HUFLIT PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF READINESS, BENEFITS, AND CHALLENGES IN USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT—As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly visible in English language teaching and in Vietnam's wider agenda for digital transformation, it is important to understand how pre-service English teachers currently perceive their preparation for AI-supported pedagogy. Existing Vietnamese studies have largely examined general student use of ChatGPT or broad attitudes toward AI, leaving limited evidence on how pre-service English teachers understand their readiness, perceived benefits, and perceived challenges from their current learning experiences and early teaching preparation. This mixed-methods study investigated HUFLIT pre-service English teachers' perceptions of readiness, benefits, and challenges in relation to AI use in English language teaching. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire survey with 115 students and analyzed using descriptive statistics; qualitative data from a focus group interview with 8 students were examined through qualitative content analysis. The findings showed that readiness was moderate, whereas perceived benefits were highly positive and perceived challenges were also strongly recognized. Overall, participants were interested in AI and had used it for learning and teaching-related preparation, but they did not yet view themselves as fully prepared for pedagogically sound and ethically responsible classroom integration. The study highlights the need to embed AI literacy, evaluative judgment, ethical awareness, and context-sensitive pedagogical training more explicitly into English teacher education in Vietnam.

Keywords—artificial intelligence, AI literacy, pre-service English teachers, readiness, English language teaching, Vietnam

I. INTRODUCTION

Artificial intelligence has moved from a distant policy issue to an everyday concern in higher education and English language teaching. International guidance now treats generative AI as a matter of institutional governance, teacher capacity, academic integrity, and human oversight rather than a simple classroom technology [1], [2]. In English language teaching, tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, automated writing assistants, and AI supported feedback systems are increasingly used to generate lesson ideas, adapt materials, model vocabulary and grammar explanations, support writing revision, and provide language practice [3], [4]. At the same time, these tools may produce inaccurate or biased content, unclear authorship, weak source verification, and privacy risks, especially when users rely on fluent output without professional judgment [1], [2], [5]. For language teachers, this means that AI affects not only preparation efficiency, but also the quality of explanation, interaction, assessment, and source use.

This issue is especially important for teacher education because pre-service teachers are still developing professional identity, pedagogical reasoning, and ethical decision making. For future English teachers, AI readiness cannot be reduced to knowing how to access a tool or write a prompt. UNESCO's AI competency framework for teachers defines teacher preparation through a human-centred mindset, ethics of AI, foundational AI knowledge, AI pedagogy, and AI for professional learning [6]. Therefore, the key question is not only whether pre-service English teachers find AI useful, but whether they feel prepared to use AI in ways that are pedagogically sound, ethically responsible, and appropriate for their learners. Such preparation is particularly necessary in language teaching, where examples, feedback, and assessment decisions directly shape learners' communicative competence and academic integrity.

Across Asia, the discussion has also shifted from individual experimentation to regional governance and capacity building. ASEAN's Guide on AI Governance and Ethics emphasizes responsible, transparent, human-centred, and risk-aware AI adoption across member states [7]. This regional orientation matters for English language teacher education because future teachers are likely to enter schools and universities where AI use is increasingly normalized, but also increasingly subject to institutional rules, ethical expectations, and public accountability. In this setting, English teachers are expected not only to use technology efficiently, but also to mediate how technology shapes interaction, feedback, assessment, authorship, and learner autonomy. Thus, AI readiness becomes a professional competence rather than a personal digital habit.

In Vietnam, AI in education is developing within two intersecting policy directions: digital transformation and the strengthening of English education. Decision 131/QD-TTg approved the project on strengthening information technology application and digital transformation in education and training for 2022-2025, with orientation to 2030 [8]. Decision 2371/QD-TTg later approved the national project of making English the second language in

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schools during 2025-2035, with a vision to 2045 [9]. These policies create a context in which future English teachers may face stronger expectations for both English pedagogy and technology informed teaching. However, digital transformation in Vietnamese higher education remains uneven, with reported gaps in institutional strategy, infrastructure, staff development, and systematic support [10]. This gap between policy ambition and institutional readiness makes teacher education a critical space for preparing responsible AI use.

Vietnam-focused studies show that AI and ChatGPT are already used in English learning and university study, with perceived benefits such as time saving, idea generation, language support, writing revision, translation assistance, and access to learning resources [11]. Studies with Vietnamese university students and pedagogy students similarly report positive attitudes toward ChatGPT for information searching, assignments, and learning support [12]-[14]. Yet these studies also identify concerns about misinformation, plagiarism, over-reliance, reduced critical engagement, and lack of clear guidance [11]-[14]. This evidence suggests that AI acceptance should not be confused with AI preparedness, especially when the target group is not general learners but future teachers. A future English teacher must judge whether AI generated content is accurate, teachable, ethical, and suitable for Vietnamese learners.

Against this background, HUFLIT provides a specific and meaningful context for investigation. As Ho Chi Minh City University of Foreign Languages - Information Technology, HUFLIT has an institutional identity that connects foreign language education with information technology. Nevertheless, little is known about how HUFLIT pre-service English teachers perceive their readiness, benefits, and challenges in using AI for English teaching. Existing Vietnamese studies have mainly examined general students, English learners, or broad groups of pedagogy students, while international studies show that pre-service teachers may welcome AI but remain uncertain about knowledge, ethics, and classroom application [15]-[21]. The present study therefore addresses a specific institutional, professional, and conceptual gap: institutionally, it focuses on HUFLIT; professionally, it examines future English teachers rather than general AI users; and conceptually, it treats readiness as pedagogical and ethical preparedness rather than simple perceived usefulness. It examines HUFLIT pre-service English teachers as future designers, mediators, evaluators, and regulators of AI supported English learning. The study addresses the following questions:

RQ1. How do pre-service English teachers at HUFLIT perceive their readiness to use AI in English language teaching?

RQ2. What benefits and challenges do they perceive in relation to AI use in English language teaching?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. THEORETICAL LENS: AI COMPETENCY AND TEACHER READINESS

This study is guided by UNESCO's AI competency framework for teachers, which provides the conceptual thread linking readiness, perceived benefits, and perceived challenges [6]. The framework conceptualizes teacher preparation for AI through human-centred values, ethical awareness, AI foundations, pedagogical integration, and professional learning. In the present study, readiness is therefore not treated as simple tool access or frequency of use. It is understood as perceived capacity to use AI with pedagogical judgment, ethical responsibility, and contextual sensitivity.

The same framework also clarifies why benefits and challenges must be examined together. AI may support lesson planning, material adaptation, feedback, and language explanation, but these benefits become educationally meaningful only when teachers can evaluate outputs, adapt them to learners, and protect human agency. Conversely, challenges such as inaccurate content, plagiarism, dependence, privacy, and poor contextual fit are not peripheral problems; they directly shape whether AI use can become professionally responsible practice. This theoretical lens informed the construction of the questionnaire, the focus group guide, and the interpretation of the findings.

B. AI IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: AFFORDANCES AND RISKS

Recent research on AI in language education shows a consistent cluster of perceived affordances. Generative tools are used to draft dialogues, generate prompts, simplify reading materials, model grammar explanations, revise writing, and prepare classroom activities. Studies with pre-service EFL teachers and EFL learners report that AI can support idea organization, time management, writing improvement, engagement, multilingual scaffolding, and future teaching preparation [16], [17], [19], [21]. These studies suggest that AI is valued mainly as a flexible support resource that can reduce planning burden and widen pedagogical options.

However, the same literature also identifies persistent risks. AI-generated outputs may be fluent but inaccurate, insufficiently personalized, ethically problematic, or weakly aligned with classroom realities. Castillo-Cuesta, Ochoa-Cueva, and Cabrera-Solano reported concerns about personalization and accuracy among pre-service EFL

teachers [16], while Alda noted concerns about overuse, critical thinking, and creativity [19]. Baskara and Meniado and colleagues also emphasized that educational value depends heavily on user proficiency, interpretive ability, and critical mediation [17], [21]. Thus, positive perceptions of AI in ELT should be understood together with the risks that require teacher judgment.

C. READINESS, BENEFITS, AND CHALLENGES AMONG PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS

In Vietnam, Pham and Cao's systematic review shows that ChatGPT has been associated with time saving, idea generation, language support, and access to learning resources in English teaching and learning [11]. Similar patterns appear in studies with Vietnamese university students and pedagogy students, where ChatGPT is valued for summarizing materials, supporting assignments, and helping with lesson-plan-related work [12]-[14]. These findings provide an important foundation, but they mostly describe use and attitudes rather than the professional readiness of future English teachers.

For pre-service English teachers, readiness is more demanding than general acceptance. It includes the ability to judge whether AI-generated content is accurate, pedagogically appropriate, ethically acceptable, and suitable for Vietnamese learners and classrooms. Karaduman's distinction between AI literacy and AI competency is useful because pre-service EFL teachers may show interest in AI while still feeling uncertain about knowledge, ethical understanding, and classroom application [15]. Ozer-Altinkaya and Yetkin similarly argue that readiness for AI-integrated language instruction requires competence beyond technological familiarity [20]. This supports the present study's focus on readiness, benefits, and challenges as interconnected dimensions of teacher preparation.

D. POSITIONING THE PRESENT STUDY

Three gaps justify the present study. First, Vietnam-based research has paid limited attention to pre-service English teachers as a distinct group whose future role involves designing, mediating, and evaluating AI-supported learning. Second, previous studies have often emphasized general attitudes or tool use, whereas less is known about readiness as a construct that includes AI literacy, evaluative judgment, ethical awareness, and program-level preparation. Third, little evidence has connected these perceptions to the specific institutional context of HUFLIT and to the current policy moment in which digital transformation, higher education readiness, and English education are all being prioritized [8]-[10].

Addressing these gaps is important because pre-service English teachers are not only learners who use AI for personal support; they are future professionals who will decide how AI enters lesson planning, classroom interaction, feedback, material adaptation, and academic honesty practices. By examining HUFLIT students' perceptions of readiness, benefits, and challenges, the study provides a grounded account of where teacher preparation appears to be strong, where it remains uneven, and what forms of support may be needed for responsible AI integration in English language teaching.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. The quantitative strand was conducted first to provide a descriptive profile of pre-service English teachers' perceptions of readiness, benefits, and challenges. The qualitative strand was then used to explain and refine the survey patterns by examining how participants reasoned about AI use, teacher agency, ethics, and contextual fit. This design was appropriate because the purpose was not to test causal effects, but to describe perception patterns and interpret their meanings within one teacher-education context.

B. PARTICIPANTS AND CONTEXT

The questionnaire survey involved 115 pre-service English teachers from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at HUFLIT. Quantitative participants were recruited through convenience sampling from eligible third- and fourth-year students in the English teacher education context because these students had already completed substantial pedagogical coursework and were close enough to professional practice to evaluate AI use meaningfully. The sample was predominantly female (70.43%), with male respondents accounting for 29.57%, and was concentrated in the third year of study (86.1%), with the remaining 13.9% in the fourth year. Although the sample cannot claim statistical representativeness for all students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, its size was adequate for descriptive survey analysis of the target group and for identifying perception tendencies within this institutional context. To reduce response bias, participation was voluntary, responses were anonymous, and the questionnaire did not ask students to provide names or grades. For the qualitative strand, 8 students were selected purposively to provide variation in AI use experience, formal AI training, and teaching-related exposure. This sampling strategy was used to capture diverse explanations rather than to generalize statistically.

C. INSTRUMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION

The survey instrument consisted of six background questions and three core perception scales measuring readiness (nine items), perceived benefits (eight items), and perceived challenges (eight items). Two additional items explored policy-related orientation toward AI in education and the strengthening of English in schools. The item pool was developed by adapting constructs from UNESCO's AI competency framework for teachers [6] and from prior studies on AI literacy, AI competency, and AI use in English language teaching [11]-[21]. Readiness items addressed basic AI understanding, prompt use, evaluative judgment, revision ability, ethics, confidence, program-level preparation, and boundary-setting. Benefit items focused on lesson idea generation, material preparation, language development, explanation, time saving, creativity, adaptation, and future teacher work. Challenge items focused on inaccuracy, over-reliance, critical thinking, plagiarism, privacy, trustworthiness, insufficient guidance, and contextual mismatch. All scale items used a five-point Likert format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The focus group guide was aligned with the same constructs and included prompts asking participants to explain when they felt ready or unready, how AI had supported their learning or teaching-related preparation, and what risks they associated with AI use in English teaching. The alignment between the theoretical framework, survey constructs, and interview questions was used to strengthen content validity.

Survey data were collected first and were used to identify broad perception tendencies. The focus group interview was then conducted as a follow-up qualitative strand to clarify why students felt more or less ready, which benefits they valued most, and why challenges remained highly salient. Participants in the interview were identified using codes P1 through P8 to protect confidentiality. The interview data were interpreted in relation to the survey results rather than treated as a separate generalizable dataset.

D. DATA ANALYSIS

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS, including means, standard deviations, and frequencies. Mean scores were interpreted using the following threshold: 1.00-1.80 = very low, 1.81-2.60 = low, 2.61-3.40 = moderate, 3.41-4.20 = high, and 4.21-5.00 = very high. Cronbach's alpha values were calculated from the main survey dataset to examine the internal consistency of the three perception scales. The coefficients were modest rather than strong, with $\alpha = .59$ for readiness, $\alpha = .57$ for perceived benefits, and $\alpha = .48$ for perceived challenges; therefore, the questionnaire results were interpreted cautiously as descriptive indicators and were triangulated with focus group data to strengthen interpretation. In addition, the qualitative data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis. Coding began with deductive categories corresponding to readiness, benefits, challenges, teacher agency, and policy awareness; within these categories, recurring subcategories were then identified inductively from the interview data. In the final interpretation, qualitative findings were used to support, explain, and refine the quantitative patterns.

IV. RESULTS

A. RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

Before examining the three core constructs, Table 1 summarizes the respondent profile and the participants' general exposure to AI. The sample was largely female and concentrated in the later stages of teacher preparation, especially the third year. Most respondents were not complete novices to AI: 79.1% reported using AI at least sometimes, including 33.9% who used it often and 8.7% who used it very often. However, only 31.3% reported having received formal instruction or training on AI in education, suggesting a gap between tool exposure and structured preparation. Awareness of broader policy directions was present but not universal: 50.4% had heard about Vietnam's orientation toward AI and digital transformation in education, and 55.7% had heard about the policy direction of strengthening English as a second language in schools. Because Table 1 already presents these background patterns, the duplicated figure presentations were removed from the revised manuscript.

Table 1. *Respondent background characteristics (N = 115)*

Category	Group	n	%
Gender	Male	34	29.57
	Female	81	70.43
Year of study	Year 3	99	86.1
	Year 4	16	13.9
Frequency of AI use	Never	2	1.7
	Rarely	22	19.1
	Sometimes	42	36.5
	Often	39	33.9
	Very often	10	8.7
Formal AI training	Yes	36	31.3
	No	79	68.7

Category	Group	n	%
Awareness of AI policy direction	Yes	58	50.4
	No	20	17.4
	Not sure	37	32.2
Awareness of English-as-second-language policy	Yes	64	55.7
	No	17	14.8
	Not sure	34	29.6

B. READINESS TO USE AI IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Table 2. Perceived readiness to use AI in English language teaching

Code	Item	Mean	SD
R1	I understand the basic functions of AI tools used in education.	3.35	0.689
R2	I know how to use AI tools to support English teaching tasks.	3.44	0.651
R3	I can write effective prompts to get useful answers from AI tools.	3.43	0.703
R4	I can evaluate whether AI-generated content is accurate enough for English teaching.	3.41	0.661
R5	I can revise AI-generated content before using it in teaching-related work.	3.50	0.706
R6	I understand ethical issues related to AI use, such as plagiarism, bias, and privacy.	3.49	0.667
R7	My teacher education program has prepared me to use AI in responsible ways.	3.20	0.665
R8	I feel confident about using AI tools in my future English teaching.	3.47	0.705
R9	I feel ready to decide when AI should be used and when it should not be used in English lessons.	3.37	0.681
Total		3.41	0.33

Using the mean-score threshold stated in the data analysis section, the quantitative results indicate that the participants perceived their readiness at the upper end of the moderate range rather than at a clearly high professional level. The overall readiness mean was 3.41, and none of the nine readiness items reached the very high range. The highest means were recorded for the ability to revise AI-generated content before using it (R5, M = 3.50), awareness of ethical issues such as plagiarism, bias, and privacy (R6, M = 3.49), and confidence about using AI in English teaching (R8, M = 3.47). These values suggest that the respondents did not reject AI; rather, they saw themselves as having emerging competence. However, the lowest readiness score was found in the item on program-level preparation (R7, M = 3.20), followed by the item on deciding when AI should or should not be used in lessons (R9, M = 3.37). This pattern indicates that the weakest area was not basic access to AI, but the feeling of being systematically prepared by teacher education for principled classroom use.

The qualitative findings closely supported and deepened this quantitative pattern. In the focus group, participants repeatedly described themselves as partly ready but not fully prepared. The focus group suggests that readiness was perceived as real but incomplete. None of the participants described themselves as entirely unprepared, yet neither did they claim strong professional readiness. Instead, they positioned themselves in an intermediate zone: they could operate AI tools, generate outputs, and obtain quick support, but they were less confident about judging quality, aligning outputs with pedagogical aims, and using AI responsibly in a real classroom.

Theme 1. Readiness was partial rather than fully developed

The strongest pattern under RQ1 was the distinction between basic functional use and deeper pedagogical readiness. Participants repeatedly signalled that they could use AI at a surface level, but they did not equate this with being professionally ready for classroom integration. This explains why readiness should not be interpreted as simple technological confidence. In the transcript, readiness was repeatedly weakened by doubts about appropriateness, decision-making, and classroom translation.

"I feel partly ready because I know basic functions... But I feel unready in a deeper way" **(P3)**

"Somewhat prepared is the right phrase" **(P1)**

The phrase "somewhat prepared" captures the collective stance of the group. Participants did not describe a readiness deficit in absolute terms; rather, they described uneven readiness. This nuance is important because it shows that exposure to AI had already occurred, but that exposure had not yet matured into professional confidence.

Theme 2. Readiness was understood as judgment, ethics, and boundary-setting

A second pattern was conceptual. Participants did not define readiness narrowly as knowing how to prompt or access AI tools. Instead, they described readiness as the ability to evaluate pedagogical quality, identify limitations, make ethical decisions, and know when AI should not be used. This view closely aligns with the conceptual lens developed in the literature review, where readiness was framed as a professional construct involving literacy, evaluation, adaptation, and ethical reasoning.

"Readiness is not only technical skill. It is also judgment" **(P7)**

"Readiness also includes knowing when not to use AI" **(P8)**

These comments show that participants already distinguished operational skill from professional judgment. The qualitative data therefore deepen the survey pattern: the moderate readiness level is not a sign of rejection, but a sign that participants are already using a relatively demanding standard to judge themselves.

Theme 3. Preparation was largely self-directed and uneven

Readiness was further limited by the way students had learned to use AI. Several participants explained that most of their AI knowledge had been developed individually through self-experimentation rather than through structured teacher education. Participants acknowledged that their program had given them strong methodological foundations, but they also argued that these foundations had not yet been translated into explicit AI-related pedagogy, ethics, and verification routines.

"I learned most of this by myself, not from the program" **(P2)**

"The pedagogical foundation is there, but the AI layer is missing or still weak" **(P7)**

This theme is significant because it points to an institutional gap, not merely an individual one. Students were not asking for AI to replace methodology courses; they were asking for methodology, practicum, and AI use to be connected more explicitly. In other words, the focus group suggests that readiness remained moderate partly because teacher education had prepared them indirectly, but not systematically, for AI-integrated English teaching. This helps explain why readiness remained moderate even though the participants were already active users of AI.

C. PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF AI IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Table 3. Perceived benefits of AI in English language teaching

Code	Item	Mean	SD
B1	AI tools help me generate ideas for English lessons more quickly.	4.35	0.547
B2	AI tools help me prepare teaching materials more efficiently.	4.23	0.563
B3	AI tools help me improve my own English language skills.	4.23	0.551
B4	AI tools help me explain vocabulary, grammar, or language use more clearly.	4.14	0.560
B5	AI tools save time when I prepare assignments, activities, or lesson plans.	4.28	0.586
B6	AI tools help me become more creative in planning English lessons.	4.26	0.548
B7	AI tools can help me adapt learning materials for students with different needs.	4.21	0.554
B8	AI tools can support my future work as an English teacher.	4.17	0.566
Total		4.23	0.28

The benefits scale produced the strongest positive pattern in the quantitative strand, with an overall mean of 4.23. This suggests that the participants saw AI as highly useful for their future professional work. The largest mean was found in the item stating that AI helps generate ideas for English lessons more quickly (B1, M = 4.35). Other highly rated items concerned saving time when preparing assignments, activities, or lesson plans (B5, M = 4.28), becoming more creative in planning lessons (B6, M = 4.26), and preparing teaching materials more efficiently (B2, M = 4.23). Even the relatively lower-rated benefit items remained clearly positive, such as helping teachers explain vocabulary, grammar, or language use more clearly (B4, M = 4.14) and supporting future work as an English teacher (B8, M = 4.17). Overall, the survey data show that the participants associated AI with practical, cognitive, and professional value.

The qualitative data strongly reinforced these high benefit ratings. Their comments suggest that the positive side of AI was immediately visible to them, especially in planning, adaptation, explanation, and idea generation.

Theme 4. AI reduced friction in planning and widened pedagogical options

The most frequently mentioned benefits were time saving, efficiency, personalization, and creative support. Participants felt that AI could reduce the blank-page problem, help them generate multiple lesson options, simplify or adapt materials, and provide language examples more quickly than they could produce on their own under time pressure. In this sense, AI was experienced as a practical support resource for novice teachers who often feel overloaded.

"The first big benefit is time" **(P5)**

"I can ask AI to rewrite one text at different levels, or generate extra support for weaker learners" **(P2)**

The benefit pattern extended beyond simple speed. Participants also saw AI as a way to enlarge planning imagination. It helped them see alternative explanations, new task types, and different pathways for supporting learners of mixed proficiency. This indicates that AI was valued not only for producing content, but for expanding the range of possibilities a future teacher could consider.

Theme 5. AI functioned as cognitive and emotional scaffolding, but only when teacher agency stayed central

Another important insight is that participants valued AI partly because it reduced insecurity. For beginner teachers, AI could provide a starting point, a draft, or a set of options that made planning less intimidating. However, participants did not celebrate dependence. Instead, they framed AI as most helpful when it supported human thinking rather than replacing it.

"It is like, um, emotional support but in an academic way" **(P6)**

"Good use of AI should increase teacher capacity, not reduce teacher agency" **(P8)**

This theme is important for interpreting the benefit findings. Participants viewed AI as valuable when it extended their planning capacity, reduced uncertainty, and generated options for adaptation. At the same time, they wanted AI use to remain under teacher control. The qualitative findings therefore show that perceived benefits were high, but they were interpreted through a professional logic of augmentation rather than substitution.

D. PERCEIVED CHALLENGES OF AI IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Table 4. Perceived challenges of AI in English language teaching

Code	Item	Mean	SD
C1	I worry that AI tools may provide inaccurate or misleading information.	4.19	0.605
C2	I worry that overusing AI tools may weaken my critical thinking.	4.14	0.591
C3	I worry that relying too much on AI may reduce my ability to design lessons independently.	4.23	0.593
C4	I am concerned about plagiarism or academic dishonesty when using AI tools.	4.13	0.570
C5	I am concerned about privacy and data security when using AI tools.	4.08	0.580
C6	I find it difficult to decide when AI-generated content is trustworthy.	4.10	0.562
C7	I have not received enough guidance on how to use AI tools effectively in English teaching.	4.17	0.534
C8	I worry that AI-generated suggestions may not fit Vietnamese learners or classroom contexts well.	4.07	0.525
Total	Composite mean	4.14	0.27

The quantitative results also showed a strong recognition of challenges, with an overall mean of 4.14 across the eight challenge items. The highest challenge mean was found in the concern that relying too much on AI may reduce the ability to design lessons independently (C3, M = 4.23). This was followed by worries that AI may provide inaccurate or misleading information (C1, M = 4.19), and the perception that students had not received enough guidance on how to use AI effectively in English teaching (C7, M = 4.17). Other challenge items also received high ratings, including the risks of weakened critical thinking (C2, M = 4.14), plagiarism or academic dishonesty (C4, M = 4.13), difficulty judging whether AI-generated content is trustworthy (C6, M = 4.10), privacy and data security concerns (C5, M = 4.08), and the possibility that AI-generated suggestions may not fit Vietnamese learners or classroom contexts well (C8, M = 4.07). These results show that challenge recognition was not peripheral; it was a central part of how the participants perceived AI.

The focus group not only confirmed this pattern but also clarified why challenge recognition was so high. This supports the survey expectation that challenge recognition would be high. Participants were not naïve adopters; they were already thinking about what could go wrong if AI were used quickly, heavily, or uncritically.

Theme 6. Participants strongly recognized risks of inaccuracy, dependence, and ethical misuse

The most salient concerns were inaccurate content, the illusion of quality created by fluent outputs, over-reliance, weakened critical thinking, deskilling, plagiarism, and privacy problems. Participants were particularly concerned that AI responses could appear convincing even when they were incomplete or unsuitable. For future teachers, this risk was amplified by the fact that classroom knowledge carries authority; once inaccurate information enters teaching, it can be reproduced as if it were legitimate.

"Wrong answers are not always obviously wrong... AI can create an illusion of quality" **(P3)**

"If pre-service teachers always use AI for explanation, activity design, or feedback wording, they may stop developing their own pedagogical reasoning" **(P8)**

These comments suggest that participants saw challenges not simply as technical glitches but as developmental threats. The danger was not only that AI might occasionally be wrong. The deeper danger was that habitual overuse might weaken the teacher's own ability to think, judge, and create independently.

Theme 7. Contextual fit and policy pressure made critical preparation essential

Participants also emphasized that AI use could not be separated from local school realities and from Vietnam's broader educational direction. They repeatedly noted that classrooms differ in infrastructure, student proficiency, available time, and institutional expectations. As a result, AI-generated tasks that looked attractive on screen might fail in actual school settings. Participants' policy awareness was general rather than document-specific, but it was still meaningful: they understood that AI and English education were both moving upward in national importance, and that this increased the urgency of careful preparation.

"AI may design nice activities, but some are unrealistic" **(P4)**

"The more important question is what kind of teachers we become while using it" **(P8)**

This theme broadens the challenge findings beyond a list of obstacles. It shows that the perceived challenge was not merely "AI has problems." Rather, participants felt that the future English teacher would need to use AI under conditions of uneven school readiness, stronger expectations for English education, and higher responsibility for ethical classroom decision-making. In that sense, challenge recognition was high because the participants already understood AI as a professional, not merely personal, issue.

V. DISCUSSION

A. READINESS AS AI COMPETENCY IN A HUFLIT TEACHER-EDUCATION CONTEXT

The first major finding was that perceived readiness remained moderate despite regular exposure to AI. This pattern is consistent with international studies showing that pre-service teachers may welcome AI while still feeling uncertain about competence, ethical judgment, and pedagogical preparedness [15]-[21]. The result is particularly meaningful in the HUFLIT context because participants were preparing to become English teachers in an institution where foreign language education and technology-oriented identity coexist. Their moderate readiness therefore does not reflect a lack of interest in AI; rather, it reflects the gap between everyday tool use and teacher-level AI competence.

This interpretation aligns with UNESCO's AI competency framework for teachers, which treats readiness as more than operational familiarity [6]. It also corresponds with wider generative AI guidance in higher education, where human oversight, verification, transparency, privacy, and academic integrity are emphasized as institutional responsibilities rather than optional individual choices [1], [2]. The focus group showed that participants themselves adopted a demanding standard: they associated readiness with pedagogical judgment, ethical awareness, evaluative confidence, and the ability to decide when AI should and should not be used. In this sense, the moderate readiness score can be read as a sign of emerging professional awareness.

The lowest readiness score concerned program-level preparation, and the qualitative data repeatedly pointed to self-learning, uneven experience, and limited explicit guidance. This extends Vietnamese research that has shown active student use and positive attitudes toward ChatGPT [12]-[14] by showing that active use does not automatically become pedagogical readiness. The finding also reflects the wider Vietnamese higher education situation, where digital transformation policy is advancing but institutional strategy, infrastructure, and staff development remain uneven [8]-[10]. For HUFLIT, the issue is therefore not whether students have access to AI, but whether teacher education provides a structured pathway from access to evaluation, adaptation, ethics, and classroom decision-making.

B. BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES AS INTERDEPENDENT DIMENSIONS OF AI USE

The second major finding was that perceived benefits were very high. This confirms previous Vietnamese and international research reporting that AI is valued for time saving, idea generation, language support, engagement, writing assistance, and lesson-related work [11]-[14], [16], [19], [21]. In the present study, the strongest benefits were linked to lesson idea generation, time saving, creative planning, and efficient material preparation. These results are understandable for pre-service teachers, who often have limited classroom experience and may need scaffolding when transforming theoretical knowledge into practical lesson materials.

However, the benefit findings should not be read as simple technological enthusiasm. The qualitative data showed that participants valued AI as a planning scaffold, not as an autonomous teaching authority. This distinction is important because it links usefulness to teacher agency. AI was useful when it helped students begin, compare options, adapt materials, or improve explanations; it became risky when it replaced their own reasoning. This interpretation is consistent with UNESCO and ASEAN guidance that positions responsible AI use around human agency, transparency, risk awareness, and contextual judgment [1], [2], [6], [7].

The high challenge scores further demonstrate that benefits and risks were interdependent in participants' thinking. The strongest concern was that over-reliance might reduce the ability to design lessons independently, followed by worries about inaccurate information and insufficient guidance. These concerns move the discussion beyond technical error. They show that participants understood AI as a possible threat to the development of pedagogical independence if it is used without reflection, verification, and teacher education support.

C. CONTEXTUAL FIT, TEACHER AGENCY, AND RESPONSIBLE INTEGRATION

The third major finding was the strong recognition of challenges related to inaccuracy, dependence, plagiarism, privacy, trustworthiness, and contextual mismatch. This finding aligns with Vietnamese and international studies that have identified misinformation, over-reliance, academic integrity, and ethical concerns as persistent issues in AI-supported education [1], [2], [11], [13], [14], [16], [18], [19]. The present study adds a teacher-education perspective by showing that these concerns are not abstract. Participants linked them to real classroom consequences, such as giving inaccurate explanations, designing unrealistic activities, or weakening their own pedagogical reasoning.

Contextual fit was especially important. Participants recognized that AI-generated materials may appear attractive but still fail to match Vietnamese learners, school infrastructure, class size, proficiency levels, institutional rules, or curriculum expectations. This point gives the study a specific contribution beyond general discussions of AI attitudes. It shows that HUFLIT pre-service English teachers were beginning to think like context-sensitive professionals, not merely like technology users. This is particularly relevant in Vietnam, where national digital and English education policies create strong expectations, while higher education readiness remains uneven [8]-[10].

Taken together, the findings suggest that responsible AI integration in English teacher education should be framed around teacher agency. AI can support preparation, creativity, and adaptation, but only when future teachers learn to question, verify, localize, and justify what AI produces. This is why the study's three constructs should be interpreted together: readiness describes the current level of preparation, benefits explain why students are motivated to use AI, and challenges reveal the forms of professional judgment that still need to be strengthened. Such an interpretation is closely aligned with competency-based views of AI readiness [6], [7].

D. IMPLICATIONS FOR HUFLIT AND THE VIETNAMESE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

For HUFLIT, the findings point to a practical curriculum-development need. AI literacy can be embedded in methodology, materials development, assessment, and practicum-related courses through tasks that require students to generate, evaluate, revise, and justify AI-supported teaching materials. This approach would connect AI use with existing pedagogical knowledge rather than treating it as a stand-alone technical skill. It would also operationalize the AI competency areas of ethics, pedagogy, foundational knowledge, and professional learning in a teacher-education context [6].

At the institutional level, clearer guidelines are also needed on ethical prompting, verification, privacy, citation or acknowledgment of AI assistance, and the limits of acceptable reliance. Such guidance would help reduce uncertainty and support consistent lecturer modelling across courses. This recommendation is supported by international guidance that frames generative AI use in education as requiring institutional policy, transparency, human oversight, and clear safeguards [1], [2], [7].

For the wider Vietnamese context, the findings suggest that digital transformation and the expansion of English education should be accompanied by teacher preparation that emphasizes human judgment, contextual adaptation, and responsible professional agency. AI integration will be more sustainable if future teachers are prepared to decide not only how to use AI, but also when, why, and with what safeguards. This is important because Vietnam's policy directions for digital transformation and English as a second language create strong expectations, while higher education systems still require more systematic capacity building [8]-[10].

VI. CONCLUSION

This study examined how pre-service English teachers at HUFLIT perceived their readiness, perceived benefits, and perceived challenges in relation to AI use in English language teaching. The mixed-method findings revealed a coherent pattern. Participants were interested in AI and recognized its value for idea generation, time saving, creative planning, material adaptation, and language-related support. At the same time, readiness remained only moderate, especially in relation to program-level preparation, evaluative confidence, and boundary-setting. Participants also recognized substantial challenges, including inaccurate information, reduced independence, over-reliance, ethical misuse, privacy concerns, and mismatch with local classroom realities.

The findings suggest that AI should not be treated as a separate optional topic discussed only in isolated workshops. Instead, it should be integrated into the core architecture of English teacher preparation. Methodology courses, materials design, micro-teaching, and practicum reflection could include structured tasks in which students generate AI-supported materials, critique them, revise them, and justify their final pedagogical choices. Such routines would help move students from casual use toward professional judgment.

The results also indicate the need for more explicit institutional guidance. The lowest readiness item and the high challenge score for insufficient guidance suggest that many students do not yet feel clearly supported in how to use AI responsibly. HUFLIT could therefore provide more consistent guidance on ethical prompting, data privacy, verification strategies, acknowledgment of AI use, and the limits of acceptable dependence in academic and professional tasks. Lecturer modelling may also be important because students need to see how responsible AI use is enacted in actual pedagogical decision-making.

Beyond HUFLIT, the findings are relevant to Vietnam's current policy moment, where digital transformation and the strengthening of English education are advancing together [8], [9]. The study suggests that AI competence should not be reduced to tool familiarity. For English teacher education, the more urgent task is to build models in which AI literacy, ethical reasoning, contextual adaptation, and pedagogical agency develop together. Without this integration, policy ambition may outpace classroom preparedness, especially in a higher education system where digital transformation readiness remains uneven [10].

The study contributes to applied linguistics and teacher education by showing that positive perceptions of AI can coexist with uncertainty about readiness, responsibility, and classroom fit. Its main implication is that teacher education should transform everyday AI familiarity into disciplined pedagogical readiness. Future research may extend this inquiry across institutions, include classroom-based observations, and examine how structured AI literacy interventions influence pre-service teachers' actual lesson planning and teaching practice.

VII. REFERENCES

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NHẬN THỨC CỦA GIÁO SINH TIẾNG ANH TẠI HUFLIT VỀ MỨC ĐỘ SẴN SÀNG, LỢI ÍCH VÀ THÁCH THỨC KHI SỬ DỤNG TRÍ TUỆ NHÂN TẠO TRONG GIẢNG DẠY TIẾNG ANH

Nguyen Ngo Dai De

TÓM TẮT— Khi trí tuệ nhân tạo ngày càng hiện diện rõ hơn trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh và trong định hướng chuyển đổi số của giáo dục Việt Nam, việc tìm hiểu nhận thức hiện tại của giáo sinh tiếng Anh về sự chuẩn bị cho dạy học có hỗ trợ AI trở nên cần thiết. Tuy nhiên, các nghiên cứu hiện có ở Việt Nam chủ yếu tập trung vào người học nói chung hoặc thái độ rộng đối với ChatGPT, trong khi bằng chứng về cách giáo sinh tiếng Anh cảm nhận mức độ sẵn sàng, lợi ích và thách thức từ trải nghiệm học tập hiện tại và quá trình chuẩn bị nghề nghiệp còn hạn chế. Nghiên cứu hỗn hợp này khảo sát nhận thức của giáo sinh tiếng Anh tại HUFLIT về mức độ sẵn sàng, lợi ích và thách thức liên quan đến việc sử dụng AI trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh. Dữ liệu định lượng được thu thập từ bảng hỏi với 115 sinh viên và được phân tích bằng thống kê mô tả; dữ liệu định tính từ một cuộc phỏng vấn nhóm tập trung với 8 sinh viên được phân tích bằng phân tích nội dung định tính. Kết quả cho thấy mức độ sẵn sàng ở mức trung bình, trong khi nhận thức về lợi ích rất tích cực và nhận thức về thách thức cũng khá cao. Nhìn chung, người học quan tâm đến AI và đã sử dụng AI trong học tập cũng như chuẩn bị các nhiệm vụ liên quan đến giảng dạy, nhưng chưa xem mình là đã được chuẩn bị đầy đủ cho việc tích hợp AI một cách sư phạm và có trách nhiệm trong lớp học. Nghiên cứu gợi ý cần tích hợp rõ nét hơn năng lực AI, năng lực thẩm định, nhận thức đạo đức và huấn luyện sư phạm gắn với bối cảnh vào chương trình đào tạo giáo viên tiếng Anh ở Việt Nam.

Từ khóa—trí tuệ nhân tạo, năng lực AI, giáo sinh tiếng Anh, sự sẵn sàng, giảng dạy tiếng Anh, Việt Nam



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