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(IJEPC)**www.ijepe.com**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) TEACHERS'
PREPAREDNESS TOWARDS STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS**Thiiruchelvi Gunasagaran^{1*}, P. Yukthamarani Permarupan²¹ Department of Entrepreneurship and Business, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia
Email: a20d077p@siswa.umk.edu.my² Malaysia Graduate School of Entrepreneurship and Business, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, Malaysia
Email: yuktha@umk.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.956008This work is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

This study investigates the impact of ESL teacher preparedness on student achievement, focusing on key areas such as teacher subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and teacher-student relationships. The research aims to explore how these elements of teacher preparedness contribute to students' academic success in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings. Additionally, the study examines the moderating role of student self-efficacy, proposing that students who believe in their ability to succeed are more likely to benefit from well-prepared teachers. By integrating these variables into a comprehensive framework, this study seeks to fill gaps in existing literature and provide practical insights for enhancing ESL education. The findings are expected to inform teacher training programs and educational policies, offering strategies to improve teaching effectiveness and student outcomes. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader understanding of how targeted teacher preparedness can foster academic success in diverse educational contexts.

Keywords:

Pedagogical Knowledge, Student Achievement, Self-Efficacy, Subject Mastery, Teacher Preparedness

Introduction

The quality of education plays a significant role in determining student success, particularly in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) education. Teacher preparedness—which encompasses subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and the ability to foster strong teacher-student relationships—is critical in shaping educational outcomes (Haycock, 2003; Liddicoat

& Kirkpatrick, 2020; Liu et al., 2021). Despite this, many ESL teachers face challenges such as insufficient training, lack of ongoing professional development, and limited resources in classroom settings, which can hinder their ability to effectively teach (Olojo, 2023; Zakaria, Zakaria, & Azmi, 2018). Additionally, the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in real classroom environments remains an issue. In this paper, the objective is to explore the impact of ESL teacher preparedness on student achievement and provide insights for improving teacher training programs. By addressing existing gaps in the literature, this paper seeks to offer practical insights for enhancing teacher training programs and improving educational outcomes (Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2021; Murphy, 2023). The challenges related to teacher preparedness, such as the disconnection between professional training and classroom application, will be examined to highlight critical areas for development in ESL education.

Problem Statement

The Malaysian education system has consistently faced challenges in improving students' English proficiency, which is crucial for academic and professional success in a globalized world, Zakaria, Zakaria, & Azmi, (2018). Despite efforts to enhance English language education, student performance in national examinations like the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) has shown stagnation and even decline over recent years, New Straits Times (2023). Research suggests that these issues are largely attributable to gaps in ESL teachers' preparedness, which includes their subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and the quality of teacher-student relationships, Olojo (2023); Nguyen et al. (2023). In the context of ESL education, teacher preparedness is a critical determinant of student success. Studies highlight that teachers' subject mastery significantly impacts students' ability to grasp complex linguistic concepts, Haycock (2003), Tangirala (2018). Moreover, pedagogical knowledge, encompassing lesson planning, classroom management, and adaptive instructional strategies, plays an essential role in facilitating effective ESL teaching, McConnell et al. (2020) ; Jacob et al. (2020). However, there is a notable gap in the Malaysian education system regarding the continuous professional development of ESL teachers, leading to inconsistencies in instructional quality, Liddicoat & Kirkpatrick (2020).

The relationship between teachers and students also remains an underexplored factor in the Malaysian context. Positive teacher-student interactions are linked to improved academic outcomes, especially in ESL settings where students face additional challenges due to language barriers, Liu et al. (2021); Moskowitz & Dewaele (2021). A supportive and trusting relationship can foster student motivation and resilience, enabling them to overcome difficulties in language acquisition, Matsuda, Weng, & Wall (2020). Another critical gap lies in understanding the role of student self-efficacy in moderating the impact of teacher preparedness on student achievement. Self-efficacy has been shown to influence how students engage with learning material and persist in the face of challenges, Bandura (1977); Aizawa et al. (2020). In the Malaysian context, where socioeconomic disparities and varying levels of exposure to English can affect students' confidence, understanding this moderating role is vital, Murphy (2023).

Despite the growing body of research on these factors, few studies have specifically examined how they interact within the Malaysian education system. This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the relationships between ESL teachers' subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and teacher-student relationships, with student self-efficacy serving as a moderating factor. The findings aim to provide actionable insights for enhancing teacher

training programs and educational policies, ultimately improving student outcomes in ESL education.

Literature Review

Teacher Subject Mastery

Teacher subject mastery is a key component of effective teaching, particularly in ESL contexts. Subject mastery refers to the depth of knowledge a teacher possesses in their subject area. In ESL education, subject mastery is especially crucial as it directly impacts the ability to convey complex linguistic concepts effectively. Research consistently demonstrates that teachers with robust content knowledge have a greater impact on student achievement (FMC Way, 2020; Klassen & Kim, 2019). In Malaysia, ongoing professional development is essential for ESL teachers to stay updated with the latest pedagogical strategies and language teaching methodologies (Liddicoat & Kirkpatrick, 2020). The importance of subject mastery is further supported by Haycock (2003), who found that students taught by teachers with strong content knowledge tend to achieve higher academic results. Additionally, teachers who possess a deep understanding of the English language are better equipped to address students' linguistic challenges, leading to improved educational outcomes (Tangirala, 2018). This study will build upon these findings to explore how subject mastery influences ESL student achievement in Malaysian secondary schools.

Pedagogical Knowledge

Pedagogical knowledge encompasses the methods and strategies that teachers use to deliver content and manage the classroom. Effective pedagogical practices are essential for creating supportive and engaging learning environments, particularly in ESL settings. According to McConnell et al. (2020), pedagogical knowledge plays a significant role in enhancing student learning outcomes. Teachers who possess strong pedagogical skills are more likely to create adaptive learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of ESL students (Jacob et al., 2020). Additionally, research by Holmes and Prieto-Rodriguez (2018) emphasizes that well-structured lesson planning is a vital component of pedagogical knowledge, leading to improved student engagement and retention. The integration of culturally responsive teaching methods, as noted by Wolff, Jarodzka, and Boshuizen (2021), further contributes to the effectiveness of ESL instruction by making lessons more relevant and accessible to students from diverse backgrounds. The current study will explore how these pedagogical practices affect student outcomes in Malaysian ESL classrooms.

Teacher-Student Relationships

The quality of teacher-student relationships is a critical determinant of student success, particularly in ESL education. Positive interactions between teachers and students foster trust, motivation, and a sense of belonging, which are essential for academic achievement (Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2021; Pishghadam et al., 2019). In the context of ESL, teacher-student relationships are especially important because they can help alleviate the challenges associated with language learning. Liu et al. (2021) highlight that students who perceive their teachers as supportive are more likely to engage in class activities and show resilience in overcoming linguistic obstacles. Furthermore, research by Van Uden et al. (2013) shows that teacher engagement directly influences student motivation, leading to better academic outcomes. This study will examine the impact of teacher-student relationships on student performance, with a

particular focus on how supportive interactions influence ESL learners' language acquisition in Malaysia.

Student Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy, defined as the belief in one's ability to succeed, is a well-established predictor of academic achievement (Bandura, 1977). In ESL education, self-efficacy moderates the relationship between teacher preparedness and student outcomes. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to benefit from high-quality teaching, as they are more willing to engage with challenging material and persist through difficulties (Aizawa et al., 2020). This finding is particularly relevant in the Malaysian context, where disparities in socioeconomic background and prior exposure to English can significantly influence students' confidence in their language abilities (Murphy, 2023). Additionally, research by Akturk and Saka Ozturk (2019) indicates that self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in academic success across different educational settings, highlighting its relevance in the ESL classroom. This study will analyse how student self-efficacy moderates the relationship between teacher preparedness and student achievement in Malaysian ESL education.

Author(s)	Year	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
Haycock	2003	Teachers with strong subject mastery have a greater impact on student achievement.	Highlights the importance of subject mastery in influencing ESL student success.
FMC Way	2020	Teachers' content knowledge significantly influences academic outcomes.	Supports the role of teacher subject mastery in ESL education.
Klassen & Kim	2019	Subject mastery is a critical factor in delivering complex linguistic concepts.	Relevant to examining subject mastery in Malaysian ESL contexts.
Liddicoat & Kirkpatrick	2020	Continuous professional development is vital for ESL teachers.	Emphasizes the need for teachers to stay updated with teaching methodologies.
Tangirala	2018	Teachers with deep content knowledge better address students' linguistic challenges.	Supports the notion that subject mastery enhances educational outcomes.
McConnell et al.	2020	Pedagogical knowledge enhances student learning outcomes.	Highlights the importance of teaching strategies in ESL learning.
Holmes & Prieto-Rodriguez	2018	Well-structured lesson planning is key to student engagement and retention.	Relevant to the role of pedagogical knowledge in student engagement.

Author(s)	Year	Key Findings	Relevance to This Study
Wolff, Jarodzka, Boshuizen	2021	Culturally responsive teaching methods make lessons more relevant and accessible.	Relevant to improving ESL instruction for diverse student backgrounds.
Moskowitz & Dewaele	2021	Positive teacher-student relationships are crucial for academic achievement.	Highlights the role of teacher-student interactions in improving ESL outcomes.
Liu et al.	2021	Students who perceive teachers as supportive engage more and overcome challenges.	Relevant to examining the impact of teacher-student relationships in ESL.
Van Uden et al.	2013	Teacher engagement directly influences student motivation and academic outcomes.	Relevant to the importance of teacher-student engagement in ESL learning.
Aizawa et al.	2020	Self-efficacy plays a significant role in students' academic success.	Highlights self-efficacy's moderating role in teacher preparedness and achievement.
Akturk & Saka Ozturk	2019	Self-efficacy is a critical factor in academic success across various settings.	Relevant to understanding the role of self-efficacy in ESL classrooms.

Conceptual Framework

This study investigates the interplay between ESL teachers' preparedness and students' achievements, focusing on:

1. ESL teachers' subject mastery as an independent variable.
2. ESL teachers' pedagogical knowledge as an independent variable.
3. Teacher-student relationships as an independent variable.
4. Students' self-efficacy as a moderating variable.
5. Students' achievements as a dependent variable.

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between ESL teachers' subject mastery and students' achievements?
2. Is there a relationship between ESL teachers' pedagogical knowledge and students' achievements?
3. Is there a relationship between ESL teacher-student relationships and students' achievements?
4. Is there a relationship between students' self-efficacy and teachers' subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and teacher-student relationship?

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative research methodology, using a questionnaire to collect data from Form 5 students in Kuala Krai, Kelantan. The questionnaire is designed to measure:

- Teachers' subject mastery
- Teachers' Pedagogical knowledge
- Teacher-student relationships
- Students' self-efficacy and academic achievements

Research Design

This study utilizes a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between ESL teachers' preparedness and students' academic success. A quantitative approach is chosen for its ability to systematically collect numerical data, providing a clear pathway for analysing relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). The cross-sectional design ensures that data is collected from a broad sample of Form 5 students across Kuala Krai, Kelantan, offering a snapshot of the educational landscape during the period of 2020-2023.

Participants and Sampling

The target population for this study comprises Form 5 students from secondary schools in Kuala Krai, Kelantan. Stratified sampling is utilized to ensure the sample represents both urban and rural schools, taking into account variations in school performance (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The sample size is calculated using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula, ensuring the study achieves sufficient statistical power.

Research Instrument

The primary data collection tool is a structured questionnaire, adapted from previous studies to measure the following constructs:

- Teachers' Subject Mastery: Items evaluate students' perceptions of their teachers' content knowledge in English (Klassen & Kim, 2019; Burroughs et al., 2019).
- Pedagogical Knowledge: This section assesses students' perceptions of their teachers' teaching strategies, classroom management, and lesson planning effectiveness (McConnell, Conrad, & Uhrmacher, 2020; Petek & Bedir, 2018).
- Teacher-Student Relationships: Items measure the quality of interaction and trust between teachers and students (Moskowitz & Dewaele, 2021; Tokan & Imakulata, 2019).
- Students' Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement: This section evaluates students' confidence in their ability to succeed in English and their academic performance (Bandura, 1977; Aizawa et al., 2020).

The questionnaire will be validated through expert reviews and pilot testing to ensure reliability and validity. Responses will be captured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Data Collection Procedures

Questionnaires will be distributed electronically to schools in Kuala Krai, Kelantan. School administrators and teachers will be briefed on the study's objectives to encourage participation. Informed consent and confidentiality will be maintained in strict adherence to the Malaysian Ministry of Education (MOE) guidelines (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

Challenges in Data Management

Challenges encountered during data management include:

- Population and Sample Size: Ensuring a representative sample that covers urban and rural areas and varying school performance levels.
- Data Distribution and Collection: Delays due to reliance on school administrators for questionnaire distribution and follow-up with participants.
- Data Analysis: The use of SPSS software will be necessary to manage large datasets and conduct statistical analyses such as correlation and regression.

Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics will provide an overview of the data, while Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses will test the relationships between the independent variables (subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, teacher-student relationships) and the dependent variable (students' academic achievement). Self-efficacy will serve as a moderating factor (Field, 2018). A significance level of $p < 0.05$ will be used to determine statistical significance (Creswell, 2014).

Questionnaires

The questionnaire used in this study is adapted from previous validated instruments. It was customized to the context of ESL education in Malaysia, ensuring relevance to the target population. Expert reviews and pilot testing ensured that the instrument is both reliable and valid for this specific study.

Discussion

By analyzing the questionnaire data, this study aims to identify patterns and relationships among the variables. The expected findings include:

- A positive correlation between teachers' subject mastery and student achievement.
- A significant impact of pedagogical knowledge on student outcomes.
- The crucial role of positive teacher-student relationships in enhancing student performance.
- The moderating effect of students' self-efficacy on the relationship between teachers' preparedness and student achievements.

Conclusion

This research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing ESL students' academic success in Malaysia. By examining ESL teachers' subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and teacher-student relationships, along with the moderating role of students' self-efficacy, this study aims to inform educational policies and practices. The findings will be valuable for educators, policymakers, and scholars in enhancing ESL education in Malaysia, ultimately contributing to better educational outcomes.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing ESL students' academic success in Malaysia. While the study's objectives have not yet been fully achieved due to the ongoing data collection and analysis, the research has laid a solid foundation for examining key factors such as ESL teachers' subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and teacher-student relationships, along with the moderating role of students' self-efficacy.

Contribution of the Study

The findings from this study are expected to make significant contributions to the field of ESL education by:

- Informing educational policies and practices to enhance ESL teaching effectiveness.
- Providing insights for educators and policymakers to develop targeted teacher training programs that focus on improving subject mastery, pedagogical knowledge, and fostering strong teacher-student relationships.
- Offering valuable evidence for scholars interested in the role of teacher preparedness and self-efficacy in improving student outcomes, specifically in the Malaysian context.

Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to better educational outcomes by equipping ESL teachers with the tools necessary to foster student success in the classroom.

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