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University Students' Readiness for ChatGPT-Assisted English Learning: An Explanatory Mixed-Methods Study



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Abstract

The growing integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI), particularly ChatGPT, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning has raised increasing interest in learners' readiness to engage with such tools effectively. However, existing research has largely focused on isolated constructs such as technology acceptance and AI literacy, providing limited insight into learners' overall preparedness in authentic learning contexts. This study therefore investigates university students' readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning from a multidimensional perspective. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 586 undergraduate students using the Learners' Readiness for ChatGPT-Assisted English Learning (LRCEL) scale developed and validated by Luo and Zou (2024b), followed by semi-structured interviews with 12 participants to explain the quantitative findings. The results indicate that students demonstrated relatively high levels of operational readiness, particularly in perceived behavioral control, attitude, and enjoyment. However, readiness was not stable, as intention to use ChatGPT remained moderate and highly dependent on task conditions. In addition, a clear gap was identified between students' ability to use ChatGPT and their capacity to critically evaluate its outputs. The findings further reveal that readiness is socially constructed, with peer networks playing a more influential role than teachers in shaping students' engagement with ChatGPT. These findings suggest that learner readiness is dynamic, uneven, and context-dependent, highlighting the need to reconceptualize readiness beyond purely cognitive or technical dimensions in AI-assisted language learning.

Keywords: ChatGPT-assisted learning, learner readiness, artificial intelligence in education, EFL learning, mixed-methods research

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Introduction

In recent years, the rapid development of generative artificial intelligence (AI), particularly tools such as ChatGPT, has begun to reshape language learning environments by transforming how learners access information, practice language skills, and receive feedback. In the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), ChatGPT has been increasingly recognized as an interactive learning partner that provides immediate, personalized, and adaptive support (Kohnke, 2025; Lo et al., 2024). However, its use also introduces challenges, including issues of epistemic reliability, cognitive overload, and overreliance on AI-generated outputs (Albadarin et al., 2024; Firat, 2023; Stockwell & Wang, 2025). These contrasting affordances and constraints suggest that its effectiveness depends on how learners engage with it in practice.

In response to this complexity, a growing body of research has examined learners' engagement with AI tools through constructs such as technology acceptance, perception, and AI literacy. For instance, technology acceptance studies have focused on perceived usefulness, ease of use, and behavioral intention (An et al., 2025), while AI literacy research has examined learners' knowledge and competencies in using AI (Alhums, 2025; Ma et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Although these approaches provide valuable insights, they primarily capture isolated aspects of engagement rather than learners' overall preparedness to use AI effectively in language learning contexts. In addition, prior research has largely emphasized cognitive and behavioral dimensions, while paying comparatively less attention to emotional and social factors (Lo et al., 2024; Luo & Zou, 2024a; Ma et al., 2024). As a result, there remains limited understanding of how learners' readiness to use ChatGPT is formed and experienced in authentic EFL contexts.

To address these gaps, this study adopts a multidimensional perspective on learner readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning, conceptualizing readiness as an integration of cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions (Luo & Zou, 2024b). Drawing on Luo and Zou's (2024b) conceptualization of learner readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning (LRCEL), the study examines both the level of students' readiness and how their lived experiences explain variations in this readiness. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of learners' engagement with ChatGPT beyond isolated constructs such as perception or literacy. Specifically, the study addresses the following research questions: (RQ1) What is the level of students' readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning? (RQ2) How can students' experiences explain their readiness for using ChatGPT in English learning?

Literature Review

Affordances and Challenges of ChatGPT-assisted English Learning

Recent research has positioned ChatGPT as a transformative tool in EFL learning, particularly in relation to interaction, feedback, and learner autonomy (Hirschel & Horai, 2025; Zeevy-Solovey, 2024). Rather than functioning merely as a source of linguistic input, it is increasingly conceptualized as an interactive learning partner within AI-assisted language learning environments. However, existing studies largely emphasize its potential while overlooking how learners actually engage with the tool in authentic learning contexts (Lo et al., 2024; Wang & Fan, 2025).

ChatGPT offers several key affordances, including personalized and adaptive feedback aligned with learners' proficiency, interactive language practice, and flexible access that supports learner autonomy (Kohnke, 2025). These features enable immediate feedback, extend opportunities for output

production, and foster self-regulated learning. However, such benefits are not inherent but depend on learners' ability to prompt effectively, interpret responses, and regulate their learning processes (Kılıç & Çelik, 2025).

Despite these affordances, ChatGPT introduces several challenges. Issues of epistemic reliability arise as AI-generated responses may be inaccurate, oversimplified, or misleading, requiring critical evaluation (Stockwell & Wang, 2025) and placing additional demands on learners' cognitive resources. At the same time, overreliance on AI may reduce deep cognitive engagement and contribute to deskilling, potentially limiting learners' independent language production (Ivanov, 2023). The need to formulate effective prompts and interpret complex outputs can also increase cognitive load (Albadarin et al., 2024), while concerns related to plagiarism, bias, and authorship further complicate its use (Firat, 2023). Together, these challenges highlight that AI use introduces new forms of learning risk rather than simply enhancing learning.

The literature thus reveals a fundamental tension in ChatGPT-assisted language learning. While the tool enhances efficiency, accessibility, and learner independence, it may also reduce cognitive engagement, introduce uncertainty, and create dependency on AI-generated outputs. This paradox suggests that the effectiveness of ChatGPT is not inherent in the technology itself, but contingent upon how learners engage with it, particularly in their ability to use it critically and strategically.

This shift highlights the limitation of examining ChatGPT solely in terms of its technological affordances, directing attention instead to learner-related factors that shape its use in practice. In this regard, learner readiness emerges as a crucial construct, reflecting learners' ability, willingness, and preparedness to engage with ChatGPT effectively and responsibly. Understanding this readiness is essential for explaining why learners experience the same technology differently, and how such differences shape their engagement with AI-assisted English learning.

Theoretical Framework

Learner readiness for AI-assisted language learning has increasingly been recognized as a complex construct that extends beyond mere access to technology. Drawing on broader educational research, readiness is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions, rather than being limited to technical or skill-based preparedness (Halle et al., 2012; Pan et al., 2019). In the context of ChatGPT-assisted English learning, readiness therefore reflects learners' cognitive evaluations, social influences, and emotional experiences when engaging with AI tools, all of which shape how they interact with and benefit from such technologies.

From a cognitive perspective, learner readiness is shaped by how individuals evaluate and regulate their use of ChatGPT in language learning. Central to this dimension are learners' perceptions of their ability to use the tool effectively, their attitudes toward its usefulness, and their intention to adopt it in future learning practices. These aspects are conceptually grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that human behavior is driven by perceived behavioral control, attitude, and behavioral intention. Perceived behavioral control reflects learners' perceived ability to use ChatGPT effectively for language-related tasks. Attitude refers to learners' evaluative orientation toward using ChatGPT, while intention reflects their willingness to integrate it into their learning practices.

Prior research has demonstrated that these cognitive factors play a crucial role in technology adoption. For example, Nie et al. (2020) found that learners' perceived control over mobile learning technologies

significantly predicted their intention to use such tools, while Pan et al. (2023) reported that attitudes and perceived behavioral control were strong predictors of students' engagement with online learning platforms.

Building on these insights, Luo and Zou (2024a) adapted these TPB constructs to ChatGPT-assisted learning, emphasizing that learners' readiness is closely tied to their evaluations of the tool's usability, usefulness, and relevance to their learning goals. Thus, cognitive readiness forms a foundational component of learners' engagement with AI-supported language learning.

Beyond individual cognition, learner readiness is also influenced by the social context in which learning occurs. This dimension reflects the role of subjective norms, referring to perceived expectations and support from significant others, such as teachers, peers, and broader social networks. Within TPB, subjective norms capture perceived social expectations to engage in a given behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Luo and Zou (2024b) highlighted that encouragement from teachers and peers plays a critical role in shaping learners' adoption of ChatGPT, particularly in structured educational settings. Similarly, prior studies have shown that social influences significantly predict learners' engagement with digital learning technologies (Pan et al., 2023). Taken together, learner readiness is embedded within a broader social ecosystem, where interpersonal and institutional factors can facilitate or constrain AI adoption.

In addition to cognitive and social factors, learner readiness is shaped by emotional experiences associated with AI-assisted learning. Drawing on the Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions (CVT) (Pekrun, 2006), emotions such as enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom play a critical role in influencing learners' engagement, motivation, and persistence. Among these, enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom have been identified as salient emotions in academic and foreign language learning contexts (Li & Wei, 2023). In this context, enjoyment reflects positive engagement, anxiety arises from uncertainty in using or evaluating AI outputs, and boredom reflects disengagement from repetitive or unchallenging interactions. Recent studies have emphasized the importance of these emotional dimensions in AI-supported learning environments. Luo and Zou (2024a, 2024b) argued that learners' emotional responses to ChatGPT significantly influence their readiness and intention to use the tool. These emotional experiences shape both immediate engagement and longer-term learning behaviors.

Overall, learner readiness cannot be understood through a single lens. Rather, it emerges from the interplay of cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions. This integrated perspective highlights readiness as a comprehensive construct shaping how learners engage with AI in language learning contexts.

Previous Studies

Recent studies have increasingly examined learner readiness for AI-assisted language learning, particularly in relation to students' engagement with ChatGPT and other generative AI tools in educational contexts. Existing research has primarily approached this issue through constructs such as technology acceptance, AI literacy, and learner perceptions.

For example, An et al. (2025) conducted a quantitative study investigating students' perceptions of AI-assisted language learning. Drawing on a technology acceptance perspective, the study examined factors such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, and behavioral intention, revealing that students' willingness to adopt AI tools was strongly associated with their perceptions of usefulness and usability. Similarly, Lee and Park (2024) developed and validated a ChatGPT literacy scale to measure learners'

competencies in understanding and using ChatGPT. Their findings highlighted the importance of technical and functional competence in AI-assisted learning environments.

In a broader context, Ma et al. (2024) explored ChatGPT literacy in language education through a global and comprehensive review-based approach. The study emphasized multiple dimensions of AI literacy, including knowledge, ethical awareness, and practical competence, while also highlighting the need for more context-specific investigations in language learning settings. Likewise, Wang et al. (2022) developed and validated an AI literacy scale focusing on users' competence in interacting with artificial intelligence systems. Although the study provided a useful framework for measuring AI-related competence, the instrument was designed for general AI use rather than language learning contexts.

Despite these contributions, several limitations remain in the existing literature. First, many studies focus primarily on isolated constructs such as perception, usefulness, intention, or technical competence, rather than examining learner readiness as a multidimensional construct. Second, existing instruments are often developed for general AI or educational technology contexts and may not fully capture the unique demands of ChatGPT-assisted English learning. Third, prior research has tended to emphasize cognitive and behavioral dimensions, while emotional and social dimensions have received comparatively less attention in AI-assisted language learning research (Lo et al., 2024; Luo & Zou, 2024a; Ma et al., 2024).

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. In the first phase, quantitative data are collected through a questionnaire to examine the level of students' readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning. In the second phase, qualitative data are gathered through semi-structured interviews to explain and elaborate the quantitative findings. This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to first identify the overall readiness patterns and then explore how students' experiences help explain those patterns in greater depth (Creswell & Guetterman, 2024).

Research Setting and Participants

Participants were recruited using convenience sampling based on accessibility and willingness to participate. This sampling technique was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a relatively large and diverse group of university students within a limited timeframe (Etikan et al., 2016).

The data collection was conducted in 2025. The target population of the study consisted of undergraduate students in Southern Vietnam, where English is taught as a foreign language and plays an increasingly important role in academic and professional development. In recent years, universities in this region have undergone ongoing digital transformation, with growing integration of online learning platforms and AI-related technologies into educational environments. In this context, generative AI applications such as ChatGPT have emerged as supplementary resources for English language learning, particularly outside formal classroom settings.

As indicated in Table 1, the final sample comprised 586 undergraduate students from various universities in Southern Vietnam. These students were selected because they were in the early stages of their

academic studies, during which English learning is often compulsory. Participants came from diverse academic disciplines, including Business Administration, Accounting, Finance and Banking, technology-related fields, and social sciences.

Overall, the study was conducted in an EFL higher education context where AI-supported learning tools are increasingly available to undergraduate students (Huynh & Nguyen, 2025; Pham et al., 2023).

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

Variable	Category	F (N = 586)	%
Gender	Male	260	44.4
	Female	326	55.6
Year of Study	Year 1	305	52.0
	Year 2	281	48.0
Major	Business-related	310	52.9
	Technology-related	110	18.8
	Social Sciences & Humanities	95	16.2
	Creative fields	71	12.1

To ensure that participants were able to provide informed responses regarding ChatGPT-assisted English learning, only students who had previously used ChatGPT for English learning were eligible to participate in the study.

Research Instruments

The quantitative data were collected using the LRCEL scale developed by Luo and Zou (2024b). The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was 0.93, indicating a high level of reliability. ChatGPT was selected as the focal AI tool because the validated LRCEL scale was specifically developed to examine learner readiness in ChatGPT-assisted English learning contexts (Luo & Zou, 2024b). The LRCEL scale conceptualizes readiness as a multidimensional construct comprising seven dimensions: perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, attitude, intention, enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom. The scale consists of 18 items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Among the seven dimensions of the scale, the anxiety and boredom dimensions each consisted of two items. Nevertheless, the study retained the original structure of the validated LRCEL scale developed by Luo and Zou (2024b). Previous methodological research suggests that two-item constructs may be acceptable when the construct is theoretically narrow, clearly defined, and supported by satisfactory reliability and validity evidence (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). In the original validation study, these dimensions demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties, supporting their inclusion in the present study.

The original English version of the LRCEL scale (Luo & Zou, 2024b) was translated into Vietnamese for use in this study. The translation aimed to preserve the original meaning of each item while ensuring linguistic clarity and cultural appropriateness for Vietnamese university students. Minor contextual adaptations were made to improve relevance to the Vietnamese EFL context without altering the underlying constructs measured by the instrument. Prior to the main data collection, the Vietnamese

version of the questionnaire was piloted to ensure the clarity, comprehensibility, and appropriateness of the wording for the target participants.

In addition to the LRCEL items, the questionnaire included a demographic section collecting information such as gender, year of study, major, and prior experience with ChatGPT. These variables were used to provide a profile of the participants and to support further analysis.

To complement the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the second phase of the study. The purpose of the interviews was to gain deeper insights into how students perceive and experience their readiness for using ChatGPT in English learning, thereby addressing the second research question. The interview protocol was developed based on two main sources: (1) the results of the quantitative phase, and (2) the research questions of the study. Specifically, the interview questions contain 13 questions and they were designed to probe students' experiences related to the key dimensions of readiness identified in the LRCEL scale, including cognitive (e.g., perceived ease of use and intention), social (e.g., influence of teachers and peers), and emotional aspects (e.g., enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom). This approach ensured that the qualitative data would directly explain and elaborate the quantitative results.

The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that all relevant themes were consistently addressed across interviews. Follow-up questions and prompts were used to clarify responses and explore emerging ideas in greater depth.

Data Collection

Data were collected in two phases following the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. In the quantitative phase, data were gathered through an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study involving 30 undergraduate students was conducted to evaluate the clarity, readability, and appropriateness of the questionnaire items. Face and content validity were examined through participant feedback and expert review to ensure the suitability of the instrument for the Vietnamese EFL context. The pilot results showed acceptable reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.80 (Hair et al., 2019). Minor revisions were subsequently made to improve item wording and clarity.

The final questionnaire was distributed to undergraduate students at several universities in Southern Vietnam through online channels. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequences.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections: demographic information and the LRCEL scale. Participants required approximately 6–8 minutes to complete the survey. Responses were automatically recorded via Google Forms and downloaded for analysis. A total of 586 valid responses were included in the quantitative analysis.

In the qualitative phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 purposively selected participants who had completed the questionnaire and agreed to follow-up participation (coded S1–S12). Participant selection was informed by the quantitative findings to ensure variation in readiness levels. The sample size was guided by the principle of information power, which suggests that smaller samples are sufficient when participants possess experiences highly relevant to the research aims (Malterud et al., 2016). Given the narrow focus of the study and the specificity of participants' experiences with ChatGPT-assisted English learning, 12 participants were considered sufficient to provide rich

qualitative insights. Each interview lasted approximately 30–35 minutes, was conducted in Vietnamese via Zoom, and was audio-recorded with participants' consent.

With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim in Vietnamese, and subsequently translated into English for reporting purposes. To enhance credibility, the transcripts were returned to participants for member checking. All participant identities were anonymized during transcription to ensure confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Prior to the main analysis, the dataset was screened to ensure data quality and suitability for statistical analysis. This process included checking for missing values, outliers, and data entry errors. In addition, the assumptions of normality were examined through skewness and kurtosis indices, with values within ± 2 considered acceptable for normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2019). The results indicated that the skewness and kurtosis values for all variables fell within the acceptable range, supporting the assumption of normality for subsequent statistical analyses.

Following data screening, descriptive statistics were computed to examine the overall level of students' readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning. Specifically, means and standard deviations were calculated for the overall scale as well as for each of the seven dimensions of the LRCEL instrument. Following previous educational research using five-point Likert scales, mean scores were interpreted using three levels: low (1.00–2.33), moderate (2.34–3.66), and high (3.67–5.00) (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995). These analyses addressed the first research question by providing a profile of students' readiness levels.

The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using a deductive thematic analysis approach informed by Braun and Clarke's (2022) framework. This approach was selected to align with the theoretical framework and the predefined dimensions of learner readiness identified in the LRCEL scale. A deductive approach was considered appropriate because the analysis was guided by theoretically established categories related to learner readiness.

The analysis followed a systematic process. First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim by the researcher to preserve participants' original expressions and meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). The transcripts were then carefully reviewed multiple times to achieve familiarization with the data. Next, an initial coding framework was developed based on the seven dimensions of readiness identified in the LRCEL scale, namely perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, attitude, intention, enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom. These predefined dimensions served as the primary coding categories.

Subsequently, relevant segments of the data were coded and categorized according to these dimensions. During the coding process, additional sub-themes were identified within each category to capture nuanced student experiences and perspectives. The coded data were then organized and interpreted to identify patterns explaining how students perceive and experience their readiness for using ChatGPT in English learning. Quotations presented in this article were translated from Vietnamese into English by the researchers, with careful attention to preserving participants' intended meanings.

Results

This section presents the findings in relation to the two research questions. The quantitative findings are presented first to report students' readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning across the seven

dimensions of the LRCEL scale, followed by the qualitative findings, which further explain and elaborate the quantitative results. Overall, students demonstrated relatively high levels of readiness across most dimensions, particularly in perceived behavioral control, attitude, and enjoyment, whereas moderate levels were observed in intention, anxiety, and boredom.

Quantitative Findings (RQ1)

The quantitative findings addressing Research Question 1 are presented according to the seven dimensions of the LRCEL scale: perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, attitude, intention, enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the seven dimensions of the LRCEL scale. Overall, students reported high levels of readiness in perceived behavioral control ($M = 3.88$), attitude ($M = 3.79$), enjoyment ($M = 3.73$), and subjective norms ($M = 3.69$). By contrast, intention ($M = 3.61$), boredom ($M = 3.20$), and anxiety ($M = 3.18$) fell within the moderate range. Among the seven dimensions, perceived behavioral control recorded the highest mean score, whereas anxiety recorded the lowest. These findings provide an overall overview of students' readiness before the item-level results are presented.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for the Seven Dimensions of LRCEL*

No	Dimension	No. of items	M	Level
1	Perceived Behavioral Control	3	3.88	High
2	Subjective Norms	3	3.69	High
3	Attitude	3	3.79	High
4	Intention	3	3.61	Moderate
5	Enjoyment	2	3.73	High
6	Anxiety	2	3.18	Moderate
7	Boredom	2	3.20	Moderate

Perceived Behavioral Control

As shown in Table 3, students reported relatively high levels of perceived behavioral control when using ChatGPT for English learning. Specifically, the highest mean score was observed for Item 3 ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.00$), indicating that students generally perceived themselves as capable of making appropriate decisions when using ChatGPT in their learning process. Similarly, Item 1 also received a high rating ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.97$), suggesting that students found the tool relatively easy to use. In addition, Item 2 ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.02$) also fell within the high range, indicating that students generally perceived themselves as having sufficient knowledge and ability to use ChatGPT for English learning.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Behavioral Control*

No	Description	M	SD
1	It is easy for me to use ChatGPT to learn English knowledge and skills.	3.90	0.97
2	I have the knowledge and ability to use ChatGPT to learn English knowledge and skills.	3.75	1.02
3	I have the control to make a decision of how to use ChatGPT in English learning appropriately.	3.98	1.00

Subjective Norms

The results in Table 4 indicate moderate to relatively high levels of perceived social support for using ChatGPT in English learning. Specifically, the highest mean score was observed for Item 5 ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.00$), indicating that students generally perceived support from their friends in using ChatGPT for English learning. Similarly, Item 4 also received a high rating ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.98$), suggesting that teachers were generally perceived as supportive of students' use of ChatGPT.

In contrast, Item 6 recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.06$), which falls within the moderate range, indicating that students perceived a comparatively lower level of support from social media in relation to their use of ChatGPT for English learning.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics for Subjective Norms*

No	Description	M	SD
4	My teachers are very supportive of my use of ChatGPT in English learning.	3.67	0.98
5	My friends are very supportive of my use of ChatGPT in English learning.	3.78	1.00
6	The social media is very supportive of my use of ChatGPT in English learning.	3.61	1.06

Attitude

As shown in Table 5, students reported relatively positive attitudes toward using ChatGPT in English learning. Specifically, the highest mean score was observed for Item 9 ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.00$), indicating that students generally perceived ChatGPT as helpful for improving their English writing ability. Similarly, Item 7 also received a high rating ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.99$), suggesting that students generally viewed using ChatGPT in English learning as a pleasant experience.

In addition, Item 8 ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.05$) also fell within the high range, indicating that students generally perceived ChatGPT as helpful for improving their English reading ability.

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics for Attitude*

No	Description	M	SD
7	Using ChatGPT in English learning would be a pleasant experience.	3.77	0.99
8	I think using ChatGPT could improve my ability in English reading.	3.76	1.05
9	I think using ChatGPT could improve my ability in English writing.	3.84	1.00

Intention

According to Table 6, students reported moderate levels of intention to use ChatGPT for English learning in the future. Specifically, the highest mean score was observed for Item 12 ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.01$), indicating that students generally reported a willingness to recommend ChatGPT for English learning to others. In contrast, Item 11 ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.14$) and Item 10 ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.10$) recorded lower mean scores, both falling within the moderate range, suggesting that students reported comparatively lower levels of intention to use or continue using ChatGPT for their own English learning in the future.

Table 6. *Descriptive Statistics for Intention*

No	Description	M	SD
10	I intend to use ChatGPT to learn English in the future.	3.49	1.10
11	I intend to continue to use ChatGPT to learn English in the future.	3.50	1.14
12	I intend to recommend ChatGPT in English learning to others.	3.84	1.01

Enjoyment

Students reported relatively high levels of enjoyment when using ChatGPT in English learning, as shown in Table 7. Specifically, the highest mean score was observed for Item 14 ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.06$), indicating that students generally enjoyed acquiring new English knowledge through ChatGPT. Similarly, Item 13 also received a high rating ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.04$), suggesting that students generally reported enjoyment when using ChatGPT in English learning.

Table 7. *Descriptive Statistics for Enjoyment*

No	Description	M	SD
13	I enjoy using ChatGPT in English learning.	3.70	1.04
14	I enjoy acquiring new English knowledge through ChatGPT.	3.76	1.06

Anxiety

As shown in Table 8, students reported moderate levels of anxiety when using ChatGPT in English learning. Specifically, the highest mean score was observed for Item 15 ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.20$), indicating that students generally reported feelings of uneasiness when thinking about using ChatGPT in English learning. Similarly, Item 16 ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.30$) also fell within the moderate range, suggesting that students reported feelings of tension and nervousness while studying English with ChatGPT.

In addition, the relatively high standard deviation values indicate variation in students' responses across the two items.

Table 8. *Descriptive Statistics for Anxiety*

No	Description	M	SD
15	Thinking about the English class using ChatGPT makes me feel uneasy.	3.30	1.20
16	I get tense and nervous while studying English with ChatGPT.	3.05	1.30

Boredom

Table 9 shows moderate levels of boredom associated with students' use of ChatGPT in English learning. The highest mean score was found for Item 18 ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.21$), followed by Item 17 ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.25$), with both items falling within the moderate range. In addition, the relatively high standard deviation values indicate variation in students' responses across the two items.

Table 9. *Descriptive Statistics for Boredom*

No	Description	M	SD
17	I get bored in learning English content and skills with ChatGPT.	3.13	1.25
18	The materials provided in ChatGPT when learning English bore me to death.	3.27	1.21

Qualitative Findings (RQ2)

The qualitative findings addressing Research Question 2 are presented according to the major themes derived from the deductive thematic analysis. Participants selected for the interviews reflected different levels of readiness identified in the quantitative phase, enabling the exploration of diverse learner experiences. Overall, the findings suggest that students' readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning was dynamic and context-dependent across cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions.

Uneven and Conditional Perceived Behavioral Control

Although the quantitative findings indicated relatively high levels of perceived behavioral control, the qualitative data revealed that students' sense of control was uneven and conditional rather than uniformly experienced. In particular, the relatively high standard deviation values observed across the perceived behavioral control items suggest considerable variation in how confidently students perceived their ability to use ChatGPT for English learning. Some students described themselves as highly confident and strategic users, whereas others expressed uncertainty, passive reliance, and difficulty evaluating AI-generated responses.

Several participants described perceived control not merely as technical ease of use, but as the ability to interact strategically and adaptively with ChatGPT. One participant explained,

"I can use ChatGPT easily, but the important thing is knowing how to ask properly to get useful answers" (S3).

Similarly, another participant noted,

"When the first answer is not useful, I try different ways of asking until it works" (S6).

These accounts suggest that students with stronger perceived behavioral control tended to approach ChatGPT as an interactive tool requiring experimentation, refinement, and prompting strategies. In particular, students from technology-related disciplines generally appeared more confident in modifying prompts, evaluating responses, and adjusting their interactions to obtain more relevant outputs.

However, this sense of control was not stable across all learners. In contrast, several students from non-technology-related fields described more passive and uncertain patterns of interaction, particularly when dealing with unfamiliar topics. As one participant shared,

"I feel in control only when I already understand the topic; otherwise I just follow what it says" (S2).

This finding suggests that students' perceived control was strongly influenced by their prior knowledge and familiarity with the learning content. Learners who possessed stronger background knowledge appeared more capable of questioning and regulating AI-generated responses, whereas those with limited familiarity tended to rely on ChatGPT more uncritically.

Moreover, students' confidence in using ChatGPT was frequently accompanied by uncertainty regarding the reliability of AI-generated content. For instance, one participant explained,

"Sometimes I feel confident using it, but I still need to check the answers because I'm not sure if they are correct" (S8),

while another added,

"Using ChatGPT feels easy, but deciding whether to trust it is actually the difficult part" (S11).

These accounts indicate that perceived behavioral control involved not only operational ease, but also evaluative competence. While many students felt technically capable of using ChatGPT, some simultaneously experienced uncertainty when judging the accuracy and appropriateness of AI-generated responses.

Taken together, the findings suggest that perceived behavioral control was characterized by a tension between operational confidence and evaluative uncertainty. This variation helps explain the relatively dispersed quantitative responses, indicating that students' sense of control over ChatGPT-assisted English learning was unevenly developed and highly dependent on disciplinary background, prior knowledge, and evaluative ability.

Readiness as a Socially Negotiated Process

Rather than being shaped primarily through formal instruction, students' readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning appeared to emerge largely through informal peer interactions and shared academic practices. While the quantitative findings showed relatively high levels of perceived social support, the interview data revealed considerable variation in how different social sources influenced students' engagement with ChatGPT. For many participants, peers functioned as the most immediate and influential source of guidance, whereas teacher support was often perceived as indirect or cautious.

A recurring pattern across the interviews was the strong influence of peers in shaping students' engagement with ChatGPT. One participant explained,

"My friends show me how they use ChatGPT for assignments, so I just follow their way" (S5).

Similarly, another participant noted,

"Teachers don't teach how to use it, so I learn mostly from friends instead" (S10).

These accounts suggest that students often developed their readiness for using ChatGPT through observation, imitation, and informal peer support rather than through structured classroom instruction. In particular, Year 1 students appeared more likely to rely on classmates for practical strategies and recommendations regarding how to use ChatGPT for academic tasks.

Beyond direct assistance, peer influence also appeared to operate through normalization and implicit comparison. For instance, one participant shared,

"Everyone around me uses it, so I feel like I should also use it to keep up" (S1),

while another explained,

"My friends don't tell me to use it, but if I don't, I feel slower than them" (S8).

These findings suggest that students' readiness was socially negotiated within peer communities where ChatGPT use had become increasingly normalized. Rather than being explicitly instructed to use the tool, some students appeared to experience indirect social pressure to adopt ChatGPT in order to remain academically competitive or socially aligned with their peers.

However, peer influence was not experienced equally across all participants. Several students from non-technology-related disciplines appeared more dependent on peer recommendations and shared practices when deciding how to use ChatGPT effectively. In contrast, some students from technology-related backgrounds described themselves as more independent and experimental users who relied less on others' guidance. This variation may help explain the dispersion observed in the quantitative findings related to subjective norms.

In comparison to peer influence, teacher support appeared more cautious and indirect. As one participant explained,

"My teacher doesn't stop us from using it, but also reminds us to be careful and not depend too much" (S9).

This suggests that teachers often occupied an ambivalent role, simultaneously recognizing the usefulness of ChatGPT while expressing concerns regarding overreliance and responsible learning practices. Consequently, students frequently perceived teacher support as permissive rather than instructional.

Regarding social media, students described it primarily as a source of exposure and awareness rather than trustworthy guidance. For example, one participant noted,

"I see many tips about ChatGPT on TikTok, but I don't always trust them or use them in my study" (S2).

This indicates that while social media contributed to the visibility and normalization of ChatGPT, its influence on students' actual learning practices was constrained by concerns over credibility, relevance, and reliability.

Overall, the findings indicate that learner readiness was embedded within broader social relationships rather than developed solely through individual motivation or technical competence. Peer communities appeared to normalize and reinforce ChatGPT use in everyday academic practices, while teacher and social media influences played comparatively more limited and uneven roles. This social variation may help explain why students differed in their perceptions of support and encouragement for using ChatGPT in English learning.

Emotional Ambivalence in ChatGPT-Assisted English Learning

Students' emotional experiences with ChatGPT-assisted English learning were characterized by a mixture of enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom rather than consistently positive or negative reactions. Although the quantitative findings showed relatively high levels of enjoyment alongside moderate levels of anxiety and boredom, the interview data revealed that these emotions frequently coexisted and fluctuated depending on students' learning experiences, expectations, and patterns of interaction with the tool.

For many participants, enjoyment was closely associated with the immediacy, convenience, and efficiency provided by ChatGPT during English learning activities. One student explained,

“I like using it because I can get answers immediately without waiting like in class” (S6),

while another noted,

“It feels satisfying when it gives exactly what I need quickly” (S8).

Several students from business- and technology-related disciplines particularly valued ChatGPT for helping them complete academic tasks more efficiently and reducing the time needed to search for information or organize ideas.

Beyond efficiency, some participants also connected enjoyment to a greater sense of interactional control and flexibility during learning. As one student shared,

“I enjoy it more when I can control the conversation, not just read the answers” (S2).

However, this enjoyment was often accompanied by feelings of anxiety, particularly when students were uncertain about the reliability or appropriateness of AI-generated responses. For instance, one participant explained,

“I feel unsure whether the answers are correct, so I’m afraid of learning something wrong” (S1),

while another noted,

“I worry that I can’t tell which part is correct or incorrect” (S6).

Several students from non-technology-related disciplines appeared more likely to describe anxiety related to evaluating unfamiliar or complex responses generated by ChatGPT. In some cases, students also expressed concern about becoming overly dependent on the tool. As one participant explained,

“Sometimes I feel nervous that I rely on it too much and forget how to do it myself” (S12).

In addition, some participants associated anxiety with the cognitive demands involved in interacting effectively with ChatGPT. One student reflected,

“If the answer is too complex, I feel confused and not confident using it” (S3),

while another shared,

“Sometimes I don’t know how to ask clearly, so I worry the answers are not what I need” (S9).

At the same time, prolonged use of ChatGPT also appeared to reduce students’ engagement and interest over time. Several participants described boredom emerging from repetitive interaction patterns and the predictability of AI-generated responses. As one participant noted,

“The responses are correct, but they don’t surprise me anymore” (S7),

while another explained,

"After a while, the responses feel quite similar, so it becomes less interesting to use" (S12).

This pattern appeared more frequently among several Year 2 students, who often described ChatGPT as becoming less novel and stimulating after repeated use. In contrast, some Year 1 students still viewed the tool as relatively engaging and useful for academic support.

Moreover, boredom was not simply related to repetition, but also to perceptions of reduced cognitive engagement and limited authentic interaction. One student reflected,

"I lose interest when I don't feel like I'm improving, just getting answers" (S10),

while another noted,

"It gives answers, but there is no real interaction like talking to a person, so I sometimes lose interest" (S6).

Rather than representing separate emotional states, enjoyment, anxiety, and boredom frequently intersected within students' experiences of AI-assisted English learning. Students appreciated the speed, convenience, and accessibility of ChatGPT, yet simultaneously questioned the reliability of its responses and experienced reduced engagement after prolonged interaction. These emotional variations help explain the dispersion observed in the quantitative findings and highlight that emotional readiness for ChatGPT-assisted learning was unstable, context-dependent, and shaped by both the affordances and limitations of AI-mediated interaction.

Discussion

By integrating quantitative trends with qualitative insights, the present study demonstrates that learner readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning was unevenly developed, socially negotiated, and emotionally ambivalent rather than uniformly positive or stable. Although students generally reported relatively high levels of perceived behavioral control, positive attitudes, and enjoyment, the qualitative findings revealed considerable variation in how learners experienced and enacted this readiness across different learning situations. In particular, students' engagement with ChatGPT appeared to fluctuate according to prior knowledge, disciplinary background, task demands, peer influence, and emotional responses toward AI-assisted interaction. These findings therefore suggest that learner readiness extends beyond technical competence and should be understood as a dynamic process shaped by the interaction of cognitive, social, and emotional conditions.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings challenge a central assumption underlying the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that favourable attitudes and strong perceived behavioral control should lead to stronger behavioral intentions and, ultimately, more stable behavioral engagement. While previous studies have confirmed this relatively linear relationship in technology adoption contexts (Nie et al., 2020; Pan et al., 2023), the present findings suggest that such a relationship may not fully capture the complexity of learners' engagement with AI-assisted learning tools. Despite students' generally positive evaluations of ChatGPT, their intention to use the tool remained moderate and highly conditional upon task demands, learning goals, and situational needs. This indicates a partial disconnect between evaluative readiness and behavioral commitment, suggesting that intention in AI-assisted learning may be more fluid and context-sensitive than traditionally assumed.

The findings also extend recent discussions on learner readiness in AI-assisted language learning. While the LRCEL framework proposed by Luo and Zou (2024b) conceptualizes readiness as a multi-dimensional construct integrating cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions, the present study further demonstrates that these dimensions do not necessarily operate in stable or synchronized ways. Instead, students' readiness fluctuated depending on their prior knowledge, confidence, familiarity with learning tasks, and ability to critically evaluate AI-generated outputs. The qualitative findings particularly revealed that perceived behavioral control was experienced unevenly across learners, with some students demonstrating strategic and adaptive engagement while others relied more passively on AI-generated responses. For example, learners reported greater confidence and control when they were already familiar with the topic but tended to depend more uncritically on ChatGPT when engaging with unfamiliar content. These findings therefore suggest that readiness is not merely a dispositional learner attribute, but rather a situated capacity emerging through the interaction between learner characteristics and contextual learning conditions.

Such a dynamic conceptualization aligns with broader perspectives in educational psychology that view learner engagement as contextually embedded rather than trait-like. For example, self-regulated learning theory emphasizes that learners continuously adapt their strategies and behaviours in response to task demands and perceived challenges (Zimmerman, 2002). Similarly, research on digital learning environments has shown that technology use is often episodic, selective, and goal-oriented rather than stable or habitual (Bower, 2019). In the context of AI-assisted language learning, this suggests that learners may selectively activate their readiness when the perceived usefulness of ChatGPT outweighs the cognitive, emotional, or evaluative effort required to engage with it effectively.

Importantly, the present findings also contribute to ongoing discussions regarding the affordances and limitations of ChatGPT-assisted English learning. Our findings are consistent with more recent research published after the completion of the present study, which likewise highlights the potential of ChatGPT to provide personalized feedback, interaction, learner autonomy, and flexible access to learning resources (Chen, 2026; Hirschel & Horai, 2025; Kohnke, 2025). At the same time, these more recent studies also acknowledge continuing concerns regarding epistemic reliability, cognitive overload, overreliance, and superficial engagement (Albadarin et al., 2024; Firat, 2023; Stockwell & Wang, 2025). The present study extends this literature by demonstrating that such affordances and challenges were not uniformly experienced across learners but were mediated by learners' fluctuating readiness. In this sense, readiness functions as a situational filter shaping whether the potential benefits of AI are meaningfully realized in practice.

Another important finding emerging from the study is the imbalance between students' operational competence and their evaluative competence when using ChatGPT. Although students generally demonstrated confidence in using ChatGPT and were able to iteratively refine prompts to obtain more relevant responses, many simultaneously expressed uncertainty regarding the accuracy, reliability, and appropriateness of AI-generated outputs. This divergence suggests that learner readiness is internally differentiated rather than uniformly developed across competencies. This finding is further supported by subsequent research published after the completion of the present study, which similarly emphasizes that effective engagement with ChatGPT requires learners not only to use AI tools proficiently but also to evaluate AI-generated content critically (Jahan & Akbar, 2026).

From an interpretive perspective, this pattern reflects a distinction between procedural fluency and evaluative judgment. Students appeared to be functionally capable of interacting with ChatGPT by navigating the platform, generating responses, and modifying prompts, yet less prepared to critically assess the epistemic quality of those responses. In this sense, their readiness was enacted more strongly at the level of operational use than at the level of critical interpretation and validation.

This interpretation aligns with previous research indicating that learners often acquire surface-level interactional competence more rapidly than deeper critical competencies required for meaningful engagement with AI-generated content (Ma et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2022).

Within existing literature, such differences are frequently discussed through the lens of AI literacy. For example, Wang et al. (2022) emphasize that AI literacy involves not only the ability to use AI systems, but also the capacity to evaluate outputs and understand their limitations. However, the present findings suggest that these dimensions may not develop evenly. While students in this study showed relatively strong operational competence, their reported difficulties in verifying information, judging correctness, and avoiding overreliance point to weaker evaluative and reflective competencies. This uneven profile therefore supports the argument that AI literacy is multidimensional and may emerge as partial rather than holistic competence (Ma et al., 2024).

The findings further reveal that students' evaluative readiness is closely connected to their prior knowledge and metacognitive awareness. When learners possessed sufficient background knowledge, they were more likely to question, verify, and critically interpret AI-generated responses. In contrast, when engaging with unfamiliar topics, students tended to accept AI outputs more passively and with minimal scrutiny. This suggests that evaluative readiness is shaped not only by technological competence, but also by learners' domain knowledge and capacity for critical reflection.

Furthermore, this difficulty in evaluation is intensified by the nature of AI-generated outputs themselves. As noted by Kasneci et al. (2023), responses generated by large language models are often linguistically fluent and authoritative in tone despite containing inaccuracies or misleading information. Consequently, learners may experience epistemic uncertainty, where they can efficiently access information but remain uncertain about how to evaluate its validity. This reinforces the argument that effective engagement with AI requires not only operational skill, but also the ability to critically interrogate and regulate knowledge.

Taken together, these findings suggest that learner readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning comprises at least two analytically distinct dimensions: an operational dimension related to functional use of the tool, and an evaluative dimension related to critical interpretation and regulation of AI-generated content. The imbalance between these dimensions indicates that readiness develops unevenly rather than holistically across competencies.

Another notable finding is that learner readiness appeared to be socially negotiated through peer interaction and shared academic practices rather than shaped primarily through formal instructional guidance. Although students generally reported relatively high levels of perceived social support, qualitative findings revealed that this support was enacted unevenly across different social sources. In particular, peer networks emerged as the most immediate and influential context shaping students' engagement with ChatGPT, whereas teacher support was often perceived as indirect, cautious, or minimally instructional.

From an interpretive perspective, these findings point to a gradual shift in the locus of influence within AI-assisted learning environments. Traditionally, teachers have occupied central roles in EFL classrooms as primary sources of guidance, scaffolding, and knowledge transmission. However, in the context of emerging technologies such as ChatGPT, learners increasingly appear to rely on peers for practical strategies, demonstrations, and usage norms. Rather than receiving explicit instruction from teachers regarding AI use, students reported learning through observing and adopting peer practices, suggesting that readiness develops through social modelling and informal knowledge exchange. This interpretation aligns with sociocultural perspectives emphasizing that learning is mediated through interaction and participation in shared social practices (Vygotsky, 1978).

At the same time, the role of teachers appeared more complex and cautious than directive. Consistent with previous discussions surrounding AI use in education (Firat, 2023; Stockwell & Wang, 2025), teachers may simultaneously recognize the usefulness of ChatGPT while expressing concerns regarding dependency, misuse, and reduced critical engagement. As reflected in the present findings, such caution may result in permissive but weakly scaffolded forms of support, where AI use is tolerated but not explicitly guided. Consequently, students often turn to peers as more accessible and immediately relevant sources of assistance.

These findings therefore extend existing conceptualizations of learner readiness by highlighting its socially embedded and collectively negotiated nature. Although frameworks such as the LRCEL emphasize subjective norms as individual perceptions (Luo & Zou, 2024b), the present study demonstrates that such norms are actively co-constructed through peer interaction, comparison, and normalization processes. In particular, students frequently described feeling implicit pressure to adopt ChatGPT because its use had become normalized within peer communities. This reflects a shift from externally imposed expectations toward more decentralized and peer-driven forms of technological engagement.

Finally, the relatively limited influence of social media observed in this study suggests that not all social sources contribute equally to learner readiness. While social media increased awareness and exposure to ChatGPT, students often questioned the credibility and applicability of information encountered online. In contrast, peer interactions provided more context-specific and experience-based guidance directly connected to students' academic practices. This distinction highlights the importance of trust, relevance, and contextual proximity in shaping how social influences are translated into actual AI-assisted learning behaviours.

Another important finding is that students' emotional experiences with ChatGPT-assisted English learning were characterized by ambivalence rather than consistently positive engagement. Although learners appreciated the efficiency, convenience, and immediacy provided by ChatGPT, these positive experiences frequently coexisted with anxiety regarding the reliability of AI-generated outputs and boredom arising from repetitive interaction patterns. This suggests that emotional readiness for AI-assisted learning is inherently unstable and may fluctuate over time depending on learners' expectations, interactional experiences, and perceptions of meaningful learning engagement.

These findings extend previous research emphasizing enjoyment in AI-supported learning environments (Luo & Zou, 2024a) by demonstrating that positive emotional engagement may simultaneously coexist with evaluative uncertainty and reduced cognitive stimulation. While students valued ChatGPT for providing rapid support and flexible interaction, prolonged engagement sometimes reduced their sense of challenge, novelty, and authentic communication. In this sense, students' emotional responses toward ChatGPT appeared multidirectional rather than uniformly facilitative, highlighting the emotionally complex nature of AI-assisted language learning.

Collectively, the findings of the present study suggest that learner readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning should not be conceptualized as a fixed or stable condition. Rather, readiness appears to be dynamic, unevenly developed, socially negotiated, and emotionally fluctuating across learning contexts. This reconceptualization highlights the need to move beyond purely technological understandings of AI adoption and toward more nuanced perspectives recognizing the cognitive, social, and emotional complexity underlying learners' engagement with generative AI tools.

Conclusion

This study investigated university students' readiness for ChatGPT-assisted English learning through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, revealing that learner readiness is both

multidimensional and unevenly developed. While students demonstrated relatively high levels of operational readiness, reflected in their perceived control, positive attitudes, and enjoyment, their readiness was not stable or consistently enacted. Instead, it emerged as conditional and context-dependent, varying across tasks, prior knowledge, and learning situations. In addition, a clear gap was identified between students' ability to use ChatGPT effectively and their capacity to critically evaluate its outputs, suggesting that readiness involves both operational and evaluative dimensions that develop at different rates. Furthermore, readiness was found to be socially constructed, with peer networks playing a more central role than teachers in shaping students' engagement with ChatGPT.

The study contributes to the growing body of research on AI-assisted language learning by extending existing conceptualizations of learner readiness. Specifically, it reconceptualizes readiness as a dynamic and context-sensitive construct rather than a stable learner trait, highlights the distinction between operational and evaluative competence in AI use, and foregrounds the role of informal peer networks in shaping technology-related learning behaviors. In doing so, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of how learners engage with generative AI tools in authentic EFL contexts. The findings also suggest that learner readiness should be understood as an emergent and socially negotiated process shaped by the interaction of cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest the need to move beyond assumptions that university students are inherently "ready" to use generative AI tools effectively. Although these implications are derived from students' experiences with ChatGPT in a Vietnamese EFL higher education context, they may inform the design of instructional practices for similar educational settings. In particular, educators should focus on supporting students' critical engagement with AI, especially in developing their ability to evaluate the accuracy, reliability, and appropriateness of AI-generated content. In addition, given the strong influence of peer networks, educators may consider integrating collaborative and peer-supported approaches into AI-assisted learning activities while also providing more explicit guidance on effective, ethical, and responsible AI use. At the institutional level, universities may also consider developing AI literacy initiatives and practical guidelines to support students' informed and critical use of generative AI tools in academic learning contexts.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted using convenience sampling within universities in Southern Vietnam, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Second, the reliance on self-reported questionnaire data may be subject to response bias. Third, although the qualitative phase provided deeper insights into students' experiences, the interview findings reflect the perspectives of the 12 participants included in this study and may not capture the full range of learner perspectives across different contexts. Although this study specifically focused on ChatGPT due to its widespread use and its alignment with the validated LRCEL scale (Luo & Zou, 2024b), the findings may also offer broader insights into learners' readiness to engage with other generative AI chatbots in language learning contexts. Nevertheless, caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings across AI tools, as different platforms may vary in functionality, accessibility, and user experience. Future research could adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to examine how learner readiness evolves over time and how different forms of instructional support influence students' engagement with AI-assisted learning tools.

Use of Generative AI

As guided, generative AI tools were used solely to assist in improving the clarity and quality of academic writing in this manuscript. Specifically, AI-based language tools were utilized for minor language editing, including grammar correction, paraphrasing, and stylistic refinement. The AI tools were not used to generate research ideas, conduct data analysis, interpret results, or write the conclusions. All intellectual content, analysis, and final revisions were completed and verified by the authors.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How often do you use ChatGPT for learning English?
2. In what situations or English learning tasks do you usually use ChatGPT?
3. How confident do you feel when using ChatGPT for English learning? Why?
4. What difficulties, if any, do you experience when using ChatGPT for English learning?
5. How do you evaluate whether ChatGPT's responses are accurate, reliable, or appropriate for your English learning?
6. How do your teachers influence your use of ChatGPT for English learning?
7. How do your friends or classmates influence your use of ChatGPT?
8. Does social media affect your perceptions or use of ChatGPT for English learning? How?
9. What do you think are the benefits of using ChatGPT for English learning?
10. Are there any concerns or negative experiences you have when using ChatGPT for English learning?
11. Do you think you will continue using ChatGPT for English learning in the future? Why or why not?
12. How do you usually feel when using ChatGPT for English learning (e.g., enjoyment, anxiety, boredom, confidence)? Why do you think you feel that way?
13. Can you describe a specific experience that strongly influenced your feelings or perceptions about using ChatGPT in English learning?