

International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research
Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 520-541, January 2025
<https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.24.1.26>
Received Nov 25, 2024; Revised Jan 21, 2025; Accepted Jan 31, 2025

Optimizing Online Teaching: An Explanatory Sequential Study on the Training Needs of Pre-Service English Teachers

Jennifer B. Gonzales 

College of Teacher Education
Cebu Normal University
Cebu City, Philippines

Abstract. The shift to online education brought about by global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and internationalization has highlighted the need for effective teaching strategies and support systems for educators, specifically those new to the field or those in training. This study determined the training needs of the pre-service English teachers in terms of instructional communication, teaching strategies, and classroom management in an online context. An explanatory sequential design was used to collect and analyze data. The design consisted of two phases, first the collection and analysis of quantitative data, second, the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The quantitative data was utilized to construct the interview questions. The qualitative result provided the researcher with deeper insight into the training needs of the pre-service teachers. The tools were administered to 101 pre-service English teachers, who were selected using random sampling. The findings revealed that the most needed skill among pre-service teachers for effective online teaching is instructional communication, followed by teaching strategy and classroom management. While they adapt to online tools and enhance teaching strategies, communication proficiency requires ongoing training. This study proves that effective instructional communication as the backbone of effective teaching, beyond language proficiency, is crucial for successful teaching and learning. Based on the results, the Acquire, Practice, Perform, and Assess training and mentoring model was designed to assist teacher training institutions and professors or mentors in delivering training tailored to the specific needs of pre-service teachers.

Keywords: online education; instructional communication; classroom management; teaching strategy; online teaching tools.

1. Introduction

Global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasing emphasis on internationalization have shifted classrooms from traditional face-to-face

©Authors

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

instruction to online and hybrid. This shift requires significant changes in classroom instruction, integrating digital technology, modern communication strategies, and innovative teaching methods to ensure effective student learning. This transformation to digital education has redefined traditional teaching methodologies, emphasizing the need for enhanced teacher preparation programs. Unfortunately, many current teacher preparation programs may not fully address these demands, leaving pre-service teachers underprepared for the realities of digital classrooms. Future teachers are now expected to manage a hybrid of onsite and online lesson delivery seamlessly, which requires re-evaluating existing teacher education frameworks.

For pre-service English teachers, this shift creates challenges that demand specialized competencies, including mastery of instructional communication, digital tools, and adaptive pedagogical strategies. The demand for proficient English language skills has surged worldwide, especially in non-native English-speaking countries. It is, therefore, vital to train pre-service English teachers to meet this growing demand. Moreover, training pre-service English teachers is crucial in effectively preparing students to use English as a lingua franca (Zein, 2018). Their responsibilities extend beyond language instruction to fostering intercultural communication skills and global competencies. Yet, despite the growing body of research on online education, significant gaps remain in understanding the training needs of pre-service English teachers as they transition into the digital teaching landscape.

Existing literature underscores the evolving demands on teachers, which require improving teacher training, particularly in pedagogy integrating technological tools, instructional communication, and classroom management. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) noted that the skills teachers need today are far beyond the traditional content delivery; teachers need to manage diverse learners while being knowledgeable users of educational technologies. However, teacher education programs remain grounded in conventional methods leaving future teachers unprepared for their future roles. Unlike face-to-face instructional delivery, teaching online requires a specific set of skills such as proficiency in digital tools, good skills in virtual classroom management, and effective instructional communication strategies tailored to online classrooms. While competence in teaching face-to-face instruction can be transferred to online classrooms; a meta-analysis of the literature reveals that training online teachers requires a careful approach. Ko and Sammons (2013) defined teaching effectiveness as the ability of the teacher to enhance learning outcomes through a positive learning environment, positive teacher-student interaction, and evidence-based practices that support student engagement. They noted that effective teachers are characterized by their reflective practices and their ability to adapt to instructional strategies to meet the student's learning needs. Sieberer-Nagler (2016) emphasized effective classroom management and a positive classroom climate are an essential foundation for effective teaching. Similarly, high-quality teaching strategies and classroom management are essential in delivering content and effectively managing classroom environments (Lockwood et al., 2015).

Albrahim (2020) reviewed teachers' competencies that can help create opportunities for online teaching. It was found out that these include technology skills, pedagogical skills, design skills, management skills, and social and communication skills. These can be further condensed into teaching strategy (pedagogy and design skills), classroom management (management skills), and instructional communication (social and communication skills), which Yusof et al. (2019) considered the three areas of teaching competence. To enhance these essential skills, teacher training programs need to incorporate targeted strategies for preparing educators to teach in online environments effectively. Gregory and Lodge (2015), and Albrahim (2020) identified these core competencies as essential for online teaching, yet current training programs often fail to integrate them comprehensively into their curricula for pre-service English teachers. The lack of targeted training on these skills leaves pre-service English teachers inadequately prepared for the demands of modern classrooms, particularly in the digital realm.

While the existing literature emphasizes the importance of pedagogical and technological skills for effective teaching, particularly for in-service educators, there is a significant gap in understanding how pre-service English teachers are being trained to navigate these challenges. Moreover, despite the recognition of training in these essential skills, there is still a significant gap in the training of pre-service English teachers, especially in the context of online teaching. This gap underscores the urgent need to understand the training needs of pre-service English teachers, specifically on the constructs of effective online teaching. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the training needs of pre-service English teachers along the three constructs of effective online teaching: classroom strategy, instructional communication, and classroom management (Albrahim, 2020; Smith, 2022; Yusof, 2019).

Various literature discussed the essential skills required for effective online teaching and learning, yet none offered a training model catering to the changing needs of the pre-service teachers in managing online classes. This study was conducted in one of the leading and recognized state universities in the Philippines, whose flagship is teacher education. This study sought to understand the training needs of the pre-service teachers to adjust mentoring and training strategies. The result of this study will be a potent data for the educators to adjust techniques suited to the needs of the pre-service teachers. Moreover, the result of this study may offer both practical and theoretical contributions as it provides insights into the specific training needs of pre-service English teachers. These insights will be valuable for teacher education institutions in curricular development and implementation. Finally, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of how online classroom strategy, online instructional communication, and online classroom management can be integrated into teacher education. Eventually, this will contribute to the growing body of knowledge in the digital educational landscape.

1.1 The Research Scope

This study aimed to determine the training needs of pre-service English teachers in online instructional delivery, adjust the training and mentoring techniques, and design a teaching model that is best tailored to the pre-service teachers' needs. The specific objectives of this study include: 1.) the quantitative result of the training needs assessment in online teaching strategies, online instructional communication proficiency, and online classroom management; 2.) the qualitative data describing the experience of the pre-service teachers in online teaching strategies, online instructional communication proficiency, and online classroom management; and 3.) the teaching model designed based on the result.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Teaching strategy in online learning

Teaching strategy ensures the attainment of the learning goals and expected learning outcomes through the effective use of varied instructional and assessment techniques. It encompasses several methods the teacher uses to engage the students in online discussion and to choose appropriate approaches to maximize student learning. Effective teaching involves not only mastery of the subject matter but also the skill to modify instructional approaches to fit various learning styles and contexts (Smith et al., 2022). Effective teaching strategy ensures active and cooperative learning where the students are allowed to experience, validate, analyze, and solve problems individually and in groups (Copper and Mueck, 1990 cited in Zapalska et al., 2019). A study by Nikoçeviq-Kurti (2023) reported lower readiness of pre-service teachers in the areas of computer self-efficacy, communication self-efficacy, and learning control. These highlighted the need for targeted training to enhance their online teaching competencies. In their study, Suzuk et al. (2021) reported the pre-service teachers' self-confidence in Pedagogical Content Knowledge and revealed that many pre-service teachers are moderately confident in using technology in teaching. They highlighted that effective use of technology requires a deeper understanding of the pedagogy and subject matter. They reported further that comprehensive training be provided for the pre-service teachers to ensure that they can use technology effectively. The studies of Pan (2023) and Bao (2020) proved the importance of adjusting instructional strategies to fit online learning, yet pre-service teachers are unfamiliar with the appropriate online strategies. Indeed, an assessment of the training needs of the pre-service teachers is very significant to identify their specific training needs in digital teaching and learning platforms.

2.2 Instructional communication in online learning

Competent online teachers carry an important role in facilitating learning, and teachers' presence is considered one of the most critical factors related to online learning (Preisman, 2014; Li & Wang, 2024). Various literature proved that communication creates a teacher's presence in the classroom and motivates students to interact and learn. While an effective teaching strategy guarantees positive learning outcomes, it will not be carried out without instructional communication competence (Karasova & Kleckova, 2023). Teachers' effectiveness is always associated with communication; effective communication between teachers and students allows more successful learning. Instructional

communication pertains to the teacher's proficiency in communicating ideas and conveying messages to guide, motivate, help, and ensure student learning. The effective use of questioning and probing techniques in classroom interaction is essential for the students' learning process (Niza, 2024). McNeill and Bushaala (2024) reported that a lack of teachers' confidence in online communication has a negative influence on their satisfaction and performance, thus, affecting their motivation to teach online. Teaching includes guiding the learners and motivating them to answer the exercises and think critically, pose questions effectively, stimulate creativity, and increase students' understanding. Through effective use of the language of instruction, teachers use motivating words and help the students in completing the tasks. They are also capable of articulating questions and instructions in a way that is easy for the students to understand. They simplify concepts, answer students' questions with the facility, and address the student's learning needs. Using proficient instructional communication, teachers guide students in the learning process effectively.

Despite the importance of honing pre-service teachers' instructional communication, a survey by Hattie (2021) showed that effective communication is underemphasized in teacher preparation programs. Walke et al. (2022) revealed in their study that quality of communication instruction is rarely given priority in teacher preparation programs, indicating a need for improvement. Further, pre-service teachers may show uncertainty in managing classroom interactions (Hamre et al., 2018). Similarly, they may feel underprepared to engage students in meaningful communication (Gorski & Dalton, 2020). Effective instructional communication is a requirement in guiding students through the learning process. The absence of non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and body language, in digital classrooms, can create a challenge for teachers in conveying their intended messages successfully. Greer and Dubnov (2021) revealed the importance of non-verbal communication particularly eye contact, in facilitating student engagement in virtual classroom. A growing body of research indicates that teachers are struggling in online interactions, resulting in lower comprehension and student engagement (Hodges et al., 2020). Moreover, Morreale et al. (2024) reported that teachers struggle to ensure students' understanding during online classes. These require enhanced teacher education programs incorporating more practical training on instructional communication, ensuring that pre-service teachers will become effective instructional facilitators in online classrooms. Without identifying the specific needs of the pre-service teachers in instructional communication especially in online teaching, pre-service teachers may struggle to create a successful learning space, that is dynamic, interactive, and well-facilitated. Therefore, conducting a training needs assessment for pre-service teachers would help educators determine the specific instructional communication skills that need to be addressed.

2.3 Classroom management in online teaching

Equally, classroom management is an essential skill for teachers to be competent. The effective use of classroom management maximizes student learning through the use of preventive management techniques strengthened by reinforcement and control of students' behavior. Teachers need effective classroom management

skills especially in online learning to ensure maximum student engagement and avoid class disruption. Considerable literature shows the importance of classroom management on effective teaching however many teachers especially those new on the field struggle to manage the classroom successfully. Gage and Macsuga-Gage (2017) contended that students who do not pay attention to instruction cannot learn, therefore classroom instruction is dependent on effective management and control of student behaviors. A handful of literature described classroom management. The development of classroom management techniques tailored to students' learning styles and learning space, highlights the need for teachers to adapt teachers' methods (Rahadian & Budiningsih, 2023).

Classroom management is a critical component in successful teaching more significantly in the online setting. Recent research highlights the critical role of effective classroom management in online settings. A study by Mogavi et al. (2021) identified barriers to active learning in online classes including technical issues, lack of engagement, and feelings of isolation resulting in decreased student engagement. Similarly, Cheddad and Nordahl (2022) revealed the difficulties teachers encounter in sustaining student participation in online learning environments. Therefore, a training needs assessment for the pre-service teachers is needed to assess their perceived competence in managing the students' behavior in online learning.

2.4 Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinning

This study is anchored on the Interaction Analysis Model (IAM), developed by Flanders (1970), which analyzes the interaction between teachers and students in the classroom. The model focuses on both verbal and non-verbal behaviors and interactions including giving directions, probing, or classroom dialogue Flanders (1970). This helps teachers analyze and improve their probing and questioning techniques, feedback mechanism, and overall classroom interactions. Using this model, teachers evaluate how often and how effectively they use probing and open-ended questions to enhance interactions. Further, they can monitor a ratio of student and teacher talk to ensure active learning and student engagement. Moreover, IAM allows teachers to evaluate a better online tools to use to foster a more interactive online learning environments, and create mechanisms to use to ensure student engagement. Moreover, using the IAM model allows teachers to provide immediate and clear feedback which is critical in the online learning environment. This model is suitable for training pre-service English teachers' instructional communication, teaching strategy, and classroom management.

Aside from the IAM, the Speech Communication Theory (SCT) highlights the principles of effective classroom communication ensuring that the message is clearly conveyed, logically organized, and effectively delivered. This theory highlights clarity exchanges and communication delivery techniques, which are essential in classroom interactions in the online learning context. Using the SCT, teachers adjust their pace during the discussion of complex concepts and use understandable simple terminologies to avoid ambiguity, especially during online learning. They will properly use tone, gestures, pacing, and presence to engage students and engage attention. Further, Wichgers et al. (2023) emphasized

the importance of teachers' communication responses to student behavior in managing student learning.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study used a mixed method following an explanatory sequential design with two phases of data gathering and analysis: the quantitative followed by the qualitative method (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative method provides strong data on the “what” while the qualitative method allows a deeper examination and analysis of the “how and why.” This design is the most appropriate for this study, as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the training needs of pre-service English teachers in the context of online teaching. The collection of quantitative data first provides a broad overview of the training needs, followed by qualitative data collection to deepen the understanding of the specific needs of the pre-service English teachers (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The sequential nature of this design aligns with the research objectives to first identify which of the constructs of effective online teaching identified by Albrahim (2020), Smith (2022), and Yusof et al. (2019) is greatly needed by pre-service English teachers. This phase provides a solid foundation for the qualitative phase. This ensures that the interview process addresses the specific gaps identified in the quantitative findings. This leads to a deeper understanding of the training needs of pre-service English teachers. By using an explanatory sequential in this study, both quantitative and qualitative methods capture the training needs and the underlying factors contributing to these needs.

3.2 Research Instrument

There were two instruments used in this study; the first was a researcher-made Likert-scale questionnaire based on the constructs of effective online teaching namely teaching strategy, instructional communication, and classroom management. This was used to collect the data on the training needs of the pre-service teachers. The second tool was a semi-structured interview guide, in which questions were guided by the result of the quantitative data, identifying the need for further information to enrich and verify the quantitative result. The interview guide was used to collect the experiences of the pre-service teachers in handling online classes to understand their training needs. These tools were validated by three experts both in content and research. All three experts are doctorate holders specializing in English Language Education. They are Graduate Studies professors who are handling both Language Teaching and Research courses. Both instruments had undergone Item-Content Validity Index validation, wherein, the experts rated the relevance of the constructs and each item under the constructs. The overall expert rating is 1.00 which is above the above threshold of 0.78, which indicates that the items under each construct are highly relevant. The interview guide was validated by the same experts who assessed the clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness of each question. Feedback was provided for revision and refinement of questions. The interview guide was sent back to the expert for final checking and approval. After the content validation, the tools were pilot-tested to 30 pre-service English teachers to test their reliability, which is a result is 0.83 Chronbach's Alpha. The interview guide had undergone pilot testing

administered to 8 pre-service teachers to assess the clarity and avoid ambiguity of the items.

3.3 Research Respondents

The research respondents were Bachelors of Secondary Education who specialized in English teaching. Only those who were in Field Study 2 and Teaching Internship were allowed to participate. This ensures that the respondents have relevant exposure and experience to online teaching through observations and actual teaching. The sampling was randomized. The consent to participate in the research was the major consideration of the participation, as well as the experience and exposure to online teaching. From the 135 total population of Field Study students and teaching interns in the First Semester of 2024 who gave their consent to participate in the study. A confidence level of 95% and a margin error of 5% were utilized. Among the 135 population, 101 were included in the study to answer the Likert-scale questions, while 20 were included in the focus group interviews, with 5 respondents per interview session. Random sampling was utilized to ensure that everyone had an equal chance of participation.

3.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive data analysis. The responses were tallied accordingly, where the rows represented the number of respondents and the columns represented the number of items. Items 1 to 5 correspond to the constructs of online teaching strategy, items 6 to 10 correspond to the constructs of online instructional communication, and items 11 to 15 correspond to the constructs of online classroom management. Points were assigned as follows: strongly needed (5), somewhat needed (4), neutrally needed (3), rarely needed (2), and never needed (1). Frequency count was utilized. The qualitative data was analyzed by themes using Braun and Clark (2006) thematic analysis. The perceived training needs of the pre-service teachers were extracted according to their strengths and challenges in the areas of online teaching strategy, online instructional communication skills, and online classroom management, as observed and experienced. The research respondents' identity was protected by using codes instead of mentioning their names as part of the ethical considerations employed in the conduct of the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Quantitative Findings

The training and mentoring needs of the pre-service teachers are visually presented and described below in terms of online instructional communication proficiency, online teaching strategy, and online classroom management.

4.1.1 Training Needs in Online Instructional Communication

The figure below shows the training needs of the pre-service teachers in online instructional communication.

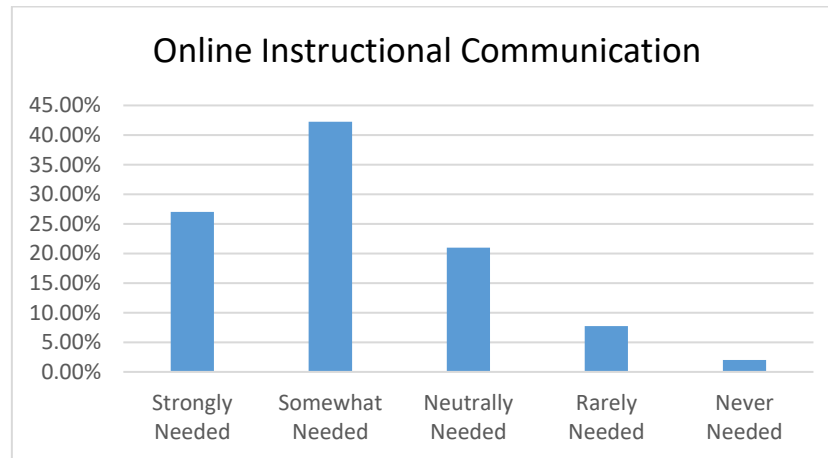


Figure 1. Pre-service teachers' online instructional communication training needs

The data in Figure 1 shows the pre-service teachers' need for training and mentoring in terms of online instructional communication proficiency in a high percentage (strongly needed at 27% and somewhat needed at 42.25%). This means that the pre-service teachers struggle with effectively communicating and facilitating the classes, particularly in online or hybrid settings. They may feel that their instructional communication skill is not enough to successfully facilitate the discussion and tasks, especially in the digital classroom where the use of non-verbal cues is limited. Generally, this means that online instructional communication is viewed as a critical need of the pre-service teachers for training and mentoring. Khalid et al. (2021) stated that pre-service teachers frequently expressed challenges in managing classroom discussions and asking questions that promote critical thinking. If teachers have difficulty in instructional communication specifically in online classes, this could bring adverse effects to students' learning, thus, immediate attention and extensive training are required to enhance the teachers' instructional communication. Additionally, with the advent of online learning, where students have access to resources beyond the traditional classroom setting, the role of pre-service teachers have evolved as Huang (2018) emphasized. Pre-service teachers may need training on posing effective questions, giving clear instructions, processing ideas effectively, using effective probing techniques, and providing clear feedback in an online environment.

4.1.2 Training Needs in Online Teaching Strategy

The figure below shows the training needs of the pre-service teachers in online teaching strategy.

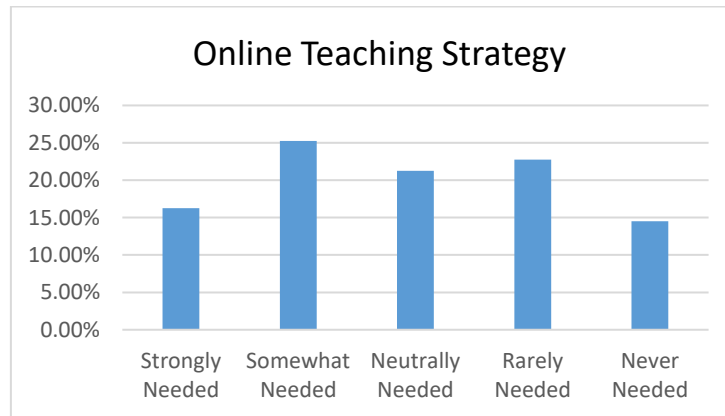


Figure 2. The pre-service teachers' online teaching strategy training needs

Figure 2 shows the high need for training online teaching strategy among pre-service teachers, which is evident in the 25.5% (somewhat needed) result. Although the result also indicates that they are confident in their acquired online teaching strategy, which is evident in the 22.75% (rarely needed) result. The result shows that pre-service teachers may they have acquired sufficient knowledge and exposure to online teaching resulting to their confidence in their online teaching strategy, although, they still welcome training in this area. This implies that online teaching strategy is still needed to be learned by the pre-service teachers although not the most critical need. This result could be attributed to the pre-service teachers' exposure to online tools, which enhanced their strategy in online teaching. Further, pre-service teachers may have already adapted to the shift to online teaching due to their exposure to various teaching strategies in college before their teaching internship. However, they lack prior experience in teaching online.

More experiential learning and training as Kolb (1984) emphasized is indeed required.

4.1.3 Training Needs in Online Classroom Management

In terms of online classroom management, it appears that the teaching interns rarely needed training in this area as illustrated in the figure below.

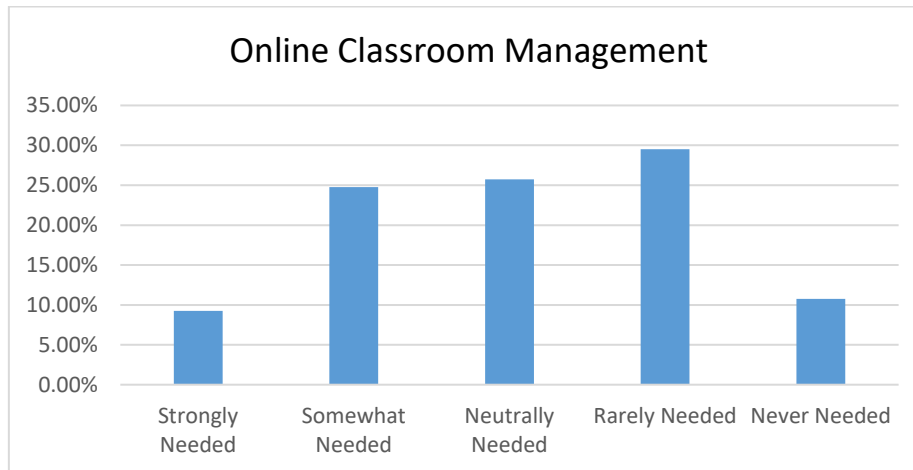


Figure 3. Pre-service teachers' online classroom management training needs

The data in Figure 3 shows that the highest percentage of pre-service teachers (29.3%) indicated rarely needed, followed by neutrally needed at 25.75% and somewhat needed at 24.75%. This reveals the confidence of the pre-service teachers in their ability to manage online platforms, thus, they do not see classroom management as a major challenge. It appears that pre-service teachers have already developed the needed skills in managing student behaviors and in participating online discussions. This further reveals that among the constructs of effective teaching, online classroom management is the least priority of the pre-service teachers for training and mentoring. This data could be attributed to the fact that when it comes to online teaching, the teacher has more control over the students' behavior and less chance to observe misbehavior since the class is done virtually. The constructs of classroom management as described by Albrahim (2020) such as controlling students' behaviors, and calming rebel students are less likely observed in the virtual classroom. This can be also attributed to the fact that parents are most probably present at home during classes, thus, students' misbehavior is minimized. This implies that training pre-service teachers in managing online classrooms could be given less priority.

Comparatively, based on the data, training, and mentoring on online instructional communication proficiency is more needed by the pre-service teachers, followed by online teaching strategy while classroom management came last.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings reveal the experiences of pre-service teachers in online classrooms highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. This helps the researcher assess the training needs of the pre-service teachers in the areas of online teaching strategy, online instructional communication, and online classroom management.

4.2.1 Strengths

4.2.1.1 Pedagogical adaptation

One of the strengths of online instructional delivery is the pedagogical adaptation of the pre-service teachers to the online classroom setup. They expressed their frustrations at first in teaching online but they soon realized that they could apply

some of the strategies used during face-to-face classes using online tools. They further noted that the eagerness to learn and adapt to online instruction matters. Eventually, they felt confident in teaching online with the new strategies and the new tools that they learned to use. These are evident in the lines below:

"I just learned that online teaching is not difficult in terms of strategy as long as teachers are eager to learn and explore especially in creating visual materials such as videos and other available online apps." (TI-B)

"At first, I thought that online class is different but later on, I realized that it is just the same as what we learned in our previous classes. It is just we need to use online tools." (TI-E)

"I believe that the training in online teaching gave me the exposure and confidence. although I feel that I need more training, but at least I am capable now." (TI-G)

4.2.1.2 Creative Lesson Designing

The pre-service teachers revealed that because of the online instructional delivery, they resolved to improving their lesson design. They feel that students are likely to get bored in the online classroom, thus, they tried to design better and more interactive lessons.

"I feel now that most of the time I struggle in lesson planning, when it comes to teaching strategy because I don't want my students to get bored." (TI-E)

"I spend more time in lesson planning, I have to make sure about my teaching strategy especially in online teaching because it is different." (TI-A)

4.2.1.3 Technology mastery

The pre-service teachers belong to the Generation Z who are already very acquainted with the online tools. This contributed to their excitement in using online technology and helped them manage class interactions successfully. Further, they showed a positive attitude toward learning and using online tools in teaching. They showed appreciation for the availability of online tools after exposure. These are observed in the statements below.

"I was thankful of the online tools since my students were very interested whenever I used some applications such as Kahoot, Quizziz Spin the Wheel." (TI-D)

"Kahoot was very interesting for me, I also enjoyed and learned a lot, and when I see my students responding positively to my activities I felt good, then I started exploring other applications such as Menti, Jamboard, Edu-pal." (TI-F)

4.2.1.4 Reduced Behavioral Disruption

Among the experiences of the pre-service teachers is behavioral disruption. They noted that students often turned on their microphones which led to class disruption. Others chatted unnecessary messages in the chat box of the online platforms used, but other than these, they did not experience much trouble

managing students. They also revealed that they learned to strategize later and did not have much trouble thereafter. Moreover, the pre-service teachers revealed that it is easier to use online platforms to manage students' behavior. Since the teacher has control over who to speak using the online tool, class disruption is likely prevented. These are observed in the lines below.

Well, there were really cases that I found challenging in terms of managing the online classroom. Some students turned the microphones on, resulting to overlapping of voices. However, compared to face-to-face classes, this issue is easier to handle. In face-to-face classes, teachers need to repeatedly remind the students to keep quiet or that teachers need to always device a classroom management mechanism to silence the students or catch their attention. In short, in online classes, managing behavior is easier. (TI-B)

"If students speak at the same time, we just have to turn-off the microphone or disable the chat-box in Zoom or Google Meet. This way we don't have to stop the class every now and then." (TI-I)

Based on the narratives of the pre-service teachers, it appears that they did not struggle in adjusting to the online instructional delivery in terms of teaching strategy as long as they managed to plan their lessons properly and master the use of appropriate online tools and applications. Indeed, with an array of tools and applications available online, tailoring teaching strategies is not difficult for pre-service teachers. They further exposed that their experience in teaching online slowly gave them confidence and mastery in selecting appropriate strategies and tools to use to ensure active class engagement. Experiential learning allows the pre-service teachers to experience, reflect, and learn (Kolb, 1984), thus, giving them the experience to teach online. These findings reveal that the online teaching strategy and classroom management training are not the highest priority.

4.2.2 Challenges

4.2.2.1 Lack of language proficiency

The pre-service teachers expressed a tone of hesitation when it came to interaction with the students. They noted that they lacked confidence in teaching using English, they were afraid of making mistakes in grammar and pronunciation, they were afraid of being corrected by the students and the parents, and sometimes they groped for words to use and express themselves. According to them, no matter how prepared they are with their visual materials, they are still very nervous during online classes. They lack confidence in teaching because they are not fluent in English. These are described in the following lines:

"I am always nervous in class, sometimes I feel giving up because I am always afraid. I just conditioned my mind that I can do it. I know that I have to discuss and ask questions to have interaction with the students, but sometimes I had mental block." (TI-C)

"I feel that I am improving in terms of communication, but I still know it is my weakness. I want to really express all my ideas during class, but I can't." (TI-J)

"[B]ecause the students are good in English, their intonation is good and they are very confident, so I am always nervous that I make mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. (TI-F)

"I don't know but I am afraid to make mistakes in grammar and pronunciation." (TI-G)

Another cause of hesitation and difficulty when it comes to online communication is the vocabulary command of the interns. They noted that there are instances of not being able to ask the right question or process the students' answers due to the lack of words to use and express themselves. These are evident in the following lines:

Although I really try to prepare and learn a lot, there are times that I had a mental block due to the limited words to use during online classes. (TI-B)

Grammar and vocabulary are my weaknesses in speaking in English. I can write better than speak in English. (TI-G)

4.2.2.2 Real-time interaction

Real-time interaction is better in face-to-face classes. These are noted by the pre-service teachers. Although it appears that in online classes, teachers can still communicate with the students, they feel that the communication is still more effective if done face-to-face. This is one of the challenges in online classes, thus, students and teachers alike prefer to hold classes onsite.

I feel like I cannot really express myself in online classes compared to face-to-face classes. Sometimes when speaking in front of the students, it is easier to understand what they meant so I could throw follow-up questions. (TI-F)

My students can understand me better in face-to-face classes because they observe my non-verbal cues. (TI-D)

4.2.2.3. Students' missing tasks

Another concern that the pre-service teachers raised was monitoring the students' submissions and missing tasks. These are observed in the following responses:

The very stressful situation in managing students' behavior is monitoring the students' submission. We are always asking the students to submit, but there are really students who submit late if not they will not submit unless we made follow-ups. It is easier to manage face-to-face than online classes. (TI-D)

We have a system that we post the names of the students who missed tasks to our group chats with the parents but still many students do not submit. (TI-C)

4.2.2.4 Difficulty to probe

One of the challenges in online classes is the speed and quality of the internet connection. Sometimes low internet connectivity causes communication lag or inability to clearly understand the person on the other side. This is experienced by the pre-service teachers. They revealed

that sometimes due to internet issues, they could not hear their students clearly and vice-versa. This resulted in the struggle to probe or process information. These are expressed as follows:

Because of the very slow internet, it is always the internet problem that made me really nervous. (TI-B)

Sometimes I cannot hear the students' answers clearly so I do not know what to say next. (TI-G)

My students always told me that I lag, so I feel anxious. I don't know if they heard me right. (TI-F)

The narratives of the pre-service teachers above relate to the issues concerning the clarity of instruction, the lack of language proficiency, the struggle in communicating with the students due to internet issues, or miscommunication due to the limited non-verbal cues. Moreover, pre-service teachers need to establish a mechanism on how to communicate with the students and encourage prompt submission. These challenges relate to the need for online instructional communication training. Since failure to communicate properly will lead to the hesitation of pre-service teachers in class and affect their overall performance, this suggests that training and mentoring have to be directed towards the honing of the interns' communication skills. Further English Proficiency is a vital element in creating successful instructional communication resulting in an effective classroom interaction. Through proficient instructional communication, teachers guide students in the learning process effectively.

The qualitative result of the study reveals that the teaching strategies of the pre-service teachers were enhanced as they experienced online teaching. By learning to use some online tools and applications in their classes, online learning has enabled them to discover new skills for effective teaching. It was also observed that online classroom management concerns are specific to online teaching and learning, however, can be remedied by using the online tools effectively. Among the constructs of effective online teaching, online instructional communication proficiency needs to be given more attention by the mentors since achieving communication fluency needs better knowledge of language and more time to practice.

The results of the quantitative study highlight the pre-service English teachers' need for training in instructional communication, teaching strategies, and classroom management, with instructional communication emerging as the most critical area. This finding was corroborated by the qualitative data, which revealed challenges faced by pre-service teachers in effective probing, real-time interactions, and language proficiency. While the quantitative survey indicates a stronger need for training in teaching strategies compared to classroom management, the qualitative interviews provide additional insights. Pre-service teachers noted that with exposure to online learning environments, they can quickly adapt to using technology. This adaptability enables them to design more creative lessons and employ innovative teaching strategies, ultimately demonstrating a positive pedagogical adjustment to online learning.

4.3 Training and Mentoring Model

Based on the result of the study, the Acquire, Practice, Perform, and Assess (APPA) training and mentoring model is proposed. This is designed to improve the pre-service English teachers' online teaching competence. This targets the constructs of effective teaching giving more emphasis on the honing of instructional communication skills.

The figure below shows the cyclical process of the APPA training and mentoring model for pre-service English teachers. The phase starts with Acquire (A) where pre-service teachers are trained in both communication proficiency and the art of questioning and probing. Communication proficiency training does not only highlight language fluency but also clarity of instructions, conveyed intentions, and other linguistic functions. Aside from language training on instructional communication enhancement, the pre-service teachers will be exposed to actual online teaching to hone their online teaching strategy and management of the online learning space during the Practice (P) and Perform (P) phases. Ratings and feedback from the training professor or mentor will be provided during the Assess (A) phase to consider the areas and competencies that need to be reacquired and strengthened.

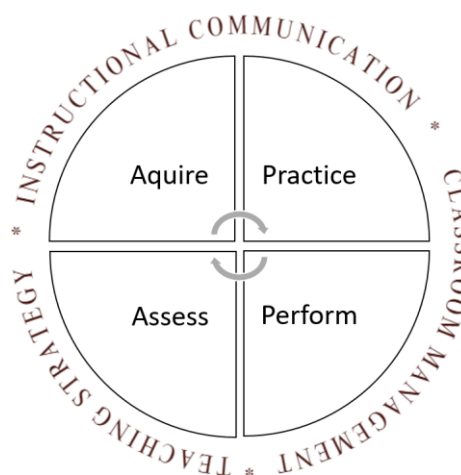


Figure 4. APP Mentoring and Training Model for Pre-Service English Teachers

4.3.1 Acquire

4.3.1.1. Training in Communication Proficiency

This involves training in instructional communication by targeting both linguistic competence, which is the mental knowledge of grammar, and the linguistic performance or the authentic use of language in realistic situations (Chomsky, 1960). Fromkin et al., (2018) described linguistic competence as putting together sounds, structure, meaning, words, and rules. Therefore, in acquiring linguistic competence and performance of the pre-service teachers, competent knowledge and proficient use of grammar are needed. Grammar is linguistic knowledge represented in the speaker's mind including everything about the language such as the lexicon, phonetics, morphology, and syntax (Fromkin et al., 2018). The pre-

service teacher's competence and performance in the English language in terms of sound production (pronunciation), structural control (syntax), and lexical command (use of vocabulary) will be assessed. This is done through a series of activities and tasks to improve their language skills.

4.3.1.2 Training in Art of Questioning and Probing

This involves training in the art of questioning from convergent questions to divergent questions, clarifying, probing, Socratic questioning, and reflective questioning. According to Vygotsky (1978), the art of questioning training also includes probing questions that are essential to enhance a deeper understanding of the text and allow students to elaborate idea. Training in Socratic questioning allows teachers to assess and guide on how students verify information and use critical thinking (Paul & Elder, 2019). Clarifying questioning is a good skill for pre-service teachers. This enables them to make sure that all students are on the same page. Okoronka and Taale (2015) emphasized, employing effective questioning strategies activates students' curiosity and motivates them to pursue new knowledge. By incorporating questioning techniques, teachers can enhance students' engagement. Hypothetical questioning allows teachers to challenge students' thinking and reasoning by prompting them to consider the implications of alternative perspectives (Bloom, 1956). Lastly, reflective questioning allows pre-service teachers to guide students in reflecting on their personal experiences (Schön, 2016).

4.3.1.3 Training in Online Teaching Strategy

This involves exposure of the pre-service English teachers to different online tools including Google Classroom, Quizlet, Kahoot, Edmodo, Padlet, Flipgrid, Canva, Nearpod, Seesaw, Socrative, Vacaroo, Grammarly, Lino, Flip, Storybird, Gimkit, Miro, Wiser.me. The use of these online tools will help pre-service English teachers prepare themselves for online and hybrid classes and ensure active and hands-on learning for the students to experience, analyze, and solve problems individually (Zapalska et al., 2019). The trainees will be provided with relevant activities to expose them to these online applications.

4.3.1.4 Training in Online Classroom Management

Online classroom management training equips pre-service English teachers with the needed skills to manage virtual learning space. This includes practical hands-on activities such as organizing individual and group tasks to be done and submitted online, designing and preparing engaging online tasks, and implementing strategies to ensure maximum student participation. It is expected that by engaging in these activities, pre-service English teachers will develop the competence in maintaining organized, well-planned activities and online classrooms to address the challenges unique to online teaching. Emphasis is also placed on utilizing digital tools to monitor and support students' engagement. It is also important that pre-service teachers are given exposure to online classes through actual class observation. This will give them opportunity to take note of the challenges that they might encounter in the future.

4.3.2 Practice

Pre-service teachers will engage in a series of online practice sessions focused on developing questioning and probing techniques. During these sessions, they will be trained in the effective use of specific online tools, such as virtual whiteboards, polling platforms, and breakout room features, to enhance student engagement. These sessions will involve collaborative activities where the teachers work in pairs, simulating real-life teaching scenarios. They will record their practice sessions to allow professors and mentors to provide detailed, constructive, and timely feedback to refine their techniques further. Following Flanders' (1970) IAM and the Speech Communication Theory, the pre-service teachers will assess their instructional communication skills, strategy, and classroom management in the online context.

4.3.3 Perform

The performance stage involves pre-service teachers conducting actual online teaching demonstrations. These demonstrations will serve as a platform to apply the skills and tools practiced in the previous phase. Using Flander's (1970) Interactive Analysis Model, the pre-service English teachers with the help of the training professor or mentors analyze their probing and questioning techniques and the overall classroom interaction. After each demonstration, detailed feedback sessions will be conducted, focusing on enhancing their instructional communication, online engagement strategies, managing online space, and overall effectiveness. This iterative process of demonstration and feedback aims to build confidence and competence in online teaching delivery.

4.3.4 Assess

Using the Interaction Analysis Model (Flander, 1970) and Speech Communication Theory discussed in Weaver and Hybels (2011). The pre-service English teachers' instructional communication, teaching strategy, and classroom management will be assessed using an analytical rubric. The areas for improvement will be assessed to identify which competencies are still to be reacquired and strengthened.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings, both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that among the constraints of effective online teaching, online instructional communication skill is the most needed by pre-service teachers. The data show that although online teaching requires a different set of skills to make the instructional delivery successful, the pre-service teachers when allowed to teach online and to maneuver some online tools available, managed to adapt and enhance their teaching strategies and classroom management fitted to the online classroom space. However, instructional communication as it requires an essential skill which is communication proficiency in the use of language, cannot be learned overnight. Thus, instructional communication along with other skills requires further enhancement through rigid training and practice. Therefore, it is concluded that effective instructional communication is the backbone of successful teaching and learning. It is not only about knowledge or language proficiency but also about how that knowledge is conveyed and utilized in the classroom setting.

This study recommended the following: 1.) Teacher education training should emphasize enhancing the instructional communication skills of pre-service teachers, especially in teaching online; 2.) The professors handling pre-service teachers are those whose have excellent instructional communication, with extensive background teaching pedagogy, and have proven effective classroom management skills; 3.) The professors handling Field Study and Teaching Internship courses are those with ample years of experience in teaching and have mastered online learning classes; 4.) the implementation of APP training and mentoring model will be done during the Field Study and Teaching Internship of the pre-service teachers; and 5.) The APPA training and mentoring model be implemented, tested and evaluated.

6. Research Scope and Limitations

This study is centered on the training needs of the pre-service English teachers specifically in the areas of instructional communication, teaching strategy, and classroom management in an online learning context. This does not include actual teaching demonstrations that are assessed by the training professors or mentors. Although this study can be translated to degree programs other than English, these were not included in this research.

7. Research Funding

This research is institutionally funded by Cebu Normal University, Center for Research and Development.

8. References

- Albrahim, F. A. (2020). Online teaching skills and competencies. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, 19(1), 9–20.
- Bao, W. (2020). COVID-19 and online teaching in higher education: A case study of Peking University. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2(2), 113–115. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.191>
- Bloom, B. S. (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals*. Longmans, Green.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cheddad, A., & Nordahl, C. (2022). Distance teaching experience of campus-based teachers at times of pandemic confinement. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2211.16280>
- Chomsky, N. (1960). *Aspects of the theory of syntax*. MIT Pres.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-prof-dev>
- Flanders, N. A. (1970). *Analyzing teaching behavior*. Addison-Wesley.

- Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyams, N. (2018). *An introduction to language* (11th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Gage, N. A., & MacSuga-Gage, A. S. (2017). Salient classroom management skills: Finding the most effective skills to increase student engagement and decrease disruptions. *Report on Emotional and Behavioral Disorders in Youth*, 17(1), 13–18. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6345407/>
- Gorski, P. C., & Dalton, K. (2019). Striving for critical reflection in multicultural and social justice teacher education: Introducing a typology of reflection approaches. *Journal of Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487119883545>
- Greer, R., & Dubnov, S. (2021). Restoring eye contact to the virtual classroom with machine learning. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2105.10047*. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2105.10047>
- Gregory, S.-J., & Lodge, J. M. (2015). Academic workload: The silent barrier to the implementation of technology-enhanced learning strategies in higher education. *Distance Education*, 36(2), 210–230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2015.1055056>
- Hamre, B., Pianta, R. C., Downer, J. T., Hamagami, A., & others. (2013). Teaching through interactions: Testing a developmental framework of teacher effectiveness in over 4,000 classrooms. *The Elementary School Journal*, 113(4), 461–487. <https://doi.org/10.1086/669616>
- Hattie, J. (2021). *Visible learning: Feedback*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003001453>
- Hodges, C., Moore, S., Lockee, B., Trust, T., & Bond, M. A. (2020, March 27). The difference between emergency remote teaching and online learning. *EDUCAUSE Review*. <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>
- Huang, X. S. (2018). Examining teachers' roles in online learning. *The EuroCALL Review*, 26(2), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.4995/eurocall.2018.9139>
- Karasova, J., & Kleckova G. (2023). Supporting learners through effective communication: Student teachers' communication strategies to address learner behavior. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 48(3). 19-35.
- Khalid, L., Buchereei, J., & Issah, M. (2021). Pre-service teachers' perceptions of barriers to promoting critical thinking skills in the classroom. *SAGE Open*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211036094>
- Ko, J., & Sammons, P. (2013). *Effective teaching: A review of research and evidence*. CfBT Education Trust. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED546794>
- Kolb, D. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
- Li, W., & Wang, W. (2024). The impact of teaching presence on students' online learning experience: Evidence from 334 Chinese universities during the pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1291341>
- Lockwood, J. R., Savitsky, T. D., & McCaffrey, D. F. (2015). Inferring constructs of effective teaching from classroom observations: An application of Bayesian exploratory factor analysis without restrictions. *Annals of Applied Statistics*, 9(3), 1484–1509. <https://doi.org/10.1214/15-AOAS833>
- McNeill, D., & Bushaala, S. (2024). Instructor communication apprehension and online teaching satisfaction. *Frontiers in Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2024.1397570>
- Mogavi, R. H., Zhao, Y., Haq, E. U., Hui, P., & Ma, X. (2021). Student barriers to active learning in synchronous online classes: Characterization, reflections, and suggestions. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2104.04862>

- Nikoçeviq-Kurti, A. (2023). The influence of online education on pre-service teachers' academic performance and self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Education*, 9, 1398642. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1398642>
- Niza, A. K. (2024). Teachers' questioning strategies in classroom interaction. *JELITA*, 5(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.56185/jelita.v5i1.589>
- Okoronka, U. A., & Taale, K. D. (2015). Application of cues, prompts, probes, questions, and gestures (CPPQG) in physics teaching and learning. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 3(9), 1151–1156.
- Pan, X. (2023). Online learning environments, learners' empowerment, and learning behavioral engagement: The mediating role of learning motivation. *SAGE Open*, 13(4), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231205098>
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2020). *The thinker's guide to Socratic questioning: Based on critical thinking concepts and tools* (5th ed.). Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Preisman, K. A. (2014). Teaching presence in online education: From the instructor's point-of-view. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Network*, 18(3). <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v18i3.446>
- Rahadian, R. B., & Budiningsih, C. A. (2023). *Development of classroom management based on student learning style database*. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7618566>
- Sieberer-Nagler, K. (2016). Effective classroom-management & positive teaching. *English Language Teaching*, 9(1), 163–172. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v9n1p163>
- Schön, D. A. (2016). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Smith, A. H., Grupp, L. L., Doukopoulos, L., Foo, J. C., Rodriguez, B. J., Seeley, J., Boland, L. M., & Hester, L. L. (2022). Taking teaching and learning seriously: Approaching wicked consciousness through collaboration and partnership. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, 41(1). <https://doi.org/10.3998/tia.453>
- Süzük, E., & Akinci, T. (2021). Comparing pre-service teachers' self-confidence levels in technological pedagogical content knowledge in terms of several variables. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 10(1), 82–93. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v10n1p82>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Weaver, R. L., & Hybels, S. (2011). *Communicating effectively* (10th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Walker, V. L., Pennington, R. C., & Masud-Werner, A. (2021). Preservice teachers' preparation in communication instruction for students with extensive support needs. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 47(1), 50–69. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221074720>
- Wichgers, I. J. M., Korpershoek, H., Warrens, M. J., Dijks, M. A., & Bosker, R. J. (2022). Study profile choices in secondary education: Searching for factors underlying the recommendations made by school guidance counsellors and tutors to vignette students. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 50(6), 1005–1024. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2022.2068504>
- Yusof, M. R., Yaakob, M. F. M., & Ibrahim, M. Y. (2019). Measurement model of teaching competency of secondary school teachers in Malaysia. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (ijET)*, 14(24), 123–132. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v14i24.11465>
- Zapalska, A. M., Waid, A., McGurer, M., & Wingrove-Haugland, E. (2019). Identifying effective and successful teaching strategies using the PERIA model.

Interdisciplinary Education and Psychology, 2(3).
<https://doi.org/10.2139/interdiscedupsy/2/3/1>

Zein, S. (2018). *Teacher education for English as a lingua franca: Perspectives from Indonesia*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367583040>