

## **The Impact of the Theoretical Education Phase on the Pre-service English Language Teachers' Practice from their Perception**

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**Keywords: Theoretical education, pre-service teachers, practices, correlation.**

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### **Abstract**

This study aimed to investigate the role that the theoretical education plays on Umm Al-Qura pre-services English teachers' practice in classrooms and if it reflects a real correlation between theory and practice from their perceptions. A quantitative correlation approach was implemented using a questionnaire to collect the data. The participants were students studied in education faculty in UQU for the second semester of the year 2016/2017. The findings indicate that there is (positive, negative) relationship between the quality of theoretical education phase and the pre-service English teachers' practice in their classrooms. Also, there is statistically significance difference in reflecting the correlation between theory and practice.

أثر مرحلة التعليم النظري على ممارسة معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية قبل الخدمة  
من وجهة نظرهم  
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**المستخلص:**

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على الدور الذي يلعبه التعليم النظري في ممارسة معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في مرحلة ما قبل الخدمة في جامعة أم القرى في الفصول الدراسية من وجهة نظرهم، وإذا كان ذلك يعكس ارتباطاً حقيقياً بين النظرية والتطبيق. تم تطبيق منهج الدراسة هم باستخدام استبيانا لجمع البيانات. المشاركون في الدراسة هم الطلاب الذين درسوا في كلية التربية في جامعة أم القرى للفصل الدراسي الثاني من السنة ٢٠١٦/٢٠١٧. وتشير النتائج إلى وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية (إيجابية، سلبية) بين جودة مرحلة التعليم النظري وممارسات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية قبل الخدمة في فصولهم. كما توجد فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في التعبير عن التنسيق بين النظرية والتطبيق.

**Introduction**

The programs that deal with teachers' education shape the pre-service teachers' attitudes toward instruction and play an important role in developing teachers' proficiency, increasing their knowledge and skills and learning to teach effectively (Paulin, 2006, Ross and Bruce, 2007). Merrill (2009) stated that learning will be reinforced if knowledge is applied and integrated in the real world. Light and Cox (2005) outlined that if the pre-services teachers are provided with various opportunities to apply what they have already learned in a meaningful context, learning then will be reinforced.

Ersanlı (2016) outlined that teacher education programs provide two types of knowledge the first one is theoretical and the second one is practical, of which the former is related to knowledge about teaching and learning and the latter is about classroom procedures. He added that one of these education programs is how to teach English as a Foreign Language. Most of these

programs offer theoretical courses in second language acquisition (SLA) where the pre-service EL teachers are expected to acquire knowledge about how languages are learnt, methods and approaches of language teaching are applied, classroom procedures, young learners, educational psychology and pedagogy.

Seferoğlu (2006) outlined that, in Turkey the teacher education programs were reshaped to go along with the teaching process of English language. These programs have various courses that integrated theory and practice e.g. "Teaching English to Younger Learners" and "English Language Methodology". Moreover the Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching Course which has a theoretical framework of which suggests a declarative knowledge. These approaches and methods coordinated to guide pre-service English languages teachers in their practicum stage at the last semester of their study at the university and provide them with knowledge about language learning process. So the components of such courses are vital in a teacher education program because they provide the teachers with the basis of the subject matter knowledge and instructional knowledge of which will affect their proficiency in teaching and their students' learning quality when they become in-service teachers.

The current study aims to investigate the impact of the theoretical education phase in Umm-Al Qura University and its impacts on the pre-service teachers' practice inside classrooms from their perception and try to find out if the pre-service teachers' practice reflect correlation between theory and practice. Deeper understanding of the relationship between pre-service teachers' theoretical education phase and their practice will provide the opportunity for more effective teaching/learning process and strengthen the links between theory and practice.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide the study:

- What are the most common aspects of the theoretical knowledge that have an impact on the pre-service teachers' practice?
- Is there a correlation between theoretical knowledge and pre-service teachers' practice inside classroom?

## **Literature Review**

It is generally accepted that learning to teach is a highly complex matter, and often a highly emotional and challenging process. Hammerness et al. (2005) described three general issues in the learning-to-teach process. First, pre-service teachers need to manage with their past background about educating during the several years of being a student. The second issue, pre-service teachers need to learn to perform what they know, in other words to have a deep understanding of theory and practice. The third issue, they need to dominate their own learning in order to realize and handle the complexity of teaching. In this paper, literature covers two key areas: pre-service theoretical education phase; and the relationship between theory and practice.

## **Pre-service Theoretical Education Phase**

In pre-service education, the attainable knowledge is effectively used and this led to the notion of teacher education as a well organized program which is used to teach knowledge to the pre-service teachers by academic professors and experts. They also try to motivate the transit of this knowledge to the classroom, by utilizing assignments to be carried out during field experiences. This is how teacher education became known as "teacher training" (Bullough and Gitlin, 1994).

Freeman (2002) discusses those outstanding parts of previous knowledge that affect teacher cognition in English language

teaching. He states that the thing that shapes the teachers' new learning is the theoretical background knowledge; it ultimately influences teachers' practical knowledge.

The structure of planning the program of pre-service teachers has a main role in providing them with authentic opportunities to promote their practice of teaching and the knowledge they had about the profession. Sheriden and Nguyen (2015 p. 409) describe the practical phase (as cited in Hammerness, Darling-Hammond and Shulman, 2002) as the basis of teacher preparation that has a "profound impact on student teachers". In every country there are teacher education programs and these preparation programs consist of initial university-based course work that followed by school-based student teaching practice.

Loughran (2006) argues that pedagogy of pre-service education is founded on integrating pair aspects of knowledge and practice. Firstly, teaching about teaching and secondly learning about teaching. The former comprises focusing on pedagogy, conceptualizing teaching as problematic, formatting the implicit feature of practice into explicit, producing a well-known language of teaching and learning, and the tendency to set up principles of practice, while the later is regard with the ability and practices underline to the paths in which registrants of teaching coincide to study from, then it is developed as a result of their teachers teaching experience.

Seferoğlu (2006) states in his study that education programs in Turkey should be redesigned to go along with the profession of English language teacher in order to gain uniformity. The resulted program should include functional courses such as "school observation" and "school experience". Other courses which coordinate theory with practice should be comprised for example, such that "English Language Teaching Methodology" "Teaching of Language Skills" and "Teaching English to Young Learners". "The Approaches and

Methods in Language Teaching Course" is a course with an assumptive foundation and propose a declarative knowledge. The acquisition of the theory which lays behind this course has an incredible vitality and intents to help pre-service English language teachers to comprehend the ease of learning and teaching.

There has been greater interest in using educational teaching traineeship that enhance mental thinking and find solutions to problems as well as reinforce learner pertinence and connectedness. There is a strong evidence in literature to claim that teachers that take a values-based instructional approach make an optimistic difference in students' learning and their lives (Lovat, 2007a).

Tang (2009), states that one of the main intents of teaching practice in pre-services teacher is to help them improve their teaching not only through the supervision of university instructors but also that of educators in the practice schools.

### **The correlation between theory and practice**

Allen and Wright (2014) examined to what extent, and how effectively, a group of pre-service teachers was able to integrate theory and practice within three weeks in the primary year of their level in faculty of Education at Australian University. The study revealed three important results: first, the sample in this investigation largely valued both the theoretical and practical components of their program second, there were varied chances to integrate theory with practice third, members overwhelmingly backed the idea for linking University coursework appraisal of the practicum likewise a method for bridging the gap between, on the one hand, the school and the university, on the other hand practice and theory.

Malin (2010) described a pilot study of 23 pre-service teachers who taught four lessons within a thematic unit to 61 male/female high school students. The data which collected from reflective documents and surveys regarding the pre-service teachers' experiences in this environment suggest that they advanced their competency in bridging theory and practice by delivering engaging content-driven in-person and online lessons. Also, they gaining comfort in utilizing various technology tools to support student learning.

Chen et al (2010: 91) reveals that if the teacher educators help the pre-service teachers to identify the gap between teaching and theory and regularly simplify them in connecting their learnt theory and practice then, the quality of teacher education programs can be improved.

Maler, (2010), outlined that instructing practicum should be line up with the theoretical educating procedures to promote a meaningful teaching experience. For that, the methods course plays an essential part in the improvement of the pre-service teachers theoretical knowledge which has an incredible effect on their educating practicum. The program design should be comprehensive enough to cover different teaching strategies that can develop a concrete assumptive basis on their coaching. The subject matter classes should equip these with significant subject knowledge to handle the curriculum of the practicum schools. Burns and Richards (2009) outlined that "Teacher learning is not viewed as translating knowledge and theories into practice but rather as constructing new knowledge and theory through participating in specific social contexts and engaging in particular types of activities and processes. This latter type of knowledge, sometimes called "practitioner knowledge," is the source of teachers' practices and understandings" (p. 4).

Smith and Lev-Ari, (2005) insist that, those instructional method courses ought to provide pre-service teachers with generous

pedagogical substance information so that they can show self confident in their teaching practicum.

One common point that emerges once again is that pre-service teacher education is more likely to impact on pre-service teachers as they become aware of their previous knowledge about teaching and learning, and help them to make connections between theory and practice.

## **Methodology**

### **Data collection and participants**

This study was carried out in Umm Al-Qura University (UQU), Makah. The sample comprise (51) English language pre-service female teachers from The English language department. The participants were chosen purposefully since they were required to study "Methods of Teaching Language II" course in the Education department along with the practical education training course. The data was collected at the mid of the second semester of the year 2017.

### **The instrument:**

The data used for this study were collected by using a questioner that measure the impact of the theoretical education phase on the pre-service English teachers' practice in classrooms from their perception, it consists of two dimensions: The effect of theoretical education phase which presented by the university on the practice of pre-service teachers (28 items); and the correlation between theory and practice through the textbooks that proposed by the university for this phase (10 items). Its items were adopted from a guide which proposed by the professional Standards for Queensland Teachers document (QCT, 2007) and the researcher modified them to match the aim of this study.



The questioner's validity was tested by having a panel of experts check its relevance, content and construction. Based on these experts' opinions, necessary and appropriate changes were made. Reliability statistics obtained using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the whole questionnaire's items which indicated acceptable consistency level exceeding (  $\alpha = .96$  ), and with good inter mean item correlations ( $m = .37$ ) as presented in table.1

**Table.1**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>		
Cronbach's Alpha	Inter items correlation	N of Items
.957	.37	38

### **Data structure and statistics**

The data was analyzed by using SPSS package according to the two study questions. A number of statistical methods were used during the data analysis. Mean scores were calculated to estimate the average of reactions for each part of the questionnaire, and standard deviations were used to estimate how much variation there is of reactions from the average for each item in each part, and correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between the theoretical phase and the practical phase. Finally, multiple regressions analysis was used to estimate the effect of the theoretical phase and the practical phase.

### **The Results:**

The results of the study regarding the first research question which stated" **What are the most common aspects of the theoretical knowledge that have an impact on the pre-service teachers' practice?**" showed the mean scores for all the items (1- 28) that concerned the first part of the questionnaire as presented in table 2:

**Table 2. The Theoretical Education Phase**

<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>			
The statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1. demonstrate how reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking are interrelated	4.0196	.94848	.900
2. Know how to ask questions and respond to learners appropriately	3.9804	.90532	.820
3. Establish learning goals and learning plans that reflect relevant curriculum frameworks and policies	3.9804	.76132	.580
4. Use authentic materials	3.9412	.98817	.976
5. Provide feedback to students on their learning	3.9216	1.03621	1.074
6. Select and use teaching and learning strategies and resources that meet specified learning goals.	3.8627	.93850	.881
7. Know how to communicate learning goals and plans to students	3.8235	.95301	.908
8. Set clear goals and intellectual challenge	3.8235	.93179	.868
9. Develop a non-threatening/learning classroom environment	3.8039	1.00039	1.001
10. Use technology in the classroom	3.7843	1.04525	1.093
11. Know the Effective teaching/classroom management	3.7451	.86817	.754
12. Use teaching time, materials, resources and physical space effectively to establish a challenging, safe and supportive learning environment	3.7059	1.04488	1.092

13. Use different approaches/techniques for presenting language items.	3.6863	1.00976	1.020
14. Know ways of assessing, interpreting, and reporting on student learning that reflect the ongoing and evolving nature of learning	3.6863	.78715	.620
15. Identify and apply learning experiences that incorporate flexible individual and group learning.	3.6863	.94848	.900
16. Use a variety of teaching aids	3.6863	1.08610	1.180
17. Take into consideration the individual differences of learners	3.6863	1.17457	1.380
18. To use a variety of educational assessment methods	3.6471	.89047	.793
19. Know learning styles and a range of techniques for ensuring the full and varied participation of all students in learning activities	3.6275	.97900	.958
20. Involve students in solving problems and in critical and creative thinking	3.6275	.97900	.958
21. Present a varied package of language activities	3.6078	.98140	.963
22. Identify and use teaching, learning and assessment strategies and resources.	3.5882	1.06163	1.127
23. Know how to teach classes with a large number of learners	3.5686	1.20424	1.450
24. Use a variety of instructional methods	3.5686	1.10009	1.210
25. Use teaching and learning strategies for promoting higher order thinking skills	2.5294	0.15504	0.334

26. Know how to create, use, and manage teaching and learning resources	3.5098	1.10223	1.215
27. design instruction to meet the needs of all students and provide for students' continuous progress and success	2.4902	0.08393	0.175
28. Use the time allocated for the class in an effective manner	2.3725	0.21591	0.478

Table 2 shows the most important aspects that had mean scores above (3.94). First of all demonstrating how reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking are interrelated with (mean score = 4.02), followed by knowing how to ask questions and respond to learners appropriately with (mean score = 3.98), then establishing learning goals and learning plans that reflect relevant curriculum frameworks and policies with (mean score = 3.98), and lastly using authentic materials with (mean score = 3.94). On the other hand a few aspects had mean score above (2.37) and these are: using teaching and learning strategies for promoting higher order thinking skills with (mean score= 2.52), followed by designing instruction to meet the needs of all students with (mean score= 2.49), and finally using the time allocated for the class in an effective manner with (mean score= 2.37).

In the second part which concerned with the second research question, if there is a correlation between theory and practice inside the classroom, the participants of the study expressed their common responses for all the 10 items of textbooks that proposed by the university which are above mean score = 3.86. As shown in table 3:

**Table 3. The textbooks that proposed by the university for this phase**

The statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
1. Enable effective learning of lesson plan development.	4.0000	.77460	.600
2. Develop learning abilities ,skills, processes and attitudes	3.9216	.82081	.674
3. Show how to teach different language skills and language areas	3.9216	.99686	.994
4. explanation is easy to understand	3.8627	.89487	.801
5. Easy to use	3.8627	.77510	.601
6. Practical and achievable	3.8431	.88029	.775
7. Effective in presenting different instructional methods	3.7843	.87895	.773
8. Useful for individuals aiming to become teachers.	3.7255	.98140	.963
9. Include pre-instructional activities, content presentation, learner participation, and assessment	3.7059	.80732	.652
10.Contain a lot of learning activities	3.5490	.98618	.973

Table 3 shows that the participants of the study agreed on the following categories: Enabling effective learning of lesson plan development with (mean score = 4.00), then developing learning abilities, skills, processes and attitudes thirdly showing how to teach different language skills and language areas with (mean score = 3.92 respectively), and lastly both respectively explanation is easy to understand and Easy to use with same mean score (3.86).

To answer the second research question which stated "Is **there correlation between theoretical knowledge and pre-service teachers' practice inside classroom?**" Pearson correlation coefficient was used and the results showed a significance positive correlation between theoretical knowledge and pre-service teachers' practice in the classroom ( $r = 0.778$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), that means the higher levels of theoretical knowledge which presented by university are associated with the higher levels of practice inside classroom. Also, there was a significant positive correlation between theoretical knowledge and pre-service teachers' practice in the classroom with the total of the items respectively as follow ( $r = 0.986$ ;  $872$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), as shown in table.4.

**Table.4. the correlation between theoretical knowledge and pre-service teachers' practice inside classroom**

Research 's Parts	1	2	3
1.Theoretical Phase	1		
2. Practical Phase	.778**	1	
3. Total	.986**	.872**	1

\*\*  $P > 0.01$

This means, there is an extreme positive correlation of both theoretical education phase and practical phases; in other words, as the pre-service teachers gain more theoretical knowledge about how to teach inside classroom the more positively and proficiency they will be in their practice.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study clearly showed the most common aspects of the theoretical knowledge which had a remarkable impact on the pre-services teachers' practice during their practicum program. To sum up the theoretical phase , provides them with the knowledge of how reading, writing, speaking,

listening, viewing, and thinking are interrelated and how to establish learning goals and learning plans that reflect relevant curriculum frameworks, know how to ask questions and respond to learners appropriately, establish learning goals and learning plans and so on. Doaly and Sader (2013) reached the same results as in this study of which revealing that the activities of methods courses moderately contributed to the pre-service teacher connecting theory and practice. Although there are a few aspects do not have such impact and these are : use teaching and learning strategies for promoting higher order thinking skills, design instruction to meet the needs of all students and use the allocated time for the classroom efficiently, which in my opinion will be improved in the future as they become experienced in-service teachers. This clarifies the importance of creating the opportunities for the pre-service teachers to practice what they have learnt theoretically in the University .Also, the findings showed a great agreement among the participants on the textbooks which are proposed by the University. This indicates that there is a coordination between the theoretical knowledge and the practice of the pre-services teachers in their classrooms; an extreme positive correlation of both theoretical education phase and practical phases. Allen and Wright (2014) have the same findings in that the participants supported the notion of linking university coursework assessment to the practicum within two domains the university and the school where the university provides the theory and the school provides practice.

### **Conclusion**

The current study revealed the most common aspects of the theoretical knowledge that have an impact on the pre-service teachers' practice and also it showed that there was correlation between theoretical knowledge and pre-service teachers' practices inside classroom through a quantitative correlation approach.

A limitation of the present study is that its results are based on instruments conducted in Saudi Arabia and thus may not be generalizable to other countries. However, the findings may provide insights for future research in pre-service teachers development programs such as ( applying micro-teaching in the courses of teaching methods of English Language in the University and its effect in modeling the difficult theoretical aspects) or using efficient and effective monitoring and evaluation of teacher education programs to gain the proficiency level in these phases.

The results of this research have several implications that relevant to theory and practice, especially for modeling a good classroom management. Learning about teaching requires a meaningful relationships between pre-service teacher education institution (theoretical phase) schools (practical phase) and the pre service teachers.

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