

## Article

# Enhancing Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Self-Efficacy through the Use of ELF in a Multilingual World

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**Abstract:** The teaching practicum, a psychologically demanding phase of professional development, yields diverse self-efficacy outcomes for pre-service teachers. While it is crucial to view the practicum as a cornerstone for shaping teaching beliefs, there exists a research gap in understanding its influence on the self-efficacy of pre-service English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers in East Asia and delving into the cognitive processes during this period. This mixed-methods study ( $n = 18$ ) aimed to address this gap. The quantitative results revealed an overall increase in participants' self-efficacy, notably in classroom management. The qualitative findings uncovered challenges faced by those with lower self-efficacy, particularly when discrepancies arose with mentor teachers over teaching English through a communicative approach. Conversely, individuals with linguistically and culturally diverse pre-practicum experiences exhibited resilience while maintaining robust beliefs about their own teaching. The findings suggest the necessity for tailored teacher preparation programs aiming at nurturing a multilingual perspective through interaction in English as a lingua franca.

**Keywords:** pre-service teachers; teaching practicum; self-efficacy; English as a lingua franca; teaching beliefs; English as a foreign language; mixed methods



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## 1. Introduction

With the spread of globalization, there is an increasing need to use English as a lingua franca (ELF) in various business, educational, and social situations. ELF serves as a medium of communication among people from diverse sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds, often among individuals with different first languages. It emphasizes the practical utilization of English rather than focusing solely on its formal acquisition and learning in school or educational institutions [1]. As the demand for ELF grows across global contexts, there is renewed attention to the importance of communicative language teaching (CLT) [2]. This is because the fundamental pedagogical principles of CLT, as outlined by Brown [3], emphasize several key aspects essential for effective communication in ELF. For instance, CLT classroom goals are centered around developing all components of communicative competence, rather than solely focusing on grammatical or linguistic proficiency. Language techniques are carefully crafted to engage learners in practical, authentic, and functional language use for meaningful communication. Moreover, students are expected to actively use the language both productively and receptively, in spontaneous and unscripted contexts. These principles of CLT aim to promote communicative effectiveness and language proficiency through authentic interaction and engagement without adhering strictly to the "accuracy" standards of the native English speaker model, thereby aligning with the notion of ELF use.

Given these characteristics, the integration of CLT into national curriculum guidelines has become increasingly prominent, especially in many Asian countries where English is taught as a foreign language [4–6]. Japan is no exception, emphasizing the importance of equipping students with communicative ability in English through student-centered,

interactive approaches rather than teacher-led, knowledge-transmission instructions in elementary and secondary school settings [7–9]. Accordingly, pre-service teachers are expected to gain knowledge and implementation skills in CLT through teacher preparation programs at university, ensuring their effective readiness for their future careers.

Globalization has also resulted in increased diversity among students in classrooms. According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology [10], there has been a dramatic increase in the number of non-Japanese students over the past decades, and this trend is expected to continue. With the expansion of multilingual and multicultural classroom settings, teachers are expected to use more English than ever for various purposes, including teaching, daily interactions with students, and meetings with parents [11]. Nevertheless, as far as teaching methods are concerned, opinions vary among teachers and administrators concerning the shift in focus from the traditional grammar-translation method, which primarily prepares students for entrance exams, to CLT: some show affirmative responses, while others express concerns about their ability to adapt to this change and their capability to effectively implement it in their own teaching [12,13].

Previous research has explored the self-efficacy beliefs of in-service teachers regarding the implementation of CLT across various English teaching contexts [2,14,15]. Teacher self-efficacy, grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory [16], refers to "the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" [17] (p. 233). Extensive research across various fields has demonstrated that teachers' sense of self-efficacy significantly influences their teaching practices and student learning outcomes [18]. Additionally, it has been noted that self-efficacy beliefs tend to be established early in one's career and remain stable and resistant to change thereafter [16]. However, limited attention has been given to examining how pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in implementing CLT are shaped, particularly during a teaching practicum and, to a lesser extent, through teaching experiences in a multilingual and multicultural classroom during the practicum. Since practicum experiences represent the initial teaching encounters in real-life classrooms, they are likely to form the foundation for subsequent professional development. Consequently, it is crucial to identify potential factors that can either enhance or diminish their self-efficacy in implementing CLT during the practicums. The present study is an attempt to fill these gaps in research on English teacher education.

## 2. Background

Teachers' self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in determining classroom dynamics [16]. Previous research has demonstrated its influence on the level of effort teachers exert [19] and its association with instructional quality [20]. Moreover, teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to adopt innovative instructional practices [21,22], feel more committed to their profession, and are less likely to leave the teaching profession [17]. Several studies have examined potential factors influencing pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, including their backgrounds, life experiences, pedagogical knowledge, and experiences in teacher preparation programs [23,24]. For pre-service teachers, the teaching practicum represents a crucial phase during which they encounter and discover the practical needs of the classroom for the first time, gaining insights into their teaching skills [25]. Their sense of self-efficacy undergoes changes during the practicum, being both enhanced and diminished. The teaching practicum, defined as the practical experiences obtained during the training course in the classroom under the supervision of mentor teachers and/or independently before officially commencing their teaching profession [26], becomes a critical phase for their professional development. Therefore, examining how their self-efficacy changes during the practicums and identifying potential factors influencing it are essential considerations.

Throughout their teaching practicums, pre-service teachers encounter a range of experiences that significantly contribute to the development of their self-efficacy, drawing upon Bandura's four primary sources [16]. One key aspect is the mastery experiences gained through personal achievements and successful completion of tasks. For instance,

successfully implementing a creative lesson plan or effectively managing a classroom challenge during the practicum serves as a direct mastery experience, enhancing their belief in their competence and capability to handle similar situations in the future [27,28]. Vicarious experiences unfold as pre-service teachers observe role models and mentor teachers in action [29]. During practicums, they actively engage in observing lessons conducted by mentor teachers and other experienced teachers. Witnessing effective teaching methods and positive outcomes in others' practices serves as a powerful example, boosting their confidence and influencing their teaching approaches.

Conversely, observing challenges and the adaptation of strategies helps them navigate potential pitfalls. Social persuasion comes into play through the verbal and non-verbal encouragement, feedback, and support provided by mentors, administrators, and students during the practicum [30]. Positive reinforcement for a well-executed lesson or constructive feedback on areas for improvement can significantly impact their self-efficacy. On the contrary, facing criticism or discouragement may pose challenges to their confidence. The physiological and affective states of pre-service teachers during the practicum are integral to understanding their emotional and physical conditions. Positive emotional states, such as the excitement and happiness derived from a successful lesson, contribute to an enhanced sense of self-efficacy [29]. Simultaneously, maintaining a sense of calmness in challenging situations becomes crucial, as negative emotions and physical discomfort, such as disappointment and anxiety, have the potential to decrease self-efficacy [31]. Thus, the teaching practicum serves as a dynamic environment where pre-service teachers actively engage in mastery experiences, observe vicarious examples, receive social persuasion, and navigate various physiological and affective states. These collective experiences, along with the interpretations attached to them, play a crucial role in nurturing the development and sustainment of self-efficacy beliefs essential for their growth as educators.

As a substantial body of research has delved into teachers' self-efficacy beliefs over the decades, there has been a growing interest in exploring language teachers' self-efficacy [32]. Although limited, several studies have investigated the impact of teaching practicums on pre-service English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers' self-efficacy. For instance, Atay [25], employing the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (adapted from Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy [33]), scrutinized the self-efficacy of pre-service EFL teachers engaged in year-long practicums at private elementary and secondary schools in Turkey. The results illuminated significant differences in self-efficacy levels for instructional strategies and student engagement before and after the teaching practicum: self-efficacy for instructional strategies decreased, while self-efficacy for student engagement increased. Focus-group discussions revolving around teaching practicum experiences identified factors contributing to the enhancement of their self-efficacy, such as observing mentor teachers' successful classroom instructions and receiving positive feedback from them (i.e., positive vicarious experiences and positive verbal persuasions). In contrast, factors hindering their self-efficacy development were recognized, including observing their mentor teachers' classes using outdated teaching approaches (i.e., negative vicarious experiences) and facing institutional constraints.

Hoang's meta-analysis [34] revealed that research on the self-efficacy of language teachers was primarily conducted in Middle Eastern countries. Furthermore, Wyatt [35] highlighted that research on the self-efficacy of pre-service language teachers has been extensively undertaken in Turkey, resulting in a noticeable dearth of investigations in other global regions. In response, Hoang and Wyatt [36] conducted an investigation into the impact of practicum on the self-efficacy of EFL teachers serving in high schools in Vietnam. They employed the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, strategically modified to enhance the instrument's contextual relevance to the dynamics of EFL learning in the Vietnamese context. The quantitative results indicated significant improvements in their self-efficacy, particularly in facets related to their capabilities to address misbehaviors, manage classroom activities, and engage with language learners. The exploration into sources fostering their efficacy beliefs revealed that enactive mastery experiences, exemplified by success in class

management and the formulation of lesson plans, constituted the most frequently cited source. Subsequently, vicarious experiences, encompassing the observation of mentor teachers' lessons, and verbal persuasion, exemplified by comments from mentor teachers, emerged as discernible contributors to the observed enhancements in self-efficacy.

Given the limited yet growing body of research on the effect of the practicum on pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive investigations, particularly focusing on wider regions of the world. Moreover, in the current era of globalization and greater migration, increased attention must be given to investigating the self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers working with multicultural and multilingual students in EFL classrooms. Despite the growing attention to understanding the sources of teachers' efficacy [37], insufficient emphasis has been placed on the sources contributing to pre-service teachers' self-efficacy during practicums [38]. Therefore, this study aims to examine how the self-efficacy of pre-service English teachers serving in secondary schools in Japan is shaped during the practicum, where the implementation of CLT is required in classrooms with and without students of multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. The study is guided by the following two research questions:

1. Are there any significant differences in pre-service teachers' self-efficacy before and after the teaching practicums?
2. What are the factors that contribute to the positive and negative changes in pre-service teachers' self-efficacy during the practicums?

### 3. Method

An explanatory sequential design [39,40] was used in the present study to investigate how pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for implementing CLT is shaped during teaching practicums. The design comprised two phases, beginning with the collection and analysis of questionnaire responses, namely, quantitative data on the change in self-efficacy before and after the practicums, followed by the subsequent collection and analysis of interviews, namely, qualitative data to gain insights into the reasons behind any change in their self-efficacy beliefs.

#### 3.1. Quantitative Phase

##### 3.1.1. Setting and Participants

Like many other EFL countries in Asia, Japan has implemented various reforms in English education policies and relevant action plans to enhance students' oral communication skills. The most recent reform in English language education policy and curriculum in Japan was initiated in 2022 with the aim of addressing concerns raised by the Japanese government regarding the quality of English language teaching and the low proficiency in English communication skills among Japanese students. A communicative approach is strongly advocated in the national curriculum guidelines known as the *Course of Study* for senior high schools [9], emphasizing the importance of students actively using language to express their thoughts and feelings to one another, as well as the need for students to engage in language activities that prompt them to consider how to express themselves appropriately in various situations and contexts. Consequently, pre-service teachers are expected to learn CLT principles and practices during their teacher preparation programs. They are then encouraged to apply these principles and practices in their teaching practicums, which typically represent their first teaching experience in real classrooms.

The participants in this study comprised 18 pre-service teachers, consisting of 14 undergraduate and 4 graduate students, all enrolled in teacher preparation programs at universities located in western Japan. To obtain a teaching certificate in Japan, students must enroll in departments that offer teacher preparation programs. For English teaching certificate programs, departments such as letters, foreign languages, international studies, etc., typically provide the necessary programs. Generally, there are no language requirements for admission to English teaching certificate programs. However, students must meet specific credit requirements set by the department, which may include passing

courses such as theories of second language acquisition, teaching methods, ELF, etc., and completing teaching practicums during their bachelor's or master's degree program. The participants undertook teaching practicums in secondary schools during the 2023 academic year, fulfilling the necessary requirements. The participant group consisted of 11 female and 7 male students, with three of them completing a 2-week practicum and the remaining 15 completing a 3-week practicum. Prior to the initiation of the research, participants were provided with both oral and written explanations detailing the purpose, methodology, and privacy policy of the study. Subsequently, they willingly signed consent forms to signify their agreement and participation in the research.

### 3.1.2. Instruments

An online self-report multiple-choice questionnaire served as the tool for gathering data on participants' demographic information and their self-efficacy beliefs in implementing CLT. The demographic information section requested participants to furnish details such as gender, scores on standardized tests (e.g., TOEIC: Test of English for International Communication), type of school assigned (e.g., junior/senior, public/private), grade assigned to teach, duration of the teaching practicum, and contact address. Regarding the self-efficacy component, Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy's Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale [33] was adapted to assess pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for teaching English based on CLT principles [41] and the *Course of Study* [8,9]. Since the original scale is domain-general, the modified scale incorporated specificity concerning the implementation of CLT in classrooms. It comprised 34 items distributed across three subscales of self-efficacy: efficacy for classroom management (5 items), efficacy for instructional strategies (14 items), and efficacy for student engagement (15 items). All items were presented in Japanese to prevent any potential misunderstanding due to variations in participants' levels of English reading comprehension. Participants were instructed to rate the extent to which they believed they could accomplish the specified tasks, utilizing a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "Not at all" to "A great deal", with higher scores indicating greater efficacy.

The revised questionnaire underwent a pilot test before the initiation of the current study to assess its reliability and validity. Pre-service teachers enrolled in the master's program ( $n = 7$ ), who had already completed their teaching practicums in the year preceding this research project, were invited to respond to the modified questionnaire. They were specifically asked to offer feedback regarding the structure, wording, and clarity of the questions, aiming to enhance the scale's validity. Furthermore, Cronbach's internal consistency coefficient was computed to assess the reliability of scores on the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha for overall self-efficacy was found to be 0.94, and the alpha coefficients for the three subscales were 0.76 for classroom management, 0.77 for instructional strategies, and 0.96 for student engagement. These values suggest that all alpha coefficients fall within an acceptable range, indicating a reasonable level of internal consistency. The translated English version of the questionnaire is included in Appendix A.

### 3.1.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data were collected twice via Google Forms: once one week before and once one week after the teaching practicum. The same questionnaire was administered on both occasions. However, when administered after the practicum, respondents were instructed to base their answers on their experiences during the practicums. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 29. Scores were summed across items in each subscale (i.e., self-efficacy for class management, instructional strategies, and student engagement), and the total scores were used for analyses. Following an assessment of normality and reliability of scores obtained from the questionnaire, a paired-samples  $t$ -test was conducted to determine whether there exists a statistically significant difference in the self-efficacy levels of pre-service teachers for implementing CLT before and after their teaching practicums. All tests of significance for three subscales were made with a Bonferroni adjustment (i.e.,  $p < 0.017$ ), and Cohen's  $d$  was computed for effect size, with  $d$



values less than or in the vicinity of 0.20 considered small effects, values in the vicinity of 0.50 considered medium effects, and values more than or in the vicinity of 0.80 considered large effects.

### 3.2. Qualitative Phase

#### 3.2.1. Participants

The results from the quantitative phase guided the selection of pre-service teachers for the qualitative phase. In the qualitative analysis, our aim was to comprehend potential factors influencing self-efficacy during the practicum, both enhancing and diminishing it. To identify individuals with significant changes in self-efficacy levels before and after the practicums, we employed extreme-case sampling. This led to the purposeful selection of Paul and Mio (pseudonyms) for interviews. Additionally, we chose to focus on Mike (pseudonym), a pre-service teacher who maintained the highest level of self-efficacy before and after the practicum. Finally, Kazuki (pseudonym), whose self-efficacy showed minimal change, was selected due to his experiences implementing CLT in multilingual and multicultural class environments. Paul and Mike were British-Japanese and Australian-Japanese, respectively, with Japanese as their native language and a high level of English proficiency. Kazuki and Mio were Japanese, defined as proficient and independent users of English, respectively. Table 1 provides information about the individuals involved in the qualitative phase and the contexts of their practicums.

**Table 1.** Participants' information.

Name	Gender	Back -Ground	CEFR	Site	Duration	Grade	SE-T1 (CM, IS, SE)	SE-T2 (CM, IS, SE)
Mike	M	A-J	C1	Private	3 weeks	11	157 (22, 66, 69)	175 (26, 76, 73)
Paul	M	B-J	C1	Public	3 weeks	9	108 (14, 45, 49)	159 (26, 71, 62)
Mio	F	JP	B2	Private	3 weeks	11	154 (23, 64, 67)	98 (17, 41, 40)
Kazuki	M	JP	C2	Public	3 weeks	10	131 (26, 64, 41)	129 (22, 57, 50)

*Note.* M = male, F = female; A-J = Australian-Japanese, B-J = British-Japanese, JP = Japanese; SE-T1 and SE-T2 denote overall self-efficacy scores (possible range: 34–204) measured before and after the practicums, respectively. CM, IS, and SE in parentheses represent self-efficacy scores for classroom management (5–30), instructional strategies (14–84), and student engagement (15–90), respectively. The Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) levels were estimated based on participants' reported TOEIC scores and scores from other standardized tests.

#### 3.2.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data were gathered through individual semi-structured interviews. In these sessions, participants were asked to explain the reasons behind their own ratings on the self-efficacy questionnaire and the changes observed before and after the practicums. They were also prompted to share their experiences and feelings regarding the implementation of CLT during their teaching practicums by responding to questions such as “What experiences during the practicum made you feel more capable of implementing CLT?” and “What experiences during the practicum made you feel less capable of implementing CLT?” Each interview session lasted approximately 30–40 min, and follow-up interviews were conducted twice. With participants' permission, all sessions were audio-recorded for later transcription and analysis.

Verbatim transcriptions of the audio-recorded interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis in the following steps [42]. The researchers read all utterances in the interviews to gain a holistic sense of the data. No sorting or coding occurred at this stage. Next, descriptive phrases pertaining to participants' explanations of the change in self-efficacy were extracted. The researchers then generated initial codes for the data by labeling the extracted phrases and identifying commonalities among the utterances. This was followed

by developing categories from the codes by aggregating similar codes together and identifying themes by comparing and examining the relations between and across the codes and categories. Moreover, peer debriefing was conducted to triangulate the researcher's inferences with those of another researcher [43]. All researchers agreed upon the reported themes as accurate characterizations of participants' reasoning behind the change in their self-efficacy beliefs.

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1. Quantitative Phase

Table 2 presents the results of the descriptive statistics of the pre-service teachers' self-efficacy levels before and after their practicums. The mean scores indicate that both overall self-efficacy and its three subscales were higher after their teaching practicums than before. The skewness and kurtosis values of all variables were within an acceptable range of normality.

**Table 2.** Results of descriptive statistics.

Variables	Time	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min.	Max.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Overall self-efficacy	1	121.17	21.87	82	157	−0.232	−0.562
	2	134.06	22.65	90	175	0.129	0.029
Classroom management	1	17.61	4.03	11	26	0.417	−0.323
	2	22.22	3.54	13	28	−0.788	1.756
Instructional strategies	1	52.33	9.92	33	66	−0.514	−0.489
	2	57.22	9.58	40	76	0.146	−0.014
Student engagement	1	51.22	10.27	33	69	0.06	−0.75
	2	54.61	10.58	37	75	0.416	−0.264

*Note.* *N* = 18. Possible score ranges were 34–204 for overall self-efficacy, 5–30 for classroom management, 14–84 for instructional strategies, and 15–90 for student engagement.

Regarding the data collected before the practicums, Cronbach's alpha was 0.94 for overall self-efficacy. The values for the subscales were 0.79 for classroom management, 0.88 for instructional strategies, and 0.90 for student engagement. For the data collected after the practicums, Cronbach's alpha was 0.96 for overall self-efficacy. The values for the subscales were 0.84 for classroom management, 0.89 for instructional strategies, and 0.92 for student engagement. All these coefficients suggest an acceptable degree of reliability.

The results of the paired-samples *t*-tests indicated that there was a significant difference between two measurement points regarding their overall self-efficacy levels ( $t(17) = 2.17$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ,  $d = 0.51$ ), suggesting an enhancement of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in implementing CLT during teaching practicums. Concerning 3 subscales, a significant difference was observed in classroom management ( $t(17) = 3.96$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.93$ ), but not in instructional strategies ( $t(17) = 1.85$ ,  $p = 0.081$ ) or student engagement ( $t(17) = 1.23$ ,  $p = 0.235$ ).

##### 4.2. Qualitative Phase

Analysis of the interview data from four pre-service teachers (Mike, Paul, Mio, and Kazuki) revealed two themes. The first theme pertained to the formation of beliefs about teaching English as a lingua franca (ELF) before the practicums, which they explicitly focused on when discussing the implementation of CLT in real-life classrooms. This theme comprised two categories developed during the coding process: learning the concept of ELF and interacting through ELF. The second theme centered on the enactment of their beliefs during the practicums, encompassing two categories: mentor–mentee relationships and adaptation to local school policies. The following sections offer a summary of results from

each case, with quotes highlighting the reasons given by pre-service teachers associated with changes in self-efficacy for implementing CLT during the practicums.

#### 4.2.1. Mike's Case

Mike completed his practicum at the private high school from which he graduated, maintaining the highest level of self-efficacy among all participants, both before and after the practicum. He was assigned to teach English to 11th-grade students. When asked about his practicum experiences, he explained that although his school was supportive of incorporating CLT, conflicts arose with his mentor teacher concerning teaching methods. This became evident in interview excerpts. For instance, "My mentor teacher kind of pushed me into giving instruction in American English. It just doesn't make sense". Mike also highlighted an issue with his school principal. Specifically, when he refrained from correcting a student's strong Japanese accent to avoid making her feel bad, the principal, who observed that scene, called him up after the class and urged him to correct it. Mike explained this incident, stating, "The principal was complaining about overlooking a Japanese accent in the class", and "He kept complaining to me, saying that it's not acceptable". Mike labeled this incident as the "negative effects of adherence to American English" on English education in Japanese secondary schools. He also expressed his beliefs, stating, "Learning only American English just didn't seem great for students' future".

Despite facing these negative experiences during the practicum, his self-efficacy for implementing CLT, coupled with his beliefs in acknowledging the variety of English, did not decrease (see Table 1). He explained the reasons, highlighting his ELF experiences, particularly exposure to various forms of English during his time at a community college before transferring to university. He expressed, "When I heard people from Asian countries speak English with a strong accent or something for the first time, I thought to myself, is this English?". Despite never studying abroad, he had numerous opportunities to interact with non-native English speakers, realizing that these varieties are indeed English. Furthermore, he learned about ELF, as depicted in excerpts such as, "I picked up the idea of World Englishes during my teacher preparation programs" and "Nowadays, English has developed well in many areas, you know? Take Singlish, for example". These experiences before the practicum solidified his acknowledgment of the variety of Englishes, as indicated in the following excerpt: "I feel like the appropriate pronunciation doesn't really exist". It appears that his teaching beliefs, formed based on these ELF experiences, contributed to sustaining his self-efficacy even in the face of conflicts with his mentor teacher and principal, as well as the challenges posed by different English teaching policies imposed on him for implementing CLT.

#### 4.2.2. Paul's Case

Paul's practicum took place in the public junior high school from which he graduated. His assignment was to teach English to ninth-grade students. During the briefing session with his mentor teacher one month before the practicum began, he was informed that he had the freedom to implement CLT in his own way.

Initially, Paul displayed a moderate level of self-efficacy, but it notably increased afterward, making him the participant with the most significant gains in self-efficacy scores. When asked about his self-efficacy level measured before the practicum, he attributed it to his worries. Like Mike, he learned about global variations in English usage and developed a positive attitude towards ELF during the teacher preparation program at university. He stated, "I used to be all about sticking to perfect English, but then, during the program, my whole outlook on that changed completely". However, his commitment to using ELF was not as steadfast as Mike's, as evident in his interview excerpt, "Before the practicum, I had concerns about using my British accent in an education system centered on American English". He demonstrated an awareness of the gap between national educational policies that do not mandate the use of American English and the local practice where American English prevailed among teachers. Moreover, he expressed mixed feelings about



implementing CLT under the premise of ELF. For instance, he explained his hesitancy in introducing words that might vary depending on the type of English, such as “sidewalk” in American English and “pavement” in British English, stating, “I was really wondering what to do”. Despite his desire to use British English, he worried that these differences might cause confusion among students.

Despite his concerns about using British English, Paul received positive feedback not only from his mentor teacher but also from other English teachers in the school. He mentioned, “I’ve received compliments, like ‘It’s beautiful’. Hearing that made me happy”. He also noted that he was particularly pleased to see similar reactions coming from his students, which made him willing to incorporate British English into CLT activities without any hesitation. In contrast to Mike, who had already established teaching beliefs strong enough to challenge teachers with opposing views before the practicum, it was through the positive feedback received during the practicum that Paul’s teaching beliefs, such as using British English as one of the varieties, were solidified. This reinforcement resulted in a boost in self-efficacy, with Paul stating, “I became more confident than before”.

#### 4.2.3. Mio’s Case

Mio conducted her practicum at the prestigious private high school from which she graduated, renowned for sending many students to top universities in Japan. However, due to its focus on university entrance exams, the school showed some reluctance to adopt innovative teaching methods.

Mio exhibited the second-highest self-efficacy score before the practicum, but her performance afterward yielded the second-lowest score, marking the most significant drop among all participants. When asked about the reasons behind her high level of self-efficacy before the practicum, she attributed it to positive feedback from her teacher trainer after a mock lesson using CLT. She recalled, “I received praise with comments stating that the class atmosphere I created was quite good, as if I was a teacher. So, I thought, ‘Yes, I did it’. This revelation prompted me to firmly decide to give my best shot in the teaching practicum”. Besides this efficacy-building experience, she highlighted how her study abroad in Canada influenced her determination to implement CLT using ELF, stating that she enjoyed communicating with many non-native English speakers without strict adherence to correct English. This approach of learning through experience shaped her teaching philosophy, as reflected in her words, “It’s kind of experiential, you know? Like, I tried it this way, and, oh, I got it. That’s how I want my students to learn English”. Thus, the combined experiences in the teacher preparation program and during study abroad formed her teaching beliefs that experiences are crucial in acquiring communication skills in English. Consequently, she planned to incorporate various CLT activities in her class during the practicum to help her students understand how communication works through ELF.

Analysis of her interview excerpts indicated that her drop in self-efficacy during the practicum had multiple reasons. Specifically, her practicum began with disappointment caused by her mentor teacher’s comments, “Probably, you can’t do what you planned” when showing a lesson plan before the class. In addition, her attempt to incorporate CLT activities such as a debate in groups resulted in failure. She could not answer difficult questions from her students about social issues in English and eventually did so in Japanese, receiving negative feedback from her mentor teacher after the class: “Was that activity meaningful?” She seemed disappointed at her mentor teacher’s feedback and her own inability to manage the class as planned. These experiences significantly influenced her self-efficacy, as shown in her excerpts, “When students asked me difficult questions about vocabulary, I found it challenging to answer in English” and “I can only engage in daily conversation, and that’s where my confidence lies”. These comments suggest that her English proficiency level (i.e., B2 on the CEFR) might not have been sufficient to effectively implement interactive, learner-centered teaching methods in real classrooms. Although Mio had the opportunity to observe her mentor teacher’s lesson, she found it challenging

to apply the techniques to her teaching. As expressed in her words, “There were a lot of grammar questions and reading aloud activities”, which did not align with Mio’s beliefs about teaching English. Repeated critical feedback from her mentor teacher, which lacked any suggestions for improvement, led her to modify her teaching approach in the middle of her practicum, as indicated in her excerpt, “I just changed my way of teaching to a simpler manner as suggested”. Unfortunately, her self-efficacy for implementing CLT never recovered during the practicum.

#### 4.2.4. Kazuki’s Case

Kazuki was among the students whose self-efficacy level remained unchanged before and after the practicum. However, this does not necessarily imply that his practicum experiences had no impact on his self-efficacy. Similar to the other three pre-service teachers, he completed his practicum at the high school from which he graduated. According to his account, within the school, there existed “both supportive and critical perspectives on the adoption of CLT”. Nevertheless, he stated that his mentor teacher was “one of the most ardent supporters of innovative teaching methods like CLT”. The classes he taught included students from various countries such as China, Korea, Indonesia, and several Middle Eastern countries, none of whom were native English or Japanese speakers. This marked his first experience teaching English to a mixed group, including both Japanese students and those whose native language was not Japanese.

Given his high level of English proficiency (i.e., C2 on the CEFR), Kazuki was initially excited about interacting with those international students in English. However, he encountered challenges in implementing CLT, describing negative experiences, “While the international students had no trouble following my instructions in English, it was very challenging with most Japanese students, making communicative activities a bit tricky”. He continued, “I wasn’t quite sure how to handle this issue, and that uncertainty affected my confidence for a while”. He seemed to be caught in a dilemma: if the classes were arranged for international students, Japanese students would get confused, and if they were arranged for Japanese students, international students would become easily distracted and bored. To address this, he decided to provide instructions in “classroom English” [44,45] at a slower pace for Japanese students, while using English at a normal speed for international students, acting as role models in the demonstration. He mentioned, “This approach worked well”, and “It turned out to be an effective way to implement CLT in diverse and multilingual classrooms”, which helped him regain confidence.

When asked about the reasons behind his success in turning a failure into a positive mastery experience, he attributed it to his beliefs, stating, “English is not meant to be seen as a study subject but rather as a communication tool, where getting the meaning across is the most important aspect”. He also stated, “It was fine to use different types of English to make the class more enjoyable for the students”. Similar to the other three interviewees, these beliefs appear to have been developed through lectures in the teacher preparation program and interactions with non-native English speakers from various countries during his study abroad in the US. He explained, “Those experiences were helpful in overcoming challenges on my own during the practicum”.

Interestingly, when asked about the self-efficacy level before the practicum, he highlighted the negative impact of studying abroad. Explaining, he said, “I came across CLT in my third year of undergrad, studied abroad in my fourth year, and completed my practicum during the first year of my master’s program. So, CLT had kind of slipped my mind during my time abroad”, resulting in modest responses to the self-efficacy questionnaire items. Reflecting on his self-efficacy after the program, he provided another reason for modesty in his responses, expressing, “I was hesitant to implement CLT in my own way during the practicum. Honestly, I feel like I only managed to incorporate about 20–30% of my planned CLT activities, even though my mentor teacher was supportive”. He continued, “This is because I just didn’t want my students to get confused about the differences in what my mentor teacher and I were teaching once I left, and the class went back to its

usual routine". These comments underscore the delicate balance between innovation and maintaining stability in the classroom, revealing the intricate nature of adaptability within the mentorship framework.

## 5. Discussion

The quantitative data revealed a significant and positive change in pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for implementing CLT before and after the teaching practicum, particularly in the subscale of classroom management. This finding underscores the effectiveness of teaching in authentic classroom settings in enhancing pre-service teachers' self-efficacy [46]. Since participants in this study completed their practicums at different schools, experiences varied due to various intraschool factors. Consequently, it is difficult to pinpoint why an enhancement in the subscales of self-efficacy at the group level was observed in classroom management only. Despite this limitation, one plausible reason for the non-significant improvement in student engagement is the brevity of the 3-week practicum period, potentially being insufficient to establish a credible relationship with students. Indeed, as one interviewed student (Kazuki) remarked, "It's a bit tough to really get to know the students well and hear about their studies and career paths in just three weeks". Moreover, considering that an enhancement in student engagement did occur among pre-service teachers participating in a more extended teaching practicum [25,47], the duration appears to emerge as a crucial factor potentially influencing the enhancement level of overall self-efficacy and its subscales. This aspect warrants further investigation.

The analysis of qualitative interviews provided insightful perspectives on the factors influencing the self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers during their practicums, particularly in the context of implementing CLT. The four individual participants in this study exhibited variations in the formation and enactment of their teaching beliefs, which were associated with their knowledge about ELF, experiences in interacting through ELF, mentor–mentee relationships, and adaptation levels to local school policies. The findings suggest that the reinforcement or hindrance of their teaching beliefs by efficacy-building experiences, such as mastery experiences, social persuasions, vicarious experiences, and physiological and affective states, plays a crucial role in shaping the development of self-efficacy. Specifically, Paul demonstrated the most significant gain in self-efficacy by successfully solidifying his knowledge about ELF and gaining confidence in interacting with students through ELF during the practicum. Importantly, he encountered no major conflicts with his mentor teacher and exhibited no unwilling adaptation to school policies. Instead, his beliefs were reinforced through positive verbal persuasions, not only from his mentor teacher and other colleagues but also from his students. The positive affective states generated, such as happiness, further contributed to the enhancement of self-efficacy. As highlighted by Pfitzner-Eden [27], students themselves can represent a form of verbal persuasion. This suggests that, for Paul, students' praise might have been interpreted as particularly supportive of his way of teaching and had a significantly positive impact on his self-efficacy, aligning with the findings of pre-service teachers in Ma et al.'s study [31].

Conversely, Mio experienced multiple incidents that proved to be a hindrance to her beliefs about English language teaching, resulting in one of the most substantial declines in self-efficacy. These challenges were primarily rooted in negative mastery experiences, including teaching failures. Compounding these challenges were recurrent negative verbal persuasions from her mentor teacher, and a notable issue was that she perceived the feedback she received as "destructive criticism" [48]. As asserted by Bandura [16], sources of self-efficacy, such as verbal persuasions, do not directly influence the judgment of self-efficacy per se; rather, they affect how one cognitively interprets events, subsequently impacting the change in self-efficacy beliefs. The convergence of these negative sources, coupled with conflicts between her personal teaching beliefs and school policies, gave rise to a negative affective state, notably disappointment. Consequently, Mio abandoned her enthusiastically planned lessons and adapted to her mentor's prescribed teaching methods, despite the misalignment with her core teaching beliefs, resulting in a significant

decrease in self-efficacy. This depicts how pre-service teachers' beliefs were influenced by the mentor–mentee relationship, subsequently affecting their self-efficacy, in Mio's case, negatively.

Interestingly, a significant divergence emerges when contrasting the experiences of Mike and Mio. While both grappled with conflicting perspectives from their mentor teachers, manifested as repeated negative verbal persuasions, their resulting self-efficacy levels varied significantly. This difference appears to hinge on the steadfastness and vulnerability of their respective teaching beliefs, as Mike did not make unwilling adaptations to local policies, whereas Mio did. The source of this difference in resilience, however, remains somewhat elusive in the current study. Although it could be speculated that the source involves individual personality traits (see [18] for a review), further investigation is needed.

Despite the discrepancy in resulting self-efficacy levels during the practicums, the overarching significance of acquiring knowledge of, and interacting through ELF, becomes evident among the four pre-service teachers as a fundamental element in developing and sustaining self-efficacy for implementing CLT. This importance is particularly pronounced in classrooms accommodating both domestic and international students. Kazuki, despite facing challenges such as negative mastery experiences at the initial stage of the practicum, demonstrated success in adapting instructional approaches. Rooted in firm beliefs about English as a communication tool, he effectively managed the varied linguistic backgrounds present among the students. His strategic use of “classroom English” played a pivotal role in successfully implementing CLT in a multilingual and multicultural classroom setting. This experience can be categorized as a positive mastery experience, recognized as the most powerful source affecting individuals' self-efficacy beliefs [16], leading to his renewed confidence.

Building on these findings, the qualitative phase deepens our understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in the formation and enactment of beliefs regarding teaching English as a lingua franca among pre-service teachers. Furthermore, it illuminates how these teaching beliefs may serve as influential factors in shaping self-efficacy for implementing CLT during the practicum. These insights pave the way for further exploration and refinement of teacher preparation programs, discussed in the following section, to better support the professional development of pre-service teachers.

## 6. Conclusion and Implications

The forces of globalization and increased migration have necessitated educators to adopt a communicative approach to teaching English. However, there are few studies focusing on pre-service teachers' self-efficacy for implementing CLT during practicums, particularly in Asian contexts where English is learned as a foreign language. This mixed-methods study contributes to and extends the existing literature by providing new insights into the roles of their beliefs about teaching English as a lingua franca in enhancing their self-efficacy during the practicums.

Our findings reveal that pre-service teachers' cognitive processing of various efficacy-building experiences during practicums is influenced by their pre-existing beliefs about teaching English. The results underscore the crucial role of teacher preparation programs in shaping these beliefs. With the communicative approach recommended in language classrooms due to globalization, there's an increased importance for programs to prepare pre-service teachers for a multilingual and multicultural stance. A key emphasis should be on acquiring knowledge of and interaction through ELF in teacher preparation programs. While study abroad experiences are effective in reducing the idealization of native English speakers [49,50] and enhancing self-efficacy for teaching in multicultural classrooms [51–53], not all pre-service teachers can have such experiences before the practicum. Therefore, alternative opportunities for interacting through ELF, similar to Mike's experience, need incorporation into the programs. Providing pre-service teachers with an arena, before practicums, to translate university-acquired knowledge of ELF into practice would be beneficial, allowing them to perceive the usefulness of gained knowledge in real-life situations.

Our findings also revealed that the enactment of teaching beliefs by pre-service teachers significantly depends on the mentor–mentee relationship, particularly on the feedback received from mentor teachers. While practicums are generally conducted in a safe and supportive environment, exceptions exist. Despite the careful selection of mentors by schools, challenges may arise. Honest summative feedback from mentor teachers, though well-intentioned, may be perceived as criticism [54]. Therefore, it is crucial for teacher trainers to equip pre-service teachers with the skills to cope with challenges, negotiate with mentor teachers, and adapt as necessary to local practices that align with their teaching beliefs. Achieving this may require an extended duration of practicum.

In the context of implementing CLT, pre-service teachers need to demonstrate adaptability, such as allowing for the possibility of amending strict adherence to using English only in the classroom to permit the use of Japanese. Indeed, this flexibility depends on contextual factors such as student proficiency levels, course content, and class size. Furthermore, given the complex nature of multilingual and multicultural classroom dynamics, it is not sufficient for pre-service teachers to merely learn how to teach from mentors. Instead, it is necessary to foster flexibility in teaching within the mentorship framework. For this to happen, both pre-service teachers and mentor teachers need to view the practicum as a collaborative opportunity to co-construct knowledge and skills to promote student learning, rather than as a one-way training focused solely on the transmission of knowledge and skills. As practicum experiences become more intricate and the demands on pre-service teachers become higher, the importance of post-practicum care concomitantly grows to assist pre-service teachers in sustaining and recovering their self-efficacy before transitioning into the teaching profession. The effectiveness of post-practicum care warrants further investigation.

Finally, it is crucial to acknowledge several limitations in the present study. The primary limitation is associated with the number of participants, as the small sample size restricts the generalizability of obtained results to broader populations. Second, due to the short duration of the practicum, lasting only three weeks, the measurement of changes in self-efficacy relied on a pre- and post-test design, making it impossible to observe a non-linear relationship. Third, the self-report questionnaire with Likert-type scales might be prone to social desirability problems. Conversely, there is evidence that Japanese teachers tend to respond humbly to this type of questionnaire [55]. These contrasting views raise concerns about the validity of the responses. Therefore, it is worth considering such cultural issues further. Fourth, there are other confounding factors to consider in the analysis of changes in self-efficacy, such as tutoring experience. Future studies should more thoroughly examine pre-service teachers' background information. In addressing the qualitative phase, attention must be directed towards data validity concerns. Qualitative data, predominantly analyzed through interviews, could have benefited from triangulation using pre-service teachers' daily journals or class observations by teacher trainers to enhance the robustness of our interpretation. The purposeful selection of only four participants necessitates caution, as they may not adequately represent diverse school settings. Additionally, while it was informative to include participants who had teaching experiences with and without students of multilingual and multicultural backgrounds, the former was limited to one case. Finally, the claims made in this article could have been strengthened through participants' verification of researchers' interpretations.

Despite these limitations, the findings offer valuable insights into the changes in pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy regarding CLT implementation during practicums and the factors influencing their self-efficacy. This information could be beneficial for both teacher educators and school administrators as they consider how to prepare and support pre-service teachers before, during, and after the practicum. This is particularly true for those working in schools and institutions undergoing reform efforts to shift from traditional teacher-fronted instruction to a student-centered communicative approach. Moreover, the findings underscore the importance of developing a multilingual stance among pre-service teachers through the use of ELF. Given the scarcity of research on pre-service EFL teachers in



multilingual and multicultural classrooms, further investigations are warranted to deepen our understanding of this context.

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## Appendix A

Pre-service teachers' perceived self-efficacy scale for teaching English  
Efficacy for classroom management

1. How well can you handle disruptive or noisy students in the class?
2. To what extent can you ensure that students follow English classroom rules?
3. How well can you facilitate activities like pair work, group work, and presentations?
4. To what extent can you manage noise levels in the class after activities such as pair work, group work, and presentations?
5. To what extent can you respond to students who are defiant and reluctant to participate in activities like pair work, group work, and presentations?

Efficacy for instructional strategies

1. To what extent can you teach grammar and language functions (sharing information and establishing or maintaining relationships between people) in connection with each other?
2. How well can you select language games that match the students' proficiency level?
3. How well can you choose group activities and presentation assignments that align with the students' proficiency level?
4. To what extent can you integrate English news programs, animations, newspapers, magazines, etc., that are suitable for students at their proficiency level?
5. How well can you introduce conversational expressions, such as "Can you . . .?" "Could you . . .?" "I wonder if . . .", matching the students' proficiency level?
6. To what extent can you create opportunities for students to communicate with each other in English, such as pair work or group work?
7. To what extent can you create opportunities for students to deliver presentations or speeches in English?
8. To what extent can you create scenarios or situations for students to practice communication in social contexts?
9. How well can you assign tasks to ensure that all students do not experience boredom during pair work or group work?
10. How well can you assess students' abilities in the following aspects?
  - (A) Ability to conduct conversations using grammar, vocabulary, and structure appropriately.
  - (B) Ability to conduct conversations using voice and phonology appropriately.
  - (C) Ability to engage in smooth conversations, including gestures, asking questions, and expressions.

- (D) Ability to understand the social context (content, situation, person to whom you are speaking, etc.) and conduct conversations.
- (E) Ability to form one or more coherent sentences and carry out conversations.

#### Efficacy for student engagement

1. To what extent can you get students to believe they can do well in the following activities?
  - (A) Conversing on everyday topics in pair works in English.
  - (B) Sharing opinions on social topics in pair works in English.
  - (C) Conversing on everyday topics in group discussions or debates in English.
  - (D) Sharing opinions on social topics in group discussions or debates in English.
  - (E) Giving presentations or speeches on everyday topics in English.
  - (F) Giving presentations or speeches on social topics in English.
2. How well can you motivate an unmotivated student in the following areas?
  - (A) Willingness to converse on everyday topics in English.
  - (B) Willingness to share opinions on social topics in English.
  - (C) Willingness to present on everyday topics in English.
  - (D) Willingness to present on social topics in English.
  - (E) Willingness to participate in pair works.
  - (F) Willingness to participate in group works.
  - (G) Willingness to give presentations or speeches.
3. To what extent can you facilitate the development of the following skills in students during group discussions and debates?
  - (A) Critical thinking ability.
  - (B) Creativity in generating new ideas and values.

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