

EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Utilizing ChatGPT in Designing Lesson Plans for IELTS Reading Skills

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: ChatGPT, IELTS Reading Skill, lesson plans, English Foreign Language (EFL), teachers' perception

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been developed rapidly, contributing positively to language teaching and serving as an assisted tool for teachers in preparing lesson materials. The paper explores EFL teachers' perceptions of ChatGPT in designing lesson plans for IELTS Reading Skill, aiming to identify both the opportunities and challenges of its use. The study employed a quantitative research method, collecting data via a Google Forms questionnaire from 54 EFL teachers in Vietnam to explore the efficiency of using ChatGPT in creating IELTS Reading lesson plans. The results showed that using ChatGPT in designing lesson plans for Reading IELTS is a promising method due to the flexibility of suggesting detailed questions, tasks, and reading strategies as well as reducing the teachers' time and effort; however, the difficulties including the lack of suitable prompt and the concern of reliability of ChatGPT-generated content when using ChatGPT are still a massive concern for EFL teachers. The findings suggested that, while ChatGPT offers potential benefits, its outcomes still depend on teachers providing suitable prompts to achieve desirable results and on reassessing the materials to ensure they align with lesson objectives.

Introduction

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a widely recognized assessment of English language proficiency for millions of people worldwide, providing opportunities for employment, education, or immigration. For some English learners, the reading component is challenging to master, requiring them to evaluate, comprehend, and decipher complex texts within a limited time. According to Dinh and Dinh (2019), Reading tests often discourage learners due to lengthy passages and extensive academic knowledge acquisition. Additionally, Vo et al. (2023) found that Vietnamese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students often encounter difficulties with IELTS reading tests, including time management and a lack of vocabulary to answer questions based on the given passages. These challenges underscore the need for thorough practice and effective strategies for learners to overcome IELTS Reading test

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challenges. In this case, EFL teachers play a vital role in guiding students on how to handle different tasks in IELTS Reading, especially in carefully designing lesson plans that include reading instructions, techniques, and exercises to help students complete reading tasks effectively. However, the process of developing lesson plans is labor-intensive and requires successive creation and thorough evaluation to ensure they are suitable for a range of learning requirements and proficiency levels. König et al. (2021) stated that lesson planning is a laborious task and requires cognitive demands that EFL teachers must meet to create high-quality instruction. According to Nguyen et al. (2020), EFL teachers need to design preparation courses not only based on major teaching materials but also to provide supplementary materials that meet the needs of IELTS learners and address diverse proficiency levels. Due to its labor-intensive nature, teachers may consider using AI tools to assist with this task.

The development of AI-powered applications, particularly ChatGPT, has drawn the attention of teachers due to their significant benefits, such as improving work efficiency, saving time, generating teaching materials, and providing clear teaching instructions. According to Phalaguna et al. (2024), teachers can use ChatGPT to quickly outline a lesson plan that aligns with their students' abilities and requirements by typing prompts. Similarly, Trust et al. (2023) showed that ChatGPT can support teaching, including writing syllabi and providing advice on creating more inclusive activities or lesson plans. Fitria et al. (2024) ChatGPT can help teachers create learning materials such as quizzes or practice questions and produce lesson plans to meet students' needs, saving preparation time. Peachey (2023) noted that designing lesson plans is a time-consuming task, and that using ChatGPT with appropriate prompts can create effective and engaging lesson plans. Additionally, Daza et al. (2024) noted that teachers can use ChatGPT to create instructional procedures and activities to enhance students' reading skills by focusing on understanding meaning, identifying main ideas, and answering text-based questions. These studies agreed that ChatGPT can be utilized to conduct academic work, such as planning lesson instructions, without wasting too much time.

While ChatGPT can be a promising tool to support academic work and reduce teachers' workload, its application in IELTS Reading preparation remains underexplored, particularly in Vietnam. There is little concern about EFL teachers' perceptions of ChatGPT's usefulness in producing lesson plans for IELTS Reading classrooms, thereby fulfilling students' demands and targets. The underexplored question is whether it is an effective chatbot that suggests a lesson plan, including reading techniques and practice exercises, to help students excel on Reading tests. Moreover, in previous studies, the experiences of EFL teachers—whether they can explore the opportunities and challenges of using this tool to design lesson plans—have not been of great interest. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring Vietnamese EFL teachers' perspectives and identifying the potential and obstacles of using ChatGPT in designing lesson plans with specific strategies and practice activities for reading sessions.

Literature Review

The challenges in the IELTS Reading test

The IELTS Reading exam takes 60 minutes and consists of 40 questions based on three reading passages totaling 2,000 to 2,750 words (IELTS Handbook, 2007). There is a variety of question types, such as multiple-choice, true/false/not given, sentence completion, matching headings, diagram label completion, etc., that appear in the IELTS Reading test. According to Holi et al. (2020), the IELTS reading test is designed to test students' reading skills, including "reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for details, skimming, understanding the logical argument,

and recognizing writers' opinions, attitudes, and purpose" (p. 1623).

Numerous studies have examined the obstacles learners encounter in the IELTS Reading exam and the solutions to IELTS Reading challenges. According to Sharif et al. (2023), the difficulties that the learners can encounter in the IELTS Reading test include linguistic challenges from complex sentence structures and vocabulary, the intense pressure of time management to answer 40 questions in 60 minutes, and the confusion arising from question types such as true/false/ not given while taking the Reading test. Similarly, Vo et al. (2023) indicated that time pressure and lack of vocabulary are the most challenging matters for IELTS test-takers. The study showed that the vocabulary in the reading passages is complex, high-level, specialized, unfamiliar, new, or academic, and that this vocabulary is integrated with the text's complexity and length, which can cause problems in reading and comprehension. Besides time management and vocabulary, Pham and Nguyen (2024) also highlighted the inadequate development of reading skills, such as skimming/scanning, which can affect the effectiveness in performing IELTS Reading tests.

Additionally, Chowdhury (2009) claimed that cultural disparities and inadequate preparation are the other challenges that many learners encounter. A lack of familiarity with the test rubrics and format, as well as critical reading skills, is also a factor contributing to difficulties for learners (Holi et al., 2020). Moreover, the findings of Ahmadian et al. (2016) suggested that affective factors, such as anxiety, pose another challenge by increasing cognitive load, thereby hindering a learner's ability to comprehend the reading task. These challenges can prevent learners from completing the reading test effectively and accurately. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to be aware of learners' challenges in the IELTS Reading test, and to design effective lesson plans that provide solutions and strategies to help learners overcome these challenges and improve their reading skills.

The role of designing a lesson plan in EFL

The lesson plan will serve as a framework for lecturers to deliver their lectures coherently and follow pre-conceived teaching intentions to achieve the desired outcomes. The study of Qassem et al. (2023) emphasized the importance and necessity of a lesson plan are similar to that of an architect who builds a blueprint before building construction, and similarly for a lecturer, it is necessary to develop a lesson plan in which the content of the lecture, teaching methods, techniques, and supporting tools are also expected in this lesson plan. Using qualitative research to investigate essential lesson planning in education, the study found that lesson plans create unexpected benefits, including helping teachers remember all activities and organizing them in class more structurally, based on classroom conditions and students' demands.

In addition, according to Khan (2011), developing a lesson plan is important for lecturers' teaching activities because it helps them manage time for each lesson and stay on track with the lesson objectives. The author applied various methodologies, including the analytic approach, generative word approach, basic reading approaches, communicative approach, and bilingual approach, to emphasize key strategies for lesson planning to improve reading instruction in EFL contexts. The findings showed that lesson planning in an active-teaching direction helped the class promote positivity, self-discipline, proactivity, and creativity among individual teachers and students.

Jamali and Mina (2014) conducted a study investigating the role of lesson plans in EFL classrooms from the perspective of 93 experienced English teachers with AA & BA Degrees and MA & Ph.D. Degrees in Iran. The authors used a quantitative research approach to collect data via a 29-item questionnaire in two parts, designed to determine teachers' attitudes towards

the role of lesson plans in EFL. The data were collected in two forms — paper and online — showing that the majority of teachers agree on the importance of lesson plans in the classroom, which can help teachers maximize time, work, and resources to accomplish lesson goals and objectives effectively.

Benefits of ChatGPT in EFL education

Recent studies have demonstrated the opportunities of integrating ChatGPT into EFL teaching to support teachers in their pedagogical work. According to Dergaa et al. (2023), the remarkable applications of AI models, particularly ChatGPT, have brought significant benefits to teaching and learning. For example, Adiguzel et al. (2023) argued that the development of AI through tools such as ChatGPT brings many benefits to the educational environment in teaching and learning. The study offered recommendations for successfully integrating AI into the educational context to benefit teachers and students while promoting responsible, ethical use.

The study by Balci (2024) investigated the potential of ChatGPT in EFL teaching and learning by conducting a systematic review of 21 articles using various research methods from the prestigious Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases to better understand the benefits and challenges of this AI-based chatbot. The results of this study showed that ChatGPT enhances the learning experience and teachers' instructional practice, reduces teachers' burdens on academic tasks such as supporting assessment processes and summarizing academic papers, and saves teachers' time and effort, despite some drawbacks.

Additionally, Derakhshan and Ghiasva (2024) investigated the potential of ChatGPT in teaching, learning, and assessment from the perspective of 30 Iranian research-active EFL teachers who have experience using technologies in the classroom and are familiar with ChatGPT, using a phenomenographic research design and qualitative interviews. The findings highlighted positive perspectives from teachers, including that ChatGPT can reduce teachers' workload, produce teaching materials, and provide immediate feedback on students' performance. Also, it is a potential tool to supplement teaching traditional methods. However, it was assessed that it can reduce creativity and lead to a lack of context and culture in language learning.

Moreover, Nguyen and Tran (2023) conducted a study to examine ChatGPT's potential for English teaching by assessing undergraduates' writing skills. The study employed a qualitative research approach and collected data by randomly selecting 10 essays from advanced English students to evaluate the writing pieces using ChatGPT, based on the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP) criteria, to explore the accuracy and effectiveness of ChatGPT's assessment. The results showed that ChatGPT can provide detailed explanations and evaluations of students' essays, including scores and diverse academic vocabulary and grammatical points, making it a useful chatbot for reducing teachers' workload.

Similarly, the study by Kohnke and Zou (2024) examined the impact of using ChatGPT on classroom teaching and lesson preparation, drawing on the experiences of 12 teachers at Hong Kong University through qualitative interviews and thematic analysis of interview data. The findings showed that ChatGPT emerged as an essential tool for lesson planning, as teachers effectively used it to plan English language lessons and to generate in- and extracurricular activities due to its convenience, flexibility, and time-saving features. Also, it showcases the transformative potential of AI in education, which can support pedagogical goals and address students' unique learning needs.

In a related context, Madden et al. (2025) conducted a study of foreign language teachers in Jamaica to investigate how they utilize ChatGPT to support their language teaching. There are

10 English secondary-level teachers among 28 FL teachers (Spanish, French, and English), and all participants have at least 1 year of experience using technology in language teaching. In this study, data were collected using two methods—quantitative and qualitative—through Google Forms, which asked participants about their experience with ChatGPT. The results also show that ChatGPT is an innovation that supports teachers in teaching language, saving time and effort when gathering information.

Likewise, Nguyen's (2023) study provides insights into the perspectives of 20 EFL teachers at Van Lang University, exploring the potential uses of ChatGPT in teaching writing by employing both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including online surveys and interviews. The data collected revealed that instructors have a positive view of this Chatbot tool in their writing classes. With its unlimited resources that can meet various demands and levels, ChatGPT is seen as a beneficial tool for designing lesson plans and student tasks.

Zaiarna et al. (2024) investigated EFL teachers' perceptions of using ChatGPT in their teaching and assessment practices, employing qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze their feedback. They collected data through a Google Form survey conducted from January to March 2024, with 36 EFL professors of higher education institutions. The study revealed a range of satisfaction levels—from moderate to high—among teachers who used ChatGPT in their EFL classes, with several benefits, including creating exercises, facilitating assessment, and supporting lesson planning. Nonetheless, some challenges were identified, such as inaccurate tasks or the need for thorough proofreading, which requires further guidelines to effectively use ChatGPT in teaching.

Challenges and limitations of ChatGPT's application in EFL education

Besides the potential benefits ChatGPT offers for the EFL teaching process, many studies have focused on the pitfalls teachers need to consider. The paper by Galip Kartal (2023) highlighted the drawbacks and challenges of integrating ChatGPT into language learning, aiming to support a deeper understanding of the connection between technology and teaching. According to the paper, the findings showed that the integration of ChatGPT for language learning was imbalanced due to circumvention of academic responsibilities, insufficient verification of information accuracy, Western cultural bias, and insufficient knowledge of real-world contexts, which were significant concerns that could affect the lessons.

Another paper by Wang et al. (2024) aimed to provide deeper insights into integrating ChatGPT to improve teaching and learning quality, using a systematic literature review to draw on numerous previous papers and identify the potential and challenges of using ChatGPT in English teaching. This study collected data from Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) to identify 212 related articles, selected the sample, and carefully narrowed it to 83 reviews. The results showed the negative impact of ChatGPT, including the inaccuracy of the information it provides, over-reliance on it, and the lack of teacher training to integrate this AI tool into the classroom.

Similarly, a study by Meniado (2023) explored both the positive and negative influences of ChatGPT on English language education and evaluation. The author also identified articles through a systematic review of literature across two databases, WoS and Scopus. The versions of ChatGPT in these relevant articles are 3.5 and 4.0, and the publications were between November 2022 and August 2023. The data were then analyzed using a deductive and inductive approach, investigating the problems of ChatGPT in English language teaching and assessment, including inaccurate or nonexistent responses, overreliance, weakening of skills such as critical and creative thinking, and endangering the privacy of teaching data. By conducting this study

on the integration of ChatGPT into English teaching and evaluation, the author provides an in-depth understanding of its optimal use to improve English teaching performance.

In addition, Aryal (2024) examined the challenges and opportunities of integrating ChatGPT into their teaching practices using a qualitative method and collected data through semi-structured interviews to provide a thorough exploration of five English instructors' perceptions of ChatGPT's use in teaching. The results showed that pedagogical and technical challenges arose from teachers' experiences, such as difficulties with the ChatGPT interface and adapting teaching methods. This suggests that teachers need to have extensive professional development to understand how technology can support their educational objectives.

Moreover, the study by Robert et al. (2023) explored the benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT in EFL classrooms to assess the tool's quality in supporting language learning and teaching tasks. The authors used a qualitative approach, combined with representative examples such as Q&A results and classroom activities, as well as real applications that students can use to participate in ChatGPT conversations and model sentences, thereby highlighting the interactive nature of educational settings. The findings showed severe difficulties, including privacy concerns, challenges with handling complex tasks, and an overreliance on teachers' prompts to produce appropriate responses without flexibility or creativity.

Overall, the studies above were conducted in different countries to explore the benefits and challenges of ChatGPT in EFL education. Based on the results and findings of previous studies, such as the studies of Derakhshan and Ghiasva (2024), Zaiarna et al. (2024), Balci (2024), and Zaiarna et al. (2024), have highlighted the benefits of ChatGPT to support teachers in various teaching tasks such as generating teaching materials, providing feedback and assessment, and designing lesson plans. Also, the studies by Wang et al. (2024), Robert et al. (2023), and Meniado (2023) focused solely on the challenges of ChatGPT in general teaching or assessment. While Balci (2024) and Zaiarna et al. (2024) showed ChatGPT's potential ability to design lesson plans, the study does not specifically focus on the IELTS exam. There is still limited, focused exploration or overgeneralization about the effectiveness and barriers in targeted investigations into creating lesson plans, specifically for the IELTS Reading skill. The potential of AI-generated lesson plans for IELTS Reading skill classrooms to support both teachers and students remains underexplored in existing studies.

Additionally, most of these studies have been conducted in international contexts, which has received insufficient attention to its application in the Vietnamese educational context. There is a lack of research on how Vietnamese EFL teachers perceive and use this AI-powered chatbot in their teaching practices. Thus, this study aims to address these gaps by exploring EFL teachers' perceptions of using ChatGPT to produce lesson plans, with a focus on its potential and barriers, to assist EFL teachers in completing this laborious task and delivering more qualified teaching instructions.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to analyze EFL teachers' perceptions of ChatGPT's effectiveness in designing lesson plans for the IELTS Reading Skill. Additionally, the study explores the opportunities and challenges of using this AI tool to produce lesson instructions for future research. The research questions below will be answered to explore the aims of this study:

1. What are the perceptions of EFL teachers in using ChatGPT to design lesson plans for the IELTS Reading skill?
2. What are the opportunities and challenges that EFL teachers face in utilizing ChatGPT for creating effective lesson plans?

Methods

Participants

This study employed a quantitative research methodology, employing an online survey to investigate the challenges and perceptions of EFL teachers when using ChatGPT to design lesson plans for IELTS reading skills. Between January and February 2025, Google Forms were used to gather data from a sample of 54 EFL teachers from different schools in Vietnam, including public and private universities, language institutions, and high schools. Participants were selected using a non-probability convenience sampling method. All participants have taught English as a second language, and 72.2% (39 out of 54) reported that they are currently teaching IELTS. The remaining 15 participants, while not teaching IELTS at the time of conducting the survey, indicated an interest in and have exposure to the IELTS context and format for their teaching tasks, making their perspectives also relevant to this study. Participants' teaching experience in English ranged from 1 to more than 10 years, providing a broad range of views on how to use AI tools like ChatGPT in the classroom.

Survey Instrument

The survey consisted of three parts. The first portion requested demographic information, including the teacher's workplace, teaching experience, and frequency of prior ChatGPT use. The second and third part consisted of 5-point Likert-scale (SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree) and multiple-choice questions that asked teachers how well they thought ChatGPT worked in preparing lessons and the problems they anticipated when using ChatGPT, such as the reliability of the content, the amount of time available, and the level of assistance their school provided. Based on an initial review of the literature on AI in education, the questionnaire items were created specifically for this project. To make the instrument more trustworthy, five EFL teachers took part in a preliminary test of the survey. Their comments helped the authors clarify the questions and make them more relevant by adjusting the phrasing and format. An experienced English teacher also reviewed the final version to ensure it was suitable for the target audience and that it was face-valid.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers used Google Forms to create an online questionnaire and had participants fill out the form. The authors exported the completed responses data to Microsoft Excel, allowing them to review it. The authors used descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, to summarize the responses and created bar charts and graphs to help people understand the statistics.

Although it has some benefits, the survey method has several drawbacks. Responses may be biased because people are reporting their own opinions, they may not fully comprehend the questions, or they may not be genuinely interested in the survey, which could decrease reliability (Gillham, 2000). To mitigate these dangers, the survey was carefully reviewed and evaluated before distribution.

Results/Findings

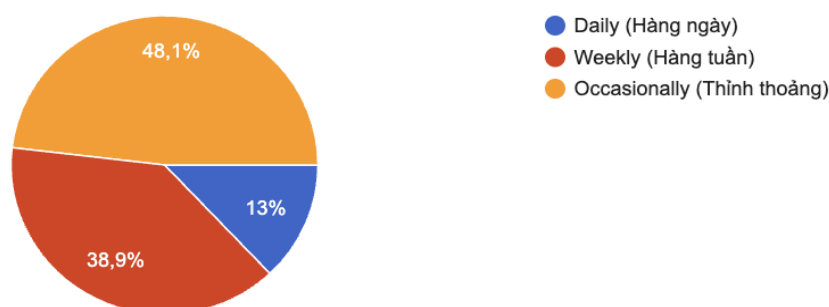
EFL teachers' perceptions of the frequency of using ChatGPT for making lesson plans

Figure 1.

The frequency of using ChatGPT for designing lesson plans

How often do you use ChatGPT in lesson planning? (Bạn sử dụng ChatGPT để thiết kế bài giảng với tần suất như thế nào?)

54 câu trả lời



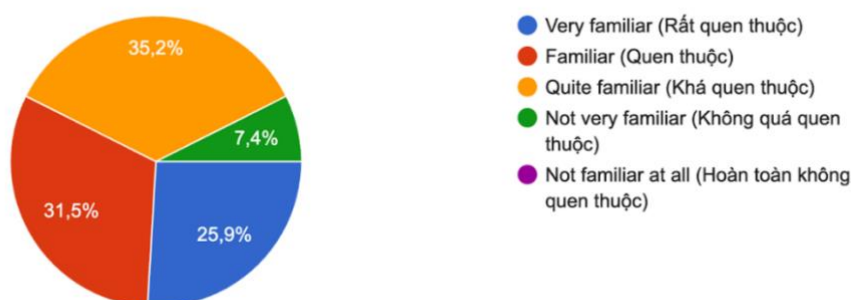
The data collected from 54 participants provide insight into IELTS trainers' perceptions of ChatGPT as a supportive tool for creating lesson plans. Across all respondents, Figure 1 shows the frequency with which EFL teachers use ChatGPT for lesson planning. Among 54 respondents, nearly half of teachers (48.1%) reported using ChatGPT occasionally, indicating that, despite AI gaining greater recognition, it is not a vital part of most teachers' lesson-planning process. Besides, 38.9% of respondents use ChatGPT every week, which demonstrates the consistent use of AI tools in their lesson design. A small percentage of participants (13%) use ChatGPT daily to plan lessons. Some factors leading to this result are that teachers may cope with time management, lesson complexity, and fear of insufficient tasks in their lesson plans, so many EFL teachers may rely on ChatGPT regularly.

Figure 2.

Familiarity with using ChatGPT to build IELTS Reading lesson plans.

How familiar are you with ChatGPT? (Bạn quen thuộc với ChatGPT ở mức độ nào?)

54 câu trả lời



Moreover, Figure 2 shows the levels of familiarity EFL teachers have with ChatGPT. Of 54 respondents, 35.2% of EFL teachers feel quite familiar with ChatGPT, suggesting they can use

it but may not fully utilize its functions. Similarly, most teachers have a solid understanding of ChatGPT's operation and are more proficient and "Familiar" in designing IELTS Reading lesson plans for students, accounting for 31.5%. This group incorporates ChatGPT into their preparation workflow but may not yet rely on it as a primary tool.

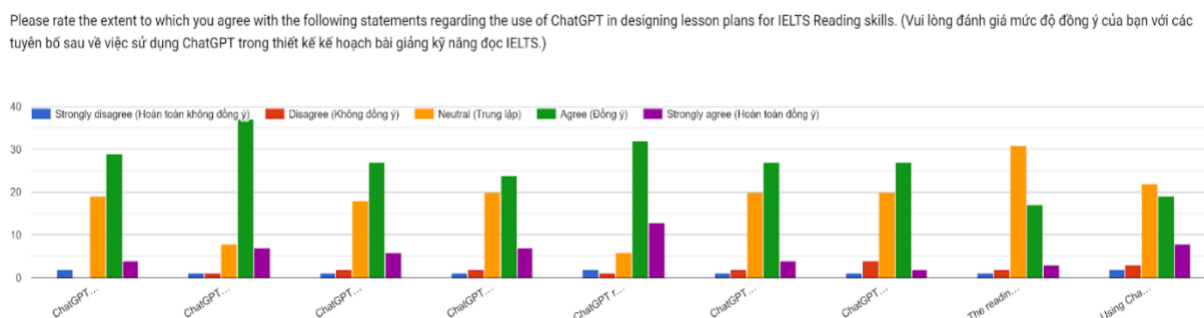
In addition, ChatGPT integration is recognized as a valuable tool, with 25.9% of participants likely to use it frequently to contribute to their lesson plans. These EFL teachers can maximize ChatGPT's capabilities by using it professionally for reading and assessment generation, which serves as a valuable partnership for training other teachers to integrate AI into lesson planning more effectively. However, a small proportion (7.4%) admitted they are not very familiar, suggesting limited exposure to ChatGPT. This suggests that while AI adoption is widespread nowadays, some EFL teachers need practical experience and knowledge of themselves to make their IELTS Reading lesson plans more useful and appropriate for each student level. Surprisingly, no respondents selected "Not familiar at all", which indicated that all teachers who did this survey have an awareness of ChatGPT's capabilities and understand the growing presence of AI in educational contexts, even among those who do not use it regularly.

These results illustrate that while most EFL teachers in IELTS training have a moderate to high level of familiarity with ChatGPT, deeper engagement and understanding of its potential for lesson planning and instructional design are still being developed. Providing professional development opportunities, workshops, and best-practice guidance can help reduce the gap for those with less experience.

EFL teachers' perceptions of the advantages of utilizing ChatGPT in designing IELTS Reading lesson plans

Figure 4

The advantages of ChatGPT in designing lesson plans for IELTS Reading Skill



The data from Table 1 suggest that EFL educators perceived ChatGPT as effective for designing lesson plans, though assessments of its accuracy and reliability vary. The results showed most uncertainty, agreement, and strong agreement, with a small proportion of disagreement and strong disagreement, reflecting the potential to integrate AI tools, especially ChatGPT, into IELTS teaching specifically and English language teaching in general.

After analyzing the data from Table 1, most respondents appreciated ChatGPT's ability to provide useful suggestions for lesson content, including vocabulary, question types, and strategies, with 68.5% agreeing and 13.0% strongly agreeing. In addition, more than half of the participants (53.7%) agreed that this chatbot is considered a useful tool for producing structured lesson plans that align with IELTS Reading requirements. This indicates the usefulness of using ChatGPT to determine how to provide reading strategies and vocabulary related to the topics, so they can design a more structured lesson plan.

Table 1.

Survey results on the advantages of ChatGPT in designing lesson plans for the IELTS Reading Skills

Items	Questionnaire	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
1	ChatGPT helps me create structured lesson plans that align with IELTS Reading requirements.	2 (3.7%)	0 (0.0%)	19 (35.2%)	29 (53.7%)	4 (7.4%)
2	ChatGPT provides useful suggestions for lesson content, including vocabulary, question types, and strategies.	1 (1.9%)	1 (1.9%)	8 (14.8%)	37 (68.5%)	7 (13.0%)
3	ChatGPT provides reliable explanations and justifications for IELTS reading answers.	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.7%)	18 (33.3%)	27 (50.0%)	6 (11.1%)
4	ChatGPT helps me create diverse and engaging lesson activities to improve students' reading comprehension.	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.7%)	20 (37.0%)	24 (44.4%)	7 (13.0%)
5	ChatGPT reduces the time required to prepare IELTS Reading lesson plans.	2 (3.7%)	1 (1.9%)	6 (11.1%)	32 (59.3%)	13 (24.1%)
6	ChatGPT helps me customize lesson plans based on my students' proficiency levels and learning needs.	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.7%)	20 (37.0%)	27 (50.0%)	4 (7.4%)
7	ChatGPT provides a variety of texts with different difficulty levels.	1 (1.9%)	4 (7.4%)	20 (37.0%)	27 (50.0%)	2 (3.7%)
8	The reading texts generated by ChatGPT are appropriate for IELTS Reading training.	1 (1.9%)	2 (3.7%)	31 (57.4%)	17 (31.5%)	3 (5.6%)
9	Using ChatGPT in lesson planning encourages me to explore new teaching strategies.	2 (3.7%)	3 (5.6%)	22 (40.7%)	19 (35.2%)	8 (14.8%)

Thanks to its helpful suggestions for lesson content and structured lessons, ChatGPT significantly reduces the time required to design lesson instructions. In addition, more than 50% of participants admitted that ChatGPT can provide reliable explanations and justifications for IELTS reading questions, which can be seen as a supportive tool for both teachers and students when solving the Remarkably, a majority of participants agreed (59.3%) and strongly agreed

(24.1%) that this AI chatbot makes creating lesson plans a less time-consuming task, reducing time on lesson planning and allocating more time to preparing other pedagogical works effectively answers of reading sections to provide detailed explanations and enhance their reading skills. This illustrates that ChatGPT can not only support teachers in their primary work but also help learners improve their reading skills and foster self-learning by providing explanations, reading strategies, and additional practice questions.

Nonetheless, it is evident that not all statements received significant agreement from participants. Typically, a significant number of respondents (57.4%) showed uncertainty about whether ChatGPT-generated comprehension reading passages are appropriate for IELTS training. Besides that, although a large number of participants agreed that ChatGPT provides useful suggestions for content such as vocabulary or strategies, 31 out of 54 participants are unsure whether the content of ChatGPT-driven reading texts is appropriate and reliable for IELTS Reading training. This aspect is skeptical, indicating uncertainty about content suitability, authenticity, and alignment with IELTS standards, as well as concerns about potential mistakes and misunderstandings. This also highlights the importance of authentic materials from official sources, such as Cambridge or the British Council, in IELTS teaching, which remains the primary choice for IELTS educators.

Moreover, half of participants agreed that ChatGPT provide diverse abilities including creating diverse and engaging activities to improve students' reading skills, customizing lesson plans based on students' proficiency levels and learning needs, and providing a variety of texts with different difficulty levels, which demonstrates the ability of ChatGPT to offer the flexibility for the lesson instructions that suitable with different levels of different learners and learning demands. However, these three features also shared the same collected data, with 37% of participants uncertain, suggesting that ChatGPT's abilities are still not fully understood by some EFL teachers.

Another remarkable feature is that using ChatGPT in lesson planning can encourage teachers to explore new teaching strategies. The data showed that most participants (40.7%) were doubtful about its effectiveness for discovering new teaching techniques. Meanwhile, 35.2% of participants agreed that it can help them discover new teaching techniques. It demonstrates that ChatGPT can be a valuable tool for teachers to explore novel teaching methods that warrant further investigation.

After analyzing the results, it is clear that EFL teachers appreciated ChatGPT's potential for generating lesson plans for IELTS Reading, though there were some uncertainties. Obviously, ChatGPT is a useful chatbot for minimizing lesson preparation time, with 59.3% agreeing and 24.1% strongly agreeing. It is evident that ChatGPT can reduce preparation time for lesson instructions, helping teachers feel less burdened and allocate their time more effectively to other teaching tasks. Moreover, nearly 70% of respondents appreciated that ChatGPT can provide vocabulary suggestions for topics, question types, and reading techniques, and can produce additional reading comprehension exercises, making lessons more useful with supplemental practice.

Despite its potential, some EFL teachers expressed uncertainty about the reliability and authenticity of ChatGPT-generated content, particularly reading passages. Significantly, it means that EFL teachers still need to reassess and adjust ChatGPT's suggestions to ensure they meet pedagogical goals and IELTS standards, and to prevent potential errors. Therefore, authentic materials from official institutions, such as Cambridge ESOL examination papers, still play an important role in teaching and learning IELTS, as they are created by real IELTS specialists through thorough investigations, ensuring better alignment with the IELTS exam

format. As a result, ChatGPT can be considered as an assistant tool but cannot fully replace teachers' roles in teaching tasks, especially in designing lesson plans for IELTS training.

Furthermore, ChatGPT has a limited ability to help teachers explore novel teaching methods, with 40% of participants uncertain about this aspect. This shows they have not noticed any remarkable suggestions for teaching techniques in ChatGPT-generated lesson plans. Moreover, even though some potential of ChatGPT including creating diverse and engaging activities for lesson activities to improve students' reading skills, customizing lesson plans based on students' proficiency levels and learning needs, and providing a variety of texts with different difficulty levels are recognized by 50% of participants, there is still 37% of participants are unsure about these abilities, which shows that a substantial proportion of EFL teachers may have not fully discovered ChatGPT's flexible and adaptive ability. Whether there is a lack of professional training on using ChatGPT in teaching, or whether they still question its real advantages. It is also reflected in the frequency of using ChatGPT in creating lesson plans: 48.1% occasionally and 38.9% weekly, which is not enough time to fully optimize ChatGPT's advantages in teaching.

EFL Teachers' perceptions of challenges in Using ChatGPT in designing lesson plans for IELTS Reading

Figure 5.

The frequency of editing materials created by ChatGPT

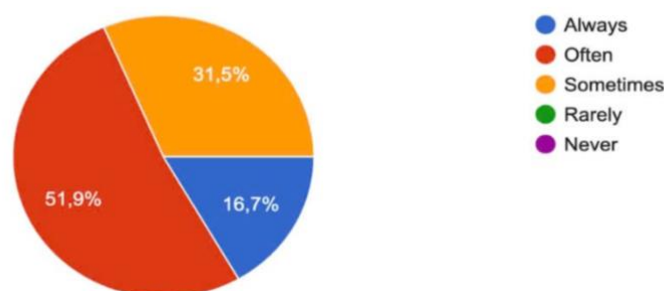
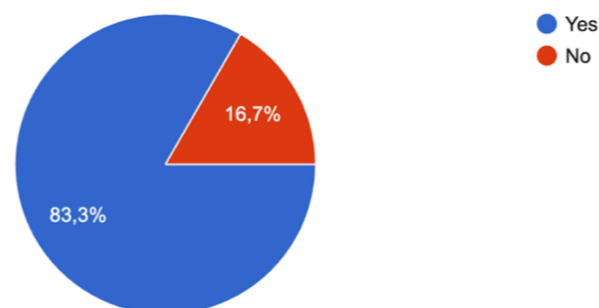


Figure 6.

Difficulties encountered in using ChatGPT for designing IELTS Reading lesson plans



The survey results in Figure 5 show that the majority of users revise ChatGPT-generated materials when designing IELTS Reading lesson plans. In particular, 51.9% of interviewees often modify the content, 31.5% sometimes, and 16.7% always adjust and refine the materials. In particular, no respondents who answered "Rarely" or "Never" emphasized that AI-generated

content is a valuable tool for users. Beyond these statistics, the content generated by ChatGPT is not fully ready for use. It requires teachers to reassess and correct it before use to ensure effective teaching. Teachers must still modify ChatGPT-generated materials, which requires significant time and effort. ChatGPT can be a helpful tool for quickly providing various teaching resources; however, teachers still play a crucial role in designing materials.

Survey results in Figure 6 indicate that 83.3% of respondents have faced difficulties when applying ChatGPT to build lesson plans. The data from the following figure shows that, despite ChatGPT's potential, it is not yet the ideal tool for curating lesson plans, which remains a weakness and a challenge, limiting teaching quality.

Figure 7.

The main challenges of using ChatGPT in lesson planning are.

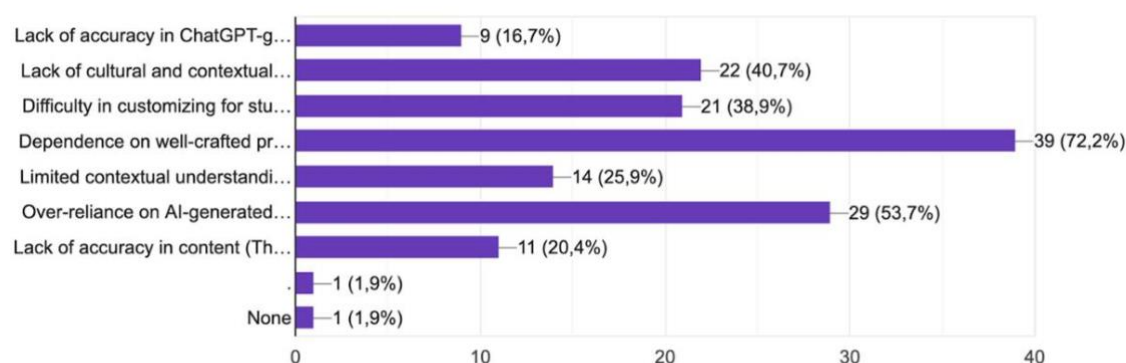


Table 2.

Survey results on the main challenges of ChatGPT in designing lesson plans for the IELTS Reading Skill

Items	Challenges	Responses (n=54)	Percentage (%)
1	Lack of accuracy in ChatGPT-generated content	9	16.7%
2	Lack of cultural and contextual awareness in content generation	22	40.7%
3	Difficulty in customizing for students' needs levels	21	38.9%
4	Dependence on well-crafted prompts	39	72.2%
5	Limited contextual understanding	14	25.9%
6	Over-reliance on AI-generated materials reduces teacher creativity	29	53.7%
7	Lack of accuracy in content	11	20.4%
8	None	1	1.9%

The data in Figure 7 reveal that the most significant challenge —accounting for 72.2% —is reliance on well-crafted prompts, indicating that effective lesson design requires precise user input. This difficulty points to the need for teachers to develop prompt-formulating skills, requiring careful, accurate, and detailed input to enhance the quality of lesson plans. ChatGPT's

effectiveness can decrease when teachers provide generic or unclear input. Moreover, prompts without specific details can lead to off-topic or unrelated materials, significantly hindering the workflow.

The second highest is over-reliance on AI-generated content, cited by 53.7% of users. This reliance raises concerns about creativity in designing lesson plans. Teachers usually over-rely on ChatGPT to generate teaching resources based on existing information, creating generic content rather than applying and updating new teaching approaches. Therefore, the lesson activities lack creativity and flexibility, and reduce the quality of teachers' lesson plans.

The next two statistics are 40.7%, indicating a lack of cultural and contextual awareness, and 38.9%, indicating struggles with customization to adapt to students' needs. These findings emphasize that teachers faced difficulties with ChatGPT-generated lesson plans that were too generic or irrelevant to students' cultures, backgrounds, specific learning goals, and levels. Despite its ability to assist teachers in preparing teaching materials, ChatGPT remains limited in its understanding and alignment with local cultural contexts, which can lead to misunderstandings, misinformation, and misalignment in lessons. Furthermore, ChatGPT is just an AI tool that doesn't automatically adjust lesson activities based on students' levels; for instance, the task can be too complex for beginners but not challenging enough for higher-level students. These two challenges not only complicate the teaching process but also increase teachers' workload, requiring careful review and adjustment to ensure and boost performance.

Other challenges, such as limited contextual understanding and low accuracy in ChatGPT-generated materials, are 25.9% and 16.7%, respectively. These issues highlight the need for human intervention in creating IELTS Reading lesson plans, aiming to improve and edit the content generated by ChatGPT to control and optimize the teaching content.

Discussion

This study aims to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of ChatGPT's effectiveness in designing lesson plans for IELTS Reading, a difficult skill for Vietnamese learners. After analyzing the results, interesting findings were achieved and presented in the previous parts of the articles. In this section, the significance of the findings, the comparison between the results of this study and previous studies, and the limitations of this study are also presented.

The significance of findings

The findings highlight both the potential and limitations of ChatGPT in IELTS Reading lesson planning. ChatGPT is valued for its ability to minimize preparation time, as it can provide structured lesson plans with useful vocabulary and strategies for IELTS Reading classrooms. However, EFL teachers remain cautious about the reliability and adaptability of ChatGPT's output. This indicates that ChatGPT-generated content still requires teacher evaluation to ensure it aligns with IELTS standards and students' needs. Additionally, some potential features of ChatGPT in planning lessons, such as creating diverse and engaging activities or providing lesson plans for different students' proficiency levels and needs, are still underexplored by a proportion of the participants, which suggests the importance of offering professional training about how to utilize this chatbot in teaching tasks in order to assist EFL teachers further discover its potential and equip them with essential skills to use ChatGPT effectively. In that way, teachers can enhance their lesson planning efficiency and optimize their teaching practices.

Despite the potential usefulness of ChatGPT in assisting EFL teachers in preparing IELTS teaching materials. The research results indicate significant constraints that require teachers' careful assessment. One major challenge to the effective implementation of ChatGPT in designing IELTS Reading teaching materials is the unreliability of AI-generated texts. Most teachers perceived they needed to adjust and proofread the generated lesson plans, highlighting doubts about ChatGPT's accuracy and the need for educators' supervision.

Notably, when discussing the potential of this AI Tool, more than half of the respondents showed a neutral view of the trustworthiness of ChatGPT-generated materials. The data also showed that most teachers encountered obstacles when designing lesson plans with ChatGPT's assistance. The primary concern is the need for detailed prompts for specific objectives and student levels that cover most responses. Following that, when EFL teachers adopt ChatGPT to create teaching resources, they tend to rely excessively on the provided content, losing creativity and flexibility in lesson planning. The limits of culture and context, and the struggle when customizing and adjusting lessons based on students' levels, are the next two difficulties taken from teachers' perceptions

The comparison with previous studies

In the Vietnamese educational context, the findings of this study align with several prevailing trends and challenges. The observed doubt among EFL teachers regarding ChatGPT's full adoption and their concern over content reliability can be partly attributed to a strong emphasis on standardized testing, particularly for high-stakes exams like IELTS. Vietnamese teachers often prioritize authentic materials from official sources (e.g., Cambridge, British Council) to ensure strict alignment with test formats and marking criteria, making them cautious about AI-generated content that might lack authenticity. Furthermore, reliance on well-crafted prompts and reported difficulties in adapting to diverse students' needs reflect a common pedagogical challenge in Vietnam, and teachers may not yet have extensive training in integrating AI platforms into English teaching and learning.

According to this study's results, ChatGPT-generated lesson plans have potential for use in the IELTS Reading classroom. It shows findings similar to those of previous studies on ChatGPT's potential for designing lesson plans in English language teaching. It has been revealed that useful content, including vocabulary, question types, and reading strategies for an IELTS reading classroom, can help teachers reduce the significant time required to prepare lesson instructions. This result supports Balci's (2024) systematic review, which recognized ChatGPT's effectiveness in enhancing teachers' instructional practice and reducing the burden of academic tasks for EFL teachers. Similarly, the results aligned with the previous study by Derakhshan and Ghiasva (2024), which found that EFL teachers perceived ChatGPT as a valuable tool for creating instructional materials and providing immediate feedback. They also reported that most participants agreed that ChatGPT is useful in designing lesson plans, indicating the reliance on this chatbot for teaching assistance.

In this study, participants perceived ChatGPT's ability to create additional reading passages for students, yet they were skeptical of its reliability and of its potential for contextual and cultural appropriation. This perception was similar to the findings of Zaiarna et al. (2024), which revealed moderate to high satisfaction among EFL teachers with ChatGPT's benefits for creating exercises, but they expressed concerns about the accuracy of AI-generated materials, emphasizing the need for thorough proofreading under teachers' oversight. Similarly, Derakhshan and Ghiasva (2024) found that this chatbot can reduce workload and produce teaching materials; however, the content generated by ChatGPT can lack context and cultural aspects, which are important for language learning. Therefore, authentic materials from

officials remain the priority for EFL teachers in IELTS instruction. The careful reevaluation of ChatGPT's content is important to ensure that lesson plans are appropriate and aligned with teaching objectives, learning needs, and IELTS standards.

Despite the similarity with the previous studies, this study presents some differences. While Adiguzel et al. (2023), Kohnke and Zou (2025), and Madden et al. (2025) have expressed the transformative potential of ChatGPT to enhance traditional teaching methods, the study takes a cautious stance. Although many participants appreciated ChatGPT's effectiveness in structuring lesson plans, 40.7% were unsure whether it could help them discover innovative teaching techniques. This demonstrates that its potential in providing creative and suitable pedagogical methods remains unexplored.

Moreover, ChatGPT was also appreciated for creating lesson plans based on students' proficiency levels and different learning needs, which align with the results of Kohnke and Zou (2024), who suggested that ChatGPT is a transformative AI tool in education, supporting pedagogical goals and students' unique learning demands. However, this study shows that some participants hesitated about ChatGPT's ability to adapt teaching materials to diverse proficiency levels. As a result, even though this chatbot provides structured lesson plans, its ability to customize them for different learners remains a concern for researchers and language educators.

Compared to previous studies, our study points out various limitations for EFL teachers in integrating ChatGPT to generate IELTS Reading lesson plans. The significant challenge is the reliance on well-crafted prompts, which aligns with the research of Wang et al. (2024), which identified the benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT and noted the lack of teacher training to effectively apply this tool to optimize pedagogical outcomes. Precise and clear prompts play an essential role in the quality of the material. Teachers can improve their skills in crafting prompts to structure productive lesson plans by participating in ChatGPT prompt-creation training sessions.

Similarly, the next finding in this study is consistent with the research by Wang et al. (2024), Meniado (2023), and Robert et al. (2023), noting the over-reliance on ChatGPT, which hinders teachers' flexibility and creativity in curating teaching materials. Despite the ability to efficiently offer various teaching resources, teachers may over-rely on ChatGPT, use the existing formula to design content, and fail to update their teaching methodologies. Therefore, teachers cannot develop skills in designing lesson plans and constrain creativity and innovation. Moreover, students can lose interest in the lessons, leading to lower performance outcomes.

Another similarity in our study is the lack of cultural and contextual nuances in ChatGPT-generated content, which aligns with Galip Kartal's (2023) studies. Unlike humans, ChatGPT is just a tool without belief or real-world understanding, reducing the lesson performance. Teachers reported experience with lesson plans that do not align with students' cultures and social contexts, limiting lesson effectiveness and engagement.

In addition, the study reinforces the research by Galip Kartal (2023), Wang et al. (2024), and Meniado (2023), confirming that the inaccuracy in the materials generated by this AI tool is another obstacle, in addition to the assistance of ChatGPT in designing IELTS Reading lesson plans. Due to concerns about reliability, teachers still need to spend extended time reviewing and modifying it before using it directly. As a result, teachers face an increase in workload, requiring more responsibilities in preparing teaching materials.

Conclusion

The study aims to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of using AI-generated tools, such as ChatGPT, in designing IELTS Reading lesson plans, focusing on their advantages and disadvantages. The findings provide valuable insights into how ChatGPT can support teachers in lesson planning, while also highlighting areas that require further consideration.

The research contributes to the ongoing integration of AI into education by demonstrating that ChatGPT is a promising tool for EFL teachers. It not only provides teachers with the knowledge to structure their lesson plans and generate relevant, suitable vocabulary and reading strategies, but also reduces the time required for lesson preparation. These benefits can enhance teachers' efficiency and allow EFL teachers to customize their practices using ChatGPT while still focusing on other pedagogical aspects. However, the research also reaffirms the importance of teachers' involvement in assessing and modifying ChatGPT-generated materials to ensure accuracy, relevance, and alignment with IELTS Reading criteria.

In relation to the research questions and objectives, the study found that EFL teachers recognize ChatGPT as a helpful assistant in lesson planning, but over-reliance on AI-generated content and reliance on well-crafted prompts can make EFL teachers passive in generating new ideas for their lesson plans. While ChatGPT can provide diverse reading exercises and instructional suggestions, challenges such as a lack of cultural and contextual awareness and difficulty in customization for different student levels were evident. Additionally, concerns about content, accuracy, and the limited creativity in preparing lesson plans on appropriate topics generated by ChatGPT underscore the need for human brainstorming and oversight.

For further research, it is essential to develop specific methods to improve prompt design, including organizing seminars or workshops to train ESL teachers to input well-crafted imperatives when designing IELTS Reading tasks, thereby enhancing ChatGPT's effectiveness in generating high-quality lesson plans. Further studies should also explore strategies for professional development, equipping teachers with teaching skills, such as preparing an outline for the IELTS reading test before submitting it to ChatGPT for assistance, to maximize ChatGPT's potential. Moreover, comparative studies between AI-generated lessons and traditional lesson planning approaches, grounded in a deep understanding of the differences between these methods, would provide deeper insight into AI's role in EFL education.

Ultimately, further research should be conducted with a large, diverse sample of ESL teachers who teach IELTS, using a combination of surveys and interviews to address limitations, yield effective results, and provide a broad understanding of the effects of AI tools such as ChatGPT in creating IELTS Reading questions.

Limitations

When conducting research or gathering data, it is unavoidable that certain limitations must be acknowledged and addressed. The first obstacle is that the participants in this study are mainly EFL teachers who teach IELTS, especially preparing lesson plans for IELTS Reading. However, some participants who completed the survey might not have direct experience teaching IELTS. This can affect the accuracy of the results as they might not completely reflect the real challenges and effectiveness when designing IELTS Reading tasks. Therefore, a well-planned selection process, including preparing relevant questions for IELTS trainers from the start to ensure a narrow selection of suitable instructors participate, would promote the reliability of the upcoming research. Secondly, this study relied solely on the Google Form to make a survey without organizing the interviews. While surveys were useful for gathering qualitative data, they did not explain why certain options were chosen or capture EFL teachers'

experiences. Incorporating additional data collection methods in the future would provide more detail on teachers' understanding of lesson planning and offer a clearer explanation of the results. Finally, randomly selecting items without carefully reading each item and comparing your planning process with teachers can hinder the collection of accurate data.

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