

12-31-2022

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Gina B. Ugalingan

*De La Salle University*, [gina.ugalingan@dlsu.edu.ph](mailto:gina.ugalingan@dlsu.edu.ph)

Aileen Bautista

*De La Salle University*, [aileen.bautista@dlsu.edu.ph](mailto:aileen.bautista@dlsu.edu.ph)

Rochelle Irene Lucas

*De La Salle University*, [rochelle.lucas@dlsu.edu.ph](mailto:rochelle.lucas@dlsu.edu.ph)

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### Recommended Citation

Ugalingan, Gina B.; Bautista, Aileen; and Lucas, Rochelle Irene (2022) "Internship Experiences of Pre-Service Teachers: A Case Study of EFL Korean Students in the Philippines," *Journal of English and Applied Linguistics*: Vol. 1: No. 2, Article 5.

Available at: <https://animorepository.dlsu.edu.ph/jeal/vol1/iss2/5>

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Internship Experiences of Pre-Service Teachers: A Case Study of EFL Korean Students in the Philippines

Gina B. Ugalingan, Aileen C. Bautista, and Rochelle Irene G. Lucas  
Department of English and Applied Linguistics, De La Salle University  
Manila, Philippines  
gina.ugalingan@dlsu.edu.ph

**Abstract:** Various studies on the different experiences of pre-service teachers who are non-native speakers of English emerged to strengthen the teaching curriculum and empower them to be equipped as they take the role of classroom teachers. Some foreign students even study abroad to strengthen their proficiency in the English language; more so, other teacher education programs offer internships abroad. Studies support that teaching internship experiences impact shaping novice teachers' identity (Borg, 2003; Kim & Cho, 2014; Ulla, 2016). This case study describes the teaching experiences of eight Korean pre-service teachers during their internship. The participants were students under the program of Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English from a private university in the Philippines. This study reports the qualitative results of individual interviews and weekly reflections. The common themes of their teaching experiences were (a) perceived low language proficiency, (b) fear of committing mistakes, (c) lack of teaching preparation, (d) inadequate classroom management, (e) fear of being observed and evaluated, (f) individual personality, and (g) cultural differences.

**Keywords:** practicum, internship, pre-service teachers experiences, teacher education, teacher identity

As pre-service teachers undergo the process of internship, they become immersed in various responsibilities, roles, and experiences such as teaching, preparing teaching materials and assessments, collaborating with other teachers, dealing with students, assessing students' performances, and others (Borg, 2003; Starkey & Rawlins, 2012). Ulla (2016) stated that internship or practice teaching is an integral part of any teacher education curriculum as it is a platform

for the teachers-in-training to employ the theories they learned in class to their classes while being supervised by a classroom teacher. These learning experiences benefit these pre-service teachers about the following: enrichment of their knowledge, development of their skills, and widening of their worldviews, which in turn increase their self-confidence and reliance and promote holistic well-being (Kabilan, 2013).

## The Experiences of the Pre-service Teachers

The experiences of student teachers and teachers alike reveal an array of aspects of teacher identity (Schutz et al., 2018). Various scholars made significant inquiries about teacher identity and the classroom experiences that helped shape their teacher identity (Borg, 2003; Kim & Cho, 2014; Ryan et al., 2009; Trent, 2013). Day (2018) described teacher identity as a synthesis of one's personal and professional selves, and it is represented by the dynamic interaction of effectiveness, agency, and emotions in the context of personal histories, workplace structures and cultures, and policy influences. It purports that many factors play in the realm of teacher identity. However, their identity is grounded on their practicum experiences as student-teachers or pre-service teachers.

It is significant to note that practicum experiences vary among countries. However, diverse teacher education programs of different countries share similar pedagogical practices of providing classroom internships or practicum to pre-service or student-teachers. For example, pre-service teachers must undergo two-semester internships in the U.S. Midwest for 10 weeks per semester (Kim & Cho, 2014). Meanwhile, Singapore's teacher education provides a 10-week teaching practice (Chai et al., 2009); New Zealand split its 21-week practicum program into its three-year teacher education program (Grudnoff, 2011); and the Philippines offers its practicum for one semester, trimester, or its equivalent (Commission on Higher Education [CHED], 2017).

In accomplishing the internship, hands-on teaching experiences impact the pre-service teachers' beliefs and cognition. For instance, Chai et al. (2009) reported the survey results of 413 Singaporean pre-service teachers' changed beliefs on learning, knowledge, and teaching (p. 355). Another example is the study of Grudnoff (2011) among 12 New Zealand beginning teachers. In addition, the qualitative inquiry reported how participants viewed the crucial role of practicum to prepare novice teachers in their transition to full-time teaching. Lastly, Ulla's study (2016) described the practicum experiences of 21 Filipino pre-service English teachers. Participants reported the challenges they experienced in classroom management, pedagogical strategies, and confidence in teaching. Further realization of their in-class teaching experiences allowed them to:

1. Facilitate pedagogical improvement and confidence-building;
2. Provide a clear understanding of which courses in their program were helpful in their profession; and
3. Realize the need for further training in classroom management and teaching aids preparation, and pedagogical development.

Similarly, Lee and Kim (2021) reported a case study of seven Korean English teachers who studied abroad but were teaching in South Korea. The study reported how the participants viewed their English proficiency as inferior despite the teacher training abroad. Another example is the study of Moorhouse and Harfitt (2021) that investigated 10 Hongkong PSTs who conducted their internship in China. The findings showed that the practicum allowed them to:

1. Question their conception of teacher cognition and resulted in changing their teacher identity as English teachers;
2. Have a heightened sense of personal awareness about their English proficiency;
3. Be problem solvers in terms of the various classroom problems;
4. Experience varied pedagogical strategies that were not taught in their previous classes, which improved their pedagogical knowledge; and
5. Change their view on parents, students, teacher collaboration, and culture.

In addition, there have been previous studies that attempted to understand language anxiety experienced by non-native student teachers in English during their classroom teaching. In Northern Cyprus, Tum (2012) investigated 216 non-native student teachers using Horwitz's Teaching Foreign Language Anxiety Scale questionnaire. From the responses of the non-native English student teachers, there were varying levels of anxiety experienced by the participants. In Thailand, a qualitative study (Suwannaset & Rimkeeratikul, 2014) that used phenomenological analyses structure attempted to find out the sources of language anxieties that were experienced by the student teachers of Burhapa University. In this research, sources of anxiety of the Thai student teachers were lack of supervision by supervising school teachers, presence of supervising school teachers in class, performing lower

than expected, students' poor knowledge and their learning outcomes, poor approach to teaching, lack of self-confidence, lack of energy to teach, problems about lesson plans, being compared with other student teachers, teaching in schools with a good reputation, controlling classes, developing teaching materials, and problems about undertaking a research project. Lastly, a qualitative study (Merc, 2011) examined the language anxiety of 150 Turkish EFL student teachers that analyzed the diaries of the respondents. It was revealed that the following are the sources of EFL students' anxiety: students and class profiles, classroom management, teaching procedure, classroom observation, mentors, and miscellaneous.

Based on the studies reported, experiences formed their pre-service teacher identity, which eventually developed their teacher identity. However, Day (2018) postulated that it is essential to dichotomize the managing and coping experiences because coping suggests "survival," whereas managing reflects succeeding in the hurdles (p. 61). Thus, Day (2018) argued that emotion is at play in unearthing the experiences related to coping and managing. Meanwhile, Alsup (2018) asserted that aside from vulnerability, which is her term for emotion, investigations on teacher identity need also to explore agency and authority. Individuals' agency may be described broadly as their ability to make free choices and act autonomously in the face of cultural and institutional constraints that limit them (p. 14). According to Tum and Kunt (2013), instructors of East Asian cultures, such as Koreans, exhibit more significant levels of foreign language anxiety, suggesting that it may potentially influence their teacher identity. In addition, authority is defined as the capacity to make judgments without hesitation or fear of repercussions, whereas vulnerability is defined as worry or concern that one's actions will be "erroneous, hazardous, or self-defeating" (pp. 14–15). These contours of teacher identity result in individuals' personalities in dealing with the students, supervising teachers, and other pre-service teachers (Aydin, 2016; Suwannaset & Rimkeeratikul, 2014; Eksi & Yakisik, 2016).

### ***Pre-service Teaching in the Philippines***

Pre-service students enroll in either a four-year Bachelor of Elementary Education or Bachelor of Secondary Education program after completing 10 years of Basic Education. Because these undergraduates

are enrolled in generic academic courses with specific specializations, they have minimal exposure and opportunities to develop pedagogical skills and knowledge to equip them for actual teaching (Zeegers, 2012).

Pre-service teaching, otherwise known as practicum, is subsumed in the teacher education curriculum as articulated in the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) 2017 series no. 104 that stipulates the local internship to develop the "life skills" of the students as well as their "professionalism and work appreciation" (CHED, 2017, p. 2). Thus, the practicum is one of their final requirements before the pre-service teachers graduate. The said CMO also assigns the practicum supervisor who orients the pre-service teachers of their responsibilities (p.6) and periodically monitors and evaluates their performances (p. 7). Meanwhile, from the joint memorandum order of CHED and the Department of Education (2021), it states that the learning activities of the pre-service teachers include the following: (a) pre-and post-observation for practice teaching; (b) pre-service teachers' observation of class routines, class activities, and assessment practices; (c) preparation of instructional materials; (d) demonstration teaching; (e) writing of a classroom-based action research paper, and (f) portfolio making.

Based on the memoranda, it is apparent that the agencies recognized that the responsibilities of teachers become more "expansive" (Moorhouse & Harfitt, 2021, p. 230); hence, pre-service teachers should be prepared for the emerging teacher-related responsibilities before joining the workforce. Further, some teacher education institutions in the Philippines house foreign pre-service teachers aside from the local pre-service teachers. Thus, regardless of their nationality, all pre-service teachers undergo the same training, which constitutes being sent to government-run basic education institutions for the pre-service teaching training. Albeit given the same training, it is interesting for us as researchers to have the foreign pre-service teachers as focal points of our investigation.

### ***Korean Preservice Teachers in the Philippines***

The first researcher is fascinated by how the Korean student teachers in her class perform in their actual practicum. It is noteworthy that Korean students are the majority of EFL students enlisted in the teaching education program of her department. The presence of these students in the education program is indicative

that the Korean population is steadily increasing in the Philippines, especially in metropolitan areas.

In May 2017, the Department of Tourism reported that 35.84% of the Philippines' visitor market comprises Koreans. This number has exponentially increased along with Korean students who come to the Philippines to learn English. They attend either short programs or diploma programs through the ESL curriculum being offered. It is reported that they choose the country to learn English because of the quality and affordable education offered compared to other English-speaking countries (Sausa, 2017).

At De La Salle University, several Korean students enroll in the Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English to achieve competence in the English language. They believe that this program may result in their competence in the English language. However, unfortunately, its primordial goal is to produce competent English language teachers who have mastered English. Ergo, the language teaching aspect seems overwhelming to the group, given their deviant program expectations.

### ***The Current Study***

Corollary to this intriguing phenomenon, we wish to examine the experiences of the Korean student-teachers in the Philippines. Their unique experience and context may provide the various second language teaching situations that present significant elements that may display essential contributions to the pedagogical and curricular aspects. Thus, this paper focuses on our Korean students transitioning from language learners to language teachers. This is a crucial phase to be examined to address arising issues. Furthermore, Day (2018) argued that the collective narratives of the pre-service teachers might contribute to understanding teacher identity in various contexts to improve the teacher education institutions. Therefore, this investigation aims to view the teacher education program from the lens of Korean student teachers.

### ***Theory of Teacher Identity***

This current study is informed by the teacher identity theory from the framework of Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018) and Jackson (2018). Both scholars argued that various classroom experiences shape the teacher's identity. The former argued that forming teacher identity is an ongoing process that includes negotiating between various roles and responsibilities,

expectations, interests, and demands in the classroom contexts that require them to adjust to various levels of relationships (p. 23). Meanwhile, the latter asserted that the environment powerfully shapes the teacher identity, mainly when the teachers and the students belong to different races.

Ruohotie-Lyhty's (2018) dimension of teacher identity focuses on the intrinsic processing of teachers, whether young or old, of the vast experiences they encounter at school. Hence, the various conditions and tasks at school facilitated the teacher's negotiation of their identities to defend or maintain their original conceptualizations of the supposed identity of teachers. This identity negotiation is typical among teachers, especially the pre-service teachers (p. 29). However, in being immersed in the actual classrooms, Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018) argued that the maturation process takes place, allowing the teachers to see themselves as professionals, which facilitates embracing all the roles and experiences of being a teacher despite the various challenges experienced.

Meanwhile, Jackson (2018) proposed that "place" or the context of the teacher education program influences the teacher-identity development where beliefs, attitudes, and others are subsumed. Hence, when the teachers and the place that includes the learners and other people belong to different cultures and races, it may affect the teachers' identity as it forces them to achieve sociopolitical and critical consciousness, thus influencing their teacher identity.

## **Methods**

This paper utilized qualitative research, particularly the case study approach to further the data analysis of the teaching experiences of EFL Korean pre-service teachers in the Philippines. Emerging themes from the individual interviews and weekly reflections were collected, read, analyzed, and grouped.

This case study consists of eight EFL Korean pre-service teachers taking the degree program Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English at a private Catholic university in Manila, Philippines. The participants were enrolled in two academic courses, *Practice Teaching in English* and *Thesis Writing*, as part of their academic requirements for the teaching degree. In the practice teaching course, the students were required to accomplish a certain number of

**Table 1***Profile of the Participants*

Name	Gender	Years Stayed in the Philippines (M=8.13)	Will Teach English After Graduation
Student A	M	11	Yes
Student B	M	5	Maybe
Student C	M	6	No
Student D	F	7	Yes
Student E	F	9	Yes
Student F	F	8	Maybe
Student G	F	6	No
Student H	F	13	Yes

Note: Codes were used to ensure confidentiality.

hours of direct teaching in their assigned government-supervised high schools in Manila. Participants of this study were five females and three males. The participants roughly stayed in the Philippines for almost a decade ( $M = 8.13$  years). Before conducting the study, the researchers secured the informed consent form based on the research ethics protocol of the institution they are affiliated with.

### ***Instruments***

#### *Demographic Questionnaire*

This preliminary research data was gathered through a self-administered open-ended demographic questionnaire designed by the researchers. No questions related to their pre-service teaching and internship experiences were asked because other instruments (i.e., interviews and reflections) would provide said data. The questionnaire only drew out information like the number of years they stayed, studied, and learned English in the Philippines. This provided necessary information about the participants' background as English language learners. Given its nature, it was not necessary to check its validity. Together with the informed consent, this demographic questionnaire was sent through email.

#### *Individual Interviews*

To have an in-depth analysis of the teaching experiences of the participants, the first researcher conducted individual interviews. The participants

were invited for an appointment to share their experiences as student-teachers during their practicum. The interview questions were adapted from the interview questions of Alsup (2018) that focused on their experiences specifically inside the classroom. Also, the interviews were scheduled based on the availability of the participants. As a result, five out of eight participants met with the researchers to conduct a personal interview, whereas the three participants answered the interview questions through email.

#### *Weekly Reflections*

The weekly reflections were part of the portfolio as one of the requirements submitted at the end of their practicum teaching. The researchers used Gibbs' (1998) reflective model by providing guide questions as they narrated specific events in their weekly journals, described their reactions, and reflected on their feelings. When the portfolios were submitted to their practicum supervisor, the second researcher secured copies for closer data analysis.

#### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

Based on the literature, the data collection was implemented (Aydin, 2016; Suwannaset & Rimkeeratikul, 2014). First, the participants filled out the informed consent form with a profile questionnaire. After the participants completed their university course requirements, pre-service teaching, and research writing, this took place to ensure that



the researchers would not influence their answers. Next, the researchers sought the availability of the participants for the interview. The audio of the interview was recorded using a camera phone. Also, through open-ended and clarificatory questions, the students were asked to narrate their experiences as pre-service teachers. Lastly, the weekly reflections of the participants were photocopied from the portfolio of each participant.

To describe the teaching experiences of the participants, the researchers utilized the participants' responses from the interview and their weekly reflections. First, the interview responses were transcribed. Further, the thematic analysis procedure was employed by grouping the related keywords and organizing them into categories or themes. In particular, the study used the analysis procedure of Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018), which allowed the researchers to code the emerging themes from the interview transcripts and journals. Then, the identified themes are compared and re-evaluated before finalizing the identified themes.

## Results and Discussion

The results of the interviews and weekly reflections were summarized based on the major themes, namely: (a) perceived low language proficiency, (b) fear of committing mistakes, (c) lack of preparation, (d) classroom management, (e) fear of being observed and evaluated, (f) individual personality, and (g) cultural differences.

### *Perceived Low Language Proficiency*

In examining the individual interviews and weekly reflections, the first common theme that emerged is perceived as low language proficiency. This is the same finding observed in the study of Moorhouse and Harfitt (2021), where the pre-service teachers' practice teaching experience resulted in a realization of their English proficiency. Interestingly, the respondents in their study and ours both view poor English proficiency. In addition, this finding agrees with the results of several studies (Aydin, 2016; Gurbuz, 2012; Lucas et al., 2011; Merc, 2011; Tum, 2012), where the perceived low language proficiency is one of the significant sources of language anxiety among learners like the pre-service teachers.

Meanwhile, Merc (2011) identified that the primary concern among pre-service teachers is that their proficiency level would be exposed when they take the role of teachers in the classroom. The fear of not being able to competently respond to their students' questions, especially when delivering their lessons in English, is frightening. Gurbuz (2012) agreed with this source of anxiety when most of her participants agreed that a competent language teacher must have a good command of the language to be taught.

Also, their perceived low proficiency resulted in feeling inadequate both as a student and as a pre-service teacher among some of the respondents. This feeling manifested through their immense discomfort because of their perceived below-proficient speaking skills. This self-assessment emerged both in their interview and in their journals. As a result, they resort to developing coping strategies such as pausing and self-monitoring to address this issue.

This experience illustrates Ruohotie-Lyhty's (2018) postulation that the teaching experiences facilitate intrinsic aspects, leading to inevitable negotiation that results in certain decisions. In the case of low proficiency, there is a realization that they are not "good enough" to become a teacher because of their level of proficiency. Therefore, they devised strategies to augment their current view of their proficiency level to negotiate.

### *Fear of Committing Mistakes*

Participants also reported their fear of committing mistakes. For example, student A expressed that he was afraid of committing grammatical and pronunciation mistakes during his practicum. This was supported by Gurbuz (2012) when she reported that 67% of pre-service teachers expressed their weaknesses in committing grammatical mistakes, and 13% mentioned that pronunciation was an area they recognized that needed improvement. In addition, Moorhouse and Harfitt (2021) stated that the awareness of their proficiency in English results in a lack of confidence. Thus, the more they become aware of their proficiency in the English language, the more negative feelings such as this type of fear surface.

Some participants were concerned about how their students might doubt their proficiency as English teachers. An example of this is expressed by Student F when she said:

I was always afraid of making grammar or pronunciation mistakes while I discuss the lesson to my students. Sometimes, I forgot what I was going to say in English and it was embarrassing when the students notice that I make mistakes in English. I also studied all the vocabulary and literature just in case my students ask me some questions. It will be a shame if I could not answer their questions.

However, to resolve or at least minimize this fear, the pre-service teachers used the same method of preparing, practicing, and memorizing a script in their mind, focusing on grammar and pronunciation. They knew they had to be prepared by studying in advance to avoid feeling embarrassed in front of their students. This affirms the postulation of Moorhouse and Harfitt (2021) that due to their classroom experiences, they grow to become problem solvers. Thus, they are constantly looking for solutions to classroom problems.

Similar to the first theme, Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018) argued that negative experiences impact how teachers view themselves. In this case, the fear of committing mistakes or being wrong in the eyes of their students brought about by their perceived lack of proficiency in the English language suggests that this may be a non-negotiable quality of an English teacher. This may have been concretized because of their view of themselves and what they experienced during their practicum. Hence, for Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018), this is the process of “identity-agency” (p. 27) or the use of personal experiences and community participation in developing professional identities.

### ***Lack of Preparation***

The third common theme found among the students is lack of preparation. From this type, the limited time or opportunity to prepare themselves or their materials results in anxiety among the Korean pre-service teachers. For example, student D recalled through her journal entry that: “Last October 11, I was informed that my CT will [sic] be late when I arrived in the [sic] school. I did not know what I have to do because I did not have any lesson plans.”

This experience concurs with the findings of Ulla (2016) that lack of preparation is a common experience among pre-service teachers. Hence, they expressed that more course training in line with this is needed to address this issue. In addition, Tum (2012), Yoon

(2012), and Ugalingan et al. (2021) mentioned that the lack of inadequate classroom preparation made pre-service teachers more anxious to take the role of an English teacher.

Moreover, Jackson (2018) underscored that environment plays a significant role in forming the pre-service teachers’ identities as they are introduced to different cultures. In the case of Student D, she was introduced to a working environment where teachers were unexpectedly absent. Perhaps, this scenario may not have been covered in the past discussions in their courses as education students. It may also be possible that this is new to Student D because she has never encountered such in her country. However, whatever circumstances there are, Jackson (2018) argued that the place or the learning environment of the pre-service teachers influences them in their identity development as it exposes them to various experiences they are unfamiliar with (p. 208).

### ***Classroom Management***

The fourth common theme shared by the students is classroom management. Most students’ journal entries mentioned the problems they encountered in classroom management, specifically during the first weeks of their practicum. Some students expressed their feeling of nervousness, most specifically when they had to do actual classroom teaching based on their journal entries. This supports Tum’s (2012) and Yoon’s (2012) findings when they described that lack or inadequate classroom preparation made pre-service teachers more anxious in taking their role as English teachers.

Student A narrated his experience in the following statement: “It was Friday and I had to get angry at one section for being so rowdy lying straight to my face with giggling at their backs. I panicked but tried to look like I didn’t.” Another similar experience was from Student H as she narrated in her journal the following experience:

Only half of the students in section Honesty followed my instruction and half of them were busy with doing other things with their seatmates. I also tried to be strict but still, it was not enough for them. Most of my energy was consumed in section Honesty because I had a hard time handling this class...but honestly, I was worried if I could endure myself until the end of practicum...



Student D also shared a similar frustration in the following statement: “The problem I had was that I could not manage section 17 well. I have to think of a method how I can manage them well and make them be motivated in learning.”

In her experience, Student G wrote in her log, “It worked at section[s] 4, 5, and 18 but the students in section 15 and 16 did not still follow [sic] me. After teaching the students of sections 15 and 16, I came back to the faculty room and sat down thinking why I cannot teach them even though the topic was simple. I feel little depression, mentally crying [sic].”

These prompted the pre-service teachers to devise ways, specifically communication strategies such as making eye contact and approaching the students. Some strategies, although not all, work in all classes.

Aside from handling students’ behavior in the classroom, another form of classroom management experienced by the Korean student teachers was handling students’ cheating. This was a challenging source of anxiety as the pre-service teachers felt powerless in the presence of their students. Student A recounted, “However, until the test period was over, I couldn’t completely stop them from cheating. And somehow, it gave me the feeling that I have lost (week 4).” Student C also experienced this and narrated, “I kept watch [sic] students stop them from cheating...It was the heavier work than I had thought (week 2).”

These discussions are similar to Yoon’s (2012) study that reported that the lack of classroom preparation could negatively contribute to the teaching performance of the pre-service teachers.

The scenarios presented in the narratives of the Korean pre-service teachers illustrated the cultural differences, which Jackson (2018) asserted as significant environmental aspects of the “place” that form the identity of the pre-service teachers. The experiences reveal conflicting views between the pre-service teachers, the students, and the cooperating teachers. It is also evident that the Korean pre-service teachers positioned themselves as “others” and felt marginalized in the classroom (p. 208), which resulted in the feeling of despair, thus seeing themselves as ineffective teachers. Albeit the fact that in Jackson’s study, teachers of Color pertain to “non-White” teachers, in the context of the Korean pre-service teachers, they seem to be parallel to the teachers of Color being non-Filipinos.

### *Fear of Being Observed and Evaluated*

The fifth common theme shared by the students is their experience of being observed and evaluated. According to Kim and Kim (2004), “many typical Korean teachers are reluctant to admit their mistakes and worry about making mistakes in their classes” (p. 179). Though their study investigated in-service teachers in elementary, middle school, and high school, the Korean culture would still be the same that Korean pre-service teachers were also “reluctant” to receive a negative evaluation.

These experiences and many others among the participants validated the results of the various studies (Merc, 2011; Swannaset & Rimkeratikul, 2014), describing the presence of mentors and other teachers who would grade the students may cause a high level of language anxiety among student teachers. One of the activities that participants of the study had to accomplish was the final teaching demonstration or grand demonstration teaching, which was commonly scheduled in the last week of their practice teaching. Although the results do not mention whether the anxiety about the grand demonstration teaching is just intrinsic, it is necessary to emphasize that anxiety leads to being paranoid in having negative thoughts about this graded performance. Therefore, none of the student teachers had a tinge of excitement about this activity.

This adverse reaction can be associated with the pre-service teachers’ view of their speaking skills because teaching requires much speaking from the teacher. Similar to the results of some studies (Merc, 2011; Swannaset & Rimkeratikul, 2014), some pre-service teachers expressed that they were self-conscious when talking to a native speaker or their teachers. It is because they are afraid that they are being monitored concerning their grammar and pronunciation, it is no longer surprising for the respondents to suffer from self-doubt during the grand demonstration teaching. Likewise, this also brought about the respondents seeing themselves as inferior in using effective classroom strategies compared to the observers who have rich experiences in teaching English. The grand demonstration teaching is the part of the practicum where students experience a high level of language anxiety primarily because they taught in front of an audience and were being evaluated.

Interestingly, the absence of a mentor or supervisor leads them to feel left out. For example, during the time that Student D’s cooperating teacher (CT) was

assigned to another school, Student D wrote: “Though spending the day without CT, I felt lonely because the other pre-service teachers discussed their lesson plans with their CTs while I had to make it my own until the Head Teacher comes to his office.”

In terms of evaluation, the pre-service teachers felt challenged in preparing lesson plans, checking papers, computing grades, and assisting their CT in any other related activities like the English month celebration. These tasks were classified under indirect teaching and part of their practicum grade. This experience also caused anxiety among pre-service teachers.

### ***Individual Personality***

The sixth common theme is the development of an individual personality. Studies (Suwannaset & Rimkeeratikul, 2014; Eksi & Yakisik, 2016; Aydin, 2016) support that individual personalities might negatively affect the pre-service teachers in their pre-service teaching.

During the interview, four respondents pointed out that their personalities are possible sources of their teaching anxiety. First, Student G felt that because she had a quiet and shy personality, she would focus on students who listened to her and avoid those who were not listening to her. Also, even with her fellow Filipino student-teachers, she would not initiate a conversation with them because she was not comfortable speaking in English. At the same time, Student E admitted that she was comfortable with her students but would always be nervous whenever she delivered her lessons and would have to speak in English. Student H also explained that even though she stayed in the Philippines for 13 years, she still felt inferior because of their high expectations of her extended stay in the country. Lastly, Student C believed that his lack of confidence was a crucial factor in why he experienced teaching anxiety. The situation where he had to teach and face students made him feel very pressured and uncomfortable.

On the contrary, Moorehouse and Harfitt (2021) argued that as the pre-service teachers become immersed in teaching, they challenge themselves; thus, their self-awareness may lead to a positive outcome. Ergo, their personalities may not necessarily have a negative effect on their teaching.

### ***Cultural Differences***

The last common theme presented by the foreign learners is cultural differences between the Korean

students-teachers and Filipino students. Tum and Kunt (2013) explained that teachers of East Asian cultures like Koreans have higher levels of foreign language anxiety. “Such cultures frown upon mistakes and have high expectations of teachers, and those social attitudes can easily create effective states of foreign language anxiety among teachers” (p.387).

Student G felt it was difficult to approach and understand the nature of her Filipino students. As a Korean pre-service teacher, she was nervous and conscious because her Filipino students could quickly identify her mistakes. She added that she felt like an outsider:

“I felt that there was an invisible boundary between me and students [sic]. I felt that some students considered me as foreigner or visitors [sic] rather than student-teacher.” Student F also narrated her experience, “. . . it was not easy to understand and follow Filipino cultures (especially in public school). It was not easy to teach them English since I am not a native English speaker... I was not able to fully understand the cultures and languages of my students. There were miscommunications between me and my students sometimes. However, I felt Filipino students were friendly and polite to their teachers. Even though I am a young and foreign teacher, they treated me as their teacher by showing some respects [sic].”

Student C also believed that being Korean gave him an advantage when he expressed, “I think they were more interested that Korean teacher taught them, not the lessons. But, in another sense, it may help me. I think they participated more because I am a Korean teacher.” However, he felt uncomfortable that the students were just excited that a real “Korean” person was in front of them, but they were not interested in the lessons he was teaching.

Another interesting data that surfaced in this study is how the students viewed the Korean pre-service teachers during the first weeks as fascinating. It was brought about by the popularity of Korean Pop (K-pop) or Korean drama (K-drama) in the Philippines. During his interview, Student B emphasized that he was being treated as a “zoo [animal]” because he amused the students because he is Korean. It seems that his students were more interested in his looks and the

Korean culture in general than their language lessons. However, experiences like this influenced how they see themselves as teachers, which requires differences from the entertainment industry.

In summary, with a closer examination of the individual interviews and weekly journals, seven themes emerged as significant experiences that shaped participants' teacher identity.

## Conclusion

This study aims to report the teaching experiences of eight Korean non-native English pre-service teachers in an ESL classroom setting. With closer examination of individual interviews and weekly journals, common themes surfaced on the different challenges they experienced during their teacher internship. These themes were (a) perceived low language proficiency, (b) fear of committing mistakes, (c) lack of preparation, (d) classroom management, (e) fear of being observed and evaluated, (f) individual personality, and (g) cultural differences. These findings confirm the assertions of Jackson (2018) that the "place" contributes to the teacher identity. The findings also support the claims of Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018) that the intrinsic aspect of teachers while experiencing all the various roles of educators is a significant variable that forms the teacher identity.

Also, based on the findings, the crucial phase of student teachers transitioning to actual classroom teachers presents essential issues. These issues, therefore, should be addressed to equip our student teachers to become competent language teachers.

First, the pre-service teachers should recognize that they are good language teachers, even if they are non-native speakers of the target language. Cook (1999) postulated that non-native teachers have several advantages over monolingual teachers. Non-native teachers are familiar with and have a better understanding of the process of language learning because they have experienced it themselves.

Second, pre-service teachers should recognize that their language and teaching anxieties should not deter them from becoming effective teachers. Personality issues such as self-confidence, being shy, and being self-conscious could be personally resolved.

Third, because Korean pre-service teachers admitted that their anxiety also came from the fear

of committing pronunciation mistakes, additional speaking classes or frequent practice of using the English language might eliminate this fear.

Fourth, a teaching course program should orient the student teachers on managing teaching in an educational environment that they are not familiar with. This would assist them in understanding and appreciating standard teaching practices and the school culture of their practicum sites to help them manage their expectations.

It is worth noting that the difficulties and challenges encountered during the internship program are part of shaping the novice teachers' cognition and beliefs as they discover their capacity to cope, manage, and overcome classroom issues. What complicates the situation is that they are international students in an ESL learning setting. There are expectations that these students have to meet both as learners and "teachers." These are part of the hands-on experiences they need to gain and hurdle as they pursue the path of a teaching career. After all, being an effective teacher is continuous learning and unlearning of pedagogical practices. As teachers, this is a daily journey of classroom failures and victories.

For future studies, the number of participants should be increased because this study is limited to eight Korean student teachers who were enrolled during the last term of their academic program. It is also recommended that the data should not just be self-reports of the participants, but data should also come from their cooperating teacher, practicum supervisor, and even students to validate their self-reports about their internship experiences.

## Declaration of Possible Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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