BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg

THE ROLE OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION IN DEVELOPING PEDAGOGICAL COMPETENCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract: Classroom interaction has become a fundamental element in contemporary English Language Teaching (ELT), not only as a medium for language learning but also as a key factor in the professional development of foreign language teachers. In modern learner-centered educational contexts, interaction shapes how teachers develop pedagogical competence, adapt instructional strategies, and respond to learner needs. This study examines the role of classroom interaction in developing teachers' pedagogical competence through the theoretical lenses of sociocultural theory, communicative language teaching, and classroom discourse analysis. Using a qualitative theoretical synthesis approach, the study analyzes interaction patterns such as teacher–student dialogue, peer interaction, and reflective classroom communication. The findings indicate that classroom interaction functions as a dynamic pedagogical space where teaching knowledge is constructed, tested, and refined in real time. The study concludes that interactional competence is a core component of teacher development and should be systematically integrated into teacher education programs.

Keywords: classroom interaction, pedagogical competence, foreign language teachers, ELT, teacher cognition, sociocultural theory, reflective practice

Introduction

In recent decades, English Language Teaching (ELT) has undergone profound transformations driven by globalization, technological advancement, and evolving educational philosophies. Traditional teacher-centered models, which emphasized grammar explanation and knowledge transmission, have gradually been replaced by communicative, task-based, and learner-centered approaches. Within this paradigm shift, classroom interaction has emerged as a fundamental element of both language learning and teacher development.

Classroom interaction refers to the ongoing communicative exchange between teachers and students as well as among students themselves. These exchanges include questioning, explaining, negotiating meaning, giving feedback, and collaboratively constructing knowledge. In communicative classrooms, interaction is no longer viewed as a supplementary activity but as the core process through which language learning occurs.

However, interaction is not only beneficial for learners. It also plays a critical role in shaping teachers' pedagogical competence. Through interaction, teachers receive immediate feedback on their instructional strategies, observe learner comprehension, and adjust their teaching behavior accordingly. Despite its importance, the theoretical connection between classroom interaction and teacher development remains insufficiently explored in ELT research. Most studies focus on learner outcomes, while fewer examine how interaction contributes to teacher cognition, reflective thinking, and professional identity formation.

Therefore, this study aims to explore classroom interaction as a developmental mechanism for foreign language teachers' pedagogical competence. The guiding research question is: how does classroom interaction contribute to the formation and development of pedagogical competence in foreign language teachers within modern ELT contexts?

Methods

This study employs a qualitative theoretical synthesis design, focusing on the interpretation and integration of existing scholarly literature rather than empirical data collection. The purpose of this approach is to develop a conceptual understanding of classroom interaction as a mechanism for teacher development.

The data sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic monographs, and foundational theoretical works in applied linguistics, ELT methodology, teacher education, sociocultural theory, and discourse analysis. The selection criteria emphasized relevance to interaction-based learning, teacher cognition, and professional development.

The analysis followed a structured multi-step procedure. First, key theoretical constructs related to classroom interaction were identified across the literature. Second, these constructs were grouped into thematic categories such as instructional interaction, peer collaboration, and reflective communication. Third, these categories were synthesized into a unified framework explaining how interaction contributes to pedagogical competence development.

This interpretive method allows for a deep conceptual exploration of interaction as both a pedagogical tool and a professional learning process embedded in classroom practice.

Results

The analysis reveals that classroom interaction contributes to the development of foreign language teachers' pedagogical competence through three interconnected mechanisms: real-time instructional decision-making, experiential learning, and reflective professional awareness.

Real-time instructional decision-making occurs during ongoing classroom interaction, where teachers must interpret learner responses and adjust their teaching strategies immediately. This process strengthens teachers' ability to manage unpredictable classroom situations and improves their instructional flexibility.

Experiential learning emerges through continuous engagement in classroom discourse. Teachers accumulate practical knowledge by observing learner behavior, identifying communication breakdowns, and experimenting with different teaching strategies. This experiential dimension of interaction contributes to tacit pedagogical knowledge that cannot be fully acquired through theoretical instruction alone.

Reflective professional awareness develops when teachers analyze classroom interaction after lessons. Through reflection, teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their communication strategies, identify areas for improvement, and refine their pedagogical approaches. This process transforms classroom experience into long-term professional competence.

Role of Classroom Interaction in Teacher Competence Development

Type of	Classroom	Cognitive	Contribution to

Interaction	Function	Impact on Teachers	Pedagogical Competence
Teacher–Student Interaction	Instruction, feedback, questioning, explanation	Enhances real-time decision-making	Improves instructional adaptability and responsiveness
Student–Student Interaction	Collaboration, group work, peer learning	Expands awareness of learner behavior	Strengthens classroom management and facilitation skills
Reflective Interaction	Post-lesson evaluation, peer feedback, self-analysis	Develops critical thinking and self-evaluation	Promotes continuous professional development

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that classroom interaction is a multidimensional phenomenon that significantly contributes to the development of pedagogical competence among foreign language teachers. Within the sociocultural theoretical framework, learning is understood as a socially mediated process, meaning that knowledge is constructed through interaction and participation in social activity. This principle applies not only to learners but also to teachers, who develop professionally through engagement in classroom discourse.

In communicative language teaching environments, interaction serves as the core mechanism of instruction. Teachers are required to manage multiple communicative processes simultaneously, including maintaining fluency-focused communication, ensuring comprehension, encouraging participation, and supporting learner autonomy. These responsibilities require advanced interactional competence, which directly influences pedagogical effectiveness.

Furthermore, classroom interaction functions as a space for adaptive teaching. Teachers continuously adjust their instructional strategies based on learner responses, classroom dynamics, and communication breakdowns. This adaptability is a key characteristic of effective teaching in modern ELT contexts.

Reflective practice plays a crucial role in transforming classroom interaction into professional knowledge. Through systematic reflection, teachers analyze their instructional decisions, evaluate learner engagement, and identify patterns in classroom discourse. This reflective cycle enables continuous improvement and supports the development of professional expertise.

Overall, classroom interaction should be understood not only as a pedagogical technique but also as a professional learning environment that actively contributes to teacher development. This dual role highlights its importance in teacher education and professional training programs.

Conclusion

This study has examined the role of classroom interaction in developing pedagogical competence among foreign language teachers in contemporary ELT contexts. The findings

demonstrate that interaction serves as a dynamic mechanism for real-time decision-making, experiential learning, and reflective professional development.

Classroom interaction enables teachers to continuously construct and refine their pedagogical knowledge through direct engagement with learners. It also facilitates the transformation of teaching experience into professional competence through reflective processes. Therefore, interactional competence should be considered a core component of teacher education and professional development programs.

Future research should focus on empirical validation of the proposed theoretical framework through classroom-based studies, teacher interviews, and discourse analysis to further deepen understanding of interaction-based teacher development.

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