Proceeding of ICMR 8(2), 276-293

Enhancing English Learning Autonomy through ChatGPT: Teachers' and Students' Perceptions in Banda Aceh

Meta Keumala[1]*, Zakaria[2], Diyana Dewie Astutie[3], T. Wildan Fahryan[4], Cut Alyfa Nisrina[5]

[1,4,5]Department of English Language Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Serambi Mekkah, Banda Aceh, 23245, Aceh, Indonesia
[2]Department of Economy Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Serambi Mekkah, Banda Aceh, 23245, Aceh, Indonesia
[3]English Teacher, Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 3, Banda Aceh, 23126, Aceh, Indonesia

***Corresponding author:** metakeumala@serambimekkah.ac.id

Abstract. *This study aims to explore the potential of ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence-powered chatbot, in enhancing student motivation and engagement in English language learning in high schools in Banda Aceh, Indonesia. Using a qualitative research approach, this study analyzes data from in-depth interviews with three teachers and three students, as well as log data, surveys, and reflections. The results show that school policy, teacher support, and the diverse functions of ChatGPT play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of ChatGPT in promoting student autonomy, motivation, and confidence. Flexible school policies and active teacher support enable students to use ChatGPT more effectively, while strict policies and lack of teacher support can limit the potential benefits of ChatGPT. Additionally, ChatGPT can be used not only for academic purposes but also for personal interests, which can increase students' intrinsic motivation. The findings suggest that optimizing the role of ChatGPT in education requires a balance between supportive institutional policies, active teacher involvement, and flexible use that integrates both academic and personal learning goals. Thus, ChatGPT can serve as a cognitive tool and a catalyst for affective and motivational growth in language learning.*
Keywords: *ChatGPT; English Language Learning, Learner Autonomy, Student Motivation, Technology Integration*

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology has transformed the landscape of English language learning, offering new opportunities for learners to develop their skills and autonomy (Yang, Xie, Liu, Xu, & Li, 2024). One such technological innovation is ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence-powered chatbot that can facilitate language learning through interactive conversations (Shin & Lee, 2024). Despite its potential, the integration of ChatGPT in English language learning remains underexplored, particularly in the context of high schools in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

Learner autonomy is a crucial aspect of language learning, enabling students to take control of their learning process and develop self-directed learning skills (Holec, 1979; Holmes, 2021). However, many English language learners in Banda Aceh face challenges in achieving autonomy due to limited access to resources, inadequate teacher support, and traditional teaching methods (Tam, 2000; Warschauer, 2002). The use of ChatGPT can potentially address these challenges by providing learners with personalized feedback, flexible learning opportunities, and enhanced engagement (Xiao & Zhi, 2023).

Previous studies have shown that technology-enhanced language learning can promote learner autonomy, motivation, and engagement (Chapelle, 2006; Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999). For example, a study by (Cárcamo Morales & Pérez, 2022) found

that learners who used online language learning platforms reported higher levels of autonomy and motivation compared to those who used traditional methods. However, there is a need for further research on the specific role of ChatGPT in enhancing English learning autonomy, particularly in the Indonesian context.

This study aims to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of using ChatGPT to enhance English learning autonomy in high schools of Banda Aceh. This research investigates the impact of ChatGPT on students' self-directed learning behaviors and skills, focusing on its potential to enhance motivation and engagement in English language learning. The study also explores the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing ChatGPT in high schools in Banda Aceh City.

To achieve this, the study examines the impact of ChatGPT on student motivation and engagement by analyzing log data, surveys, reflections, and in-depth interviews. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How do teachers' attitudes towards technology integration influence the effectiveness of ChatGPT in enhancing student learning outcomes in English language classes? and (2) How do high school students perceive the benefits, challenges, and impact of ChatGPT on their English language learning motivation and autonomy?

By exploring these questions, the study seeks to provide insights into the potential benefits and challenges of leveraging ChatGPT in English language education. This study also aims to contribute to the development of effective strategies for promoting English learning autonomy in high schools of Banda Aceh. The findings of this study can inform educators, policymakers, and stakeholders about the potential benefits and challenges of integrating ChatGPT in English language learning, ultimately enhancing the quality of language education in the region.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach to gain in-depth insights into the interactions between students and ChatGPT (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The research instruments used included interview guidelines, which were carefully validated by experts in English language education and learning technology to ensure their reliability and validity (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2002). Data collection involved conducting in-depth interviews with three students (Code: S1, S2, and S3) and three teachers (Code: T1, T2, and T3), aiming to capture their perceptions, challenges, and benefits associated with using ChatGPT in learning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The research subjects were chosen purposively involving three teachers and three students each represents the school namely SMAN 3, SMAN 4, SMAN 5 Banda Aceh.

The collected data, comprising interview transcripts, were analyzed using a thematic approach, involving open and axial coding. This analysis sought to uncover the nuanced perspectives of both students and teachers on the use of ChatGPT, highlighting its potential benefits and challenges in the learning process (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

3. Results and Discussions

This *RQ 1: "How do teachers' attitudes towards technology integration influence the effectiveness of ChatGPT in enhancing student learning outcomes in English language classes?"*

The teacher interview results, based on (Wang, 2025), encompassed six aspects: 1. Learner Autonomy; 2. Achievement of Learning Goals; 3. Independent Exploration; 4. Critical Evaluation Skills; 5. Responsibility in Learning; and 6. Teacher's Attitude and

Integration. Fifteen questions were posed based on these six variables. The teacher interview results were elaborated using codes Teacher (T1), Teacher 2 (T2), and Teacher 3 (T3) as follows.

Learner Autonomy

T 1 emphasized that ChatGPT encourages students to become more independent. This aligns with (Holec, 1979) concept of learner autonomy, which refers to the ability of students to take initiative in organizing and managing their own learning processes. From the transcript, it is evident that students are no longer fully dependent on the teacher; instead, they can explore the language, check grammar, and expand vocabulary through interactions with ChatGPT. The results can be seen in the following Table 1.1 Axial Coding analysis results.

Table 1. Results of Axial Coding (Teacher)

Category	Sub-Category	Codes (from Open Coding)	Interpretation
Student Factors	Learner Autonomy	- Teacher 1: Students manage grammar/vocabulary independently.- Teacher 2: Students take initiative in asking questions.- Teacher 3: Restricted due to gadget ban.	ChatGPT has potential to foster autonomy, but effectiveness varies depending on access.
	Achievement of Learning Goals	- Teacher 1: Improved writing through revision.- Teacher 2: Support in speaking/writing tasks.- Teacher 3: No direct evidence in class.	Where accessible, ChatGPT enhances achievement of English learning goals; restrictions limit impact.
	Independent Exploration	- Teacher 1: Used outside class for contests/creative writing.- Teacher 2: Some use beyond assignments.- Teacher 3: Possible only outside school.	Exploration is strongest where freedom exists; institutional restrictions reduce opportunities.
	Critical Evaluation Skills	- Teacher 1: Students evaluate and adapt ChatGPT's answers.- Teacher 2: Mixed—some evaluate, others copy.- Teacher 3: Not observable.	Critical evaluation emerges gradually but is uneven; institutional barriers halt its growth.
	Responsibility in Learning	- Teacher 1: Students filter and apply input wisely.- Teacher 2: Responsibility developing but inconsistent.- Teacher 3: Responsibility tied to following school rules.	Responsibility can grow with AI use, but in restrictive contexts, it is redefined as compliance with rules.
Teacher Factors	Attitude & Integration	- Teacher 1: Very positive; sees ChatGPT as supportive.- Teacher 2: Cautiously positive; teacher's role still central.- Teacher 3: Less positive; doubts integration due to rules.	Teachers' acceptance shapes whether ChatGPT is positioned as a complement or rejected as impractical.
Institutional Factors	Policy Environment	- Teacher 1: No major restrictions, enabling experimentation.- Teacher 2: Some flexibility but teacher supervision emphasized.- Teacher 3: Strict ban on gadgets, sanctions for violations.	Institutional policies are decisive in enabling or hindering ChatGPT integration, strongly affecting learner autonomy and exploration.

According to (Wang, 2025), ChatGPT can foster learner autonomy by enabling students to access immediate linguistic input and feedback without direct teacher

intervention. In the transcript, T 2 highlighted that students were able to use ChatGPT independently after initial guidance, though the level of autonomy varied. This partially supports Wang's claim, as some students demonstrated independence, while others still relied on teacher prompts.

T3's responses indicate that ChatGPT plays a role in strengthening students' independence. Students are not only relying on teachers' directions but also beginning to explore learning strategies and problem-solving through the AI tool, which reflects a shift toward greater autonomy.

Achievement of Learning Goals

The teacher observed an improvement in the quality of students' learning outcomes, particularly in writing descriptive texts. ChatGPT assists students in revising their writing rather than merely copying, which reflects a metacognitive process consistent with (Smith, 2008) notion of critical reflection in language learning. Thus, the technology not only accelerates the achievement of learning goals but also raises students' awareness of the quality of their work.

The emphasizes that ChatGPT contributes to more effective goal achievement by providing context-specific corrections and examples in real time (Wang, 2025). Teacher 2 observed improvements in students' grammar and narrative writing quality, which aligns with Wang's findings. However, the inconsistency across students suggests that the benefits depend on how actively learners engage with the tool. ChatGPT appears to facilitate more efficient goal attainment. By providing immediate explanations and examples, it helps students understand concepts more quickly, allowing them to meet learning objectives with fewer obstacles.

Independent Exploration

The teacher observed an improvement in the quality of students' learning outcomes, particularly in writing descriptive texts. ChatGPT assists students in revising their writing rather than merely copying, which reflects a metacognitive process consistent with (Smith, 2008) notion of critical reflection in language learning. Thus, the technology not only accelerates the achievement of learning goals but also raises students' awareness of the quality of their work.

The notes that students who explore AI tools beyond classroom assignments tend to show stronger communicative gains (Wang, 2025). In Teacher 2's account, a small group of students used ChatGPT outside class for vocabulary enrichment and conversational practice. This mirrors Wang's argument but also highlights that independent exploration is not yet a widespread habit among the majority. The transcript highlights that students are taking more initiative in learning. Instead of waiting for direct guidance, they use ChatGPT to explore new vocabulary, grammar structures, and contextual applications on their own, which shows proactive learning behavior.

Critical Evaluation Skills

Students demonstrated strong initiative by using ChatGPT beyond classroom hours, even for non-academic purposes such as speech competitions or creative writing. This indicates a shift from teacher-directed learning toward self-directed learning, as described by Benson (2011). This stresses the importance of learners developing critical literacy when using AI, since not all outputs are reliable (Wang, 2025). Teacher 2 reported that only a minority of students questioned, compared, or refined ChatGPT's responses, while most simply accepted them. This indicates a gap between the potential benefits described by Wang and the current reality in practice.

Although ChatGPT provides instant answers, students are encouraged to compare,

verify, and reflect on the information. This process fosters critical thinking, as they learn to distinguish between reliable and less relevant outputs.

Responsibility in Learning

Students showed responsibility by selecting, filtering, and using ChatGPT's input wisely. This demonstrates that AI use can foster a sense of ownership over their learning process, which is consistent with Zimmerman's (2002) theory of self-regulated learning. The teacher observed that students show increasing responsibility for their own progress. By independently seeking help and resources through ChatGPT, they demonstrate accountability for achieving their personal learning outcomes.

The identifies responsibility as a key dimension of effective AI-supported learning (Wang, 2025). Teacher 2 suggested that while some students revised their work with AI feedback, others tended to copy directly without modification. This partial adoption shows that ChatGPT can cultivate responsibility, but scaffolding from teachers remains essential.

Teacher's Attitude and Integration

Teacher 1 expressed a highly positive attitude, viewing ChatGPT not as a replacement for teachers but as a supportive tool that strengthens learning. The teacher also planned to expand its use through creative projects. Such attitudes are crucial, as teacher acceptance is a key factor in the successful integration of technology in education (Davis, 1989).

Finally, (Wang, 2025) underscores the role of teachers in framing AI as a supportive rather than substitutive tool. Teacher 2's balanced view—seeing ChatGPT as beneficial but emphasizing the need for guidance—echoes Wang's position. The teacher's positive yet cautious stance demonstrates an awareness of both the opportunities and risks of overreliance on AI.

Furthermore, Table 1.2 is provided to compare the perspectives of three English teachers (Teacher 1, Teacher 2, and Teacher 3) on the effectiveness of integrating ChatGPT in promoting learner autonomy and English learning in high school settings. By organizing their responses into variables such as learner autonomy, achievement of learning goals, independent exploration, critical evaluation, responsibility, and teacher attitude, the table provides a structured overview of how different school contexts and teacher perceptions shape the role of ChatGPT in education.

Table 2. Results of Open Coding (Teacher)

Variable	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
Learner Autonomy	Students become less dependent on the teacher; they manage grammar, vocabulary, and progress with ChatGPT.	Students show initiative in asking questions and exploring tasks.	Very limited, as gadget use is prohibited in school.
Achievement of Learning Goals	Students revise and improve descriptive texts with AI support, reflecting deeper learning.	ChatGPT helps students reach goals in speaking and writing exercises.	No direct evidence in class due to restricted access.
Independent Exploration	Students use ChatGPT outside class (speech contests, creative writing).	Some students use ChatGPT beyond assignments for extra practice.	Possible outside school, but not encouraged within school policies.
Critical Evaluation Skills	Students evaluate and adjust ChatGPT's answers before applying them.	Some students evaluate AI responses, but others copy directly.	Not observable, as use is restricted.

Responsibility in Learning	Students carefully filter and apply AI suggestions, showing ownership.	Developing sense of responsibility, though uneven across individuals.	Responsibility framed by following school rules rather than self-regulated learning.
Teacher's Attitude and Integration	Very positive—views ChatGPT as a supportive tool, not a replacement.	Supportive but cautious—emphasizes continued teacher guidance.	Less positive—skeptical due to strict gadget bans and practicality issues.

Source: Author (2025)

The data shows first, learner autonomy, this variable examines whether ChatGPT supports students in becoming more independent learners. For example, Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 reported that students took more initiative, while Teacher 3 emphasized that autonomy was limited due to institutional restrictions on gadget use.

Secondly, achievement of learning goals, this aspect explores whether ChatGPT helps students reach specific academic objectives, such as improving writing or speaking skills. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 noticed clear benefits, with students revising and enhancing their work. Teacher 3, however, could not observe such improvements because students lacked access in school.

The third is independent exploration. This variable highlights whether students use ChatGPT beyond classroom assignments. Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 observed students experimenting with creative tasks and practice outside the classroom, while Teacher 3 reported that exploration might happen only outside school but was not encouraged institutionally.

Next, critical evaluation skills. This aspect focuses on students' ability to analyze and question ChatGPT's outputs rather than accepting them passively. Teacher 1 saw strong evidence of critical engagement, Teacher 2 noted mixed practices, and Teacher 3 could not evaluate this skill due to restricted access.

To add, responsibility in learning. This variable refers to how students take ownership of their learning when using ChatGPT. Teacher 1 highlighted that students filtered suggestions wisely, Teacher 2 saw responsibility developing unevenly, and Teacher 3 defined responsibility mainly in terms of compliance with school rules.

Last, teacher's attitude and integration. This aspect captures teachers' perspectives on ChatGPT's role in the classroom. Teacher 1 had a very positive view, seeing it as supportive; Teacher 2 was cautiously positive, stressing teacher guidance; while Teacher 3 was skeptical, citing strict gadget bans and practicality issues.

RQ 2 : "How do high school students perceive the benefits, challenges, and impact of ChatGPT on their English language learning motivation and autonomy?"

The student interview results were structured based on six main variables, namely: 1) background experience; 2) perception of ChatGPT's benefits; 3) ease and challenges; 4) signs of learning autonomy; 5) attitudes and future expectations; and 6) impact on learning motivation.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis (Students)

Main Theme	Description
Background & Learning Experience	Students start learning in elementary school, but the intensity increases in middle and high school. Gadgets/ChatGPT make learning more engaging.
Perception of ChatGPT Benefits	Helping independent learning, supporting academic achievement (writing, vocabulary, grammar), as well as interest-based exploration (songs, technology).
Ease & Challenges	ChatGPT is relatively easy to use. Challenges include slow internet connections, long answers, and school rules that restrict gadget use.
Learning Independence	Students choose their own topics, adjust their answers, and compare them to other sources. Variation: High School 3 & 4 are more independent, while High School 5 tends to be passive.
Attitude & Expectations	Students are generally positive, wanting to continue using ChatGPT, but school regulations are an obstacle.
Motivation to learn	ChatGPT increased morale and confidence (SMA 3 & 4), but the impact was weak in students with limited access (SMA 5).

Source: Author (2025)

Background and Learning Experience

Interview results indicate that most students have been studying English since elementary school, but their commitment to learning the language only truly emerged in junior high school and further developed in high school. During high school, they perceived increased opportunities to develop their language skills, both through available facilities and more flexible school policies regarding the use of technology. One prominent factor was the permission for gadgets in class, which then facilitated the integration of applications such as ChatGPT into learning. This made the English learning experience more engaging, interactive, and relevant to the learning styles of the digital generation.

Perception of the Benefits of ChatGPT

In general, students view ChatGPT as a useful learning tool to enhance their independence. This application allows them to learn without always relying on teachers, for example, in looking up word definitions, understanding reading texts, practicing writing, or expanding their vocabulary. In addition to supporting core academic skills like grammar, writing, and vocabulary, ChatGPT also provides a platform for students to explore topics that align with their personal interests, such as understanding English song lyrics or reading technology articles. This demonstrates that ChatGPT functions not only as a support for formal learning but also as a medium for broadening horizons and fostering interest-based learning motivation.

Ease and Challenges

Most students found ChatGPT relatively easy to use, especially after receiving teacher guidance on how to formulate questions or *prompt*. This demonstrates that students' digital literacy can develop with the right support. However, several challenges remain in practice. Frequent technical challenges include slow internet connections and lengthy responses from ChatGPT, which sometimes require summarization skills. Furthermore, school regulations restricting the use of gadgets in the classroom are the most significant obstacle. This situation limits the use of ChatGPT to learning contexts outside the classroom, preventing the technology's full potential from being optimally realized in the school environment.

Learning Independence

Data shows that the use of ChatGPT can encourage students' independent learning.

Some students reported choosing their own topics, adapting their answers to their personal style, and even comparing the results from ChatGPT with other sources such as textbooks or teacher explanations. This reflects a critical, reflective, and creative approach to utilizing technology. However, there is variation across schools: students in SMA 3 and SMA 4 appear more active, critical, and independent, while students in SMA 5 are more passive due to limited access in class. Therefore, it can be concluded that independent learning through ChatGPT is strongly influenced by the extent to which schools provide flexibility to use this technology in learning activities.

Attitude and Expectations

In general, students had a positive and enthusiastic attitude toward using ChatGPT. They considered ChatGPT a fun, modern learning tool that helped them understand the material more easily. Some even referred to the app as a personal assistant or virtual tutor, always ready to assist. Expectations for continuing to use ChatGPT in their learning were high, particularly due to the benefits they experienced in writing skills and vocabulary development. However, students also recognized that school regulatory barriers were a major obstacle. In other words, while student attitudes tended to be positive, the reality of restrictive school policies limited the integration of ChatGPT into formal learning.

Motivation to Learn

The use of ChatGPT has been shown to increase learning motivation and self-confidence in some students. Students in SMA 3 and SMA 4 felt more enthusiastic because learning became more interactive, easier, and more enjoyable. They also reported feeling more confident speaking in class after practicing with ChatGPT outside of class. This suggests that ChatGPT can function as a safe learning space that supports students in overcoming their fear of making mistakes. However, for students in SMA 5, ChatGPT's effect on motivation was relatively weak due to limited access. These students were more motivated by direct classroom learning with teachers and peers, thus under-maximizing ChatGPT's positive impact.

The results of the thematic analysis indicate that students' English learning experiences began in elementary school, although their commitment to learning only truly emerged when they entered junior high and high school. This aligns with (Smith, 2008) findings, which emphasize that the development of learning autonomy does not occur instantly, but rather through stages influenced by educational level and previous learning experiences. Furthermore, school policies that allow for the use of gadgets are an important factor in making learning more engaging and meaningful. With the integration of technology, particularly ChatGPT, students experience increased engagement and motivation in learning English.

Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's benefits also demonstrate the app's important role in supporting learning. Students view ChatGPT as a tool that can enhance independent learning because it provides quick access to explanations, vocabulary, and sentence structure. This finding is consistent with the concept of*perceived usefulness* in *Technology Acceptance Model* (Davis, 1989), where technology will be well-received if users perceive tangible benefits in learning activities. Furthermore, ChatGPT helps students achieve academic goals in writing, reading, vocabulary, and grammar, and supports interest-based learning such as understanding song lyrics or technology articles. According to (Wang, 2025), interest-based learning can increase students' intrinsic motivation because the learning process becomes relevant to their personal needs and

preferences.

In terms of ease of use, the majority of students considered ChatGPT relatively easy to understand after receiving teacher instructions regarding how to give commands (*prompting*). This supports the view that technological literacy needs to be developed through pedagogical support to enable students to optimally utilize AI applications (Benson, 2013). However, several challenges remain, such as limited internet connections, excessively long answers, and school regulations prohibiting the use of gadgets in class. This last factor is a major obstacle, as limited access directly impacts the low frequency and quality of ChatGPT utilization in formal learning. Therefore, it can be concluded that the acceptance and effectiveness of ChatGPT are heavily influenced by the institutional context and available infrastructure.

Another important finding is ChatGPT's contribution to student learning independence. Some students demonstrated initiative in choosing their own topics, adapting their answers to their personal style, and comparing ChatGPT results with other sources such as textbooks or teachers. This aligns with Holec's (1981) concept of learning autonomy, which emphasizes students' ability to take responsibility for determining the goals, content, methods, and evaluation of their own learning. However, there was variation across schools: students from SMA 3 and SMA 4 demonstrated higher levels of independence than students from SMA 5, who tended to be passive due to limited access in the classroom. This reaffirms that a learning environment that supports the use of technology is a prerequisite for developing learning autonomy.

Students' attitudes and expectations also tended to be positive. They viewed ChatGPT as a "personal assistant" or even a "virtual tutor" always available to assist in their learning. Students hoped to continue using the application in formal learning, particularly to improve their writing and vocabulary skills. However, they also recognized that school regulatory barriers posed a significant obstacle to integrating ChatGPT into the classroom. According to (Benson, 2013), learning autonomy can only develop optimally if educational institutions provide space for students to utilize their preferred learning strategies, including digital technology. Therefore, institutional support is crucial for ensuring that the benefits of ChatGPT are truly integrated into formal learning.

Finally, in terms of motivation, the use of ChatGPT has been shown to increase student enthusiasm and self-confidence, especially in those with extensive access (SMA 3 and SMA 4). Students found learning more enjoyable, less boring, and felt more confident speaking up in class after becoming accustomed to practicing with ChatGPT. This demonstrates that ChatGPT can be a *safe space* which minimizes anxiety in learning a foreign language, in line with (Smith, 2008) view that learning autonomy is closely related to growing self-confidence. Conversely, for students with limited access (SMA 5), the impact of ChatGPT on motivation is relatively weak because its use only occurs outside of the classroom. Thus, it can be concluded that ChatGPT has the potential to strengthen both cognitive and affective aspects of learning, but its effectiveness is highly dependent on institutional support and consistent access in formal learning contexts.

Table 4. Open Coding (Students)

No	Category	Initial Code
1	Initial Language Learning Experience	Studying since elementary school, serious in junior high/high school
2	Motivational Driving Factors	School policies, gadget permission, personal interests
3	ChatGPT Function	Translation, grammar, writing, speaking, reading text, summaries, song lyrics, technology articles

No	Category	Initial Code
4	Context of Use	Supporting schoolwork vs. personal interest based
5	Independence	Asking questions independently, choosing topics, verifying sources
6	Creativity	Customize ChatGPT answers to your own style
7	Technical Barriers	Internet is slow, answers are too long
8	Regulatory Barriers	Prohibition on the use of cell phones in class
9	Affective Impact	Confidence, motivation, enthusiasm
10	Positive Attitude	ChatGPT as a personal assistant, virtual tutor, fun learning
11	Limitations	More frequent use outside of class hours

Source: Author (2025)

Most students begin learning English in elementary school, but they only truly demonstrate a commitment to it when they enter junior high or high school. This indicates that the language learning process develops gradually, with motivation and awareness of the importance of English increasing with age and academic demands. High school is a crucial phase because it provides students with more opportunities and resources to hone their skills.

Students begin learning English in elementary school, but seriousness in learning it only becomes apparent in middle and high school. This aligns with (Smith, 2008) view that the development of autonomous learning is a gradual process, with awareness of the importance of language skills increasing with learning experience and academic demands. The context of secondary education is a crucial phase for students to begin developing independent learning skills with the support of technology.

Student learning motivation is greatly influenced by external factors such as school policies and permission to use gadgets, as well as internal factors such as personal interests *self-determination theory.* As stated by (Deci & Ryan, 2000), intrinsic motivation will increase when students have the opportunity to learn according to their interests, while extrinsic motivation is strengthened through environmental support such as flexible school policies. Therefore, the integration of institutional policies and personal interests is an important combination in building student learning motivation.

Student learning motivation is influenced by three main factors: school policies, permission for gadget use, and personal interests. School policies that support technology use, such as allowing gadgets in class, can boost student enthusiasm. Conversely, strict regulations can reduce motivation. Furthermore, personal interests, such as a passion for music or technology, can also act as intrinsic drivers that encourage students to be more active in learning.

Students use ChatGPT for a variety of purposes, from vocabulary translation and grammar practice to productive skills like writing and speaking. Some students also use it to read texts, create summaries, understand song lyrics, or read technology articles. This demonstrates ChatGPT's multifunctionality, supporting both receptive and productive skills in language learning.

ChatGPT is used multifunctionally to support both receptive (reading, listening) and productive (writing, speaking) skills. Its functions include translation, grammar practice, summarization, and even understanding song lyrics and technology articles. This diverse functionality aligns with (Wang, 2025) findings, which emphasize that AI-based technology can provide comprehensive support for language skills, adapting to students' diverse learning needs.

Students' use of ChatGPT can be divided into two contexts: academic and informal. In academic contexts, ChatGPT is used to complete school assignments, understand reading texts, or write. In informal contexts, the application is used for personal interests,

such as understanding song lyrics or reading articles about technology. This difference in function demonstrates ChatGPT's flexibility in accommodating both formal and informal learning needs.

The use of ChatGPT spans both academic (e.g., completing school assignments) and informal (e.g., exploring hobbies). This demonstrates the technology's flexibility in bridging formal and informal learning. According to (Benson, 2013), students' ability to integrate learning experiences inside and outside the classroom is a strong indicator of learning autonomy. Thus, ChatGPT expands students' learning space, making it a sustainable learning tool that transcends the classroom context.

Data shows that ChatGPT contributes to increased student independence. Some students use the app to ask questions independently, choose learning topics based on their interests, and even verify answers with other sources. This way, students no longer rely solely on teachers but begin to take initiative and responsibility in their learning. ChatGPT encourages students to be more independent, for example by asking direct questions, choosing topics based on their interests, and verifying information with other sources. This approach aligns with (Holec, 1979) concept of autonomy, which emphasizes the importance of students' ability to take responsibility for their own learning goals, content, and strategies. The practice of verifying ChatGPT answers also demonstrates that students are developing critical digital literacy, essential in the era of technology-based learning.

Besides independence, ChatGPT also encourages creativity. Students do not always copy the answers provided, but adapt them to their own style and understanding. This adaptation process demonstrates a reflective and creative ability to use technology, enabling ChatGPT to function not simply as a provider of instant answers but as inspiration for developing ideas. Several students stated that they did not copy the answers outright, but adapted them to their own style. This is consistent with (Smith, 2008) view that learning autonomy encompasses not only technical independence but also creativity in processing material according to personal context. Thus, ChatGPT serves as a creative stimulus that encourages students to develop more personalized learning styles and language expression.

Despite its relative ease of use, some technical challenges still arise in practice. The most frequently cited obstacle is a slow internet connection, which makes accessing ChatGPT difficult. Furthermore, students complain that ChatGPT answers are sometimes too long, requiring additional skills to summarize relevant information. Students encountered technical challenges such as slow internet connections and excessively long ChatGPT responses. These challenges align with the framework *Technology Acceptance Model* (Davis, 1989), where the factors *perceived ease of use* can impact technology acceptance. If technical barriers are not addressed, students may feel less efficient in using the application, thus preventing the full benefits of ChatGPT from being fully realized.

Another, significant obstacle is school regulations. Some schools prohibit the use of gadgets in class, preventing students from utilizing ChatGPT in formal learning situations. This policy limits ChatGPT use to outside the classroom, preventing students from fully benefiting from it when spontaneous challenges arise at school. School policies restricting gadget use in the classroom are a major obstacle to optimizing ChatGPT. This situation results in students only being able to use it outside of class hours, thus limiting ChatGPT's role in formal learning. According to (Benson, 2013), institutional support is essential to creating an effective autonomous learning ecosystem. Without supportive policies, the potential of technology will not fully contribute to increasing student

learning independence.

Using ChatGPT has had a positive impact on students' affective aspects, such as increasing self-confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm for learning. Some students feel more confident speaking in class because they are used to practicing with ChatGPT. Furthermore, they feel more enthusiastic because learning becomes more fun and interactive. Thus, ChatGPT supports not only the cognitive but also the psychological aspects of language learning. ChatGPT has a positive impact on affective aspects, such as increasing students' self-confidence, motivation, and enthusiasm for learning. This supports (Smith, 2008) view that learning autonomy is closely related to growing self-confidence because students feel they have control over their learning process. With ChatGPT, students feel a sense of ownership *safe space* to practice without fear of being judged, so their confidence increases when interacting in class.

The majority of students expressed positive attitudes toward using ChatGPT. They described the app as a "personal assistant" or "virtual tutor" always ready to help at any time. This perception demonstrates that ChatGPT is seen not simply as a technology application, but as a learning partner that supports the ongoing learning process. Students described ChatGPT as a “personal assistant” or “virtual tutor” who was always ready to help. This positive attitude indicates a high level of technology acceptance, which according to (Davis, 1989) is influenced by perceptions of usefulness (*perceived usefulness*) of the application. Students felt that ChatGPT made learning more fun and modern, thus increasing their engagement in learning.

Despite positive student attitudes, limitations remain. ChatGPT is primarily used outside of class hours, due to limited internet access and school regulations. As a result, ChatGPT has not been fully integrated into the formal learning process, limiting its role as a supplementary tool for independent learning at home. Students often use it outside of the classroom due to regulatory and technical barriers. This makes ChatGPT more of an informal learning tool than an integral part of formal learning. According to (Wang, 2025), the effectiveness of AI technology in learning depends heavily on systematic integration into the curriculum, not just incidental use by students outside of school.

Table 5. Axial Coding (Students)

No	Category Relationship	Description
1.	School Policy → ChatGPT Access → Independence & Motivation	Open access (SMA 3 & 4) → high motivation & independence. Limited access (SMA 5) → low motivation & independence.
2.	Teacher Support → Technology Literacy → Self-Confidence	Teachers guide students in giving prompts → students are confident (SMA 3 & 4). Without guidance + prohibitions → students are hesitant & lack confidence (SMA 5).
3.	ChatGPT Function → Form of Utilization → Impact	Academics (grammar, writing, vocabulary) → improve competence. Personal interests (songs, technology) → increase intrinsic motivation. Results: creativity, self-confidence, enthusiasm for learning.

School Policy → ChatGPT Access → Independence & Motivation

The data shows that school policy is a key determinant in determining the extent to which students can access ChatGPT and how this impacts their learning independence and motivation. In schools that allow for the use of gadgets (such as SMA 3), students can utilize ChatGPT both in and outside of class, significantly increasing their learning independence and motivation. Conversely, in schools with strict regulations (such as SMA 5), ChatGPT use is limited to outside of class hours, minimizing its impact on learning independence and motivation. This confirms that institutional policy support is

a critical variable in optimizing the role of learning technology.

Teacher support → Technological literacy → Student self-confidence

In addition to school policies, teacher support has proven to be highly influential in improving students' technological literacy. Teachers who provide guidance on how to create questions or *prompt* Appropriate guidance helps students understand how to effectively utilize ChatGPT. This contributes to students' growing confidence in using technology, as they feel able to control their learning process independently. Conversely, in schools that don't provide guidance, students tend to lack confidence and hesitate to rely on ChatGPT, even though the application is technically easy to use. Therefore, the role of teachers is not only as academic facilitators but also as digital literacy mediators, which determines students' level of confidence.

ChatGPT Function → Form of use → Impact

ChatGPT's diverse functions are utilized by students in two main ways: supporting academic assignments (grammar, writing, vocabulary) and fulfilling personal interests (songs, technology articles). Academic use helps students achieve formal learning goals, while interest-based use increases intrinsic motivation because the learning feels relevant to their lives. The impact of both uses is increased creativity, self-confidence, and enthusiasm for learning. In other words, ChatGPT functions not only as a technical tool but also as a means of strengthening the cognitive, affective, and motivational aspects of language learning.

The results of the study indicate that school policy is a key factor in determining the extent to which students can utilize ChatGPT and how this impacts their learning independence and motivation. Schools that provide flexibility in the use of gadgets (e.g., SMA 3) allow students to access ChatGPT both inside and outside the classroom, allowing them to be more independent in managing their learning process and more motivated to explore the material. Conversely, in schools that implement strict regulations on gadget use (e.g., SMA 5), the use of ChatGPT is limited to contexts outside of class hours, so its impact on independence and motivation is minimal. These findings support (Benson, 2013) view that institutional support is an important prerequisite for the development of learning autonomy. Furthermore, in accordance with the framework *Technology Acceptance Model* (Davis, 1989), accessibility and contextual support influence the level of acceptance and effectiveness of technology in education.

In addition to school policies, the role of teachers has also proven to be very influential in improving students' technological literacy. Teachers who provide guidance on how to create questions or *prompt.* Appropriate instruction helps students understand how to effectively utilize ChatGPT. This fosters student confidence because they feel able to control their learning process independently with the support of technology. Conversely, in schools with minimal teacher support, students tend to lack confidence even though the application is technically easy to use. This finding aligns with (Smith, 2008) perspective, which emphasizes that learning autonomy can develop when students are supported by appropriate pedagogical guidance. Furthermore, (Wang, 2025) research also shows that technological literacy acquired through teachers' roles as digital facilitators is crucial in fostering student confidence in using AI for language learning.

ChatGPT is utilized by students in two main ways: first, as a tool to support academic tasks, such as grammar practice, writing texts, and enriching vocabulary; second, as a learning medium based on personal interests, such as understanding song

lyrics or reading technology articles. The use of ChatGPT in an academic context contributes directly to the achievement of formal learning objectives, while the use based on personal interests increases students' intrinsic motivation because it makes learning more relevant to their daily experiences. Both forms of use have positive impacts in the form of increased creativity, self-confidence, and enthusiasm for learning. These findings align with (Holec, 1979) theory of learning autonomy and (Wang, 2025) research, which states that technology-based learning can strengthen students' cognitive, affective, and motivational aspects when its use is integrated with academic needs and personal interests.

4. Conclusions

The findings of this study highlight three interrelated factors that shape the effectiveness of ChatGPT in promoting student autonomy, motivation, and confidence. First, school policy plays a decisive role in determining access to ChatGPT. Schools with flexible gadget policies provide students with broader opportunities to engage with the tool, which in turn strengthens their independence and motivation. Conversely, strict policies limit usage and reduce potential benefits, confirming Benson's (2011) assertion that institutional support is a prerequisite for learner autonomy.

Second, teacher support is pivotal in fostering technological literacy and self-confidence. When teachers provide guidance on formulating prompts and using ChatGPT effectively, students feel more capable of directing their own learning. In contrast, the absence of guidance—often compounded by prohibitive school rules—leads to hesitation and lower confidence levels. This finding supports Little's (1991) argument that autonomy requires pedagogical scaffolding and aligns with Wang's (2025) emphasis on teachers as mediators of digital literacy.

Finally, the functions of ChatGPT extend beyond academic purposes to personal interests. Students who use it for grammar, writing, and vocabulary development benefit academically, while those who explore personal topics (e.g., song lyrics, technology articles) experience greater intrinsic motivation. Both uses foster creativity, enthusiasm, and self-confidence, echoing Holec's (1981) perspective on autonomy as learner-driven and reinforcing the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), which links usefulness and accessibility to technology adoption.

Taken together, these findings suggest that optimizing the role of ChatGPT in education requires a balance of supportive institutional policy, active teacher involvement, and flexible use that integrates both academic and personal learning goals. In such contexts, ChatGPT can serve not only as a cognitive tool but also as a catalyst for affective and motivational growth in language learning.

5. Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the research team for their valuable collaboration and commitment throughout this study. Special appreciation is extended for the financial support provided through a research grant, Kemendikti Saintek which made this possible. The funding support played a crucial role in facilitating data collection, analysis, and the successful completion of this study. The authors also acknowledge all participants who generously contributed their time and perspectives to this research.

6. References

Benson, P. (2013). *Teaching and researching: Autonomy in language learning*. Routledge.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.

Cárcamo Morales, B. E., & Pérez, C. (2022). Toward autonomous learning: Exploring the impact of participating in an online second language learning course.

Chapelle, C. A. (2006). *English language learning and technology: Lectures on applied linguistics in the age of information and communication technology*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2002). *Research methods in education*. routledge.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Davis, F. D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 319–340.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The" what" and" why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), 227–268.

Egbert, J., & Hanson-Smith, E. (1999). *CALL environments: Research, practice, and critical issues*. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages Alexandria, VA.

Holec, H. (1979). *Autonomy and foreign language learning*. ERIC.

Holmes, A. G. D. (2021). Can We Actually Assess Learner Autonomy? The Problematic Nature of Assessing Student Autonomy. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 9(3), 8–15.

Shin, D., & Lee, J. H. (2024). Exploratory study on the potential of ChatGPT as a rater of second language writing. *Education and Information Technologies*, 29(18), 24735–24757.

Smith, R. (2008). Learner autonomy. *ELT Journal*, 62(4), 395–397.

Tam, M. (2000). Constructivism, instructional design, and technology: Implications for transforming distance learning. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 3(2), 50–60.

Wang, Y. (2025). A study on the efficacy of ChatGPT-4 in enhancing students' English communication skills. *Sage Open*, 15(1), 21582440241310644.

Warschauer, M. (2002). A developmental perspective on technology in language education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 36(3), 453–475.

Xiao, Y., & Zhi, Y. (2023). An exploratory study of EFL learners' use of ChatGPT for language learning tasks: Experience and perceptions. *Languages*, 8(3), 212.

Yang, B., Xie, C., Liu, T., Xu, J., & Li, W. (2024). Exploring the relationship between

teacher talk supports and student engagement from the perspective of students' perceived care. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 32(10), 6393–6412.