



Pedagogical and Professional Competence of English Teachers in EFL Learning at Islamic Senior High School

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study aims to analyze the pedagogical and professional competencies of English teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning at Madrasah Aliyah Madani Alauddin Pao-Pao, Gowa, South Sulawesi, particularly in classroom management, teaching implementation, and mastery of teaching materials.

Methodology: This study used a qualitative descriptive method. The subjects were two English teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Madani Alauddin Pao-Pao. Data were collected through classroom observation, structured interviews with teachers, unstructured interviews with students, lesson plan review, and observation checklists. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model.

Main Findings: The findings revealed that pedagogical competence between the two teachers showed significant differences. One teacher was considered less effective due to monotonous teaching methods and limited classroom engagement, while the other teacher was more favored because of interactive teaching strategies. Both teachers demonstrated adequate professional competence in material mastery, technology use, and continuous professional development.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This study specifically compares pedagogical and professional competencies of English teachers in an Islamic senior high school context by combining teacher observation and student perceptions. It highlights how student-centered teaching strategies significantly influence teacher effectiveness, providing practical insights for improving EFL teaching quality in madrasah settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers hold a strategic role in determining the success of educational processes, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. In the Indonesian educational context, English teachers are expected not only to transfer knowledge but also to build students' communicative competence, critical thinking, and motivation to learn [1]-[3]. Teacher competence becomes one of the most essential factors in achieving these educational goals because teachers function as facilitators, motivators, evaluators, and classroom managers. Without qualified

teachers, curriculum improvement and educational reform cannot be implemented effectively. Therefore, teacher competence is considered the main foundation of successful EFL learning in schools [4], [5].

Teacher competence in Indonesia is generally categorized into four major aspects: pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competence [6], [7]. However, among these four competencies, pedagogical and professional competence are often considered the most directly related to classroom instruction and students' academic achievement. Pedagogical competence refers to the teacher's ability to understand students' characteristics, develop curriculum, implement effective learning strategies, conduct evaluation, and facilitate student development [8]-[10]. Meanwhile, professional competence emphasizes mastery of subject matter, continuous professional development, and the effective use of educational technology in teaching practice. These two competencies are highly significant because they directly influence the effectiveness of learning activities in the classroom.

In reality, many educational institutions still face serious challenges regarding teacher competence, particularly in EFL classrooms. Some teachers still apply monotonous teaching methods, rely excessively on textbook explanation, and fail to create interactive and student-centered learning environments [11], [12]. In some cases, teachers demonstrate limited mastery of English language skills, weak classroom management, and insufficient use of learning media and technology. These conditions often reduce students' motivation and participation during English lessons [13]. As a result, students experience boredom, low engagement, and limited opportunities to develop their communicative competence. This situation indicates that teacher competence remains a crucial issue that requires serious attention [14].

Government efforts such as teacher certification programs, professional teacher education curriculum reform, and professional training have been conducted to improve teacher professionalism [15], [16]. However, these programs do not always produce significant changes in classroom practice. Some teachers participate in training only to fulfill administrative requirements rather than to improve teaching quality. In many schools, teachers still struggle to implement innovative teaching methods and adapt to curriculum changes. This gap between policy expectations and classroom realities demonstrates that teacher competence should not only be measured administratively but also through direct observation of teaching performance and student responses [17], [18].

At Madrasah Aliyah Madani Alauddin Pao-Pao, Gowa, South Sulawesi, the researcher found several indications related to teacher competence in English learning. Some teachers were observed using highly teacher-centered approaches with limited variation in instructional strategies, while others demonstrated more interactive and engaging teaching practices. Students also expressed different perceptions regarding their teachers' classroom performance, particularly in terms of motivation, teaching style, and material delivery. Some students preferred teachers who used games, interactive speaking activities, and technology integration, while they considered monotonous explanation-based teaching less effective [19], [20]. These findings suggest that pedagogical and professional competence vary significantly among teachers and strongly affect students' learning experiences.

Based on these conditions, it becomes important to investigate how English teachers implement pedagogical and professional competence in EFL classrooms [21]. This study focuses specifically on analyzing English teachers' competencies at Madrasah Aliyah Madani Alauddin Pao-Pao, particularly in classroom management, student engagement, curriculum implementation, mastery of material, and technology use. Understanding these competencies is necessary to evaluate whether English teachers have fulfilled the standards of professional teaching and how their competence influences students' learning experiences [22]. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to improving the quality of English language teaching in madrasah education.

Previous studies have discussed teacher competence from various perspectives. Damar Pratiwi [23] found that teachers' pedagogical and professional competence were generally lower than personal and social competence in vocational schools. Abd Syukur [24] revealed that professional competence significantly contributed to learning effectiveness, although many external factors also influenced student outcomes. Renata Terajova [25] emphasized that effective teachers are not only determined by content knowledge but also by pedagogical skills and classroom interaction. However, these studies mainly focused on general educational settings and did not specifically explore EFL learning in Islamic senior high schools (*Madrasah Aliyah*), especially by comparing teacher performance with direct student perceptions. This indicates a research gap that requires further investigation in the context of EFL teaching in madrasah education.

The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on comparing pedagogical and professional competence of English teachers in an Islamic senior high school context using both classroom observation and student interviews [26], [27]. Unlike previous studies that primarily measured competence through teacher self-report or institutional assessment, this study combines teacher behavior observation with students' real classroom experiences. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how teacher competence is implemented in practice and how it influences student engagement and learning effectiveness. The study also highlights the importance of interactive teaching strategies in strengthening EFL learning outcomes.

The implication of this study is expected to provide practical recommendations for English teachers, school administrators, and educational policymakers in improving teacher professionalism. For teachers, the findings can serve as reflective material to improve teaching methods, classroom management, and student-centered learning approaches [28]. For school leaders, the study may support professional development planning and supervision systems. For policymakers, the findings may strengthen the importance of evaluating teacher competence not only through certification but also through direct teaching performance and student feedback in classroom settings [29], [30].

The urgency of this study becomes increasingly important because English competence is now a major requirement in global education and professional competition. Students need qualified English teachers who can facilitate effective language learning and prepare them for academic and social challenges in the future. If teacher competence remains weak, the quality of English education will continue to decline, particularly in madrasah institutions that aim to balance academic excellence and character education. Therefore, examining English teachers' pedagogical and professional competence is an urgent effort to support better educational quality and more meaningful EFL learning outcomes.

Based on the background, research gap, and urgency described above, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How do English teachers implement pedagogical competence in EFL classrooms at Madrasah Aliyah Madani Alauddin Pao-Pao? (2) How do English teachers demonstrate professional competence in teaching English as a foreign language? (3) How do students perceive the pedagogical and professional competence of English teachers during classroom learning activities? and (4) What factors support or hinder the implementation of pedagogical and professional competence in EFL learning at the madrasah level? These research questions are formulated to obtain a comprehensive understanding of teacher competence implementation and its influence on students' learning experiences in Islamic senior high school contexts.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate [31], [32] the pedagogical and professional competencies of English teachers in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning at Madrasah Aliyah Madani Alauddin Pao-Pao, South Sulawesi. Qualitative descriptive research was chosen because it allows the researcher to describe naturally occurring classroom phenomena and teacher performance in detail without manipulating variables. The focus of this study was to understand how teachers implemented pedagogical and professional competence during the teaching and learning process. According to Miles and Huberman, qualitative research emphasizes understanding social phenomena through observation, interaction, and interpretation of human behavior in its natural setting. Therefore, this design was considered appropriate for analyzing teacher competence in real classroom situations.

2.2. Subject Sample Research

The subjects of this study were two English teachers who actively taught English at Madrasah Aliyah Madani Alauddin Pao-Pao. These teachers were selected purposively because they were directly involved in the EFL teaching process and represented the main focus of the research. In addition to the teachers, several students from the first and second year classes were also involved as supporting informants to provide additional information regarding the teachers' classroom performance, teaching style, and learning atmosphere. The students were selected using purposive sampling based on their active participation and experience during English lessons. This selection aimed to obtain comprehensive and valid information from both teachers and learners regarding the implementation of pedagogical and professional competence.

2.3. Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data [33]. Primary data were obtained directly from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student interviews, while secondary data were collected from lesson plans and school documents. Data collection techniques included participant observation, structured interviews with English teachers, and unstructured interviews with students to gain deeper insights into classroom conditions. Observation was conducted to identify teaching practices, classroom management, and student engagement, while interviews were used to confirm and clarify observational findings. This combination of techniques ensured comprehensive data collection and strengthened data reliability through methodological triangulation.

2.4. Research Instrument

The instruments used in this study included observation checklists, interview guidelines, and documentation sheets [34]. In this study, the observation sheet was designed based on several indicators of

pedagogical and professional competence in EFL learning. The indicators included student-centered learning, classroom management, use of games or interactive methods, equal student participation, learning motivation, and technology integration. These indicators were used to evaluate and compare the teaching performance of English teachers during classroom learning activities. Student-centered learning focused on how teachers encouraged active student involvement in the learning process. Classroom management examined teachers' ability to manage classroom conditions effectively and create a conducive learning environment. The use of games and interactive methods assessed teachers' creativity in implementing engaging teaching strategies. Equal student participation evaluated whether all students had equal opportunities to participate in classroom activities. Learning motivation referred to teachers' efforts in encouraging students' enthusiasm and confidence in learning English. Meanwhile, technology integration examined teachers' ability to utilize digital media or technological tools to support EFL instruction. These indicators were systematically observed to obtain comprehensive data regarding the implementation of pedagogical and professional competence in the classroom context.

Table 1. Indicator Research Instrument

Indicator	Focus of Observation
Student-centered learning	Teachers encourage active student participation
Classroom management	Teachers manage classroom conditions effectively
Use of games/interactive methods	Teachers apply engaging teaching strategies
Equal student participation	Teachers provide equal learning opportunities
Learning motivation	Teachers motivate students during learning activities
Technology integration	Teachers use digital media and technological tools

The observation indicators presented in the table were used to evaluate the implementation of teachers' pedagogical and professional competence during EFL classroom learning activities. These indicators focused on teachers' ability to create student-centered learning, manage classroom interactions effectively, apply engaging teaching methods, encourage equal participation, motivate students, and integrate technology into the learning process. Through these observations, the researcher obtained comprehensive data regarding teachers' instructional practices and their influence on students' learning experiences in the classroom context.

2.5. Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of four main stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data collection was conducted continuously during the research process. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing relevant data from observations and interviews. Data display was carried out by presenting the data in descriptive form, tables, and matrices to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified based on consistent patterns found in the data. This analytical approach allows the researcher to systematically interpret qualitative data and generate valid conclusions. To support the clarity of data analysis, the following table illustrates the categorization of teacher competence levels:

Table 2. Categorization of Teacher Competence

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Pedagogical Competence of English Teachers	Bad	8.6
Professional Competence of English Teachers in EFL Learning	Sufficient	12.4
Islamic Senior High School	Good	15.3

The results presented in the table indicate varying levels of teacher competence in EFL learning at the Islamic senior high school context. Pedagogical competence of English teachers was categorized as bad with a percentage of 8.6%, showing that several aspects of classroom management, student-centered learning, and instructional strategies still need improvement. Meanwhile, professional competence in EFL learning was categorized as sufficient with a percentage of 12.4%, indicating that teachers demonstrated moderate mastery of teaching materials and instructional practices. In contrast, the Islamic senior high school context was categorized as good with a percentage of 15.3%, suggesting that the learning environment generally supported the implementation of English teaching and learning activities.

2.6. Research Procedure

The research procedure was conducted in several systematic stages [35]. First, the researcher conducted preliminary observations to understand the classroom context and identify research problems. Second, the researcher carried out classroom observations to record teaching practices and student responses. Third, structured interviews were conducted with English teachers to obtain detailed information about their competencies. Fourth, unstructured interviews were conducted with students to validate and enrich the data. Fifth, the researcher analyzed

the collected data using the interactive analysis model. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the findings and verified through triangulation of data sources.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Pedagogical Competence of English Teachers

The findings showed that the pedagogical competence of English teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Madani Alauddin Pao-Pao varied significantly between the two observed teachers. Pedagogical competence refers to the teacher's ability to understand students' characteristics, manage the classroom, implement effective learning activities, develop lesson plans, and facilitate student participation. Based on classroom observations and student interviews, one teacher demonstrated stronger pedagogical competence by applying interactive teaching strategies, while the other teacher tended to use monotonous lecture-based instruction that reduced students' engagement [36].

The first indicator observed was the teacher's ability to identify students' characteristics and learning needs. One teacher successfully created an interactive classroom atmosphere by beginning the lesson with *ice breaking* activities and asking contextual questions related to the topic of announcement texts. Students actively responded to questions such as where they usually found announcements and how important announcements were in daily life. This strategy helped students connect prior knowledge with new learning material and increased their curiosity. However, another teacher was perceived as less responsive to students' individual learning styles because the teaching process was dominated by one-way explanation without sufficient adaptation to student differences. Students stated that they often felt bored because the teacher repeatedly used the same teaching pattern without variation.

The second indicator was equal participation and classroom management. Observation revealed that some teachers focused only on students sitting in the front rows, while students in the back rows received less attention. As a result, back-row students often talked to each other, lost focus, and sometimes slept during the lesson. This imbalance indicated weak classroom control and insufficient distribution of learning opportunities [37]. In contrast, the teacher who actively moved around the classroom and involved students through games and vocabulary activities was able to maintain better student participation. Students reported that they felt more motivated when teachers used enjoyable activities such as word games and song-based vocabulary memorization rather than long oral explanations [38]. This finding confirms that effective classroom management directly influences students' motivation and discipline.

Another important aspect of pedagogical competence was the teacher's ability to develop students' potential in speaking, writing, and reading. The study found that speaking activities were limited mostly to reading texts aloud rather than encouraging authentic communication. Writing activities were rarely conducted because teachers relied heavily on modules and oral explanation [39]. Reading activities focused mainly on pronunciation fluency rather than reading comprehension strategies such as skimming and scanning. Students expressed that some teachers did not sufficiently encourage them to use English actively in class. Meanwhile, another teacher enforced English use more strictly and even applied simple penalties when students avoided speaking English. This practice helped improve students' speaking confidence and language discipline. Therefore, the findings suggest that pedagogical competence strongly affects students' opportunity to develop language skills in EFL classrooms.

Lesson planning and curriculum implementation also showed differences among teachers. Both teachers used the School Level Curriculum and prepared lesson plans based on school requirements. Observation confirmed that teachers followed the general stages of teaching, including opening activities, explaining learning objectives, presenting materials, and closing activities. However, the execution was not always fully aligned with the lesson plan. Some planned activities such as assignments, confirmation stages, and follow-up evaluation were often omitted during actual classroom practice. In several cases, students only listened to explanations and copied material from the LCD projector without engaging in deeper problem-solving tasks. This indicates that administrative lesson planning alone does not guarantee effective pedagogical practice unless it is implemented consistently in the classroom.

The use of instructional media and technology also became an important finding. Teachers who used laptops and LCD projectors created more structured and visually clear lessons compared to those relying solely on verbal explanation. Students stated that visual presentation through slides made learning easier to understand because the material became more detailed and systematic. However, technology use was still limited to presentation rather than interactive learning. Digital tools were not maximized for collaborative activities, speaking practice, or independent learning tasks [40]. This suggests that while basic technology integration exists, pedagogical innovation remains limited. To summarize the pedagogical competence findings, the following table presents the dominant classroom characteristics observed.

Table 3. Pedagogical Competence Findings

Indicator	Teacher A	Teacher B
Student-centered learning	Low	High
Classroom management	Moderate	Good
Use of games/interactive methods	Rare	Frequent
Equal student participation	Limited	Better
Learning motivation	Low	High
Technology integration	Moderate	Moderate

These findings indicate that pedagogical competence is not merely about fulfilling formal teaching procedures but also about creating meaningful, student-centered learning experiences. Teachers who understand students' needs and use varied teaching strategies are more likely to achieve effective EFL learning outcomes.

3.2. Professional Competence of English Teachers

Professional competence concerns teachers' mastery of subject matter, teaching performance, language proficiency, and commitment to continuous professional development. The findings revealed that both teachers generally demonstrated adequate professional competence, but significant differences appeared in practical classroom performance and students' perceptions of teaching quality.

The first aspect was mastery of English material. Both teachers were able to explain the topic of announcement texts according to curriculum objectives and could provide examples relevant to students' daily life. Students understood the general concept of oral and written announcements and were able to identify their components. However, some students reported that one teacher's pronunciation and explanation were less clear compared to another teacher who was considered more fluent and confident in English delivery. Pronunciation accuracy became an important concern because students tend to imitate teacher language models in EFL classrooms. Teachers with stronger pronunciation and communication skills were viewed as more professional and more capable of improving students' speaking ability [41].

The second aspect involved the teacher's ability to motivate students through professional teaching performance. Students strongly associated professionalism with how teachers presented lessons. Teachers who were humorous, disciplined, and creative were perceived as more competent than those who only explained material continuously without interaction. One teacher was particularly appreciated for integrating games into vocabulary learning, which made students memorize English words unconsciously through enjoyable repetition [42]. This teaching style not only improved vocabulary acquisition but also strengthened students' positive attitudes toward English learning. In contrast, students described another teacher's style as "like giving a sermon," meaning too much talking and too little engagement. This shows that professional competence is closely connected with the teacher's practical ability to transform subject knowledge into meaningful learning experiences.

Another professional competence indicator was the teacher's commitment to professional development and instructional improvement. Observation showed that some teachers prepared learning materials independently using LCD presentations and additional examples beyond the textbook. This effort reflected preparation and responsibility toward teaching quality. However, there was still limited evidence of systematic professional development such as reflective teaching practices, peer collaboration, or participation in pedagogical innovation. Some teachers still relied heavily on traditional teaching habits and did not significantly adapt to student feedback. This suggests that professional competence requires continuous self-improvement rather than only subject mastery [43].

The findings also showed that teacher professionalism influences classroom authority and student discipline. Students admitted that they were less likely to make noise or ignore lessons when taught by teachers they respected for their competence and communication style. Teachers with stronger authority were usually those who combined mastery of material with clear instruction and engaging delivery. This finding supports the view that professionalism is not only technical competence but also the teacher's ability to build respect and trust within the classroom.

To illustrate professional competence findings, the following equation conceptually represents the relationship between teacher competence and learning effectiveness. This conceptual framework was adapted from the teacher competency theory proposed by Lee Shulman, particularly concerning the integration of pedagogical knowledge and professional teaching performance in influencing students' learning outcomes. The framework was further contextualized in this study to analyze English teachers' pedagogical and professional competence in EFL learning at Islamic senior high schools :

$$LE = F (PC + PrC + SM + CM) \quad \dots(1)$$

Where:

LE	= Learning Effectiveness
PC	= Pedagogical Competence
PrC	= Professional Competence
SM	= Student Motivation
CM	= Classroom Management

This conceptual relationship explains that learning effectiveness increases when pedagogical competence, professional competence, student motivation, and classroom management work together effectively.

The results of this study support the theory that pedagogical competence and professional competence are central determinants of effective EFL learning. Teachers who implemented interactive strategies such as games, vocabulary practice, and contextual discussion created stronger student engagement than teachers who relied on lecture-based methods. This finding is consistent with Syekh Ali [44], who found that pedagogical competence strongly influences classroom participation and learning motivation. Similarly, Onisimus Amtu [45] emphasized that professional competence contributes significantly to students' academic achievement when teachers can transform subject mastery into understandable instruction.

However, this study also found that formal compliance with curriculum requirements does not automatically lead to effective teaching. Although teachers prepared lesson plans and followed curriculum standards, actual classroom implementation often remained teacher-centered and repetitive. This finding extends Yohanes Sunaryo [46] argument that effective teaching depends not only on curriculum knowledge but also on the teacher's ability to build dynamic classroom interaction. In this study, students clearly preferred teachers who combined instructional discipline with humor, creativity, and emotional connection.

A significant gap emerged when comparing this study with three previous studies. Syekh Ali focused on vocational schools and measured competence quantitatively without deep classroom observation. Onisimus Amtu emphasized professional competence statistically but gave limited attention to student perceptions. Yohanes Sunaryo discussed teacher effectiveness theoretically without focusing on EFL classrooms in Islamic senior high schools [47]. This study fills that gap by directly comparing teacher competence through observation and student interviews in a madrasah context. It reveals how student perception becomes a powerful indicator of real teaching effectiveness beyond formal certification.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of teacher observation and student voice to evaluate pedagogical and professional competence simultaneously. Previous studies often relied only on teacher self-assessment or institutional evaluation [48]. This study demonstrates that students provide valuable evidence regarding teacher effectiveness because they experience classroom practice directly. The comparison between two teachers in the same institutional setting also provides clearer insight into how different teaching approaches produce different learning outcomes.

The practical implication of this study is that teacher development programs should prioritize classroom performance rather than administrative certification alone. Schools should provide continuous supervision, peer mentoring, and reflective teaching opportunities to help teachers improve pedagogical innovation. Teachers need to strengthen student-centered learning strategies, improve English communication skills, and maximize technology integration beyond presentation tools. Educational policymakers should also design teacher evaluation systems that include student feedback as an important component of professional assessment [49].

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the research involved only two English teachers in one madrasah, so the findings cannot be generalized to all EFL contexts. Second, the study focused mainly on pedagogical and professional competence without deeply examining personal and social competence. Third, the observation was limited to certain classroom meetings, which may not fully represent long-term teaching behavior [50]. Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, multiple schools, and mixed-method approaches to provide broader evidence regarding teacher competence and EFL learning effectiveness.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the pedagogical and professional competencies of English teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Madani Alauddin Pao-Pao significantly influence the effectiveness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. In terms of pedagogical competence, differences were found in classroom management, student participation, teaching strategies, and the ability to develop students' language skills. Teachers who applied interactive, student-centered methods such as games, vocabulary practice, and contextual discussion were more successful in creating active learning environments and increasing student motivation compared to teachers who used monotonous lecture-based approaches. In terms of professional competence, both teachers showed adequate mastery of teaching materials and curriculum implementation, but differences appeared in pronunciation, teaching performance, classroom authority, and the ability to motivate students. Teachers with stronger communication skills and more engaging instructional delivery were perceived as more professional and effective by students. Overall, the study confirms that effective EFL learning depends not only on curriculum fulfillment and

administrative preparation, but also on the teacher's practical ability to integrate pedagogical and professional competence in real classroom situations. Therefore, continuous teacher development focusing on classroom performance, reflective practice, and student-centered learning is essential to improve the quality of English teaching in madrasah education.

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USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted technologies were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All stages of the research process, including data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation, were conducted entirely by the authors without the assistance of any AI-based tools.

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