SYSTEMIC AND PEDAGOGICAL BARRIERS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Relevance of the study lies in the need to synthesize contemporary scientific approaches and formulate practical recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of English language teaching in higher education institutions.

Aim: a synthesis of contemporary scientific research dedicated to the challenges of teaching English as a foreign language in higher education institutions, and a systematization of recommendations based on empirical data.

Methods: theoretical analysis of scientific literature, content analysis of contemporary publications on the topic, synthesis and classification of approaches to teaching English, comparative analysis of pedagogical practices in higher education, and interpretation of results from previous empirical studies.

Results: main systemic and pedagogical factors complicating the effective teaching of English as a foreign language in higher education institutions have been identified. Problems related to insufficient teacher training, limited resources, and the mismatch of curricula with modern communicative needs have been revealed. The obtained results provide a foundation for developing practical recommendations aimed at improving the quality of language education.

Conclusions: analysis of contemporary scientific literature has shown that key problems include both external barriers (outdated curricula, standardized assessment, limited access to professional development) and internal factors related to pedagogical approaches and the level of teacher training. These factors reduce the quality of language education and hinder the development of students' practical skills. Overcoming these challenges requires a comprehensive approach: reforming educational policy, updating curricula, ensuring continuous professional development for teachers, implementing flexible student-centered methodologies, and supporting the integration of authentic and digital resources.

Keywords: *higher education, English as a foreign language (EFL), language education, teaching methodology, teacher professional development.*

Introduction. The global spread of the English language has profoundly affected educational systems, particularly in the sphere of teaching English as a foreign language; however, the diffusion of English is accompanied by a series of challenges that vary according to regional context. Despite the emphasis on developing communicative competence, the scholarly literature lacks an in-depth analysis of the difficulties encountered by instructors.

These difficulties exhibit both a systemic nature (language-policy constraints, insufficient funding, low professional status, shortage of resources) and an individual one (student motivation, mixed-ability preparation, classroom management, internal pressure). Uneven access to educational resources further complicates the situation. Under such conditions, English is often perceived as a formal subject rather than as a means of genuine communication (Kayum, 2025).

Accordingly, there is an urgent need for context-sensitive, inclusive and resource-supported approaches to English language teaching that can respond to global as well as local challenges.

Sources of the study. An analysis of scholarly sources indicates a growing interest among researchers in the problems of teaching English as a foreign language amid globalisation and regional educational transformations. Attention is focused on systemic barriers—language policy, infrastructural limitations, standardised assessment—as well as on pedagogical challenges related to insufficient teacher preparation, limited use of the communicative approach, and the absence of personalised learning (Saito & Turner, 2025; Chanwaiwit & Kantisa, 2022; Rahimi, 2024). Individual studies emphasise the influence of sociocultural context on learning effectiveness, the role of digital technologies, and the need to update curricula in accordance with students' needs (Leon & Castro, 2025; Wang, 2025). Despite the abundance of publications, a comprehensive synthesis of these findings is required to formulate context-sensitive and empirically grounded teaching strategies.

The purpose of the article is to summarise contemporary research devoted to the problems of teaching English as a foreign language in higher education institutions and to systematise recommendations based on empirical data with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the educational process.

Research methods comprise theoretical analysis of scholarly literature, content analysis of recent publications on the topic, synthesis and classification of approaches to English language teaching, comparative analysis of pedagogical practices in higher education, and interpretation of previous empirical findings.

Results and discussion. On the basis of the literature review, it has been determined that the teaching of English as a foreign language involves both external systemic barriers and internal pedagogical problems that affect learning effectiveness.

Excessive dependence on traditional teaching methods. In many educational contexts, traditional teacher-centred methodologies, including the grammar-translation approach, dominate. Large class sizes, inadequate teacher preparation and a lack of resources hinder the implementation of communicative and student-centred approaches, thus constraining the development of oral practice and written fluency (Saito & Turner, 2025). The emphasis often shifts to reading and writing, whereas speaking and listening remain neglected.

A system oriented toward standardised testing intensifies this imbalance by emphasising grammatical and lexical knowledge instead of the development of practical language skills and communicative competence (Rahimi, 2024; Zapotichna, 2024). As a consequence, the educational process is centred on predictability and control rather than on interaction and learner autonomy.

Despite the potential of modern technologies to create an interactive environment, many instructors adhere to traditional approaches that do not meet current educational needs (Al-wossabi, 2023). This reflects not only technical constraints but also cultural and institutional inertia that impedes the renewal of pedagogical practice (Rahimi, 2024).

Limited integration of the communicative approach. Communicative language teaching (CLT) remains restricted owing to insufficient teacher training (Mutolwa & Mwanza, 2025; Suwannatrai et al., 2023).

Traditional instruction is largely based on passive knowledge transmission, which fails to meet contemporary student expectations oriented toward interactivity and experience (Xie, 2025). Even when instructors recognise the advantages of CLT, curricula and institutional inertia hamper the transition to student-centred methods (Adhikari, 2021). This problem is compounded by standardised examinations that focus on grammar, even when instructors acknowledge the importance of developing communicative competence (Chanwaiwit & Kantisa, 2022).

CLT has a positive impact on student motivation and the development of their language skills (Leon & Castro, 2025), yet its implementation is constrained by resource shortages, curricular misalignment and limited support for out-of-class language use. Curricular imbalances lead to uneven development of language skills, thereby complicating the transfer of knowledge to real

situations. Moreover, there is a risk of superficial CLT implementation without regard to cultural context. Singh (2024) warns that mechanical application of communicative skills can diminish linguistic identity and critical thinking.

To realise the potential of CLT, instructors must deliberately adapt the methodology to the sociolinguistic realities of their students, taking into account classroom constraints. Given appropriate preparation and contextualised implementation, an integrated approach can greatly enhance learner autonomy, engagement and practical language abilities (Leon & Castro, 2025).

Absence of personalised and contextualised learning. The study by Chanwaiwit and Kantisa (2022) shows that success in learning English largely depends on both personal factors (learning goals, self-perceived proficiency, exposure through social media) and contextual factors (teacher experience, quality and availability of materials, learning environment). These aspects point to the need for flexible, adaptive teaching strategies.

However, many instructors encounter difficulties in adapting programmes to mixed-ability groups and diverse learning styles. Because of the absence of a quality needs analysis, one-size-fits-all programmes are created that are not linked to the students' real context, reducing their effectiveness.

In Thailand, instructors still adhere to an authoritarian teaching style that suppresses student autonomy (Suwannatrai et al., 2023). Xie (2025) calls for a personalised approach based on individual data such as pace and students' strengths and weaknesses, yet implementing this requires considerable resources and analytical teacher training.

Hussein and Alqassier (2024) draw attention to the harmfulness of teachers' stereotypical perceptions of student abilities—particularly by gender or social background—which generate unequal opportunities and widen learning gaps. Effective teaching requires that instructors be able to identify students' educational needs and adapt the methodology accordingly (Dr. C. Abirami & Chandrasekaran K, Abirami, 2025). At the same time, this presupposes high pedagogical qualifications and leadership support. The absence of strategies for working with different student types diminishes their engagement and learning outcomes.

Wang (2025) emphasises the importance of active student engagement as a means of increasing motivation and highlights the need for a balance between autonomy and support, especially for youth who require both freedom and structured guidance.

Mallillin and Mallillin (2024) urge the development of programmes aligned with students' achievement levels, focusing on the selection of methods tailored to their needs. According to them, effective teaching is possible only when pedagogical approaches correspond to the real educational context.

Outdated or inflexible curricula. In various educational contexts, curricula often fail to meet contemporary communicative goals and practical requirements for using English. A systemic problem is the excessive emphasis on rote memorisation, grammatical accuracy and examination preparation at the expense of developing communicative competence. For example, in Thailand, English-teaching curricula remain largely oriented toward native-speaker norms (particularly American or British English), which limits learners' exposure to English varieties and reproduces linguistic bias (Chanwaiwit & Kantisa, 2022). Traditional instruction in Thai classrooms likewise concentrates mainly on grammar and memorisation, neglecting functional language use and thus severely restricting students' real communicative ability (Suwannatrai et al., 2023).

Similar trends are observed in other Asian countries. In India, curricula focus on rote learning and grammar-oriented instruction, ignore the development of oral communicative skills, and do not provide structured opportunities for speaking and listening practice. In Nepal, curricula often omit components needed for practical language use—such as speaking and listening activities—and do not correspond to principles of contextualised learning, hindering the implementation of communicative English teaching methods.

In Saudi Arabia, limited contact hours further hinder the integration of communicative skills—especially speaking and listening—into curricula (Alfares, 2024). A similar mismatch is found in Pakistan, where curricula inadequately support both communicative and technology-enhanced learning, indicating the need for comprehensive reform. In Zambia, traditional

curricula and assessment practices are also poorly aligned with the principles of the communicative approach, restricting the implementation of communicative grammar teaching (Mutolwa & Mwanza, 2025).

Japan's English curriculum is frequently criticised for its late introduction and its outdated examination-oriented focus, which impedes the development of comprehensive language competencies (Saito & Turner, 2025). In Ukraine, speaking and listening skills often remain overlooked despite their increasing importance for employability in a globalised world (Zapotichna, 2024).

Taken together, these observations point to a widespread mismatch between curriculum design and contemporary requirements for communicative, contextual and competence-based English teaching.

Examination-centred English teaching. In many countries, language education is influenced by standardised assessment, which lowers the priority of meaningful language use. Exam-centrism often leads to rote learning of grammar and vocabulary, displacing the development of communicative skills.

In Iraq, the focus on grammar-based testing hinders the development of speaking and listening, which are critical for real communication (Hussein & Alqassier, 2024). A similar situation exists in Thailand, where instructors, while acknowledging the importance of communicative competence, nevertheless concentrate on accuracy and test-taking strategies (Chanwaiwit & Kantisa, 2022).

This exam-dependent approach is also typical of Japan, Yemen and China, where instruction is primarily oriented toward reading and writing, leaving oral skills unattended. Consequently, students often achieve high scores without acquiring functional language ability (Sharma & Kumar, 2024).

In Saudi Arabia, teaching is oriented toward examination content rather than authentic language use (Al-wossabi, 2023), whereas in India the absence of oral components in tests reduces motivation to develop speaking.

Systemic problems, including academic dishonesty, further complicate the situation. In Japan, cheating during examinations casts doubt on result validity and demotivates genuine learning (Saito & Turner, 2025).

Thus, the dominance of test-oriented practices in English teaching restrains the development of communicative skills, necessitating a revision of assessment approaches to create a more balanced and meaningful educational process.

Insufficient professional development of instructors. The lack of adequate teacher preparation and limited opportunities for professional growth remain serious issues in many educational contexts, complicating the implementation of modern teaching methods.

Integrated and communicative approaches require the ability to design tasks that develop multiple language skills simultaneously. However, instructors often lack sufficient preparation for this (Leon & Castro, 2025). A lack of confidence in their own English, especially in speaking, reduces their participation in communicative activities and limits the language environment for students. Moreover, inadequate understanding of curriculum objectives weakens the link between teaching and expected outcomes.

In rural areas, the situation is aggravated by limited access to training. In Afghanistan (Rahimi, 2024) and Indonesia, teachers require additional support to work with mixed-ability students and adapt to varied programmes. Similar difficulties are observed in Iraq, Saudi Arabia and China (Hussein & Alqassier, 2024; Alfares, 2024; Wang, 2025), where the absence of systematic upskilling hinders the application of interactive methods and the development of intercultural competence. In Japan, a lack of updated methodological training limits the use of innovative strategies (Saito & Turner, 2025).

In Ecuador and Tanzania, calls are voiced for targeted andragogical training that combines theory with practice. Ukrainian instructors likewise lack support in implementing cognitive-communicative and intercultural approaches (Buzdugan et al., 2025). Experts emphasise the importance of continuous access to resources and learning so that teachers can implement adaptive, inclusive and context-sensitive practices (Azad, 2024).

Therefore, without systematic preparation and support, instructors cannot effectively implement learner-centred approaches, which

substantially limits teaching quality across educational systems.

Excessive workload and burnout. Heavy workloads and staffing problems constitute serious obstacles to quality English teaching, especially in resource-constrained and rural settings. They complicate lesson planning, reduce student engagement and hinder adaptation to changes in instructional approaches.

In many countries, instructors are forced to combine teaching with administrative duties. For instance, in Mongolia, rural teachers perform several roles simultaneously owing to staff shortages, leaving little time for lesson preparation (Marav & Batsuuri, 2025). Low pay, regional isolation and limited language proficiency also negatively affect teaching quality. A similar situation is observed in Nepal, South Africa and Afghanistan, where a shortage of qualified personnel reduces the effectiveness of the educational process.

The COVID-19 pandemic further aggravated the situation: instructors faced new demands to move online without adequate preparation, considerably increasing workload (Kocha et al., 2022).

A shortage of qualified instructors in rural and remote areas, particularly in Mongolia and the Philippines, compels institutions to assign English teaching to unqualified specialists. This deteriorates instructional content and intensifies the burden on existing staff.

Educators are obliged to meet high demands without adequate institutional support, which causes stress, emotional burnout and demotivation. In some countries, the teaching profession holds low social prestige, further undermining teacher morale (Tkachenko et al., 2024).

Lack of ICT competence among instructors. The integration of digital technologies into teaching has significant potential to enhance student engagement and activity. Tools such as multimedia, online collaboration and gamified learning environments foster the development of all language skills, including pronunciation and listening, through the use of audiovisual media (Wang, 2025). Moreover, technology stimulates learner autonomy and transforms the instructor's role from traditional lecturer to facilitator and mentor (Xie, 2025).

Despite these advantages, successful implementation of such technologies as virtual reality, educational platforms and intelligent tools requires appropriate infrastructure, stable institutional support and ongoing teacher upskilling (Xie, 2025). Many educators lack sufficient training and confidence in using digital learning tools, complicating the creation of an interactive and meaningful digital learning environment (Ghafar, 2023; Qu, 2025). Teachers often face difficulties in selecting and applying suitable digital materials, and disparities in ICT proficiency produce uneven learning outcomes.

Enhancing instructors' digital competence requires urgent professional development (Qu, 2025). Without adequate preparation and institutional support, educators may struggle to use technological tools effectively (Adhikari, 2021; Wang, 2025). In some countries, notably Nepal, responsibility for technology integration is frequently placed on individual instructors who must use personal resources because of systemic limitations (Adhikari, 2021).

Furthermore, unstructured or excessive use of personal devices may diminish interaction between learners and instructors as well as among students themselves, causing a sense of isolation in the learning environment (Adhikari, 2021). Although technology opens transformational opportunities for English language teaching, its adoption should be grounded in pedagogical principles and accompanied by careful planning, appropriate training and institutional support to avoid risks such as overdependence on technology or neglect of fundamental language skills (Kumar, 2024).

Shortage of authentic and locally relevant teaching materials. Excessive reliance on outdated textbooks that often lack communicative relevance and cultural appropriateness limits the effectiveness of English teaching (Rahimi, 2024). In many educational contexts, there is a deficit of basic teaching resources, including textbooks, audiovisual media, language laboratories and other supplementary materials, which hampers the design and delivery of interactive and context-rich lessons (Ghafar, 2023; Alfares, 2024; Leon & Castro, 2025). In addition, weak infrastructure and the absence of diverse and authentic resources restrict opportunities

for full development of speaking and listening skills, reduce methodological variety and hinder the creation of an interactive learning environment (Al-Jaro et al., 2024; Mallillin & Mallillin, 2024).

Gaps in educational policy and its implementation. Despite the formal recognition of English as a strategic element of education, many countries display a substantial gap between policy declarations and their practical realisation. Policies that proclaim the importance of English often remain fragmented, inconsistent or lack an effective implementation mechanism.

In Nepal, the absence of coherent approaches that consider both global requirements and local educational realities confuses instructors and hampers the formation of a unified national strategy. A similar situation is observed in Algeria, where political recognition of English is not accompanied by clear or consistent actions in educational institutions.

Such challenges indicate the need to strengthen the connection between educational policy and practice, to develop clear implementation guidelines, and to establish effective monitoring systems that ensure context-relevant, high-quality teaching.

Conclusions. The study has revealed a series of systemic and pedagogical challenges that substantially influence the effectiveness of teaching English as a foreign language in higher education institutions. An analysis of contemporary scholarly literature showed that the key problems encompass external barriers (outdated curricula, standardised assessment, limited access to professional development) as well as internal factors related to pedagogical approaches and the level of instructor preparation. Overcoming these issues requires a comprehensive approach: reforming educational policy, updating curricula, ensuring continuous teacher professional development, implementing flexible learner-centred methodologies, and supporting the integration of authentic and digital resources. Only through systemic changes can more effective, contextually relevant and outcome-oriented teaching of English as a foreign language in higher education be ensured.

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СИСТЕМНІ ТА ПЕДАГОГІЧНІ БАР'ЄРИ У ВИКЛАДАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ: КОМПАРАТИВНИЙ АНАЛІЗ

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Реферат:

Актуальність дослідження полягає в необхідності узагальнення сучасних наукових підходів і формулювання практичних рекомендацій для підвищення ефективності викладання англійської мови у закладах вищої освіти.

Мета: узагальнення сучасних наукових досліджень, присвячених проблемам викладання англійської мови як іноземної у закладах вищої освіти, систематизація рекомендацій, заснованих на емпіричних даних.

Методи: теоретичний аналіз наукової літератури, контент-аналіз сучасних публікацій з теми, синтез і класифікація підходів до викладання англійської мови, порівняльний аналіз педагогічних практик у вищій освіті, інтерпретація результатів попередніх емпіричних досліджень.

Результати: виокремлено основні системні та педагогічні чинники, що ускладнюють ефективне викладання англійської мови як іноземної у закладах вищої освіти. Виявлено проблеми, пов'язані з недостатньою підготовкою викладачів, обмеженими ресурсами та невідповідністю навчальних програм сучасним комунікативним потребам. Отримані результати створюють підґрунтя для формування практичних рекомендацій, спрямованих на покращення якості мовної освіти.

Висновки: аналіз сучасної наукової літератури засвідчив, що ключові проблеми охоплюють як зовнішні бар'єри (застарілі навчальні програми, стандартизоване оцінювання, обмежений доступ до професійного розвитку), так і внутрішні чинники, пов'язані з педагогічними підходами та рівнем підготовки викладачів; ці фактори знижують якість мовної освіти та перешкоджають розвитку практичних навичок студентів; подолання зазначених проблем вимагає комплексного підходу: реформування освітньої політики, оновлення навчальних програм, забезпечення безперервного професійного розвитку викладачів, впровадження гнучких методик, орієнтованих на студента, та підтримки інтеграції автентичних і цифрових ресурсів.