

English Teaching Skills among Pre-Service Primary Teachers: A Case Study at Thu Dau Mot University

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ABSTRACT: English has become an essential language in education and global communication. For pre-service primary teachers, English teaching skills are particularly important because they are expected to teach English effectively to young learners in the future. This study investigates English teaching skills among pre-service primary teachers at Thu Dau Mot University. A quantitative research design was employed, with a questionnaire administered to 240 students majoring in Primary Education. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data, including mean scores and standard deviations. The results indicate that students generally demonstrate a high level of competence in several English teaching skills, especially in using visual aids, explaining vocabulary clearly, and organizing classroom communicative activities. However, some challenges remain, such as lesson planning in English and using English confidently when teaching. The findings suggest that teacher education programs should strengthen practical teaching experiences and provide more opportunities for students to practice English in real teaching contexts. This study contributes to a better understanding of how teacher education institutions can enhance English teaching skills among future primary school teachers.

KEYWORDS: English teaching skills, pre-service teachers, primary education, teacher training, Vietnam

I. INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most widely used languages in international communication, education, and global cooperation, with many countries regarding English proficiency as essential for both academic and professional success (Teaching English Methods for Primary School Teachers, 2022; Wulandari et al., 2018). As globalization continues to expand, education systems worldwide have responded by introducing English language instruction at increasingly earlier stages of schooling to enhance learners' communicative competence and future opportunities (Teaching English Strategy for Young Learners, 2022).

In Vietnam, English has been made compulsory in many primary schools as part of ongoing foreign-language education reform aimed at improving national English proficiency and competitiveness in global contexts (Vietnamese EFL Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions ... Training Course, 2025). The Vietnamese government and educational stakeholders have launched initiatives to enhance English teaching and learning, emphasizing the need for effective pedagogical methods and stronger teacher preparation (Teaching with Tasks ... Readiness for TBLT, 2024).

Teaching English at the primary school level requires specialized pedagogical skills because young learners differ significantly from older learners in cognitive development, learning styles, and motivation. Research has shown that effective English instruction for young learners often includes interactive activities, visual support, play, storytelling, and age-appropriate communicative tasks, which cater to children's developmental needs (Effective Methods of Teaching English to Young Learners, 2026; The Application of Story-based Teaching Method ..., 2025). These approaches align with established theories of language acquisition, emphasizing meaningful interaction and learner engagement rather than traditional, grammar-centered methods (Exploring English Teaching Technique, 2022).

Teacher education institutions play a crucial role in preparing pre-service teachers for these challenges. During their training, pre-service teachers must develop both language proficiency and pedagogical competence, including lesson planning, classroom management, designing learning activities, and assessing student outcomes (Vietnamese EFL Pre-service Teachers' Perceptions ... Training Course, 2025; Teaching with Tasks ... Readiness for TBLT, 2024). However, many pre-service teachers experience difficulties when applying theoretical knowledge to actual classroom situations, particularly when translating pedagogical strategies into practice, designing effective lesson plans, or managing dynamic interactions with young learners.

Although numerous studies have explored English teaching methodologies and teacher preparation programs, relatively limited research has focused specifically on the teaching skills of pre-service primary teachers in the Vietnamese context, especially in relation to the unique demands of primary English instruction. Investigating these skills can yield valuable insights into the

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strengths and shortcomings of teacher education programs and inform targeted improvements to better support future English teachers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 English Teaching Skills

English teaching skills encompass a teacher's ability to effectively deliver English lessons, facilitate student learning, and manage classroom activities. These skills include explaining vocabulary and grammar, designing lesson plans, using appropriate teaching materials, and organizing interactive learning activities (Harmer, 2007).

Teachers with strong teaching skills can create engaging learning environments that motivate students to participate actively in language learning. Brown (2007) notes that effective language teaching requires teachers to integrate linguistic knowledge with pedagogical strategies.

2.2 Teaching English to Young Learners

Teaching English to young learners requires specialized approaches because children learn differently from adults. According to Cameron (2001), young learners benefit from activities that involve movement, interaction, and visual support.

Visual aids such as pictures, flashcards, and videos are widely used in language classrooms because they help students understand new concepts more easily. Anglin, Vaez, and Cunningham (2004) argue that visual representations can significantly enhance comprehension and memory retention.

Another effective method is communicative language teaching, which focuses on meaningful communication rather than memorization of grammar rules. Richards and Rodgers (2014) emphasize that communicative activities, such as role-plays and group discussions, help students develop confidence in using the language.

2.3 Pre-service Teacher Education

Pre-service teachers are students who are undergoing professional training to become teachers. Teacher education programs aim to equip students with both subject knowledge and teaching skills.

According to Nation and Macalister (2010), effective teacher education programs should combine theoretical knowledge with practical teaching experiences. Activities such as micro-teaching, classroom observation, and teaching practice allow students to apply their knowledge in real teaching situations.

However, many studies have reported that pre-service teachers often feel less confident when using English in teaching contexts. This suggests that teacher training programs need to provide more opportunities for practical language use.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate English teaching skills among pre-service primary teachers. Quantitative research was selected because it enables researchers to collect numerical data and systematically and objectively analyze participants' perceptions. A questionnaire survey was used as the primary data collection method.

The study was conducted at Thu Dau Mot University, a public university located in Binh Duong Province, Vietnam. The university offers a Primary Education program that prepares students for teaching careers in primary schools. Within this program, students receive training in pedagogy, teaching methodology, and subject knowledge, including English language skills that support their future teaching practice.

3.2 Participants

The participants consisted of 240 pre-service primary teachers enrolled in the Primary Education program at Thu Dau Mot University. The sample included 60 students from each of four academic years. This distribution allowed the study to capture perspectives from students at different stages of their teacher education program.

Regarding gender distribution, the majority of participants were female students. Out of the total sample, 222 participants (92.5%) were female, and 18 participants (7.5%) were male. This gender distribution reflects the common trend in primary teacher education programs, where female students typically outnumber male students.

The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	18	7.5
	Female	222	92.5

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Total		240	100
Year of study	First year	60	25
	Second year	60	25
	Third year	60	25
	Fourth year	60	25
Total		240	100

3.3 Research Instrument and Data Analysis

Data were collected using a 13-item questionnaire on English teaching skills. The questionnaire was designed to measure students' perceptions of their ability to perform different teaching tasks, such as explaining vocabulary and grammar, using visual aids, organizing communicative activities, encouraging student participation, and preparing lesson plans in English.

Participants responded to each statement using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). This scale allowed participants to express varying degrees of agreement with each statement.

The questionnaire was distributed to the participants during the data collection period, and all responses were collected and compiled for analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, to identify general trends in students' perceptions of their English teaching skills.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted during the second semester of the academic year at Thu Dau Mot University. Before data collection, the researcher informed participants about the study's purpose and assured them that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for research. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were allowed to withdraw at any time without any consequences.

The questionnaire was distributed directly to students enrolled in the Primary Education program. Participants were asked to read each statement carefully and indicate their level of agreement using the five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire required approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. After the questionnaires were completed, they were collected and checked to ensure that all items had been answered.

3.6 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify general trends in students' perceptions of their English teaching skills. The responses from the questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for analysis.

Descriptive statistics, including mean scores (M) and standard deviations (SD), were calculated for each questionnaire item. The mean scores were used to determine the overall level of students' agreement with each statement, while the standard deviations indicated the degree of variation among participants' responses.

In interpreting the results, higher mean scores indicated stronger agreement and higher levels of perceived competence in English teaching skills. Conversely, lower mean scores suggested areas where students felt less confident or experienced greater difficulty. The statistical results were then presented in tables and interpreted to identify the strengths and challenges in the development of English teaching skills among pre-service primary teachers.

A total of 240 valid questionnaires were obtained and used for data analysis. The collected responses were then coded and entered into a statistical software program for further analysis. This procedure ensured the accuracy and reliability of the data collected for the study.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the study's findings on the English-teaching skills of pre-service primary teachers at Thu Dau Mot University. The analysis is based on descriptive statistics derived from responses to the questionnaire from 240 participants. The results provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of students' perceived teaching competencies in English instruction for young learners.

Table 2. Teaching Skills for Primary Education

Teaching skills	Mean	SD
Teaching basic vocabulary to young learners	4.75	0.44
Teaching simple communicative sentence patterns	4.70	0.46
Giving instructions for games and activities in English	4.63	0.50
Telling simple stories in English	4.59	0.51
Singing English songs and chants for students	4.61	0.51
Designing age-appropriate learning activities	4.59	0.57
Managing the classroom effectively in English	4.58	0.57
Explaining grammar and vocabulary in a simple, clear way	4.75	0.43
Using visual aids to support teaching	4.59	0.64
Writing English lesson plans for primary students	4.55	0.62
Assessing English skills of primary school students (tests, feedback)	4.53	0.54
Guiding students to practice listening and speaking in class	4.63	0.48

This section presents and discusses the findings related to pre-service primary teachers' perceptions of their English teaching skills. The analysis is based on the descriptive statistics shown in Table 2 and the corresponding figure, which illustrates the mean scores for the 12 teaching competencies. Overall, participants reported high confidence in their ability to teach English to primary school students. The mean scores for teaching skills range from 4.53 to 4.75, indicating that most participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statements describing their teaching competencies. The relatively low standard deviations (SD = 0.43-0.64) further suggest that the responses were fairly consistent across the sample.

To facilitate a clearer interpretation of the findings, the discussion is organized into three major themes: (1) fundamental language teaching skills, (2) interactive classroom teaching skills, and (3) instructional planning and assessment skills.

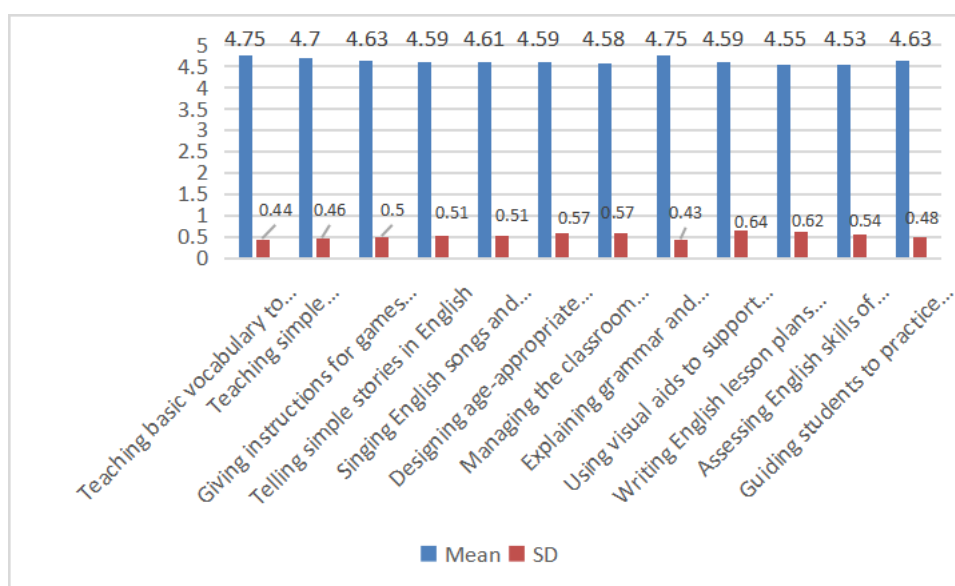


Figure 1. Teaching Skills for Primary Education

Fundamental Language Teaching Skills

The first group of skills includes teaching basic vocabulary, explaining grammar and vocabulary clearly, and teaching communicative sentence patterns. These competencies received the highest ratings among all items in the questionnaire.

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The results show that *teaching basic vocabulary to young learners and explaining grammar and vocabulary in a simple, clear way* received the highest mean score ($M = 4.75$). This finding indicates that the participants perceive themselves as highly competent in presenting fundamental language knowledge to primary school students. Vocabulary instruction plays a crucial role in early language learning because young learners rely heavily on lexical knowledge to understand and produce language.

This result is consistent with Paul Nation's work, which emphasizes that vocabulary knowledge underpins language proficiency. According to Nation, learners need a large vocabulary base to comprehend spoken and written language effectively. Teachers who can introduce vocabulary clearly and provide meaningful practice opportunities can significantly enhance learners' language development.

In addition, the high score for *explaining grammar and vocabulary in a simple and clear way* suggests that the participants believe they can adapt their language explanations to suit young learners' cognitive levels. Teaching grammar to children often requires simplifying complex linguistic concepts and presenting them through examples, visual aids, or interactive activities. The ability to provide clear explanations is, therefore, an essential pedagogical skill.

Similarly, *teaching simple communicative sentence patterns* ($M = 4.70$) received a high rating from participants. This finding reflects the communicative orientation of modern language teaching approaches. Teaching sentence patterns enables learners to construct meaningful utterances and participate in basic communication. The emphasis on communicative sentence structures aligns with the principles of communicative language teaching proposed by Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers. These scholars argue that language teaching should focus on enabling learners to use language for real communication rather than merely memorizing grammatical rules.

The visual representation of the data further supports this interpretation. The chart shows that the bars for vocabulary teaching, grammar explanation, and sentence pattern instruction are among the highest, highlighting the participants' strong confidence in these fundamental teaching competencies.

4.1. Interactive Classroom Teaching Skills

The second group of skills includes classroom interaction techniques such as giving instructions for games, guiding listening and speaking practice, singing songs, telling stories, and using visual aids. These teaching strategies are particularly important in primary education because young learners tend to learn more effectively through interactive and engaging activities.

The results show that *giving instructions for games and activities in English and guiding students to practice listening and speaking in class* both received relatively high mean scores ($M = 4.63$). These findings suggest that the participants feel confident in facilitating interactive classroom activities that encourage students to use English in meaningful contexts. Games and communicative tasks are widely recognized as effective strategies for promoting language learning because they create opportunities for authentic communication.

These results support the communicative approach to language teaching, which emphasizes interaction as a key component of language acquisition. According to Jeremy Harmer, communicative activities such as games, role plays, and pair work encourage learners to practice language naturally while maintaining a high level of motivation. Teachers who can organize such activities effectively are more likely to create dynamic and engaging learning environments.

In addition, the participants reported high levels of confidence in *singing English songs and chants* ($M = 4.61$) and *telling simple stories in English* ($M = 4.59$). Songs and storytelling are commonly used teaching techniques in young learner classrooms because they combine language input with entertainment. These activities help learners internalize vocabulary and grammatical structures through repetition and rhythm.

The pedagogical value of storytelling and songs has been highlighted by Lynne Cameron, who argues that young learners benefit from meaningful and enjoyable language experiences. Storytelling allows teachers to introduce new vocabulary and sentence patterns in a narrative context, while songs provide opportunities for pronunciation practice and memory reinforcement.

Furthermore, *participants rated visual aids to support teaching* ($M = 4.59$) highly. Visual aids such as pictures, flashcards, and videos help learners understand new concepts more easily by providing concrete representations of abstract language items. Research by Gary J. Anglin indicates that visual representations can enhance comprehension and memory retention by linking verbal information with visual stimuli.

Another important competency in this category is *managing the classroom effectively in English* ($M = 4.58$). Classroom management is a crucial skill for teachers working with young learners, who often have shorter attention spans and higher energy levels. Teachers must maintain discipline while also encouraging participation and interaction. The relatively high score for this item suggests that the participants believe they can maintain a productive classroom environment while conducting lessons in English.

The figure illustrating the teaching skills shows that most interactive teaching competencies have similar mean values, forming a cluster of high scores. This pattern indicates that pre-service teachers are generally confident in their ability to manage classroom activities and engage students in communicative learning experiences.

4.2. Instructional Planning and Assessment Skills

Although the majority of teaching skills received high ratings, two competencies recorded comparatively lower mean scores: *writing English lesson plans for primary students* ($M = 4.55$) and *assessing students' English skills* ($M = 4.53$). While these scores still indicate positive perceptions, they suggest that participants feel slightly less confident in these areas compared with other teaching competencies.

Lesson planning is an essential component of effective teaching because it helps teachers organize instructional content, activities, and assessment methods coherently. Writing a lesson plan requires teachers to define learning objectives, select appropriate teaching materials, design classroom activities, and determine evaluation strategies. For pre-service teachers who have limited classroom experience, integrating these elements into a well-structured lesson can be challenging.

Similarly, assessing students' English skills is a complex task that requires teachers to evaluate learners' language performance through various methods, such as written tests, oral presentations, and classroom observation. Effective assessment also involves providing constructive feedback that helps students improve their language abilities.

The relatively lower ratings for lesson planning and assessment are consistent with the concept of pedagogical content knowledge proposed by Lee Shulman. Shulman argues that effective teaching requires teachers to integrate subject knowledge with pedagogical strategies. Developing this type of knowledge often requires extensive teaching practice and professional experience. The figure presented earlier also illustrates that lesson planning and assessment appear slightly lower than the other skills. This visual pattern highlights the need for additional training in these areas within teacher education programs.

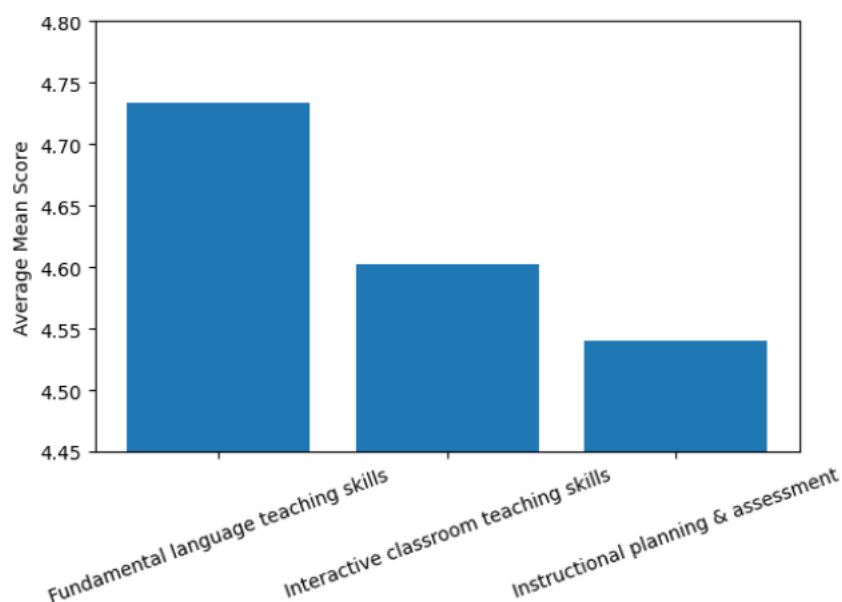


Figure 2. Comparison of major English teaching skills categories

4.3. Overall Interpretation of the Findings

The results of this study indicate that pre-service primary teachers have strong confidence in their English teaching skills, particularly in language explanation and interactive classroom practices. The highest-rated competencies involve direct classroom interaction, such as explaining vocabulary, teaching sentence patterns, and guiding communicative activities.

However, skills related to instructional planning and assessment received slightly lower scores. This pattern suggests that while students feel comfortable performing classroom activities, they may require additional support in designing structured lessons and evaluating student learning outcomes.

These findings highlight the importance of providing more practical teaching experiences in teacher education programs. Activities such as micro-teaching sessions, teaching practicums, and classroom observation can help pre-service teachers develop stronger lesson planning and assessment skills. By strengthening these areas, teacher education institutions can better prepare future teachers to meet the demands of English language instruction in primary schools.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the English teaching skills of pre-service primary teachers at Thu Dau Mot University. Data from 240 participants revealed high confidence in most teaching competencies, with mean scores ranging from 4.53 to 4.75 on a five-point scale. Participants reported the highest confidence in fundamental language-teaching skills, including teaching basic vocabulary, explaining grammar clearly, and teaching simple communicative sentence patterns. These skills are essential for building learners' foundational language knowledge and support effective classroom communication (Nation, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

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Interactive classroom skills, such as guiding listening and speaking activities, storytelling, singing songs, and using visual aids, also received high ratings. These results indicate that pre-service teachers are prepared to engage young learners in communicative and motivating activities, consistent with contemporary approaches to primary language teaching (Cameron, 2001; Harmer, 2015). In contrast, lesson planning and assessment skills were rated slightly lower, suggesting that pre-service teachers feel less confident in instructional design and evaluating student learning. This finding aligns with Shulman's (1986) theory of pedagogical content knowledge, which highlights the need for practice and reflection to integrate teaching strategies effectively.

The findings have practical implications for teacher education programs. Emphasizing micro-teaching, guided practicum, and reflective exercises can enhance lesson planning and assessment competence while maintaining strong interactive and language teaching skills. Additionally, using authentic classroom materials and providing structured feedback may further improve professional readiness.

In summary, pre-service primary teachers at Thu Dau Mot University demonstrate strong confidence in core language and interactive teaching skills, while lesson planning and assessment remain areas for improvement. Targeted interventions in these areas can better prepare teachers to deliver high-quality English instruction to young learners, combining theory with practical classroom application.

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