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Deficiencies Encountered by Pre-service Teachers in Learning English: Challenges and Methodological Perspectives for Developing Productive Skills

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Abstract: English language proficiency has become an essential component of teacher education in response to the growing demand for globally competent educators. Despite years of language instruction, many pre-service teachers continue to experience difficulties in developing productive skills, particularly speaking and writing. These deficiencies reduce their communicative confidence and negatively influence their future professional performance in English language classrooms. The present study examines the major challenges encountered by pre-service teachers in learning English and discusses methodological perspectives for improving productive language skills. The paper analyzes linguistic, psychological, pedagogical, and technological factors influencing language learning and emphasizes the importance of communicative, learner-centered, and action-oriented approaches in teacher education. It is argued that the systematic integration of interactive learning activities, reflective practice, collaborative learning, and digital educational technologies can significantly enhance speaking and writing competence. The study concludes that developing productive skills should be considered one of the primary objectives of English teacher education programs because these skills directly affect future teachers' professional competence and classroom communication.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, English language learning, productive skills, speaking, writing, communicative competence, teacher education, language pedagogy, action-oriented learning.

Introduction

The increasing internationalization of education has substantially changed the professional requirements imposed on future teachers. English is no longer viewed merely as an academic subject but as a fundamental medium for international communication, academic cooperation, professional development, and lifelong learning. Consequently, teacher education institutions are expected to prepare graduates who are capable of using English effectively in both academic and professional contexts.

Although many pre-service teachers complete several years of English language study, a considerable proportion still encounter difficulties when they are required to communicate spontaneously or produce coherent academic texts. These deficiencies become particularly visible in productive language skills, namely speaking and writing, which require learners to integrate linguistic knowledge, communicative strategies, critical thinking, and contextual awareness simultaneously. As a result, many future teachers demonstrate adequate receptive skills while experiencing considerable challenges in expressing ideas fluently and accurately.

The development of productive skills is influenced by numerous interconnected factors. Insufficient vocabulary, limited grammatical control, pronunciation problems, writing anxiety, lack of authentic communicative practice, and low self-confidence frequently hinder learners' ability to communicate effectively. In addition, teacher-centered instructional practices and limited

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opportunities for meaningful interaction often reduce students' motivation to use English actively inside and outside the classroom.

Contemporary language education increasingly emphasizes communicative competence, learner autonomy, reflective learning, collaborative problem-solving, and authentic communication. Within this perspective, productive skills are not regarded as isolated language components but as integrated competencies that enable learners to participate successfully in academic, professional, and social communication. Therefore, improving speaking and writing abilities requires methodological approaches that combine linguistic accuracy with meaningful communication, critical reflection, and continuous practice.

This paper investigates the most common deficiencies encountered by pre-service teachers in learning English, with particular attention to speaking and writing skills. It also discusses methodological perspectives that may contribute to overcoming these challenges and strengthening future teachers' communicative competence. The findings are expected to contribute to improving English language teacher education by providing pedagogically grounded recommendations for the systematic development of productive skills.

Literature Review

The quality of teacher education largely depends on the level of foreign language competence that pre-service teachers acquire during their university studies. In recent years, educational researchers have increasingly emphasized that English language proficiency should not be limited to linguistic knowledge alone. Instead, future teachers are expected to demonstrate communicative competence that enables them to interact effectively in academic, professional, and multicultural environments. Consequently, productive skills, particularly speaking and writing, have become central components of English language teacher education.

Productive skills represent learners' ability to generate meaningful language through oral and written communication. Unlike receptive skills, which involve understanding linguistic input, productive skills require learners to organize ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, apply grammatical structures accurately, and communicate according to the social and academic context. Because these processes occur simultaneously, productive skills are generally considered the most demanding aspect of second language acquisition.

Despite continuous improvements in language teaching methodology, many pre-service teachers experience persistent difficulties in mastering productive skills. Classroom observations and educational practice indicate that university students frequently possess sufficient theoretical knowledge of English grammar but encounter considerable challenges when required to communicate spontaneously or produce coherent academic writing. This discrepancy demonstrates that language knowledge does not automatically develop into communicative competence.

One of the most frequently observed deficiencies concerns oral communication. Many pre-service teachers hesitate to participate in classroom discussions because they are afraid of making grammatical or pronunciation errors. This fear often results in limited interaction, reduced speaking practice, and lower communicative confidence. As speaking requires immediate language production, students frequently experience cognitive overload when attempting to organize ideas while simultaneously monitoring vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. Consequently, they tend to produce short, simplified responses instead of engaging in meaningful communication.

Writing presents another significant challenge for future teachers. Although students generally understand grammatical rules, many experience difficulties in organizing ideas logically, developing coherent paragraphs, maintaining academic style, and using appropriate lexical resources. Academic writing requires not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking, analytical skills, and the

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ability to structure information systematically. Insufficient practice in process-oriented writing often prevents students from developing these competencies during teacher education.

Vocabulary limitations constitute another factor influencing productive language use. Learners frequently possess passive vocabulary that allows them to understand written texts but experience difficulty retrieving appropriate lexical items during spontaneous speaking or writing. As a result, communication becomes repetitive, inaccurate, and less effective. Similar problems occur with grammatical competence, where theoretical knowledge is often not transferred successfully into authentic communicative situations.

Psychological factors also influence language production. Foreign language anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, and limited motivation reduce students' willingness to communicate in English. Such emotional barriers are particularly evident during presentations, classroom discussions, and academic writing tasks, where students are expected to demonstrate their language competence publicly. Educational research increasingly suggests that emotionally supportive learning environments encourage greater participation and contribute positively to productive language development.

Contemporary language pedagogy therefore recommends learner-centered instruction that promotes authentic communication, collaborative learning, reflective practice, and continuous feedback. Interactive classroom activities, project-based learning, problem-solving tasks, peer assessment, and technology-supported instruction create meaningful opportunities for students to practice English in realistic contexts. These approaches help transform linguistic knowledge into communicative competence and support the gradual development of productive skills.

Based on the existing body of research, it can be argued that the deficiencies observed among pre-service teachers are multidimensional. They originate from the interaction of linguistic, pedagogical, cognitive, and psychological factors rather than from language knowledge alone. Therefore, improving speaking and writing competence requires an integrated methodological framework that simultaneously develops language proficiency, communicative confidence, critical thinking, and professional teaching competence.

Deficiencies Encountered by Pre-service Teachers in Learning English

The development of English language proficiency among pre-service teachers remains one of the major challenges in contemporary teacher education. Although most university students receive formal English instruction for several years, many graduate without achieving the level of communicative competence required for professional teaching. The most noticeable deficiencies are observed in productive language skills, particularly speaking and writing, because these skills require learners to apply linguistic knowledge actively in authentic communicative situations.

A Methodological Framework for Developing Speaking and Writing Skills among Pre-service Teachers

The analysis of existing educational practice indicates that the development of productive skills among pre-service teachers requires a comprehensive methodological framework that combines linguistic competence, communicative practice, reflective learning, and digital educational technologies. The present study proposes an integrated framework based on learner-centered instruction, communicative interaction, and continuous formative assessment.

Creating an Authentic Communicative Environment

One of the primary conditions for improving productive skills is the creation of an authentic English-speaking environment within teacher education programs. Classroom communication should encourage students to use English naturally rather than merely reproduce memorized grammatical structures. Discussions, debates, role-playing activities, problem-solving tasks, and collaborative

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projects increase learners' opportunities to express opinions, negotiate meaning, and develop communicative confidence.

Authentic communication also reduces language anxiety because students gradually become accustomed to using English for meaningful purposes instead of focusing exclusively on grammatical accuracy. Consequently, fluency and interaction develop simultaneously with linguistic competence.

Digital Technologies for Productive Skill Development

Digital learning environments provide additional opportunities for productive language practice beyond the traditional classroom. Video conferencing platforms, collaborative writing tools, learning management systems, online discussion forums, and artificial intelligence–supported language applications enable students to practice English independently and receive immediate feedback.

Digital technologies also increase learner autonomy by allowing students to monitor their progress, revise written texts, practice pronunciation, and participate in virtual communicative activities. Consequently, technology-supported learning extends productive language practice beyond classroom boundaries.

Discussion

The findings of the present study indicate that the difficulties encountered by pre-service teachers in learning English are multidimensional and cannot be attributed to a single factor. Although many students demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, this knowledge is often not reflected in their ability to communicate effectively in authentic situations. The results suggest that productive language skills require the integration of linguistic competence, cognitive abilities, emotional readiness, and communicative experience.

Speaking remains the most challenging productive skill because it demands immediate language production under real-time conditions. Many pre-service teachers experience communication anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and limited opportunities for authentic interaction. These psychological factors frequently reduce learners' willingness to participate in classroom communication, which consequently limits their language development.

Writing presents different but equally significant challenges. The analysis demonstrates that students frequently experience difficulties in organizing ideas logically, maintaining coherence, applying academic vocabulary appropriately, and producing grammatically accurate texts. These difficulties indicate that writing instruction should extend beyond grammatical exercises and emphasize planning, drafting, revising, peer review, and reflective writing practices.

The study also highlights the importance of learner-centered pedagogy. Productive skills develop more effectively when students actively participate in communicative tasks rather than passively receiving language knowledge. Interactive classroom activities encourage learners to negotiate meaning, exchange opinions, solve problems collaboratively, and apply English in realistic contexts. Such experiences gradually transform theoretical language knowledge into practical communicative competence.

Another important implication concerns the role of digital educational technologies. Modern technological tools provide continuous opportunities for language practice beyond classroom instruction. Artificial intelligence–supported applications, collaborative online platforms, virtual discussions, and digital writing environments create additional opportunities for individualized learning and immediate formative feedback. These technologies should complement rather than replace direct interaction between teachers and students.

Overall, the findings emphasize that improving productive skills requires a systematic methodological approach that combines communicative interaction, reflective learning, formative assessment, professional orientation, and technology-enhanced instruction. Such an approach

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contributes not only to language proficiency but also to the professional development of future teachers.

Conclusion

Developing productive English language skills has become one of the principal objectives of contemporary teacher education. The ability to communicate confidently through speaking and writing directly influences future teachers' professional effectiveness, classroom interaction, and lifelong learning opportunities. Therefore, strengthening productive skills should be regarded as a strategic priority in English language teacher preparation programs.

The present study identified several major deficiencies commonly encountered by pre-service teachers, including limited communicative confidence, insufficient speaking fluency, weaknesses in academic writing, restricted active vocabulary, grammatical inaccuracies, pronunciation problems, and language anxiety. These challenges originate from the interaction of linguistic, pedagogical, psychological, and methodological factors rather than from language knowledge alone.

Based on the analysis, this study proposes an integrated methodological framework that combines communicative language teaching, collaborative learning, reflective practice, technology-supported instruction, and continuous formative assessment. The proposed framework creates meaningful opportunities for students to use English actively while simultaneously developing professional competence required for future teaching practice.

The findings suggest that productive skill development should become a continuous process embedded throughout teacher education rather than being confined to isolated language courses. Universities should design learning environments that encourage authentic communication, independent learning, critical thinking, and professional reflection. Such educational practices will contribute to preparing highly competent English teachers capable of responding effectively to the linguistic and pedagogical demands of modern education.

Future research may investigate the effectiveness of specific instructional models for developing productive skills, compare different technology-supported learning environments, and examine the long-term impact of communicative methodologies on the professional competence of pre-service teachers.

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