

Establishing Lesotho's English Teachers' PCK Through Teacher-Student Classroom Interactions: A Multiple Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Teaching and learning continue to improve and become more engaging with innovations and reforms in education taking place worldwide. Teachers are at the center of all this and are wedged; therefore, how they teach should be continuously examined. This study aimed to investigate English teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) using a multiple-case study design. The participants of this study were four experienced English teachers from two high schools in the southern region of Lesotho. Data collection involved classroom observation and in-depth post-observation interviews, and they were analyzed thematically. The findings demonstrate that English teachers are aware of and have established goals and objectives for teaching specific topics within the curriculum. They are also aware that different topics demand different teaching approaches as well as different methods of assessment. However, the traditional teaching methods still dominate in most of the observed classes. Teachers struggle to inclusively accommodate miscellaneous students' learning styles and class participation. It is therefore recommended that teachers consider classroom climate, school culture as a way to encourage students' active classroom participation. While further seeking expert advice within their professional learning communities, where difficulties ascend.

Keywords: Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Instructional strategies, Class participation, Classroom culture.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is more than just knowing the subject matter oneself and transferring the content to others to formulate their knowledge on a specific subject (Alonzo et al., 2012). Teachers' understanding of pedagogical approaches proposed and subject content is the most critical ingredient in shaping their Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and thus improving students' academic performance. PCK is what allows great educators to render disciplinary ideas intelligible to novices, as well as coworkers who teach other subjects (Alonzon et al., 2012). PCK was established by Shulman in the 1980s and was considered the most *unique* knowledge that teachers possess. It is also context-specific. In the context of Lesotho, there have been three major educational transformations. The pre-colonial, the colonial, and post-colonial transformations (Chere-Masopha et al., 2021). These restructurings were implemented to amend the deteriorating quality of education in Lesotho. Recently, for example, there has been an introduction of Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) 2009, Integrated Curriculum (IC), the establishment of the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education

(LGCSE), and, most recently, the introduction of Inclusive Education Policy (IEP) 2018. With the latter specifically focusing on skill-based competencies of learners, while accentuating students' test-score performance is insignificant. With these colossal adjustments in the education system in Lesotho, whereby there are curriculum shifts, and educational policy adjustments have recently been implemented, it is unavoidable that teachers carry a full burden on successfully implementing them. Insofar as major curriculum reforms have been implemented since 2009, their pedagogical approaches to date have barely been under investigation. Despite these encumbers, Lesotho's institutions of higher learning are still wedged with their conventional enrollment of high school graduates. For example, these institutions require at least 60% pass or higher in the English language subject (Lekhetho, 2021; Raselimo & Thamae, 2018). The problem is reflected well when fewer than half of all Grade 12 students since 2021 who have written exams failed to be enrolled in the institutions of higher learning due to their 'poor' academic performance (Lekhetho, 2021). It is therefore crucial in this regard to examine through an

evidence-based approach the core causes of this nationwide predicament.

Previous studies tried to investigate and elucidate why learners persistently fail to succeed in their final examination, especially in the English language, and have specifically examined teachers' Content Knowledge (CK) and Pedagogical Knowledge (PK) discretely. These studies conducted in Lesotho have discovered notable reasons, which include unqualified in-service English teachers who lack CK and Professional Development (PD) (George et al., 2018). However, there is still a lack of research done specifically on PCK. This impasse further removes any possibility of drawing conclusions that are evidence-based as far as Lesotho is concerned. Additionally, there is a dearth of knowledge regarding the actual techniques espoused by instructors when teaching English in Lesotho. To what extent are they actively engaging with their students, and what opportunities are they providing to learners to impart the subject content to them? This study aims to add some value from theoretical perspectives, as a new context regarding English teachers' PCK will be captured in a new context, Lesotho.

Lesotho's educational quality has declined significantly in recent years, as evidenced by high student failures in the annual publication of Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) examination results. Students' academic performance in core subjects, including English language, which is required for admission to Institutions of Higher Education, is similarly low, even though it is used as a medium of instruction throughout the country starting from Grade 4. Stols (2008) attributed this problem to instructors' lack of proper training and knowledge. The World Bank (2019) also investigated the root cause of high student failures in the country and found that factors like Basotho cultural practices, such as '*initiation school*', Lesotho's topography, and misuse of national funding aimed to improve education in Lesotho contribute to students' academic failures in LGCSE. Nonetheless, this same study did not provide a practical understanding of what instructors do at the classroom level as an attempt to upsurge students' academic achievements. Other research on Grade 12 students has shown comparable findings (Lekhetso, 2013). However, the same scholar (Lekhetso, 2021) persisted in his efforts to understand the root cause of these unprecedented students' academic performance in HEI entrance subjects, including English language, by shifting his focus primarily to high-performing schools and what influences their performance. Students' prior achievements at primary schools, type of primary school attended, and selectivity of the secondary junior level were found to have played a part in better students' academic performance. Even though this is the case, in the context of Lesotho, it is not yet practically understood specifically how English teachers teach, what knowledge they have, and the approaches they employ regarding the subject, which may

influence their classroom teaching and thus improve students' academic performance. This study intends to explore the PCK of English instructors in low-performing schools, how it influences their everyday teaching practices, and provide relevant suggestions on how they might improve it. Therefore, the current study aims to explore the English teachers' PCK at their natural settings and further aims to investigate how teachers' relationship and collaboration enhances their PCK. This study aims to answer the following research questions: (a) What is the PCK of English teachers as evidenced by teacher-student classroom interactions? (b) What kind of challenges do English teachers face while teaching the subject?

Literature Review

Tensions on teachers' PCK development

According to Aydn and Ačk (2018), PCK concerns concept representation and formulation, pedagogical strategies, understanding of concepts, knowledge of what makes it simple or difficult, and theories of knowledge and philosophy. Meschede et al. (2017) found that in-service teachers had a stronger professional vision and more pedagogical expertise than pre-service teachers in their comparative research. Other researchers have noted that teachers with more teaching experience have more stringent PCK than those with less teaching experience. According to Shing et al. (2015), a teacher with more teaching experience tends to have a broader range of educational approaches, a greater knowledge of learners, and confidence in the topic they teach. Other studies argue that teacher preparation programs have a significant impact on instructors' PCK growth (König et al., 2017; Karal & Alev, 2016), but Canh (2014) maintains that PCK development is a product of teaching practice.

Although PCK helps improve educational quality in terms of teacher development and student learning gains, many scholars problematize Shulman's conceptualization of the notion (Mu et al., 2018). According to Depaepe et al. (2013), these problems include: (1) PCK cannot be construed as a separate body of teacher knowledge and cannot be conceptually and empirically distinguished from content knowledge; rather, teaching requires a systematic integration of different knowledge bodies. (2) PCK cannot be limited to knowledge of instructional strategies and representations or knowledge of students' (mis)conceptions; rather, PCK should also encompass curriculum knowledge, beliefs, and emotions. (3) PCK is not a context-free concept; rather, it is cultural, policy, and curriculum-specific. This final argument is especially important in the Chinese setting, where PCK might imply various things to rural and urban instructors. Rural

teachers were discovered to use examination-focused pedagogy to implement the examination-driven curriculum and assist students in surviving high-stakes standardized testing; in stark contrast, urban teachers worked tirelessly to echo the call for all-around education and endow their students with the capacities valued by mainstream society (Yin, 2018). Because of the disparities in pedagogies between rural and urban instructors, Yin (2018) created the concept of 'Localized Pedagogical Capital' to supplement the standard concept of PCK.

Factors influencing students' academic performance

This section will openly examine teacher-related aspects that influence students' academic achievement. Those that are external and internal from teachers' and students' perspectives. The external factors include socioeconomic conditions, difficulties in the educational process, such as the pedagogical model or the demands of the instructor. Internal factors include psychological and cognitive difficulties, challenging family settings, a lack of desire, or an adaptive learning style (Kim et al., 2018).

External factors influencing students' academic performance

One of the most important priorities in education is how to facilitate students' learning, as represented by interest and academic achievement; thus, factors related to interest in learning school subjects and academic achievement may include subject characteristics, teachers' instructional styles, and students' differences, such as gender and prior learning experiences (Lee & Boo, 2022). However, factors that will only be studied in this section will mostly focus on teachers and students as they are the primary stakeholders in this study, and teachers' instructional style, as an approach to improving students' academic performance. This concept can be categorized into two components, which are a student-centered instruction approach and teacher-centered instruction approach (Lee & Boo, 2022). Student-centered instruction is defined as teaching practices in which students are encouraged to direct their learning with a little help from the teacher and to learn by doing and working together with other students while teacher-centered instruction approach is structured in a manner that all learning experiences are directed by teachers who organize materials and deliver contents to students through traditional lectures or demonstrations (Lee & Boo, 2022). This research also shows that these two methods retain some benefits in influencing students' interest in learning the subject and improving their academic performance.

The research shows that teacher-centered instruction tends to have more positive effects on students' academic achievement

as compared to student-centered instruction; nonetheless, this teaching approach has shown a slight effect on student interest in learning school subjects, while student-centered instruction increases student interest in learning (Kang & Keinonen, 2018; Areepattamannil, 2012). Other research, however, has reported positive results regarding student-centered instruction on students' learning attitudes and academic achievement (Capar & Tarim, 2015). In contrast, studies on English and other language classes frequently reveal that student-centered education has a greater beneficial influence on students' academic attainment than teacher-centered direct instruction (Nie & Lau, 2010; Nunan, 2013). In another context, Korean students who perceived more frequent contacts between students had higher academic progress as well as stronger intrinsic desire to learn English as compared to those who perceived fewer social interactions (Yoon, 2021; Kim et al., 2018; Chung et al., 2017; Ha & Chang, 2017).

Capar and Tarim's (2015) research collects experimental studies from 1988 to 2010 that investigated the impact of cooperative learning approaches on mathematics achievement and attitudes toward mathematics. This study included reports, journal papers, and MA and PhD theses. The effect size for achievement was found to be medium, positive, and significant, whereas it was small, positive, and significant for attitude. As a result, cooperative learning was reported to be a more successful method than the traditional method in both achievements and attitudes (Capar & Tarim, 2015). In summary, the evidence shows that the impacts of student-centered teaching and teacher-centered instruction on students' academic success differ across school topics; however, student-centered education consistently shows favorable effects on student engagement in learning.

Students' academic achievement is influenced by their socioeconomic background. Educational achievement is constant from the earlier stages throughout to a higher level. Students who do well and those who struggle early in elementary school were often prone to continue to do so later on (Burchinal et al., 2020). Lack of school preparation upon school admission at the beginning of the school term has also been linked to low academic performance and social adjustment in the school setting (Burchinal et al., 2020). Moreover, studies found that mostly disadvantaged family environment and deficient parent-child interactions have a potential risk factor for low students' academic achievements, along with the concept of vulnerability, which posits that children may vary in their susceptibility to different environmental factors (Carbonneau et al., 2022).

Internal factors influencing students' academic performance

From a scientific standpoint, recent findings from genetic and neuroscience research have broadened this paradigm by supporting a biopsychosocial view of development (Carbonneau & Tremblay, 2022). This viewpoint holds that children's early behaviors, learning abilities, and social adjustment are the product of a process including genetic and environmental effects that begin before the child is born. The psychological profile of students is another crucial component that may impact academic achievement (Dong & Lucas, 2014). The significance of students' coping methods during the educational era was emphasized (Sanchez-Conde et al., 2021), as well as other psychological variables that influence students' coping strategies and adaptive and efficient responses in stressful academic circumstances (Sanchez-Conde et al., 2021). Other variables, such as inadequate cognitive flexibility or an experience of loneliness, were also linked to poor academic achievement (Beltran-Velasco et al., 2021). Based on the literature review, it can be determined that instructors' knowledge of a subject and how well they teach it are never adequate to enhance students' academic achievement since a variety of factors influence students' academic success. As a result, the purpose of this study is to determine which components of English instructors' PCK in low-performing schools influence students' academic achievement.

Theoretical Framework

The section offers the theoretical framework that will guide this research, Shulman's (1986) Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) framework. This adopted framework specifically explains a comprehensible connection between educational constructs, built on which are the content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge possessed by teachers. Shulman's (1986) and Shulman's (1987) papers unveil the PCK framework in the 1980s as an attempt to emphasize the value of teacher knowledge in the teaching profession. In the first essay, he focuses on subject matter awareness among instructors as a "missing paradigm" in teacher knowledge, claiming that this paradigm has received little attention in research and literature (Shulman, 1986). Shulman argues in his article that PCK is closely related to "the most often taught subjects in one's subject area" (Shulman, 1986: p.9), which, if instructors possess, they can successfully teach regardless of the subject.

According to Shulman (1986), PCK is divided into seven categories: (a) Content knowledge, which is required knowledge of teachers in their specific subject area, and it requires subject instructors to have a deeper understanding and truth about why it exists. (b) General pedagogical knowledge refers to teacher understanding of educational purposes and objectives, settings, learners, learning, and evaluation, as well as knowledge of classroom management

and organization principles and practices. (c) Curriculum knowledge is seen as part of the subject knowledge required of instructors to connect teaching and learning resources to the content intended to be taught. (d) Pedagogical content knowledge, often known as teacher knowledge, extends beyond subject matter to include teacher understanding on how to teach the material (Shulman, 1987). (e) Knowledge of learners and their characteristics; this means that teachers should be able to adopt various teaching tactics that aid students' understanding of the subjects presented. This same seminal paper's last components are (f) knowledge of educational aims, purposes, values, and (g) knowledge of educational environments. Shulman maintains that when instructors possess all these interwoven components and use them to address students' needs, they have the capacity to make learning experiences meaningful and influence students' learning outcomes.

The present studies, like Adel and Noughabin's (2022) study, conceptualizes PCK as a specific type of pedagogical knowledge that English language teachers must have to present content to their students and align their teaching with the established curricular objectives to create an environment conducive to successful positive learning. PCK is defined as instructors' practical knowledge of bridging the gap between topic and pedagogical ideas to increase students' comprehension of content (Adel & Noughabi, 2022). According to Suh and Park (2017), the most essential body of information for driving any change in teaching practices is PCK.

Lee Shulman (1986), developed a theoretical framework that emphasized the importance of combining these two constructs and termed it Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), explaining that it is a type of knowledge that is built by teachers themselves and is also referred to as a special form of an educator's professional knowing, understanding, and reasoning in learning context. It combines seven crucial categories: Content knowledge, General pedagogical knowledge, Curriculum knowledge, Pedagogical content knowledge, Knowledge of learners, Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and Knowledge of educational contexts. According to Shulman (1986), instructors' PCK is context-specific, and when all these components are united, teachers will find it easier to make their content teachable to learners, hence boosting their academic achievement. As a result, the current study's purpose is to explore, understand, and investigate English teachers' PCK and its influence on students' academic performance in Lesotho, and what kind of assistance can be offered to English teachers to improve their teaching skills and therefore improve students' academic performance.

METHODS

The context of this study is important because of the value it will add to the existing literature, the nature of PCK as a theoretical construct and a design, and the criteria used to lure in the participants in this study. As mentioned in other studies (Shulman, 1986; Alonso, 2012), PCK is context-specific, and it develops based on individual teachers' preferences and practices, including how they went through to acquire their content and pedagogical knowledge. The research paradigm, interpretivist, used in this study also contributes to its uniqueness and is supported by constructivist (Pearson, 2019, cited in Masopha-Chere, 2021). Constructivists believe that people give meaning to life depending on their experiences of interacting with their environments. As such, there is nothing like absolute truth or reality: truth or reality depends on an individual and a context (Parsons, 2018). This worldview gives an opportunity to both the researcher and participants to construct their understanding depending on the meaning they both make through multiple observations and analysis of scenarios. The paper applies to an exploration of multiple case study analysis of four teachers teaching in two different schools: three teachers from school A and one teacher from school B. These teachers also vary in the grades that they teach, as shown in Table 1. The study applies the multiple cross-case study design (Yin, 2003), thereby allowing researchers to have a deeper exploration of the phenomena. This approach also helps researchers to answer the question 'how' and 'why' through cross-sectional analysis (Urbinati et al., 2018).

The context of the study

Lesotho is the location of the present study. In this country, English is mandated by law to be taught as a second language starting in Grade 3. Lesotho's structure and educational system underwent a recent modification in 2018, moving from 7-3-2-4 to 7-4-3/4. The cases that were chosen were from two schools in the nation's south. The educational institutions are public and located in the same region.

Participants' selection Data Collection, ethical considerations, and

For participants selection, the criterion used included the following minimum criteria: all teachers had to have at least ten years of teaching experience in teaching English language. In this way this will assure that at least teachers had experienced some multiple educational reforms in the country, and they have also built a more rigorous PCK practices as Shulman (1986) expressed that teachers' PCK becomes strong as accumulate more years of teaching. Commonly, case studies in qualitative research, participants and sites of the studies are identified and sampled purposefully strongly based on how best they can help the researcher to dig information and understand phenomenon of interest (Cresswell, 2007). The participants for the study composed of three teachers from school one (S1) of which two were males and one female all with more than ten years of teaching experience while the school two (S2) only one teacher was able to complete the study, and she had more than 15 years of teaching experience. Table 1 gives further information about participants' demographics.

Table 1. *Participants' Demographic Information*

Participants names (pseudonyms)	Number of class visits or observation	Number of interviews with participants	Number of students in a classroom	Grade	School 1/2
S1P1	Five class observation visits	One post-observation in-depth interview	30 students	Grade 8	S1
S1P2	Five class observation visits	One post-observation in-depth interview	25 students	Grade 11	S1
S1P3	Five class visits	One post-observation	34 students	Grade 9	S1

		in-depth interview			
S2P4	Six class visits	One post- observation in-depth interview	30 students	Grade 8	S2
Totals		Twenty-one class observation visits	Four in- depth interviews		

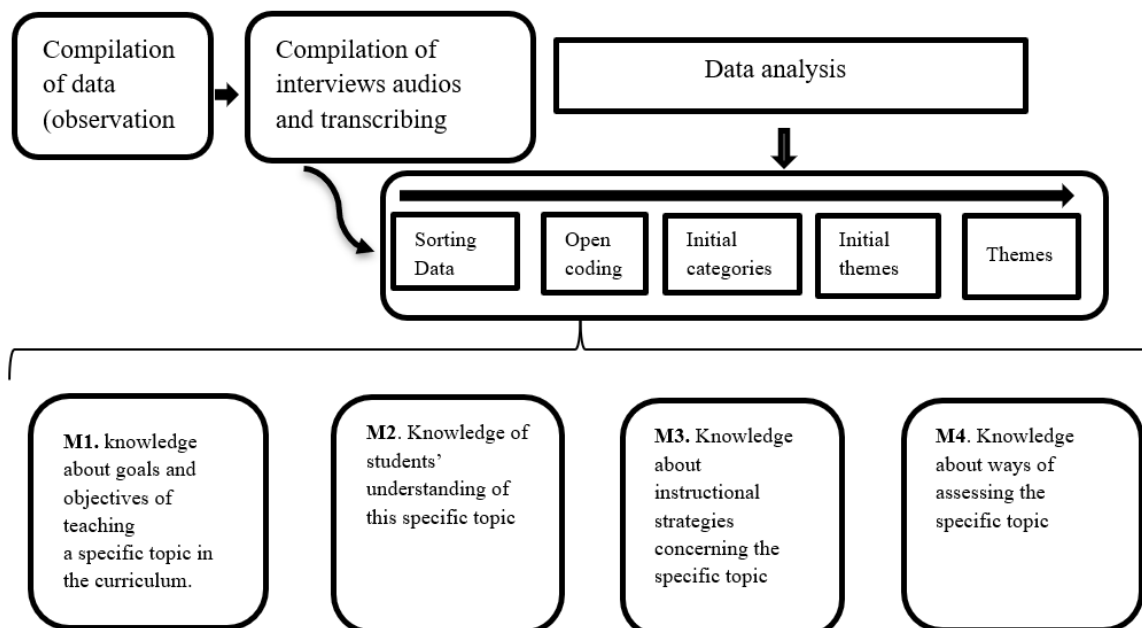
The participants were coded together with their school. For example, Participant one from school one was coded as P1S1. The participants were recruited and informed before the data collection processes of what was expected from them during the classroom teaching and for the interviews conducted afterwards. They were notified before interviews that they would be recorded, and their participation was fully voluntary.

Data analysis

The PCK elements and CoRe items (Magnusson et al. 1999; Loughran et al., 2004) were used in this paper, with a significant contribution to devising the structured in-depth interviews, which provided a blueprint for data analysis

processes. For example, on **M1**, the questions were focused on teachers' general knowledge about goals and objectives of teaching specific topics in the curriculum. In this case, we only focused on topics that were covered during the period of this study by individual teachers. In this category, the questions included were: What do you want pupils to know about this idea? Why is it vital for kids to understand this? (Barendsen & Henze, 2017). In **M2**, we focused on teachers' knowledge of their students' aptitudes, while in **M3** and **M4**, we focused on each participant's knowledge of subject matter and assessment methods, respectively. These areas were supported with multiple classroom observations to investigate teachers' real practice. The observation guide was also followed and was developed based on these CoRe elements.

Figure 1 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures



RESULTS

In this section, we offer the findings case by case to provide an individually tailored and analytical assessment of the four

distinct English instructors' PCK as it relates to their classroom practices on the modules they are teaching. The interconnection of inclinations throughout their teaching practices, such as how analogies of their approaches to their lesson are explored.

RQ1- What is the PCK of English teachers as reflected through teacher-student classroom practices? In the following section, we present the findings in line with Pedagogical elements, Magnusson et al. (1999), M1 to M4, and Content Representation items, Loughran et al. (2004), which guided mostly the interviews as elaborated earlier.

Case1: P1S1

By considering Clara's teaching experience and reflecting on PCK's theoretical proposition that it grows with teaching practice, it becomes obvious that to some extent, P1 had a better chance to develop some PCK components through several ways. However, due to a lack of research in her teaching context, it is still not known yet what PCK components she possessed. Therefore, such will be elaborated.

According to **M1**, the focus on the PCK components focuses more on knowledge about the goals and objectives of teaching a specific topic in the curriculum. However, there is an explicit explanation from the syllabus that these teachers should follow in the Lesotho syllabus, which is to develop students' language skills and proficiency in its components, which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Apart from these general goals, English teachers in Lesotho ought to consider developing vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, fostering communication skills, promoting critical thinking and analytical abilities, cultivating cultural awareness, and encouraging lifelong learning amongst their pupils. In all her lessons, P1 showed a comprehensive understanding of these goals as stipulated in her guided syllabus. This is because all her lessons through observations were introduced with an explicit explanation of the goals and objectives of the day, which were mostly reflected in the curriculum outline. Throughout the teaching period, students were given some opportunities to interact with their peers, the teacher herself through discussion. During the class, learners were invited to brainstorm verbs and, of course, comment on their meaning and how they might be used within sentences, allowing them to create their sentences and phrases.

In the other domain, **M2**, the focus was on teachers' knowledge about students' understanding of this specific topic. In this domain, the observation sessions revealed that P1 has a comprehensive understanding of her students and therefore uses multiple teaching methods to encourage students' active engagement at multiple levels. This domain had some connections with **M3** in the sense that P1 knew her students' varied aptitudes and therefore altered. For example, she wrote tasks for discussions on the board for students who prefer to visualize and make references as they engage in classroom discussions, and for those students in her classroom who preferred to hear the question rather than have it written down, questions were read either by her or, on

occasion, by volunteer students. P1 occasionally encouraged all students' vocal engagement in assisting those who prefer peer conversation.

The fourth category in this same participant is **M4**, and it elaborates more on teachers' knowledge about ways of assessing the specific topic. For the assessment, teachers may apply different methods, but different topics and subjects require different strategies. For this study, the subject was English, and the topics taught during this study by this participant were passive voice, verbs, and argumentative composition. For the passive voices, in this area, the participant mostly utilized a "lecture-like" method where students sat there and the teacher wrote down the sentences on the board, made a few explanations of what passive voices are, and gave examples. However, the assessment strategies given were formative assessments and were engaging, immediate, and comprehensive. They were engaging in the sense that P1, after all these explanations and giving of examples for students to internalize and differentiate what the correct content from the incorrect content, learners were either volunteering to go and write their answers on the board for everyone to engage and scrutinize, thereby creating an engaging classroom environment. This situation was observed to have created a classroom atmosphere where immediate peer assessment and feedback ensued concurrently. The assessment was made comprehensive with teachers' knowledge and contributions on error corrections.

Case 2: P2S1

The second participant came from the same school as P1. On the **M1** category, this participant also showed an understanding of what and why he is teaching the topic in the curriculum. For example, the interview revealed that he knows why he is teaching the subject.

It's because language proficiency prepares them for their written work. Their compositions, their letters, will be error-free because they will be at the level to know which sentences are grammatically correct. How sentences would be structured. If you talk of a formal report, this is one of the topics that are examined, but you should prepare them to be able to (respond) and face real life situations, they encounter when they have completed their high school learning, they may be requested to give a report to the police to report about the theft that occurred. They should have logic and reasoning, and develop their argument well. They should not leave the points hanging and logically in the sense respond to what has been asked. P2

In this next category, M2, we will be exploring P2's

knowledge of students' understanding of specific topics. In this case, the topics that were thought of by P2 during this study were focused on language proficiency, passive voices, argumentative composition, and formal letter/report. The interview findings indicate that P2 had a rigorous understanding of his students and their aptitudes.

Descriptive composition is challenging to me because the kids I'm working with need to be exposed to a larger vocabulary and widen their vocabulary, especially when it comes to adjectives; they lack knowledge of adjectives; therefore, they fail to describe. Argumentative composition is very tactical and technical in that it has two approaches: the balanced approach and the biased approach. When you tell students such things, they get confused as to what this is and that, you try to demonstrate it, it becomes more abstract to them. P2

The instructional strategies concerning the specific topic M3 form the third part of the theme for this participant. Most of the classes were usually conducted in a question-and-answer session kind of class; however, there were some exceptions for which the interview revealed the rationale behind such approaches, P2 applied to his classroom. One of them was that some students were assigned tasks to other tasks while others were still assisted in trying to complete, especially when the classroom tasks were demanding, students as writing their responses in the book. P2 would verbally request students who had completed the task to proceed to the next. In this case, the interviewers found the rationale behind this.

With these ones I was teaching, I only have three that I know will grasp what I want them to. I give them different tasks for those who understand faster than slow learners. When the rest are dealing with another task. P2

M4. The concluding category for P2 is the ways of assessing the strategies he used. P2 implements different strategies to assess his students' understanding of the topic, such as individual classroom tasks to complete.

Now I have not given them the task to do, but to get the real picture of what they know happens when they write down something individually. Because when we discuss, we talk in the group as a class, you realize they should address. I gave them this formal report to go and find about it and talk about it in class so they would be familiar with some of the things that will say in class because If I introduce it before allowing them time to research on it, I would be the only main speaker, giving them some exercise to complete, I would be able to know if these kids did what I intended them to do. Today, I gave them a short piece of writing to see if they had grasped what I had taught them about the opening paragraph. It's only when they have written down something that I know whether they have understood

or not. P2

P2 incorporated multiple strategies to assess students' understanding, which involved evaluating their effectiveness and their abilities for creative writing. P2 applies various assessment methods to gauge his students' understanding of the subject matter, including assigning individual classroom tasks for students to complete. These strategies support him in determining how well students grasp the concepts and allow for targeted support where needed.

Case 3: P3S1

For participant three (P3), in the M1 category, the topics that he thought about during the time of this study were the passive voice and active voice, and the teacher mostly showed an understanding of why such topics and English in general are important for students to learn. The aims as elucidated in the lesson plans and verbally communicated to students, especially at the beginning of each class.

When it comes to the issues of passive voice and active voice, they should learn how to use tenses and main verbs. When it comes to tense, they should be able to identify the present tense and the past tense. In passive voice, what is important is tense, and it's important for language usage, because in creative writing, they must consider grammar usage; they must use language aspects differently, passive voice, indirect speech, direct speech, and active voice. And when writing creative writing, they must consider that these varieties of grammar usage are important for writing creatively. P3

In the M2 category, P3 had elaborated that his students find some of the concepts and topics difficult to understand and therefore devise and implement different ways to address the problem. He also confirms that with different topics, students have different understandings, and to some, it takes a bit longer for them to understand.

Passive voice and active voice are very easy to teach, just like changing the word present to the past tense. Those topics are easy for students; in most cases, you don't find problems, you only find problems when you let them differentiate between simple and complex sentences. There, we struggle a lot because most of the time, students take time to understand what you are talking about. P3

In M3, P3 were found to have different approaches that make students understand the content better.

I think they really understood it because they were able to do the exercise well. The classwork and both on the chalkboard, they had to write the answers for certain sentences, passive voice to active voice, and because they were able to do that, 80 percent

were able to do it successfully. With several classes, when they don't have classwork, they should always have something to do at home. In the next lesson, should I delay going to class? When I get to class, I should find them doing the work, which gives a clear picture of whether these students have understood or not. Others would have done it; others would be those students who do not do the work. You know your students that this one is the best student, this one is an ordinary student, while there are those ones that I don't know how to classify, they are struggling. P3

For the assessment of the specific topic in the subjects (English), M4, P3 relied more on classwork and take-home tasks, of which he said that those take-home tasks serve as the beginning for the next class and an evaluation to understand if every student understood what was taught the previous day. In the observations of the classes, he also gave individual tasks for students to complete and provided overall summative feedback about the tasks. Also, P4 encouraged students' self-assessment.

With a number of classwork, when they don't have classwork, they should always have something to do at home. In the next lesson, should I delay going to class? When I get to class, I should find them doing the work, which gives a clear picture of whether these students have understood or not. P3

Case 4: P4S2

In the case of P4S2, the data was collected from the neighboring school, which is still a government school. This participant has more than fifteen years of English teaching experience, and similar data collection methods to the other previous participants were employed to gather data from this participant. The topics covered during this study were question tags, formal article writing, and formal reports. Further similar analysis based on Magnusson (1999) as the previous cases were used. For the first category, M1, which focuses on goals and objectives of teaching certain topics in the curriculum, the observations revealed that P4 was able to synthesize such aims and objectives into small manageable lesson aims and objectives classroom and articulate them to students. In addition to such situations, in the post-observation interview, the teacher was able to elaborate well on this point.

The question tags are important to teach language to learners whereby learners are helped to have different strategies to answer questions unlike to always asks questions that ['WH'], such as what and who. It helps learners to have different ways of interrogating, and it is also one of the concepts that checks whether learners can punctuate meaningfully and helpfully. When we speak, there are no punctuations, but in writing, there

are. While in articles, I help learners or conscientize them to avoid being the victims of fraud in all its sorts, they were able to realize that, and they should know where to report. The objectives of teaching the learner, specifically English, is to help them communicate at all levels, including public speaking, writing skills, and reading; all these are the main objectives of teaching language. P4

The second category, which is M2 and focuses on the teachers' understanding of learners on specific topics. At the beginning of the lesson, which was about question tags, students could not understand very well what P3 was trying to communicate to them. They found it difficult to respond to questions posed by the teacher. P3 was scaffolded by referring to the previous lessons and concepts to help them understand her demand in the present lesson. Also, the interview revealed some considerable findings.

From my experience for the past 17 years, I have learned that there are those students who understand the concept immediately when you introduce it to the class, and even go beyond what you have introduced in class. There are those who struggle to understand, and I take them to a remedial class. What I like is that my learners differ as much as they differ on understanding is that I like them to be at par most of the time, even though they are not at the same level exactly, but I strive for them to have a common understanding. P3

In M3, the researchers focused on teachers' instructional strategies concerning certain topics. In this area, the observation showed that the approaches that this participant mostly employed in her classroom were traditional methods; the classroom setting was normal, and she faced the board all the time. There was no observed specific teaching approach implied by P4. The question-and-answer method was the one used all the time. At times, students were only asked to proceed to the board to write answers for the question tags provided by the teacher. There was minimal student active engagement in the classroom.

In the last category, M4, the participant uses different methods of assessment to check students' understanding. The one she pointed out was that she incorporates remedial classes for slow learners while using the observations. The only methods observed were the question-answer sessions as the classes continued. The assignments were given to students after each class to complete them back home.

The second research question was to investigate:

RQ2: What kind of challenges do English teachers face

while teaching the subject? In this question, the aim was to investigate generally what makes teaching English as a subject difficult for teachers in the described context.

Learners' language proficiency and previous experiences

According to the finding of the study, some participants presented that most of the learners are from poor primary schools where they did not learn and understand most of the concepts and therefore that brings more burden to them as teachers because instead of teaching and focusing on the concepts which appears on the syllabus, they now have to focus on the concept knowledge which was supposed to be covered at least in grade 7. For example, P2 had this to say about his learners.

The bottom line was that sometimes it is only a matter of how kids at primary school were taught and what kind of primary school, in terms of performance, they attended. Some kids are exposed to argumentative essays at grade 10; the approaches are the problem, but the association tried to equip me with strategies that I may apply. This one is general; it's not only about description, but our kids are also lacking exposure. It's like there could be school trips more often. In the rural school, if you talk about the place of interest, they haven't gone to one; they fail to write, they haven't literally gone to one. This becomes a limitation to them when it comes to writing meaningful and interesting compositions. P2

This also indicates that the focus on improving students' capabilities should not only start at the secondary level, but primary education also plays an important role in students' future educational abilities. Therefore, quality primary education should be provided to all learners, especially those in public primary schools who, in most cases, cannot afford private schools.

Ambiguous teachers' guide and teachers' collaboration

The ambiguity of the teachers' teaching guide and the lack of teachers' collaboration were reflected through the analysis. Some participants enunciated that the syllabus's content guide is misdirecting their teaching, grounded on the fact that there is an existing imbalance between what is expected to be taught in the classroom and what the examiners demand end of each term. These include the prescribed textbooks, which, as one of the participants clearly stated, he stopped using such textbooks and encouraged his cohorts to do so as well. Their decisions mainly emanated from the irregularities between examiners' demands and textbooks' prescriptions. One of the participants' accounts is elaborated below.

We have the prescribed textbooks, but I also rely on my own. But these prescribed books, I won't be encouraging people to use them, because the formats

they give to these kids are different from what the syllabus says; they are different from what the examiner is looking for. I have to use my resources. They should do away with these formats written in those textbooks. I have to deal with the confusion in the classroom, the first one I have to deal with is this one of textbooks, which don't correspond to the examiner's requirements, I have to correct it, the other concern maybe that since we team-teach, my teammate does not recognize that the prescribed textbooks formats do not match incorrectly. P2

To fill this gap and attend to the circumstances, teachers resort to sourcing out teaching materials for themselves, which match the examiners' demands.

Miscellaneous students' learning aptitudes and unequal class participation

The study further construed that there is a bigger gap among students' abilities in the classrooms observed. Some students were observably able to raise their hands during the class observation period and mostly got their answers correct when chosen to respond. In addition, some students kept silent and never volunteered to respond. When such students were chosen to answer one or two questions without volunteering, they often got them correct. However, there were those students who never volunteered to participate but could barely answer teachers' questions correctly when requested to answer and participate in the classroom. The post-observation interviews revealed that, indeed, some students are well ahead of others.

You know what, there is this one boy you saw who was sitting in front, usually most of the times he is participating but at times I have to give others a chance even if he is raising his hand even if I know that they will not get the answer correct but I have to choose them so they can participate too. Sometimes, it takes other students two to three lessons to be in a better position to understand, but mostly towards the end of the lesson, the class is balanced, and most students understand what I wanted them to know. P4

Different students have varying learning abilities, and teachers should inclusively accommodate all learners to facilitate their learning. All learners deserve equal chances in their classes and teachers' support.

DISCUSSION

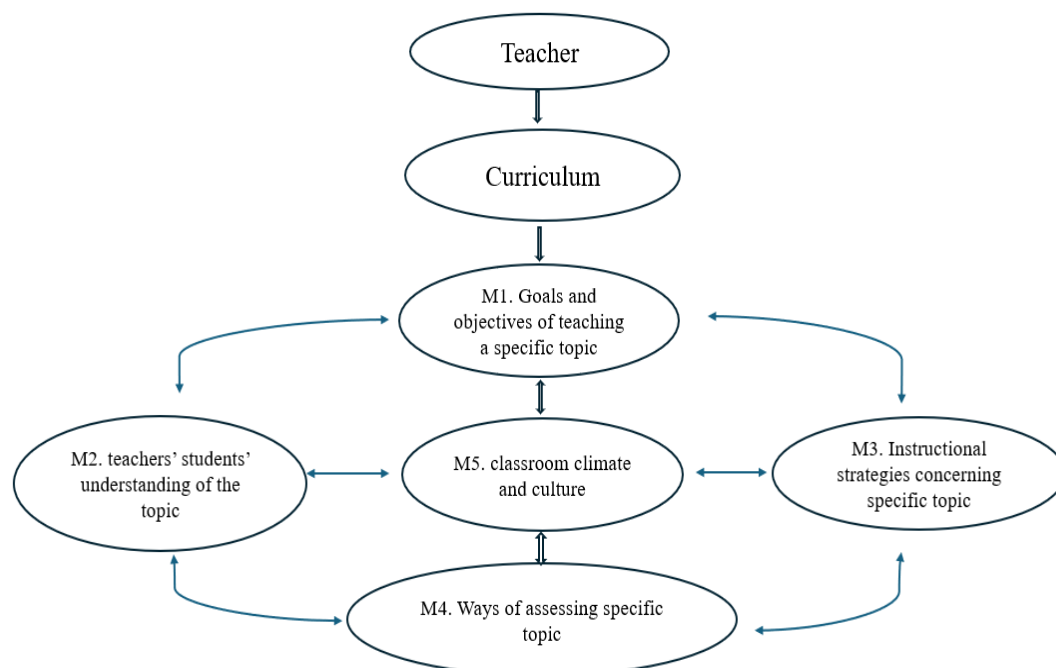
In this study, educators demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the aims and objectives of teaching

English as a subject, both as individuals and collectively. They can relate their teaching practices to the demands of the curriculum. To carry this out further, they effectively interconnected the purposes, objectives, and goals with students' learning needs, particularly at the start of the lessons. With the rigor in their teaching experience, they employed achievable step-by-step procedures that benefited their students in achieving their learning objectives. However, not all participants were able to achieve these goals; therefore, they further extended and adjusted their teaching techniques to suit the types of learners they were teaching (Kurata et al., 2022). Knowledge about their students' backgrounds, which includes the level of the previous school and the educational levels students have attended, also influences classroom culture, teaching methods, and teacher-student relationships. In addition, when it comes to instructional strategies, they relied mostly on traditional teaching methods, which do not fully address students' varied learning preferences. The assessment methods and approaches within the classrooms embraced formative and summative methods (Namanyane et al. 2025), a question-and-answer, peer assessment, and encouraged some students' self-assessment. For these assessment categories, which were used to ameliorate these English teachers' PCK, some presented connections and a positive relationship to the curriculum. This study, therefore, proposes the following theoretical framework for English

teachers in the context in which it was conducted.

Firstly, it is important for teachers to be aware of their abilities through continuous individual and shared teacher reflections and development practices on their teaching practice environments. Encouraging their colleagues to collaborate and team-teach for better self-reflection. Secondly, teachers must be cautious about the guidelines, demands, and scope of the curriculum they are requested to implement through collaboration and constructive analytical discussions on comprehensive implementations in their classrooms. In this way, they may be more likely to adjust their instructional approaches that are appropriate to students' learning styles, thereby perpetuating their motivation to learn (Zheng & Ye, 2022). Teachers' knowledge about interrelationships among all four CoRe elements is necessary as it may serve as a supplement for teachers to know more about their classroom culture and climate, which are significant contributors to students' effective learning. Additionally, in this study, we appended the fifth element (M5), which we understood plays an integral part that teachers should be aware of during teaching and learning. According to Xudong and Li (2019), classroom culture has a significant positive influence on students' learning identity and competence, thereby improving students' academic outcomes.

Figure 2. English Teachers' CoRe PCK Elements for Specific Topics Within the Curriculum in Lesotho



The recommendations and future directions suggested in this study are explored in the following segment. The main question that directed this study was to investigate what the PCK of English teachers is as reflected through teacher-

student classroom experiences. With this study, it has been found that teachers struggle with multiple issues in their teaching and learning, such as students' participation, clashing syllabi with examiners'

requirements, and inactive class participation. These were the common problems that arose. A study conducted by Namanyane and Shaoan (2025) in other location (China) produced similar results. On top of that, traditional methods of teaching dominated every class. This study proposes the following recommendations. Firstly, it recommends that English teachers be provided with Continuous Professional Development (CPD) workshops (Zheng & Ye, 2022), which focus on improving their teaching approaches. These CPD should be tailor-made for specific teachers' demands, which respond effectively and improve students' learning experiences, and secondly, the researchers propose that teachers themselves should formulate school-based Professional Learning Communities (PLC), which aligns with school climate and culture as a way to inclusively accommodate different learners within the school's premises (Rashida & Bariham, 2025). Experienced teachers and other experts in similar subjects should cooperate in PLC programs to train teachers through their leadership. Individual teachers should further seek professional advice from experts and other experienced teachers in other better-performing schools and institutions of higher learning in areas where they encounter some difficulties. These may significantly bring positive results to their teaching experiences and thereby improve students' academic performance. The education system in Lesotho still stands a better chance to improve through exploring other areas which have not been tapped before, not only in English but inclusive in all other subjects.

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