# The Impact of Practicum on Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs: First Step into Professionalism

**İlknur Eğinli**
*Istanbul Medipol University, Turkey*
 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3317-7956

**Mehdi Solhi**
*Istanbul Medipol University, Turkey*
 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0355-9171

**Abstract**
*This study sought to investigate changes in pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs before and after the practicum experience at school. The data were collected using the same 24-item teacher sense of efficacy (TSE) scale. Three null hypotheses were formulated based on the sub-categories of self-efficacy in the study (i.e., self-efficacy in student engagement, self-efficacy in applying instructional strategies, and self-efficacy in classroom management). The Wilcoxon-signed rank test runs on the pre-practicum and post-practicum results suggested that the null hypothesis that practicum would not bring about any change in student engagement should be rejected. According to the second null hypothesis, there would be no significant difference between pre-service EFL teachers' pre-practicum and post-practicum self-efficacy in applying instructional strategies. Results indicated that we should reject the second null hypothesis, too, implying that pre-service teachers' scores in this construct have also been significantly different from each other in the pretest and the posttest. The last hypothesis of interest was if pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management changes due to practicum experience. The data gathered implies that we should reject this hypothesis, possibly in favor of the premise that our practicing pre-service EFL teachers have made positive gains in their classroom management ability. If we compare the obtained results based on the effect sizes that we have calculated for them, although all of them are strong effect sizes, we can say that the pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy has improved first in classroom management (r = 0.77), second in applying instructional strategies (r = 0.71), and third in student engagement (r = 0.622). The findings of the study are discussed in the light of implications to the language teacher education programs and the development of practicum experience.*
**Keywords: Practicum, Teacher self-efficacy, Pre-service teacher, Professionalism**

## Introduction

Teaching practicum refers to the practical experiences that pre-service teachers obtain during the training course in the classroom before they take over and begin the actual teaching profession. This pre-service practical training for prospective teachers is a widely recognized invaluable learning experience in teacher education programs. In the field of language education, language teaching departments at universities similarly give immense importance to teacher candidates' practicum experience since in this period, they would find an excellent opportunity to connect the theoretical knowledge they gain from the teacher education program courses with the actual teaching practices in a classroom setting. In addition, while the practicum provides a wealth of experience that requires the practical application of theory, prospective teachers would also benefit from reflecting on their learning and teaching expertise, learning from experienced teachers and making predictions about the kind of work environment they will be likely to work shortly (Goodnough et al., 2009; Rozella & Wilson 2012; Vo et al., 2018).

Indeed, pre-service teachers' perceptions about their profession and abilities are set in their minds before they actively commence their teaching practices (Johnson, 1994; Borg, 2006). Being recognized as one of the most essential and facets of pre-service teachers' education (Farrell, 2008) in learning how to teach (Vo et al., 2018), teaching practicum seems to be a constructive period for teacher candidates to inherit positive changes in their self-beliefs. The valuable experiences from the practicum would surely contribute to the teaching knowledge and expertise of the pre-service language teachers.

**Practicum in Teacher Education**

In almost all teacher education programs, practicum (i.e., the period of teaching practice done by the teacher candidates) is deemed the central component of teacher education programs (Farrell, 2003). During this period, prospective teachers are allowed to apply theory into practice, to practice their teaching skills (Collinson et al., 2009), and also to evaluate the change in their self-belief systems (Debreli, 2012). In this regard, the objective of the teacher education program is aimed at allowing pre-service teachers to build up the paramount knowledge of teaching theories in virtue of which they can observe and analyze teaching practices in ways that can help their actual teaching (Bobrakov, 2014). Given that pre-service teachers' steps toward professionalism require dynamic construction of knowledge from different sources (Borger & Tillema, 1996), practicum can enlighten them in obtaining the required knowledge in actual teaching.

A body of studies on pre-service language teachers' beliefs during practicum has revealed that the practice of teaching in this period results in positive changes in teacher beliefs (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Mattheoudaki, 2007; Ozmen, 2012). On the contrary, some other studies reported that teacher beliefs do not always significantly change classroom practices even after being exposed to classroom teaching practice (Farrell, 2003, Hobbs, 2007; Urmston & Pennington, 2008). In a different study, Özder et al. (2014) evaluated the practicum course of senior pre-service teachers at the pre-school teacher education programs with an implementation

of a curriculum assessment approach, in an attempt to see to what extent the prospective teachers accomplish the objectives of the teaching course in a real classroom setting and to investigate their beliefs as to how this course could be improved. According to the results, the pre-service teachers indicated a high teaching competency level. The content analysis also puts forward plenty of considerable suggestions such as ensuring the continuation of the practicum accompanying richer content, boosting the collaboration between faculty and school, and balancing the theoretical courses with the practical teaching experiences to pave the way for effective opportunities for the prospective teachers to practice what they learn in theory.

More than two decades ago, Stoynoff (1999) asserted that the main goal of school-based field experience in ELT is to allow students and teachers to connect their academic knowledge with self-knowledge and evaluate their skills. Along the same lines, Külekçi's (2011) study on pre-service teachers' sense of self-efficacy beliefs in teaching English during the practicum experience identified significant positive changes in teachers' beliefs. Olson and Jimenez-Silva (2008) similarly indicated a significant positive change in pre-service English language teachers' beliefs about themselves and attitudes toward English language learners.

In a recent study, Kasapoğlu and Yıldırım (2018) examined the prospective pre-service teachers' beliefs on the contribution of the placement schools' characteristics to their professional improvement. In so doing, focus-group interviews were conducted with 24 senior prospective teachers. Based on the results, the would-be elementary school teachers indicated a tendency to attribute the meaning of a well-served placement school to the richness of the resources or the abundance of the materials. However, the quality of mentor teachers was reported to be more important than the richness of the sources or the abundance of the materials. Yalcin Arslan and Ilin (2018) also investigated whether possessing theoretical and methodological knowledge obtained from the courses at university and observing real teaching practices during practicum is likely to result in any changes in prospective EFL teachers' potential concerns on teaching. The data were

gathered through a scale that was kept for ten weeks. Results indicated a significant difference between prospective teachers' concerns at the beginning and the end of the practicum. The practicum provided prospective teachers with awareness of real issues in the teaching profession. Very recently, Yin (2019) ran an empirical study to evaluate a methodology course designed to improve Chinese pre-service EFL teachers' readiness to teach in a 4-week practicum in secondary schools. During the practicum period, 15 pre-service teachers kept reflective journals. Results indicated that during the semester teacher training methodology course enhanced pre-service teachers' content knowledge by bridging the gap between theory and practice; however, the program failed to build the teachers' self-confidence in their communication skills.

On the other hand, Mattheoudaki's (2007) longitudinal study indicated that theoretical lessons in EFL teacher education programs are insufficient to prepare pre-service teachers in teaching real classrooms. It is only after the teaching in a practicum that the pre-service EFL teachers can personalize their teacher identity and become more aware of their personal beliefs as they teach in real context experience. The dissatisfaction with the methodology courses at university has also been indicated in Yin's (2019) study with 15 prospective teachers who have already taken the methodology course for teaching speaking. In her study, she explored the pre-service teachers' beliefs on how they perceive the effects of the teacher-training courses at university as they attempt to practically weigh their theoretical knowledge during the practicum. Attending a 4-week practicum in secondary schools, they documented their teaching reflections in their reflective journals and the interview was conducted after the practicum. The university courses were reported to be insufficient in preparing the prospective teachers to cope with the realities of actual teaching because the courses are based on a too idealistic and far-fetched image of teaching practice.

## Teachers' Self-efficacy Beliefs

Teacher efficacy is defined as the extent to which a teacher feels confident to control events that affect them (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Bandura, 2002)

and how confident s/he is to handle their ability to promote students' learning (Bandura, 1994). More than four decades ago, Bandura (1977) clearly stated that teacher self-efficacy is deeply rooted in the social cognitive theory, as beliefs of self-efficacy form the basis for human behavior choices.

Since pre-service teachers' beliefs and attitudes during their education are likely to affect their behaviors in teaching (Bandura, 1997), pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in the beginning and at the end of practicum teaching experience would be enlightening as these perceptions may have significant implications when they practice their profession. Additionally, Cephe (2009) emphasizes the value of reflective teaching and the fact that teachers who are void of self-efficacy may end up leading an unsuccessful teaching career. It is essential, therefore, for pre-service FFL teachers to observe and analyze the effect of their self-efficacy beliefs on their ability to teach and what their actual ability is during the practicum experience. The three main areas of teaching where the importance of teacher self-efficacy beliefs manifests itself are in the phase of understanding student engagement, enlisting instructional strategies, and using classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001).

Teachers need to pave the way for creating conditions in which learners can engage in meaningful activities in class (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) assert that over the years, it is well-understood that self-efficacy is a valuable construct to identify both student learning and student engagement in the classroom. Chesnut and Cullen's (2014) study with 209 pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about teachers' commitment to the profession similarly identified the importance of student engagement. The researchers discussed that teachers hold significant concerns about their abilities to manage the classroom environment and engage student learning. In an attempt to clarify the value of teachers' perceiving themselves positively, in Shaughnessy`s interview with Anita Woolfolk, Woolfolk recommends teachers to learn how to establish order and have power in controlling the classroom environment, where they encourage students to take responsibilities, which in turn leads

to diminishing disruptive behavior (Shaughnessy, 2004). In a similar vein, Shaukat and Iqbal (2012) explored teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as a function of student engagement, using instructional strategies and classroom management. The results of the study demonstrated that male teachers with a master's degree felt more efficacious in classroom management than those of female teachers; however, there was no significant difference between teachers' level of education or gender in the other areas (i.e., instructional strategies and student engagement). When it comes to the age factor, the study revealed no difference in instructional strategies after all age groups were computed in the analysis. Finally, compared to older teachers, younger teachers were highly likely to engage students and manage their classrooms.

Notwithstanding the fact that teacher self-efficacy performs a major role in terms of understanding student engagement and applying instructional strategies, teacher efficacy within classroom management has been a challenge for teachers (Ritter & Hancock, 2007; Hicks, 2012; Carr, 2013). Dicke et al. (2014) conducted a study with 1227 German pre-service teachers to determine how teacher efficacy and student misbehavior affect teacher attrition. The results showed that emotional disturbance, being emotionally exhausted, was a stronger predictor of low self-efficacy in classroom management.

Hoy and Spero (2005) explored changes in teacher efficacy from the time they commenced in a teacher preparation program to the induction year. According to the results, pre-service teachers' teaching efficacy increased during student teaching, while it declined during the actual first year. The decrease in efficacy during the first year of teaching is linked with the level of support received. In Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez's study (2007), the pre-service teachers similarly indicated a significant increase in their level of efficacy over the teaching practicum. The reason for the decline in teacher efficacy can be attributed to the fact that, as Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez (2007) underline, the teaching practicum is still a relatively safe and supportive environment for pre-service teachers in comparison to the time they would be in the first year of teaching.

Notwithstanding a large body of studies in the field of language teacher education which highlight the impact of the teaching practicum on the professional development of pre-service teachers (Numrich 1996; Freeman 2002; Farrell 2007; Chiang 2008; Leijen & Kullasepp, 2013; Canh, 2014; Kayi-Aydar, 2015), the pre-service English as a foreign language teachers' self-efficacy and their potential changes during the practicum experience have not been taken into scrutiny. Additionally, most of the conducted studies rely solely on qualitative methods (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Mattheoudaki, 2007; Debreli, 2012; Seymen, 2012). Therefore, unlike the qualitative approaches adopted in most of the studies which have investigated a similar phenomenon, in this study, a quantitative-method approach was adopted to explore pre-service EFL teachers' practicum experience in their senior year.

In so doing, the aim of this study was to investigate changes in pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs before and after the practicum experience at school. The sub-categories of self-efficacy as hypothesized in the study were self-efficacy in student engagement, self-efficacy in applying instructional strategies, and, finally, self-efficacy in classroom management. Therefore, three null hypotheses were formulated as follows:

1. The pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy in student engagement will not change due to practicum experience.
2. The pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy in applying instructional strategies will not change due to practicum experience.
3. The pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management will not change due to practicum experience.

## Materials and Methods

In line with the studies conducted to date, there seems to be a gap in pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in their teaching practicum. Tang et al. (2012) similarly suggest further studies into teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs and other organizational variables. Although the initial years of teaching could be vital to the long-term development of teacher efficacy, little longitudinal research has been done to trace teacher efficacy over the first years of teaching (Hoy & Spero, 2005). In so

doing, this study sought to explore pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs before and after the practicum experience using a quantitative methods approach.

## Participants

The participants in this study were 32 pre-service teachers, aged 21 to 35, enrolled in a Bachelor of Education degree program majoring in ELT at a private university in Turkey. They were senior students who voluntarily participated in the study and filled in the teacher sense of efficacy scale before and after the 12-week practicum.

## Instrument
### Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale

Created by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001), the TSE long-form and short-form scale, also referred to as the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale, is based on Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy scale. The researchers included the most essentials dimensions of effective teaching, which they believed were missing in the earlier efficacy scales. In this study, the short form on a 9-point scale indicating the degree to which the participants feel they can accomplish the indicated task (1= nothing, 3= very little, 5= some influence, 7= quite a bit, 9= a great deal) was used. The 24-item scale has three factors: self-efficacy for student engagement, self-efficacy for classroom management, and self-efficacy for instructional strategies. While the overall reliability for the composite in the scale was .90, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (2001) noted that "the instrument is also shown to be reliable with Cronbach's alpha values above .70 and overall, 12 questions being 0.90" (p. 801), showing that the responses of the participants to the items of this questionnaire were quite consistent for assessing the participants' attitudes toward their self-efficacy. In Fives, Hamman, and Olivarez's (2007) study, the data demonstrated similar levels of reliability (i.e., overall efficacy $\alpha = .97$; efficacy for instructional strategies, $\alpha = .94$; efficacy for classroom management, $\alpha = .96$; efficacy for student engagement, $\alpha = .93$).

## Procedure

The study was divided into two phases. In the first phase, before the pre-service EFL teachers began their practicum, they were given the 24-item TSE scale. The survey has the reader answer from 1 "nothing" to 9 "a great deal" with subscales of student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. In the second phase, after the pre-service teachers completed their practicum, the TSE scale was re-administered to investigate the change, if any, in the pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy by practicum.

## Results

The data for this study were collected using the same 32-item Likert scale questionnaire twice, that is, at the pretest and posttest stages. So, it was necessary at the beginning to estimate the questionnaire's reliability at both two stages. Running Chronbach alpha internal consistency reliability tests returned the results of $\alpha = .938$ and $\alpha = .926$ for the pretest and posttest administrations of the questionnaire, respectively. Both reliability estimates are very high. These statistics are presented in Tables 2 and 4. Tables 1 and 3 provide information on the number of items and whether any question was missed by the respondents or not.

**Table 1: Case Processing Summary**

| | | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cases | Valid | 32 | 100.0 |
| | Excludeda | 0 | .0 |
| | **Total** | 32 | 100.0 |
| a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure. | | | |

**Table 2: Pretest Reliability Estimate**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Number of Items |
|---|---|
| .938 | 24 |

**Table 3: Case Processing Summary**

| | | N | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cases | Valid | 32 | 100.0 |
| | Excluded[a] | 0 | .0 |
| | Total | 32 | 100.0 |
| a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure. | | | |

**Table 4: Post test Reliability Estimate**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Number of Items |
|---|---|
| .926 | 24 |

To answer the questions of the study, it was necessary to compare information gathered at the pre-practicum and post-practicum stages. Comparison of the pre-practicum and post-practicum results of the same respondents requires running paired-samples t-tests. However, one of the assumptions of the paired-samples t-test is the normality of the scores difference's distribution. If the normality assumption is not satisfied, the alternative method is to run the Wilcoxon-signed rank non-parametric test. The difference between these two tests is only in their power, with the non-parametric test allegedly having less power to detect the possible difference. In this study, we examined both options. After observing that both tests return the same results, even with normal distributions of the differences with p-values larger than .05 that are given in Table 5, we decided to use the non-parametric alternative because of its visual informativeness.

**Table 5: Normality Tests of the Pretest and Post test Scores' Differences**

| | | pretest-post test difference | difference in student engagement | difference in instructional strategies | difference in classroom management |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **N** | | 32 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| **Normal Parameters[a,b]** | **Mean** | 2.2813 | 1.5000 | 3.3750 | -.3750 |
| | **Std. Deviation** | 3.27487 | 3.38062 | 2.19984 | 3.37797 |
| **Test Statistic** | | .141 | .184 | .270 | .169 |
| **Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)** | | .109c | .200c,d | .089c | .200c,d |

**Testing the First Hypothesis**

The questionnaire had three sub-scales, each addressing one of the constructs in question. The first construct concerned self-efficacy of the pre-service teachers in engaging the students and the change that was hypothesized to occur in this aspect of their self-efficacy as a result of practicum. The Wilcoxon-signed rank test run on the pre-practicum and post-practicum results, as represented in the hypothesis test summary table below, suggests that the null hypothesis that practicum would not bring about any change in student engagement should be rejected.

**Table 6: Result of the Pre test and Post test Comparison of Pre-Service Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Engaging Students**

| Null Hypothesis | Test | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| The median of differences between pretest in-service teacher engagement efficacy and posttest in-service teacher engagement efficacy equals 0. | Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test | .000 | Reject the null hypothesis. |

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

As it may be noticed immediately, while the test summary in Table 6 suggests that the difference had been meaningful and the null hypothesis should be rejected, it does not tell us about the direction of difference, that is, whether the student engagement self-efficacy of the pre-service teachers has been higher or lower after the practicum. To know about the direction of change, we need to examine the rank-ordered histogram, which is generated as the auxiliary output to the Hypothesis Test Summary in the area called Continuous Field Information.

This histogram is generated after subtracting the pre-practicum results from the post-practicum results. That is, the values of items are subtracted from each other. The height, width, and colors of the bars all convey different kinds of information. The height represents the frequency of the items whose overall values have changed. The width of the bars

points to the range within which the changes have happened. So, each bar may be representative of just one item or more than one item. This means that usually, there is not as many bars as there are items. The number of bars is usually fewer than the number of items.

Changes may be in the positive direction or the negative direction. Positive changes are represented by brown color and to the right of the histogram, but negative changes are represented by blue color and to the left of the histogram. Falling in a positive category means that the item's rank has improved, while falling in the negative category means that the rank of the item has deteriorated.
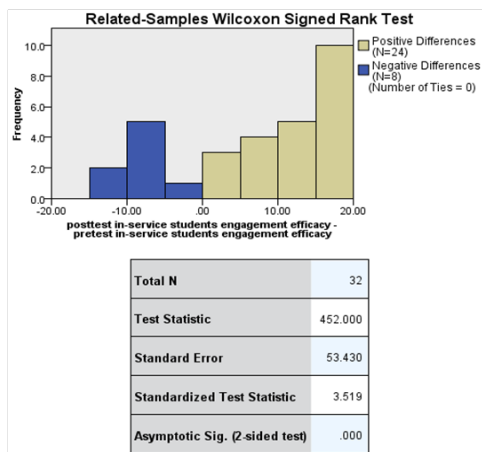


**Figure 1: Ranks of the Items and Test Statistic Relating to the Respondent Engaging Self-Efficacy**

The intervals of the histogram reveal that rank order is done based on half of a score change in the overall value of the item. Each rank is different from its adjacent ranks by only half of a score at most. If we look at the frequencies or height of the blue bars, we can understand that 1 item's rank has come down

by zero to half of a score, 5 items' ranks by half of a score to one score and 2 items' ranks by one to one and a half of a score. So, altogether eight items have gathered fewer overall values in the post-practicum stage compared to the pre-practicum stage, even though to different degrees.

On the positive side of the histogram, we see both more bars and higher frequencies. Three items' overall values have improved between zero and half of a score; 4 items' scores have improved from half of a score to one score; 5 items' scores have improved between one and one and a half of a score; and finally, 10 items' scores have improved between one and a half to two scores. Therefore, together, 22 items have gathered more overall values regarding the pre-service teachers' ability to engage students in the teaching process, which is very different from the number of items that have gathered smaller values.

The table with rows below the histogram shows the test statistic and its significance level, among other things. As can be seen, the hypothesis should be rejected with t = 452 and p = 000 < 001. The standardized test statistic is also 3.19. The calculated effect size or r is 0.622, which is strong effect size.

**Testing the Second Hypothesis**

According to the second null hypothesis, there would be no significant difference between pre-service teachers' pre-practicum and post-practicum self-efficacy in applying instructional strategies. The Hypothesis Test Summary Table, which compares the items' overall values at these two stages, suggests that we should reject this null hypothesis too, implying that pre-service teachers' scores in terms of this construct have also been significantly different from each other pretest and posttest.

**Table 7: Result of the Pretest and Post test Comparison of Pre-Service Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Applying Instructional Strategies**

| Null Hypothesis | Test | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| The median of differences between pretest in-service teacher instructional strategies efficacy and posttest in-service teacher instructional strategies efficacy equals 0. | Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test | .000 | Reject the null hypothesis. |

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

To go into more detail again, we need to look at the Continuous Field Information and the histogram

and table. The histogram shows that, after being ranked, 5 items' overall values have shrunk from

zero to two scores from the pre-practicum to post-practicum. On the other hand, 27 items have improved in their overall values from zero to three scores suggesting higher ability in pre-service teachers at the post-practicum stage to apply instructional strategies based on their responses to the items of the questionnaire. For this hypothesis, the table shows that t = 479.5 and p = .000 < .001. The standardized test statistic is equal to 4.034 and the r or effect size is equal to 0.71. This effect size is even larger than the previous one pointing to an even more significant change or difference.
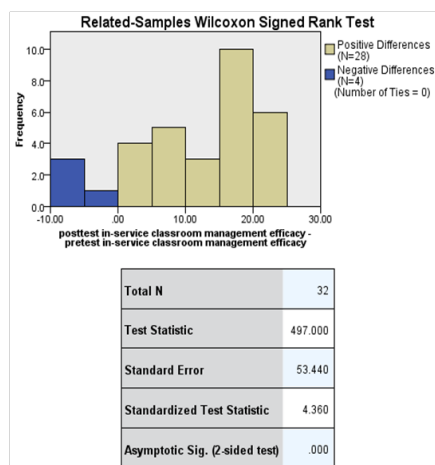
**Testing the Third Hypothesis**

The last hypothesis of interest was if pre-service teachers' self-efficacy in classroom management changes due to practicum experience. Like the two previous questions, data relating to this hypothesis were fed into SPSS. The resulting table and figure were used to decide if we should accept or reject the hypothesis. Let's first have a quick look at the Hypothesis Test Summary Table.



**Figure 2: Ranks of the Items and Test Statistic Relating to the Respondents' Self-Efficacy in Applying Instructional Strategies**

**Table 8: Result of the Pretest and Post test Comparison of Pre-Service Teachers' Self-Efficacy in Classroom Management**

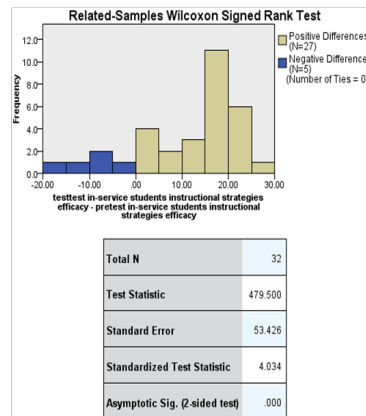| Null Hypothesis | Test | Sig. | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|
| The median of differences between pretest in-service teacher classroom management efficacy and posttest in-service teacher classroom management efficacy equals 0. | Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test | .000 | Reject the null hypothesis. |

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.



**Figure 3: Ranks of The Items and Test Statistic Relating to the Respondents' Classroom Management Self-Efficacy**

The table implies that we should reject this hypothesis, possibly in favor of the idea that our practicing pre-service teachers have made positive gains in their classroom management ability. But to make sure, as before, we should look at the Continuous Field Information Figure.

The histogram shows that only four items' overall values measuring classroom management self-efficacy worsen from the pre-practicum to the post-practicum. One of these four items' overall values has dwindled only between zero and half of a score. The other three have shrunk by only zero to one point. The remaining 28 items have improved in their overall values between zero and two and a half of a score. Four items have improved by zero to half a score, 5 items have improved by half of a score to one score, 3 items between one and a half of a score, 10 between one and a half of a score and 2 and finally

6 items between two and two and half of a score.

In the table that follows, the test statistic value, standardized test statistic and p-value are as follows: t = 497, standardized t = 4.360 and p = 000 < .001. The conclusion that can be reached is that this hypothesis should also be rejected. The effect size for this test is r = 0.77. If we compare the obtained results based on the effect sizes that we have calculated for them, although all of them are strong effect sizes, we can say that the pre-service teachers' self-efficacy has improved first in classroom management (r = 0.77), second in applying instructional strategies (r = 0.71), and third in student engagement (r = 0.622).

## Discussion

Given that prospective teachers highly value the importance of self-efficacy in their career (Arnold et al., 2011), the aim of this study was to investigate the changes in the pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy perceptions before and after the practicum experience at school to explore the extent their self-efficacy beliefs in student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management would change as a result of practicum experience. In so doing, three null hypotheses were formulated. In the light of the results, the null hypotheses that practicum would not bring about any change in student engagement, that there would be no significant difference between their pre-practicum and post-practicum self-efficacy beliefs in applying instructional strategies and classroom management, respectively, were all rejected. Indeed, the findings identified that the pre-service EFL teachers' teaching practicum at school made positive contributions to their attempts to effectively engage students, apply instructional strategies, and conduct classroom management. The present study differs from previous research in facilitating a teacher self-efficacy scale developed to measure teacher efficacy as a multi-dimensional construct with three latent factors: efficacy for classroom management, efficacy to promote student engagement, and efficacy in using instructional strategies.

The findings align with the studies that indicate the positive and constructive impact of the practicum experience on prospective teachers' perceptions of their abilities to effectively handle real classroom teaching practices in their profession (Cabaroglu & Roberts, 2000; Mattheoudaki, 2007; Ozmen, 2012). Indeed, teachers' self-efficacy beliefs on their profession can positively change during the teaching practicum at school. The data in this study also suggest that when prospective teachers produce positive emotions about themselves as professionals, they increase the likelihood of achieving a strong sense of efficacy (e.g., Goker, 2006, Liaw, 2009). The significance of developing in-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs has been emphasized in the literature. In their study, Tang et al. (2012) investigated the change in ESL teachers' beliefs and self-understanding in their teacher education program by running a four-year longitudinal study. Four ESL teacher candidates were asked questions in the pre and post-teaching practicum experience. The researchers suggested that teacher candidates should be regularly encouraged to develop firm self-efficacy beliefs about their abilities in the program.

The present study relied on a quantitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of practicum experience in prospective EFL teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy beliefs during their practicum experience. The results of the study showed that classroom management was the hardest experience for the pre-service EFL teachers. The findings are echoed in Coskun (2013) and Yusof et al.'s (2014) studies on the pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and the issues they face in their field experience. These researchers reported that at the beginning of the actual classroom teaching journey, the pre-service EFL teachers experienced weakness in their self-confidence and lack of knowledge in managing a real class. The findings align with Gan's study (2013), which explored pre-service ESL teachers' difficulties during their practicum period in primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. In this study, classroom management, more specifically the control of running activities and implications of classroom rules, was the major concern of the prospective EFL teachers. More recently, similar to the present study, Yalcin Arslan and Ilin's (2018) study indicated a significant difference between student-teacher concerns at the beginning and the end of teaching practice.

The findings point to the importance of

intensifying the pedagogical content knowledge in language teacher education programs so that pre-service EFL teachers will be more prepared for the teaching practicum. The EFL teacher education programs need to design additional pre-practicum teaching courses and incorporate "in-class" mock teaching/pseudo practice assignments into the curriculum at each grade level of the teacher education program. While taking their coursework, pre-service teachers need to be exposed to various scenarios to improve their problem-solving skills and to cope with the difficulties they may face in real classrooms.

Furthermore, to train self-motivated EFL professionals, EFL teacher educators need to be encouraged to remind their students of the importance of reflective writing. We consequently suggest that incorporating reflective writing in EFL teacher preparation courses will promote teacher candidates' critical reflective skills and their understanding of teaching and learning. Keeping reflective journals each time a teaching methodology is taught in class can bring out students' critical thoughts about their assumptions and implementation of that practice. In short, pre-service EFL teachers can explore their metacognitive thoughts, and by incorporating reflective writing, they can think about their thinking. The practicum experience in the eyes of pre-service teachers can be named as the first step into professionalism, where they begin becoming a "reflective practitioner" (Schon, 1983).

Thus, in the light of the studies (e.g., Shaukat & Iqbal, 2012; Chesnut & Cullen, 2014) that argue in favor of the significance of classroom management and student engagement in pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, prospective teachers need to be taught the necessary strategies to improve their self-efficacy along before they step into a real teaching experience. In all EFL teacher education programs, before the academic year starts, teacher educators should consolidate ideas on how to integrate authentic materials to reduce prospective teachers' possible concerns about effective use of time in the classrooms and the management of misbehavior, giving succinct instructions to deliver a particular teaching activity and an engaging lesson. It would be even more beneficial to remind prospective teachers'

that teacher efficacy beliefs may be resistant to change in the earlier years of their teaching careers (Pajares, 1996).

Our study has implications that can stimulate and inform the teacher education programs, which possess the utmost importance in prospective teachers' professional lives. Therefore, building and maintaining high levels of teacher efficacy in specific teaching areas (i.e., engaging students, managing the classroom, and applying various instructional strategies) need to be the priority for faculty and administrators in institutions of higher education long before they step into teaching in the real world.

## Availability of Data and Material

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available on various publishing websites with their reference numbers. The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article's references section as it is a review study.

## Funding

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**Author Details**

**Mehdi Solhi,** *Istanbul Medipol University, Turkey,* **Email ID***: solhi.mehdi@gmail.com*

**İlknur Eğinli,** *Istanbul Medipol University, Turkey,* **Email ID***: ilknur.eginli@gmail.com*