

Preparing Future English Educators for the Teaching Practicum: Examination of Communicative Engagement, Mentorship, and Language Exposure

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Abstract

Preparing future English educators for the teaching practicum necessitates considerably more than sustained language exposure; it demands purposeful communicative engagement and systematic mentorship capable of cultivating pedagogical acumen, professional discernment, and instructional preparedness. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, this investigation examined the contributory dimensions of communicative engagement, mentorship, and English language exposure in relation to the practicum readiness of 69 pre-service English educators enrolled at a state university in Iloilo City, Philippines. The quantitative phase utilized validated four-point Likert-scale instruments to evaluate English language exposure, communicative engagement, mentorship support, and perceived practicum readiness, whereas the subsequent qualitative phase employed semi-structured interviews to elucidate the contextual underpinnings of the quantitative outcomes. The findings disclosed that the participants experienced a moderate degree of English language exposure, predominantly derived from digitally mediated and entertainment-oriented platforms, while opportunities for interpersonal interaction and household language utilization remained comparatively circumscribed. Notwithstanding this pattern, the respondents manifested a high level of perceived practicum readiness. Inferential analysis further demonstrated that English language exposure exhibited no statistically significant association with practicum readiness, indicating that passive linguistic immersion alone is insufficient to engender the pedagogical competence, instructional judgment, and professional self-assurance indispensable for effective classroom practice. Conversely, the qualitative evidence illuminated that sustained communicative engagement, constructive mentorship, pedagogical exemplification, reflective feedback, and authentic instructional experiences substantially fortified participants' confidence and professional preparedness. Collectively, the findings substantiate that practicum readiness constitutes a multidimensional professional construct progressively cultivated through the synergistic integration of communicative engagement, experiential learning, reflective professional growth, and sustained mentorship rather than through the mere frequency of language exposure. Accordingly, teacher education institutions should prioritize structured communicative opportunities, experiential pedagogical immersion, and comprehensive mentoring frameworks to reinforce the professional formation of future English educators and facilitate a seamless transition from academic preparation to authentic instructional practice..

Keywords : English language exposure; Communicative engagement; Mentorship; Practicum readiness; Pre-service English educators

Introduction

In Philippine teacher education, competence in the English language constitutes an indispensable prerequisite for instructional preparedness; however, learners encounter markedly heterogeneous linguistic experiences due to the country's multilingual environment and rapidly expanding digital ecosystem (Santos et al., 2022; Diestro, 2023). Although sustained engagement with multimedia platforms broadens opportunities for incidental linguistic exposure, contemporary scholarship contends that passive interaction with language resources is insufficient for cultivating authentic communicative competence (Lashari et al., 2023; Marcos, 2024). Rather, pedagogical language proficiency is progressively cultivated through purposeful communicative participation wherein learners continuously negotiate, construct, and contextualize meaning across authentic instructional situations (Cao & Liu,

2024; Karima, Hellalet, & Breeze, 2022). Preparation for the teaching practicum represents a multifaceted developmental process that transcends linguistic dexterity alone, encompassing pedagogical versatility, instructional design competencies, classroom decision-making, and professional self-assurance (Chen et al., 2024; Ventista & Brown, 2023). The advancement of these interrelated competencies is substantially reinforced through high-quality mentorship characterized by systematic feedback, psychosocial reinforcement, and exemplary linguistic scaffolding provided by supervising educators, thereby facilitating the translation of theoretical preparation into genuine classroom enactment (Chea, 2024; Mwesigwa & Nakato, 2025). Conversely, inconsistencies in supervisory guidance may generate pronounced differences in perceived practicum preparedness among pre-service teachers despite their participation in an identical curricular framework (Prananto et al., 2025).

The accelerating integration of digital technologies into teacher preparation has transformed the ways in which future educators encounter, interpret, and utilize the English language throughout their academic formation. Nevertheless, increased accessibility to digital learning resources does not inherently guarantee the acquisition of pedagogically transferable communication skills, as effective instructional practice requires the capacity to employ language strategically, responsively, and contextually during authentic classroom interactions. Consequently, examining how digital language exposure translates into professional instructional competence has become an increasingly consequential concern within contemporary teacher education. Furthermore, emerging discourse in teacher education underscores that internship preparedness is not exclusively determined by isolated learner attributes but rather by the cumulative interaction of linguistic experiences, communicative participation, and institutional support mechanisms. Appreciating these interconnected dimensions provides a more comprehensive understanding of how pre-service English educators cultivate the competencies necessary to navigate the academic, interpersonal, and professional demands of the teaching practicum. Such an integrated perspective contributes to strengthening teacher preparation initiatives capable of responding to evolving educational expectations within Philippine higher education (Hue & Trang, 2022). Despite the recognized significance of these individual dimensions, empirical evidence examining their collective contribution to student development remains comparatively limited (Cadiz, 2022). Accordingly, this mixed-methods investigation examines how the synergistic interaction among English language exposure, active communicative engagement, and mentorship quality collectively influences the internship preparedness of pre-service English educators in the Philippines.

Research Objectives

The principal objectives of this investigation are as follows:

- a) To determine the degree of English language exposure, communicative engagement, and mentorship support encountered by pre-service English educators.
- b) To assess the level of practicum preparedness demonstrated by students across instructional, interpersonal, and professional competency dimensions.
- c) To ascertain the relationships between practicum preparedness and the variables of English language exposure, communicative engagement, and mentorship support.
- d) To explore the lived experiences of pre-service English educators in order to elucidate how communicative engagement and mentorship guidance shape their perceived preparedness for the teaching practicum.

Research Questions

This research is guided by the following inquiries:

- a) What is the level of English language exposure, communicative engagement, mentorship support, and practicum preparedness among pre-service English educators?
- b) Is there a statistically significant relationship between practicum preparedness and students' English language exposure, communicative engagement, or mentorship support?
- c) Are there statistically significant differences in communicative engagement, mentorship support, or practicum preparedness across distinct student cohorts?
- d) How do pre-service English educators describe their communicative engagement within academic, personal, and digital contexts?

e) In what manner do mentorship guidance and constructive feedback influence the confidence and perceived practicum preparedness of pre-service English educators?

Methods

Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, commencing with a quantitative phase followed by an in-depth qualitative inquiry. This methodological configuration enabled the empirical assessment of the primary variables English language exposure, communicative engagement, mentorship support, and practicum preparedness; while the succeeding qualitative phase furnished contextual interpretations that elucidated the quantitative patterns observed (Toyon, 2021). The qualitative component was particularly indispensable in clarifying unanticipated statistical findings, including the absence of a significant association between English language exposure alone and practicum preparedness, as well as the observed differences across class cohorts, thereby generating a more comprehensive understanding of the preparedness of pre-service English educators.

Participants

The research was conducted at a state university in Iloilo City, Philippines, within a Commission on Higher Education (CHED)-accredited teacher education program where English serves as the principal medium of instruction. The quantitative phase involved the entire population of 69 third-year Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) major in English students, organized into two naturally constituted cohorts: Section A (34 students) and Section B (35 students). Participants were predominantly between 19 and 21 years of age and completed an identical curricular sequence. For the qualitative component, a purposively selected group of 10 to 12 participants was drawn from both cohorts to reflect diverse quantitative profiles (e.g., participants exhibiting comparatively high and low practicum preparedness), thereby strengthening data triangulation and interpretive breadth.

Sampling Procedure

To minimize sampling bias while ensuring complete cohort representation, total population sampling was implemented during the quantitative phase, incorporating all 69 officially enrolled students. The utilization of intact class cohorts preserved naturally occurring variations in mentorship experiences and communicative engagement. Thereafter, the qualitative phase employed purposive sampling, a widely recognized strategy in explanatory sequential mixed-methods investigations, to identify participants whose quantitative outcomes representing varying degrees of English language exposure, communicative engagement, and practicum preparedness necessitated further contextual interpretation.

Research Instrument

Data collection employed rigorously developed quantitative and qualitative research instruments. The quantitative component consisted of a validated four-point Likert-scale questionnaire encompassing four domains: (a) frequency and contexts of English language exposure; (b) active communicative engagement across academic and digital environments; (c) perceived mentorship support, including instructional modeling and formative feedback; and (d) self-evaluated practicum preparedness with respect to pedagogical and professional competencies. Following comprehensive reliability verification of the survey instrument, the qualitative phase utilized a semi-structured interview guide. The protocol was intentionally adaptable to examine salient patterns emerging from the quantitative findings, enabling participants to explicate dimensions of their developmental experiences that could not be sufficiently represented through numerical indicators alone.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection process conformed to the prescribed explanatory sequential mixed-methods protocol. Upon obtaining institutional authorization and participants' informed consent, the quantitative questionnaires were administered systematically to the entire cohort. Following the completion and statistical processing of the quantitative dataset, the qualitative phase was subsequently initiated. Participants whose survey responses

demonstrated particularly noteworthy patterns for instance, individuals reporting elevated practicum preparedness despite limited English language exposure within the home environment were invited to participate voluntarily in individual semi-structured interviews. This sequential methodological procedure established a direct correspondence between qualitative narratives and quantitative outcomes, thereby enriching the interpretive rigor of the investigation.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data underwent both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Mean scores were interpreted using predetermined classification intervals whereby 3.25–4.00 indicated high levels of exposure or preparedness, 2.50–3.24 represented moderate levels, 1.74–2.49 corresponded to low levels, and 1.00–1.73 denoted minimal exposure or preparedness. Considering the ordinal characteristics of the Likert-scale measurements, appropriate non-parametric inferential statistical procedures were employed to determine group differences and relationships among the study variables. Subsequently, qualitative interview transcripts were analyzed through thematic analysis to generate contextual interpretations of the quantitative findings. The integration of both analytical strands facilitated a more nuanced explanation of how mentorship support and active communicative engagement contribute to practicum preparedness beyond what quantitative evidence alone could sufficiently elucidate (Ahmed, Pereira, & Jane, 2025).

Results and Discussion

As presented in Table 1, the pre-service English educators exhibited an overall **moderate** degree of English language exposure, with a cohort mean of $M = 3.18$ and $SD = 0.621$. This outcome signifies that although participants encounter the English language with relative regularity, their everyday linguistic engagement cannot be characterized as fully immersive. Placement within the moderate exposure category suggests that, despite the widespread accessibility of English across academic settings and digital platforms, the language remains less pervasive within spontaneous interpersonal interactions. Such a pattern indicates that English is employed predominantly for functional and academic purposes rather than as an extensively internalized medium of everyday communication, a circumstance frequently observed in multilingual contexts where English assumes an auxiliary rather than a primary role in informal discourse (Fang, 2025).

Table 1. Student English Language Contact Levels

Cohort	Mean	SD	Classification
Total Sample	3.18	0.621	Moderate Contact
Class A	3.09	0.592	Moderate Contact
Class B	3.28	0.675	High Contact

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (High Contact); 2.50–3.24 (Moderate Contact); 1.74–2.49 (Minimal Contact); 1.00–1.73 (No Contact).

When the two cohorts were compared, **Class A** registered a slightly lower level of English language exposure ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 0.592$), whereas **Class B** attained a comparatively higher mean ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.675$), positioning the group marginally above the criterion for **high exposure**. This variation suggests differences in the learners' linguistic ecology and patterns of digital media engagement. Preliminary findings revealed that students in Class B participated more consistently in activities such as viewing subtitled international dramas or anime, listening to English-language music, and accessing English-based online materials. These behavioral tendencies exemplify the expanding contribution of digital media to language development, wherein entertainment-oriented platforms function as substantial channels of linguistic exposure (Nasution, 2022).

Notwithstanding the moderate-to-high overall level of English language exposure, particular indicators including the use of English within the household and participation in extracurricular language-related activities recorded comparatively lower mean values. This pattern substantiates the notion that the participants' linguistic

environment is predominantly receptive rather than communicative or productive. Although environments characterized by extensive language input facilitate the development of receptive linguistic competencies, they do not consistently nurture the active academic discourse and pedagogical communication indispensable for effective teaching practice (Yang et al., 2021). This distinction explains why students may experience considerable exposure to English while still requiring structured opportunities to cultivate active pedagogical expression.

Overall, the findings presented in **Table 1** demonstrate that although the pre-service English educators encounter English through multiple channels, their exposure remains uneven and is largely concentrated on passive media consumption. Consequently, there is a compelling need for deliberate instructional strategies that facilitate the progression from passive language reception to active communicative production, particularly in contexts where instructional competence is an essential professional requirement. These findings underscore the importance of systematic and programmatically structured interventions designed to expand and reinforce purposeful English language utilization among future educators.

The results summarized in **Table 2** reveal that the respondents perceived themselves to be **highly prepared** for the teaching practicum, reflected in an overall mean score of **$M = 3.55$ ($SD = 0.540$)**. **Class A** demonstrated a higher level of perceived preparedness (**$M = 3.71$**), whereas **Class B** reported a slightly lower, yet still elevated, mean (**$M = 3.38$**). These outcomes indicate a substantial degree of professional confidence among the pre-service English educators, suggesting that their academic preparation and simulated teaching experiences have effectively strengthened their pedagogical competencies (Jamil & Jan, 2024). Such elevated perceptions of readiness reinforce the proposition that systematically organized teacher education programs successfully cultivate the professional capabilities required for instructional practice.

The high level of practicum preparedness observed across the cohort is congruent with existing scholarship, which indicates that pre-service teachers commonly demonstrate considerable confidence in areas such as inclusive instructional practices, ethical professionalism, and classroom management when exposed to structured teacher preparation and authentic instructional experiences (Chavez & Lamorinas, 2023). Confidence across these professional domains reflects preparedness to perform fundamental instructional responsibilities, including establishing supportive learning environments, maintaining appropriate teacher–student interactions, and implementing essential pedagogical strategies. The comparatively higher mean recorded by **Class A** may be attributable to differences in peer interactions, instructional climate, or faculty mentorship, all of which have been consistently recognized as influential determinants of teacher self-efficacy.

Despite these favorable aggregate outcomes, practicum preparedness is not uniformly manifested across every instructional competency. Previous investigations have demonstrated that although pre-service teachers frequently perceive themselves as generally prepared, they continue to encounter challenges involving advanced pedagogical responsibilities, including differentiated instruction, the cultivation of higher-order thinking, and sophisticated lesson planning (Sebullen, 2023). Consequently, these elevated readiness ratings should be interpreted with prudence, as strong self-perceptions of preparedness do not necessarily signify comprehensive mastery of all instructional competencies. Certain professional capabilities may still require sustained mentorship and structured experiential scaffolding.

Table 2. Practicum Readiness Levels

Cohort	Mean	SD	Classification
Total Sample	3.55	0.540	Highly Equipped
Class A	3.71	0.450	Highly Equipped
Class B	3.38	0.575	Highly Equipped

Legend: 3.25–4.00 = Highly Equipped; 2.50–3.24 = Moderately Equipped; 1.74–2.49 = Minimally Equipped; 1.00–1.73 = Unprepared.

The item-level findings presented in **Table 3** reveal differentiated patterns in the manner by which pre-service English educators encounter the English language. The highest mean scores were associated with digital entertainment activities, particularly viewing subtitled international television series (**$M \approx 3.66$**) and streaming English-language audio content (**$M \approx 3.25$ – **3.66**). These elevated values substantiate that contemporary learners predominantly experience English through digitally mediated entertainment platforms, a trend that corresponds**

with international evidence regarding informal digital language learning (Fauziah & Diana, 2023). Sustained engagement with authentic English-language materials likewise contributes to the enrichment of vocabulary knowledge and the enhancement of overall language comprehension (Gesta et al., 2025).

In contrast, comparatively lower mean scores were observed for indicators pertaining to English use within the household and participation in extracurricular activities involving English communication ($M \approx 2.58\text{--}2.78$). These findings suggest limited opportunities for sustained interpersonal English interaction beyond academic and digital contexts. Such a pattern is consistent with previous observations indicating that English is seldom employed as the principal language of everyday family communication in the Philippines, thereby restricting opportunities for spontaneous verbal practice in informal settings (Chavez et al., 2025). These relatively lower ratings further indicate that the participants' linguistic experiences remain predominantly receptive rather than interaction-oriented, reflecting insufficient engagement in natural conversational exchanges. The predominance of receptive language exposure highlights an important developmental limitation. Although passive engagement with English-language input facilitates the acquisition of listening proficiency and language comprehension, it does not adequately cultivate real-time meaning negotiation, reciprocal communication, or spontaneous oral expression (Salih & Omar, 2024). For pre-service English educators, this limitation is particularly consequential because effective classroom instruction requires responsive interaction, fluent verbal communication, and pedagogically appropriate discourse.

Table 3. Specific Metrics for English Language Contact

Survey Item	Mean	SD	Min	Max
1. Exposure to English from an early age through family communication.	3.652	0.521	2	4
2. Watching subtitled international television series and animated programs.	3.665	0.482	3	4
3. Employing English-language online platforms for interactive educational activities.	3.542	0.565	2	4
4. Listening to English-language music to enrich vocabulary and strengthen comprehension.	3.251	0.672	1	4
5. Observing English conversations and incorporating expressions into everyday communication.	3.162	0.485	2	4
6. Performing translation or tutorial activities to strengthen English fluency.	3.148	0.685	2	4
7. Engaging in volunteer programs that facilitate communication in English.	3.195	0.612	2	4
8. Viewing English instructional videos to comprehend sophisticated concepts.	3.072	0.582	2	4
9. Utilizing English-language YouTube instructional materials to acquire subject-specific knowledge.	3.105	0.665	1	4
10. Preparing academic assignments and coursework in English within the home environment.	3.225	0.645	2	4
11. Completing English-based academic tasks (e.g., essays and reports) to strengthen oral communication confidence.	3.188	0.575	2	4
12. Participating in language-oriented competitions such as spelling contests and declamation events.	3.215	0.582	2	4
13. Reading English-language books, magazines, and related publications to improve language proficiency.	3.155	0.505	2	4
14. Examining printed or digital English reading materials for academic or recreational purposes.	3.165	0.592	2	4
15. Delivering speeches during academic or public events to enhance oral communication proficiency.	3.192	0.605	2	4
16. Actively participating in classroom debates and collaborative presentations conducted in English.	3.158	0.485	2	4

Survey Item	Mean	SD	Min	Max
17. Becoming involved in language organizations to increase opportunities for conversational English practice.	3.162	0.595	2	4
18. Writing various forms of essays to enhance written expression and communicative precision.	3.218	0.580	2	4
19. Collaborating on English-related academic projects to strengthen interactive communication competencies.	3.135	0.510	2	4
20. Participating in drama performances or role-playing activities to enhance conversational communication skills.	3.182	0.575	2	4

The **Mann–Whitney U test** results presented in **Table 5** indicate that **no statistically significant difference** exists in English language exposure between the two cohorts ($p = 0.056$), suggesting a relatively comparable level of linguistic exposure across both classes. This consistency is expected within a formal teacher education context in which students are exposed to the same curricular requirements, instructional resources, and comparable linguistic environments (Qureshi et al., 2021). The closely comparable distribution further implies that both cohorts have relatively equivalent opportunities to engage with the English language in both academic and non-academic settings. In contrast, the analysis revealed a **highly significant difference** in practicum preparedness ($p < 0.001$), with **Class A** demonstrating a substantially higher level of readiness than **Class B**. This finding indicates that practicum preparedness is shaped by factors extending beyond English language exposure alone. The results are consistent with previous scholarship emphasizing that the professional development of pre-service teachers is strongly influenced by the quality of academic mentorship, collaborative peer interactions, and authentic instructional experiences (Giles et al., 2020). It is therefore plausible that participants in one cohort benefited from more effective instructional support or a more conducive learning environment despite experiencing comparable levels of language exposure.

The marked difference in practicum preparedness, despite the absence of significant differences in English language exposure, underscores the multidimensional character of teacher preparation. Professional readiness encompasses reflective thinking, contextual responsiveness, and instructional judgment, competencies that are progressively cultivated through authentic experiential learning rather than through passive language exposure alone. This interpretation supports the broader scholarly perspective that practicum preparedness develops through sustained guided practice, effective instructional modeling, and continuous professional supervision (Abdallah & Kaabi, 2024). These statistical findings demonstrate that English language exposure, by itself, does not function as the sole or direct determinant of professional teaching preparedness.

Table 5. Mann-Whitney U Test Comparisons

Construct	Cohort	Average Rank	U Value	p-value	Outcome
English Contact Level	Class A	30.85	428.00	0.056	Non-Significant
	Class B	39.12			
Practicum Readiness	Class A	43.50	285.00	<0.001	Significant
	Class B	26.15			

The correlational analysis presented in **Table 6** indicates that the association between English language exposure and practicum preparedness is **not statistically significant** ($\rho = -0.124$, $p = 0.315$). This finding suggests that increased exposure to the English language does not necessarily correspond to higher levels of confidence or preparedness for instructional responsibilities. The result is consistent with established educational perspectives asserting that language exposure in isolation is insufficient to cultivate the broad range of competencies required for effective teaching practice (Tuimebayeva et al., 2024). Although English language exposure contributes to vocabulary development and general language comprehension, it does not independently foster pedagogical communication, instructional interaction, or higher-order teaching competencies. The absence of a significant relationship further supports previous investigations demonstrating that practicum preparedness is developed

through purposeful and interactive learning experiences rather than through the quantity of language exposure alone. Educational approaches that emphasize reflective practice, collaborative discourse, and simulated instructional experiences have been recognized as more influential in strengthening teaching confidence and professional competence (Aryal, 2024). Accordingly, these findings reinforce the growing emphasis on competency-oriented teacher education, in which meaningful pedagogical engagement assumes greater importance than passive linguistic exposure.

Furthermore, the results indicate that pre-service English educators with comparable levels of English language exposure may demonstrate substantially different levels of instructional competence and professional confidence, depending on the quality of mentorship and pedagogical feedback available to them. Previous scholarship consistently emphasizes that effective mentors play a pivotal role in enabling future teachers to interpret classroom dynamics, refine instructional strategies, and strengthen pedagogical decision-making (Brittain et al., 2025). Consequently, the absence of a significant correlation suggests that English language exposure functions only as an indirect contributor to practicum preparedness and cannot substitute for systematic pedagogical preparation.

Table 6. Spearman's Rank-Order Correlational Analysis

Interacting Variables	p value	p-value	Outcome
English Contact & Practicum Readiness	-0.124	0.315	Non-Significant

Conclusion

This study substantiates that the practicum preparedness of pre-service English educators in Iloilo City is predominantly conditioned by purposeful communicative engagement and robust mentorship rather than by the sheer magnitude of English language exposure. Although the participants exhibited a moderate degree of linguistic exposure, principally derived from digitally mediated and entertainment-oriented platforms, the correlational findings established that such exposure did not demonstrate a statistically significant association with practicum preparedness. Accordingly, passive linguistic input, irrespective of its frequency, remains insufficient for cultivating the instructional discourse, pedagogical reasoning, reflective discernment, and professional judgment indispensable for effective classroom practice.

Conversely, elevated levels of practicum preparedness were more apparent among pre-service English educators who consistently participated in authentic communicative exchanges and benefited from sustained mentorship distinguished by constructive feedback, pedagogical exemplification, and continuous professional guidance. Moreover, the statistically significant variation in practicum preparedness observed between the two cohorts further affirms that the quality of the instructional milieu and supervisory experiences exerts a more consequential influence on professional formation than comparable levels of language exposure alone. Collectively, these findings reaffirm that practicum preparedness constitutes a multidimensional professional construct integrating communicative competence, pedagogical expertise, reflective acumen, professional self-efficacy, adaptive responsiveness, and instructional discernment. The progressive cultivation of these interdependent competencies is fundamentally contingent upon authentic experiential engagement, sustained communicative participation, and systematically structured mentorship, thereby reinforcing the indispensable function of comprehensive teacher education in equipping future English educators for the multifarious demands of contemporary classroom practice.

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