statistically significant improvement in students' post-test scores after receiving ChatGPT feedback. However, when compared to teacher feedback, the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the improvement of students who received ChatGPT-generated feedback and those who received teacher feedback. Although the control group demonstrated a higher mean gain, this difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that both ChatGPT-generated feedback and teacher feedback are effective in improving students' narrative writing performance. However, ChatGPT-generated feedback does not significantly outperform teacher feedback.

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