Improving the Pedagogical Competence of English Teachers through Digital-Based Communicative Language Teaching Training

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Abstrak

English teachers' pedagogical competence plays a strategic role in improving the quality of foreign language learning in the era of digital transformation. However, various studies indicate that the implementation of the communicative learning approach still faces obstacles, particularly in the effective use of digital technology. This community service activity aims to improve the pedagogical competence of English teachers through digital-based Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) training. The training program is designed with a participatory and collaborative approach that includes the delivery of CLT conceptual material, practical design of digital-based learning tools, communicative learning simulations, and mentoring for implementation in the classroom. The implementation method uses a combination of online and offline training utilizing digital learning platforms, interactive media, and language learning support applications. The participants consisted of secondary school English teachers who are members of the teacher community in the target area. Evaluation of the activity was conducted through pre- and post-tests, observations of teaching practices, and questionnaires regarding participants' perceptions of the training's effectiveness. The results of the activity showed a significant increase in teachers' conceptual understanding of CLT principles, their ability to design digital-based communicative learning activities, and their skills in managing student-centered classroom interactions. Furthermore, teachers demonstrated positive attitudes toward utilizing digital technology as a means of improving the quality of English language learning. Thus, digital-based CLT training has proven effective in improving the pedagogical competence of English teachers and has the potential to become a model for continuous professional development in the digital education era.

Keywords: Pedagogical Competence, English Teacher, Communicative Language Teaching

Introduction

English plays a strategic role as an international language widely used in education, global communication, and human resource development. As a lingua franca, English serves as the primary medium for knowledge exchange, cross-border academic collaboration, and access to global learning resources, including scientific publications, technology, and educational innovation. A good command

of English not only enhances individual competitiveness globally but also contributes to improving the quality of a country's human resources. Therefore, English language education is seen as a fundamental element of a modern education system oriented toward sustainable development and readiness to face global challenges (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006).

With the intensification of globalization and the rapid development of digital technology, demands for improving the quality of English language learning are growing. Digital transformation has changed the way students access information, interact, and construct knowledge, rendering traditional teacher-centered learning approaches less relevant to the needs of 21st-century learners. The language learning paradigm is shifting toward a learner-centered approach that emphasizes active participation, communicative interaction, and the development of authentic student competencies. In this context, teachers are required not only to master the teaching materials, but also to have pedagogical competencies that are able to integrate digital technology effectively to create communicative, contextual, and meaningful English learning (Richards, 2006; OECD, 2019).

English language teacher pedagogical competence is a set of professional skills that encompasses understanding student characteristics, mastery of language learning theory, lesson design, implementation of instructional strategies, and ongoing evaluation of learning outcomes. In the context of English language learning, pedagogical competence relates not only to the delivery of linguistic material but also to the teacher's ability to create a communicative, interactive learning environment oriented toward authentic language use. Teachers with high pedagogical competence are able to select learning approaches, methods, and media appropriate to student needs and the socio-cultural context of language learning, thereby making the learning process more meaningful and effective (Shulman, 1987; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

Various studies have shown that teacher pedagogical competence is significantly related to the effectiveness of English language learning, particularly in increasing student participation, motivation, and communicative skills. Pedagogically competent teachers tend to be able to manage classroom interactions in a balanced manner, encourage the use of English as a communication tool, and facilitate task-based and collaborative learning. However, English teachers still face a number of challenges in implementing communicative and interactive learning, including limited understanding of the Communicative Language Teaching approach, lack of experience in managing communication-based activities, and obstacles in utilizing digital technology pedagogically. These challenges have implications for the suboptimal implementation of learner-centered learning and require strengthening pedagogical competencies through training and ongoing professional development (Borg, 2015; Richards, 2006).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a language learning approach based on the primary goal of developing students' communicative competence, encompassing linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic aspects. This approach emphasizes the use of language as a meaningful communication tool through authentic interactions, group work, and task-based activities. Key characteristics of CLT include learner-centered learning, the use of contextual materials, tolerance for errors as part of the learning process, and the teacher's role as a facilitator and mediator of learning. Thus, CLT provides space for learners to develop integrated language skills, particularly speaking and interacting in real-life situations (Canale & Swain, 1980; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The relevance of CLT in English learning is growing in line with the demands for mastery of communication skills in the global era. Various studies have shown that consistent application of CLT can increase students' self-confidence, language fluency, and active participation in the learning process. However, the implementation of CLT in English classes still faces several challenges, particularly in terms of practice and consistency of application. Teachers often struggle to design effective communicative activities, manage heterogeneous classes, and balance curriculum demands with a communicative approach. Furthermore, limited professional training and a tendency to use traditional methods contribute to CLT's partial and unsustainable implementation, resulting in the goal of developing students' communicative competence not being optimally achieved (Littlewood, 2014; Richards, 2006).

The integration of digital technology in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) makes a significant contribution to strengthening communication-based language learning. Digital technology acts as a means of enabling authentic interaction, collaboration, and the use of English in broader and more meaningful contexts. Digital media, online learning platforms, and interactive applications such as learning management systems, video conferencing, and communicative task-based applications can facilitate language practice in real-time and asynchronously. The use of this technology aligns with CLT principles, which emphasize interaction, negotiation of meaning, and active student involvement. However, various studies indicate a gap in teacher competency in utilizing digital technology pedagogically. Technology is often used solely as a presentation tool and not optimally integrated into communicative learning strategies (Chapelle, 2003; Richards, 2015).

This situation underscores the urgency of continuous professional development for English language teachers in the digital era. Digital-based CLT training is seen as an effective strategy for improving teachers' pedagogical competency, particularly in integrating communicative approaches with learning technology. Through structured and contextualized training, teachers can gain a conceptual understanding of CLT as well as practical skills in designing,

implementing, and evaluating digital-based English language learning. The selection of digital-based CLT training as an innovative solution is based on its ability to address the challenges of 21st-century learning, strengthen the role of teachers as learning facilitators, and encourage the creation of student-centered learning oriented towards the development of authentic communicative competence (Borg, 2015; Koehler & Mishra, 2009).

Although the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has been widely studied as an effective strategy in English language learning, most previous research has focused on CLT implementation in the classroom without comprehensively linking it to digital technology-based teacher training programs. Furthermore, studies on digital-based teacher training tend to emphasize improving technological literacy or mastery of learning media, without explicitly integrating CLT pedagogical principles. This separation of focus has limited understanding of how the simultaneous integration of CLT and digital technology training can contribute to improving the pedagogical competence of English language teachers. Furthermore, there is still a lack of research empirically examining the impact of digital-based CLT training on teachers' abilities to design and manage learner-centered communicative learning (Borg, 2015; Richards, 2006).

Recognizing this gap, this study offers theoretical and practical contributions to the development of English language teacher training models. Theoretically, this research enriches language education studies by integrating CLT concepts and digital pedagogical frameworks within the context of teacher professional development. Practically, this study provides an applicable and contextual digital-based CLT training model that can be used as a reference in English teacher pedagogical competency development programs. The research findings are expected to provide a basis for educational policy makers, teacher training institutions, and educational practitioners in designing training programs that are more effective, sustainable, and aligned with the demands of English language learning in the digital era (Koehler & Mishra, 2009; OECD, 2019).

Research Methods

This study used a quantitative approach with to assess the effectiveness of digital-based Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) training in improving the pedagogical competence of English teachers. The study subjects consisted of secondary school English teachers selected using a purposive sampling technique based on teaching experience and involvement in professional development activities. The training program was systematically designed, encompassing the provision of conceptual CLT material, practical application of digital-based learning tools, communicative learning simulations, and classroom implementation support. The training was implemented using a blended learning model, combining

online and offline sessions, utilizing digital learning platforms and interactive media as the primary learning tools.

Data were collected through pedagogical competency tests, teaching practice observation sheets, and questionnaires assessing teachers' perceptions of the training. The pedagogical competency tests were administered before and after the training to measure improvements in teachers' understanding and pedagogical skills, while observations were used to assess their ability to implement digital-based CLT in their teaching. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired sample t-tests to determine significant differences between pretest and posttest scores. Meanwhile, supporting data from the questionnaire was analyzed descriptively to strengthen the interpretation of the research results. This methodological approach is expected to provide a comprehensive empirical picture of the impact of digital-based CLT training on improving the pedagogical competence of English teachers.

Result and Discussion

The research results show that digital-based Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) training has a significant positive impact on improving the pedagogical competence of English language teachers. Analysis of pretest and posttest results indicates an increase in teachers' understanding of CLT principles, particularly in aspects of communicative learning, classroom interaction management, and task-based activity design. These findings reinforce the view that teachers' pedagogical competence can be effectively improved through structured training oriented toward practical language learning (Richards, 2006; Shulman, 1987).

In addition to improved conceptual understanding, the research findings also demonstrate significant developments in teachers' ability to integrate digital technology into English language learning. Teachers are able to utilize online platforms, interactive media, and learning applications to support communicative activities, such as group discussions, conversation simulations, and collaborative assignments. This technology integration aligns with CLT principles, which emphasize authentic and meaningful language use. These results align with previous studies that suggest that digital technology has the potential to expand interaction and improve the quality of language learning when used pedagogically (Chapelle, 2003; Koehler & Mishra, 2009).

From a practical learning perspective, classroom observations indicate that teachers who participated in the training tended to be more capable of managing learner-centered learning. Teachers acted as facilitators, encouraging active participation, negotiation of meaning, and the use of English as the primary means of communication in the classroom. This resulted in increased student engagement

and confidence in communication. These findings support previous research confirming that teacher pedagogical competence directly influences the effectiveness of language learning and the achievement of communicative goals (Littlewood, 2014; Borg, 2015), as seen in Figure 1.
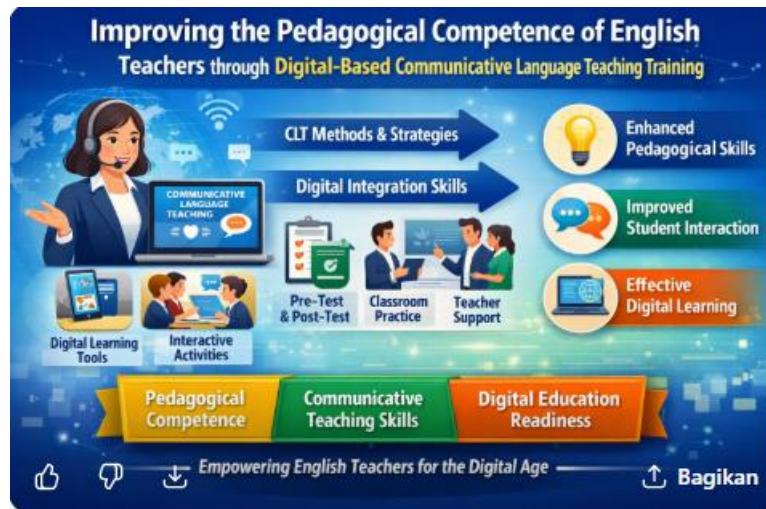

Figure 1. CTL

However, this study also found that not all teachers demonstrated the same level of adaptation in consistently implementing digital-based CLT. Some teachers still faced challenges in managing learning time, adapting digital materials to students' needs, and maintaining a balance between curriculum demands and communicative approaches. These findings indicate that single training is not entirely sufficient to ensure the sustainability of digital-based CLT practices, necessitating continued mentoring and professional learning communities to strengthen classroom implementation (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The results of the statistical analysis can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Pedagogical Competence Scores

Statistic	Pretest	Posttest
Mean	65.40	82.70
Standard Deviation	7.85	6.90
Minimum Score	50	68
Maximum Score	78	95
Sample Size (N)	30	30

Table 1. presents the descriptive statistics of English teachers' pedagogical competence before and after participating in the digital-based Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) training program. The increase in the mean posttest score indicates a substantial improvement in pedagogical competence, while the lower

standard deviation suggests more consistent performance among teachers following the training. Overall, the findings of this study confirm that digital-based CLT training is an effective and relevant strategy for improving the pedagogical competence of English language teachers in the digital education era. The primary contribution of this study lies in providing empirical evidence regarding the importance of integrating pedagogical and technological approaches in teacher professional development. The results of this study not only enrich theoretical studies on CLT and digital pedagogy but also provide practical implications for teacher training program designers and education policymakers in designing sustainable and contextual training models (OECD, 2019).

Conclusion

The results of the activity showed a significant increase in teachers' conceptual understanding of CLT principles, their ability to design digital-based communicative learning activities, and their skills in managing student-centered classroom interactions. Furthermore, teachers demonstrated a positive attitude toward utilizing digital technology as a means of improving the quality of English language learning. Thus, digital-based CLT training has proven effective in improving the pedagogical competence of English teachers and has the potential to become a model for continuous professional development in the digital education era.

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