

Indonesian EFL university students' ChatGPT acceptance: a cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Informed by the technology acceptance model (TAM), this cross-sectional study investigated to what extent ChatGPT is perceived by English as a foreign language (EFL) university students. A total of 149 Indonesian EFL university students took part in filling out a questionnaire representing the five variables of TAM including perceived ease of use (PEU), perceived usefulness (PU), attitude toward using (ATU), behavioral intention to use (BIU), and actual use (AU). The data were analyzed based on partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS v.4. The results showed that all of TAM variables contributed to explaining the participants' use of ChatGPT, except the path ATU→BIU ($p=0.229$), which was not significant due to the overshadowing influence of perceived usefulness. This indicated that the participants were mainly motivated by the practical benefits of ChatGPT in enhancing language learning. Therefore, this study suggests that educators and curriculum designers might consider integrating ChatGPT's utility into language learning tasks to foster students' effective yet critical engagement with the tool. Pedagogically, this study provides empirical evidence on the potential of ChatGPT to be adopted in future university-level language education, while acknowledging the need for further research on its limitations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

ChatGPT has significantly impacted many disciplines but it is still limitedly applied in the language learning, particularly in higher education context [1] due to its recent emergence. However, some researchers have already explored the integration of ChatGPT in English language teaching from diverse domains including students and teachers' perceptions [2], [3], factors driving the use ChatGPT [4], pedagogical benefits [5], teacher readiness [6], vocabulary acquisition [7], writing skill development [8], and automated writing scoring system [9]. The exploration of ChatGPT incorporation in English language teaching highlights both its benefits and drawbacks. Firstly, the benefits include enhancement on language skills, diverse, adaptive and up-to-date creation of learning materials, quick preparation of lesson plans, personalized and dynamic learning interactions, promoting self-directed learning, and personalized feedback for learners [2]–[5], [8], [10]. On the other hand, the drawbacks comprise plagiarism, dishonesty, unethical acts, violation of academic integrity, biased contents, cognitive skill degradation, in need of careful monitoring/evaluation, overreliance on ChatGPT, creativity suppression [2], [4], [10], [11].

In Indonesian English as a foreign language or EFL context, artificial intelligence (AI), particularly ChatGPT has been researched by some scholars with several focuses such as writing skill development [8], [12] pedagogical practices [13] argumentation skills [14], and automated writing evaluation [15]. However, limited studies were found to explore how Indonesian EFL university students adopt ChatGPT as new technology in their learning practices while it is very essential to understand students' perspectives when trying to see how new technology may contribute to their learning process [16]. To bridge this gap, the present study aims at investigating how Indonesian EFL university students perceive ChatGPT represented by their attitudes, intentions, and actual behaviors drawn upon technology acceptance model (TAM), a framework designed for explaining and predicting how new technology is accepted and used by individuals developed by Davis [17]. As generally used by prior studies to examine how individuals accept technology such as the adoption of computer-assisted language learning or CALL [18] and mobile-assisted language learning or MALL [19], this model describes a number of variables representing potential factors driving to the adoption of technology including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitudes toward using, and behavioral intention to use, as in Figure 1.

Thus, to see the inter-factor relationships among TAM variables, this study proposes the following hypotheses. H1 states that perceived ease of use (PEU) positively predicts perceived usefulness (PU). H2 states that perceived usefulness (PU) positively predicts attitude toward using (ATU). H3 states that perceived ease of use (PEU) positively predicts attitude toward using (ATU). H4 states that attitude toward using (ATU) positively predicts behavioral intention to use (BIU). H5 states that behavioral intention to use (BIU) positively predicts actual use (AU). Lastly, H6 states that perceived usefulness (PU) positively predicts behavioral intention to use (BIU).

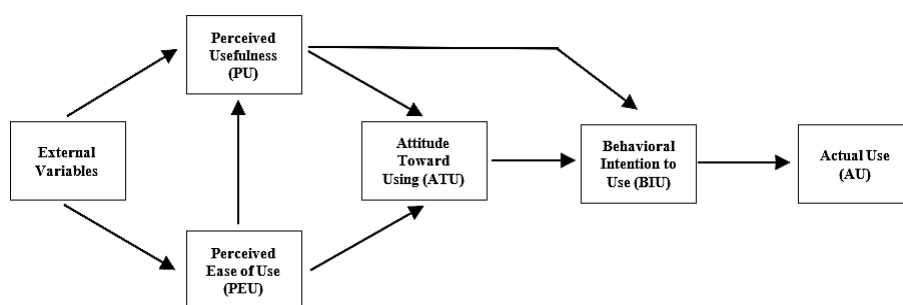


Figure 1. Technology acceptance model [20]

2. METHOD

2.1. Research design

This study employed a structural equation modelling (SEM) approach to test the hypotheses on the potential relationship among TAM variables [21]. The statistical data related to the causal relationship among the determined variables including PEU, PU, ATU, BIU, and AU were yielded from this study. SEM was chosen due to its ability to handle complex models involving multiple dependent and independent variables, including both observed and latent constructs. By utilizing SEM, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships among the five variables and test the proposed model's validity.

2.2. Participants and context

This study was conducted within the context of university English language program in Indonesia. The participants of this study were EFL university students from various public and private universities across Indonesia majoring English language education study program or English language and literature study program. A total of 149 students participated in filling out online questionnaire on their perceptions of ChatGPT based on TAM variables. The respondents' data were selected based on the inclusion criteria namely the period of using ChatGPT. Participants who utilized ChatGPT less than one month were excluded from this study. Subsequently, a total of 142 respondents were eligible to be included in the SEM analysis.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire designed based on the five variables of TAM including PEU, PU, ATU, BIU, and AU. Containing a total of 22 items, this questionnaire was adapted from well-established TAM instrument designed and validated by Liu and Ma [22]. Each item construct was

measured based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree enabling participants to identify the degree in which they agreed with statements about ChatGPT. The questionnaire was administered online mediated by Google Form. Subsequently, the data were analyzed statistically based on partial least square-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach using SmartPLS v.4. PLS-SEM approach was selected due to its ability to analyze complex relationship among multiple variables showing both direct and indirect effects with small sample size and non-normally distributed data [23].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Outer model assessment

The factor loadings for each indicator across all latent variables namely PEU, PU, ATU, BIU, and AU were consistently higher than the threshold value of 0.7. This demonstrates a fairly acceptable relationship between each indicator and its corresponding latent variable [24]. The detailed value of loading factor for each item is presented in Table 1. Moreover, in terms of reliability as shown in Table 2, the value of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability of all latent variables were exceeding 0.7 indicating an acceptable reliable construct of the model [25], [26].

To check the validity construct of the model, average variance extracted (AVE) was utilized as the indicator. The results showed that the AVE value of all latent variables was higher than 0.5 confirming that the construct was explained by more than 50% of the variance of its indicators, as in Table 3. This indicates that there is adequately convergent validity in the model [25].

Meanwhile, to determine the distinctiveness of the construct, the researcher referred to the Fornell-Larcker criterion to measure the square root of the AVE of all latent variables. The results showed that the square root of the AVE for each latent variable surpassed the correlation among latent variables, as revealed in Table 4. It indicates that every latent variable has fairly good discriminant validity meaning that latent constructs in the model are unique and distinct from one another [25]. Furthermore, this guarantees that each construct captures the intended concept without making significant overlap, representing a clear as well as reliable theoretical framework.

Table 1. The factor loadings of each indicator

Latent variable	Indicator	Loading factor
PEU	Item 2	0.889
	Item 3	0.729
	Item 4	0.830
PU	Item 5	0.813
	Item 6	0.826
	Item 8	0.842
ATU	Item 9	0.904
	Item 12	0.879
BIU	Item 13	0.817
	Item 14	0.791
	Item 16	0.870
AU	Item 17	0.712
	Item 18	0.740
	Item 19	0.832
	Item 21	0.793
	Item 22	0.832

Table 2. Reliability construct of model

Latent variable	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
PEU	0.750	0.751
PU	0.772	0.782
ATU	0.743	0.749
BIU	0.768	0.767
AU	0.839	0.857

Table 3. Validity construct of model

Latent variable	AVE
PEU	0.671
PU	0.684
ATU	0.795
BIU	0.684
AU	0.607

Table 4. Discriminant validity

Latent variable	AU	ATU	BIU	PEU	PU
AU	0.779				
ATU	0.598	0.892			
BIU	0.800	0.489	0.827		
PEU	0.564	0.720	0.640	0.819	
PU	0.781	0.576	0.740	0.539	0.827
The square root of AVE	0.883	0.944	0.909	0.905	0.909

3.2. Inner model assessment

The measurement model was constructed by examining the indicators representing the model fit (goodness-of-fit). Two indicators were used to determine the model fit namely standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and chi-square (X^2/df). At first, the test results showed that the value of both indicators did not meet the minimum requirement value, as in Table 5. Thus, the researchers excluded some factor loadings having values lower than 0.7 (i.e., item 1, 7, 10, 11, 15, and 20). Once deleted, the researchers performed re-calculation of the model and obtained the value of SRMR at 0.10 and X^2/df at 3.95. Those values met the minimum requirement as SRMR must be ≤ 10 [27] while the value of X^2/df should be < 5 [28].

Table 5. The fitting indicators of structural model

Model	SRMR	X^2/df
The initial measurement model	0.12	8.17
The revised measurement model	0.10	3.95

Moreover, R-square values and path coefficients in the structural model are presented in Figure 2. As seen in the figure, perceived usefulness was explained by perceived ease of use as much as 29%. This meant that when they found ChatGPT easy to use, they were more likely to view it as useful for their tasks or goals. Meanwhile, attitude toward using was explained by perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness by 56.8%. Participants demonstrated a similar relationship, where their positive perception of ease and utility directly influenced their overall attitude toward using ChatGPT. Next, behavioral intention was explained by perceived usefulness and attitude toward using at 55.3%, indicating that once the participants noticed that ChatGPT was a useful tool for them and had positive feelings towards using it, their intention to use ChatGPT continuously increased significantly. Finally, actual use was explained by perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude toward using, behavioral intention as much as 64%. This meant that these factors jointly predicted students' engagement with ChatGPT in an active and consistent way.

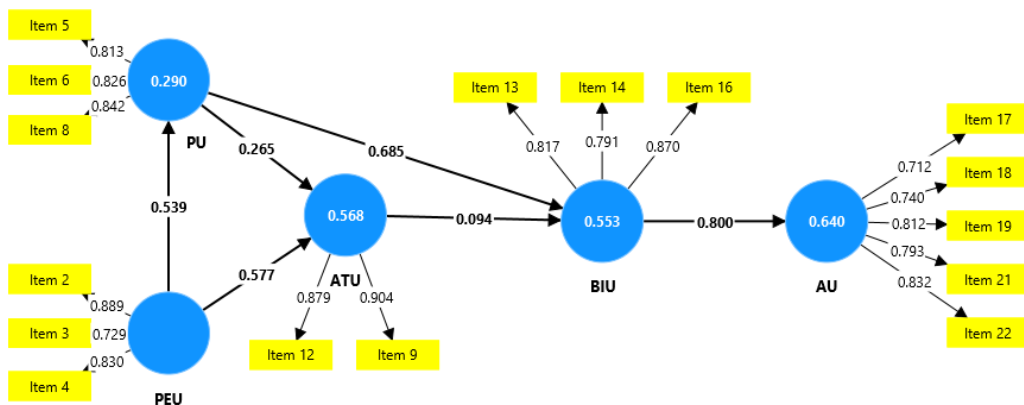


Figure 2. Structural fit model of relationships between PEU, PU, ATU, BIU, and AU

Furthermore, using a threshold p-value of less than 0.05, Table 6 displays that the t-test was used to examine the proposed hypotheses. As shown in the table, perceived ease of use demonstrates a positively significant influence on both perceived usefulness and attitude toward using. Likewise, perceived usefulness also exhibits a positive impact on attitude toward using. Unfortunately, attitude toward using does not significantly affect behavioral intention potentially due to the dominant influence of perceived usefulness, which more directly impacts behavioral intention, overshadowing the effect of attitude in this context. In

other words, the dominant influence of perceived usefulness appears to provide a more immediate and practical appeal to users demonstrating that students' behavioral intentions are shaped more by their perspectives on the functionality of ChatGPT than by their affective attitudes on it. In this case, external factors (e.g., academic pressure, study workload, institutional support, and practicality) may pose a stronger influence on the students' decision in utilizing ChatGPT for the study than their personal feelings. Meanwhile, perceived usefulness shows strong and positive influence on behavioral intention. In the same way, finally, behavioral intention provides a significantly positive effect on actual use.

Table 6. Path Coefficient and t-tests

Relationships	Path coefficient	t-value	p-value	Result
PEU → PU	0.539	4.786	0.000	Accepted
PEU → ATU	0.577	9.038	0.000	Accepted
PU → ATU	0.265	4.519	0.000	Accepted
ATU → BIU	0.094	1.202	0.229	Rejected
PU → BIU	0.685	10.009	0.000	Accepted
BIU → AU	0.800	16.975	0.000	Accepted

3.3. The relationships between PEU, PU, ATU, BIU, and AU

The focus of this analysis is to examine the relationships between PEU, PU, ATU, BIU, and AU in the context of EFL university students where ChatGPT is newly used as a technology for supporting their studies. The first relationship between PEU and PU indicates that when EFL university students find ChatGPT easy to use, they are more likely to perceive it as useful for their academic tasks, for example, used as a writing assistance [12]. This finding aligns with the TAM, which suggests that ease of use significantly impacts perceived usefulness [17], [20], [29], particularly in educational contexts where students' cognitive load can influence their engagement with technological tools [30], [31]. Correspondingly, this situation supports the cognitive load theory [31] explaining that humans have limited capacity to process information at any given time. Thus, when ChatGPT is perceived as easy to use, it can reduce students' extraneous cognitive load making the process of utilizing the tool more manageable and less intimidating. As a result, it enhances the students' willingness of using ChatGPT. Additionally, previous studies have shown that user-friendly technologies, such as ChatGPT, tend to be more readily adopted by students, as they reduce frustration and cognitive overload, making them more likely to recognize the tool's utility in enhancing learning outcomes [32].

Similarly, the relationship between PEU and ATU demonstrates that the ease of use of ChatGPT positively influences students' attitudes toward its usage. A system that simplifies the language learning process, offering instant feedback, and personalized learning [33], is likely to foster EFL university students' positive attitude toward using the tool. This is consistent with Davis's [17] findings that ease of use not only enhances perceived usefulness but also strengthens attitudes toward technology use. Also, this reflects Bandura's [34] social cognitive theory emphasizing the role of self-efficacy in shaping human behavior. In this case, when students perceive ChatGPT as easy to use, their confidence in their ability to operate the tool increases leading to the enhancement of their motivation and positive attitudes. However, this contradicts from what has been reported by previous research within the similar context reporting that the path of PEU → ATU was insignificant with $p < 0.50$ (rejected) [22]. However, although PEU did not directly predict ATU, its mediating effect through PU was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that PEU influences learners' attitudes indirectly via PU.

The positive link between PU and ATU further reinforces the idea that when students perceive ChatGPT as useful, particularly in terms of enhancing their language learning experience, their attitude toward using the tool becomes more favorable. This is particularly significant in the context of writing instruction where EFL university students are aided by ChatGPT to deal with language barriers, for example, dealing with limited vocabulary, difficulty in understanding complex grammar, or challenges in structuring coherent arguments [8], [12]. The perception that ChatGPT can help with these challenges likely contributes to more positive attitudes. Additionally, previous studies within different contexts, investigating the use of Zoom (PU → ATU $p < 0.000$) and information and communication technology or ICT (PU → ATU $p < 0.000$) based on TAM confirm that the ability of a technology to support students' learning success is a key factor in shaping their attitudes toward the adoption of the technology [35].

The path from ATU to BIU, however, shows a weaker relationship, suggesting that while EFL university students may develop a positive attitude toward using ChatGPT, this does not always translate into strong behavioral intentions to use it. This aligns with what had been observed by Davis *et al.* [20] that ATU only modestly predicts technology acceptance, suggesting users may adopt technology based on perceived usefulness or ease of use, regardless of their attitude. Correspondingly, some previous research found that ATU did not significantly influence BIU [36], [37]. Additionally, the dominant influence of perceived

usefulness may overshadow the effect of attitude in this context as what has been reported by other studies about the possibility of a latent variable being prevailed over by other variables/factors [38]. When students see clear benefits from using ChatGPT such as improving their language skills or overcoming specific challenges like language barriers, they may rely more on their practical evaluations of the tool rather than their overall attitudes toward it. This unexpected finding calls for further research to explore the interplay between affective and cognitive components in technology acceptance, especially in academic EFL settings.

The relationship between PU and BIU confirms that EFL university students' perception of ChatGPT's usefulness strongly influences their intention to use it. This result highlights the critical role of utility in shaping behavioral intentions, as students are likely to adopt tools that they find effective in meeting their academic needs. In the context of EFL university students, the perceived ability of ChatGPT to enhance language learning, provide writing feedback, and assist with grammar or vocabulary directly drives their intention to use it more consistently [12]. However, this slightly contradicts with a study reporting that PU did not have a direct impact on BIU, yet it indirectly influenced BIU through personalization (positive effect) and interactivity (negative effect) in the context of ChatGPT use in Vietnamese higher education [39] while another study, taking similar latent variable, found that perceived playfulness became the paramount predictor of behavioral intention to use ChatGPT [40].

Finally, the strong relationship between BIU and AU accentuates the idea that students' behavioral intention to use ChatGPT is a reliable predictor of actual system usage. This aligns with the theory of planned behavior [41] explaining that a person's behavior is dominantly determined by their level of intention to perform that behavior. In addition, this result is consistent with numerous technology adoption studies, including those in educational settings, which show that when students intend to use a tool, they are more likely to follow through with actual engagement [22], [35]. For EFL students, their intention to use ChatGPT for writing assistance, language practice, or academic queries translates into active participation, reflecting the central role of intention in driving technology adoption. The intention of EFL university students to use ChatGPT for writing assistance, language practice, or academic queries fosters active participation, highlighting the pivotal role of intention in driving technology adoption.

In conclusion, the relationships observed in this study align well with the TAM [17], [20] and highlight the importance of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness in shaping EFL students' attitudes, behavioral intentions, and actual usage of ChatGPT. However, the findings also suggest that perceived usefulness may play a more dominant role than attitude in determining behavioral intention, as students prioritize the practical benefits of the tool over general feelings about its use. These insights emphasize that despite its limitation and ongoing controversies, a user-friendly, effective, and academically beneficial tool like ChatGPT, can significantly enhance students' motivation to engage in language learning.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, this study concludes that perceived usefulness comes up as the dominant role in driving Indonesian EFL university students' adoption of ChatGPT. Despite the important factors of ease of use and attitude toward the tool, the study reveals that the students are primarily motivated by the tool's practical benefits in enhancing their language learning experience. This highlights the need to explicitly demonstrate the tool's utility in academic contexts to gain greater adoption.

Pedagogically, this study provides key implications for EFL teachers and policymakers when integrating ChatGPT into language learning. First, aligning with the strong effect of perceived usefulness, teachers need to design activities clearly demonstrating how ChatGPT improves various language skills, such as vocabulary enhancement, sentence construction, and grammar check to help students viewing its practical value. Second, the strong impact of perceived ease of use on both perceived usefulness and attitude toward using ChatGPT highlights the necessity of ensuring accessibility and user-friendliness of the tool. EFL teachers should provide clear instructions and training on using ChatGPT effectively. Third, as attitude alone does not strongly influence behavioral intention, instruction should focus on showing tangible benefits, such as improving speaking accuracy, enhancing listening comprehension, or boosting writing clarity. Integrating ChatGPT into task-based EFL activities can make its advantages more apparent and relevant to learners' language development goals. Fourth, the strong link between intention and actual use highlights the need to create supportive learning environments that encourage meaningful engagement with ChatGPT. Finally, successful integration of ChatGPT into EFL learning requires considering individual differences, such as students' digital literacy levels and attitudes toward technology. EFL teachers should assess these factors and offer tailored support to ensure equitable and effective use of ChatGPT, enabling all students to benefit from its potential.

However, this study is not without limitations. First, it used a cross-sectional survey, which means it only captured students' perceptions at one point in time, making it difficult to understand how their views

might change over time. Second, the data relied on self-reported questionnaires, which may be influenced by students giving socially desirable answers rather than their actual behavior. In other words, the participants might respond to the questionnaire in a manner they think is socially acceptable or favorable than how they truly think or behave. Third, important factors such as students' actual digital literacy skills or the level of institutional support were not included in the model, even though they might affect how students use ChatGPT. Lastly, since the participants were only from Indonesian universities, the findings may not fully apply to students in other countries or educational contexts. Future studies are encouraged to use mixed-method or longitudinal designs, include more diverse samples, and examine additional factors like digital competence, teacher support, or access to technology.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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Pupung Purnawarman	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓				
Nenden Sri		✓		✓	✓					✓		✓		
Lengkanawati														

C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

INFORMED CONSENT

The authors have full documentation of informed consent disseminated to all participants prior to their participation. Participants read and ticked the consent box before answering the online questionnaire. All data were kept confidential.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. No participant names were collected, no identifying information about the individual or the institution was disclosed, and proper citations were used.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

None declared.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The authors confirm that data supporting the findings of the study are available within the article.

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