

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The way people lived and learned was deeply influenced by the rapid growth of digital technology. One of the most influential innovations was Artificial Intelligence (AI), which allowed machines to perform tasks that usually required human intelligence, such as problem-solving, pattern recognition, and language processing. According to Ali (2024), Issa (2024), and Dwivedi et al. (2021), AI became a transformative technology that impacted various sectors, including business, health, and education. AI was already integrated into many daily applications that people used without realizing it. For example, recommendation systems on platforms such as YouTube and Netflix personalized content based on user preferences, while navigation apps like Google Maps optimized travel routes in real time. Virtual assistants such as Siri and Alexa also helped users manage schedules, set reminders, and answer quick questions. These applications showed that AI was no longer a distant concept but had already become a practical tool in everyday life (Aramide, 2025; Dini et al., 2025; Richter et al., 2019).

The growing presence of AI in daily life also influenced the education sector. As universities and schools adapted to digital transformation, AI tools were increasingly used to support both learning and teaching activities. According to Singh (2025), Jeyakumaran et al. (2025), and UNESCO (2021), AI in education provided opportunities for personalized learning, expanded access to knowledge, and assisted teachers in assessing students' progress. This meant that AI not only functioned as a supplementary tool but also became part of the learning ecosystem,

where students and teachers relied on it to facilitate academic tasks. By supporting both instruction and assessment, AI was gradually changing traditional approaches to education and shaping new ways of teaching and learning.

In the field of English Language Education (ELT), AI applications were particularly popular among students. Research showed that AI had been applied in various areas of language learning, including automated writing evaluation, natural language processing, and intelligent tutoring systems (Alhusaiyan, 2025; Bai & Nordin, 2025; Son et al., 2025). In practice, tools such as Google Translate helped students access texts in foreign languages, while Grammarly assisted in checking grammar and improving writing quality. More advanced systems like ChatGPT were already used to generate ideas, summarize complex materials, and explain concepts in simpler terms. In addition, newer platforms such as Perplexity AI provided research support by delivering concise academic information, while Gemini and Blackbox AI assisted learners in text generation and coding-related tasks. These examples illustrated how AI has become an essential component of academic contexts, especially for university students who required reliable support in writing assignments, conducting research, and completing theses.

This need for support was especially evident in writing an undergraduate thesis proposal, which functioned as the foundation for the entire undergraduate thesis process and demanded strong scientific writing and research skills. Writing an undergraduate thesis proposal was widely acknowledged as one of the most challenging academic tasks for university students, because it required them to demonstrate scientific writing skills, research methodology, and the ability to organize ideas before continuing to the full undergraduate thesis. Previous research

showed that students often faced difficulties related to language proficiency, psychological pressure, and limited scientific writing skills (Khusniyah & Ismiatun, 2024). Other research highlighted that problems also emerged from external factors such as limited supervision, lack of academic support services, and insufficient access to resources (Aprillia et al., 2023). For English Language Teaching (ELT) students, writing an undergraduate thesis could be even more difficult because they must express complex ideas in a foreign language. They often struggled with organizing ideas, reviewing literature, and applying research methods, which made the process stressful and took a lot of time (Prasetyaningrum et al., 2025).

The complexity of undergraduate thesis proposal writing often led students to feel overwhelmed, especially when they needed to balance academic demands with limited time and resources. In this situation, technology was increasingly seen as a potential solution to reduce students' burden. In particular, AI gained attention as a supportive tool that could simplify several aspects of undergraduate thesis writing. For ELT students, AI applications such as automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, and idea generators provided practical help in dealing with language-related challenges and scientific writing tasks (Tran et al., 2025; Kalan & Mazharpour, 2025; Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024). Nevertheless, the integration of AI into undergraduate thesis writing was still debated, as it raised concerns about plagiarism, ethical use, and the development of independent critical thinking skills (Balalle & Pannilage, 2025).

Despite these concerns, recent discussions in higher education suggested that the use of AI was not strictly prohibited but rather regulated through institutional and ethical guidelines. For example, UNESCO (2021) emphasized the responsible

use of AI in education, highlighted transparency, accountability, and academic integrity as key principles. In addition, universities also introduced policies that allowed AI-assisted work as long as it supported learning rather than replacing students' original thinking (Chan, 2023). Similarly, in the Indonesian context, the Ministry issued "*Panduan Penggunaan Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) pada Pembelajaran di Perguruan Tinggi*", which provided rules to ensure that AI was used responsibly in academic writing (Kemendiktisaintek, 2024). These developments indicated that AI could be integrated responsibly into undergraduate thesis proposal writing, serving as a supportive resource while still maintaining the values of academic honesty and critical engagement.

Although AI had been increasingly used in education and guided by ethical regulations, research on its role in undergraduate thesis proposal writing, especially among ELT students, was still limited. Most research examined AI in classroom learning or language skill development. Previous findings indicated that students often relied on AI tools for routine academic tasks such as homework and assignments (Delello et al., 2025; Estaphan et al., 2025; Phua et al., 2025). Recently, researchers also started to look at how students perceived AI in undergraduate thesis proposal writing. Research by Fitra et al. (2025), Ummu'qultsum (2025), and Wahyu et al. (2025) found that students had different opinions about AI. Some students think AI was helpful because it made writing easier and faster, while others worried about the originality and quality of the writing produced. Although the research provided useful information, it still focused on general perception and did not specifically examine how ELT students actually use AI in writing undergraduate

thesis proposals. This showed that more research was needed to understand how students perceived the use of AI in the writing process.

At Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji (UMRAH), these issues were also highly relevant. Based on preliminary observations and informal discussions with several ELT students, many of them reported difficulties in writing their undergraduate thesis proposals, particularly in organizing ideas, reviewing literature, and applying appropriate research methodology. The process became even harder because English was a foreign language for them, so expressing ideas clearly and correctly was often challenging. At the same time, the use of AI tools such as Grammarly, Google Translate, and ChatGPT became increasingly common among students as a way to cope with these challenges. However, despite this growing reliance on AI, there was still a limited understanding of how ELT students at UMRAH actually perceived and used AI in writing their undergraduate thesis proposals, including how they interacted with AI during the writing process. Therefore, it was necessary to explore how AI could support ELT students at UMRAH in their writing process.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher was interested in investigating the perceptions of ELT students at UMRAH regarding the use of AI in writing their undergraduate thesis proposals. This research aimed to explore the types of AI tools students were familiar with and often used, the benefits they experienced, and the prompts they found most helpful during the writing process. Understanding these perceptions was important to ensure that AI could be used effectively and responsibly to support undergraduate thesis writing while maintaining academic integrity. Therefore, this research was entitled "*The Use of Artificial Intelligence*

for English Language Teaching Students in Writing Undergraduate Thesis Proposal at Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji.”

1.2 Identification of Problem

Based on the research background presented, the problem identified in this research was that very little research had specifically investigated the use of AI in writing undergraduate thesis proposal.

1.3 Research Limitations

This research was limited to seventh-semester students of the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji (UMRAH) who were currently working on their undergraduate thesis in the academic year 2025/2026. In addition, this research focused on AI specifically designed for scientific writing, referred to as writing-based AI. Furthermore, the scope of this research was restricted to the use of AI and prompts related to the background of the undergraduate thesis proposal.

1.4 Research Questions

With reference to the identified problem and research limitations, the research question of this research were:

- 1) How did ELT students perceive the use of AI in writing their undergraduate thesis proposals?
- 2) Which AI did ELT students perceive as the most helpful for writing the background of their undergraduate thesis proposals?
- 3) What were the best prompts utilized by ELT students in writing the background of their undergraduate thesis proposals?

1.5 Research Objectives

In line with the research question, the purpose of this research were:

- 1) Investigated ELT students' perceptions regarding the use of AI in writing their undergraduate thesis proposals.
- 2) Identified the AI that ELT students perceived as the most helpful in writing the background of their undergraduate thesis proposals.
- 3) Described the best prompts utilized by ELT students in writing the background of their undergraduate thesis proposals.

1.6 Research Significances

This research carried both theoretical and practical significance for the field of English Language Teaching, particularly in the context of using Artificial Intelligence to support students in writing their undergraduate thesis proposals.

1) Theoretical Significance

This research contributed to the development of existing literature in ELT by providing insights into how AI could be integrated into scientific writing, especially in composing the background of a research proposal. The findings enriched current theories related to technology-assisted writing, learner autonomy, and the role of AI as a cognitive support tool in the writing process.

2) Practical Significance

a. For the Students

The findings of this research were expected to help students in writing their undergraduate thesis proposals more effectively by utilizing AI. It could also

guide them in recognizing both the benefits and limitations of AI, thereby allowing them to use the technology responsibly and strategically.

b. For the Advisors

The results of this research provided crucial insights for the advisors. By understanding the specific AI, methods, and challenges students faced, advisors could provide more relevant, targeted, and ethical guidance during the proposal writing process, ensuring students maintain academic integrity while leveraging technology.

c. For the Institution

The findings of this research provided valuable insights for higher education institutions, particularly in formulating policies and strategies related to the ethical and effective use of AI in scientific writing. The results served as a reference for universities to develop institutional guidelines, training programs, or scientific policies that ensure AI was used to improve, rather than replace, students' critical thinking and writing skills.

d. For Other Researchers

This research served as a valuable reference for future research that aimed to investigate the use of AI in academic contexts, particularly in undergraduate thesis proposal writing. It could also open opportunities for further exploration of AI integration in different aspects of ELT and higher education research.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid ambiguity and ensure clarity throughout this research, several key terms used in this research were defined as follows:

1) Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI referred to digital technologies or tools that used machine learning and natural language processing to help students generate, analyze, and write text in their undergraduate thesis proposals.

2) English Language Teaching (ELT) Students

ELT students referred to the undergraduate students of the English Language Education Study Program at Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji who were preparing or writing their undergraduate thesis.

3) Undergraduate Thesis Proposal Writing

Undergraduate thesis proposal writing referred to the process undertaken by university students in preparing a scientific writing that outlined the research they intended to conduct for their undergraduate thesis.