



The Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences on English Language Teaching in the New Normal in Nonthaburi, Thailand

Richard Naval Ballesteros, MAEd

FEU Roosevelt, Cainta, Rizal

Philippines

ABSTRACT

In today's educational landscape, there is a growing emphasis on preparing future educators to meet the evolving demands of English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly during the teaching practicum. This study aimed to explore and interpret, and gain a thorough understanding of pre-service teachers' experiences on ELT in the new normal during their teaching practicum. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews, observations, and thematic consultations to collect and validate data. Eight pre-service teachers from a private university in Nonthaburi, Thailand participated in the study. The data were analyzed using Colaizzi's Method, with results derived through triangulation. The findings revealed four key themes: ¹communication barriers in addressing student needs, ²consistency in English language use, ³effective instructional materials, and ⁴the role of the practicum in improving teaching skills. These results highlight the critical function of the teaching practicum in enhancing the interpersonal, language, and pedagogical skills of pre-service teachers on ELT, aligning with the modern educational requirements.

Key Words: English Language Teaching, Interpersonal Skills, Language Skills, Pedagogical Skills, Pre-Service Teachers, Teaching Practicum.

1. INTRODUCTION

In progressive education, teaching practicums serve as a critical phase for pre-service teachers, especially in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). These practicums give students with practical experience, allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge and develop substantial skills needed for effective tutoring (UKEssays, 2018). However, the challenges posed by varying levels of English proficiency in Thailand, combined with the country's diverse educational landscape, create obstacles that pre-service teachers must overcome.

Moreover, teaching practicum is considered as one of the most crucial undertakings that a would-be teacher should undergo. This teaching immersion should be taken importance given that this is a teacher-training program to education students. Further, teaching practicum is proffered to education students in their final year, where they are immersed in and exposed to practical experiences and realize the actual teaching and learning environment in preparation for the real-world scenario of being a teacher.

Teaching in higher education in Thailand aims at honing and preparing pre-service teachers to be equipped with the necessary pedagogical skills to cope with the demands of the ever-changing needs of the students and the occurring challenges that may arise. Therefore, several education sectors are investigating relevant approaches for initial teacher preparation programs. For this reason, various ways are being implemented to establish a solid foundation to support the pre-service teachers in transitioning from the role of students to the role of beginning teachers.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, it has drastically disrupted traditional educational practices in Thailand and worldwide (Thaiger, 2022). Institutions were compelled to transition to online or hybrid learning models to comply with public health regulations. This shift particularly affected pre-service teachers, who had to navigate virtual teaching environments. The adaptation to these new modalities highlighted the difficulties of teaching

in what is now referred to as the *new normal*, revealing gaps in training and practical experience that future educators needed (Bangkok Post, 2020).

Unpacking the new normal in ELT, it is becoming clear that online teaching and learning may remain a lasting component of the educational landscape. In a post, Unpacking the new normal in ELT (2020), the adaptation to this new normal; however, has affected different areas of ELT to varying degrees, highlighting the need for ongoing adjustments in teacher training programs to equip future educators with the skills necessary to navigate this digital era.

In this new normal, several sectors are finding effective ways in navigating this new approach to teaching and learning English. With this reasoning, the pre-service teachers are in need of substantial support and assistance in transitioning from the role of the students to being the teachers in the class. This transition is never an easy endeavor but with the sudden shift of teaching and learning modalities, it influences the pre-service overall teaching practicum experiences on English language teaching.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The ongoing struggle with English proficiency continues despite various educational reforms (Young, 2021). In recent English proficiency survey result, Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI, 2022) ranked Thailand 100th out of 112 countries, with a score of 419 (out of 600), placing it in the “very low proficiency” category. Although Darasawang and Todd (2020) noted a considerable demand for English, overall proficiency remains low. This presents a significant challenge for pre-service teachers, who are the next generation of educators.

However, the Thai government sector together with Cambridge University in English attempted to collaborate in addressing a language learning program to help the Thai learners English proficiency (Inness, 2020). Amidst the considerable efforts, still no progress has happened to address the issue given the shortcomings in English learning. Not only that, this just proves that Thailand does not possess the English language proficiency necessary to engage in a global society. Despite the numerous modification in education system, majority of Thailand population is still struggling and lacks the proficiency in using English needed to participate in the global world (Youngs, 2020).

Additionally, several studies have determined a significant number of low English competencies among pre-service teachers. Thadphoothon (2017) emphasized that Thai English teachers have low English proficiency and struggle communicating with their students. As a result, they are seeking more opportunities for professional development to address these challenges. In response to this, a report from the Bangkok Post (2019) mentioned an initiative, such as the “Teachers for their Hometown” project, which requires new graduates to score at least 400 out of 990 on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) exam before being placed in schools. Even so, these new graduates still find this score way too high to achieve and should be lowered.

Similarly, other countries face comparable challenges in developing English proficiency and other skill areas among pre-service teachers. In Indonesia, a study by Tanjung et al. (2021) revealed that pre-service teachers fell within the elementary range of the CEFR’s A2 level, which was described as alarming. In the Philippines, Gutierrez and Espique (2020) found that Filipino pre-service teachers exhibit beginner-level proficiency, particularly in methodology and curriculum development. In Turkey, Babanoğlu (2021) stressed the importance of technological proficiency and the use of Web 2.0 tools as key components in strengthening pre-service teachers’ pedagogical skills in the new normal.

The aim of this study is to explore pre-service teachers’ experiences on English Language Teaching in the new normal during their teaching practicum. More so, how this endeavor has influenced their interpersonal, language, pedagogical skills, and overall perceptions. While considerable research has been conducted on English proficiency in Thailand, the perspectives of pre-service teachers—the facilitators of future learning—are often overlooked. This study seeks to fill those gaps by considering their insights to improve English education in Thailand and at the same time provide a place for the pre-service teachers perceptions on ELT.

3. TEACHING AND THE TEACHING PRACTICUM

As the great philosopher Socrates once said , "I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think." This statement highlights the true essence and role of a teacher- not merely teaching in the class but more so igniting the students' to start thinking critically. Likewise, while anyone can teach something, not everyone can be a teacher.

According to Rajagopalan (2019), the concepts of teaching has been defined by various authors. Firstly, to Morrison (1934), teaching is a close interaction between a more mature and less mature individuals supporting the latter's learning. Secondly, to Amidon (1967), it is an interactive strategy that mostly consists of teacher-student meaningful exchanges during certain class activities. Lastly, Robertson (1987) referred to teaching as a broad term encompassing actions used to promote learning with the people..

On the other hand, teaching practicum is a practical course exercised by final-year education students where are sent to schools to teaching immersion. Through this undertaking, it is believed that comparable teaching experience is gained. According to UKEssays (2018), in general, the term "practicum" refers to the various forms of school attachment, such as school experience, teaching assistantships, and teaching practice, which pre-service students will participate in as part of their initial teacher preparation program.

Hence, depending on the course's objective, a teaching practicum can help students develop their understanding of dealing with big groups, attention to instructional demands, and communication skills. The teaching practicum in Thailand often lasts two semesters or an entire year academic year. Furthermore, a committee or a coordinator at their institution places the pre-service teachers in specific or with their coordinating schools. They are expected to act professionals as they are already in the field.

As viewed by PIM (2018), in the School of Creative Education Management, pre-service teachers must participate in school activities and programs and seminars or training. Additionally, pre-service teachers are assigned to classes to teach based on their administrators' decisions. They are also joined in each session by a Thai supervisor(s) to develop teaching and learning competency. Moreover, it is a work-based education of teaching that will truly envelop the pre-service teachers with adequate knowledge and skills in real-world scenarios.

4. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

The beginning of formal English Language Teaching (ELT) originated in the reign of King Rama III through American missionaries with the introduction of Western education methods. Successively, during the rule of King Rama V, English emerged as the most prominent foreign language when many foreigners and immigrants started visiting Thailand. In light of this, King Rama V believed that more Thai people needed to study other languages in order for the country to prosper and grow (Methitham, P., & Chamcharatsri, P., 2011).

Presently, as foreseen by the new Thai Constitution, the significance of English as a world language, the breakthrough of technology, and the education reform, these are the key factors influencing new advances for English language teaching and learning in Thailand (Wiriyachitra, 2020). Nevertheless, despite the changes in ELT in Thailand, the status remains low and passive. Thai children spend twelve years studying English in primary and secondary schools, yet the results are debatable. Compared to those in nearby nations, the majority of Thai people speak English significantly less fluently.

5. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE NEW NORMAL

Teachers and students should understand that the new norm for teaching and learning is a flexible, supportive environment that can tolerate isolation, quarantine, and other uncomfortable situations, especially in light of the tremendous challenges they have faced (Northeastern University, 2022).

In a report by LaptrinhX / News. (2020), considered as the new normal now is the online learning and teaching. It is therefore expected that "tech education" will soon rise in higher education and corporate trainings. Just like in

Mahidol University in Thailand where they made sure they were ready enough by making a new digital platform available and conducting online classes even before the pandemic struck (Bangkok Post, 2020). The university students could even utilize the digital technology for a fast-paced learning, for instance a virtual learning environment. Additionally, curricula were revised to accommodate the learning needs in particular with professional skills, and even internet packages were provided in support for an equal access to education.

5.1 English Language Teaching at Tertiary Level

For a long time, Thailand has been dealing with the challenges of teaching and learning English. Despite studying English from primary to tertiary level for over ten years, it is believed that Thais lack the necessary language skills to communicate with people from other countries in English. As a result, the Ministry of Education (MOE, 2017) has made significant interventions and changes under numerous governments to deal with and resolve recurrent issues. With this, Spolsky, B. & Park, E. (2017) highlighted that there is a great deal of consideration in all higher education institutions to take serious action to increase Thais' proficiency in the English language.

Language teachers in the four Southeast Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam, need to enhance their English language proficiency and instructional strategies, as noted by Darasawang (2007). Even though Thailand has a greater number of English language instructors, they are only found in Bangkok and the main provinces. The lack of qualified English language instructors was the biggest obstacle to increasing English instruction since the MOE's main goal is still the professional development of English language teachers.

5.2 English Language Competence of Pre-Service Teachers

In a study conducted by Thadphoothon (2017), it revealed that a total of 175 teachers were self-assessed, and it was discovered that while their level of English proficiency was poor, their need for the language was average. Their poor command of the language restricted their use of it. Thus, it was also revealed that high-competence teachers spoke more English with their students and used the language more in their lessons. Teachers want the government to assist them in improving their English language proficiency. The workload, available time, and opportunity to utilize English are the three main barriers preventing Thai teachers from improving their English language abilities.

Another study also found out that although English is taught and studied at primary, secondary, and university levels in Thailand and is considered a foreign language, the overall outcome has been unsatisfactory. In addition, Thai English teachers are somewhat concerned about issues with their practices, textbooks and curricula, assessment, and other aspects of successful teaching (Noom-ra, 2013).

Given this, there is a gap among English language competence of pre-service teachers ever since. Even though there have been numerous changes in educational settings, still there are various sectors or elements to be examined. This issue is not new, even among colleges and universities. As Bangkok Post (2019) reported about "Teachers for Their Hometown", and qualify for employment, the final-year education students have to meet the prerequisites through Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC). They have to attain at least 400 out of 900; however, many argued that this was a bit high and they demanded to lower it to 250. Conversely, the requirement would not change, according to OHEC Secretary General Supat Jampathong. Supat stated that the purpose of the test is to choose qualified teachers for the educational system. Therefore, the test is expected to get more complex every year, to which MOE agreed and even made English mandatory.

5.3 Pre-Service Teachers Teaching Practicum Experiences

Self-perception theory (Bem 1972; Alyward, G., & Jeffries, L. 2008) is fundamental concept that views on how individuals interpret their own behaviors, attitudes, and the environments surrounding them. This theory infers that individuals form concepts based on their observations of their personal actions and experiences. Significantly, people believe that through self-perception, it results to a close connection on how they see and discover themselves.

Reflecting on the pre-service teachers' experiences, López and Mariza (2020) highlighted the relevance of self-reflection during the teaching practicum. Given that this is a new endeavor, a study by Parks (2018) discussed that it is a process of continuous self-recalibration to align with the demands of teaching. Moreover, pre-service teachers faced substantial challenges even before the pandemic; with the advent of the new normal, these challenges have intensified, especially in specific skill areas such as interpersonal, language, and pedagogical skills. These key elements are critical in equipping them with the competencies needed to teach English effectively in a diverse learning environment.

Accounting the pre-service teachers' teaching practicum experiences are essential as it provides a room to share their favorable and unfavorable experiences. Significantly, several studies revealed a few of positive and negative perceptions. According to Addo (2018), most pre-service teachers are satisfied with the preparation programs provided to them to pursue the teaching profession and enable them to carry out their tasks efficiently, per the data collected about their opinions on the study's factors. Moreover, Cretu (2019) noted significant factors of pre-service teachers to more successful aspects of the practicum. Also, Karadüz A. et al. (2009) study revealed that pre-service teachers could receive professional experience in the teaching practicum course.

However, per Karadüz, A. et al. (2009), there are potential concerns about the professional experience that pre-service teachers consider. Some of them include teaching approaches, particular problems in teaching profession, communication skills, and classroom management. This also supported by Addo (2018) that lack of adequate teaching tools, difficulty managing disruptive kids, and little or no help from their mentors were issues encountered during the teaching practicum experience.

5.4 Pre-Service Teachers Interpersonal Skills

As pre-service teachers who are novices in the education field, teaching a variety of students with different learning needs and styles can be quite challenging. Therefore, teachers need to be flexible enough to connect and relate to their students in many ways. Strong interpersonal skills, especially communication abilities, are necessary for a teacher to comprehend the needs of each student. By building good relationship and adjusting the teaching methods and approaches, teachers can create a welcoming and supportive classroom for all students.

Teachmint (2021) pointed out that interpersonal effectiveness can enhance pre-service teachers' teaching presentations and student engagement. This is supported by Prabjandee and Denchai (2019), who claimed that emotional and technical support from both inside and outside the institutions enables pre-service teachers to overcome adversity in English Language Teaching (ELT). With this, strong interpersonal skills, especially communication abilities, are necessary for teachers to comprehend the needs of each student.

5.5 Pre-Service Teachers Language Skills

Teaching English as a foreign language is already a challenge, especially for non-native speakers. For pre-service teachers, teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is vital to have a deep understanding of the language, the differences among conversational speech, formal and informal speech, and abstract rules about word usage in divergent cultures. Having this knowledge enables them communicate effectively and meaningfully with the students.

Jaca and Javines (2020) reported that pre-service teachers expressed difficulties in using English effectively, interacting with their students, and delivering lessons. In a similar vein, Köksal and Ulum (2019) indicated that pre-service teachers must assess and improve their language skills—listening, speaking, and writing—before entering the classroom. Therefore, having a deep understanding of the English language is vital.

5.6 Pre-service Teachers Pedagogical Skills

Effective teaching requires more than just knowledge of the subject matter; pre-service teachers must also convert their expertise into effective pedagogy. Through cognitive and experiential learning, pre-service teachers are expected

to generate varying teaching styles and methods that suit best to their students different learning needs and styles. They have to find out or come up with interesting and engaging activities to make the language acquisition convenient for both the teacher and the students.

Ramirez (2020) suggested that well-designed educational programs and appropriate training would provide pre-service teachers with opportunities for improvement. Furthermore, Karadüz et al. (2009) affirmed that pre-service teachers enhance their practical skills by integrating theoretical knowledge during their teaching practicum. Thus, institutions play a crucial role in ensuring the teaching competencies of pre-service teachers.

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored with Constructivism theory by Piaget (1970) and Experiential learning theory by Kolb (1984). These two significant underpinnings have made relevance in the study for they both emphasized the individuals learning through practical, meaningful experiences.

6.1 Jean Piaget's Constructivism Theory

Piaget (1970) emphasized that individuals construct understanding based on prior knowledge and highlighted the significance of practical experiences, such as teaching practicums, for cognitive growth. Therefore, to promote cognitive growth, pre-service teachers must be exposed to engaging and meaningful activities connected to the real world, such as the teaching practicum. Correspondingly, Phillips (1995) stated that people build new understandings on top of what they currently know. With this, it is true among pre-service teachers that this theory postulates that they will attempt to make sense of all they observe and that each of them will afterward construct their own meaning from that knowledge. This is particularly relevant for pre-service teachers adapting to the new normal in education, as they interpret their experiences in English Language Teaching and refine their language and pedagogical skills.

6.2 David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

Kolb (1984) stressed learning through life experiences, with teaching practicums enabling pre-service teachers to integrate academic knowledge with real-world teaching scenarios. To supplement their regular academic studies with a practical component, many educational institutions provide experiential education programs like internships, field projects, and classroom experiential learning activities. In addition, undertaking a teaching practicum is one effective source of learning various teaching and learning experiences that could help the pre-service teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward teaching in a real-world context. This setting provides a solid basis for them to explore and discover the concept of being educators in the future. Also, it might provide the pre-service teachers with a clearer idea of how they should adapt and modify their methods in ELT.

6.3 Statement of the Problem

By highlighting pre-service teachers' experiences on English Language Teaching in the new normal, the research seeks to inform teacher preparation programs, policy initiatives, and support systems. The goal is to better equip pre-service teachers for the challenges they may encounter in the evolving landscape of modern education.

The study discerned to answer to the following questions:

1. How did the teaching practicum experience impact the pre-service teachers' experiences on ELT in the new normal in terms of:
 - 1.1. interpersonal skills;
 - 1.2. language skills; and
 - 1.3. pedagogical skills?
2. How did the pre-service teachers' experiences on English Language Teaching in the new normal change as a result of the teaching practicum experience?
3. What program could be suggested based on the findings and results of the study?

7. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach to explore and interpret the pre-service teachers' experiences on ELT in the new normal during their teaching practicum. The goal was to understand their narratives, as described by Silverman (2021), and connect to what was significant for the pre-service teachers. A descriptive phenomenological approach was also employed to gain a deeper understanding of ELT practices and the actual teaching practicum experiences in the new normal. In this study, the independent variable was the pre-service teachers' experiences with ELT in the new normal, particularly the challenges and adaptations they faced. The dependent variables were their understanding and perceptions of these experiences, as well as the impact on their pedagogical approaches, assessing how these experiences shaped their teaching methods and effectiveness.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at a private university in Nonthaburi, Thailand, established in 2007 and supported by CP All Company Limited. The university offers accredited undergraduate and postgraduate programs and ranks among Thailand's top 40 universities. As a corporate university, its aim is to prepare students for real-world employment, enabling them to work for organizations while studying and receiving compensation during their courses. Furthermore, one of its faculties, the School of Creative Education Management (CEM), focuses on developing students' potential in creative processes and linguistic fluency, particularly in Chinese and English Language Teaching. Students are expected to attain language proficiency and basic service skills for professional management, with CEM also promoting innovation and digital literacy to meet the needs of 21st-century learners.

Informants of the Study

The study involved eight pre-service teachers, seven females and one male, who were selected through a nonrandom sampling technique. These informants were in their final year of the Bachelor of Secondary Education, majoring in English Language Teaching at the School of Creative Education Management in a private university in Nonthaburi, Thailand. As part of their teaching practicum, they were assigned to teach English in selected government schools within the local area, providing them with the opportunity to implement their knowledge and skills in real-world teaching scenarios.

Research Instruments

The study utilized a researcher-made questionnaire for semi-structured interviews with the eight pre-service teachers. The questionnaire was designed to address inquiries related to the pre-service teachers' experiences on English Language Teaching in the new normal during their teaching practicum. It was organized based on the study's statements of the problem, focusing on the impact of the teaching practicum experience on the pre-service teachers' interpersonal, language, and pedagogical skills, as well as their overall perceptions of their teaching practicum experience.

Data Gathering Procedures

Through a descriptive phenomenological approach, the pre-service teachers' experiences on English Language Teaching in the new normal during their teaching practicum were explored using semi-structured interviews. The diverse narratives were then scrutinized and analyzed using Collaizi's seven-method (Morrow et al., 2015). This analysis was complemented by Triangulation, which included the interviews, observations, and thematic consultations (Nightingale, 2020).

8 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Informant's Demographic Profile and Pertinent Characteristics

Informants	Gender	Subject Description	Grade Level/s
PST 1	Female	Basic English	Grade 7 and 9
PST 2	Female	Basic English	Grade 9
PST 3	Female	Basic English	Grade 8
PST 4	Female	Fundamentals of English	Grade 9
PST 5	Female	Fundamentals of English	Grade 7 and 12
PST 6	Female	Fundamentals of English	Grade 9
PST 7	Female	English Skills	Grade 8
PST 8	Male	English Skills	Grade 9

Table 1 presented the demographic profile and pertinent characteristics of the eight pre-service teachers (PSTs) who participated in the study. All but one of the informants were female, with PST 8 being the only male participant. The subjects they taught ranged from Basic English, Fundamentals of English, to English Skills, covering various grade levels from Grade 7 to Grade 12. Most informants handled Grade 9 students, while others taught Grades 7, 8, and 12. This diversity in subject area and grade levels provided a broad perspective on their experiences in English Language Teaching in the new normal during their teaching practicum.

Table 2: Four Major Themes Emerged from the Results Data with their Subthemes

Four Major Themes	
Subthemes	Major Themes Emerged
Interpersonal Skills	Communication as Barriers in Addressing Students' Needs, Interests and Behaviors
Language Skills	Consistency in Communication using the English Language
Pedagogical Skills	Effective Use of Instructional Materials and Classroom Activities
Overall Perception	Practicum Helps in Improving Pre-Service Teachers Teaching Skills

Problem 1. The Impact of Teaching Practicum of Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences on ELT in the New Normal

1.1 Interpersonal Skills: Communication as Barriers in Addressing Students' Needs, Interests and Behaviors

The first theme that emerged in the impact of teaching practicum on the pre-service teachers' experiences in English Language Teaching was the identification of communication barriers as a significant challenge. These barriers primarily affected their ability to address students' needs, interests, and behaviors. Such difficulties align with previous research highlighting the importance of interpersonal skills, particularly effective communication, in successful teaching (Teachmint, 2021).

As stated by P1, which resulted in being able to control and show oneself freely to other people, "*to manage their emotions and express themselves positively to others.*" According to P2, it was easy to communicate and talk about anything when you have good interpersonal skills; however, she opposed, "*it's very challenging to get attention because students are different.*"

Among the other informants, many pre-service teachers concurred that they have to control their temper because of their student's behavior. Five out of eight participants concerned about managing themselves and their students. P3 said, *"there are many too that not pay attention, I try to get their attention in class. I challenge myself to be a funny teacher, speak louder"*, which was also agreed by P4, *"at first I need to use more energy for make them pay attention to me."*

More so, P6 expounded that having the capacity to control your emotions would result to less stress, *"for manage and controlling your own emotions to order for less stress, improve communication."* She continued, *"happy and positive thinking"* and *"have fun when teaching the students"*, which would make a good approach for a manageable learning environment. However, to P7 and P8 argued that building rapport with their students was a real struggle and problematic, *"very challenging to me because not only have to attract 2-3 students, but 30 or more students"* and *"I don't want to continue teaching, I feel very tired"*, expressed by P7 and P8 respectively.

This finding underscored the need for pre-service teachers to develop strong communication and interpersonal skills to navigate the complexities of their teaching environments effectively. As noted by Prabjandee and Denchai (2019), addressing communication barriers is essential for facilitating the success of pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum experience.

1.2 Language Skills: Consistency in Communication using the English Language

The second theme that emerged in the impact of the teaching practicum on the pre-service teachers' experiences in English Language Teaching was their need for consistency in communication using the English language. The pre-service teachers expressed that communication was crucial in overcoming various challenges encountered during their teaching practicum.

Though most of the participants had similar perspectives, they had different effective strategies in ELT that they employed. It was reflected in P1's statement, *"focus on teaching things that are practical, such as communication in everyday life. English for further education, resume writing, etc.... Speaking skills and reading skills were seen most clearly. We are trained to speak English using a native accent"*. P2 said, *"Pronunciation is like a native. The pronunciation must be adjusted to be easy to listen to"*. This need for consistent communication is supported by Köksal and Ulum (2019), which highlights that pre-service teachers must develop strong listening, speaking, and writing skills to succeed in their roles.

As P3 viewed it, *"I improve my English communication skills... and develop in good way. And I believe that practicing can make me better about English"*. Likewise, as P4 delivered, *"my teaching help me to confident when I speak with foreigner people and my skill can develop my student too,"* which was also a similar claim of P5 that *"teaching a language helps me gain more knowledge"*. This was also true for P6 that *"Thai students use communication skills in foreign teacher. I communicate at the office more than in class and some students ask me for help to talking with foreign teacher."* Further, P7 described it as *"teaching practicum has a huge impact on my English practice because I have talked to teachers who are foreign teachers. I have improved in English"*. Given this, it highlights the significance of real-life interactions in developing language skills and building confidence in using the English language.

Moreover, the study found that while the teaching practicum significantly enhanced their English communication skills, some pre-service teachers still struggled with comprehending technical content in their curricula, emphasizing the complexities they faced in their teaching practicum.

1.3 Pedagogical Skills: Effective Use of Instructional Materials and Classroom Activities

The third theme that emerged in the impact of the teaching practicum on the pre-service experiences in English Language Teaching was the effective use of instructional materials and classroom activities. The pre-service teachers highlighted the importance of preparing various teaching methodologies and materials to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

The majority of the informants stressed their pedagogical skills and various preparations of teaching methodologies and materials. They opted to read, review, and practice the lesson content before administering it to the class. They thought of incorporating educational learning activities to support students' learning process, and they learned to adapt to the situations to any problems encountered.

As P1 recounted her teaching preparations, she said that it was essential to review and practice the lesson before administering it, *“make a PowerPoint and check the content inside to see if there is anything wrong and practice teaching before”* which was also the same scenario to most of the participants. Moreover, P8 emphasized using prior knowledge and previous lessons to incorporate to the current ones since it would create interest among his students, *“Learn more lessons from what we know and prepare teaching techniques. Let the variety create interest”*. In line with this, to lead effective, engaging lessons for your students and make the most of your time and resources, it is crucial to prepare before giving courses (Indeed, 2022).

Furthermore, some of the participants suggested that incorporating online games are essential for an engaging class. P2 remarked, *“they are excited and interested in teaching materials and games”* just like how P6 mentioned a few names of online games that she utilized, *“Teaching methodologies and materials like worksheet and online game, Bamboozle, Quizlet, Quizzer, Vonder Go”*. P8 also shared, *“Teach by using games together with handmade media. And allow students to move on their own enhance memory skills.”*

With this, it was clear to the pre-service teachers that merely having subject matter knowledge is insufficient; effective classroom instruction requires thoughtful preparation and adaptability to students' needs. This approach aligns with Victoria (2017), who emphasizes that incorporating educational online games can motivate students and foster a positive learning environment.

Problem 2. The Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers on ELT in the New Normal during the Teaching Practicum Experience

2.1 Overall Perception: Practicum Helps in Improving Pre-Service Teachers Teaching Skills

The fourth theme that emerged from the pre-service teachers' overall perception of their experiences in English Language Teaching during the teaching practicum was that it helped them improve their teaching skills. The pre-service teachers revealed that the practicum significantly influenced their understanding of effective teaching and highlighted its relevance.

Many reported positive experiences, although some voiced differing opinions. The pre-service teachers observed that the practicum encouraged them to be resourceful, improve their teaching content, and develop better classroom management skills.

As P1 expressed, *“the content of the books we have to teach is not enough for our students. We will have to find more content. Form of activities to increase the fun in learning or taking example using something close to the student”*. She also added that *“coaching is very necessary for us to practice.”* This agrees with Cretu (2019), who noted that learning from school mentors and receiving feedback during the practicum are crucial for developing teaching competencies.

The varying views about teaching practicum were reflected as viewed by P2, “*it is just like being a regular teacher because I act like other teachers.*” According to her, when asked about how it changed her perceptions, for most of the course, it did not affect her, especially since “*everything is usually the way I know it.*” Unlike P3, she was able to widen her knowledge in her chosen career and able to know various teaching methodologies and materials, “*I know more and learn more about English language teaching. In the new era, I know how to manage and integrate teaching English. I know that there are many method and material that can teach student*”. She also believed that “*it is a good way to have teaching practicum before real teaching*”. These perspectives view that teaching practicum allowed them to adapt to various teaching methodologies and understand students' needs, which is supported by UKEssays (2018), emphasizing the importance of integrating theory and practice in education.

Despite some challenges, such as adjusting to diverse teaching environments, the overall experience of the practicum was deemed essential for their professional growth as educators. This finding is further reinforced by the three-year study by Choy et al. (2013) and further explained by StudyCorgi (2020), which demonstrated significant transformations in the pedagogical knowledge and perceptions of pre-service teachers throughout their professional practice.

Problem 3. What program may be suggested based on the findings and results of the study?

A proposed intervention program emerged from the collated narratives of the informants of the study and the researcher's expertise. With the ever-changing demands in the educational system, many innovations and developments have flourished in the teaching and learning process that must be considered to adapt and meet its needs. The 21st-century students have different learning needs, interests, and behaviors that should be addressed to attain their full potential. The task of the teachers as facilitators does not limit them to an extent. However, it has to deeply understand the importance of developing a curriculum relevant to the student's demands and levels, ensuring the integration of learning between content and real-life events. The role of the teachers should be optimized and maximized to help the students successfully transfer knowledge, understanding, and skill areas. Effective teaching methodologies and classroom activities should be emphasized to boost engagement and realize the higher-order thinking skills required to be globally competitive and holistic individuals.

Further, this seminar-workshop aims to develop an awareness of the importance of curriculum planning and development in the teaching and learning process; to equip student-teacher participants in innovative teaching strategies and materials to meet the needs of 21st-century students; to provide them with interactive and engaging strategies and materials to assist students to achieve their full potential; and to recognize the crucial role that character development plays in students' learning and growth

Moreover, this program aims to enrich participants' knowledge and specific skill areas while solidifying their understanding of what it means to be an educator. The program is titled *Seminar-Workshop on Recalibrating Teachers' Competencies* with a theme of *Recalibrating Teachers' Competencies: Meeting the Needs of the 21st Century Students*. In the course of the program, it consists of three components: an opening session, a seminar-workshop proper, and a closing ceremony with certificate distribution. A key feature of this program is the presentation of topics by experts in the field of education. These topics include an in-depth discussion on curriculum development, its principles and practices, the role of a teacher, and teaching strategies focused on classroom management and character formation. Each presentation will conclude with an open forum to address participants' inquiries.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study aimed to explore the pre-service teachers' experiences on English Language Teaching in the new normal during their teaching practicum.

Accordingly, among the important findings that emerged from this research were:

1. The Impact of Teaching Practicum of Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences on ELT in the New Normal

1.1 Pre-Service Teachers' ELT Experiences: Interpersonal Skills

The pre-service teachers faced challenges during the teaching practicum in the new normal, particularly in addressing diverse student needs and learning styles. They recognized the importance of developing interpersonal skills, such as self-management and self-awareness, to build rapport with students and manage classroom behavior effectively. The experience underscored the necessity of strong interpersonal skills for fostering positive teacher-student relationships and creating an engaging learning environment.

1.2 Pre-Service Teachers' ELT Experiences: Language Skills

The pre-service teachers realized that teaching practicum significantly contributed to the improvement of their English language skills, despite English not being their native language. Through the effective use of teaching strategies in English, they enhanced their communication competencies, facilitating better interactions with both students and foreign colleagues. This experience underscores the crucial role of practical teaching experiences in developing language skills essential for effective English Language Teaching

1.3 Pre-Service Teachers' ELT Experiences: Pedagogical Skills

The pre-service teachers, as novice educators, effectively employed various teaching methodologies and materials during their teaching practicum. They recognized the importance of evaluating and practicing lesson content before teaching, which enhanced their preparedness and initiative. By integrating prior knowledge, multimedia, and educational online games, they improved their pedagogical skills, fostering a positive learning atmosphere and attitude among students. This experience underscores the significance of practical training in developing the pedagogical competencies necessary for successful ELT.

2. The Perceptions of Pre-Service Teachers on ELT in the New Normal during the Teaching Practicum Experience

2.1 Pre-Service Teachers' Overall ELT Experiences

The pre-service teachers' conveyed that teaching practicum significantly enhanced their teaching skills. Their experiences solidified their foundation as educators, making them more resourceful in improving content and integrating various teaching methodologies. They learned to adapt to students' needs and behaviors while recognizing the importance of mentorship. More so, these experiences positively transformed their perceptions of English Language Teaching, highlighting the critical role of teaching practicum in shaping their professional development.

3. What program may be suggested based on the findings and results of the study?

Based on the pre-service teachers' narratives and the researcher's insights, an intervention program was developed. This proposed seminar-workshop aims to enhance knowledge and specific skill areas while reinforcing the understanding of what it means to be an educator. Moreover, the program also strives to equip the pre-service teachers with practical skills for classroom management, lesson planning, and student engagement. This creates an encouraging and positive learning environment where the participants can consider on their personal teaching experiences and career development.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Pre-service teachers must develop strong interpersonal skills to build rapport with students, ensuring that communication effectively addresses their needs, interests, and behaviors.

2. Consistency in using the English language is essential, encompassing speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills to enhance overall competency and effectiveness as language teachers.
3. The effective utilization of instructional materials and classroom activities significantly contributed to pre-service teachers' pedagogical skill improvement and encouraged initiative in their teaching preparations.
4. Overall, the teaching practicum experience was invaluable in enhancing pre-service teachers' skills, fostering resourcefulness in creating engaging instructional materials and activities, adaptability to various circumstances, and emphasizing the importance of mentorship from coordinating teachers. This experience solidified their understanding of what it means to be an educator.
5. Based on the study's results, there is a need for an intervention program to be implemented to address the gaps identified in pre-service teachers' experiences and skills. This seminar-workshop program aims to strengthen their knowledge and specific skill areas while deepening their understanding of their role as educators, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the study's conclusions, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. *Foster Professional Growth*: Create opportunities that encourage teacher involvement in the development of curricula aligned with the teaching practicum. Promoting collaboration among peers and establishing a culture of trust and shared knowledge can enhance teacher effectiveness and openness to innovations.
2. *Provide Ongoing Support*: Continuous support for teachers can significantly promote excellence in teaching. Assistance from administration, instructional resources, and peer networks are vital for successful learning transfer from professional development to classroom application.
3. *Integrate ICT*: Utilize Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to facilitate access to content, professional development, and learning communities. As teachers adapt to various teaching strategies and learning modalities, staying updated is crucial for their professional growth. Providing access to teaching resources and integrating them into instruction will support effective ICT implementation.
4. *Expand Future Research*: Future studies should explore the experiences of pre-service teachers from other specializations

at the tertiary level to gain a broader understanding of the teaching practicum. This could enhance insights into the current practices and their implications.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author sincerely thanks the pre-service teachers who participated in this study and shared their experiences.

REFERENCES

- Addo, A. (2018). From theory to practice: pre-service teachers experience. Welcome to European/American Journals - EA Journals. <https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/From-Theory-to-Practice-Pre-Service-Teachers%e2%80%99-Experience.pdf>
- Alyward, G. & Jeffries L. (2008). Self-perception theory. ScienceDirect.com | Science, health and medical journals, full text articles and books. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/nursing-and-health-professions/self-perception-theory>
- Babanoğlu, M. Pınar. (2021), Online ELT Practicum: Views of Student Teachers, Cooperating Teachers and Faculty Supervisors. In: Education Quarterly Reviews, Vol. 4 (4), pp. 455-471. <https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.04.04.407>
- Bangkok Post. (2019). Why English matters to Thailand. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/1798104/why-english-matters-to-thailand>.
- Bangkok Post. (2020). Pandemic is exposing the gaps in Thai education. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1910956/pandemic-is-exposing-the-gaps-in-thai-education>.
- Choy, D., Wong, A., Ming Lim, K., & Chong, S. (2013). Beginning teachers' perceptions of their pedagogical knowledge and skills in teaching: A three year study. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 38(5), 68-79. <https://doi.org/10.14221/AJTE.2013V38N5.6>.
- Cretu, D. (2019). Pre-Service Teachers' Perceptions On Their Practicum In School. In E. Soare, & C. Langa (Eds.), Education Facing Contemporary World Issues, vol 67. European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences (pp. 412-420). Future Academy. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.08.03.49/>.
- Darasawang, P. & Todd, R. (2020). English language teacher education in Thailand: A mix of global and local (Chapter 10) - English language teaching and teacher education in East Asia. Cambridge Core. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/english-language-teaching-and-teacher-education-in-east-asia/english-language-teacher-education-in-thailand-a-mix-of-global-and-local/643E816D7DE2F04FD63DCA30BAFEA0B4>
- Darasawang, P., & Todd, R. (2020). English Language Teacher Education in Thailand: A Mix of Global and Local. In: Tsui ABM, ed. *English Language Teaching and Teacher Education in East Asia: Global Challenges and Local Responses*. Cambridge Education Research. Cambridge University Press; 2020:195-216.
- EF Education First. (2022). EF EPI 2021 – EF English proficiency index – Thailand. <https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/regions/asia/thailand/>.
- Gutierrez, J., & Espique, F. (2020). Competencies of pre-service language teachers: Towards developing a language training program. PEAC Official Website, pp. 11-28. <https://peac.org.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2020-1-02.pdf> <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.08.03.49>.

- Ilnes, G. (2020, April). English learning in Thailand: The simple fact that no one seems to get. Chiang Mai Citylife. <https://www.chiangmaicitylife.com/clg/living/education-schools/english-learning-in-thailand/>
- Indeed (2022). What is preparation in teaching and why is it important?. <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/careerdevelopment/preparation-in-teaching>
- Jaca, C., & Javines, F. (2020). Oral communication needs of pre-service teachers in practice teaching. ResearchGate, Vol 1 (1), pp. 67-73. <https://doi.org/10.47175/rielsj.v1i1.31>.
- LaptrinhX / News. (2020). Unpacking 'the new normal' in ELT. <https://laptrinhx.com/news/unpacking-the-new-normal-in-elt-k4m9EAB/>
- Karadüz, A., Eser, Y., Şahin, C., İlbay, A. (2014). Eğitim Fakültesi Son Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Görüşlerine Göre Öğretmenlik Uygulaması Dersinin Etkililik Düzeyi/The Effectiveness of Teaching Practice Module in Opinions of Final-Year Student Teachers. *Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 6(11), 440-453.
- Köksal, D., & Ulum, Ö. G. (2019). Pre-service EFL teachers' conceptions of language proficiency: entry and exit level qualifications. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 15(2), 484-495.
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development: Second Edition*. Pearson Education, Inc. ISBN 13: 978-0-13-389240-6.
- López, M., & Mariza, G. (2020). Emotions attributions of ELT pre-service teachers and their effects on teaching practice. ERIC - Education Resources Information Center., pp. 15-28. pp. <https://doi.org/10.15446/profile.v22n1.78613>.
- Methitham, P., & Chamcharatsri, P. B. (2011). Critiquing ELT in Thailand: A reflection from history to practice. Academia.edu - Share research. Retrieved July 08, 2022 from https://www.academia.edu/2352913/Critiquing_ELT_in_Thailand_A_reflection_from_history_to_practice
- Ministry of Education Thailand. (2017). Thai education in brief. home. <https://www.en.moe.go.th/enMoe2017/index.php/policy-and-plan/thai-education-in-brief>
- Morrow, R., Rodriguez, A., & King, N. (2015). Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method. Semantic Scholar. Corpus ID: 148004019.
- Nightingale, A.J. (2020). Triangulation. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography (Second Edition)*, pp. 477-480. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10437-8>.
- Noble, H., & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 22(3), pp 67-68. <https://doi.org/10.1136/ebnurs-2019-103145>.
- Noom-ura, S. (2013). English-teaching problems in Thailand and Thai Teachers' Professional Development Needs. ERIC - Education Resources Information Center. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1078705.pdf>
- Northeastern University. (2022). Teaching in the new normal. Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning Through Research. <https://learning.northeastern.edu/teaching-in-the-new-normal/>
- Parks, MC (2018). Pre-service teachers' evolving perceptions and responses to teaching : changing career to find meaning and purpose. University of Tasmania. Thesis. <https://doi.org/10.25959/100.00029710>.
- Phillips, D. (1995, January). The good, the bad, and the ugly: The many faces of constructivism. Academia.edu - Share research. https://www.academia.edu/576372/The_good_the_bad_and_the_ugly_The_many_faces_of_constructivism

- Piaget (1970); Ramsook, L. & Thomas, M. (2016). Constructivism-linking theory with practice among pre-service teachers at the University of Trinidad and Tobago. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, Vol 15 (7), pp. 127-137.
- PIM. (2018). Higher education institute by CP All. PIM – Creating professionals through work-based education. <https://www.pim.ac.th/about/intro-pim>.
- Prabjandee, D. (2019). Becoming English teachers in Thailand: Student teacher identity development during teaching practicum. *Issues in Educational Research*, 29(4), 1277-1294. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier29/prabjandee2.pdf>.
- Rajagopalan, I. (2019). Concept of Teaching. ERIC - Education Resources Information Center. Retrieved July 07, 2022 from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1245288.pdf#:~:text=Edmund%20Amidon%20defined%20teaching%20as%20%E2%80%9Cinteractive%20process%2C,and%20pupil%20and%20occurs%20during%20certain%20definable%20activities%E2%80%9D>
- Ramirez, I. (2002). Pre-service teachers' perceived level of teaching skills. *JEBS – Journal of Education in Black Sea Region*, Vol 6 (1). <https://doi.org/10.31578/jebs.v6i1.222>.
- Silverman, D. (2021). *Qualitative research*. Google Books. SAGE Publications Ltd., pp 1-16. ISBN 978-1-5297-1298-8
- StudyCorgi. (2020). Preservice teachers' perceptions of their teaching. <https://studycorgi.com/preservice-teachers-perceptions-of-their-teaching/>.
- Tanjung, F., Musthafa, B., & Wirza, Y. (2021). Proficiency and motivation: Foundation of pre-service English teachers' professional identity development. Atlantis Press, pp. 337-344. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201230.128>.
- Teachmint. (2021). Importance of interpersonal skills for teachers. Teachmint: No.1 Teaching Platform. <https://blog.teachmint.com/importance-of-interpersonal-skills-for-teacher/>.
- Thadphoothon, J. (2017). English Language Competence of Thai School Teachers, *Economics & Management Innovations*, 1(1) :154-156. ResearchGate. <https://doi.org/10.26480/icemi.01.2017.154.156>.
- Thaiger. (2022). Thailand news today | Post pandemic Thailand - What to expect. <https://thethaiger.com/news/national/thailand-news-today-post-pandemic-thailand-what-to-expect>. Retrieved July 08, 2022.
- UKEssays. (2019). The concept of teaching practicum. <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/education/the-concept-of-teaching-practicum-education-essay.php?vref=1>.
- Unpacking the new normal in ELT. (2020). WordPress. <https://adaptivelearninginelt.wordpress.com/2020/06/14/unpacking-the-new-normal-in-elt/>.
- Victoria. (2017). 10 Benefits To Playing Games In The Classroom. Teach Starter. <https://www.teachstarter.com/au/blog/10-benefits-to-playing-games-in-the-classroom/>.
- Young, D. (2021). The hierarchy of Thailand and its effects on English language learning. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 14(1), 15-27.
- Young, D. (2021). The Hierarchy of Thailand and its effects on english language learning. ERIC - Education Resources Information Center. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1284461.pdf>