

## Editorial

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## Teacher Competence and Practical Strategies for ELT in an AI-Driven Era

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This edition of MaJER (Volume 22, Issue 2) examines the themes of teacher competence and practical pedagogical approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT). In today's digital age, where Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly accessible, it is essential to reinforce the foundational principles of teaching before promoting the adoption of emerging technologies. While teacher competence and subject knowledge remain central to effective learning outcomes, these alone are not sufficient. Teachers must also develop confidence in their ability to deliver impactful lessons and foster learner engagement. Beyond cognitive skills, affective dimensions—such as motivation and self-efficacy—play a critical role in shaping classroom practices. As technology becomes more pervasive, educators should adopt strategies that encourage learner autonomy, particularly within AI-enhanced learning environments. Two articles in this issue explore pedagogical approaches: one focuses on adapting classroom activities based on the CEFR framework, while another investigates teachers' self-efficacy in implementing blended learning. Additional contributions include an analysis of pre-service teacher education curricula, emphasising the importance of affective and behavioural factors alongside cognition, and a study on leveraging AI to enhance academic literacy and promote self-regulated learning.

Another key theme of this issue addresses a fundamental aspect of English language learning—vocabulary. As a cornerstone of language proficiency, vocabulary underpins successful communication and reading comprehension. Mastery of vocabulary encompasses multiple dimensions, from understanding meaning and pronunciation to applying words appropriately in context. This issue features four articles dedicated to vocabulary teaching and learning: two present empirical research on instructional practices, one offers a systematic review of teaching approaches, and the fourth provides a lexical analysis of textbook content. Collectively, these contributions advance ongoing discussions on effective strategies and resources for improving vocabulary instruction.

The first article, *Phonemic Awareness and Word Decoding Through Multisensory Synthetic Phonics Instruction: Insights from East Malaysia*, addresses reading difficulties among primary school pupils. Its findings underscore the effectiveness of strategic phonics instruction in improving reading skills. Although not focused exclusively on vocabulary, the study highlights the critical role of word knowledge in developing literacy.

The second article, *Can-Do Statements for Improved Oral Communication: A Practical Approach*, examines how teachers adapt CEFR-based suggestions to design communicative tasks suited to their teaching contexts. It illustrates how teachers expand their instructional repertoire through a willingness to implement innovative approaches that enhance students' speaking proficiency.

The third article, *Language Teacher Cognition: Congruence Between Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Blended Learning Practice in the Malaysian Primary ESL Classroom*, presents a mixed-method investigation into teachers' integration of technology via blended learning. The study emphasises the significance of teachers' self-efficacy in successfully implementing technology-driven lessons, particularly in primary education where blended learning remains underexplored.

The fourth article, *Leveraging English Movies for Vocabulary Enhancement: A Study on Malaysian Secondary School ESL Learners*, reports on a quasi-experimental study of vocabulary instruction. Despite the proliferation of advanced technologies in the AI era, the use of movies as a learning resource remains pedagogically relevant. Findings highlight the value of multimedia in vocabulary teaching and learner engagement.

The fifth article, *Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioural Construction of Pre-Service English Language Teacher Identity*, focuses on teacher preparation in China. Document analysis reveals that while cognitive development is essential for acquiring teaching knowledge and skills, affective and behavioural dimensions are equally critical and should not be overlooked in pre-service training.

The sixth article, *Indonesian EFL Students' Perception of the Use of Artificial Intelligence Applications to Support Self-Regulated Learning in Academic Reading and Writing*, explores how university students employ AI tools in academic tasks. The study provides insights into AI's role in fostering self-regulated learning.

The seventh article, *A Systematic Review of Vocabulary Teaching Approaches in Malaysia Pre- and Post-CEFR Implementation (2010–2024)*, synthesises research on vocabulary instruction. Findings indicate an encouraging increase in studies following CEFR adoption, with diverse strategies being implemented. However, the review calls for more research beyond higher education contexts.

The eighth article, *Examining EFL Textbooks from a Phraseological Perspective: A Corpus Analysis of Lexical Bundle Features*, analyses Chinese EFL textbooks and finds a predominance of three-word lexical bundles. This has implications for teaching collocations and phraseology in language classrooms.

Finally, this issue introduces two new features that complement its overarching focus on innovation in language teaching. The book review examines a mobile application for vocabulary learning in the context of inclusion, reinforcing the discussion on vocabulary as a foundational element of language proficiency and effective pedagogy. In parallel, the software review evaluates an AI-powered tool designed to create CEFR-aligned reading comprehension exercises, reflecting the issue's emphasis on technology integration and practical strategies for classroom application. These additions broaden the dialogue on how both digital and traditional resources can support teacher development and enhance learner outcomes.

As we conclude 2025, this issue of *MaJER* brings together research and insights that reflect the evolving priorities in English Language Teaching. The articles featured here explore critical themes such as strengthening teacher competence, integrating affective dimensions into pedagogy, advancing vocabulary instruction, and leveraging technology—including AI—to create meaningful learning experiences. These contributions highlight the dynamic interplay between foundational principles and innovative practices in language education.

Looking ahead to 2026, *MaJER* reaffirms its commitment to fostering scholarship that bridges theory and practice. We invite submissions that explore diverse pedagogical strategies, whether grounded in traditional approaches or driven by digital innovation, as well as book and software reviews that expand professional dialogue. Together, let us continue shaping methodologies that empower teachers and learners, ensuring that language education remains responsive, inclusive, and impactful in the years to come.

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