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Research Article

Scrutinizing Practicum for a More Powerful Teacher Education: A Longitudinal Study with Pre-service Teachers^{*}

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the role of school-based practicum in promoting pre-service English language teachers' professional development through the use of a longitudinal design in combination with qualitative methods. To achieve this aim, pre-service teachers were asked to successively reflect on video-recordings of their micro-lessons in their university-based methodology courses directly after delivering the micro-lessons and retrospectively after their practicum experience. The participants of this study were 13 pre-service English language teachers studying at a foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey. The same data collection methodology was adapted before and after the practicum to gain a deeper understanding of the learning stemming from school-based practicum. The data for the study came from pre- and post-self-evaluation reports as well as pre- and post-focus-group interviews that had been collected based on the pre-service teachers' video-recorded microteaching simulations. The findings indicate that pre-service teachers commented on the same pedagogical, psychological, and physical factors they had noticed regarding their micro-lesson before and after the practicum. However, some qualitative changes were detected in their views over time as they had become more learner-oriented and had developed a more reflective view of teaching following the practicum. These findings have implications for the impact of practicum for future teacher education programs.

Keywords

Pre-service teacher • Reflection • Practicum • Microteaching

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While the undisputed goal of student achievement pursuant to the field of education “In a world where education matters more than it ever has before, ...” (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 4) exists, there is also growing empirical evidence that the quality of teacher preparation and certification plays a determining role in attaining this goal (Darling-Hammond, 2000a, 2000b, 2006; Yıldırım, 2013). As a result, the field of teacher education faces the “problem” of explaining how teachers learn to teach, which the related literature has argued to be possible through reflection (Richards, 2008). Reflection as a practice is a highly valued component of pre-service teacher training (Akcan, 2010; Betil-Eröz, 2013; Hamiloğlu, 2014; Seferoğlu, 2006) as it stimulates the growth and development of teachers as professionals (Loughran, 2002).

School-based practicum, another important aspect acknowledged to be highly influential in the initial education of teachers (Hascher, Cocard, & Moser, 2004), lies at the heart of pre-service teachers’ knowledge construction and professional development (Tang, 2004), and growing consensus exists on the necessity of a reflective practice for pre-service teachers in practicum settings. With the help of observing real teaching/learning contexts and carrying out tasks under the supervision of university lecturers and cooperating teachers, pre-service teachers can develop their own teaching knowledge and skills and reflect on their beliefs (Tarman, 2012); this supports their cognitive learning and development (Cheng, Cheng, & Tang, 2010). Practicum is recognized as a learning arena where pre-service teachers maximize their opportunity to bridge theory with practice.

Regarding the importance of reflection incorporated into practicum during pre-service teachers’ professional development, Hamiloğlu (2013) aimed to investigate whether pre-service teachers’ professional identities during their practicum were influenced more effectively when they could reflect. Data was collected through reflective journals, interviews, and stimulated recall sessions. The results showed that participants had become more aware of the transformation of their emerging identities from being imagined to practice. She interpreted this finding to suggest that practicum plays a prominent role as long as it has a critical reflective nature.

Prior to practicum, pre-service teachers also have a chance to gain some practical experience through microteaching simulations during their university courses. Microteaching, which dates back to the 60s, has been criticized for concealing the characteristics of the technicist view of teaching in its nature since learning to teach is conceptualized as acquiring, practicing, and reinforcing a discrete set of behaviors. However, it is important to note that it is particularly valued by pre-service teachers (Farrell, 2008; Seferoğlu, 2006) in terms of the positive impact it is argued to have on growth in the teaching profession. After rejecting the technicist view of teaching, microteaching simulations retained a position in teacher education by undergoing

some modifications that provided room for systematic reflection to be incorporated into microteaching (Johnson & Arshavskaya, 2011). The practices that accompany self-examination have made it especially feasible in larger contexts which include social and institutional agents (Farrell, 2008).

One powerful tool that has been used to facilitate reflection in pre-teacher education is video recording (LeFevre, 2004). This enables pre-service teachers to capture the complex nature of the teaching practice that occurs in a classroom. Furthermore, it allows a number of different possibilities, such as performing detailed analyses of one's own teaching practices for professional development, catching things that might not have been noticed from the first viewing, and having increased self-awareness. The use of video within pre-service teacher education has been incorporated into the practicum lessons delivered at cooperative schools (Akcan, 2010; Kuter, Altınay Gazi, & Altınay Aksal, 2012; Rosaen, Lundeberg, Cooper, Fritzen, & Terpstra, 2008; Siry & Martin, 2014) and some micro-lessons delivered at university-based methodology courses (Savas, 2012).

An important study in this regard was conducted by Betil-Eröz (2013) to investigate the contribution of reflective feedback sessions that had been strengthened by video recording pre-service teachers' practicum lessons. Results indicated that the act of examining themselves through video enabled pre-service teachers to develop a critical perspective on their own teaching practice, leading Betil-Eröz to conclude that it was highly beneficial for pre-service teachers to watch their videotaped lessons during practicum. She highlighted that providing a carefully planned practicum helped pre-service teachers "become insightful and realistic about their own teaching practices by helping them to discover their own strengths and weaknesses in teaching and guiding them to find ways to improve their classroom performance," (p. 175).

In another study, Savas (2012) investigated the opinions of pre-service teachers about the effectiveness of videotaped microteaching sessions delivered during their university-based methodology courses. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire aimed at eliciting the opinions of participants in two respects: the effectiveness of videotaping microteaching for improving their English proficiency, and how it improved their teaching skills. Results illustrated that a substantial majority of participants in her study had viewed microteaching videos useful in both respects. She interpreted this finding to support the positive role of videotaped microteaching in motivating and encouraging pre-service teachers "to excel in their performance in micro-teachings that are done in methodology courses," (Savas, 2012, p. 736).

Although detailed research has been carried out to investigate the reflection of pre-service teachers elicited through video recordings either during their practicum or university-based methodology courses, there is still a need to trace pre-service

teachers' "actual learning and/or professional development over time," (Johnson & Arshavskaya, 2011, p. 169). In this study, the researchers, who also supervised the study, aimed to explore the role of school-based practicum in promoting pre-service English language teachers' professional development. To carry out the research, video-recorded microteaching simulations that had been incorporated into participants' previous methodology courses were used as instruments to extract whether there had been any changes in the reflections of pre-service teachers before and after their practicum. To achieve this aim, the research was guided by the following questions:

1. How do pre-service English language teachers reflect upon and evaluate their own microteaching simulations before the practicum?
2. How do pre-service English language teachers reflect upon and evaluate their own microteaching simulations after the practicum?
3. Have there been any changes detected in the pre-service English language teachers' pre- and post-practicum reflections and evaluations over time?

Method

This case study was carried out using the qualitative research design and data collection methodologies (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The longitudinal nature of the study combined with a qualitative methodology enabled the researchers to create an opportunity for the participants to have an instantaneous reaction and a delayed retrospective of their own microteaching experience, the former being pre practicum and the latter post practicum.

Study Population

The study group consisted of 13 female pre-service English language teachers from the English Language Teaching Education Program of a foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey. The ages of these pre-service teachers ranged from 20-23. Two of them had graduated from teacher training high schools, five of them had graduated from state high schools, and six of them had graduated from private high schools. They had all passed the university's English proficiency test with at least a minimum score of 60, which is considered equivalent to a 75 on the TOEFL-IBT. As such, the participants were considered moderately proficient in English. This is highly important considering the fact that their English proficiency constituted their subject-matter knowledge as a prospective teacher.

During a four-year English teacher education program, participants take courses such as linguistics, literature, and teaching a foreign language methodology. Professional courses, especially those which aim to address methodological and

pedagogical approaches to teaching English, cover a diverse array of subfields such as teaching the four main skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing; grammar; teaching young learners; and language testing. In their final year, they practice teaching in competitive cooperating schools in Istanbul, Turkey.

Participants were selected based on purposive sampling. For ethical considerations, written consent was collected from the participants and anonymity of participation was promised. Pseudonyms, such as *Inf. A*, have been used for each participating pre-service teacher in reporting the results of the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected both in the spring semester of the 2013-2014 academic year and in the fall semester of the 2014-2015 academic year. Data for the study came from (a) pre-service teachers' self-evaluation reports of the video-recorded microteaching performance which they watched before and after the practicum and (b) from focus group interviews conducted on pre-service teachers and university supervisors based on their self-evaluation reports. The data collection process, which was repeated during two consecutive semesters, was performed with the aim of examining whether there had been any changes in pre-service teachers' reflections and self-evaluations regarding their own microteaching simulations.

The data collection tools and procedures are shown below in Table 1. The same data collection methodology was adapted during the junior spring semester and senior fall semester of the BA program (before and after the practicum) to gain a deeper understanding of the learning stemming from the school-based practicum. Video-recorded microteaching simulations were integrated as a component into the three core methodology courses (Grammar in Teaching English as a Foreign Language [TEFL], Reading and Writing in TEFL, and Young Learners in TEFL) offered during the third year of the language teacher education program and attended by pre-service teachers to achieve this aim.

Table 1
Data Collection Tools and Procedure

Timeline	Research Tools	Total Amount of Data Collected
Before the practicum	Video recorded microteaching simulations	14.3 hours
Before the practicum	Pre-self-evaluation reports	11,461 words
Before the practicum	Pre-focus-group interview	65 min
After the practicum	Post-self-evaluation reports	11,320 words
After the practicum	Post-focus-group interview	43 min

During their junior-year courses, pre-service teachers had their first chance to design and deliver micro-lessons, which lasted around 20-25 minutes, in front of their peers. These micro-lessons were videotaped in order to incorporate reflective processes into the microteaching simulation (Mace, 1996). Pre-service teachers

were asked to watch their own video recordings and then write self-evaluation reports that were then collected to identify the reflections and evaluations brought up in their comments on what they had noticed about their teaching performance while watching the video. The university supervisors, who were also the researchers of the study, collaboratively listed some possible key points to be included in the self-evaluation reports. They then framed these key points into some questions and submitted them to an expert from the related field to evaluate the content and structure of the questions. The researchers highlighted in the rubric that had been prepared for the self-evaluation reports that pre-service teachers were encouraged to take some personal time to reflect on their microteaching and videotaping experience. In their reports, pre-service teachers were invited to respond to the following key points: the usefulness of microteaching and videotaping, the feelings evoked by microteaching and videotaping, and the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching performance; responses were not limited to these points. Afterwards, pre-service teachers along with their university supervisors attended a focus-group interview conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the reflections that had emerged in the self-evaluation reports. The focus-group interview was employed as a method since it is highly suggested as a qualitative method in the literature for providing in-depth data regarding participants' views, experiences, emotions, and attitudes (Çokluk, Yılmaz, & Oğuz, 2011). At the beginning of the interview, pre-service teachers were informed to feel free to express their thoughts without restraint. The interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Pre-service teachers attended their school experience course as a requirement of the practical application of the program during the next semester under the supervision of the same university supervisors. They spent one day in cooperating schools during the semester and completed an array of observational tasks, mostly adapted from Wajnryb (1995), such as examining and reflecting upon the way cooperative teachers give instructions, direct questions, give feedback, or use meta-language in the observed classrooms. In total, they observed 30 hours of class and performed two micro-lessons (20-25 minutes of teaching). In addition to the day spent at the cooperating schools, pre-service teachers attended a three-hour seminar course managed by the university supervisors once a week to share their experiences and findings based on their observational tasks and micro-lessons.

After the pre-service teachers had completed their school experience course at the end of the semester, they had a chance to re-watch their microteaching video recordings from the previous year and rewrite self-evaluation reports on it. These post-self-evaluation reports were highly significant for seeing what reflections and evaluations the pre-service teachers would bring up after their school experience through their comments on what they had noticed about their micro-lessons while

watching the videos. Video recording was used as a tool for pre-service teachers to revisit and reevaluate their teaching practice, which would not have been possible if it were merely based on memory. At the same time, a post focus group interview was conducted to explore the insights of the pre-service teachers before and after practicum by comparing their own teaching from a retrospective lens. The post focus group interview was also audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis was carried out following a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which enabled researchers to code and fracture data through identification of the patterns within the self-evaluation reports and interview transcriptions, both of which were collected after the pre- and post-phases of the study. The self-evaluation reports and transcriptions of the focus group interviews were read several times in order to first develop a general understanding of the data's meaning and then to find the patterns that emerged from the data set. The patterns which emerged in the form of chunks were initially coded. Later these initial codes were reviewed and labeled under certain themes by the researchers. The final coding scheme, which indicated pre-service teachers' perspectives on their microteaching experience, is presented in Table 2. The frequency distribution of each theme and sub-theme has been presented in Table 3. A computer software program (Dedoose 5.3.22) was used to store the qualitative data, count the frequency distribution of the themes and sub-themes, and easily retrieve data excerpts located under coded themes and sub-themes. The word cloud retrieved from the software program in Figure 1 shows the frequency of occurrence of the themes and sub-themes within the data set. Larger words depict higher frequencies.

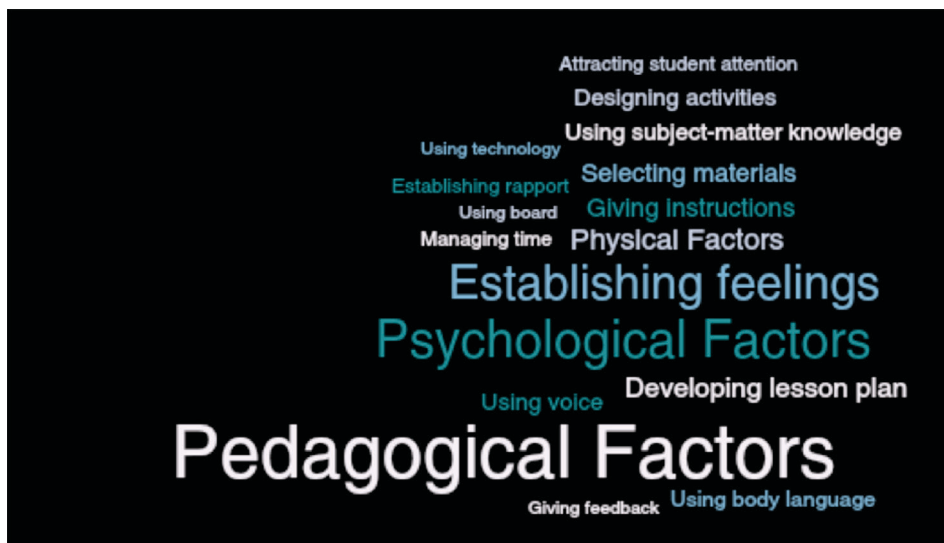


Figure 1: The word cloud retrieved from Dedoose 5.3.22.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the validity and reliability of this study, certain measures were taken following the principles of qualitative design. The data was triangulated to enhance internal validity by using not only the pre-service teachers' self-evaluation reports, but also the focus group interviews. In this respect, the findings (themes and sub-themes) showed parallelism across all data sets and data sources. Moreover, pre-service teachers were informed on their consent forms that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point should they decided to do so. Some of them were also asked to read the transcriptions of the focus group interviews for the purpose of employing member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They were presented with the main conclusions that had been drawn by the researchers, the majority of which they were in agreement with. To ensure external validity, detailed descriptions were provided about the participants, data collection procedures, and analysis. Additionally, direct quotations were included not only to back the interpretations presented by the researchers of the study but also to better portray the reflections of the pre-service teachers. The researchers of the study worked independently from each other while coding the data to ensure internal reliability. Inter-rater reliability, which was assessed by dividing the total number of agreements by the total number of agreements plus disagreements (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986), was found to be .94. Moreover, an independent rater, who was an expert from the same field with a Ph.D., coded 10% of the data individually. By using the same calculation, the inter-rater reliability was found to be .87.

Results

In connection with the first and second research questions investigated in this study, analysis of the pre- and post- self-evaluation reports and focus-group interviews suggested that what the pre-service teachers noticed and brought up in relation to their microteaching experience remained unchanged before and after the practicum. In other words, the same themes emerged from the pre and post data sets. However, the findings related to the third research question, whether there had been any changes in pre-service teachers' reflections and evaluations regarding their own microteaching simulations, indicated that there had been a qualitative change due to their ideas on teaching and learning becoming more detailed and complex after practicum. The themes that emerged in relation to the first and second research questions have been presented below under the following sub-heading; the subsequent sub-heading relates to the third research question.

Findings for the First and Second Research Questions

In this section, the findings for the first and second research questions have been presented together as the same themes and subthemes given in Table 2 had arisen from the analyses of the qualitative data before and after the practicum. The frequency distribution

of the themes and subthemes that emerged in the pre and post data set is shown in Table 3. In this vein, the findings from the pre-service teachers' pre- and post-reflections and self-evaluations regarding their own microteaching experience have been presented under the following three themes: (i) pedagogical factors (giving instructions, demonstrating subject-matter knowledge, designing activities, attracting student attention, selecting materials, developing and implementing the lesson plan, managing time, using the board, using technology, and giving feedback); (ii) psychological factors (establishing feelings and rapport); and (iii) physical factors (using the voice, using body language).

Table 2
Final Coding Scheme: Themes and Subthemes

Pedagogical Factors	Psychological Factors	Physical Factors
Giving instructions	Establishing feelings	Using the voice
Using subject-matter knowledge	Establishing rapport	Using body language
Designing activities		
Attracting student attention		
Selecting materials		
Developing the lesson plan		
Managing time		
Using the board		
Using technology		
Giving feedback		

Table 3
Frequency Distribution of Themes and Sub-themes Before and After the Practicum

Themes	Sub-themes	Pre (f)	Post (f)
Pedagogical factors		134	144
	Giving instructions	20	25
	Using subject-matter knowledge	16	22
	Designing activities	27	18
	Attracting student attention	13	11
	Selecting materials	19	26
	Developing the lesson plan	20	17
	Managing time	6	8
	Using the board	5	8
	Using technology	5	7
Psychological factors	Giving feedback	3	2
		70	62
	Establishing feelings	66	55
Physical factors	Establishing rapport	4	7
		23	23
	Using the voice	12	17
	Using body language	11	6

Pedagogical factors. Both pre- and post-practicum data have shown that pre-service teachers commented mostly on their own teaching performance concerning certain pedagogical factors. Ten subthemes (giving instructions, demonstrating

subject-matter knowledge, designing activities, attracting student attention, selecting materials, developing the lesson plan, managing time, using the board, using technology, and giving feedback) were identified under the pedagogical factors theme. These sub-themes together with selected excerpts from pre-service teachers' writings and interview comments are presented respectively below.

Through their videotaped microteaching simulation, pre-service teachers became more concerned with the way they gave instructions during lessons. While only two pre-service teachers identified giving instructions as an area for improvement, all the rest found themselves bad at giving instructions. They noticed their mistakes while giving instructions and reflected on what went wrong. Some of them listed the things that made their instructions bad as follows: giving lengthy or hard-to-follow instructions, making grammatical mistakes while giving instructions, and having difficulty in simplifying them. They all emphasized the importance of giving clear instructions. Many pre-service teachers reflected on how they could have improved giving instructions if they had taught the same lesson one more time by giving less complicated instructions to follow. Two pre-service teachers suggested being well-prepared and even memorizing instructions beforehand as a precaution. Only one of the pre-service teachers acknowledged to herself that she had used her body language effectively so as to give better instruction. Some of the statements made by the pre-service teachers are presented below:

Also my instructions are problematic. They need to be better. (Inf. K, Pre-Focus-Group Interview)

I noticed that I gave many instructions in a row, never repeating myself twice or asking concept-checking questions. (Inf. G, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Considering the fact that these pre-service teachers are prospective foreign language teachers, they unsurprisingly expressed their deep concern about their target-language competency, which constitutes their subject-matter knowledge. Except for the one who had a high appreciation of her level of proficiency, two pre-service teachers felt uneasy about their proficiency level in general while all the rest of the pre-service teachers criticized their mistakes regarding different areas of language, mainly pronunciation and grammar. Most of them also reported that they had difficulty speaking fluently. Only one of them noted that she had made spelling mistakes. These spotted mistakes were put forth by the pre-service teachers as a source of considerable worry and an area of necessary improvement; caution is warranted in order to be good models to their future language learners. Some of the comments related to subject-matter knowledge were:

When I watched myself, I saw that my speaking was terrible. (Inf. M, Pre- Self-Evaluation Report)

After I had watched my previous microteaching sessions, I observed that I could not speak fluently. Mostly while I was speaking, I always said “uh, umm,” so in my opinion, my speech was neither natural nor fluent. I need to speak both fluently and naturally. (Inf. C, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

The activities in the micro-lessons received substantial comments both in the reports and during the interviews. Unlike the previous two sub-themes which had been reflected on as particularly weak points, many pre-service teachers expressed quiet satisfaction with the activities they had designed for their lessons and how these activities went during their micro-lessons. Only one of them expressed disappointment in not meeting her objective as related to a specific activity. One consideration pre-service teachers indicated they took into account was that they had put a great deal of effort into designing activities according to the characteristics of hypothetical students, such as age and proficiency level. Some of them highlighted the fact that they had noticed how important it was to have a plan B or some extra activities prepared for the lesson in case something went wrong or the pace of the lesson went faster than planned. Finally, two pre-service teachers stressed the difficulty of providing smooth and natural transitions between activities. Some pre-service teachers' views on designing activities were as follows:

My strength was that I really researched my activities well. I looked for what I could do. I see activities as my strength. (Inf. Y, Pre-Focus-Group Interview)

Also the transitions between the activities were not natural or smooth. There were no meaningful transitions from one task to another. When one was done, I said time's up and then immediately moved on to the next task instead of spending more time on the current one, explaining and waiting for the students to absorb it. (Inf. G, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Another pedagogical factor that was constantly voiced by pre-service teachers in their pre- and post- reflections was attracting students' attention. The majority of pre-service teachers showed serious concern over whether they had been able to capture attention or not during their micro-lessons. While most of them were pleased with the level of attention they managed to draw, four of them regarded themselves as failures in that respect. In terms of things they did to attract students' attention, they claimed that they purposefully took advantage of using different things during their micro-lessons such as visuals, technology, competitions, games, real objects, and interesting movie or book characters. On the other hand, the ones who stated that they had lost the attention of their students listed low levels of energy, excessive use of body language, uninteresting topic choice, and lengthy activities as the reasons for their failure. Some of the statements made by the pre-service teachers are presented below:

If I am not energetic, students' attention may wander and they may also not want to listen to me. (Inf. A, Pre-Self-Evaluation Report)

For instance, microteaching a grammar lesson was more enjoyable than the others because there I used the computer and played some entertaining videos and movie characters which really grabbed their attention. (Inf. L, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

The pre-service teachers reflected on and evaluated how effectively they had selected material for their micro-lessons as another pedagogical factor. Many of them were satisfied with the material they had selected. Only two of the pre-service teachers asserted that they did not like their material. One of them had found her material boring, whereas the other one underlined that her material had not worked properly in one of her micro-lessons and this made her check her material each time in the other micro-lessons. Those who were satisfied with their material argued that they had made sure their material had certain key features such as being colorful, enjoyable, and authentic. Still, they notified two areas for self-improvement even if they had been satisfied with their material: (1) checking their material beforehand for appropriateness and accuracy, especially with spelling and grammar, and (2) preparing extra material in case something goes wrong during the lesson. Moreover, pre-service teachers commented on why material has critical importance. They dwelt on the role of selecting good material for attracting students' attention as the most striking reason. To them, material with good features such as listed above is necessary for making students focus on course content, which results in effective learning. Only one of the pre-service teachers expressed her appreciation of the opportunity materials create for teachers' professional development since new material is constantly being developed due to ongoing research which thus results in teachers' self-evaluation. Some of the pre-service teachers' views were as follows:

Also, I gave importance to using colorful and funny visuals in activities and presentations. (Inf. G, Pre-Self-Evaluation Report)

For the grammar lesson, I chose materials that were in the classroom such as the desk and pencil, and also I brought some Lego figures to class, which they liked. Using real objects and toys that they enjoy helps them to remember that subject more easily. (Inf. B, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

One pedagogical factor brought up by every pre-service teacher in the study was the lesson plans they had designed for their micro-lessons and how they had been implemented. Whereas four pre-service teachers evaluated themselves positively in terms of preparing good lesson plans, two of them criticized their plans because of a lack of clarity. No matter how they judged their lesson plans, they all referred to designing or implementing lesson plans as a crucial learning opportunity. The

majority of pre-service teachers acknowledged that they had learned a lot regarding lesson plans during their microteaching experience. They noticed the things that they needed to improve to make their lesson plans run more smoothly like dwelling on unexpected things more, allocating time more carefully, and including some extra activities and back-up plans. As parts of the lesson plans, lesson objectives and anticipated problems can be counted as the ones most emphasized by the pre-service teachers. Some of the statements made in relation to lesson plans are presented below:

I was so afraid of preparing a lesson plan. I really put a lot of effort into making it. Then, I realized that I had learned well. (Inf. G, Pre-Focus-Group Interview)

I prepare detailed and well-organized lesson plans which help me to use time efficiently since I am not an experienced teacher; however, in the long run, I am willing to become more flexible about lesson plans. (Inf. N, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Managing time was another sub-theme that had emerged under the theme of pedagogical factors. Pre-service teachers mentioned the difficulty of allocating the precise time needed for smooth lesson flow. Those who were not happy with their time management had run out of time, could not finish their activities at the right time, or had been left with a considerable amount of extra time which they did not know what to do with. The majority of these pre-service teachers highlighted the discrepancy that existed between the actual time required for the lesson and the time calculated in their lesson plan. However, in either scenario they reflected on the microteaching experience as a good learning opportunity for their future professional life since most of them found it important to use the available time effectively and properly in a real classroom environment. Some of the comments related to managing time were:

For example, I have a time management issue. I write on the plan that this will take three minutes, that will take five minutes, and another one will take six minutes, but it doesn't happen as planned. The activity I had allocated three minutes for turned out to take five. (Inf. G, Pre-Focus-Group Interview)

We are supposed to use time effectively to teach within a limited time. (Inf. N, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Another sub-theme that arose in the pre-service teachers' reflections was the classroom board. The majority of them found it important to note that they had used the board during their micro-lessons. They referred to their use of the board for certain acts such as writing down answers they elicited from students, hanging pictures or cardboard, and writing down the meaning of unknown words. They expressed their concern on using the board effectively so as to avoid possible student misunderstandings and to help students better understand the topic. Some of the statements made by the pre-service teachers are presented below:

I wrote two categories on cardboard then stuck them on the board. (Inf. Y, Pre-Self-Evaluation Report)

I valued students' answers and I preferred to show them on the board. (Inf. K, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Technology emerged as another sub-theme since some pre-service teacher reflected on it both in their reports and interview comments. They remarked that technology should be used as a teaching resource, especially in this era. They further elaborated that it is a must to integrate technology into their lessons, considering the fact that it attracts student attention and motivates them to learn more. Regarding their own use of technology, three pre-service teachers expressed their satisfaction, whereas two of them leveled serious criticism at themselves since they had not blended technology into their micro-lessons. Some of the statements made by the pre-service teachers related to technology are presented below:

I am good at using technology in my microteaching. (Inf. K, Pre-Self-Evaluation Report)

For example, I got angry at the fact that I did not use technology at all. Since we have this opportunity to use technology and it's something that attracts young learners, I have discussed why I did not use technology. (Inf. L, Post-Focus-Group Interview)

As a final sub-theme that emerged under the theme of pedagogical factors, giving feedback to students was emphasized by three of the pre-service teachers before and after the practicum. Among these three, only one of them was happy with the way she had given feedback during her micro-lessons by always providing correct answers. However, two other pre-service teachers expressed disappointment in themselves. One of them was concerned about her lack of practical knowledge though she claimed to have been equipped with the necessary theoretical knowledge, and the other one was concerned about providing positive reinforcement. Some of the pre-service teachers' views were as follows:

For instance, one student gives the correct answer and I reply "yes, ok" and then move on immediately. In fact, I want to show a reaction, but I just can't do it. (Inf. F, Pre-Self-Evaluation Report)

For example, we all talked about error correction types in the grammar lesson. We know what to do and how to do it in terms of methodology. But somehow I was very surprised while watching the video. Apparently, I didn't prepare myself; I assumed that everyone would give the correct answer. (Inf. B, Post-Focus-Group Interview)

Psychological factors. In addition to the pedagogical factors listed and elaborated on above, both pre- and post-practicum data showed that pre-service teachers also commented on their own teaching performance concerning certain psychological factors. Two subthemes, establishing emotion and rapport, were identified under the theme of psychological factors. Indeed, pre-service teachers were particularly engaged about their feelings while reflecting on their teaching performance. They emphasized their emotions nearly as much as the pedagogical factors they had commented on. These two sub-themes, together with selected excerpts from pre-service teachers' writings and interview comments, are presented below respectively.

Reflecting on emotions emerged as the sub-theme voiced by the highest number of pre-service teachers. With no exception, all the pre-service teachers intensely reflected on their feelings in their reports and during the focus-group interviews. The emotions that had been evoked before and mainly during the microteaching simulations constituted the negative ones. All pre-service teachers stated that they had suffered from very strong feelings such as nervousness, anxiety, stress, fear, and uneasiness before and during the micro-lessons. They mentioned, albeit scantily, that they had felt relaxed and happy after the micro-lessons. One of the participants even remarked that she had again felt the exact same emotions when watching her video-recordings. As a result of this whole range of harbored negative feelings, some pre-service teachers ran into certain difficulties during their micro-lessons: (1) forgetting things they had included in their lesson plans, (2) making some fundamental grammatical mistakes, and (3) experiencing deterioration in their fluency. Additionally, some pre-service teachers highlighted that there had been some sudden transitions of feelings which had taken place during the micro-lessons, whether the lesson had gone astray or not, moving back and forth between emotions. Though micro-lessons were blamed for raising negative feelings, they were highly acknowledged as a particularly helpful component among their studies for gaining self-confidence, learning how to control their emotions, and remaining calm. The majority of pre-service teachers explained that their level of nervousness decreased as the number of micro-lessons they delivered increased. Finally in regard to being videotaped, some pre-service teachers asserted that they had felt nervous when first informed that they were to be videotaped during their micro-lessons. However, they forgot that they were being recorded the moment they started delivering their lesson. Some of the pre-service teachers' views on their feelings are as follows:

Before the session I felt a little nervous because I didn't know whether my lesson plan would work or not. Besides, I was not sure about the warm-up stage of the lesson. (Inf. B, Pre-Self-Evaluation Report)

I was not often disappointed when things went wrong. To exemplify, when students were unable to answer some questions, I did not become frustrated. Instead, I just gave the correct answers and smiled. (Inf. S, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Establishing a good rapport with students was stressed by the pre-service teachers in their reflections before and after practicum. They all emphasized how important it is for teachers to build a good rapport with their students. In the same vein, they were concerned about the relationship they had developed for themselves in the classroom during their micro-lessons. One of them even prioritized rapport over other pedagogical factors. The majority of them acknowledged trying to be cheerful was a powerful tool for building the desired relationship; they found it to be one of their strengths. Only two of the pre-service teachers expressed their dissatisfaction at not being cheerful. Some of the statements made by the pre-service teachers are presented below:

Also, I realized that I'm cheerful. (Inf. G, Pre-Focus-Group Interview)

The last thing is that no matter how experienced you are as a teacher, if you don't communicate with your students in a positive and purposeful way, all the things that you do in your lessons won't be effective for your students. (Inf. B, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Physical factors. In addition to the pedagogical and psychological factors discussed above, physical factors emerged as a theme in both pre- and post-practicum data with respect to the microteaching performance of the pre-service teachers who had participated in this longitudinal study. Two subthemes, using the voice and body language, were identified under the theme of physical factors. Pre-service teachers unsurprisingly became very conscious about how they looked as their video recordings gave them a chance to see themselves as an outsider. These two sub-themes together with selected excerpts from pre-service teachers' writings and interview comments are presented below respectively.

Pre-service teachers were highly interested and judgmental about their voice in the classroom, a sub-theme that had received substantial comments both in the reports and during the interviews. With the exception of three, all pre-service teachers expressed their frustration at how they used their voice in class. Many of them expressed their surprise when they heard how quiet their voice was. They remarked that their voice was not audible and had bad or no intonation at all. They attributed this condition directly to low self-esteem and the intense excitement they had experienced during the micro-lessons, except one person who sincerely expressed her annoyance at her own voice in general. The three pre-service teachers who had found their voices to be good during the micro-lessons asserted that their voices were clear, audible, friendly, and not rushed. Some of the statements made by the pre-service teachers are presented below:

It seems I was not able to control my voice. (Inf. C, Pre-Focus-Group Interview)

I talk with such a quiet voice that I am sure I would be sleeping if I were a student. (Inf. G, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Body language, another sub-theme under the theme of physical factors, was frequently voiced by the pre-service teachers as something they had particularly noticed while watching themselves in their video recordings. Half of the participants expressed relief at using their body language appropriately, whereas the other half was not content. Both the satisfaction and dissatisfaction regarding body language consisted of whether or not they had made eye contact and used appropriate mimics, gestures, or facial expressions. Two of those who were not happy with their body language criticized themselves as they had been fidgeting with their hair the whole time. Two of the pre-service teachers highlighted finding the way they had used their body language to be powerful since they had used it to enhance student learning. This was exemplified by how one of them showed her ears while she was instructing to make them listen to something carefully. Some of the comments related to body language were:

One of my teachers at high school used to fidget with her hair a lot. She used to fix her hair all the time. When I watched the video, I saw that I did the same. I made the same mistake. (Inf. T, Pre-Focus-Group Interview)

Also, another strong point about me is my body language. (Inf. G, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Findings for the Third Research Question

In this section, we present the findings related to the third research question of whether there had been any change in pre-service teachers' reflections and evaluations regarding their own micro-lessons before and after practicum. As indicated above, there was a qualitative change over time since their ideas of teaching and learning had become more detailed and complex after practicum, though the components detected regarding their micro-lessons remained unchanged over time. The post-self-evaluations of the pre-service teachers involved a deeper level of analysis and reflection as they not only noticed things they had not noticed in their pre-self-evaluations, but also because they had more insightful perspectives on learners and had come up with justifications and alternatives in relation to their practices.

The data suggested that pre-service teachers' interests had been more oriented towards themselves and not much towards learners when reflecting on their own microteaching simulation during the first phase of the study, the pre-practicum. They had focused on their own performance and expressed their concerns on what they did and how they looked during the micro-lessons. However, post-reflections collected after the practicum experience suggested that the focus of pre-service teachers' concerns started to shift from themselves towards the learners in class; in other words, learners started to appear more as the agent in the context of learning and teaching. It is important to note that although pre-service teachers had re-watched their own micro-

lessons where their classmates were still pretending to be learners, their awareness towards the learner increased after post practicum. When they re-visited their micro-lessons, they were able to take learners more into account and could reflect on their micro-lessons by moving beyond the lack of authenticity inevitably embedded in microteaching, the lack of real students. However, after encountering “real” teaching contexts through practicum, it was evident in their reflections that pre-service teachers had become more aware of the hypothetical learner in the class they had designed even though they had been watching the very same micro-lesson from pre practicum. This raised awareness in pre-service teachers’ reflections was twofold: (1) there had been no reference to the learner in the pre-reflections of the pre-service teachers before they started practicum; however, the learner emerged as an agent in their post-reflections as exemplified in Inf. K’s excerpt from her post-practicum report below; (2) there had been a certain, albeit casual, reference to the learner in the pre-reflections but the reflections became more complex and elaborate post practicum by taking the learner into account in a multi-layered manner, as seen in Inf. G’s excerpts below.

The first thing I noticed was that I had a good rapport with the students and all of my interactions with them were positive. (Inf. K, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

To give an example of a weak point, I could not provide clear instruction for my students’ competition activity. (Inf. G, Pre self-evaluation report)

As I watched the video, I saw I had divided the students into two groups, and there were 5 categories in the competition. The categories were bigger mouth, smaller hand, thinner person, taller person and colorful clothes. According to the activity, those two groups were going to select their competitors for each category. Then, the competitors for each category would come to the board and the whole class would compare them to decide who won the category. I think it was a very enjoyable activity for the students, but I realized that I should have chosen different categories. The reason for that is I think the categories of bigger mouth, smaller hand, and thinner person were not proper to use in a classroom. In a real classroom atmosphere, I may be faced with a problem if I use these categories because the students are young and they really tend to make fun of each other. While laughing at each other, students may exaggerate the situation and thus some of the students could be offended because body image is very important for children in puberty. (Inf. G, Post self-evaluation report)

This increased awareness of pre-service teachers as developed towards the learners manifested itself in relation to the characteristics learners bring to class and the learning outcomes learners might achieve in lessons. Principally, after the practicum experience where pre-service teachers had encountered real students, they came to better understand the importance of learner characteristics such as age, proficiency

level, and personal traits. As a result of this, the issue of learner characteristics was not merely a unit covered as part of their university-based coursework anymore but an indispensable component of teaching. When they reflected on their micro-lessons in the post-practicum phase of the study, they mapped the learner characteristics of those hypothetical students in their simulated lessons onto the real students from their cooperative schools. Secondly, the post-reflections revealed that pre-service teachers had become more concerned about the quality and outcome of the learning process after the practicum experience. They came to realize that the ability to employ effective teaching strategies translates into more desirable and successful learning outcomes on the side of the learner. Some of the statements made by the pre-service teachers in the post phases of the study are presented below:

For example, while I was doing my microteaching in the young learners course, I did this activity for the third graders. I said to myself that the proficiency level of our cooperative school is high with respect to the activity I did. That activity would be fine for the first graders in our school. (Inf. K, Post-Focus-Group Interview)

I recognized that I must choose pictures that can be clearly understood by students. In the grammar lesson about prepositions, I realized that students might get confused because of the pictures that I had chosen. Additionally, for my other lesson which was about the family I put pictures about the members but two of them were plural (sisters and brothers) where the rest were singular. During the lesson I understood that choosing pictures is not something that is easy. Because of my mistake students can learn the word in its plural form which is not acceptable. (Inf. A, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

In the first phase of the study where they watched their micro-lessons for the first time right after delivering them, they were more concerned about checking their discrete set of behaviors. They constantly attested to what they had done and what they had failed to do during the micro-lessons. It was as if they were putting a tick or a check next to a list of behaviors. In short, it would not be a loose interpretation to argue that their observations had been at an elementary level before the practicum. However, after the practicum, they expanded their pedagogical knowledge in terms of moving beyond identifying discrete behaviors to more of a reflective evaluation. Pre-service teachers watched their micro-lessons the second time through a more reflective lens considering the fact that they had provided ample justifications and conceptualized alternative perspectives in their teaching objectives, decisions, and practices. Some of the statements made by the pre-service teachers are presented below:

Now I can link what I need to do, and why, at this stage (at certain stages of the lesson). My awareness has been raised in that matter due to practicum. I could also see this while watching the videos this time. Now I am doing this for this reason. I

am doing it with this intention. I thought I could even do that for this reason. When I watched the video for the first time, I thought that I should do this or not do that; I followed the lesson plan. But now I can say that I did this because of this reason and I could even have done that as well. (Inf. S, Post focus-group interview)

In the young learners' micro-teaching I again talked about a story and the characters of that story, but the impact was not the same. However, if I had opened some videos about Little Red Riding Hood and the students were asked to watch the video after listening to the story, the impact might have been different. (Inf. L, Post-Self-Evaluation Report)

Discussion

In this study, we reported evidence to illustrate our claim that practicum is an imperative component of teacher education as a transformational arena where pre-service teachers can step more deeply into reflection and gain a deeper understanding of contextual factors, especially about learners. In this context, the capacity to reflect is itself the result of a developmental process fostered by practicum. The pre-service teachers in our case study moved from a technicist-view of teaching in which teaching is conceptualized as consisting of a discrete set of behaviors broken down into small parts towards a more reflective view of teaching by integrating systematic self-examination and critical reflections. In this vein, the findings of the current study relate to the reflective learning theory as argued by Higgs (1988): "... the value of reflection in learning lies in its ability to help learners clarify their thoughts, gain insights, and deepen their understanding of the information they receive" (p. 47). Though the potential benefits and constraints of practicum have been well documented in teacher education (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Smith & Lev-Ari, 2005; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002), there still remains a need for research that provides a comprehensive analysis of the actual role of school-based practicum in pre-service English language teachers' professional development. These studies that have attempted to explore practicum and its role in pre-service teachers' professional development have mainly been built upon pre-service teachers' perceptions and recollections of their learning during practicum rather than any sort of empirical data that provides their actual learning over time.

The aim of this study was to explore the role of school-based practicum in promoting pre-service English language teachers' professional development with the help of videotaped micro-lessons incorporated into their earlier methodology courses. Through analyzing what pre-service teachers had noticed and brought up in relation to their microteaching experience before and after practicum, it became evident that the pre-service teachers referred to the same elements in their pre- and post-self-evaluations and reflections. Both pre- and post-practicum data showed that

pre-service teachers had commented on their own teaching performance concerning certain pedagogical factors, psychological factors, and physical factors.

Specifically, the pedagogical factors that had been detected were giving instructions, demonstrating subject-matter knowledge, designing activities, attracting student attention, selecting materials, developing lesson plans, managing time, using the board, using technology, and giving feedback. Akcan (2010) revealed similar results in relation to pre-service language teachers' recognition of some pedagogical elements of their lessons recorded during their practicum, such as target language use, time management, lesson plan, and student attention while watching themselves and reflecting on their own teaching performances. The psychological factors included establishing feelings and rapport. As a matter of fact, pre-service teachers were especially highly engaged in their feelings while reflecting on their teaching performance. Analysis indicated that pre-service teachers had reported their feelings nearly as much as pedagogical factors. This is not surprising, as it has been documented in the related literature that because of the emotional nature of practicum, pre-service teachers have some concerns (Çelik, 2008) and emotional experiences (Marais, 2013) that they constantly have to cope with (Gallant, 2013) during practicum. In addition to the pedagogical and psychological factors, data indicated that physical factors had emerged as a theme in both pre- and post-practicum data with respect to the microteaching performance of the pre-service teachers who had participated in this longitudinal study. Specifically, the two subthemes of using the voice and body language were identified under the physical factors theme. It is common in the related literature that pre-service teachers comment on their physical presence and body language (Betil-Eröz, 2013) when given the chance to watch themselves in videotaped microteaching simulations.

The critical finding of this study was that although the issues pre-service teachers had noticed and brought up regarding their microteaching experience remained

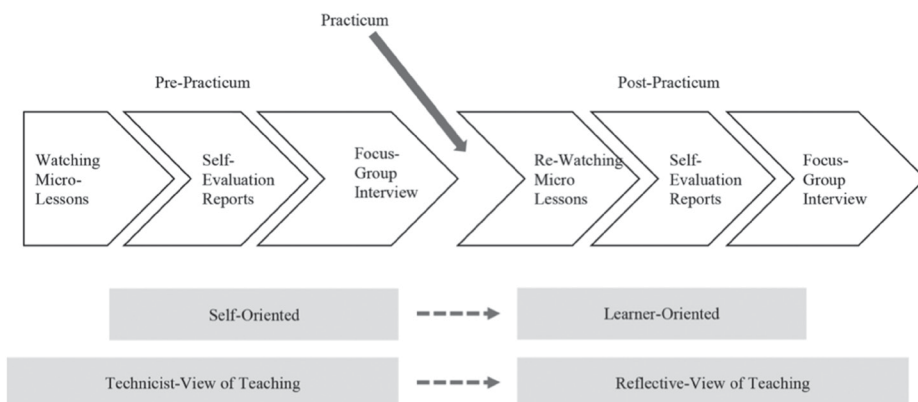


Figure 2: Qualitative changes that emerged pre and post practicum.

unchanged both in the pre-and post-data sets, a change in the nature of their self-evaluations and reflections was noticed. A shift from a self-oriented perspective to a more learner-oriented perspective and a switch from a technician view of teaching to a more reflective view of teaching were detected (See Figure 2).

The excerpts we have shared demonstrate that pre-service teachers' reflections became more learner-oriented after completing the practicum. In the pre-self-evaluations and reflections of their micro-lessons, pre-service teachers' attention had been directed more to themselves rather than the learners. The comparison of the pre-and post-data sets noted that pre-service teachers had come to better recognize the learner as the primary agent of the teaching context and had understood the importance of learner characteristics such as age, proficiency level, and personal traits. A point that should be considered here is that both pre and post practicum, they had watched the same video of the micro-lesson they had offered to peers, not real learners. After the practicum, pre-service teachers still considered the learner-related components of their microteaching practices more. We argue that the increased awareness that pre-service teachers developed towards learners illuminates a shift from a self-oriented perspective to a more learner-oriented perspective. This shift may be due in part to their contact with real students in actual teaching contexts during practicum which may have strengthened their sense of becoming a teacher, thus triggering them to watch the videos through a teacher's lens rather than a learner's lens post practicum. This line of interpretation is parallel to the related literature as studies on the identity construction of pre-service teachers has highlighted the importance that practicum plays in pre-service teachers' professional identity construction. For example, in a study exploring professional identity construction and reconstruction of pre-service teachers during practicum, [Hamiloğlu \(2013\)](#) concluded that the critical and reflective essence of practicum had an essential part in fostering pre-service teachers' awareness of their identity construction.

The findings of the study were not limited to what the pre-service teachers had noticed about their micro-lessons. As indicated in our findings, in the first phase of the study where pre-service teachers watched their micro-lessons for the first time right after delivering them, they were more concerned about checking their discrete set of behaviors; thus their observations remained at an elementary level pre practicum. We therefore argue that pre-service teachers' reflections depicted a more technician view of teaching which lacks the systematic reflection that leads to moving beyond intuition or routine ([Johnson & Arshavskaya, 2011](#)). As acknowledged in the literature, noticing is not enough because pre-service teachers need to be able to interpret what they have noticed ([van Es & Sherin, 2002](#)). The findings of the study post practicum showed that pre-service teachers not only noticed things that they had not noticed in their pre-self-evaluations but also had more insightful perspectives on learners and came up

with justifications and alternatives in relation to their practices. Post practicum, they expanded their pedagogical knowledge in terms of moving beyond the identification of their discrete behaviors into more of a reflective kind of evaluation. The excerpts we have shared demonstrate that practicum supported the pre-service teachers to critically reflect on their micro-lesson as they became better able to problematize the issues they had noticed in their micro-lessons. Pre-service teachers watched their micro-lessons the second time through a more reflective lens considering the fact that they had provided ample justifications and conceptualized alternative perspectives in their teaching objectives, decisions, and practices. In this vein, our analysis has revealed that practicum supports pre-service teachers concretely, connecting noticing with reflecting. We therefore further argue that pre-service teachers switched from a technicist-view of teaching to a more reflective view of teaching as their post-self-evaluations and reflections had shown a broader and deeper analysis of their own teaching practices and contextual factors, especially about learners.

Based on the findings of the study, some direct and indirect implications can be suggested. Considering the transformational role of practicum indicated in the findings of this study, teacher education programs should be reconstituted by incorporating practicum into the curriculum prior to the senior year. By doing this, the need for an integration of theoretically based knowledge provided in universities with experience-based knowledge gained from practicum may be satisfied (Darling-Hammond, 2006). This suggestion was also voiced by one of the pre-service teachers: “I wish we started to intern earlier. If it had been for the last two years of the university instead of one, I’m sure I’d graduate as a much more well-equipped and efficient teacher.” Moreover, teacher educators can and should maximize the learning opportunities of pre-service teachers through the implementation of efficient self-inquiry tools such as videos (Baecher, Kung, Jewkes, & Rosalia, 2013) during their initial teacher education years. The limitations of the present study, as well as suggestions for further research, are worth mentioning. To begin with, this study focused exclusively on the role of practicum in pre-service teachers’ professional development. However, it is worth mentioning that the results should be interpreted with the caveat that practicum is not suggested as the only determining factor that can influence the development of pre-service teachers. Thus, future studies on the role of the impact of other factors on the professional development of pre-service teachers should be conducted (Aypay, 2009). Moreover, as suggested by Yıldırım (2013) and Yücel-Toy (2015), in order to improve pre-service teacher education programs in Turkey, longitudinal studies investigating the relationship between pre-service teachers’ learning processes when beginning their teaching careers and student academic achievement should be conducted. An important limitation of the study is the relatively small sample ($N = 13$) that may not be representative of a larger population of pre-service language teachers. To address this limitation, future research adopting similar methodological approaches may be conducted in other teacher education programs, both in Turkey and in other countries.

All in all, the study's findings suggest that practicum is a vital component of teacher education as a transformational arena where pre-service teachers can step more deeply into reflection and gain a deeper understanding of contextual factors, especially regarding learners. Our findings echo Britzman's (2003) remarks that learning to teach is "always the process of becoming, a time for formation and transformation," (p. 31).

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