Pedagogical Opportunities and Challenges among English Teachers in the Contemporary Classroom

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Abstract

The advent of educational opportunities and challenges, as concomitants of technological evolution and generational emergence, has surfaced. This has revolutionized the teaching-learning process for Gen Z students nowadays. Hence, this study investigates the pedagogical and student-centered opportunities and challenges that English teachers encounter when teaching Gen Z students. The study employed a descriptive quantitative design using survey questionnaires to elicit the requisite insights of 31 teachers and 229 Gen Z students. The study revealed that English teachers perceive both opportunities and challenges in integrating technology, employing teaching strategies, and managing classroom behavior, while also acknowledging the need for strategic interventions such as targeted professional development, streamlined resources, and institutional support. The study also found that the use of innovative educational tools and methods enhances Gen Z students' attention, retention, and interest in learning. It further highlighted that collaboration with diverse individuals yields better learning outcomes and competencies. Thus, there is a need for educators to integrate technology, adapt to innovative teaching-learning processes, employ the student-centered approach with ample time allocation, and align competencies to the current demands of industry and society.

1. Introduction

The educational landscape of today has recognized the need to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving and increasingly globalized world. Shaped by technological innovations, diverse learner needs, and shifting workforce demands, contemporary classrooms no longer resemble traditional ones. Student-centered approach, which encourages autonomy, collaboration, and innovation, has replaced the memorization and passive reception of information typical in traditional learning environments. English language instruction, in particular, has gained even greater prominence in its role in communication and intercultural competence, significantly preparing learners to navigate a globalized workforce. Technological advancements have considerably accompanied the rise of English and revolutionized the way instruction is delivered. To enhance language practice, educators and policymakers have embraced a variety of technological tools available that support language teaching and learning (Alda, 2018). Nowadays, language classrooms have become more dynamic and multifaceted, accommodating the needs of a growing diversity of learners who dwell in them. Amid global development, the advent of the internet in 1995 gave birth to a new generation (Demir & Sönmez, 2021). The rise of Generation Z, commonly referred to as digital natives, has further added complexities in the educational landscape. Born into the digital age, they are a generation who "live and breathe" technology (Cilliers, 2017) and therefore demand a more technology-driven and global language classroom (Sedanza et al., 2023). In these circumstances, English teachers face pedagogical opportunities and challenges to adapt to accommodate these diverse demands. They further emphasized the need for teachers to reevaluate their instruction in order to better support Gen Z learners and to align with 21st-century learning approaches.

In response to these nuances, educators, including English teachers, recognize the need to balance innovation and meet the changing needs of Gen Z learners at the same time. English teachers are now making the most of academic opportunities to cater to the needs of this tech-savvy generation. The rise of mobile-assisted language learning, or MALL, for instance, offers a promising opportunity for English teachers to engage learners and promote active learning. This approach makes use of

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technology in providing students a wide array of language content in a variety of forms, thereby fostering 21st-century skills (Alda, 2018). However, there have also been a considerable number of challenges that teachers face, such as generational differences in terms of values, expectations, and preferences. There exists a generational gap in some aspects of language learning (Demir & Sonmez, 2021). While teacher participants found their language curriculum successful, student participants found it outdated and ineffective.

In further identifying the pedagogical opportunities and challenges that English teachers face in the contemporary classroom, it is crucial to address significant research gaps to enhance teaching practices and learning outcomes. While there is ample research on technology integration in the modern classroom, there is a lack of empirical studies that focus on teaching strategies specifically tailored to Gen Z learners in language classrooms. Many studies explore classroom management practices; however, there is limited focus on the challenges that English teachers face in managing a diverse classroom of Gen Z learners. This includes an insufficient exploration addressing how teachers can respond to learners' engagement levels, unique learning styles and preferences, and digital habits. Sedanza et al., (2023) also highlight a lack of research on teachers' practices and beliefs on language teaching from the Gen Z perspective. Thus, this study seeks to provide insights to teachers, school administrators, and policymakers on how instructional practices can be optimized to enhance engagement and learning outcomes of this new cohort of students.

1.1 Problem Objectives

This study aims to investigate the pedagogical and student-centered opportunities and challenges that English teachers encounter when teaching Gen Z students and their implications for classroom teaching. It determines the following:

1.1.1 The teachers' pedagogical opportunities and challenges in terms of: technology integration; teaching strategies; and classroom management strategies.

1.1.2. The student-centric opportunities and challenges in terms of: learning styles and preferences; engagement and motivation; and cultural and linguistic diversity.

2.   Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to gather specific and measurable insights into the research problem. It is appropriate for quantifying and describing specific factors in teaching and learning without delving deeper into underlying causes. It enables researchers to gather quantitative data through structured instruments, which may be statistically examined to discern patterns and trends.

2.2. Research Instrument

This study utilized validated four-point Likert scale survey questionnaires as the main data-gathering tool. The questionnaires vary according to two groups of participants - teachers and students. The questionnaire for teachers is composed of three parameters under study: technology integration, teaching strategies, and classroom management strategies. Meanwhile, the questionnaire for students also has three parameters: learning styles and preferences, engagement and motivation, and cultural and linguistic diversity.

2.3 Research Participants

The sample size of the participants (229 students and 31 English teachers) was identified using the Cochran formula. It is employed to determine the optimal sample size based on the estimated proportion of the attribute in the population, the desired level of precision, and the desired confidence level. The inclusion criteria for the teacher participants include: English teachers who have a bachelor's degree in secondary education majoring in English, have at least two years of teaching experience, and are currently teaching English subjects to Gen Z students. On the other hand, Gen Z students (born in 1997-2012) were considered eligible for participation, especially those in junior high school.

2.4 Research Procedures and Analysis

After the data collection, the results were compiled, tallied, and tabulated for analysis and interpretation. For the statistical treatment and interpretation of data, a simple statistical tool, particularly, weighted mean, was utilized for the descriptive analysis of data.

3.   Results and Discussion

This study explores the opportunities and challenges of English teachers in teaching Gen Z students. Specifically, it looks into the pedagogical

aspects, including technology integration, teaching strategies, and classroom management strategies; as well as the student-centric aspects, such as learning styles and preferences, engagement and motivation, and cultural and linguistic diversity. By identifying these opportunities and challenges, this study seeks to determine its implications for classroom teaching.

Table 1 Technology Integration

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I believe technology integration creates visually appealing learning experiences that help enhance student retention.	1.42	Strongly Agree
2. I believe technology integration increases Gen Z students' engagement and participation in classes.	1.52	Strongly Agree
3. I find that technology integration improves Gen Z students' overall language skills.	1.78	Agree
4. I believe technology integration covers more curriculum content effectively compared to traditional methods.	1.65	Strongly Agree
5. I believe technology integration develops Gen Z students' critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration.	1.55	Strongly Agree
6. I find it difficult to stay updated on new digital tools…	2.48	Agree
7. I struggle in managing Gen Z students' use of technology.	2.42	Agree
8. I find that technology integration requires significant preparation time, which is challenging to manage ….	2.19	Agree
9. I have difficulty handling technical issues that disrupt the lesson flow.	2.68	Disagree
10. I feel there is a lack of adequate training or professional development opportunities on technology integration in English language instruction.	1.94	Agree
Sub-Weighted Mean	*1.96*	*Agree*

Legend: 1.00–1.75 = Strongly Agree; 1.76–2.50 = Agree; 2.51–3.25 = Disagree; 3.26–4.00 = Strongly Disagree

Table 1 shows that English teachers perceive both opportunities and challenges in leveraging technology tools in their teaching practice, with an overall mean of 1.96, categorized as "agree." While teachers recognize the value of technology, addressing its drawbacks is essential for the effectiveness of its utilization in the classroom.

The teacher respondents strongly agreed that technology enhances Gen Z students' retention (1.42), engagement, and participation (1.52). This may be attributed to technology's transformational potential to personalize learning experiences that cater to students' unique interests, abilities, and needs (Gyawali & Mehndroo, 2024). Moreover, the respondents held positive perceptions on how technology integration promotes essential skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration (1.55); and improves overall language skills (1.78). Technology provides access to authentic English learning materials, such as videos, podcasts, news articles, interactive multimedia content, etc., which expose students to genuine use of language. Eslit (2023) thereby emphasized that students' exposure to these materials through technology significantly improves their overall language competence and other critical skills. In addition, teacher respondents strongly agreed that technology integration enables more effective curriculum coverage compared to traditional methods (1.65). It grants the availability of meaningful features that enable students to have new experiences that cannot be found in conventional education (Rintaningrum, 2022). Shofiyyah et al. (2024) also highlighted the importance of regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum and making the necessary adjustments to keep it relevant and effective in addressing present developments. Overall, these identified opportunities reveal how technology empowers English teachers with innovative ways to enhance instruction, making it a valuable asset to foster Gen Z learners' academic and holistic development.

Table 2 Teaching Strategies

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I am able to provide differentiated, personalized, and self-directed learning experiences for Gen Z students…	1.87	Agree
2. I am able to deliver bite-sized lessons instead of traditional, lengthy lectures and text-heavy materials…	1.74	Strongly Agree
3. I am able to use collaborative learning strategies fostering engagement and teamwork.	1.53	Strongly Agree
4. I am able to integrate inquiry-based, real-world, authentic, and practical	1.68	Strongly Agree

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
applications, making lessons more relevant for Gen Z students.		
5. I am able to incorporate multimedia and online game-based learning platforms to enhance student engagement and motivation.	1.61	Strongly Agree
6. I find it challenging to balance teacher-centered instruction and student-led approaches during complex lessons, as this is time-….	2.26	Agree
7. I find it difficult to enhance Gen Z students' critical thinking as they often rely too heavily on technology (e.g., use of AI tools) for answers.	2.16	Agree
8. I find that integrating technology tools sometimes leads to superficial engagement, distracting Gen Z students from the focus of…	2.23	Agree
9. I find student-centered approaches challenging due to the extensive preparation required, large class sizes, diverse learning styles…	2.16	Agree
10. I find it difficult to provide feedback and continuous assessment of individual learning progress in a timely manner in student-centered…	2.48	Agree
Sub-weighted Mean	*1.97*	*Agree*

The contemporary classrooms have shifted from traditional, lecture-heavy methods to approaches that are student-centered. Generation Z students are more likely to thrive in environments that are tech-driven, visual, interactive, and engaging. Teachers are constantly exploring what motivates Gen Z students and how to motivate them, however, these students often find motivation when they perceive value and relevance in what they are learning (Afshar et al., 2019). Table 2 shows that English teachers perceived both opportunities and challenges in employing teaching strategies to cater to Gen Z students, with an overall mean of 1.97, categorized as "agree." Teachers recognize the potential of adapting their teaching strategies to engage learners, while also seeing the need to address the barriers for its effective implementation.

The teacher respondents strongly agreed that they effectively use collaborative learning strategies, such as peer-to-peer activities and project-based tasks (1.53), while also incorporating multimedia tools and game-based platforms to enhance engagement and motivation (1.61). They also reported success in integrating inquiry-based,

real-world applications (1.68) and delivering bite-sized lessons that cater to Gen Z's preference for relevant, practical, and focused content (1.74). Shofiyyah et al. (2024) concurred on the effectiveness of real-world, project-based education in allowing Gen Z students to learn through hands-on experiences and practical applications. Furthermore, teachers agreed that they provide differentiated, personalized, and self-directed learning experiences tailored to students' diverse needs and interests (1.87). Overall, these identified opportunities reveal the importance of leveraging innovative, flexible, and technology-driven teaching strategies in order to create impactful learning experiences that will prepare students for a highly evolving world.

Table 3 Classroom Management Strategies

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I have sufficient opportunities to use proactive classroom management strategies to suit the needs of Generation Z students.	1.87	Agree
2. I receive adequate training on how to engage Generation Z students through technology and other modern tools.	2.26	Agree
3. I feel confident managing classroom behavior while balancing the use of digital tools that Generation Z students prefer.	2.06	Agree
4. I am equipped to handle the potential distractions posed by smartphones and other devices used by Generation Z students.	2.16	Agree
5. I am immersed in a school administration that supports innovative classroom management approaches and provides resources …	1.90	Agree
6. I find it challenging to maintain student focus due to the influence of technology on Generation Z students.	2.32	Agree
7. I find managing the classroom behavior of Generation Z students requires an overwhelming amount of effort and poses….	2.13	Agree
8. I find the individualistic and independent learning style of Generation Z students daunting because it complicates…	2.53	Disagree
9. I find it difficult to manage the short attention spans of Generation Z students in a structured classroom environment.	2.10	Agree

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
10. I find Generation Z students' preference for collaborative learning demanding because it makes maintaining the classroom…	2.42	Agree
Sub-weighted Mean	*2.18*	*Agree*

The Gen Z students of today exhibit unique learning habits, behaviors, and expectations that require teachers to adapt their management strategies in order to build a productive and conducive learning environment. Table 3 shows that English teachers perceived both opportunities and challenges in implementing classroom management strategies to cater to Gen Z students, with an overall mean of 2.18, categorized as "agree." Teachers recognize that while classroom management strategies are effective in managing Gen Z classrooms, they also acknowledge the challenges that come with their implementation.

Teachers agree they have opportunities to use proactive strategies, like setting clear expectations and building rapport, to meet Gen Z's needs (1.87). They also feel they receive adequate training to engage Gen Z students with technology and modern tools (2.26). Teachers are confident in managing classroom behavior while balancing digital tools preferred by Gen Z learners (2.06). They feel equipped to handle distractions from smartphones and other devices commonly used by Gen Z students (2.16). Moreover, teachers report strong support from school administration, which provides resources and encourages innovative classroom management approaches to address Gen Z's unique learning preferences and short attention spans (1.90). Overall, these identified opportunities suggest that English teachers are well-supported with proactive strategies, adequate training, resources, and institutional support to effectively manage and support Gen Z students.

Table 4 Learning Styles and Preferences

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I have the opportunity to learn through interactive and hands-on activities that align with my learning preferences.	1.62	Strongly Agree
2. I am given the freedom to engage with technology, such as apps or online tools, that enhance my learning experience.	1.57	Strongly Agree
3. I feel supported in using digital tools to personalize my learning experience.	1.66	Strongly Agree
4. I incorporate digital platforms and multimedia resources that reflect my generation's preference for online and interactive …	1.67	Strongly Agree
5. I have amazing teachers who adapted teaching methods to accommodate the diverse learning styles present in our generation.	1.55	Strongly Agree
6. I struggle to stay focused during lectures that do not incorporate interactive or multimedia elements.	2.21	Agree
7. I have difficulty expressing my learning style due to the emphasis on standardized testing that limits my ability in ….	2.20	Agree
8. I often feel overwhelmed by the variety of digital tools available, which can hinder my learning.	2.09	Agree
9. I find it hard to get engaged and motivated due to the absence of opportunities for creative expression in the curriculum…	2.23	Agree
10. I find it challenging to collaborate with peers who have different learning styles, which affects group project outcomes.	2.02	Agree
Sub-weighted Mean	*1.88*	*Agree*

In today's generation, the learning ability of learners varies according to their individuality and comfort level. Learners learn best if the learning environment provides warmth and support in dealing with diversity. In this sense, adapting hard lessons will come easily for the Gen Z learners because of the given motivation and versatile activities that deflected standardization. Table 4 shows the perceived opportunities and challenges of Gen Z students' learning styles and preferences, with an overall of 1.88, categorized as "agree." It demonstrates that student respondents predominantly favor interactive, hands-on, and technology-integrated learning approaches.

The integration of digital tools, such as apps and multimedia resources, not only amplifies engagement but also equips the learners to have comfort because of the freedom being nurtured for them (1.66). This aligns with findings from studies suggesting that Generation Z learners thrive in environments that incorporate digital tools and multimedia, which cater to their familiarity with technology and preference for active engagement

(Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Additionally, students expressed strong approval for teachers' efforts to adapt teaching methods to diverse learning styles. Overall, these identified opportunities suggest that learners thrive in environments that foster engagement and accommodate their diverse learning styles. Teachers' efforts to accommodate these preferences are positively acknowledged, reflecting adaptability in modern classrooms (1.55).

Table 5 Engagement and Motivation

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I use creative digital technology, such as Quizlet, Kahoot!, and Quizizz, to easily create and play interactive review …	1.66	Strongly Agree
2. I can efficiently persevere through comprehensive and complex English topics, such as literature and grammar, without fatigue …	1.77	Agree
3. I am compelled to stay competitive and engaged in my English class due to gamification of language assessments.	1.77	Agree
4. I am more motivated to take my English course/subject seriously because the implementation of simulations allows me …	1.67	Strongly Agree
5. I am more motivated to study with my friends because today's technology offers various tools and platforms to …	1.75	Strongly Agree
6. I lose focus on the subject matter itself because of interactive language learning materials.	2.44	Agree
7. I am embarrassed and discouraged from participating in class because I do not have access to trending cyber-digital tools.	2.48	Agree
8. I cannot engage with the lessons and my classmates in a timely and smooth manner because of my intermittent and …	2.38	Agree
9. I can no longer stay attentive for a sufficient amount of time when it comes to pure discussions and study sessions because I …	2.48	Agree
10. I lose interest in class when I see that teachers are just showing us ready-made self-learning modules and pre-recorded videos…	2.26	Agree
Sub-weighted Mean	*2.07*	*Agree*

Students like interactive and digital improvements, but there needs to be a balance to deal with the problems that come with too much use and accessibility issues. Table 5 shows the perceived opportunities and challenges of Gen Z students' engagement and motivation, with an overall mean of 2.07, indicating that students generally "agree" with the statements about their engagement and motivation. This suggests a positive but cautious perspective on the use of digital tools and teaching strategies that leverage interactive methods.

The lowest weighted mean of 1.66 is associated with students' strong agreement regarding the use of creative digital tools such as Quizlet, Kahoot!, and Quizizz to enhance their learning experience. This highlights the significant role that gamified, interactive platforms play in sustaining students' interest and engagement in English subjects. Whereas, activities that relate lessons to real-life contexts enhance their desire to learn and promote collaboration among peers (1.75). Collaborative tools evidently enhance motivation, illustrating that technology can proficiently promote active and cooperative learning. Gamification and simulations are valued for their ability to promote competitiveness and motivation while connecting learning to real-world applications (1.67). Research shows that integrating gamification in education increases student motivation and retention of concepts (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). Additionally, collaborative tools enable students to develop critical communication skills while fostering a supportive learning environment (Gilles, 2019). Overall, the findings suggest that while digital tools and innovative methods effectively enhance engagement and motivation, educators must strive for a balanced approach. Addressing technological disparities (Alda, et al., 2022), integrating diverse teaching methods, and fostering a supportive classroom environment (Bacus & Alda,, 2023) are critical to ensuring equitable and sustained engagement in English language learning.

Table 6 Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Statements	Weighted Mean	Description
1. I am now more able to effectively and appropriately communicate and collaborate with people coming from diverse…	1.78	Agree
2. I have become more prudent and sensitive with my utterances because I am consistently around people from diverse cultural …	1.86	Agree
3. I am more encouraged to use the English language as inclusively and clearly as possible to ensure mutual interpretation.	1.77	Agree
4. I am able to enhance my collaboration skills more easily because I study and accomplish academic tasks with people from diverse…	1.77	Agree
5. I have become more open to novel and diverse ideas and philosophies because of being consistently exposed to peopl….	1.82	Agree
6. I am held back from actively participating in our English class because I am ashamed of my different level of proficiency in the…	2.16	Agree
7. I sometimes feel that the strategies and methods of English teachers cater more to native English speakers or those with ….	2.15	Agree
8. I find it uncomfortable to accomplish academic tasks together because I have different beliefs and practices from those …	2.46	Agree
9. I have a tendency to blurt out insensitive comments and jokes that are deemed taboo by other cultures, …	2.40	Agree
10. I am reluctant to be active and to improve myself in my foreign or different learning environment because of culture shock and…	2.23	Agree
Sub-weighted Mean	*2.04*	*Agree*

Cultural and linguistic diversity plays a significant role in shaping the learning experiences of Gen Z learners as they grow up in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world. With access to a wide range of digital platforms and international communication tools, Gen Z students are more exposed to diverse cultural perspectives and languages than previous generations. This exposure fosters greater awareness, adaptability, and collaboration across various cultures. Table 6 shows the perceived opportunities and challenges of Gen Z

students' cultural and linguistic diversity, with an overall mean of **2.04**, categorized as **"agree."** This indicates that students generally agree with the statements, reflecting a moderate level of adaptability and awareness regarding cultural diversity in academic settings.

Student respondents expressed increased sensitivity, inclusivity, collaboration, and openness to new ideas due to interactions with individuals from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds (1.78). Deardorff (2020) stressed the importance of cross-cultural exposure in developing intercultural competence, which is crucial for personal growth and success in a globalized world. Similarly, fostering an inclusive environment where students are encouraged to use language clearly and inclusively can lead to better mutual understanding. A study by Banks (2016) supports this, showing that culturally diverse classrooms promote empathy and communication skills, which are key to success in diverse work environments. Overall, the opportunities created by cultural and linguistic diversity in educational settings are vast, fostering key skills such as communication, collaboration, and openness to diverse perspectives (1.77). These opportunities not only prepare students for the complexities of global interaction but also equip them with the intercultural competence necessary to thrive in the modern world.

These findings extend constructivist and socio-cultural learning theories by illustrating how Gen Z's digital fluency reshapes traditional teacher–student dynamics. The strong agreement on collaborative, technology-driven methods affirms Vygotskian principles of socially mediated learning, while the reported challenges with attention and superficial engagement highlight cognitive-load concerns in multimedia learning theory. By linking technology integration with learner motivation, the study also supports self-determination theory, suggesting that autonomy and relatedness are crucial for sustaining engagement in contemporary classrooms.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Taken together, the results from the six tables reveal a consistent pattern: English teachers and Gen Z learners generally agree that technology integration, innovative teaching strategies, and collaborative learning are powerful drivers of engagement and skill development. At the same

time, both groups highlight parallel challenges—limited training, short attention spans, and uneven digital access—that temper these opportunities. This convergence of perspectives underscores the need for balanced, evidence-based interventions that maximize the benefits of technology while mitigating its drawbacks.

This study examined the pedagogical and student-centric opportunities and challenges of English teachers in teaching Generation Z learners. It was revealed that technology integration, student-centered approaches, contextualized learning, collaboration, and curricular adaptation significantly improve and modernize the teaching-learning process of English courses, thus better equipping Generation Z learners with the knowledge and skills needed in the real world. On the other hand, the data reveal that despite the aforementioned benefits in teaching English to Generation Z learners, challenges, such as teachers' readiness to integrate technology thoroughly, outdated instructional strategies and methods, difficulty in catering to emerging learning needs and preferences of students, limited access to innovative educational technology, and students' anxiety and embarrassment in dealing with classroom diversity, are existent. Based on these findings and insights, it is recommended that educators and policymakers develop a curriculum that meets the needs, characteristics, preferences, and expectations of students. It is crucial for teachers to understand the nature of their learners and reflect on their practices and find balance in the use of traditional and modern teaching strategies. It is a necessity to embrace the potential of technology and continuously utilize it in the classroom for Gen Z students who are highly attuned to such tools. Moreover, it is recommended that school administrators provide the necessary support for teachers such as professional development programs and significant resources to equip them with the knowledge and skills to make the teaching-learning process more effective.

While this study provides valuable insights on addressing the dynamics and demands of 21st-century classrooms, it is limited by its reliance on pre-designed survey questionnaires, which may have restricted deeper insights from participants. Future research could benefit from a mixed-method approach and broader stakeholder involvement to capture diverse perspectives across various educational and cultural contexts.

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