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Students Perception Regarding the Use of ChatGPT in Semantics Class at Universitas Bhinneka PGRI

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Abstract

This study aims to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of ChatGPT in the Semantics course at Universitas Bhinneka PGRI. The research was motivated by the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) technology, particularly in the field of education. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with data collected through open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The participants were sixth-semester students of the English Education Department who had taken the Semantics course. The findings revealed that most students had positive perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT, especially in simplifying semantic concepts and promoting independent learning. Some challenges were also identified, including, including the risk of over-reliance, limited digital literacy, and the possibility of inaccurate information. Based on these findings, this study suggests the need for digital literacy training and responsible integration strategies to ensure that ChatGPT is used effectively to support the learning process.

Keywords: ChatGPT; Students Perception; Semantics

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INTRODUCTION

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in education has transformed the way teaching and learning are delivered, especially in language-related disciplines. Among various AI applications, ChatGPT an AI-powered conversational model developed by OpenAI has emerged as a widely used tool in academic environments for its ability to generate coherent text, provide explanations, and assist students with language-related tasks (Ho & Nguyen, 2024; Menon & Shilpa, 2023). In the context of semantics, a branch of linguistics concerned with meaning in language, ChatGPT offers the potential to help students understand abstract concepts, interpret word meanings, and analyze linguistic structures through interactive and accessible engagement (Aithal & Aithal, 2023).

Many scholars define semantics as the study of meaning in language, which involves complex and abstract analysis of words and phrases in context (Muhriz, 2015). Consequently, it is often perceived by students as one of the more conceptually demanding areas of linguistic study. ChatGPT's ability to provide contextual examples, clarify polysemous terms (e.g., "bank" meaning a financial institution or river edge), and support student inquiry on-demand positions it as a potentially transformative tool in semantic instruction. However, the benefits of such tools must be weighed against growing concerns about their impact on students' critical thinking, creativity, and academic integrity. Researchers have noted that excessive reliance on ChatGPT may hinder students' independent problem-solving skills, foster surface-level understanding, and introduce risks of plagiarism or misinformation (Shidiq, 2023).

Recent studies have begun exploring how students perceive and interact with ChatGPT in educational settings. Haviki et al. (2024) reported that students appreciate the efficiency and accessibility of ChatGPT, particularly for generating quick responses and explanations. Similarly, Garasut et al. (2024) found that students enrolled in mathematical modeling courses viewed ChatGPT as a helpful support tool. However, these studies primarily focused on general perceptions and specific subjects, without delving deeply into how such AI tools

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affect learning in linguistically complex fields like semantics. Moreover, there remains a lack of research that critically examines how students in language education programs, particularly in Indonesian higher education, engage with ChatGPT as part of their semantic learning process.

This study addresses that gap by investigating students' perceptions of using ChatGPT in the semantics course at Universitas Bhinneka PGRI. The research focuses on understanding the benefits students experience, the obstacles they encounter, and their suggestions for the responsible and effective integration of ChatGPT into semantic instruction. Perception, in this context, refers to the students' subjective understanding, attitudes, and evaluative judgments about ChatGPT as a learning aid (Walgito, 2010). Students' perceptions are essential because they influence learning engagement, motivation, and the overall effectiveness of instructional tools. A preliminary observation was conducted prior to the distribution of questionnaires, aiming to identify the relevance of ChatGPT in the semantics learning context. This informal observation involved six sixth-semester students, who had previously used ChatGPT during their coursework. Their experiences suggested that ChatGPT was frequently consulted for understanding semantic terms and answering assignments, leading the researcher to explore student perceptions in greater depth through formal data collection.

Understanding how students perceive ChatGPT in the semantics classroom is important for several reasons. First, it helps educators design more relevant and adaptive teaching strategies that align with students' needs and technological preferences. Second, it informs institutional decisions about integrating AI tools into the curriculum responsibly and ethically. Third, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on how AI affects the development of linguistic competencies, particularly in semantics, which requires not only comprehension but also the application of meaning-making skills in diverse communicative contexts (Kessler, 2018).

Therefore, this study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of sixth-semester students' perceptions regarding the use of ChatGPT in the semantics class. By exploring students' experiences, this research seeks to reveal both the instructional value and the challenges of ChatGPT in semantic learning and to offer practical recommendations for its integration into future language education practices. The findings are expected to benefit educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers in ensuring that AI tools like ChatGPT enhance rather than hinder the goals of linguistic education (Doris et al., 2018; Killen et al., 2023).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to explore sixth-semester students' perceptions regarding the use of ChatGPT in a semantics course at Universitas Bhinneka PGRI. A total of 15 students enrolled in the course during the 2024/2025 academic year participated in the study. All students were given open-ended questionnaires to collect varied perceptions, while 4 students were selected for semi-structured interviews to provide deeper insights. These interviewees were chosen purposively based on the diversity of their questionnaire responses, representing a range of ChatGPT usage frequency and attitudes toward its application in semantic learning. There are six stages in the research process, and each stage has different characteristics (Creswell, 2018). These stages are presented in flowchart 1.

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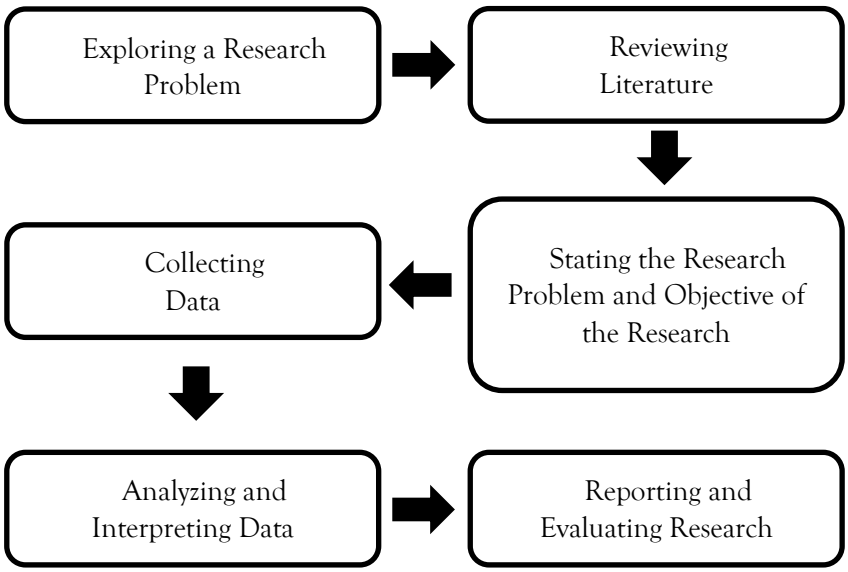

Figure 1. The Research Procedures

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to perceived benefits, challenges, and recommendations. Credibility of the findings was ensured through data triangulation between questionnaire and interview results, along with member checking to validate interpretations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study were drawn from open-ended questionnaire responses collected from 15 sixth-semester students of the English Language Education Department at Universitas Bhinneka PGRI. The questionnaire used in this study was designed to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of ChatGPT in the semantics course. It consisted of 18 open-ended questions, which were grouped into five main aspects: (1) understanding of semantic concepts, (2) ease of use and accessibility, (3) promotion of independent learning, (4) potential for over-reliance, and (5) ethical concerns and academic honesty. Each aspect contained 3 to 5 items aimed at eliciting students' detailed opinions, experiences, and critical reflections. The following is the complete list of questionnaire items used in the study: 1) How often do you use ChatGPT in your semantic studies?; 2) What do you usually ask ChatGPT related to semantic materials?; 3) In your opinion, how does ChatGPT help you understand semantic concepts such as polysemy or ambiguity?; 4) How does ChatGPT compare to your textbooks or lecturers in explaining semantic topics?; 5) Is ChatGPT easy to use for learning semantics? Why or why not?; 6) When do you usually access ChatGPT? (Before class, after class, during assignments?); 7) Do you feel more confident learning independently with ChatGPT?; 8) How does ChatGPT affect your learning strategies or study habits?; 9) Have you ever used ChatGPT as the only source to answer your assignments?; 10) Do you think you rely too much on ChatGPT? Please explain; 11) Have you ever submitted a ChatGPT-generated answer without editing it? Why?; 12) Do you consider using ChatGPT as a form of academic dishonesty? Why or why not?; 13) Does using ChatGPT increase or decrease your motivation to learn?; 14) What are the most motivating or demotivating aspects of using ChatGPT?; 15) Do you think ChatGPT helps you develop deeper understanding or just gives quick answers?; 16) Would you recommend ChatGPT to your classmates?; Under what conditions?; 17) What should teachers do when students use ChatGPT in their coursework?; 18) What are your suggestions for responsible use of ChatGPT in the classroom?.

Thematic analysis of the responses led to the emergence of five major themes, each supported by multiple student responses and linked directly to specific questionnaire items.

The first theme revealed that ChatGPT helps students better understand complex semantic concepts. Thirteen out of fifteen students stated that ChatGPT helped them understand complex semantic concepts in semantics, particularly through simplified definitions and contextual examples. In response to items 1 and 2, which asked "In what ways does ChatGPT help you in understanding semantics?" and "Can you explain a topic in semantics that became easier after using ChatGPT?", students frequently stated that the AI tool provided

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simplified definitions, contextualized examples, and more accessible explanations than those offered by textbooks or in-class instruction. This aligns with Walgito's (2010) theory of functional perception, where an individual's experiences and learning needs influence their interpretation of stimuli. One student shared, "I asked ChatGPT about polysemy, and it gave different examples in different contexts. It's easier to understand that way."

The second theme relates to the efficiency and ease of using ChatGPT. Through items 3 and 4 ("Is ChatGPT easy to use?" and "Do you find it helpful to study with ChatGPT outside classroom hours?"), students emphasized its 24/7 availability, quick response time, and intuitive interface. Eleven out of fifteen students appreciated ChatGPT's accessibility and time-saving features, stating that they could study independently at night or outside class. These factors allowed them to continue studying at their own pace, without needing constant guidance from lecturers or peers. As supported by Kamalov et al. (2023), such characteristics of AI technology enhance time management and support self-regulated learning. A participant remarked, "I can study at night and still get answers. It saves my time."

The third theme focuses on ChatGPT's role in fostering independent learning. In items 5 and 6, students were asked "Do you feel more confident learning independently with ChatGPT?" and "How does ChatGPT support or limit your ability to explore semantics on your own?". Nine students stated that ChatGPT encouraged them to study independently by allowing them to explore new examples and verify their understanding. Most responses reflected positive experiences, with students describing how they used ChatGPT to clarify difficult points, check their own answers, and explore new perspectives. These findings correspond with Safdari's (2019) discussion of intrinsic motivation in digital learning, as well as Chukwuere's (2023) findings on personalized AI-assisted learning. One student explained, "I use it to check my understanding. I try to answer first, then compare it with ChatGPT."

Despite these benefits, the fourth theme highlights a potential drawback over-reliance. In items 7 and 8, which asked "Have you ever copied ChatGPT's response without editing or thinking critically?" and "Do you feel you rely too much on ChatGPT?", some students admitted to using the tool excessively, particularly when facing deadlines or difficulties understanding the material. Six students admitted they often copied ChatGPT's responses without reflection. This phenomenon aligns with Gantman et al.'s (2014) concept of negative perception patterns, where technological ease reduces cognitive effort. A student remarked, "It makes me lazy. I don't try to think for myself anymore."

Finally, the fifth theme addresses concerns regarding plagiarism and misinformation. Seven students expressed concern about plagiarism and the accuracy of ChatGPT's answers. Items 9 to 12 asked about the accuracy of ChatGPT's responses, awareness of plagiarism, and instances where students used ChatGPT answers in their submissions. These items (items 9–12), which explored students' reliance on ChatGPT, accuracy of information, and awareness of plagiarism, were developed based on insights gained from an initial classroom observation involving six students. Their unfiltered use of ChatGPT during assignment preparation raised concerns about ethical use and academic integrity, which informed the formulation of this section of the questionnaire. Responses revealed that while students valued the quick help, they were also aware of the ethical risks involved. Some reported receiving vague or inaccurate answers, while others acknowledged submitting ChatGPT-generated content without sufficient revision. These concerns align with Sidiropoulos and Anagnostopoulos (2024), who warned about the ethical challenges of AI usage in academic contexts. One student reflected, "Sometimes it's wrong, and if we just copy it, it becomes our mistake."

The remaining items (items 13–18) of the questionnaire were designed to explore students' attitudes toward the future use of ChatGPT in academic settings, including its effects on motivation, perceived depth of learning, and suggestions for responsible use. These items are as follows: 13) Does using ChatGPT increase or decrease your motivation to learn?; 14) What are the most motivating or demotivating aspects of using ChatGPT?; 15) Do you think ChatGPT helps you develop deeper understanding or just gives quick answers?; 16) Would you recommend ChatGPT to your classmates? Under what conditions?; 17) What should teachers do when students use ChatGPT in their coursework?; 18) What are your suggestions for responsible use of ChatGPT in the classroom?.

The analysis of responses to these items revealed a variety of perspectives. Several students (9 out of 15) stated that ChatGPT increased their motivation to study because it allowed instant feedback and personalized

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explanations. This supports Deci and Ryan's theory of Self-Determination, which posits that learners are more motivated when they feel autonomous and supported.

However, four students noted that ChatGPT could decrease motivation by making them overly dependent, echoing extrinsic dependency concerns in AI-assisted learning (Gantman et al., 2014). Additionally, 10 students felt that ChatGPT's responses often lacked depth and required cross-checking, supporting Sidiropoulos and Anagnostopoulos (2024) who warned that overreliance could hinder deep learning.

For responsible use, most students recommended combining ChatGPT with teacher supervision, which aligns with constructivist theory, where learning tools should be guided by pedagogical context

Interview Findings

To deepen the analysis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four students (R1 to R4), selected based on the diversity of their questionnaire responses. Their insights further illuminated the five main themes: a) **A.A.P** reported that ChatGPT was useful for breaking down complex terms into simpler language. They appreciated being able to ask multiple follow-up questions. However, they emphasized the need for teacher confirmation: "Sometimes I'm not sure if the explanation is correct, so I ask the lecturer again."; b) **F.M.K** admitted relying too much on ChatGPT for homework. They often used it without verifying the answers. "It's fast and easy, but it makes me too dependent. I forget how to explain things by myself," they said, expressing regret about reduced learning effort; c) **T.D.S** valued ChatGPT's flexibility in providing alternative examples, especially when studying alone. Yet, they were cautious about incorrect information. "Some answers don't match with what our lecturer teaches, so I double-check."; d) **R.V.W** suggested that students should be trained in how to use ChatGPT wisely. They proposed that lecturers incorporate AI use into the curriculum to prevent misuse. "If we're guided, we can use it properly and still learn the right way," they explained.

These interviews confirmed the findings from the questionnaire, illustrating both the instructional benefits of ChatGPT and the ethical and cognitive risks it may pose when used without guidance. Students generally viewed ChatGPT as a valuable aid but emphasized the need for critical evaluation and structured support from educators.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight how ChatGPT, as an AI-powered language model, is perceived by students in the semantics class at Universitas Bhinneka PGRI as both a valuable learning aid and a potential source of academic concern. These perceptions reflect broader issues in the integration of educational technology, where innovation often brings both pedagogical opportunities and ethical challenges.

First, students' acknowledgement that ChatGPT enhances their understanding of semantic concepts is consistent with the role of AI in facilitating cognitive scaffolding. ChatGPT's ability to explain complex linguistic terms in accessible language, along with contextual examples, aligns with constructivist principles of learning where knowledge is built through interaction and interpretation (Killen et al., 2023). This supports previous findings by Haviki et al. (2024), who observed similar benefits of ChatGPT in complex subjects, such as mathematical modelling. In the context of semantics, which often involves abstract categories such as sense, reference, and meaning relations, this accessibility becomes particularly valuable.

The findings also support prior studies that emphasize AI's potential to foster autonomous learning. Students in this study utilized ChatGPT to support independent inquiry, frequently turning to it outside of formal classroom hours. This finding affirms Chukwuere (2023) argument that AI tools can strengthen students' confidence in self-regulated learning environments. Despite its advantages, this benefit is not experienced equally by all students. As some students have indicated, insufficient digital literacy can hinder their ability to frame effective prompts or critically interpret responses. This echoes the concerns of Cardona et al. (2023), who warned that unequal access to AI literacy could widen learning gaps, especially in under-resourced settings.

Despite its utility, the study reveals an emerging tendency toward over-reliance. Students who frequently use ChatGPT for assignments may bypass critical thinking and replicate the system's responses. This pattern reflects a passive learning style, which contradicts the goals of higher education and language pedagogy. Gantman et al. (2014) identified similar risks, noting that technological convenience can inadvertently reduce deep

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engagement and creativity in student work. In semantics, where understanding word meaning involves nuanced interpretation and application, such over-reliance may hinder the development of essential analytical skills.

Another critical issue raised by the students concerns the reliability and ethical use of AI-generated content. Some students questioned the accuracy of ChatGPT's explanations, indicating that its outputs occasionally contradicted their classroom learning. This aligns with Villarreal (2023) findings, which suggest that AI models can generate plausible but incorrect information. Furthermore, concerns about plagiarism, whether due to intentional copying or uncritical use, raise important ethical questions. As Walgito (2010) notes, perception influences behavior; if students perceive ChatGPT as a shortcut rather than a tool, the likelihood of misuse increases. Thus, integrating AI into education must be accompanied by robust digital ethics instruction and academic integrity policies.

Finally, students' suggestions for more structured guidance point to the need for institutional support in AI-assisted learning. While ChatGPT offers scalable educational support, it cannot replace the role of human educators in fostering critical awareness. Teacher mediation is essential to help students discern when and how to appropriately rely on AI. This aligns with Doris et al. (2018), who stressed the importance of scaffolding technological tools with pedagogical strategies to maximize their impact.

In summary, the discussion reveals that students perceive ChatGPT as a double-edged tool capable of enriching the learning experience when used responsibly, but also prone to misuse if left unguided. These findings contribute to ongoing debates about the responsible use of AI in higher education and highlight the need to develop clear pedagogical frameworks that support AI literacy in language learning contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions regarding the use of ChatGPT in the semantics class at Universitas Bhinneka PGRI. The findings revealed that most students viewed ChatGPT as a supportive learning tool that helped them understand complex semantic concepts, saved time, and encouraged independent learning. Specifically, 13 out of 15 students (approximately 87%) expressed positive perceptions of ChatGPT's role in enhancing their academic experience. However, a few students also raised concerns about over-reliance, the potential for plagiarism, and the accuracy of the information provided. These findings indicate that while AI tools like ChatGPT can positively impact language learning, their use should be accompanied by clear guidance and ethical considerations to avoid misuse and promote deeper learning.

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