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RECEIVED 13 November 2024

ACCEPTED 26 March 2025

PUBLISHED 08 April 2025

CITATION

Suar GB, Behera RR, Rout RK, Patra S,
Panda P and Sethi P (2025) English language
and pedagogical competency of prospective
English teachers: insights and challenges
from teacher education institutes in Odisha,
India.
Front. Educ. 10:1517466.
doi: 10.3389/feduc.2025.1517466

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English language and pedagogical competency of prospective English teachers: insights and challenges from teacher education institutes in Odisha, India

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This study examines the English language competency (ELC) and pedagogical competency (PC) of prospective English teachers in teacher education institutes (TEIs) across Odisha, India. Recognizing the importance of good teacher training for effective language teaching, this research employed a mixed-method approach, assessing a sample of 70 trainee-teachers through a standardized knowledge test complemented by qualitative question, addressing challenges faced by them. The results were concerning, with average scores of 42.36% in ELC and 46.36% in PC, highlighting major gaps in both language proficiency and teaching methods. A one-way ANOVA suggested no significant differences in performance among trainees from different TEIs across Odisha, indicating that all TEIs faced similar challenges. Qualitative analysis highlighted major challenges faced by trainee-teachers including overdependence on old-fashioned methods like the grammar translation method (GTM), limited use of information and communication technology (ICT), English language proficiency issues with teachers, and administrative issues. Despite these impediments, the ongoing educational reforms introduced by the National Education Policy 2020 and Odisha Government present promising opportunities for enhancing teacher education. This study emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive faculty development initiatives, the adoption of innovative pedagogical practices, and increased utilization of ICT tools within teacher preparation programs. The findings are essential for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders aiming to improve the quality of English language instruction and better prepare future educators in Odisha.

KEYWORDS

English language competency, India, Odisha, pedagogical competency, teacher education institutes

1 Introduction

1.1 The current state of English language education in Odisha schools and its impact on students

The framework for English language education in Odisha, as delineated by the Board of Secondary Education and the Government of Odisha, aims to address all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) comprehensively (Behera et al., 2024; Board of Secondary Education (BSE), Odisha, 2013; Government of Odisha, 2017/2019). Despite the broad and inclusive curriculum, practical implementation often emphasizes syllabus completion over actual enhancement of students' language proficiency (Nayak, 2019; Behera et al., 2024). This approach results in limited improvement in students' English language skills. Pratham's Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) (ASER Centre, 2022) highlights a stark contrast in English language proficiency between students from government and private schools in Odisha. Only 22.9% of class V students from vernacular government schools were able to read English sentences, compared to 68% in private schools. This proficiency gap persists into higher grades; by class VIII, only 46.9% of students from vernacular government schools could read English sentences, showing minimal improvement from 44.3% in 2016 (ASER Centre, 2022). Such disparities highlight the systemic challenges within the educational framework, reflecting broader issues in English language instruction. Students face substantial difficulties in learning English, including challenges with vocabulary comprehension and inconsistent learning experiences due to frequent teacher absences (Sahoo, 2022). A significant proportion of students in Odisha—55%—report difficulties with vocabulary and sentence structure in English textbooks, while 45% struggle with reading assignments (Rao et al., 2024). These challenges are exacerbated by ineffective instructional methods and a lack of resources, which further hinder effective language acquisition (Rana, 2018; Satapathy, 2017). A similar situation can be observed across most states in India, where inadequate teacher training, resource constraints, and pedagogical limitations continue to affect English language education.

The quality of English education in Odisha is primarily compromised by the lack of teacher specialization and training. Many secondary school teachers lack specialized training in English, leading to less effective teaching practices (Arul Kumar, 2012; Padwad, 2017). This deficiency impedes the successful implementation of the curriculum and pedagogical strategies, contributing to ineffective language instruction. Traditional pedagogical methods, such as the grammar translation method (GTM) and the use of Odia for instruction, further restrict students' language development (Nalla and Pani, 2018). These methods emphasize rote learning and translation over communicative competence, while outdated teaching materials do not support comprehensive English skill development (Nayak, 2019; Behera et al., 2024). Consequently, these pedagogical limitations hinder students' ability to master English effectively.

Additionally, the prevalent instructional practice in Odia medium schools—where English texts in English classes are frequently explained in Odia—limits students' exposure to

English and impedes their language development (Nayak, 2019; Pattanaik, 2020). This practice amplifies the challenges in achieving proficiency in English. The challenges extend to teacher preparation as well. Approximately 82.9% of trainee-teachers report experiencing language-related difficulties, highlighting deficiencies in current training programs (Sahoo and Kharwar, 2023). This gap in teacher preparation reflects broader systemic issues affecting English instruction across schools. Most teachers, having graduated from educational systems with inadequate pedagogical training, struggle to effectively teach English grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, adversely impacting students' learning outcomes (Behera et al., 2024). Taking all such problems into account, the British Council's Mo School initiative (British Council, 2018) and Behera (2024) emphasize the need to modernize teaching methods and provide ongoing teacher training by implementing learner-centered pedagogies and addressing current limitations in teaching practices to improve students' English proficiency. Moreover, Pawlak (2011) highlights the cruciality of target language proficiency for non-native teachers, pointing out that limited exposure, working mostly with low-level students, and neglecting self-improvement leads to deskilling, which underscores the need for strong language training in teacher education (TE) programs/institutes.

The challenging conditions faced by English teachers in Odisha brings to the forefront the urgent need for a thorough examination of the state's teacher education institutes (TEIs), particularly those offering Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programs. In Odisha, a B.Ed. degree is a mandatory qualification for securing a teaching position, and it is during this program that trainee-teachers are supposed to receive specialized training in teaching specific subjects, including English. However, the effectiveness of this training is increasingly being called into question. While numerous studies (Saha, 2022; Satapathy, 2016; Panda, 2024) have pointed out that many teachers in Odisha graduate from institutions of questionable quality, there has been limited research specifically focused on these TEIs. The few studies (Panda, 2024; Bhat, 2024) that have examined these institutions suggest significant deficiencies, yet the overall efficacy of these TEIs has not been rigorously evaluated. While, considerable attention has been given to student performance (Agnihotri, 2022), there remains a significant lack of focus on the effectiveness of TEIs in preparing future English teachers. This lack of scrutiny raises concerns about the quality of teacher preparation programs and their ability to equip future educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach English effectively. As the state grapples with the challenges of improving English language education, it becomes imperative to assess and enhance the quality of TE in Odisha.

1.2 Role of TEIs in imparting language pedagogy and preparing prospective English teachers

TEIs play a pivotal role in equipping future educators with essential pedagogical skills and subject expertise. Research consistently highlights that teachers with strong preparation and robust pedagogical foundations contribute significantly to student achievement (Boyd et al., 2007; Goldhaber and Brewer, 2000).

TEIs emphasize linguistic proficiency, ensuring that prospective English teachers can effectively meet diverse student needs through innovative and evidence-based teaching strategies (Anca, 2013; Faltis and Valdes, 2016; Kubanyiova and Crookes, 2016). Beyond language proficiency, TEIs provide comprehensive pedagogical training, helping pre-service English teachers refine their instructional approaches (Zakeri and Alavi, 2011; Reynolds et al., 2021), develop new pedagogies (Abdullah et al., 2019), and integrate effective curriculum-based training (Almazroa and Alotaibi, 2023; Ogilvie and Dunn, 2010; Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2007). These institutions also play a crucial role in enhancing technological competence, equipping teachers with knowledge of information and communication technology (ICT) (Nasim et al., 2024; Horwitz, 2020; Koranteng, 2012; Roschelle et al., 2000; Shamoail, 2005) and teaching-learning materials (TLMs) (Ayerteye et al., 2019; Adu-Yeboah and Kwaah, 2018). Furthermore, TEIs contribute to teacher research skills development, preparing educators to engage in evidence-based teaching practices (Curwood et al., 2017; Tursini, 2019). Equally important is their role in building confidence among pre-service teachers, ensuring they can effectively manage classrooms and adapt to dynamic teaching environments (Jimenez-Silva et al., 2012; Finlinson, 2016; Turnbull, 2018; Alaa et al., 2019).

Given these multifaceted contributions, TEIs serve as a cornerstone for quality teacher preparation, ensuring that educators enter the profession with both theoretical knowledge, practical expertise and adaptability to modern educational challenges. TEIs also play a critical role in preparing future English teachers by integrating language pedagogy with effective teaching strategies, providing practical experience, fostering reflective practice and enhancing language skills of prospective English teachers (Pickering and Gunashekar, 2014). By addressing these areas, TEIs in Odisha can ensure that future English teachers are well-equipped to navigate the challenges of multilingual and diverse classroom settings, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes for students. However, to fully realize this potential, it is essential to examine the various challenges that TEIs in Odisha face, as these obstacles can significantly impact their effectiveness in achieving these goals.

1.3 Condition of TEIs in Odisha

The Directorate of Teacher Education and the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), established in 1990, has played a pivotal role in providing both pre-service and in-service training to teachers in Odisha. Over the years, this Directorate has expanded into a broader network of TEIs and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), offering a variety of programs, including B.Ed., Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.), Master of Education (M.Ed.), and Bachelor in Hindi Education (B.H.Ed.). Additionally, the English Language Teaching Institute (ELTI) has been instrumental in enhancing English education through its specialized programs [School & Mass Education Department, Government of Odisha, 2015; Sams Teacher Education (He) Govt. of Odisha, 2023]. The evolution of TEIs in Odisha has been significantly influenced by a series

of reforms and developmental efforts aimed at improving the quality of teacher training. Historically, TE in Odisha faced substantial challenges, such as a scarcity of local facilities, which compelled students to seek education in neighboring states. However, recent decades have seen considerable improvements, including curriculum reform, the modernization of examination systems, and the integration of educational technologies (Mohanty, 2023).

A major shift in the management of TEIs occurred in June 2021 when oversight was transferred from the School and Mass Education and ST&SC Development, Minorities, and Backward Classes Welfare (SSDMBW) Departments to the Higher Education Department. This transition aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which aims to transform TEIs into multi-disciplinary institutions by 2025 (Higher Education Department and Government of Odisha, 2021). As part of this broader initiative, the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) restored recognition to eight TEIs in Odisha, allowing them to admit students for the 2021–2023 academic session with an intake capacity of 50 students per institution after a four-year moratorium. However, the recognition of 15 TEIs was withdrawn due to severe staffing shortages, leading to a temporary suspension of admissions (Higher Education Department and Government of Odisha, 2021).

Despite these positive developments, TEIs in Odisha continue to face several significant challenges:

- **Staffing shortages:** One of the most pressing issues is the chronic shortage of faculty, which has led to the withdrawal of NCTE recognition for several TEIs. In response, the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC) advertised 385 Assistant Professor positions in 2021, and appointed faculty thereafter to support these institutions (Higher Education Department and Government of Odisha, 2021). However, the number remains insufficient compared to the student enrollment.
- **Infrastructure and facilities:** The quality of higher education in Odisha is often undermined by inadequate infrastructure. Behera (2023) highlights issues such as poor library resources, limited laboratory facilities, and substandard classroom management. Significant disparities exist across districts, with some institutions suffering from severe deficits in facilities and qualified teachers (Satapathy, 2016).
- **Language and communication laboratories:** The integration of language and communication laboratories remains minimal, with only 0.78% of colleges equipped with such facilities. This limited reach accentuates the need for broader implementation to ensure that more students benefit from these essential resources (Department of Higher Education, 2014).
- **Monitoring and compliance:** Recent initiatives by the Higher Education Department to monitor faculty attendance aim to address concerns about insufficient academic engagement. These measures are intended to improve teaching standards and ensure compliance with the mandated seven-hour duty for college faculty (Sahu, 2023).

The current state of TEIs in Odisha presents a mixed picture of progress and ongoing challenges. While there have been significant advancements in faculty recruitment and institutional reform, persistent issues such as infrastructural inadequacies, staffing shortages, and limited access to advanced teaching resources continue to impede the effectiveness of TE. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes systemic reforms informed by empirical research, better resource allocation, and enhanced quality assurance mechanisms to prepare prospective teachers for the demands of an evolving educational landscape.

In light of the challenges faced by present and future English language teachers and students in Odisha, as well as the significant difficulties encountered by TEIs in the state, there is an urgent need to evaluate the effectiveness of these institutions. The scarcity of literature on the efficacy of TEIs in Odisha and their contribution in preparing future English language teachers, language and pedagogical competence of trainee-teachers further underscores the importance of this study. Thus, this research aims to (i) evaluate the English language competency (ELC) and pedagogical competency (PC) of trainee-teachers enrolled in various TEIs in Odisha, with a particular focus on comparing how these competencies differ among trainee-teachers enrolled in different TEIs, and (ii) examine challenges that impacted their preparedness for teaching English. ELC refers to a trainee-teacher's proficiency in English, including their ability to read, write, speak, and comprehend the language effectively. PC, on the other hand, encompasses the instructional skills, methodological knowledge, and classroom management abilities required for effective teaching. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to provide critical insights into how well TEIs in Odisha prepare prospective English teachers for the complex realities of the classroom. As a pioneering effort to assess the efficacy of TEIs in Odisha, this study's findings will be invaluable for policymakers, educational administrators, and TEIs themselves. The insights gained will help in developing targeted strategies to enhance teacher training, thereby improving English language education outcomes for students across the state. This research will contribute to the broader discourse on TE and its impact on educational quality in Odisha, offering a foundation for future reforms and improvements.

2 Materials and methods

2.1 Research design and sampling procedure

The research design (Figure 1) employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies. While the quantitative study evaluated the ELC and PC of trainee-teachers enrolled in various TEIs in Odisha, the qualitative study examined various challenges that impacted their preparedness for teaching English. The independent variable of the quantitative study included the various TEIs, which are categorized into three distinct zones for feasibility. The dependent variables were the trainee-teachers' ELC and PC of the trainee-teachers.

Given the extensive number of TEIs and trainee-teachers in Odisha, a systematic sampling approach (Figure 2) was essential.

As of 2023, Odisha is home to 36 NCTE-recognized TEIs that offer secondary-level B.Ed. programs. These TEIs are categorized based on the three types of programs they offer: 26 TEIs offer two-year B.Ed. programs, 4 provide three-year B.Ed.-M.Ed. programs, and six offer four-year B.A. B.Ed. (Integrated) programs. The academic sessions under consideration span 2020–24, 2021–24, and 2022–24, with all students having completed their internships at schools as pre-service teachers and coursework in subject-specific pedagogy. The total admission intake for Arts (Humanities) students across these programs during these academic sessions is 1,450. Within this group, the population of the study comprises 268 teacher trainees who selected English Pedagogy as their method/pedagogy subject, which constitutes the primary focus of this study.

To address the impracticality of studying the entire population from 36 TEIs, a two-phase stratified proportional random sampling strategy was implemented. In the first phase, 36 TEIs were categorized based on Odisha's Revenue Division classification. The state is divided into three Revenue Divisions (RDs): Central Zone, North Zone, and South Zone. Out of 30 districts, 15 districts house the 36 TEIs, which are categorized by program type. The North Zone includes six districts with 12 TEIs offering two-year and three-year B.Ed. programs, the Central Zone has six districts with 17 TEIs offering two-year and four-year B.Ed. programs, and the South Zone comprises three districts with seven TEIs, all offering exclusively two-year B.Ed. programs.

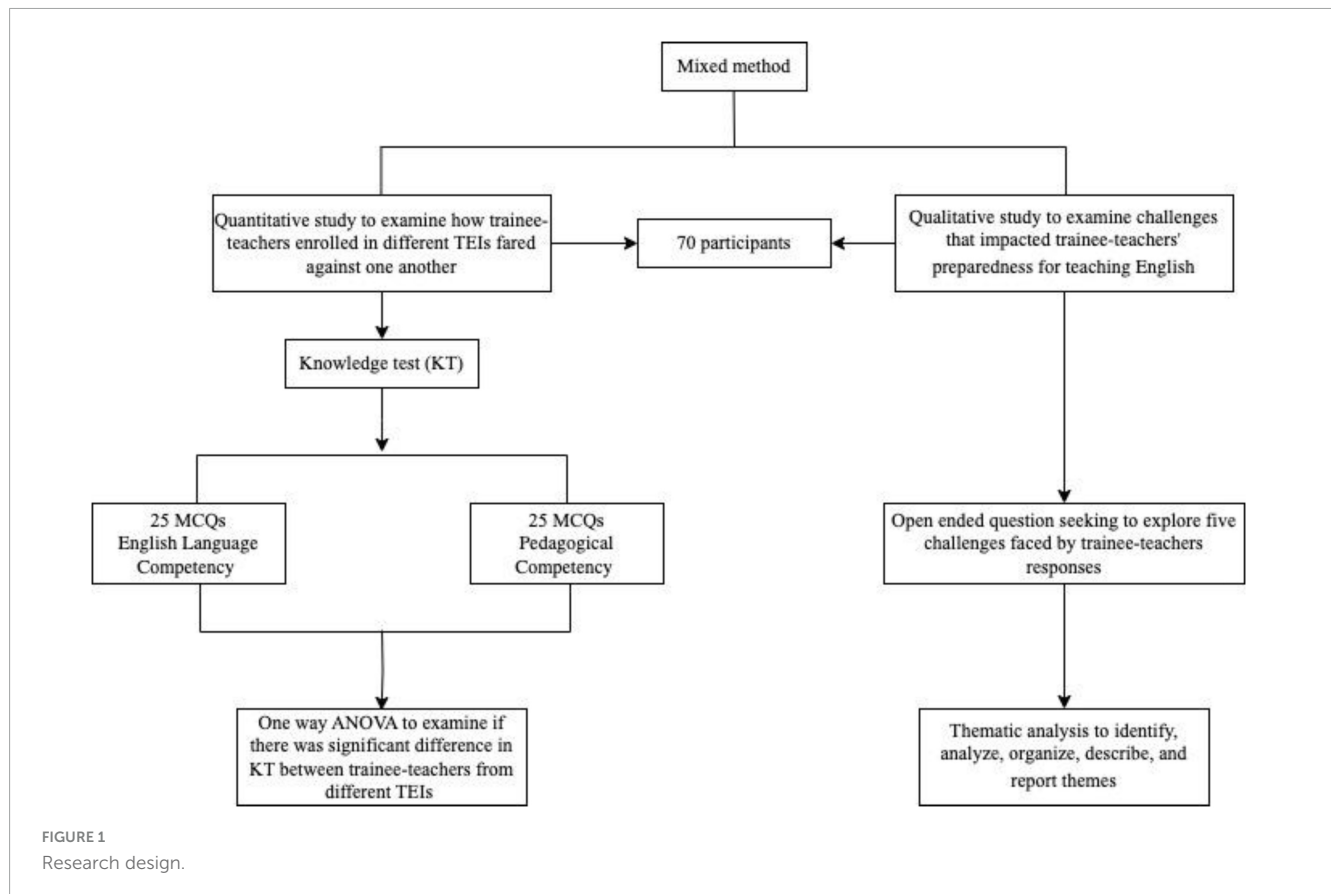
In the second phase of sampling, 25% of the 268 English Pedagogy trainee-teachers were randomly selected to ensure proportional representation across different zones. To maintain fairness and minimize bias, TEIs within each zone and program type were also randomly chosen.

- Central zone: From 17 TEIs, four were selected, resulting in 35 trainees being included in the sample. This comprised 27 trainees from a total of 106 enrolled in two-year B.Ed. programs and eight trainees from a total of 27 enrolled in four-year integrated B.A. B.Ed. programs.
- North zone: From 12 TEIs, three were chosen, representing 25 trainees. These included 17 trainees from a total of 67 enrolled in two-year B.Ed. programs and eight trainees from a total of 30 enrolled in three-year B.Ed.-M.Ed. programs.
- South zone: From 7 TEIs, two were selected, yielding 10 trainees from a total of 38 enrolled in two-year B.Ed. programs.

The final sample included 70 trainees from nine TEIs across all three zones. This consisted of 54 trainees from a pool of 211 in two-year B.Ed. programs, eight trainees from a total of 30 in three-year B.Ed.-M.Ed. programs, and eight trainees from 27 enrolled in four-year integrated B.A. B.Ed. programs. This two-phase sampling method ensured the sample was diverse, representative, and reliable, while also addressing practical constraints in the study.

2.2 Participants

The participants in this study comprised 70 teacher trainees, all of whom were between the ages of 22 and 23. They



shared a relatively homogenous socio-economic and cultural background, predominantly from rural, Odia-speaking families. These trainees had access to similar educational resources and learning opportunities, ensuring a comparable baseline in terms of academic exposure. In terms of resource accessibility and learning environments, the participants experienced similar conditions within their respective TEIs. The uniformity of their educational settings, including infrastructure and facilities, contributed to a consistent learning environment across the sample. Additionally, all participants had demonstrated a requisite level of academic proficiency by successfully passing an entrance examination for enrollment in the B.Ed. program, as mandated by the Higher Education Department of Odisha. This accomplishment indicates that the trainees met the minimum academic requirements for admission, establishing a common academic threshold for evaluating their subsequent learning experiences and pedagogical outcomes. This shared proficiency serves as a foundational baseline for comparing the participants' educational trajectories throughout the study.

2.3 Measures

The study measured trainee-teachers' (i) ELC and (ii) PC using a carefully designed knowledge test (KT). This test consisted of two sections: Section A included 25 multiple-choice questions (MCQs) aimed at evaluating participants' understanding of English language and grammar, based on the secondary school curriculum of Odia medium schools. Questions in this section assessed

fundamental language skills such as sentence structure, vocabulary, tenses, subject-verb agreement, and reading comprehension. Section B contained 25 MCQs focused on assessing participants' knowledge of English teaching pedagogy, as outlined by the curriculum of NCTE. These questions covered topics such as teaching methodologies, lesson planning, classroom management, and student assessment techniques. A pilot test was conducted with 47 participants to refine the KT and ensure its reliability and validity. During the pilot phase, item analysis was performed to evaluate the quality of the 50 MCQs. The difficulty indices of the items ranged from 0.35 to 0.85, with an average of 0.61, indicating a moderate level of difficulty overall. The discrimination indices ranged from 0.22 to 0.58, with an average of 0.38, demonstrating that most items effectively distinguished between high and low-performing participants. Based on this analysis, several items were revised to enhance the test's performance. The final version of the test, administered with a 30-min time limit, demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.717, confirming good internal consistency, and a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.82, affirming its content validity. Scoring was based on a one-point system, where each correct answer received one point, and incorrect or unanswered questions received zero points. The total score for each participant was calculated by summing correct responses from both sections, with higher scores reflecting stronger competency levels. The 30-min time limit was deemed adequate for participants to complete the questions without undue pressure.

This study also incorporated one qualitative question: What are the top five challenges you have faced during your teacher training program related to English language instruction, and how have

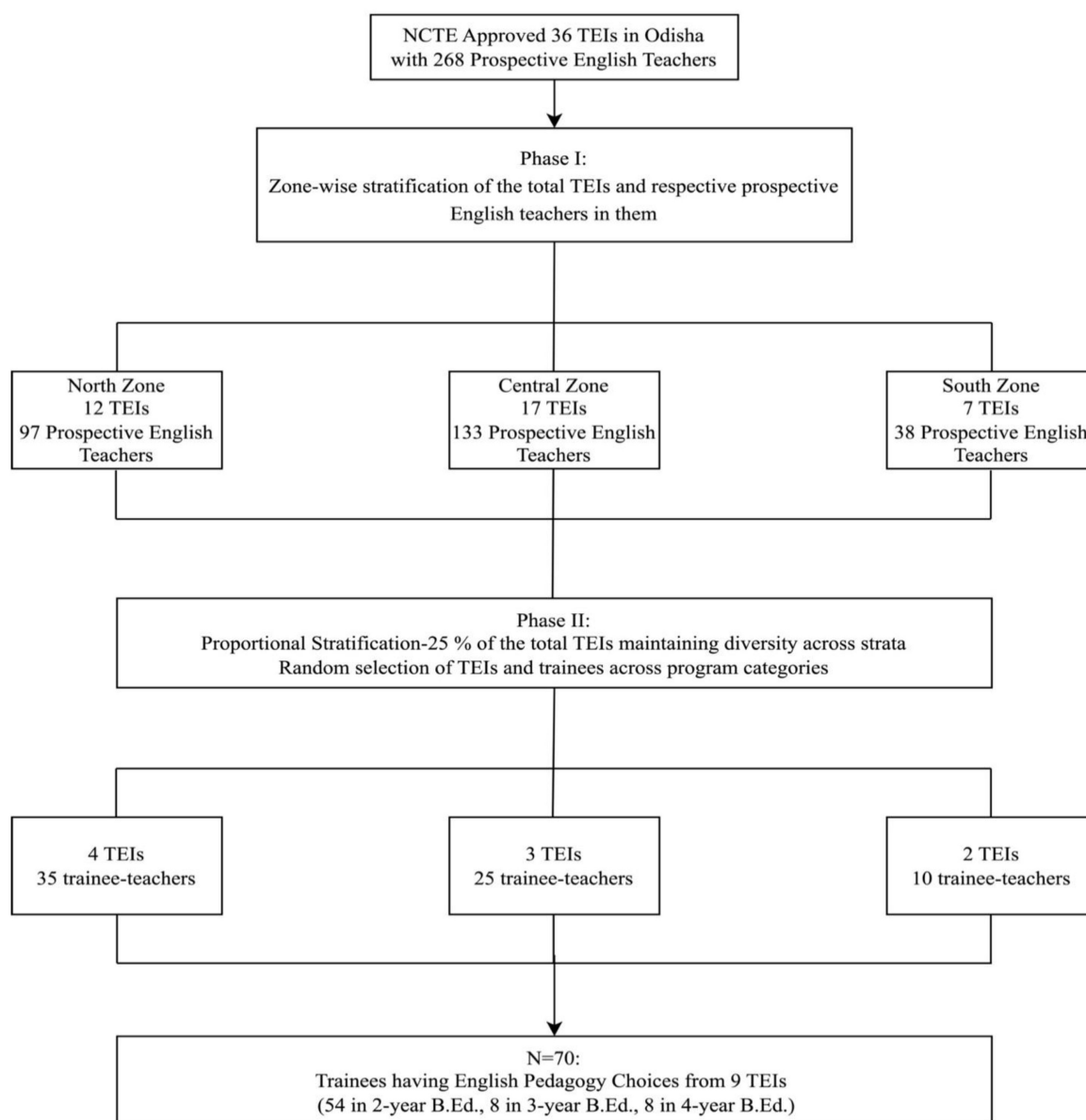


FIGURE 2
Sampling strategy.

these challenges impacted your preparedness for teaching English? This question was designed to explore challenges participants faced that impacted their preparedness for teaching English.

2.4 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize the overall performance of trainee-teachers on the KT. To determine whether trainee-teachers from different colleges performed similarly in terms of ELC and PC, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. For ease of analysis, the colleges were categorized into three distinct zones. The ANOVA was used to assess whether there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the KT among the trainee-teachers from these three zones. This allowed

for the identification of any zone-based variations in language and pedagogical competence.

To analyze the qualitative data obtained from the responses to the open-ended questions, thematic analysis was adopted, following the steps employed by [Borgohain et al. \(2023\)](#). Thematic analysis is a robust qualitative method that facilitates the identification, analysis, organization, description, and reporting of themes within qualitative data. This method is well-suited for exploring diverse perspectives, uncovering commonalities and differences among participants, and generating new insights from complex data sets ([King, 2004](#)). The analysis process began with the first and third authors independently reviewing the responses multiple times to gain a deep understanding of the content and context of each response. This initial familiarization involved examining the participants' descriptions and perceptions

related to their TTPs and TEIs. The responses were then coded using a structured approach. Each response was initially assigned an open code based on the content and themes described by participants. The open codes were subsequently categorized into axial codes that grouped similar meanings and themes. Finally, axial codes were further organized into broader selective codes to consolidate and refine the themes. Inter-coder reliability was ensured throughout the coding process. The agreement between the coders during the axial and selective coding stages exceeded 85%, indicating a high level of reliability. Any discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussion to achieve consensus. This involved discussing divergent interpretations, referring back to the raw data, and revising codes where necessary to align with the overarching themes. In cases where disagreements persisted, a third researcher was consulted to provide an impartial assessment. To enhance the validity of the thematic analysis, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing findings with existing literature and participant narratives. Additionally, an audit trail was maintained, documenting coding decisions, theme development, and resolution of discrepancies to ensure transparency and replicability. These measures strengthened the credibility and trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, ensuring that the themes accurately represented participants' perspectives and experiences.

3 Results and findings

The results, findings, and corresponding tables in the following section are presented in the order of the various analyses conducted throughout the study. Table 1 and Figure 3 present the descriptive statistics. Tables 2–4 present the results of the One-way ANOVA.

One-way ANOVA was performed three times to examine the performance of trainee-teachers on the KT, ELC, and PC across different TEIs, categorized into three zones. Levene's test for homogeneity of variances confirmed that the assumption of equal variance was met for all three ANOVAs: KT, $F(2, 67) = 1.47, p > 0.05$; ELC, $F(2, 67) = 0.02, p > 0.05$; and PC, $F(2, 67) = 0.30, p > 0.05$. The results of the ANOVAs indicated no significant differences in performance between trainee-teachers from different colleges in the three zones for KT, $F(2, 67) = 1.01, p = 0.37$; ELC, $F(2, 67) = 0.54, p = 0.58$; and PC, $F(2, 67) = 0.50, p = 0.60$. This suggests that the independent variable (TEIs, categorized into three zones) did not significantly influence the outcome variables within this sample. The average score of trainee-teachers across all TEIs on the KT was 22.17 out of 50, reflecting a performance of just 44.34%, indicating a general lack of mastery in the content assessed. Similarly, the average score for ELC was 10.59 out of 25, equating to 42.36%, while the average score for PC was 11.59 out of 25, or 46.36%. These results are concerning, as they suggest that prospective English teachers are underperforming in both their understanding of the language and in their pedagogical abilities. Specifically, the low score in ELC points to insufficient preparedness in foundational language skills, a critical area for future educators. Moreover, these scores were consistent across all TEIs in three zones, further highlighting the uniformity of

training programs in Odisha, yet revealing a potential systemic shortfall in the quality of TE. Thematic analysis yielded four themes and 15 sub-themes (Table 5) that comprehensively outlined trainee-teachers' perspectives on various challenges they faced as prospective English language teachers. The findings are categorized under language, pedagogical, infrastructural, and administrative dimensions.

Language challenges: One prominent issue that emerged from the data was the excessive use of the mother tongue (MT), particularly Odia, in English language teaching. Trainees frequently reported that the English method courses were taught predominantly in Odia, which created a disconnect in their learning. The lack of proficiency in English among both the trainees and faculty exacerbated this problem. Many English teachers were found to have poor speaking proficiency, and this deficiency was observed across the faculty. Moreover, there was a shortage of qualified English language educators, with teachers of other subjects often stepping in to teach English pedagogy. This contributed to a lack of immersion in English communication settings, leaving trainees with limited practical exposure to the language. Furthermore, there was an uncanny absence of focus on core language competencies—listening, speaking, reading, and writing (LSRW)—in the curriculum, which negatively impacted the trainees' overall language development.

Pedagogical challenges: In terms of pedagogical training, the findings revealed that the range of English teaching methods taught was limited. Trainees reported an overreliance on traditional methods, particularly the GTM, with little scope for experimentation with newer, more interactive methodologies. An overemphasis on lesson planning, often theoretical in nature, was also highlighted, at the expense of practical skill development in teaching language competencies. The internship experience was similarly unsatisfactory, with trainees noting that the focus was more on completing the syllabus than on improving their teaching skills and language skills of school students, leaving little room for growth in their language teaching capabilities. Furthermore, there was a lack of integration of ICT in language teaching, with many educators unprepared and untrained to use digital tools effectively.

Infrastructural challenges: Infrastructural limitations also posed significant barriers to effective teacher training. Trainees reported a scarcity of TLMs, particularly interactive resources and good quality English language teaching method book that could enhance language teaching. The technological infrastructure was outdated, with little access to digital tools essential for modern language instruction. The physical infrastructure of TEIs was often described as inadequate, with outdated classrooms, insufficient teaching space, poor sanitation, and a lack of hostel facilities, all contributing to a less conducive learning environment.

Administrative challenges: Finally, administrative inefficiencies emerged as a critical concern. Trainees frequently faced irregular and unpredictable class schedules, with disruptions due to changes in the academic calendar and teacher transfers. The over-reliance on inexperienced guest faculty and the burden of administrative duties on regular teachers further hindered the learning process. This poor management of resources, time, and personnel significantly affected the quality of teacher training in Odisha's TEIs.

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics.

TEI Zones	N	KT			ELC			PC		
		Mean	SD	Min/max	Mean	SD	Min/max	Mean	SD	Min/max
North	25	21.96	1.695	18/25	10.48	1.262	7/13	11.48	1.295	8/14
Central	35	22.49	2.005	19/27	10.74	1.314	8/14	11.74	1.358	9/15
South	10	21.60	2.495	17/24	10.30	1.636	6/12	11.30	1.767	7/13
All	70	22.17	1.971	17/27	10.59	1.335	6/14	11.59	1.388	7/15

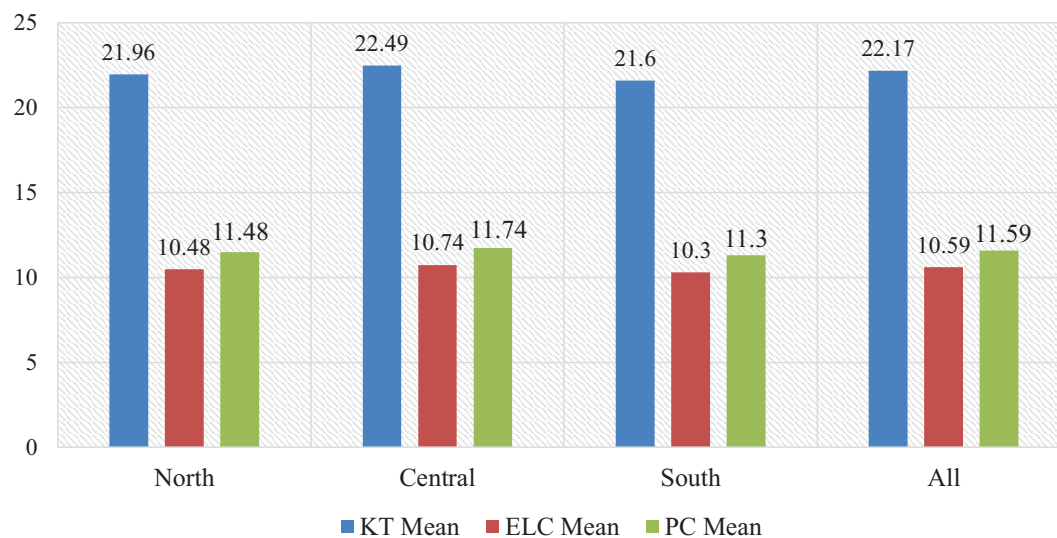


FIGURE 3

Comparative analysis of KT, ELC, and PC across TEI zones in Odisha.

TABLE 2 ANOVA for KT.

Knowledge test		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
	Between groups	7.840	2	3.920	1.010	0.370
	Within groups	260.103	67	3.882		
	Total	267.943	69			

TABLE 3 ANOVA for ELC.

English language competency		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
	Between groups	1.960	2	0.980	0.543	0.584
	Within groups	121.026	67	1.806		
	Total	122.986	69			

TABLE 4 ANOVA for PC.

Pedagogical competency		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
	Between groups	1.960	2	0.980	0.501	0.608
	Within groups	131.026	67	1.956		
	Total	132.986	69			

TABLE 5 Various challenges the trainee-teachers faced as prospective English language teachers.

Selective code	Axial code	Open codes	<i>n</i>	Exemplars
Language challenges	Excessive use of MT to teach English	Language of instruction not in English	12	Although we have English textbooks, our teachers teach us in Odia
		English method taught in Odia	10	Our teachers are not updating their knowledge of English pedagogy and teach us in Odia during English pedagogy classes
	Language proficiency issues among teachers	Poor English-speaking proficiency among English teachers	9	Many teachers cannot speak proper English and struggle with pronunciation of difficult words
		Poor English proficiency among faculty members in general	11	Most of our teachers do not have good English knowledge and knowledge on phonetics
	Issues of English teachers' availability	Shortage of qualified English language educators	12	Our college does not have a teacher for English pedagogy paper, and Odia pedagogy teacher teaches us English paper
		Teachers of other subjects teaching English pedagogy	13	There is no English pedagogy teacher, and other subject teachers, like the Social Science teacher takes our language pedagogy class
	Limited practical exposure to English language	Lack of practical English language immersion	9	There is no scope for us to engage in practical language application in our college
		Limited exposure to English communication settings	14	We do not get any chance to enhance our English communication skills
	Limited focus on core language competencies	Limited focus on core English language competencies (LSRW)	8	I feel there should be classes to enhance our LSRW skills in English, as we are going to become English teachers
Pedagogical challenges	Limited variety of English teaching methods taught	Limited variety of English teaching methods taught	10	Only a handful of English language teaching methods are discussed without properly applying them
		Overreliance on traditional methods (e.g., GTM)	11	There's a heavy reliance on traditional grammar-translation methods, with little emphasis on newer pedagogical approaches
		No scope for experimentation with newer methodologies	8	Our teachers only discuss methods that are there in old books, with little effort to incorporate modern developments in language teaching
	Excessive focus on theoretical lesson planning, limited focus on practical language teaching	Overemphasis on theoretical lesson planning by teachers	13	Teachers ask only to prepare lesson plans, which many copy from senior students, and they don't explain other ways of teaching English
		Insufficient opportunity to practice what is learnt	11	There's no structured opportunity for us to practice what we learn, which makes it hard to see how these theories work in real classrooms
	Unsatisfactory internship experience	Limited scope to hone teaching skills during internship	9	We did not get a chance to enhance our teaching skills during internship
		Internship goals focused on syllabus completion rather than language teaching	9	During our internship we were asked only to complete the syllabus as early as possible, without any concern for students' language skills
	Poor ICT integration in language teaching	Educators not equipped with ICT skills to teach English language	10	Our teacher does not know how to use ICT for teaching English
		No training for digital tools in language teaching	12	We did not get any training on using digital tools and e-resource to teach English
Infrastructural challenges	Limited TLM availability	Scarcity of teaching-learning aids and materials	12	Our teachers often advise us to use local question-answer materials to pass exams, rather than recommending good books on pedagogy
		Lack of interactive language resources	9	We still use charts and pictures as teaching aids. There is no provision for interactive digital language resources

(Continued)

TABLE 5 (Continued)

Selective code	Axial code	Open codes	<i>n</i>	Exemplars
	Poor technological infrastructure	Lack of technological infrastructure/digital tools in TEIs	12	We lack facilities like an ICT lab and a language laboratory, which limits our ability to incorporate technology in teaching
	Poor physical infrastructure	Outdated classroom infrastructure	13	We lack proper classroom facilities, and this scarcity affects the quality of our learning experience
		Insufficient space for teaching and learning activities	11	There is no sufficient space in our college for teaching and learning activities
		Inadequate sanitation and utilities	14	We do not have proper toilets in our college
		No hostel facilities	11	We have to have to stay outside as we do not have hostel and it is very hard to study
Administrative challenges	Poor class management	Irregular and unpredictable class schedules	14	Our classes have irregular and unpredictable schedules. Teachers randomly take classes
		Frequent disruption of classes	11	Our classes are randomly canceled most of the times
		Delayed commencement due to changes in academic calendar	15	Our pedagogy classes started late due to the late admission process, but we were still sent out for internships without proper preparation
	Poor teacher management	Constant teacher transfers disrupt learning	12	Our teachers get transferred and our classes get disrupted
		Over-reliance on inexperienced guest faculty	15	Most of our teachers are guest faculties and they lack basic mastery of subjects they teach.
		Teachers burdened with administrative tasks	10	Most of the time, our pedagogy teacher is busy with administrative work, leaving us with little guidance

4 Discussion

The findings from this study provide crucial insights into the English language competency and pedagogical preparedness of prospective English teachers in Odisha. The results are consistent with long-standing concerns about the quality of TE in the region, as reflected in previous studies. On average, prospective teachers scored 42.36% in ELC and 46.36% in PC. This shows that many trainee-teachers lack sufficient mastery of the language and teaching methodologies required for effective instruction. These findings mirror those from several studies, including [Nayak \(2019\)](#) and [Sahoo and Kharwar \(2023\)](#), which emphasize the systemic issues within Odisha's education system, particularly the persistent deficiencies in teacher training. [Saha \(2022\)](#) highlighted how many teachers graduating from Odisha's TEIs often lack the foundational skills needed to teach English effectively, an issue exacerbated by inadequate training in modern pedagogical practices. The low scores in ELC and PC observed in this study further support the findings of [Mohapatra et al. \(2022\)](#), who noted that many pre-service teachers feel unprepared for classroom challenges, particularly in teaching English as a second language.

This trend is also consistent with the broader issues of English in school education documented by [Behera et al. \(2024\)](#) who found that the quality of instruction and teacher preparedness directly affect student outcomes. As highlighted by [Agnihotri \(2022\)](#) the lack of specialized training for English teachers has had a detrimental impact on student learning, leading to widespread underperformance in English proficiency across state-run schools.

Similarly, [ASER Centre \(2022\)](#) confirmed that students in Odisha's government schools lag significantly behind their private school counterparts in English proficiency. This gap is intrinsically linked to the quality of teacher training. While several studies have focused on the challenges of English language teaching in Indian schools, few have examined the specific issue of TE and its direct impact on English pedagogy. This study is the first to thoroughly examine TEIs in Odisha concerning English pedagogy, filling a significant gap in the literature. Previous research, including that of [Sahoo \(2022\)](#) and [Panda \(2024\)](#), often critiqued the broader education system without delving into the internal issues of TEIs, such as the overreliance on outdated methods like the GTM, which this study has brought to light. Furthermore, while [Behera et al. \(2024\)](#) and [Satapathy \(2016\)](#) emphasized the systemic challenges of teaching English in rural settings, this study is unique in its focus on the TE process itself, highlighting how institutional deficiencies within TEIs contribute to the overall inefficacy of English language education in schools. The findings of this study not only corroborate previous research but also expand on it by exploring the root causes of underperformance among prospective English teachers. Unlike earlier studies that primarily focused on student outcomes, this research highlights the crucial role of inadequate teacher training in perpetuating these outcomes, particularly in rural and vernacular settings.

Despite the challenges identified in this study, there are promising developments within Odisha's education system. As mentioned earlier, in June 2021, TEIs management was transferred from the School and Mass Education and SSDMBW Departments

to the Higher Education Department, aiming to strengthen academic governance and institutional management (Higher Education Department and Government of Odisha, 2021). The OPSC recruited 385 Assistant Professors to support these institutions further. Implementing the NEP 2020 also signals a transformative shift, with plans to reshape TEIs into multi-disciplinary institutions that foster cross-disciplinary learning, thereby improving the quality of teacher training (Higher Education Department and Government of Odisha, 2021). Efforts like the British Council's "Mo School" initiative (British Council, 2018) reflects a growing commitment to enhancing English education in Odisha. This initiative emphasizes learner-centered pedagogies and the importance of continuous professional development for teachers. As Arul Kumar (2012) and Padwad (2017) suggest, TE programs that prioritize practical pedagogical skills over rote learning offer potential solutions to some of the systemic challenges in the region. However, significant obstacles remain, particularly about infrastructure. Behera (2023) has highlighted deficiencies such as inadequate library resources, limited laboratory facilities, and poor classroom management. These problems are exacerbated by stark disparities across districts, where some institutions severely lack facilities and qualified teachers (Satapathy, 2016). While the government is working to address these infrastructural shortcomings, progress will take time. More urgently, a change in the approach to language education is needed. Trainee-teachers must be equipped with modern pedagogical methods to ensure that future generations can learn English more effectively and easily.

The results of this study emphasize the urgent need for faculty training in both language proficiency and innovative language pedagogy. As several scholars have noted, one of the critical challenges in improving TE is the lack of exposure to modern, research-backed teaching methodologies (Tilak and Bandyopadhyay, 2023). The findings of this study align with the call for integrating ICT into teacher training programs, as proposed by Horwitz (2020) and Koranteng (2012). ICT can enhance instructional quality, facilitate better language learning, and equip future teachers with the tools to create more engaging and interactive classrooms. In-service training programs often cover ICT applications, equipping teachers with the necessary competencies to implement technology-driven instructional strategies (Qizi et al., 2020). Our study reinforces this by emphasizing the increasing reliance on digital resources and interactive learning platforms in English language pedagogy.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the professional development needs of English teachers. As Pawlak (2011) noted, continuous professional development is essential for teachers to remain effective in an evolving educational landscape. Many institutions have introduced diverse training programs that focus on both theoretical and practical aspects of language teaching (Kulić and Kostić-Minić, 2022). This aligns with our study's findings, which highlight the significance of structured and ongoing professional development initiatives in sustaining high-quality English language instruction. The findings of this study echo those of Curwood et al. (2017), who argue that teacher training programs must not only focus on theoretical knowledge but also the practical application of pedagogical skills through internships and fieldwork. Research also underscores that effective teacher training programs

emphasize learner-centered approaches, fostering creativity and problem-solving through authentic learning environments (Shaik, 2024). These programs not only enhance pre-service teachers' instructional strategies but also prepare them to navigate dynamic classroom settings using innovative methodologies.

Despite the availability of various training programs, a gap remains in specialized courses focused specifically on English language teaching methodology (Kulić and Kostić-Minić, 2022). This finding supports our research, which identifies a need for more targeted pedagogical training that addresses language-specific instructional challenges. Additionally, the evolving educational landscape necessitates continuous research into effective training practices to ensure that TE programs align with contemporary classroom demands (Shaik, 2024). By incorporating these insights, our study contributes to the ongoing discourse on optimizing teacher training frameworks, reinforcing the importance of tailored professional development programs, and advocating for curriculum enhancements that address emerging pedagogical challenges.

This study has important implications for education policymakers in Odisha and beyond. The underperformance of trainee-teachers in both ELC and PC signals the need for a comprehensive overhaul of teacher training programs, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas. The findings align with the observations of Menon et al. (2014), who emphasize the need for TE programs to integrate linguistic and pedagogical strategies to address the complexities of multilingual classroom environments. The results suggest that policymakers must prioritize faculty training, particularly in English language proficiency and ICT-based pedagogy. Without these critical changes, the persistent issues plaguing English education in Odisha are unlikely to be resolved. Moreover, this study has shown that TEIs must adopt a more interdisciplinary approach to teacher training. As noted by Wei (2025), Gondra and Aguiló-Mora (2024), Qasserras (2023) and Abdullah et al. (2019), incorporating modern pedagogical models such as the flipped classroom methods and communicative language teaching principles into teacher training can significantly enhance the teaching competencies of prospective teachers. This research offers a timely reminder that without proper training and support, even the most well-intentioned educational reforms are unlikely to succeed.

5 Limitations

While providing valuable insights into the English language competency and pedagogical preparedness of prospective English teachers in Odisha, this study has its limitations. First, the study was conducted within a specific socio-cultural and institutional context, focusing exclusively on trainee-teachers enrolled in TEIs in Odisha. As a result, the findings may not be entirely generalizable to other regions with different educational systems and resources. Odisha's unique socio-economic and linguistic dynamics, particularly in rural and vernacular schools, may have shaped the results in ways that would differ from findings in other states or countries. Secondly, while systematically selected, the study's sample size was relatively small, consisting of 70 trainees from nine TEIs. Although this sample provides a focused examination of the

issues within Odisha, a larger and more diverse sample would yield more robust results. A more extensive sampling of TEIs, particularly those from more remote areas or institutions with varying levels of resources, could uncover additional patterns and challenges. Another limitation is the study's focus on a single point in time (after completion of teaching internship), which does not account for potential developments in trainee-teachers' skills throughout their professional journey. Longitudinal research, tracking the progress of these prospective teachers from their time in TEIs through their first years in the classroom, would provide a more complete picture of the effectiveness of teacher training programs. Such studies, with more sample size, could also assess the long-term impact of training on actual teaching practices and student outcomes. Despite these limitations, the study has contributed significantly to understanding the critical gaps in teacher training for English pedagogy in Odisha. Also, while this study focuses specifically on the state of Odisha, the challenges identified in English language teacher training may reflect broader trends observed in other Indian states. Future research could extend this investigation to a pan-Indian context to enhance the generalizability of these findings.

6 Future directions

To build upon the findings of this study, future research should expand to different geographical contexts to enhance the external validity of conclusions. A comparative, pan-Indian study could help determine whether the challenges identified in Odisha are common across other states or unique to the region. Additionally, longitudinal research that follows trainee-teachers beyond their TEI training and into their early years of professional teaching would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of TE on classroom effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Further research should also explore variations in TEI programs by studying institutions with diverse resource levels and pedagogical approaches. Expanding the sample size and incorporating perspectives from teachers in rural, tribal, and underprivileged areas could yield valuable insights into regional disparities in teacher training quality. These studies could also assess the effectiveness of ongoing professional development programs and propose evidence-based improvements to English language TE.

7 Conclusion

This study highlights critical gaps in Odisha's TE system, particularly in English pedagogy training and access to ICT resources, which significantly impact the effectiveness of English instruction. Addressing these challenges requires systematic improvements in teacher training programs, ensuring that prospective educators are equipped with modern pedagogical strategies and digital literacy skills. Strengthening curriculum design, integrating student-centered teaching methodologies, and expanding continuous professional development programs are essential steps toward improving teacher preparedness. Additionally, institutional and policy-level reforms, such as

structured mentorship programs for new teachers, increased funding for TEIs in underprivileged areas, and evidence-based policy interventions, can bridge existing gaps in English education. A stronger collaboration between TEIs, government bodies, and international educational organizations can further enhance teacher training quality by incorporating best practices from successful language education models. Furthermore, regular impact assessments and policy evaluations will be crucial in ensuring the long-term success of these initiatives. By addressing these concerns through proactive policy measures and strategic interventions, Odisha's TE system can transition toward a more inclusive, effective, and globally competitive framework, ultimately improving English proficiency among students and enhancing their academic and professional opportunities.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in this study are included in this article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the ethical standards of Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, Odisha, comparable with other accepted ethical standards. The ethics committee of Fakir Mohan University, Balasore, Odisha approved this study. No names, addresses or other identifying information were used in the data analysis and dissemination of findings. The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article and can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. This work was conducted using various laboratory facilities provided by the Fakir Mohan University (India) and Central University of Odisha (India). GBS is affiliated with the Central University of Odisha (India) and Fakir Mohan University (India). The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

GS: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing. RB: Formal Analysis, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review and editing. RR: Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – review and editing. SP: Writing – review and editing. PP: Writing – review and editing. PS: Writing – review and editing.

Funding

The authors declare that no financial support was received for the research and/or publication of this article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

The reviewer PP declared a past co-authorship with the author RB.

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