

Research Article

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH AS A COMMUNICATIVE MEDIUM VERSUS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Nguyen Duc Vuong¹¹ Faculty of Social Sciences and International Languages, Gia Dinh University

Abstract

The shift toward viewing English as a global communicative tool has become a central focus in English language teaching (ELT), yet a significant tension remains between its role as a functional medium and a traditional academic discipline. This paper addresses this gap by investigating teacher perceptions in Vietnamese contexts where communicative policy mandates often conflict with classroom realities. The study examines the pedagogical and institutional factors, including high-stakes assessment and negative washback, that shape educators' beliefs and classroom practices. It further explores how the emergence of English as a lingua franca (ELF) and artificial intelligence (AI) influences teacher identities and professional development within these systems. Utilizing a desk-based literature review to synthesize theories, concepts, and empirical research, the paper therefore intends to provide a theoretical roadmap for bridging the binary between social fluency and academic proficiency, offering analysis and implications for systemic reforms in assessment and infrastructure to align educational outcomes with twenty-first-century global demands.

Keywords

Teacher perceptions, English as an academic discipline, English as a communicative medium, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Vietnamese educational reform.

1. Introduction

The global landscape of English language teaching (ELT) has undergone a significant fundamental transformation, shifting from a classical focus on literature and grammatical functions to a modern emphasis on functional communication and international mediation. At the epicenter of this reform is partially related to teachers' perceptions regarding the nature of the language itself: whether English should be recognized and categorized primarily as a communicative medium, a

dynamic and flexible tool for social and professional interaction, or as an academic discipline, like other subjects, a fixed system of grammatical, lexical, and literary knowledge. This discrepancy is not merely a theoretical disagreement but a lived reality for educators and language instructors who must navigate and strictly follow the competing demands of communicative policy mandates and traditional, grammar-heavy assessment systems (Vu, 2025).

*Corresponding author: Nguyen Duc Vuong

Email addresses:

nguyenducvuong3103@gmail.com (Nguyen Duc Vuong)

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The conceptualization of English as an academic discipline originated from the nineteenth-century tradition of studying foreign languages. In this framework, language had a tendency to be viewed as a mental discipline intended to gain the intellect through the rigorous analysis of grammatical structures and the translation of sophisticated literary texts. Academic English, in this sense, adheres to strict conventions of formal tone, complex sentence structures, and discipline-specific terminology, prioritizing subject accuracy over social fluency in reality. Conversely, the perception of English as a communicative medium emerged from the late twentieth-century paradigm shift toward the communicative language teaching (CLT) trend, which insists that the primary purpose of language is the negotiation of meaning in real-life contexts (Abdalla, 2025). In this view, English or language is a personal resource that belongs to all its users, rather than a set of norms and rules owned exclusively by native speakers (Alhasnawi, 2021).

This study tends to adopt a desk-based literature review, instead of conducting primary empirical data, to examine the theoretical construct of teachers' perceptions surrounding these two models, with a specific focus on the pedagogical and institutional factors that shape educators' beliefs. Future research is also vital to empirically test the framework's efficacy and adaptability across a variety of educational contexts and cultural settings. Drawing on extensive research from Asia countries, namely Vietnam, China, and Thailand, the analysis explores how teachers balance the academic rigor and regulations demanded by institutional standards with the communicative competence required for global participation (Vu et al., 2020). In Vietnam, there are differences in teaching methodology between teachers in public schools, who often treat English as an academic subject, and language teachers at private centers, who follow the ideology that English should be taught as a communication medium.

The following sections provide an overall review of the literature, a detailed exploration of the implications for curriculum and assessment, and a discussion of the challenges and future outlook for the field in an era of rapid digital transformation and policy reform (Thai, 2025).

2. Literature review

The evolution of teacher perceptions is involved in foundational theoretical conflicts that have shaped the history of linguistics and language pedagogy. The literature reveals insights from the structural abstractions from several centuries ago to the contemporary, socially situated understanding of language as a global lingua franca.

2.1. Theoretical framework

The distinction between English as an academic discipline and as a communicative medium is theoretically grounded and compared in the divergence between Noam Chomsky's linguistic competence and Dell Hymes' communicative competence (Zainuddin, 2016). Chomsky's linguistic theory was concerned with an ideal speaker-listener within a language community, focusing on the internal knowledge of language structure that enables the creation of an infinite number of grammatical sentences and expressions (Durbidge, 2022). This perspective essentially defined language as a cognitive discipline, a viewpoint that has long supported the traditional pedagogical focus on grammar and accuracy in isolation from social context (Zainuddin, 2016). It also tends to highlight the significance of correction following the native-like language.

However, the perceived inadequacy of this model for explaining real-world language use led Dell Hymes to introduce and develop the concept of communicative competence (Durbidge, 2022). Hymes argued that there are rules of communication use, without which the rules of grammar would be unnecessary and useless (Zainuddin, 2016). For Hymes, the study of language must include sociocultural features, as communicative events are comprised of participants, settings, message forms, and topic genres that decide the appropriateness of an utterance (Zainuddin, 2016). This shift moved the perception of English from a static object of study to a dynamic speaking and hearing capability dependent on both practical knowledge and the ability to use it.

Table 1: The difference between the linguistic competence of Chomsky and the communicative one of Hymes

Theoretical parameter	Linguistic competence (Chomsky)	Communicative competence (Hymes)
Object of study	Language system (Grammar)	Language use (Social interaction)
Context	Abstracted and homogeneous	Socially-situated and heterogeneous
Criterion	Grammaticality	Appropriateness and effectiveness
Role of the user	Idealized generator of sentences	Active participant in speech events
Goal of pedagogy	Structural accuracy	Functional proficiency

Henry Widdowson (1978) further explained and nuanced this distinction by separating "usage", the manifestation of the

linguistic system, from "use", the realization of the system as a communication tool. Widdowson's work emphasized that teaching language as communication requires an investigation into the nature of discourse and the ways illocutionary acts, such as defining, classifying, or generalizing, are combined into coherent meaning. The scholar's argument that a language taught in school is a subject on the curriculum artificially designed mainly for learning purposes, whereas natural language is a social and natural phenomenon. This remains a critical point of reflection for teachers navigating their dual roles as subject experts and communication facilitators (Widdowson, 2003).

2.2. Methodological evolution

The grammar–translation method, which dominated from the 16th to the early 20th century, views language primarily as an academic discipline governed by rules and norms, with teaching focusing on grammar explanation, translation exercises, and literary analysis (Yuan, 2025). Emerging in the late 19th to early 20th century, the direct method treats language as a practical tool, emphasizing oral communication, immersion, and inductive grammar learning. During the 1940s and 1950s, the audio-lingual method conceptualized language as a habit-forming structural system, with instruction centered on drills, pattern practice, mimicry, and reinforcement (Orujlu, 2025). From the 1970s to the present, communicative language teaching (CLT) has framed language as a communicative medium, prioritizing functional use, social interaction, and meaning negotiation (EFL Cafe, 2024). Finally, developing from the 1980s onward, task-based instruction (TBI) regards language as a goal-oriented tool, focusing on meaningful tasks, problem-solving activities, and real-world language application.

The perceptions of English as either a discipline or a medium are most visible in the pedagogical methods adopted in the classroom. The grammar-translation method (GTM) probably represents the academic discipline model. In this teacher-centered method, the teacher is the sole authority, and students are passive receivers of knowledge, focused on translation and the intellectual improvement derived from mental discipline (Abdalla, 2025). This method prioritizes reading and writing over listening and speaking, viewing the language as an abstract body of knowledge to be mastered rather than a practical tool to be used. The focus is mainly on the academic function rather than the communicative aspect of a language.

In contrast, communicative language teaching (CLT) seeks to develop communicative competence through real-life scenarios or contexts and student-centered interaction (Abdalla, 2025). CLT positions the teacher as a facilitator who encourages the use of realia, storytelling, and role-plays to simulate authentic communication (Sefa & Eyyüp, 2023).

Despite the theoretical popularity of CLT, empirical research indicates that many teachers hold a hybrid perception, acknowledging the importance of communication while continuing to rely on traditional methods for teaching grammar in practical (Van Le et al., 2024). Perhaps for many reasons, like institutional demands or teaching conditions, these teachers probably cannot spend much time on communicative activities, and they have to prioritize grammatical approaches.

Table 2: The difference between the grammar translation method and the communicative language teaching.

Methodological attribute	Grammar-translation method (GTM)	Communicative language teaching (CLT)
Primary skill focus	Reading and writing	Listening and speaking
Priority	Strict focus on accuracy	Emphasis on fluency
Language theory	Structural and traditional	Functional and interactional
Classroom dynamic	Teacher-fronted and passive students	Learner-centered and active negotiation
Target language model	Native-speaker literature and standard	Real-world situational use

It is also essential to identify newer comprehension-based approaches, such as teaching proficiency through reading and storytelling (TPRS), which focus on comprehending information holistically through stories rather than discrete, separate grammar structures. While TPRS and CLT both aim for language acquisition, they differ in their strategies for engagement. For instance, TPRS emphasizes comprehensible input and minimal forced output in the early stages (Sefa & Eyyüp, 2023).

2.3. Case Study: Teacher perceptions in Vietnam (Project 2020-2025)

The context of Vietnam provides a powerful illustration and realistic demonstration of the conflict between perceiving English as a medium and as a discipline. The national foreign language project 2020 (rebadged as project 2025) was launched with the ultimate goal of renovating English education by shifting from traditional, teacher-centered processes to interactive, learner-centered pedagogy adhering to CLT principles (Vu, 2025).

However, findings from several studies indicate a profound

and unreasonable mismatch between the project's macro-strategies and classroom realities (Vu, 2025). While Vietnamese teachers generally hold positive attitudes toward the necessity of reform and the philosophy of CLT, they harbor deep skepticism regarding its feasibility (Vu et al., 2020). This disagreement is driven by several factors:

The first is about assessment pressures. High-stakes examinations remain grammar-focused, creating a negative washback where teachers feel compelled to prioritize explicit form-focused instruction to ensure students pass, and consequently, the students also highly concentrate on learning to test, instead of comprehensive study (Vu, 2025).

Secondly, infrastructural constraints should be taken into consideration. Large class sizes, typically around 45 students or more per class in almost all educational levels in Vietnam, noisy environments, and a lack of air conditioning or modern audio-visual equipment hinder the implementation of communicative tasks.

Moreover, teachers' preparedness is also problematic. Many teachers do not meet the mandated CEFR proficiency standards, at least C1 for pre-service teachers, and lack confidence in their ability to conduct interactive, open-ended lessons (Vu, 2025).

Last but not least, the cultural values of Western countries are different from those of the East. CLT's Western origins, emphasizing individualism and low power distance, often clash with traditional Vietnamese values of collectivism and the teacher as a moral authority (Thao & Lan, 2021). In the Western style, there is little difference in power position between teachers and students in the classroom. Nevertheless, contemporary Eastern teachers still hold a significantly higher position in classes than learners.

In a study of high school teachers in the Mekong Delta, researchers found that while teachers recognized and admitted the benefits of the competency-based English teaching curriculum, they identified significant barriers related to student proficiency, teachers' pedagogical skills, and institutional teaching and learning resources (Nguyen et al., 2023). Quantitative data from this region of another research showed that oral communication challenges, particularly listening comprehension at native speed ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.79$) and psychological factors like anxiety ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.83$), are significant hurdles for students, reinforcing the teacher's perception of English as a difficult discipline rather than a straightforward, accessible medium (Nga & Thuy, 2025).

2.4. English as a lingua franca and academic norms

The perception of English is further complicated by its status as a lingua franca (ELF), a shared communicative resource among speakers of different mother tongues and nations (Alhasnawi, 2021). ELF challenges the traditional

academic discipline model by arguing that native-speaker norms are no longer the only valid targets for instruction (Tsagari et al., 2023). The development of English users worldwide could demonstrate the need to teach English as a communicative tool.

Research on teachers' beliefs regarding ELF reveals a complex paradox. In a study at Hue University, participants acknowledged the global spread of English but remained in favor of native-speaker ownership and elite groups (Phuong, 2016). Both teachers and students often perceive native-speaker pronunciation as an ideal target but not necessarily a priority for communication, yet they struggle to incorporate it into assessment due to institutional mandates (Tsagari et al., 2023). In Vietnam, specifically, while English is moving toward a prioritized position as a second language (ESL), teachers often still treat it through the lens of English as a foreign language (EFL), clinging to British and American norms as markers of academic rigor and standards (Thu, 2022).

2.5. The role of English-medium instruction and English for specific purposes

In higher education, the perception of English as a communicative medium is dominant in English as a medium of instruction (EMI) and English for specific purposes (ESP) programs. In these contexts, English is a primary hybridized and adaptable resource for meaning-making and knowledge construction within specific academic or professional communities (Alhasnawi, 2021). Noticeably, in Vietnamese hospitality or business sector ESP courses, teachers support authentic assessment strategies that align with industry demands, recognizing that students need English to communicate professionally in the workplace environment (Cuong & Duyen, 2025).

However, even in EMI programs, students also encounter significant challenges. International medical students in Vietnam report that while EMI offers career advantages, they still struggle with complex terminologies, fast-paced delivery, and language barriers that hinder classroom participation and social integration (Nguyen et al., 2025). This suggests that the academic discipline aspects of English, such as specialized terminology and abstract concepts, remain a barrier to the language functioning effectively as a widely communicative medium.

ImplicationsA significant gap exists in the literature regarding how language teachers' perceptions of their own academic literacy processes affect the construction of their professional identity (PI). While much attention has been paid to student outcomes, studies on how teachers navigate the dual task of content instruction and language development for themselves and their students are less abundant (Chen et al., 2023). Furthermore, many teachers report insufficient training

in second language acquisition (SLA), leading to deficit thinking where a student's linguistic challenges are misperceived as academic or cognitive deficiencies (Catalina, 2015).

3. Implications

The controversial teachers' perceptions of English as either a discipline or a medium have profound implications for educational policy, classroom practice, and educators' professional identities. These perceptions act as filters through which curriculum is enacted, and student achievement is measured more effectively.

3.1. Assessment and the mismatch of washback

One of the most significant implications and considerations is the mismatch between communicative teaching goals and grammar-based assessment (Vu, 2025). When teachers view English as an academic discipline, they prioritize linguistic accuracy, error correction, and mastery of discrete items (Abdalla, 2025). However, modern policies and trends increasingly demand ELF-aware assessment that focuses primarily on intelligibility, mediation, and task completion (Tzagari et al., 2023). Tzagari also points out that teachers might navigate this tension through several strategies: selective correction is applied only when form interferes with incorrect meaning, while formative assessment relies on self- and peer-assessment to satisfy curriculum requirements without losing communicative focus. At the same time, authentic task creation involves designing recordings and activities that capture real-world multilingual voices, addressing the limitations often found in traditional textbooks.

Despite these efforts, the ongoing washback effect of high-stakes written examinations remains a primary reason why teachers revert to traditional instruction (Vu et al., 2020). If the exam only tests explicit grammar knowledge, teachers perceive communicative time as wasted time in the context of student success (Van Le et al., 2024). This teach-to-test trend may have a detrimental effect on the acceptance of English as a widely used communicative medium.

Negative washback occurs when the narrow focus of an examination overrules the broader goals of the curriculum (Sultana, 2018). Studies in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Vietnam show that even when exams are redesigned to include speaking and listening components, teaching often remains test-oriented, focusing on de-contextualized language points rather than authentic communication (Barnes, 2016). Teachers may skip or pay little attention to productive skills, such as speaking or writing, in favor of grammar drills to ensure students achieve high scores, which are often used as criteria for university admission or institutional accountability

and achievement (Catalina, 2015).

Conversely, positive washback occurs when testing procedures encourage good teaching practices, such as adopting CLT or task-based language teaching (TBLT) (Barnes, 2016). This occurs when there is strong alignment among curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Sultana, 2018). However, achieving this alignment is difficult. Barnes also suggests that tests have a stronger influence on what is taught (the content) than on how it is taught (the methodology).

Table 3: The difference between the discipline-centric and the medium-centric.

Assessment Dimension	Discipline-centric (Traditional)	Medium-centric (Communicative/ELF)
Criterion	Deviation from standard English (error fix)	Failure to achieve a communicative goal
Pronunciation	Near-native model (general American)	Intelligibility to a global audience
Grammar	Mastery of complex syntactic rules	Effectiveness in a functional context
Feedback role	Teacher as judge or evaluator	Teacher as facilitator of mediation
Material source	Standardized textbooks and literary texts	Multi-modal realia and authentic discourse

3.2. Teacher identity and professional development

Traditionalists view language learning through the lens of knowledge transmission and linguistic norms. They, thus, prioritize grammar, translation, and adherence to standard linguistic forms. This group often perceives the teacher as the primary source of knowledge and believes that classrooms should be a teacher-centered environment. For a Traditionalist, English is an academic discipline in which precision and the avoidance of errors are paramount and crucial. From their perspective, communicative goals distract from the rigor of language study (Ünsal & Kasap, 2023).

On the contrary, idealists perceive language study as a means to strengthen communication and cultural comprehension. They, therefore, prioritize the development of critical thinking and social interaction over rote academic mastery (Ünsal & Kasap, 2023). Idealists, furthermore, see English as a communicative medium that allows students to negotiate identities and perspectives (Brunson, 2023). They

are more likely to adopt learner-centered approaches, viewing themselves as facilitators rather than absolute experts (Table 3).

Perceptions of English also shape how teachers view their own roles and expertise in the classroom. From an academic discipline perspective, the teacher's authority is derived from being the knower of the linguistic code and then sharing their knowledge with learners (Abdalla, 2025). In the communicative medium model, the teacher must serve as a facilitator, counselor, and resource provider to support students throughout the educational process. This transition is often difficult to mediate and settle, as teachers may feel a lack of authority if they cannot select their own teaching materials or if they feel their proficiency does not match the native-speaker ideal (Phuong, 2016).

Professional development (PD) programs are essential for facilitating this shift, yet the study of Leah Day (2023) shows that short-term PD often fails to change deep-seated teacher beliefs. Effective PD must be long-term, content-focused, and encourage active participation to increase cultural understanding and pedagogical confidence and flexibility. Furthermore, for teachers to successfully transition to a medium-oriented perception, PD must address teacher agency, the ability of educators to navigate and challenge policy constraints in their local classroom contexts (Thai, 2025).

3.3. Impact on English language learners

Teacher perceptions also have a dramatic influence on student labeling and outcomes. Misperceptions about students, such as believing they need an oversimplified curriculum or judging higher-order thinking as inappropriate for them, can lead to poor self-perception and confidence, as well as low achievement (Leah, 2023). In the U.S. context, teachers who are unaware of the difference between social English and academic English may assume that a student with native-like social fluency ability should perform well academically, leading to a deficit thinking model when they struggle with formal tasks and exercises (Catalina, 2015). Catalina also demonstrates that the lack of understanding can trap students in the status of long-term English learners, highlighting how the perception of English as a discipline is essential for true academic success, even if the primary goal is communication.

3.4. Pedagogical strategies and classroom techniques

3.4.1. Scaffolding for academic success

Scaffolding consists of helpful interactions between teachers and students that enable learners to perform tasks beyond their independent level. Firstly, verbal scaffolds are slowing speech, enunciating, reinforcing definitions, and

using the think-aloud technique to model the thought process as one learner reads or solves problems (Rebecca, 2014). Next, procedural scaffolds are utilizing graphic organizers, visuals, and wait-time to allow students to process information and articulate their ideas. Lastly, front-loading vocabulary is rather than rote memorization, teachers introduce academic vocabulary through photos, metaphors, and contexts related to the students' lives before they encounter the words in complex texts (Rebecca, 2014).

3.4.2. Integrated skills approach

The integrated skills approach (ISA) challenges the separation of the four macro-skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. By integrating these skills, teachers can create a good and learner-friendly classroom atmosphere where students encounter authentic language and interact naturally. Research indicates that ISA enhances communication competence and helps move the classroom away from teacher-centered or chalk-and-talk methods toward student-centered exploration (Akmal et al., 2020).

3.4.3. Digital transformation and AI integration

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital platforms, such as Facebook, TikTok, and Zalo, is introducing a new dimension and approach to these perceptions. In Vietnam, teachers are being encouraged to use AI for personalized learning, automated writing evaluation, or idea suggestions. These tools can reduce student anxiety by providing a relaxed, personalized environment for practice (Nga & Thuy, 2025). However, they also raise questions about teacher supervision and the future role of the human educator in a world where communicative tasks can be increasingly facilitated and automatically supported by machines. The perception of English may shift from a discipline to be learned to a medium to be managed with the help of technological breakthroughs.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The synthesis of this research on teacher perceptions reveals a field in a state of high-stakes transition. While the globalized world and institutional policies increasingly move toward treating English as a communicative medium, the structural realities of schooling, namely, assessment, infrastructure, and cultural norms, continue to reinforce the perception of English as an academic discipline.

4.1. Discussion

4.1.1. The Vietnamese paradox between policy and reality

Vietnam represents a compelling sample of this global

struggle. The ambitious goal of making English a second language by 2035 (vision 2045) reflects a significant shift toward a communicative ideology (Thai, 2025). Yet, the dissonances found in universities and schools' contexts suggest that this goal is probably overambitious and likely unachievable without systemic changes (Vu et al., 2020).

Table 4: The difference between the policy expectation and the classroom reality.

Factor	Policy expectation (Medium)	Classroom reality (Discipline)
Instructional aim	Student-centered communication	Teacher-centered exam prep
Language target	Functional bilingualism and ESL	Standardized EFL and GTM
Pedagogy	CLT, TBLT, and Interactive	Grammar-translation and drill
Assessment	Competency-based and mediation	Form-focused and written exams
Teacher role	Facilitator or agency-driven	Knowledge-provider or policy-constrained

The approach mismatch in Vietnam is not just a matter of teacher training or teaching conditions. It is a fundamental clash between Western educational values inherent in CLT and the local realities of Vietnamese classrooms (Vo & Nguyen, 2024). This is compounded by the washback effect, where the necessity of passing grammar-centric exams overrides the desire and expectation for communicative proficiency (Vu, 2025).

Besides, the paradox of time is also reported that implementing integrated, communicative classwork, namely task-based instruction or project-based learning, is fairly time-consuming and requires extensive design and adaptation of materials. In an era of high teacher accountability and fixed syllabi, finding the protected collaboration time necessary for this innovation is a systemic issue (Velásquez Hoyos, 2023).

4.1.2. Nuancing the discipline-medium binary

It is suggested that the binary of discipline and medium may be insufficient for describing the ideal teacher perception. A student who only has a perception of English as a communicative medium will likely fail in an academic setting that requires English as a cognitive tool. Conversely, a student who only masters English as an academic discipline may be highly linguistically competent but communicatively weak in real-world settings (Vu et al., 2020).

From Table 1 to Table 4, there are obvious discrepancies between the two ways of perceiving English. Thus, various

constraints and difficulties in combining these views in language teaching. Teachers have to consider which poles are suitable in each teaching section, because the first priority should be to find the most appropriate method to educate students. In some situations, the communication purpose should be prioritized to stimulate and encourage engagement among students. In other circumstances, language accuracy should be focused on to guarantee the meaning of messages.

Therefore, the most sophisticated teachers' perception, emerging in ESP and EMI contexts, recognizes that English should be considered in both. It is a medium for interaction and a discipline for specialized knowledge (Alhasnawi, 2021). Effective pedagogy must bridge these two ends, moving from knowing the rules to using its resources while maintaining the rigor required for higher education and professional life.

There is a dire need for teachers to be assessment-literate as well. Teachers who understand the underlying concepts of a test are better equipped to integrate those concepts into their daily routines without sacrificing communicative goals (Athiworakun & Adunyarittigun, 2022). Professional development should move beyond how to grade and toward how to align instruction with the high-stakes mandates that haunt and hinder classroom practice (Sultana, 2018).

4.2. Conclusion

For the perception of English as a medium to become practically feasible, education systems should probably reform their assessment systems by shifting national examinations toward assessing communicative competence and mediation rather than just discrete grammatical points (Tsgari et al., 2023). In addition, the educational workforce should be professionalized by concentrating on long-term PD that empowers teachers with the language proficiency and pedagogical agency to adapt CLT to local needs (Thai, 2025). Furthermore, Infrastructural equity should be addressed by reducing class sizes and improving resources in rural and remote areas to make interactive teaching possible for all, not just elite groups of urban students (Vu, 2025). Lastly, educators should embrace the multilingual realities and adopt ELF-aware and translanguaging strategies that acknowledge English as a shared, hybridized resource for a globalized society (Alhasnawi, 2021).

The future of the field lies in an integrated approach that balances fluency and accuracy, ensuring that students are not only linguistically competent but also socially responsible and equipped with the critical thinking skills necessary for success in a modern, information-rich world and competitive working environment (Zhang et al., 2025). This requires a fundamental shift in teacher cognition: from viewing English as a subject to be mastered to seeing it as a medium for participating in a realistic society.

In conclusion, the teacher's perception of English is the

pivot upon which language education reform turns. While the shift from academic discipline to communicative medium is fraught with challenges, from cultural clashes to exam washback, it is a necessary evolution for preparing students to participate in the global society of the twenty-first century (Vu et al., 2020). The journey from 2025 to 2045 will require a nuanced understanding of English that values both the stability of its discipline and the fluidity of its medium (Thai, 2025).

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