

TIRF-British Council Research Mentoring Awards 2026

Researcher

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Title of Project

A Case Study on the Development of English Teachers' Competence:
From Pre-Service Preparation to In-Service Practice in Vietnam

Research Supervisor

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TIRF Research Topic Investigated

Language Teacher Education

Bio

Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh, an English teacher with about 15 years of experience, is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Theory and Methodology of English Language Teaching. Her research investigates how English teachers develop their competence from the pre-service stage through the early stages of their in-service practice. Using a qualitative, longitudinal multiple-case study design, the study aims to provide deep insights into the continuum of teacher competence development.

Project Summary

Following the emergence of English as the “first truly global language” (Makhmudova, 2021, p.210), English education has expanded worldwide. This shift has led to new requirements in *teacher's competence* – considered as what teachers “are supposed to know and be able to do” (Bailey, 2006, p.210). In Vietnam, the General Education Curriculum 2018 (GEC 2018), including English education, reflects this trend by fostering students' communicative competence for lifelong learning and global citizenship (MOET, 2018). Consequently, English teachers in Vietnam must go beyond being instructors to serve as advisors, co-participants in learning, and researchers.

However, graduation from a teacher education program does not guarantee complete teacher's competence. Instead, teacher's competence grows over time and is highly complex and non-linear within classroom teaching contexts, with student teachers experiencing different trajectories of growth or decline (Tang et al., 2019). Upon entering the profession, novice teachers often experience a “reality shock” due to “the collapse of the missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life” (Veenman, 1984, p.143). They also face complex challenges such as learning how to teach while simultaneously teaching (Farrell, 2012), as well as heavy workloads, new school environments, new assessment policies, ineffective professional development (Senom & Shah, 2013), and pedagogical and classroom management struggles (Sali & Kecik, 2018).

Despite the continuous and challenging nature of the transition from pre-service to in-service teaching, current literature seems to treat these stages separately. There remains a notable lack of longitudinal research tracking the development of competence from student teachers into the first stage of practice. To fill this gap, this study explores how Vietnamese English teachers develop their competence from the pre-service stage to the nascent, in-service practice stage.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do English teachers in Vietnam develop their professional competence from their pre-service preparation to their initial year of in-service teaching?
2. What contextual factors impact English teachers' competence development in Vietnam, and to what extent?

The study employs a qualitative approach with a longitudinal multiple case-study design, through semi-structured interviews and documentation for triangulation. Data will be analyzed both deductively and inductively, allowing predefined theoretical frameworks and new emergent themes to guide the data. Particularly, a narrative analysis will be constructed alongside within-case and cross-case thematic analyses to identify key developmental patterns. Additionally, plausible rival explanations will be examined to enhance the study's reliability.

Findings of this study could provide a longitudinal perspective on teacher's professional continuum. For pre-service teachers, the study's result could provide a realistic roadmap of developmental milestones that they can expect in their induction year. Furthermore, it provides actionable insights for teacher educators, school leaders, and policymakers designing continuous professional development programs.
