

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

The present study utilized a qualitative research approach as the fundamental framework to understand social phenomena in a holistic and in-depth manner. This approach consists of various research designs such as phenomenology, ethnography, and grounded theory all of which focus on interpreting human experiences and meanings within their natural settings. However, the researcher specifically selected and implemented the descriptive qualitative method for this study because the primary objective was to provide a comprehensive and systematic summary of the eighth-semester student's experiences in navigating ChatGPT.

The fundamental reason for choosing the descriptive qualitative method was the researcher's intention to portray the field reality as it was, without manipulating variables or providing experimental treatments. This was particularly crucial given the study's focus on learning and integrity, which required an authentic narrative of how students interacted with ChatGPT. By employing this method, the data gathered from interviews and field observations were elaborated narratively to reveal the synchronization between the student's verbal claims regarding academic honesty and their actual practices in English language learning at UINFAS Bengkulu.

Therefore, the selection of the descriptive qualitative method was a strategic decision to authentically capture the reality of ChatGPT usage among UINFAS Bengkulu students without manipulating variables. This method enabled a deep synchronization between student's verbal claims regarding academic honesty and their actual English language learning practices. By focusing on systematic narratives, this method effectively revealed the complex dynamics between technological efficiency and intellectual integrity. Consequently, the research provided a critical and holistic interpretation of educational phenomena in the digital age.

B. Place and Time of Research

The research was conducted at the English Study Program of Islamic State University of Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu focusing on students in eighth semester. Data collection took place over approximately one month, from June 3 to July 3, 2026.

C. Research Informants

The researcher employed purposive sampling to select the 16 (sixteen) informants for this study. Purposive sampling is a technique used to determine informants by selecting individuals based on specific criteria that align with the researcher's requirements and the objectives of this study. The informants of this research were 16 students of the eighth semester students at UINFAS Bengkulu. Eligibility requires candidates to meet three main requirements: (1) regular use of ChatGPT, defined as a minimum frequency of 2-3 times per week, and (2) eighth semester English students at UINFAS, (3) willing to give an information based on the questions.

Although the number of informants in this study is flexible, the final determination is strictly guided by the principle of data saturation. Data saturation is achieved when the process of collecting additional data through interviews no longer yields significant new information, concepts, or themes regarding student's experiences with ChatGPT in English language learning. Data collection was halted once the researcher convinced that the information being gathered had begun to repeat itself and no new insights were emerging, indicating that the dataset had reached a point of saturation.

Table 3.1
Research Informants

No	Initial Name	Class
1	OH	8A
2	IO	8A
3	IS	8A
4	EDP	8A
5	RNA	8B
6	STP	8B
7	PH	8B
8	FZ	8B
9	TNA	8C
10	TRA	8C
11	YA	8C
12	AS	8C
13	MLS	8D
14	DP	8D
15	NH	8D
16	SN	8D

D. Data Sources

Data sources refer to the origins from which information is collected and organized by the researcher. The adequacy and quality of factual data are largely contingent upon these data sources.

1. Primary Data Sources

Primary data sources refer to data obtained directly from research subjects as the intended source of information. Primary data comprises the core information gathered firsthand from the field, such as from informants. The primary data source for this research consisted of eighth semester students from

the English study program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Tadris, Islamic State University of Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, who use ChatGPT as tools in English language learning.

2. Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data refers to data used to supplement the primary data. Unlike primary data, it is not obtained directly by the researcher but rather through intermediaries or existing documents. Examples include theses, journals, and books used to support the primary data. In addition, the researcher drew on secondary sources available on the internet, such as website articles, e-books, online media, social media, and other related materials.

E. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was a critical and primary action in this research, as the main purpose of conducting research was to obtain data (Sugiyono, 2021). The details of the techniques used are as follows:

1. Depth-Interview

The interviews in this study used structured questions related to the resource. These were further extended by incorporating seven indicators derived from the UTAUT2 theory, namely performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, hedonic motivation, price value, and habit.

In this study, the researcher conducted depth interviews with sixteen (16) eighth-semester students from the English Education Study Program at UINFAS Bengkulu. These participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, specifically targeting students who actively used ChatGPT in their academic activities. The interview process aimed to gather detailed insights into their personal experiences, motivations, and perceptions regarding academic integrity while utilizing AI tools. Each interview lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes and was recorded with the participant's

consent to ensure data accuracy.

Although the informants are students of the English Education Study Program, the depth interviews conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. This linguistic choice was intentionally made to ensure comfort, eliminate psychological barriers, and allow informants to express their genuine experiences, anxiety regarding plagiarism, and complex ethical dilemmas without being constrained by foreign language anxiety or vocabulary limitations.

Beyond psychological comfort, this linguistic adaptation fulfilled the fundamental ethical standards of research involving human subjects. The Belmont Report (1974) emphasizes that the manner of communication is as crucial as the information itself, requiring researchers to adapt the presentation to the subject's capacities to guarantee true comprehension. In line with this, the updated APA Ethics Code (2017) mandates that researchers must obtain informed consent using language that is reasonably understandable to the participant. Therefore, conducting the interviews in Bahasa Indonesia ensures absolute cognitive clarity, allowing participants to fully comprehend the ethical nuances of the study and safeguarding the integrity of their informed consent.

2. Observation

The observation technique in this study was employed as a sequential follow-up and triangulation supplement to the depth interviews. To maintain strict objectivity and ensure the natural learning environment remained undisturbed, the researcher adopted the role of a non-participant observer. In this capacity, the researcher acted as a detached onlooker, systematically monitoring student's naturalistic study routines, academic workflows, and digital habits in common study areas or classrooms without intervening in their activities.

To ensure a methodical and comprehensive data collection process, the observation was guided by a structured checklist comprising 16 distinct operational fields. These fields were categorized into technical interaction

patterns such as access frequency or duration, the utilization of specific ELL features (brainstorming, grammar checking, and vocabulary expansion), prompting interaction details, infrastructure, network support and behavioral-ethical manifestations, including habitual dependence, attitudes toward plagiarism, and academic transparency. Furthermore, the non-participant observation closely monitored the student's post-AI processing habits, specifically their reference validation procedures (e.g., cross-checking via Google Scholar), text modification techniques (e.g., utilizing secondary tools like Quill-Bot and Deep-L), filtering of ambiguous content, and comprehension synchronization with their actual classroom notes. By cross-referencing these 16 observed behavioral fields with the verbal claims made during interviews, the researcher was able to eliminate self-perception biases, validate the qualitative data, and construct a highly credible, multifaceted synthesis of the student's actual AI-assisted learning ecosystem.

3. Documentation

Documentation is a data collection method that supports research by drawing on various sources, such as books, archives, written materials, images, and letters. This process involves gathering data in accordance with the needs of the research. In this study, documentation data served as supporting material. Within the context of research on perceptions of AI ChatGPT, such documentation includes photographs of informants relevant to the study. The data employed in this research were derived primarily from interview results and secondary sources, including scientific journals.

F. Research Instruments

In this qualitative study, the researcher was the primary instrument (human instrument) responsible for gathering and interpreting data. To facilitate this process, the following secondary instruments were utilized to ensure data rigor and validity:

1. Depth Interview

The primary instrument in this study was an depth interview guide. This tool was designed to facilitate a semi-structured dialogue with eighth-semester students at UINFAS Bengkulu, allowing for flexibility while maintaining a focused exploration of the research objectives. The interview questions were operationalized through two main pillars:

- a. The UTAUT 2 Framework: Questions are structured to elicit detailed accounts of Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, and Habitual Use of ChatGPT in English language learning. This helped the researcher understand the technical motivations behind student adoption of AI.
- b. The Integrity Pillar: The guide includes probing questions regarding the student's ethical decision-making processes. This focused on how they negotiate the boundaries of academic honesty when utilizing ChatGPT for their academic assignments.

2. Observation Field Notes

To support the data obtained from interviews, non-participant observation field notes were used as a supplementary instrument. This allowed the researcher to unobtrusively observe and record student's naturalistic behaviours and interaction patterns with ChatGPT during actual academic activities without intervening in the process. The researcher focused on documenting objective cues, such as moments of hesitation during prompt engineering, visible expressions of frustration upon receiving inaccurate outputs, or immediate copy-pasting habits. These field notes provided a richer behavioural context that self-reported interview data alone could not capture, ensuring a more holistic and authentic understanding of the students' actual experiences.

3. Documentation

Documentation was employed in the form of photographs captured during the interview sessions with the informants to provide visual evidence of the

data collection process. Therefore, the integration of UTAUT 2-based interviews, non-participant observation, and photographic documentation established a robust triangulation strategy to ensure research validity. This approach allows for a deep exploration of ethical motivations while verifying the authenticity of the fieldwork and minimizing potential bias. By combining these techniques, the study achieves an objective and comprehensive analysis of the dynamics between AI usage and academic integrity. Consequently, this methodology provided a strong empirical foundation for understanding the complexities of AI in English language education.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection process, the researcher follows a systematic five-steps procedure to validate the research instruments:

- 1) Initially, the instruments were submitted to the first and second supervisors for a rigorous review to ensure alignment with the research objectives. Specifically, the researcher consulted the First Supervisor on May 8, 2026, who approved the questions but emphasized that the items must be balanced proportionately across all research questions (e.g., five questions per RQ). Subsequently, the researcher met with the second supervisor on May 18, 2026, who recommended expanding question 2 to include the weekly frequency and hourly duration of ChatGPT usage, while advising the use of simpler, unambiguous language. Following these directions, the researcher immediately refined the instruments based on the feedback from both supervisors before moving to the next stage.

- 2) The next step, the researcher proceeded to expert validation, consulting two subject-matter experts to refine the instruments and enhance the academic quality. Specifically, the researcher consulted two senior English language lecturers at UINFAS Bengkulu to evaluate and validate whether the interview instruments were valid and appropriate for field data collection.

The researcher met both the first and second validators on the same day, May 19, 2026. Following a rigorous assessment, both experts concluded that the interview instruments were well-constructed, highly relevant, and fully ready to be deployed in the field without requiring any additional revisions or feedback. Consequently, the instruments received full approval for immediate use in the data collection phase.

3) The next stage involved a pilot study (try-out) conducted with three non-participants to test the clarity and accessibility of the questions. On the evening of May 19, 2026, at Tomoro Coffee Mahakam, the researcher conducted pilot interviews with three eighth-semester English education students initial as QN, HN, and MPM who served as the non-primary informants. During this session, these participants responded to the finalized interview instruments that had been fully verified by the supervisors and officially approved by the expert validators. This try-out served as a crucial final check to ensure that the approved questions were clear, accessible, and free of ambiguity before being deployed to the actual research field.

4) Following the pilot study, the researcher meticulously analysed the try-out results to ensure that the gathered narratives directly addressed the study's research questions. The thematic analysis of the pilot interviews with QN, HN, and MPM yielded critical insights mapped specifically onto the three designated Research Questions (RQs):

a. Alignment with RQ 1: The pilot data demonstrates that ChatGPT functions as a highly practical and efficient tool that enhances learning performance by accelerating information retrieval and offering targeted linguistic support, such as grammar checking, vocabulary expansion, and structural brainstorming. In supporting their English learning experiences, participants heavily rely on the platform because it is more detailed, user-

friendly, and immediate than conventional literature searches, with QN noting, “It is more practical, fast, and uncomplicated... whereas searching in books is somewhat time consuming” and HN adding, “It is much easier; you simply type and the results are instantly generated”. Governed by the UTAUT2 framework, this convenience has transformed AI usage into an automatic daily habit or reflex for task completion. This widespread digital integration is actively sustained by personal mobile data and Wi-Fi networks, though students face a distinct infrastructural barrier regarding the financial constraints of premium, paid advanced AI features, as MPM highlighted, “The primary difficulty arises when there are paid features that we wish to utilize”.

b. Alignment with RQ 2: The interview instrument proved exceptional in exposing the severe ethical challenges and behavioural struggles students face, particularly a profound psychological anxiety regarding digital plagiarism in their final undergraduate theses and the degradation of their independent critical thinking skills. This tension is clearly expressed by QN who feared, “I am currently in the process of writing my undergraduate thesis, and I am terrified that it will detect plagiarism when checked” and HN who worried about becoming “lazy to think, because nowadays I tend to use ChatGPT immediately for everything”. Additionally, students consistently grapple with data validity challenges and scepticism toward the accuracy of AI outputs, with MPM stating, “I am not 100% confident yet, because sometimes what we search for on ChatGPT is not instantly correct” and noting that the answers can be “less valid”. Interestingly, a shared ethical consensus emerged that providing a formal written disclaimer or acknowledgement of ChatGPT use is entirely unnecessary; as HN bluntly remarked, “It is unnecessary, because what is required is the answer, not the origin of the source”, while QN argued that it is obsolete since “the ones we actually mention are those (original journal) references”.

c. Alignment with RQ 3: The final-year students demonstrate active cognitive agency by deploying robust, multi-layered adaptation strategies to maximize AI benefits while strictly upholding academic integrity. To verify information truthfulness and counter ChatGPT errors, they execute a strict cross-verification protocol by running ChatGPT's claims against empirical databases, primarily Google Scholar. To preserve their unique authorial voice, they utilize a hybrid text modification strategy; MPM explained, "The output is not directly copied; rather, I paraphrase it first using Quill-Bot and perform manual paraphrasing if there are sentences that sound illogical or ambiguous", a sentiment mirrored by QN who modifies text "independently utilizing my own intellect and Quill-Bot". Lastly, to guarantee genuine comprehension and prevent absolute dependency, they treat AI strictly as a baseline framework, ensuring they independently read university materials and journals, as MPM concluded, "We must utilize our own minds first and construct the ideas beforehand; only when we hit a complete block do we utilize ChatGPT to assist us".

5) The execution of the try-out in Bahasa Indonesia successfully yielded granular, highly contextual, and emotionally authentic narratives regarding their psychological anxiety toward digital plagiarism and conceptual understanding of AI ethics, which would otherwise be restricted if conducted in English. Furthermore, this is aligned with the Second Supervisor's advice on May 18, 2026, to utilize simple and unambiguous language during data collection. In conclusion, the analysis of the pilot study confirms that the refined interview protocol functions as an exceptional tool for data collection. The instruments successfully yielded rich, granular, and highly contextual narratives that directly answer all three overarching research questions, rendering the protocol fully valid and ready for immediate deployment in the field.

G. Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2017). The data analysis in this study follows the Tematic Analysis (V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006) which are states by following:

1. Familiarizing Yourself With Your Data

The first stage of this thematic analysis was data immersion, where the researcher gained a deep understanding of the information by reading and reviewing it many times. In this study, this phase was done by creating verbatim transcriptions of the interviews with eighth-semester students at UINFAS Bengkulu. This was not just a typing task but a key step in understanding how students used ChatGPT for their studies. By transcribing the data personally, the researcher could identify patterns and hidden meanings in the student's words. Following the transcription, the researcher reread the transcript in order to familiarize themselves with the data, ensuring that every nuance of the participants narratives was fully captured. This careful process was necessary to see the difference between using AI as a helpful tool and using it in ways that broke academic honesty. Ultimately, this stage ensured the analysis stayed true to the student's real experiences and provided a strong start for the rest of the research.

2. Generating Initial Codes

The second stage of this thematic analysis involves generating initial codes, a systematic process where the researcher organized raw interview transcripts and observation notes from eighth-semester students at UINFAS Bengkulu into meaningful data segments. Following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), this phase utilizes a dual approach: a theory-driven strategy based on the UTAUT 2 model and academic integrity principles, and a data-driven strategy to capture unexpected regional insights or unique adaptation strategies. By applying

equal attention to the entire dataset, the researcher ensures that all nuances including contradictions in how students negotiate the boundary between AI assistance and intellectual honesty were coded inclusively. This meticulous organization provided the essential preparation needed to transition from raw data to the broader interpretive themes analysed in the following chapters.

3. Searching For Themes

The third stage of this thematic analysis was searching for themes, where the researcher transitioned from detailed coding to the development of broader, overarching categories that reflect the experiences of eighth-semester students at UINFAS Bengkulu. In this phase, initial codes were sorted and combined into candidate themes, such as merging technical AI usage into learning acceleration or grouping behaviours under effort expectancy and habit. By analysing the relationships between these codes, the researcher evaluated their significance in relation to academic integrity and the student learning experience. This systematic sorting ensured that all unique perspectives including complex ethical dilemmas were organized into a collection of themes and sub-themes, providing the essential structure for the subsequent refinement and discussion of research findings.

4. Reviewing Themes

The fourth stage of this thematic analysis was reviewing themes, a rigorous refinement process to ensure that the candidate themes meet the criteria of internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. In the context of this study at UINFAS Bengkulu, the researcher verified that data extracts within themes such as strategic adaptation for integrity cohere meaningfully while remaining distinctly separate from other categories like technological habituation. This phase involves a two-level verification against the entire dataset, where the researcher rereads the

interview transcripts to ensure the thematic map accurately captures the nuanced tension between AI-assisted learning and intellectual honesty. By fine-tuning these structures until they authentically represented the student's voices, the researcher established a valid and solid framework for the detailed analysis presented in the subsequent chapters.

5. Defining and Naming Themes

The fifth stage of this thematic analysis is defining and naming themes, a step where the researcher explains the core meaning of each final category. For this study at UINFAS Bengkulu, this means going beyond just summarizing student answers to identify the deeper significance of each theme, such as using "The Paradox of Efficiency" to describe the conflict between AI speed and original writing. The researcher organized these ideas into a clear structure, turning broad concepts like "Technological Adoption" into specific sub-themes like "Performance Expectancy in Language Acquisition". By giving each theme a clear name and a short definition, the researcher ensured the analysis is a professional interpretation of the student's ethical and educational experiences that directly answered the research questions.

6. Producing The Report

The final stage of this thematic analysis was producing the report, where the researcher compiled the findings into a clear and logical narrative that reflects the complex relationship between AI utility and academic integrity. In the context of this study at UINFAS Bengkulu, the report goes beyond summarizing data by using powerful, verbatim quotes from interviews as evidence to validate the emerging themes. The researcher provided a deep analysis that connects student voices to the UTAUT 2 model and the core research questions, arguing how these learners balance ethical boundaries with modern technology. By blending individual experiences with academic theory, this phase ensures the study

offers a convincing and meaningful contribution to the field of English Language Learning.

Therefore, the application of these six stages of thematic analysis was highly appropriate for this study, as it provided a systematic framework to explore the tension between ChatGPT efficiency and academic integrity among UINFAS Bengkulu students. By utilizing both UTAUT 2 theory and organic field data during the coding process, this method ensured that the findings remain authentic and move beyond simple paraphrasing. This approach allowed for deep data triangulation, accurately capturing the ethical adaptation strategies used by senior students. Ultimately, this rigorous process guaranteed a logical and valid analysis that contributes significantly to the field of English Language Teaching in the digital era.

