

Perceptions of Pre-service Kindergarten Teachers on Using ChatGPT to Support English Learning: A Mixed-Methods Study in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: ChatGPT, pre-service kindergarten teachers, beginner level, English learning

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived advantages and disadvantages of using ChatGPT to support English learning among pre-service kindergarten teachers at beginner proficiency levels. The study collected data from both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Results show that ChatGPT is perceived as a valuable tool for English language learning, providing quick answers, easy access, and great convenience, as well as personalized help and support in developing language skills. Participants emphasized reduced anxiety and increased motivation, confidence, and self-determination in learning. The results also reveal several drawbacks, including inconsistent or unclear responses, difficulty asking the right questions, information overload, technical limitations, and the risk of excessive reliance on the tool. As a result, equipping low-proficiency learners with basic AI digital literacy, including critical thinking and effective prompt creation, is very necessary to ensure the effective integration of ChatGPT into teaching practices. Besides, the paper discusses the teaching implications and further research to enhance English language education through ChatGPT for beginning-level learners.

Introduction

In the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI), advancements in natural language processing and large language models have revolutionized language learning (Liu et al., 2024). Research has shown that AI technologies such as ChatGPT are highly beneficial for language learning (Liu et al., 2024). In the context of English learning, ChatGPT can assist learners in comprehending and expanding English words and grammar knowledge (Van Horn, 2024). The tool helps develop a variety of language skills, including writing and speaking (Pham & Cao, 2025). ChatGPT also assists learners in dealing with learning tasks (Pham & Le, 2024). In the meantime, it is essential for teachers seeking to incorporate ChatGPT into their teaching practices to understand learners' viewpoints and their use of the tool, particularly among beginner-level learners, as teaching this

level is the most difficult (Brown & Lee, 2015). By gaining insights into their opinions, teachers can make informed decisions about incorporating the tool into their pedagogy.

One of the researchers worked as a visiting lecturer at a vocational college in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where many English courses were offered for beginner-level students majoring in kindergarten education. Their knowledge of the target language was very limited. They were classified as beginner-level (CEFR A1) based on the results of a college-administered placement test taken prior to the course. The institution used this test to assign students to English classes based on their proficiency levels. From the researcher's observations, they were quite shy and not confident in English classes. There were many students (more than 60) in each class, so the teacher-researcher found it difficult to provide individual help. As a result, the researcher introduced ChatGPT to these learners, assuming that the tool could support their English language learning.

The purpose of the current study is to investigate how pre-service kindergarten teachers with CEFR A1 English proficiency view the role of ChatGPT in their English learning. The study focuses on identifying both the benefits and challenges they encounter while using the tool. The study also explores the impacts of using the tool on their affective attitudes toward English language learning. Based on these understandings, recommendations for using the tool in English teaching and learning, especially with beginner-level learners, are suggested. This group has received little attention in existing research, particularly among pre-service kindergarten teachers in Vietnam, underscoring the study's originality.

Literature Review

AI and Language Learning

Integrating AI into language learning provides a wide range of benefits (Liu et al., 2024). For example, studies in Nguyen's (2024) literature review indicate that AI can greatly improve pronunciation, fluency, and learning autonomy. Additionally, Tran (2024) found that AI is effective at learning academic vocabulary. The participants reported that AI provided them with access to authentic academic vocabulary and helped them understand more academic vocabulary, thanks to the corrections and feedback it offered. AI also has positive effects on grammar and writing skills. Tran et al. (2025) found that AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, support academic writing by detecting grammar errors and assisting with paraphrasing. These studies collectively show that AI-based technologies are useful for improving advanced linguistic and writing skills. However, they primarily focus on postgraduate or high-proficiency learners, suggesting that the benefits for beginner-level students remain underexplored.

Complementing these findings, Pham and Luong conducted a 2025 study at Ho Chi Minh City University of Law to explore the challenges students face when using AI tools to support their legal writing. Results show that participants regularly used tools such as Quillbot, Grammarly, and ChatGPT to improve their vocabulary and grammar. They also reported that AI tools helped them understand legal contexts and create accurate grammar.

Ngo (2024) conducted a literature review to examine the role of ChatGPT in vocabulary acquisition in English. Results show that learners generally have favourable attitudes toward using ChatGPT for vocabulary learning. Research in foreign countries shows that ChatGPT is perceived as effective for supporting English vocabulary acquisition. In the meantime, studies in Vietnam indicate that ChatGPT increases learner participation, self-directed learning, and motivation.

Pham and Cao (2025) also conducted a systematic literature review to explore and highlight additional benefits of integrating ChatGPT in English language learning in Vietnam. This AI tool has been proven to enhance learners' individualized learning experiences by providing immediate responses, promoting learner independence, supporting language practice, and boosting motivation and participation. The review also reports improved language skills — particularly writing, speaking, and reading — and better critical thinking skills, as well as reduced anxiety about language and improved access to genuine resources.

Perceptions and Attitudes of ChatGPT in Language Learning

Research on learners' attitudes toward ChatGPT has generally shown optimism alongside awareness of its limitations. Jamshed et al. (2024) found that Saudi EFL learners held positive attitudes toward the adoption of AI-powered tools for language learning. Similarly, Van Horn (2024) reported that, by and large, Korean university students expressed favorable attitudes towards ChatGPT for its accessibility, extremely quick responses, and lexical and syntactic support. They perceived ChatGPT as a valuable tool that increased their confidence in using English in classroom settings as well as in real-life contexts, and encouraged their engagement and collaboration, even in typically quiet classroom settings. They used ChatGPT creatively for different purposes, such as practicing pronunciation and preparing for authentic scenarios.

Liu et al. (2024) reached similar conclusions in China, where students found ChatGPT easy to use and useful for out-of-class English learning. Main activities included obtaining materials for English learning, checking written work, and building confidence in using English outside the classroom. They valued ChatGPT's ability to serve as a tutor and conversation partner. They frequently utilized ChatGPT to learn new English vocabulary, enhance grammar, engage in conversations on specific topics, and even practice speaking English.

In the Vietnamese context, Ho (2024) found that undergraduate learners viewed ChatGPT as a valuable tool for acquiring vocabulary, doing translation, checking grammar, and rephrasing. Conversely, Pham and Le (2024) revealed that Vietnamese students found ChatGPT useful for getting quick information and exploring ideas. Moreover, according to these students, integrating ChatGPT into their learning activities reduces classroom pressure and establishes a comfortable, active classroom environment. They also recognized that ChatGPT reduced anxiety when completing assignments, encouraged participation, and boosted readiness.

Challenges and concerns about the adoption of AI in language learning have been raised. There have been concerns regarding excessive reliance on AI (Van Horn, 2024). This reliance could hinder high-order thinking (Pham & Le, 2024), critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Ho, 2024; Pham & Le, 2024; Pham & Luong, 2025), abilities for analysis (Pham & Le, 2024) and for language (Ho, 2024), and creativity (Ho, 2024; Pham & Luong, 2025). In persuasive legal discourse, this dependency would yield writing without a distinctive voice, failing to convince readers (Pham & Luong, 2025).

AI's inability to cater to the various and specific needs of all learner groups is highlighted in Jamshed et al. (2024). Also, students reported that they do not find ChatGPT helpful for improving their speaking and writing skills (Ho, 2024). Furthermore, many students believed that AI tools generated responses that lacked individualization and emotion, making their writing sound unoriginal and commonplace (Pham & Luong, 2025).

Students also feared that ChatGPT could discourage them from attending face-to-face classes or from performing tasks that require reading comprehension (Pham & Le, 2024). Nonetheless, students in Ho's study (2024) do not consider it a replacement for instructors and learning in a physical classroom. Instead, students highlighted the importance of teacher interaction and real-

life communication, which they think gives more motivation and personalized feedback, leading to genuine and successful learning. AI can facilitate language education and should be used to support, not replace, the role of teachers (Van Horn, 2024). Therefore, he recommends that continuous support and teacher guidance remain necessary to maximize the benefits of this tool. Moreover, students are concerned that ChatGPT might cause distraction from their work (Pham & Le, 2024). There are also concerns regarding privacy, limited digital literacy among instructors and students, logistical difficulties in implementation, a lack of experts, and the addictive nature of technology (Jamshed et al., 2024).

Challenges and Opportunities for Beginner English Learners

According to Harmer (2015), beginner learners can be categorized as real beginners or false beginners. The former have no knowledge of English, while the latter have very limited knowledge, not enough to communicate effectively. According to Brown and Lee (2015), teaching learners at the beginner level is widely regarded as the most difficult level of language teaching because they generally have very limited or no background in the target language. They are constrained by a lack of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and the ability to produce long utterances. At this level, learners' ability to absorb and retain new vocabulary, grammar, and concepts is somewhat limited. Therefore, they typically lack automaticity in both grasping and utilizing the language.

Findings from the aforementioned studies suggest that ChatGPT could be a promising tool for low-proficiency learners. The tool has the potential to facilitate the development of language areas such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. It can also provide chances for language practice, including reading, speaking, and writing. However, more research is necessary to better understand its effects across various contexts and learner profiles.

In summary, while an increasing number of studies have examined the role of ChatGPT and other AI tools in English language learning, most of this research has focused on general learners, university students at higher proficiency levels, or specific skill development. There remains a notable gap in the literature concerning beginner-level learners, particularly those who are also pre-service kindergarten teachers. The current study aims to address this gap by investigating their experiences and perceptions of using ChatGPT for English learning, offering insights that may inform both AI tool integration and EFL pedagogy at the foundational level.

Research Questions

In order to fulfill the purpose of the study, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are students' general attitudes towards using ChatGPT for English learning?
2. What do students find helpful or difficult when using ChatGPT?
3. How does using ChatGPT make them feel about learning English?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The current study was conducted at a vocational college in Ho Chi Minh City, where one of the researchers served as a visiting lecturer. The college offered different English courses for students with varying English proficiency levels, aiming to help them achieve CEFR level A2, the requirement for graduation.

Thirty-eight college students (37 females and 1 male), aged 18-24, enrolled in a Basic English course instructed by one of the researchers during Semester 2 of the 2024-2025 academic year. The study employed convenience sampling in order to recruit easily accessible participants (Alele & Malau-Aduli, 2023; Patton, 2002). The participants had previously taken a placement test administered by the college before they enrolled in this class. Their English proficiency was at a beginner level. They had very limited knowledge of English. The students majored in kindergarten education. The course lasted nine weeks. There were three 1-hour and 30-minute sessions per week. The class was selected for the following reasons. Firstly, the class, which was predominantly female due to the nature of the major, was assigned to the researcher, which facilitated certain convenience in carrying out the research. Secondly, the participants had never used ChatGPT for learning English before. The significant gender imbalance (37 females and one male) reflects the demographics typical of kindergarten education programs and should be considered a limitation in generalizing the results.

Design of the Study

A mixed-methods design was applied to the current study. According to Neuman (2014), this approach facilitates the triangulation of findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences and opinions. Data were collected through an online questionnaire with Likert-scale and open-ended questions. To gain a deeper understanding, semi-structured interviews were carried out with six randomly chosen students (S1-S6). According to Bhandari (2023), interviews allow for in-depth conversations, enabling researchers to get deep insights into participants' viewpoints and experiences. To enhance the validity and reliability of the survey and interview questions, they were first reviewed and revised by two of the researchers' colleagues with Master's degrees in English teaching, and then piloted prior to the official survey and interviews (Alele & Malau-Aduli, 2023).

Data collection & analysis

Questionnaire

Questions used in the survey were adapted from those of previous studies. There were 17 Likert-scale statements and 2 open-ended questions, allowing for the capture of diverse viewpoints and personal experiences (Bhandari, 2023). All the questions were in both English and Vietnamese, allowing participants to fully understand them.

The survey was conducted via Google Forms to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on learners' use and opinions regarding integrating ChatGPT into their English learning. There were seventeen statements rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) and two open-ended questions. The first five statements were used to gauge learners' general interest in using ChatGPT, their opinions about its usefulness, their concerns about heavy reliance, and their willingness to introduce it to others. The next seven statements were used to measure participants' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the AI tool. Four statements examined factors such as better understanding, time-saving, and individualized support, whereas the other statements addressed concerns about information reliability, distractions, and prompts. The last five statements examined the emotional and motivational effects of using ChatGPT. Six Likert-scale items assessed whether the integration of ChatGPT resulted in greater enthusiasm, independence, less anxiety, or intense feelings of overload, as well as whether it led to greater motivation and confidence in English learning. Finally, two open-ended questions were asked to identify the most useful ways they had used ChatGPT and to describe any problems or frustrations they had faced.

Interview

There were nine open-ended interview questions. Interviews were conducted individually with six participants via Zoom immediately after the course ended. All six participants volunteered to participate in the interviews. These interviews explored participants' general attitudes and personal experiences about the use of ChatGPT.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze quantitative data and identify general patterns. All responses were transferred into Microsoft Excel for organization and grouping. The data were illustrated in bar charts to facilitate interpretation.

Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data from both the questionnaire and the interviews to identify recurring themes regarding learners' viewpoints, advantages, and challenges. The interview transcripts and survey responses were manually coded for analysis. After the data were interpreted, they were categorized into themes to explore learners' perceptions of using ChatGPT for English learning. To ensure confidentiality and ethical standards, six volunteers were identified as Student 1 (S1), Student 2 (S2), Student 3 (S3), Student 4 (S4), Student 5 (S5), and Student 6 (S6).

Results/Findings

Research question 1: What are students' general attitudes towards using ChatGPT for English learning?

Figure 1

Student Attitudes Towards Using ChatGPT for English Learning

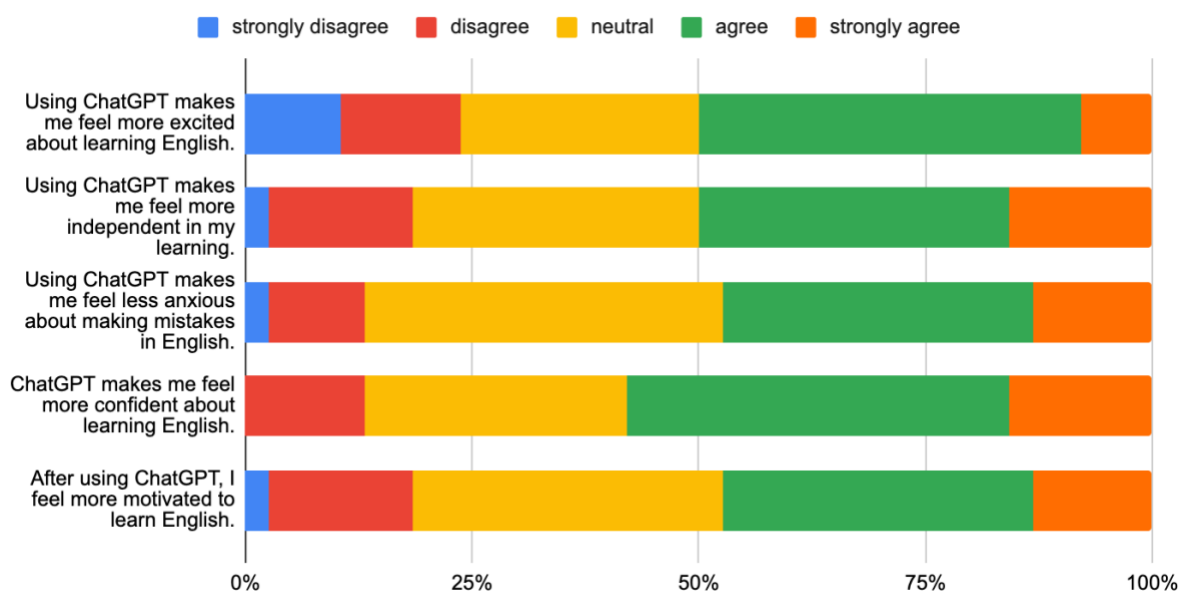


Figure 1 shows that participants generally have a positive attitude towards using ChatGPT for English learning.

Table 1*Student Interest and Perceived Usefulness of ChatGPT for English Learning (N = 38)*

Statements	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
I am interested in using ChatGPT to help me learn English.	7.9%	0%	28.9%	28.9%	34.2%
I think using ChatGPT could be a helpful way to improve my English skills.	0%	7.9%	34.2%	26.3%	31.6%

Table 1 shows that a large number of respondents (63.1%) expressed interest in using ChatGPT, while only 7.9% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. Likewise, only 7.9% chose “disagree,” while over half of the participants (57.9%) viewed ChatGPT as a helpful tool for developing their English skills, and around one-third remained neutral. The data show that while general sentiment is optimistic, some students are unsure of whether the tool is useful.

Table 2*Student Concerns and Trust Toward ChatGPT Use in English Learning (N = 38)*

Statements	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
I am worried that using ChatGPT might make me too reliant on it.	15.8%	18.4%	18.4%	23.7%	23.7%
I believe ChatGPT can provide accurate information for English learning.	0%	15.8%	39.5%	31.6%	13.2%

On the other hand, as shown in Table 2, while some participants expressed concern about becoming overly reliant on ChatGPT, a sizable portion (34.2%) disagreed with this view. Similarly, although less than half of the students reported full trust in the tool’s reliability, most remained neutral, with only a minority expressing doubt.

Table 3*Student Willingness to Recommend ChatGPT to Others (N = 38)*

Statements	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
I would recommend using ChatGPT to other English learners.	2.6%	10.5%	13.2%	42.1%	31.6%

Most strikingly, Table 3 shows that a significant majority (73.7%) of respondents expressed a strong willingness to recommend ChatGPT to other learners, suggesting that students generally accept ChatGPT as a helpful language-learning resource.

Interview data offered a more nuanced understanding of learners' opinions. Three participants (S1, S2, S3) reported mixed opinions. They liked ChatGPT because the tool "*offers a lot of information, which is easier to understand than that of dictionaries or Google Translate*" (S3). However, they also reported that the tool occasionally provides confusing information. On the other hand, other participants (S4, S5, S6) expressed positive viewpoints.

"I like to use ChatGPT to learn English and to improve my speaking and writing skills"(S4).

"ChatGPT provides more precise and relevant responses than Google"(S5).

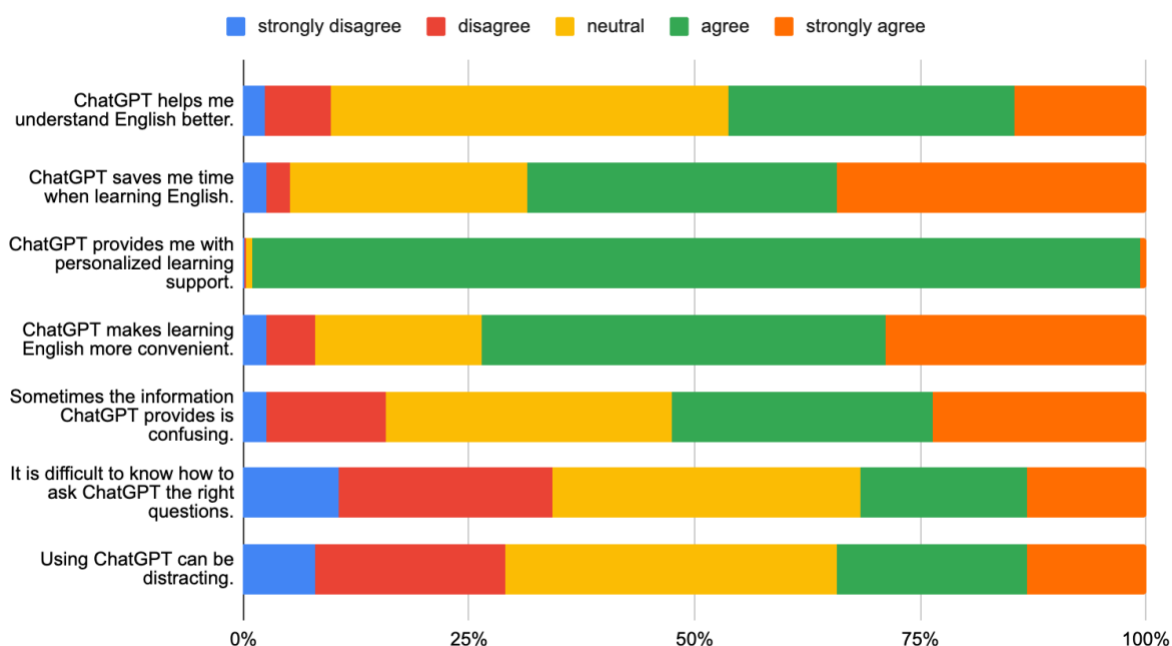
"ChatGPT is a useful tool to support four language skills"(S6).

These results reveal that students generally have a positive outlook on using ChatGPT to learn English. However, there is some anxiety about heavy reliance and occasional inaccuracies.

Research question 2: What do students find helpful or difficult when using ChatGPT?

Figure 2

Student Perceptions of ChatGPT's Benefits and Challenges



Both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that learners experience practical benefits when using ChatGPT for English studies.

One of the main benefits is a better understanding of the target language. Table 4 shows that 50% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT helps them better understand English, whereas only 10.5% disagreed, indicating that many learners find the tool helpful for their comprehension. In open-ended questions, several participants mentioned that they required ChatGPT to explain difficult English words and grammar, provide synonyms and antonyms, translate, and suggest sample sentences and paragraphs.

Table 4*Student Perceptions of ChatGPT's Benefits for English Learning (N = 38)*

Statement	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
ChatGPT helps me understand English better.	2.6%	7.9%	47.4%	34.2%	15.8%
ChatGPT saves me time when learning English.	2.6%	2.6%	26.3%	34.2%	34.2%
ChatGPT provides me with personalized learning support.	2.6%	7.9%	26.3%	36.8	26.3%
ChatGPT makes learning English more convenient.	2.6%	5.3%	18.4%	44.7%	28.9%

Another benefit is saving time. Table 4 shows that 68.4% reported that using ChatGPT to learn English saves them time. Open-ended responses and interviews supported this viewpoint. Participants reported that ChatGPT answered their questions very quickly. For example, one learner responded: *"I use ChatGPT instead of traditional dictionaries because it is quick and provides more information, including more examples."* S5 added: *"ChatGPT helps me to find answers extremely quickly, and even offers me additional information"*.

Another benefit reported is personalized support. As shown in Table 4, a majority of participants (63.1%) said that ChatGPT provides them with support for individualized learning. Participants mentioned utilizing ChatGPT to ask questions to satisfy their learning needs. For example:

"I use ChatGPT to explain and translate English exercises into Vietnamese."

"I take photos of difficult questions and request ChatGPT for answers."

"I use ChatGPT to learn vocabulary, to explain a specific grammar structure, and other grammar rules, or to correct mistakes."

"I use ChatGPT to find vocabulary, learn more common idioms in daily life, and learn how to use new vocabulary through short dialogues from ChatGPT."

Another important advantage is convenience and accessibility. Table 4 shows that 73.6% agreed or strongly agreed that learning becomes more convenient with ChatGPT. Many reported that they could use the tool to find vocabulary, translate texts, get writing samples, or practice speaking English *"anywhere, anytime"*. In interviews, several learners (S1, S3, S4, S5) said that ChatGPT *"enables them to translate or look up words and grammar structures much more efficiently than with traditional resources"*.

In addition, participants reported that ChatGPT aids in developing various language skills. Interviews indicated that many participants used ChatGPT to support their English development. Learners used ChatGPT to practice grammar structures, writing, speaking, and pronunciation (S1, S2, S3, S4, S6). S3 and S4 appreciated the immediate responses and the detailed explanation of grammar and vocabulary. S6 valued its support for practicing all four English skills (writing, reading, listening, and speaking). In responses to open-ended survey questions, respondents noted using ChatGPT for practicing speaking, improving pronunciation and writing, and reading through interactions with it.

In sum, students greatly benefit from integrating ChatGPT into English learning. ChatGPT assists in understanding the English language, provides quicker access to information, individualized learning support, streamlines the learning process, and enhances language skills, particularly reading, writing, and speaking.

Table 5

Student-Reported Challenges When Using ChatGPT for English Learning (N = 38)

Statement	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Sometimes ChatGPT's information is confusing.	2.6%	13.2%	31.6%	28.9%	23.7%
It is difficult to know how to ask ChatGPT the right questions.	10.5%	23.7%	34.2%	18.4%	13.2%
Using ChatGPT can be distracting.	7.9%	21.1%	36.8%	21.1%	13.2%

On the other hand, several challenges emerged in the findings. One main challenge reported is the tool's generation of confusing or unclear answers. Table 5 shows that 52.6% agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT occasionally provides answers that cause confusion. In responses to open-ended questions, many learners reported that ChatGPT's responses were frequently too long, very academic, and irrelevant to their questions. Some reported that this AI tool occasionally did not understand their questions. For example:

"ChatGPT sometimes doesn't understand my questions."

"The responses that ChatGPT provides are generic and unclear."

Interviews further illuminated this concern. Learners reported that ChatGPT's responses were sometimes unfocused, overly long, or inconsistent, leaving them frustrated and confused (S3, S4, S5, and S6). S5 also noted that *"ChatGPT gives different answers to the same questions. I really find it confusing and hard to trust the tool."* These issues may be attributable to learners' inexperience in creating effective prompts.

Another notable challenge is effective prompt formulation. From Table 5, it can be seen that 31.6% found it difficult to create the right prompts. Open-ended responses also revealed this challenge. For example:

"I don't know how to ask questions effectively."

"I must write very specific prompts or questions because of large quantities of information."

This was echoed in the interviews. Learners reported difficulty in writing effective prompts. For instance:

"Sometimes ChatGPT doesn't understand my prompts, so it provides inaccurate or irrelevant responses" (S3).

"ChatGPT sometimes generates too long explanations or too much information, which makes it hard for me to understand" (S4).

The data indicate that digital literacy and the ability to create effective questions are necessary to leverage ChatGPT.

Another common challenge is information overload and inconsistency. In open-ended responses, learners reported that ChatGPT sometimes suggests too many responses or provides too much content, making it hard to know which answer is the most exact or relevant. For instance:

“ChatGPT provides too much information that is unnecessary”.

“The responses are irrelevant and sometimes inaccurate”.

“Sometimes the answers are not right and confusing”.

This was reinforced in the interviews. Learners (S1, S2, S3, S4, and S6) reported being frequently overwhelmed or confused by ChatGPT's overly long and detailed responses, and Interviewee S3 also felt *“annoyed by receiving too many answers”*. S5 also shared that *“I felt confused because ChatGPT suggests different answers to my same questions”*. These findings indicate that learners do not know how to effectively create prompts.

Another problem is related to technical issues. In responses to open-ended questions, some learners shared:

“ChatGPT is sometimes laggy and doesn’t generate responses.”

“ChatGPT sometimes delays loading.”

Many learners also reported problems with image processing. Some learners tried to upload pictures of English exercises, but ChatGPT didn’t often scan the content properly. For instance:

“ChatGPT fails to scan all the content of the image.”

“Sometimes ChatGPT isn’t able to process the photo correctly.”

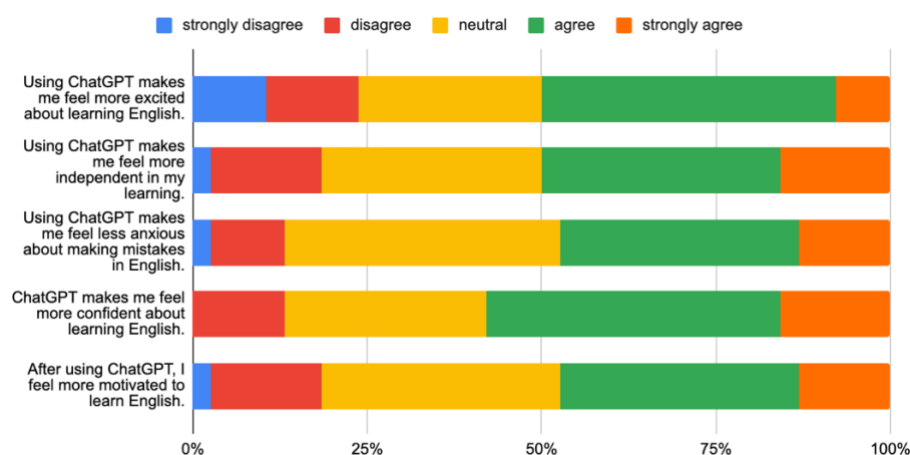
Lastly, the concern regarding overreliance on AI-powered tools emerged in survey responses and interviews. A few learners are concerned that regular use of ChatGPT could lead to overdependence or hinder independent thinking.

In summary, although ChatGPT is perceived as a beneficial tool for studying English, learners experience several limitations, including confusing or unclear answers, difficulties in writing effective prompts, too much information, technical issues, and concerns about heavy reliance.

Research question 3: How does using ChatGPT make them feel about learning English?

Figure 3

Student Feelings about Learning English with ChatGPT



As can be interpreted from Figure 3, ChatGPT positively influences students' motivation, confidence, and learning independence.

Table 6

Student Motivation and Excitement Toward English Learning When Using ChatGPT (N = 38)

Statement	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Using ChatGPT makes me feel more excited about learning English.	10.5%	13.2%	26.3%	42.1%	7.9%
After using ChatGPT, I feel more motivated to learn English.	2.6%	15.8%	34.2%	34.2%	13.2%

One of the key emotional benefits reported is increased motivation. As shown by Table 6, a majority (50%) of the participants reported feeling more excited when learning English with ChatGPT. In addition, 47.4% of participants reported greater motivation to study English after using ChatGPT, with a small percentage disagreeing. This was also supported by interview data. Most interviewees (S2-S6) said that their motivation increased thanks to ChatGPT. S5 shared, "Previously, using Google didn't provide the right answers, so I became discouraged and gave up". S6 added, "I get more motivation because ChatGPT provides more focused responses compared to Google. Google provides a lot of irrelevant information that makes me not want to learn more".

Table 7

Student Anxiety Reduction and Confidence Toward English Learning When Using ChatGPT (N = 38)

Statement	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Using ChatGPT makes me feel less anxious about making mistakes in English.	2.6%	10.5%	39.5%	34.2%	13.2%
ChatGPT makes me feel more confident about learning English.	0.0%	13.2%	28.9%	42.1%	15.8%

Table 7 demonstrates that 57.9% reported an increase in their confidence in learning English after utilizing ChatGPT, while no one selected "strongly disagree". This finding was supported by interviews. All six interviewees reported that ChatGPT helped them feel more confident when using this tool. Furthermore, 47.4% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT reduced their anxiety about committing mistakes.

Table 8*Student Perceptions of Autonomy When Using ChatGPT (N = 38)*

Statement	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Using ChatGPT makes me feel more independent in my learning.	2.6%	15.8%	31.6%	34.2%	15.8%

Another important finding relates to greater learning autonomy. Table 8 shows that exactly 50% agreed that the tool facilitates their learning autonomy. Interview data also reinforced this trend. For example, *"I become proactive in my English learning, relying on ChatGPT whenever I have questions to ask and reading about related topics that it suggests."* (S5)

In summary, the majority of learners hold favorable attitudes about ChatGPT's effectiveness in their motivation, autonomy, confidence, and anxiety control in English learning.

Discussion

The results from both surveys and interviews provide a deep understanding of learners' perceptions of ChatGPT's use in English learning. Generally, learners had optimistic views of this AI tool, valuing its practical benefits, support for English skills, personalized learning, and positive impacts on motivation, confidence, and learning autonomy. Difficulties that emerged include the accuracy and clarity of information, prompt writing, technical issues, information overload, and worry about overreliance on AI-powered tools.

In line with Jamshed et al. (2024) and Van Horn (2024), the participants in this study had a positive outlook on the integration of ChatGPT into English learning journeys. The current study indicates that ChatGPT can be a very useful tool for English learning in various aspects. For example, the tool can provide translation into either the mother language or the target language, explanations of vocabulary and grammar, and sample sentences or paragraphs. These findings are similar to previous studies by Ho (2024), Liu et al. (2024), and Van Horn (2024). In addition, participants in this study reported that the tool is more accessible and quicker to respond than traditional dictionaries or Google. This enables them to save time by asking questions and getting answers immediately. The findings are in line with prior studies by Ho (2024), Liu et al. (2024), Pham & Le (2024), and Van Horn (2024).

In Ho (2024)'s study, learners did not find ChatGPT useful for productive skills. However, the current study's findings reveal that ChatGPT can be used to practice many English skills, including both receptive and productive skills. One explanation for this difference may be that the learners in this study can use the latest version of ChatGPT, which includes voice features. They shared that they could hold conversations with ChatGPT and that ChatGPT helped them improve their pronunciation, correct grammar mistakes, and improve their word choice while speaking.

Liu et al. (2024) and Van Horn (2024) also reported similar findings. These findings provide further evidence that ChatGPT can effectively support various aspects of English learning. It is this tool's versatility that could be beneficial for beginner-level English learners, who have very little knowledge of the target language and need language support outside the school.

In terms of feelings, many participants of the present study said that their confidence and motivation increased when they used ChatGPT to learn English. These findings are in line with prior studies, including Liu et al. (2024), Ngo (2024), Pham & Le (2024), and Van Horn (2024). The learners also shared that ChatGPT's support in learning English made them feel less worried and pressured. This finding is consistent with prior work (Pham & Le, 2024; Pham & Cao, 2025). Interestingly, some learners in this study admitted that they relied on ChatGPT for a range of learning needs, from practicing vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar structures to writing. This indicates that ChatGPT can encourage self-regulation among learners. Several previous studies (Ngo, 2024; Pham & Cao, 2025; Van Horn, 2024) support this result. These findings regarding feelings suggest that ChatGPT can boost learners' confidence and motivation, reduce anxiety, and facilitate self-directed learning. This is especially significant for lower-proficiency learners because, according to Brown and Lee (2015), they heavily depend on their teachers. These learners also need to maintain positive emotions throughout their language-learning journeys.

The positive emotions reported by the participants, such as increased motivation, confidence, and reduced anxiety, can be explained through the lens of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This theory posits that when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated. In this study, ChatGPT seemed to satisfy these needs by offering immediate feedback, flexible access to learning support, and a low-pressure environment, which enabled students to control their learning.

In the present study, many participants reported difficulty asking ChatGPT the right questions, leading them to often receive answers that were not relevant or confusing. Even though they asked the same questions, they received different responses from ChatGPT. They also shared that they were overwhelmed by the amount of information the tool provided. Besides, surprisingly, some learners in the current study worried that they might rely too much on ChatGPT. Participants in Ngo's (2024) and Van Horn's (2024) research shared the same worry. These findings suggest that beginning-level learners very much need basic AI digital literacy. In particular, they need to be instructed in creating effective prompts so they can receive answers that satisfy their learning needs, and in critical thinking to evaluate ChatGPT's answers.

If those limitations are resolved, ChatGPT can be a very useful tool for beginning-level learners of English. Since they have very limited knowledge of the language and AI digital literacy, the authors recommend that, when teachers integrate ChatGPT into their teaching practices to teach learners at this level, they should provide training on writing prompts and on using critical thinking to assess information. For instance, teachers can offer learners several sample prompts for specific tasks and then work together to evaluate responses from ChatGPT. With sufficient teacher support, these learners can use ChatGPT effectively and confidently to make their English learning journeys less challenging.

Based on the findings, it is evident that beginner-level learners require structured support in developing AI literacy. This includes explicit instruction on writing effective prompts that elicit relevant and understandable responses, as well as on critically evaluating the accuracy and appropriateness of AI-generated content. Moreover, learners should be guided in using tools like ChatGPT as a supplement, not a replacement, for teacher instruction and interactive classroom learning. Providing targeted training can help maximize the benefits of AI while minimizing risks of overreliance, confusion, or misinformation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study reveals that learners have very positive attitudes toward using ChatGPT for English study. The perceived benefits include better comprehension of the target language, time-saving, personalized assistance, accessibility, convenience, and honed language skills. The perceived challenges include irrelevant and inconsistent responses from the tool, difficulties creating prompts, information overload, technical problems, and reservations about the heavy reliance on AI-powered tools.

The main limitation of this study is that the data were collected from 38 learners at a college. Therefore, the results may not be generalised to other populations or contexts. In addition, the study depended on self-reported data from 38 learners, which might be subject to bias. Also, the research depends on learners' opinions on improvements, limiting the ability to make claims about ChatGPT's effectiveness in enhancing learning outcomes. Another limitation of this study is the significant gender imbalance among participants, with almost all being female. This reflects the nature of early childhood education programs in Vietnam but may limit the generalizability of the findings to more gender-diverse populations. Future research could examine whether learners with different gender identities perceive AI tools such as ChatGPT differently in similar educational contexts.

Further research should examine the long-term effects of ChatGPT integration on learners' language development, motivation, and self-directed learning. In addition, future studies could compare groups of beginning-level learners who use ChatGPT with those who do not to examine causal relationships between ChatGPT use and increased motivation. Further research should examine the extent to which teacher support and prompt-formulation training can maximize ChatGPT's effectiveness, particularly for beginner learners. Experimental designs comparing learners who receive prompt-based crafting training with those who do not could reveal best practices for using AI in English teaching and learning.

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