

# THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS: A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY

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## ABSTRACT

*The study provides a deeper understanding about the lived experiences of the Pre-service English Teachers in terms of mechanisms, insights and challenges encountered to craft a comprehensive Development Plan program, thus, facilitating the transcendence of becoming an effective teacher. The study utilized the phenomenological qualitative research design. An in-depth interview was conducted to gather the data and pieces information from the 10 pre-service-informants who were purposively selected from St. Francis Xavier College. Findings suggested that the challenges encountered by the pre-service teacher mostly were lack of knowledge about lesson planning, construction of sentence, trainings and exposure in the language. These challenges hinder them from performing their duties well. The study also revealed that pre-service English teachers experienced grammar errors, lacks confident in teaching the language. However, despite these challenges, the participants remained consistent in performing their duties as pre-service English teachers by resorting to solutions like a positive outlook in their teaching practicum, proper time management, and open communication for consultation between their peers and cooperating teachers. Despite their challenges, the participants still see and realize how important and beneficial teaching practicum is in their lives as future educators. The study ends with recommendations to improve the current teachings of the instructors and by providing functional speech laboratory and to sketch avenues for future research.*

**Keyword:** Pre-service Teaching, experiences, challenges, insights, mechanisms, phenomenological study

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Practice Teaching is a period during which pre-service teachers are given opportunity to try the art of teaching before getting into the real world of the teaching profession. One of the highlights of the academic journey of a would-be teacher is the teaching practicum. It is the phase where an aspiring teacher will wear practice teaching uniform, which signifies the start of immersion to the world of teaching. This is also a phase where pre-service teachers could reflect and make decisions regarding the profession that they are about to enter. However, teaching practicum is not just a piece of cake for these pre-service teachers. As it has been considered one of the most crucial and influential stages in teacher education (Trent, 2013) [14].

In Turkey, pre-service teachers are required to take the 'School Experience Course' in the first semester and subsequently the 'Teaching Practice Course' in the second semester of their fourth year at foreign language teacher education programs (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu, 2007) [19]. 'School Experience Course' is merely based on experiencing the real-school environment through observation, and it requires prospective teachers to carry out certain tasks each week, such as observing teachers and students, improving teaching skills through observation, and getting acquainted with the school and school management. According to the directive jointly prepared by the Turkish Higher Education Council (HEC), National Teacher Training Committee and Ministry of National Education (MoNe) Teacher Training and Development General Directorate, student teachers are expected to attend

practicum regularly for at least 12 weeks and to teach courses at least 4 times in different weeks under the supervision of their mentor teacher and university supervisor. The university supervisor and the mentor teacher are also expected to collaborate and help pre-service teachers.

Regarding the Turkish context, a large body of research illustrated that the teaching practicum format applied in L2 teaching programs had a positive effect on pre-service students in terms of changing their perceptions of the teaching profession (Köksal & Genç, 2019) [9], boosting their self-confidence and competence in teaching (Yıldız, Geçikli, & Yeşilyurt, 2016) [18], learning to establish student-teacher interaction (İşcan, 2017) [7], improving their classroom management skills (Atay, 2007) [1], enhancing self-efficacy and identity development (Kırmızı & Tosuncuoğlu, 2019) [8], and having opportunities for discussion and peer feedback (Celen & Akcan, 2017) [4].

In Mindanao, Philippines, Barrios et al (2018) [2] investigated pre-service teacher training programs through the practicum experience of 21 junior and senior BSEd and BA English student-teachers from a private institution. The data demonstrated that pre-service teacher preparation programs for BSEd and BA English had a varied standard policy. While BSEd-English focused on training professional secondary school teachers, BA-English focused on developing professionals with great communication abilities, not simply teachers. Classroom management, teaching confidence, and a lack of teaching materials were all mentioned as obstacles by the student-teachers during practical teaching.

In St. Francis Xavier College, San Francisco, Agusan del Sur, these difficulties are evident to the pre-service English teachers during their practice teaching. To validate this problem, the researcher conducted a short initial interview with the cooperating teachers. Throughout the interview, the researcher found out that the pre-service English teachers experienced difficulties and challenges in teaching the language. Some difficulties are improper pronunciation, grammar errors, classroom management, time management, dispensing the lesson, handling my mistakes and the challenges they experienced lack of English fluency, no training and exposure, lack of foundation, lack of reading comprehension, student's difficulty in reading, lack of vocabularies, lack of materials.

The pre-service teachers, including English majors encounter challenges in teaching practicum. The researcher aimed to describe their experiences, challenges, insights, and coping strategies in a glimpse at English language teaching through their teaching internship. Significantly, the researcher wished to explore solutions to improve the condition of pre-service teachers major in English in their teaching practicum.

### 1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of the participants in practice teaching?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the participants on their practice teaching?
3. What mechanisms do the participant utilize in coping with the challenges encountered in practice teaching?
4. What are the insights of the participants regarding their practice teaching?
5. What development plan can be crafted based on the results and findings of the study?

### 1.2 Theoretical Lens

This study was anchored to the theory of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. The Zone of Proximal or Potential Development (ZPD) perhaps is the best-known concept of Vygotskian socio-cultural psychology. Initially, it was elaborated for psychological testing in schools (Vygotsky, 1962) [16]. Vygotsky stated that testing should be based not only on the current level of a child's achievements but also (and mainly) on the child's potential development. The actual level of development (level of independent performance) does not sufficiently describe development. Rather, it indicates what is already developed or achieved, it is a "yesterday of development".

The level of assisted performance indicates what a person can achieve in the near future, what is developing (potential level, "tomorrow of development", what a person "can be") (Vygotsky, 1978) [17]. Thus, the Zone of Proximal Development is the distance between what a person can do with and without help. The term proximal (nearby) indicates that the assistance provided goes just slightly beyond the learner's current competence complementing and building on their existing abilities (Cole & Cole, 2001) [5].

The teacher's zone of proximal development is thought as a learning space between his present level of teaching knowledge consisting of content (theoretical) and pedagogical knowledge and skills and his next (potential) level of knowledge to be attained with the support of others (Blanton et al., 2005) [3]. This definition provides us with the possibility not to restrict ourselves to regard teacher educator as the only source of scaffolding and think of

some other sources like the teacher's colleagues, researchers in the field (TESOL community), student achievement data, narratives, observation, action research, pre-service and in-service LTE course-room, etc. as other possible sources of scaffolding that can change the teacher's ZPD. The starting point for teacher learning is the teacher's willingness and motivation to keep his ZPD in motion so as to move from the current ZPD to a more advanced ZPD in his teaching profession. If the prospective novice teacher is determined to improve his act of teaching, he must engage in that shifting process and continuously define new ZPDs.

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Research Design

A phenomenological research design was used in this study. Phenomenology is a living, transformative experience through which we make sense of our own being in and through the transformative experiences of others so that we become nourished beings. Merleau-Ponty (2002) [10] said that phenomenology is unique to each individual and only understood by that individual. Phenomenology as a methodology makes this study qualitative in nature and invites unique and independent interpretations of lived experiences. The qualitative research is concerned with feelings, ideas, or experiences. Finding insights that can result in testable hypotheses is the main goal of the data collection, which is frequently done in narrative form.

Moreover, participants were identified using purposive sampling. There will be 10 participants, the researcher will use the In-Depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to the participants, and it will be recorded. The sample size of the participants satisfied the requirement in the qualitative study using phenomenology because there should be 5 to 25 (Creswell, 2007) [6]. related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work Introduction related your research work.

### 2.2 Research Participants

The participants of this research were selected through a non-probability type of sampling, specifically purposive sampling. The sample preference of this study was based on the personal judgment and discretion of the researcher, based on one subgroup in which all the sample members are similar. The participants for the said study are the 10 Pre-service Teachers (PST) enrolled at St. Francis Xavier College taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English during the 2nd semester of the school year 2022-2023. This group of students is also having their 9 weeks off-campus pre-service teaching in different public secondary school in the Division of Agusan del Sur.

The participants were requested to sign a consent form and agreed to the condition stipulated that they are voluntarily participating and willing to impart their knowledge as needed in the study. The participants also will be given an orientation about the study and will ask to participate through an In-Depth Interview (IDI) as means of data collection. Data from the participants will be generated through a semi-structured interview using validated interview questions as an instrument. Transcripts of interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The use of pseudonyms will be employed to protect the identity of the participants in the data analysis and reporting.

### 2.3 Data Collection

This study used an interview guide created by the researcher as a qualitative analysis method. The researcher was used a tool, which has a list of questions to keep track of to ensure that all of the topics necessary to address the research questions will be covered. The study interview guide aimed to learn about the experiences, challenges, insights, and mechanisms of the pre-service English teachers.

Furthermore, interviews were the primary method of data collection in the phenomenological study (Creswell, 2007) [6]. Interviewing, according to Rubin and Rubin (2012) [12], helps researchers appreciate experiences they may not have had or offers them a different viewpoint on an experience. They also said that interviewing is the best method for providing insight into personal or sensitive issues. The researcher will undergo the guidelines on the procedure of gathering the data. Before conducting the interview, the researcher will write a

letter to the College President, College Dean and the Program Head of the College of Teacher Education seeking permission as part of the data collection process. After obtaining permission, research participants will be asked to sign a consent form and be informed of the study's intent.

The researcher will then continue the in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion to participants through face to face. As qualitative research, this study used an interview guide made by the researcher and was validated. Rucker (2017) [13] viewed this instrument which contains a list of questions to keep track of and ensures that all the topics needed to answer your research questions are covered. The researcher will use android phone to record the whole duration of the interview. Each interview will take a maximum of 30 minutes. The collected data will then be transcribed and analyzed. The findings were represented in thematic format and revealed transformational learning experiences for participants.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the findings to the research questions that explored the lived experiences of Pre-Service English teachers in terms of the challenges they encountered and how they overcome. The primary focus of the investigation is to develop an understanding of their experiences and to craft a School Development Plan that helps the Pre-service English Teachers to become effective language teachers in the future. The research participants were selected through purposive sampling. There were 10 pre-service English teachers from St. Francis Xavier College the desired number of samples for the In-Depth Interview (IDI).

#### 3.1 Experiences

**The Strategies Use in Teaching the Language.** The emerging themes are using technology, collaborative approach, direct method, motivate learners, holistic approach, and scaffolding method. These are the strategies used by the pre-service English teachers in teaching the language. This reveals that the majority of the informant used technology as one of the strategies in teaching the language. For the participants, using technology as one of the strategies is the best during this time because students are more engage in technology.

Similarly, the data in Yunus et al.'s (2010) [20] study showed that the pre-service teachers had problems with students' discipline and motivation to learn language in addition to the challenge they experienced in choosing appropriate teaching methodology and strategy.

**Advantages Observed on Teaching the Language.** The advantages observed by informants, they must develop confidence, develop reading comprehension, use English in other discipline, mastery of English language, use English language in interacting, and integrate technology.

Based on the responses of informants, teaching the language is helpful for the pre-service English teachers if they develop confidence in teaching. By having the self-confidence, they became fluent in explaining or they will not encounter problems in teaching. Moreover, by developing reading comprehension they can easily understand the meaning of the word. Another for using English in other discipline the student can really applied language in other discipline like science, mathematics, technology, and countless other areas and because language is the primary language used by other discipline student can really understand it.

**Disadvantages Observed on Teaching the Language.** The disadvantages observed by informants, the use of unfamiliar words, proper grammar usage, language barrier, call switching, lack of vocabularies, and learner's difficulty in understanding. Tüzel and Akcan (2009) [15] investigated the challenges of four Turkish pre-service teachers of English about target language use during their practicum and found that the pre-service teachers faced common difficulties about teaching certain grammatical structures and unknown words, modifying language according to students' level. According to Reeves (2009) [11], misconceptions about how languages are learned can occur when students don't have experience learning additional languages or being a second language learner themselves.

#### 3.2 Challenges

**Problems Experienced in Teaching the Language.** The emerging themes were lack of materials, no training and exposure, lack of English fluency, lack of vocabularies, lack of foundation, lack of reading comprehension, and students' difficulty in reading.

The results showed that informants have experienced lack of materials in teaching the language. The purpose and importance of teaching and learning materials is to make the lessons interesting, learning easy and enable teachers to easily express concepts. It is quite devastating for them to teach without materials. Another problem was no training



and exposure in teaching the language. Training is vital to success, inadequate training and exposure are likely to experience poor performance.

**Mistakes Usually Committed in Teaching the Language.** The emerging themes were improper pronunciation, grammar errors, classroom management, dispensing the lesson, and handled my mistakes. The themes mentioned were the common mistakes of the pre-service English teachers.

The most common mistakes of the pre-service English teachers were grammar errors. They are also prone to grammar errors we should understand this situation because English language is not our first language. Another common mistake was improper pronunciation it is evident to our pre-service English teachers they have also difficulty in the pronunciation of the words. Moreover, pre-service English teachers had commonly mistaken in managing the classroom most of them were hard times in classroom management they find it difficult to handle the students because according to them they have different world.

Furthermore, pre-service English teachers have difficulty in dispensing the lesson, some of them experienced in repeating the lesson. As teachers, you cannot proceed to the next lesson if your students will not understand the basic one. Lastly, there are pre-service English teachers who handled their mistakes properly.

### 3.3 Coping Mechanism

**Ways in Accepting the Mistakes or Errors made in Teaching the Language.** The six emerging themes; accept mistakes wholeheartedly, manage the class, more improvement, correct the mistakes made, take the mistakes positively, and consult from English language teachers. Some pre-service English teachers accept their mistakes wholeheartedly in this manner some pre-service English need to accept their mistakes with all their hearts. Some pre-service English teachers manage their class as a way of accepting their errors made in teaching the language. Even if there are corrections in the middle of the class the informants still manage their class. However, there are pre-service English teachers needs more improvement as a way of accepting the mistakes made. Another way revealed in accepting the error was correcting the mistakes made by the pre-service English teacher.

Whatever corrections they have received they will apply it to the next teaching and learning process. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the pre-service English teachers took the mistakes or error made positively because some pre-service English loved to be corrected and accept it with all their hearts positively. Lastly, consulting from English language teachers was one of the ways in accepting the errors made was done by the pre-service English teachers. Consultation English language teachers who provide assistance in a variety of ways. They might help in lesson planning, delivering the lesson, and address related problems.

**Ways in Handling the Problems Encountered in Teaching Language.** The emerging themes were evaluating oneself, seek advice, catch the attention of the learners, develop skills, master the lesson before teaching, find alternative ways, and ask learners for clarifications.

The research participants showed how important is evaluating the self in handling the problems encountered in teaching the language. By engaging is a self-assessment, teachers can gain insights into their teaching methods and strategies, which can enable them to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to improve the students' outcomes. Seeking some advice was also mentioned. It enables the teachers to see how teaching practice can be improved, and which teaching and learning strategies are more likely to be effective.

Another way was catching the attention of the learners, pre-service English teachers must get the interest of the students. Capturing and maintaining student attention is not just important for ensuring that students get good grades. It is necessary to help them truly learn the subject matter at hand and prepares them for skills they will need later in life. It was mentioned also that developing skills was important ways in handling the problems encountered in teaching the language. Skill development helps build a strong foundation for students at the school level. It helps the students become independent thinkers and encourages them to plan. Moreover, master the lesson before teaching was a way in handling the problems encountered. Teachers who master material in a lesson can more easily learn new material. Teachers' self-esteem increases when they master the lesson they have presented.

**Ways in Dealing with Usually Committed Mistakes in Teaching Language to the Students.** The emerging themes were correct it right away, provide explanation, cater questions, ask students back, apologize to learners, and ask guidance from co-teachers. In dealing with usually committed mistakes in teaching the language, research participants correcting it right away.

By providing timely and appropriate correction, teachers can help students recognize and correct their errors before they become ingrained habits. This helps to create a supportive learning environment that encourages

students to develop their language skills and reach their full potential. They highlighted the importance of not letting the students continue the erroneous one, they focus to help the students.

**Ways to Enhance Practices in Teaching the Language.** The responses elicited these emerging themes, practice speaking the language, read more, exercise the language, learn from experiences, apply learnings, learn through research, prepare, and create good relationships. The research participants mentioned practice speaking the language as a way of enhancing the grammar, comprehension and vocabulary. Learning a language through speaking improves both linguistic and non-linguistic skills.

**Ways in Dealing with Students' Negative Reactions on Teaching the Language.** This structured theme elicited seven emerging themes; change teaching strategy, accept one's deficiency, don't be affected, take it as a challenge, never encountered negative reaction, one on one conversation with learners, and give attention to confused learners. There were varied reactions among the students. Some students reacted positively and never show negative reactions because they trust their teachers. Nevertheless, when there were negative reactions from the students, the teachers explain the correction to the students.

### 3.4 Insights

**Insights to Share about Teaching the Language.** The responses elicited many emerging themes. The emerging themes showed that don't stop learning, utilize new teaching strategy, master the English language, make learning concise, be always prepared, do some research, have patience and passion, and make learners love the English language. The informants highlighted that teaching English language was never stop learning the language. As a teacher it is their job to educate others.

The training refreshed not only in academic skills, but also improved in understanding of essential life skills. Another insight shared by the participants was utilize new teaching strategy because it improves the quality of teaching and learning. Experiments with new teaching strategies improve teaching. It helps in building good teacher taught relationship. It promotes greater understanding and increase retention by often providing for active and hands-on learning experiences.

Moreover, master the English language was revealed an important in teaching the language. There are several reasons why we must master English. The first reason is that English is the unifying language of the world, an official international language. In this case, English is used as a means of communication between various people in the world. Another is making the learning concise. Being concise helps to bring clarity because it is easier for the students to remember a short set of instructions than a long set.

### 3.5 Developmental Plan

The researcher developed a Developmental Plan which will serves as a guide for the school administrators in improving the quality of education. This plan compromises priority improvement areas, general objectives, root causes, time frame, and a solution.

The first priority improvement area is teaching the foundation of language, the instructors should provide activities that can enhance students writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills.

The second priority improvement area is making of lesson plan, the instructors should assess and train their students to plan and write their lesson plans.

The third priority improvement area is conducting school training and seminars, the instructors will conduct training and seminars with various teaching strategies.

The fourth and last priority improvement area is providing speech laboratory to the students, the school should provide speech laboratory to enhance and develop speaking skill, in terms of pronunciation of the words.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

With the lived experiences of pre-service teachers in teaching the language as the focus of the investigation, the understanding of the experiences, the challenges encountered, mechanisms utilize in coping with the challenges, and insights of the English teachers in teaching the language was highlighted. The understanding of the experiences of the pre-service English teachers, drawn from their experiences and insights, could reinforce the means of developing their teaching performance.

Pre-service English teachers should make sure that their teaching styles and delivery of the lesson should be understood by their students. In order to instill learner autonomy, it is also beneficial to encourage independent learning among students. Also, teachers must set the standards inside the classroom so that the students will not be confused.

The experiences of the pre-service teachers stated in this research would help the school leaders to know what the programs are should be implemented to help improve the performance of the pre-service English teachers. Also, the challenges encountered by the teachers make us aware of what are the difficulty they have experienced in teaching the language. How they cope with the challenges brought us ideas on how to remain firm in times of difficulty. Finally, their insights are indeed invaluable for the improvement of making programs by the school leaders.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First, the author would like to express thanks to the almighty God for the knowledge, guidance, protection, gift of life, and the chance to be in this world.

Secondly, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to our Dean Roel P. Villocino and my adviser Dhan Timothy Ibojo for their wisdom, guidance, love and patience they displayed beyond the scope of the master's journey.

Third, I would also like to express our gratitude to my husband for his unending support on all aspects, which fueled me to pursue and strive hard in everyday living.

My utmost recognition to the pre-service English teacher in Sait Francis Xavier College for genuinely sharing their experiences and cooperation with our respondents, and for giving us the consent to collect their personal data concerning the subject of this study which made this research come to its completion.

Lastly, I am indeed very grateful for all who helped me along the way my siblings and friends who always believing in me. can acknowledge any person/authorities in this section.

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