

THE ROLE OF PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE OF ENGLISH TEACHERS IN TEACHING PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Annotation: *This study explores the pivotal role of pedagogical competence in the effective teaching of English in primary education. Focusing on core competencies such as classroom management, language proficiency, instructional design, and cultural awareness, the paper examines how these elements influence students' language acquisition and overall learning experiences. An in-depth review of past studies highlights significant trends, challenges, and best practices that shape the pedagogy of English teachers. This research emphasizes the need for continuous professional development and tailored teaching approaches to address the diverse needs of primary school learners.*

Keywords: *Pedagogical competence, English teachers, primary education, language acquisition, instructional design, teacher training, classroom management*

Introduction

English is a global lingua franca, and primary education serves as the foundation for developing linguistic competence among young learners. The effectiveness of English teaching largely depends on the pedagogical competence of teachers, encompassing their ability to design engaging lessons, foster a positive learning environment, and adapt methodologies to the developmental needs of children. This paper investigates the essential competencies required for English teachers and analyzes past research to understand their impact on primary education.

Literature Review

The role of pedagogical competence in teaching English has been widely explored in educational research, with an emphasis on its critical impact on primary education. Richards (2011) highlighted that effective English teachers possess not only language proficiency but also a deep understanding of teaching methodologies tailored to young learners. Similarly, Harmer (2007) emphasized the importance of lesson design, advocating for interactive and communicative approaches such as games, storytelling, and role-play to maintain student engagement. Research by Shulman (1987) introduced the concept of pedagogical content

knowledge (PCK), underscoring the need for teachers to integrate subject knowledge with an understanding of how to teach it effectively.

Tomlinson (2005) focused on differentiated instruction, which allows teachers to address individual learning needs and abilities within diverse classrooms. This approach has been particularly beneficial in primary education, where learners' developmental stages and linguistic backgrounds vary significantly. Furthermore, Vygotsky's (1978) theory of scaffolding suggests that teachers must provide appropriate levels of support to enable students to achieve higher levels of understanding, a concept especially relevant for language acquisition.

However, challenges persist in the practical application of these pedagogical strategies. Byram (1997) identified a gap in cultural competence among English teachers, which can hinder the contextualization of language instruction. More recent studies have also pointed to the digital divide and its impact on teachers' ability to incorporate technology into English lessons, especially in under-resourced regions (Ellis & Shintani, 2014). Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of pedagogical competence and its influence on the effectiveness of English instruction in primary education.

Methods

This paper adopts a qualitative approach through a systematic review of relevant literature. Past studies published in peer-reviewed journals between 2000 and 2023 were analyzed to identify recurring themes and gaps in the pedagogical strategies employed by English teachers in primary education.

The data were collected from educational databases such as ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar using keywords like "pedagogical competence," "English teaching in primary schools," and "teacher professional development."

Key themes were identified and categorized, focusing on competencies such as subject knowledge, teaching strategies, classroom management, and adaptability to cultural contexts. The findings were synthesized to establish a cohesive narrative.

Results

The findings from past research underscore four major aspects of pedagogical competence:

1. Subject Matter Expertise: Teachers with advanced English proficiency were better equipped to model accurate language use for their students (Richards, 2011).

2. Instructional Design: Studies (e.g., Harmer, 2007) show that integrating storytelling and play-based learning enhances young learners' engagement.

3. Classroom Management: Effective management techniques, including differentiated instruction and positive reinforcement, were highlighted as critical (Tomlinson, 2005).

4. Cultural Awareness: Research by Byram (1997) emphasized the importance of incorporating cultural elements to make language learning relatable and meaningful.

However, gaps in teacher training programs, particularly in under-resourced settings, limit the development of these competencies, impacting student outcomes negatively (Shulman, 1987).

Discussion

The review reveals that pedagogical competence extends beyond language proficiency to include a deep understanding of child psychology, curriculum design, and socio-cultural dynamics. For instance, Harmer (2007) argued that a teacher's ability to create an immersive language environment significantly influences students' enthusiasm for learning English. Additionally, studies such as those by Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of scaffolding in primary education, a strategy often underutilized by teachers lacking professional development opportunities.

While considerable progress has been made in recognizing the role of pedagogical competence, challenges persist. For example, in multilingual contexts, teachers often struggle to balance the demands of teaching English as a second or third language. Furthermore, limited access to technology and teaching resources exacerbates these challenges in developing countries.

The role of English as a global lingua franca highlights its significance in the academic, social, and professional spheres, necessitating its inclusion as a core subject in primary education. Primary education serves as the crucial starting point where students acquire foundational language skills that underpin their future learning and communication abilities. This makes the effectiveness of English instruction in these early stages particularly critical.

Pedagogical competence refers to the ability of teachers to integrate subject knowledge, teaching strategies, and student-centered approaches to optimize learning outcomes. In the context of English teaching, this competence includes:

- Language Proficiency: Teachers must have strong command over the English language to model accurate pronunciation, grammar, and usage for young learners.

- Engaging Lesson Design: Effective English teaching involves designing lessons that are interactive and developmentally appropriate. For example, storytelling, songs, and games can make language learning enjoyable and relevant to young learners, aligning with their cognitive and emotional needs.

- Positive Learning Environment: A nurturing classroom atmosphere is essential for language acquisition. Teachers need to employ strategies that encourage participation, reduce anxiety, and build a supportive community among learners.

Young learners differ significantly from older students in their cognitive, emotional, and social development. English teachers must adapt their methodologies to these unique needs:

1. Cognitive Development: At the primary level, students are in the pre-operational and concrete operational stages (Piaget, 1964). They learn best through concrete experiences and visual aids, making it crucial for teachers to use tangible objects, visual stimuli, and hands-on activities in English instruction.

2. Emotional and Social Needs: Children thrive in environments that recognize their individual efforts and foster collaboration. Teachers with high emotional intelligence can better manage classroom dynamics, encourage teamwork, and instill confidence in learners.

3. Individual Differences: Not all students acquire language at the same pace or in the same way. Pedagogically competent teachers are skilled in differentiating instruction to cater to diverse learning styles, abilities, and backgrounds.

Numerous studies have shown a direct correlation between teachers' pedagogical competence and students' language proficiency. For instance:

-Improved Communication Skills: Teachers who effectively model conversational English enable students to acquire functional language skills, which are essential for real-world communication.

-Enhanced Engagement: Creative lesson designs capture students' attention and make learning a memorable experience, fostering intrinsic motivation to learn English.

-Cultural Understanding: Teachers who incorporate cultural elements into their lessons provide students with a richer context for language use, enhancing comprehension and relatability.

Despite its importance, the development of pedagogical competence is not without challenges. Many primary school teachers, particularly in non-English-speaking regions, lack access to quality training programs. Resource constraints, such as limited teaching aids and large class sizes, further hinder the application of best practices. Additionally, the global shift towards digital learning has highlighted disparities in teachers' digital literacy, which is now an essential component of pedagogical competence.

Pedagogical competence is fundamental for English teachers in primary education, directly influencing students' language acquisition and overall learning experience. To address the growing demand for quality English instruction, educational systems must prioritize the continuous professional development of teachers, equipping them with the tools and knowledge to design effective lessons and foster a positive learning environment. By addressing these needs, teachers can ensure that primary education lays a strong foundation for students' lifelong linguistic competence.

Pedagogical competence is a cornerstone of effective English teaching in primary education. This study highlights the need for holistic teacher training programs that address subject knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and cultural awareness. Policymakers and educational institutions must invest in professional development initiatives to ensure that teachers are equipped to meet the dynamic needs of primary school learners.

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