A Case Study of English Language Teacher Training during Emergencies: Critical Junctures

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Abstract

Teacher training was carried onto the online platforms during the Covid-19 outbreak. Although it was a novel experience for the whole field, this period stands as a beneficial source for language teacher training in emergencies. This study, therefore, was conducted to document the experiences of pre-service language teachers, teacher mentors, and university lecturers. The study was conducted between February and June 2021 at a university in the Black Sea region of Turkey. Following the data analysis procedures of grounded theory and the inquiry traditions of the case study, semi-structured interviews with 22 pre-service language teachers during the 2020 – 2021 fall semester were conducted. Additionally, qualitative online surveys were conducted with six university lecturers and three teacher mentors. The data analysis indicated that the critical junctures, which are constituted of antecedents, impacts, and consequences, present implications for effective language teacher training on online platforms. Taking these junctures into account while designing online teacher training could help prevent potential problems.

Introduction

Covid-19 has immensely changed the practices in education, teacher education being one of these affected aspects. One significant change Covid-19 brought has been the virtualization of teacher training as well as almost all other educational practices, which raised questions on the quality and effectiveness of teacher training during the pandemic (la Velle et al., 2020). Therefore, examining how the pandemic has changed the practices in teacher education as well as what implications the procedure has for future teacher training is vital since the documentation of the experiences of all parties (i.e., teacher trainers, prospective teachers, educational administrators, students, mentor teachers) will increase the preparedness of education system for similarly unexpected and difficult circumstances. However, although education in an emergency is a firmly established

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field, how education, particularly teacher training, could be conducted in online settings during emergencies has not sufficiently been examined in the literature. It is of particular importance to examine how online teaching and learning in language teacher education during the pandemic was conducted and to understand the implications of the procedure (Carillo & Flores, 2020). Thus, this study focused on the prospective English language teachers' teaching practicum via emergency online teaching to present the reflections of prospective language teachers, teacher mentors and university lecturers at both universities and practicum schools. Through the presentation of these perspectives, the study contributes to the literature by revealing critical junctures that would be a guideline for similar situations in developing quality online teacher training and learning, which will be the novel contribution of this study.

Literature Review

Studies on remote or online teacher training have examined how educational institutions adapted to the emergency online teacher training during Covid-19. One primary understanding of the findings of these studies is to "go beyond emergency online practices and develop quality online teaching and learning that result from careful instructional design and planning" (Hodges et al., 2020, p. 13). However, little attention has been paid to what factors need to be considered while developing quality online teaching and learning. Thus, further research is needed to evaluate factors affecting quality, significance, and responsiveness (Toquero & Talidong, 2020) in any form of distance teacher training.

One theme of the studies on teacher training during the pandemic has been the challenges teacher educators encountered during the pandemic. In their small-scale study, Kidd and Murray (2020) conducted an online questionnaire among twenty initial teacher educators in England. Following the online questionnaire, volunteer teacher educators were invited to participate in an interview. The findings indicated the teacher educators faced challenges in several areas. One particular issue was that it was a brand-new experience for all participants to conduct teacher training on online platforms, which resulted in concerns about inefficient student learning among teacher educators. Others also supported Kidd and Murray (2020). The survey study conducted by Terenko and Ogienko (2020) among the administrative and teaching staff and the students of teacher training programs showed that teacher trainers had concerns about the online tools they had to use for teacher training. These concerns covered issues such as the design of web-based platforms, course resources, software for platform management, tools for learning management, IT competence of teachers, and learning materials (Terenko & Ogienko, 2020). The study by Hassani (2021) conducted in the Iranian language teacher training context and Paudel (2021) in the Nepal online teaching contexts also presented meaningful findings for the current study. Supporting Terenko and Ogienko (2020), both Hassani (2021) and Paudel (2021) found that teachers in general and language teacher trainers specifically were challenged by the existing platforms, these platforms' inappropriacy and digital illiteracy during the pandemic. Additionally, it was found that teacher trainers were worried about access to high-speed Internet, poor connection, and

Internet prices. Adding to these findings, Almazova et al. (2020) underline the significant role of management-related issues when conducting online education.

Increased need for support for the experimental learning that teacher training required was another concern for teacher trainers during the pandemic (Kidd & Murray, 2020). Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020) indicated that since learner engagement was a vital component of teacher education, the lack of teacher trainee participation, together with the decreased opportunities to gain practical experience, was a challenge for teacher trainers. Hassani (2021) also presented similar findings indicating that Iranian teacher trainers were worried about the decreased learner motivation and participation during the pandemic. Since practical experience was a vital component of teacher education programs, emergency remote training "called into question the ability of teacher education programs to properly train and qualify teachers during this time" (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020, p. 589).

Other concerns for teacher trainers in remote education during the pandemic covered issues such as blurring of work-home boundaries, extended working hours, a sense of constant availability with students and colleagues, feelings of cognitive over-loading, and brain buzzing adrenaline and the removal of personal boundaries between teacher trainers and trainees (Kidd & Murray, 2020). Likewise, teacher trainers were also worried about presenting equal opportunities for their trainees during emergency remote teaching (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020).

From the perspective of the teacher trainees, the pandemic posed challenges as well. Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020) indicated that many pre-service teachers faced financial and mental problems after the pandemic. For example, pre-service teachers in Israel lost their jobs, lived with their parents, sat in front of the computer screens for long hours, and completed an overwhelming amount of assignments, which created concerns over their well-being and drop-out rates. Teacher trainees also experienced challenges with the online tools. They had an unstable internet access and used computers for extended hours, which led to visual impairments among pre-service teachers. Lack of face-to-face communication and self-study skills were also one of the significant challenges for pre-service teachers during the pandemic (Terenko & Ogienko, 2020). The same study also showed that the lack of face-to-face communication and self-study skills were the significant challenges for pre-service teachers during the pandemic. Hitkova (2021) who examined the pre-service teachers' experiences in Slovakia during the pandemic, also supported these findings and reported that teacher trainees experienced lack of social contact with fellow students and colleagues and needed live discussions with professors.

The procedure of assessment of practicum during the pandemic has also been examined. Moyo (2020), for instance, found that there was a conflict between universities and practicum schools regarding the conduct of the assessment. It was found that since practicum had to be conducted online, universities' proposals to create virtual assessment tools were rejected by schools, which was a clear indicator of the lack of trust between university lecturers and teacher mentors in the practicum schools (Moyo, 2020). Showing

that a new normal is likely to happen, Moyo (2020) suggested that the Covid-19 procedure showed the need to adjust while also securing the quality assurance mechanisms in teacher education, which have been developed over time.

Studies also showed that moving the teacher training to online platforms had positive effects. From the perspectives of teacher trainers, Kidd and Murray (2020) reported that the participants developed new technological skills, or reconfigured previous practices for the online environment as potential contributions of the distance training practices for their professions. Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020) reported that the pandemic turned teacher training programs into a community learning center where teacher trainers worked together. Likewise, the trainers developed suitable assessment tools including podcasts, writing blogs, producing interactive digital posters, collating portfolios, generating mind maps, and preparing presentations (Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020). Finally, teacher trainers asked their students to conduct teaching for peers, family members, or the children in their neighborhood to gain practical experience. Similar innovative ways teacher trainers developed during the pandemic language teacher candidates benefited from critically examining and developing the existing system (Hassani, 2021) are using training strategies, innovative experiences (Ferdig et al., 2020), innovative teacher education (Ellis et al., 2020), good educational relationships (Murray et al., 2020), practicum online learning through pedagogic agility (Kidd & Murray, 2020, p. 542), virtual teaching placement (Sepulveda-Escolar & Morrison, 2020), and mentoring and assistance (Judd et al., 2020; O'Brien et al., 2020).

The design of teacher training programs to overcome the effects of Covid-19 and similar emergencies was also examined. Pozo-Rico et al. (2020) conducted an experimental study among 500 primary school teachers to reveal whether teacher training programs influenced teachers' coping with stress, prevented burnout, improved their information and communications technology (ICT) competency, and introduced emotional intelligence (EI) in the classroom. The findings indicated that "training teacher competencies are key in responding to the pandemic situation" (Pozo-Rico et al., 2020, p. 14). Likewise, Sullivan (2020, p. 303) stated a need for parallel change in teacher training since "the current pandemic has exposed existing equity challenges and surfaced new ones." Sullivan (2020), therefore, recommended the use of stimulation practices called teacher moments. Through these simulations, pre-service teachers are given the opportunities to think deeply about teaching practice especially when encountering challenges posed by Covid-19. In terms of the design of teacher training courses, Sánchez-Cruzado et al. (2021) also indicated that three variables need to be considered: a) the level of digital competence of teachers, b) the adjustment of the training to the platform being used, and c) considering the classroom methodologies and didactic strategies. Also, the study by Fuertes-Camacho et al. (2021) revealed the significance of incorporating reflective practice for teacher training programs as reflective practice enables pre-service and in-service teachers to acknowledge the influence of beliefs, personal thoughts and feelings, weaknesses and strengths, stress management, and the role of communication in the process of learning and teaching, which might be particularly important in times of remote education.

Findings from studies with a broader focus on online education are also meaningful for the current study. Bao (2020), for example, examined one online education case at Peking University. The findings showed that six instructional strategies could ensure a smooth transition to online education in emergencies, thus facilitating effective student learning. These strategies are a) emergency preparedness plans for unexpected problems, b) dividing the teaching content into smaller units to help students focus, c) emphasizing the use of voice effectively in online settings, d) working with teaching assistants and gaining online support from them, and e) strengthening students' active learning skills outside the class. In terms of assessment in online settings, Surahman and Wang (2021) found that conducting online assessments resulted in several forms of academic dishonesty: plagiarism, cheating, collusion, and using jockeys among students. Surahman and Wang (2021) suggested using plagiarism-checking software, multi-artificial intelligence, adaptive tests for computers, and online proctoring. More importantly, re-designing assessment forms were suggested by Surahman and Wang (2021). Studies on learner perceptions of online teaching and learning practices from various contexts also present contrasting findings. Akuratiya and Meddage (2020), Lei and So (2021), Muthuprasat et al. (2021) and other earlier studies (e.g., Arbaugh, 2000; Hay et al., 2004; Lim et al., 2007; Picciano, 2002; Swan et al., 2000; Trautwein et al., 2006) found that the success of online learning for students depended on several factors. These factors were internet mode (Akuratiya & Meddage, 2020; Muthuprasat et al., 2021), teacher performance (Lei & So, 2021), consistency in course design (Swan et al., 2000), the communication skills of course instructors (Hay et al., 2004; Picciano, 2002), the interactivity in the online settings (Arbaugh, 2000), and academic self-perceptions of learners (Lim et al., 2007; Trautwein et al., 2006).

In Turkish higher education context, studies on online education have also been conducted. These studies also presented similar findings and focused on challenges of online education from the perspective of learners and teachers (Ateş, 2021; Özer, 2020; Sart, 2021; Tokuç & Varol, 2020; Valizadeh & Soltanpour, 2021). There are studies examining the teacher training practices in online settings, particularly during the pandemic, as well (Çobanoğlu & Çobanoğlu, 2021; Ersin et al., 2020; Fidan & Yıldırım, 2022; Kaya, 2021; Özüdoğru, 2021; Sungur-Gül & Ateş, 2021). These studies, however, focused solely on pre-service teachers' perspectives and found implementation, student, technicality, facility, and instructor-related challenges in online settings. The perspectives and experiences of teacher mentors and university lecturers during the teacher training procedure have not received attention, which this study aims to reveal together with the pre-service teachers' perspectives.

As stated earlier, all these studies are essential in presenting the emergency period from various perspectives. More importantly, these studies indicate the critical issues determining the effectiveness of remote teacher training during any emergency scenario. Understanding these dynamics "entails the necessity to provide an evidence-based perspective on what works and does not work, but most importantly, to understand the characteristics, the processes, the outcomes, and the implications of online practices" (Carillo & Flores, 2020, p. 467). In the Turkish higher education context, despite the existence of studies on online education, there is little research on the language teacher

education with all the parties involved and the Covid-19 remote education process. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the challenges and implications of these challenges for online language teacher education in emergencies by focusing on pre-service teachers, teacher mentors, and university lecturers. Although similar findings are expected, understanding the context-specific needs in Turkey in relation to teacher training during emergencies may contribute to teacher training in similar situations. Likewise, this study will provide an understanding of the experiences of teacher mentors and university lecturers. With these purposes in mind, the study developed four research questions:

1. What challenges did pre-service English language teachers face in the online practicum during the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. How did pre-service English language teachers cope with the challenges they encountered in the online practicum during the Covid-19 pandemic?
3. What challenges did teacher mentors face in the online practicum during the Covid-19 pandemic?
4. What challenges did university lecturers face in the online practicum during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Method

Research Design

In this exploratory qualitative study, the inquiry traditions of the case study were utilized to collect data from the university lecturers, teacher mentors, and pre-service language teachers. As a case study, the study aimed to reveal an understanding of a contextually bounded phenomenon through multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2002; Dörnyei, 2007; Johansson, 2003; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003; Yin, 2003). The data collection methods, interviews and qualitative surveys, facilitated accessing these perspectives. Also, the research findings are interpretive and essentially valid for the research site. However, these findings could contribute to understanding similar situations. Finally, since the research was conducted at one university, this is a single case study.

Context

The study took place at one university in Turkey. In the 2020-2021 academic year, 70 students from the English Language and Literature department enrolled in the pedagogical training program to be able to work as language teachers in Turkey. As part of their pedagogical program, these students had to complete their teaching practicum. However, Covid-19 prevented face-to-face practicum, which was eventually completed via online platforms.

The teaching practicum had to be completed in 12 weeks, from September until January. All students were put into groups of eight and matched with different teacher mentors at different schools. Teacher candidates were asked to join the Zoom sessions where their teacher mentors carried their classes. The practicum lasted for 12 weeks. University lecturers joined these sessions for observation and assessment at least twice

during the 12 weeks. In the end, teacher mentors and university lecturers completed the assessment together using the traditional face-to-face evaluation tool developed by the Ministry of National Education.

Data Collection: Instruments and Participants

Instruments

The data was collected through two instruments: a) qualitative surveys with university lecturers and teacher mentors, and b) interviews with pre-service language teachers. During the procedure, interviews with pre-service language teachers were conducted and analyzed. Then, qualitative surveys were shared with university lecturers and teacher mentors. The details of data collection for each instrument are presented next.

Sampling and Participants in Interviews

The sampling strategy for interviews was convenience sampling where participant selections were determined by accessibility (Dörnyei, 2007).

After the ethical permission was received, the researcher invited all the students enrolled in the pedagogical training program to participate in the interviews (Appendix 1 for Interview Protocol). Once a cohort of participants was determined, the researcher set dates with all participants. Students were interviewed individually via Zoom. Each interview lasted 40-60 minutes and was recorded with the permission of the participants. The interviews were conducted in Turkish. All interviews were immediately transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. The translations were later peer-reviewed by two established academics. The researcher used a semi-structured interview protocol with additional follow-up interviews when necessary.

All students who took the Teaching Practicum course online during the Covid-19 pandemic in the 2020-2021 fall semester were invited. Twenty-two students out of 72 agreed to participate in the study. Students were all third-year students from the English Language and Literature Department of the university. Nineteen of these students were female and three of them were male. Students took their Teaching Practicum course from different university lecturers and teacher mentors. More specifically, the university assigned each university lecturer, except two of them, eight students. As for teacher mentors, each was assigned four teacher candidates (Table 1). The practicum was also at different schools, including elementary schools or high schools.

Sampling and Participants in Qualitative Surveys

As in the interviews, convenience sampling was used for qualitative surveys due to access issues. The surveys were semi-structured and conducted in English (Appendix 2). The questions were open-ended and asked participants about their experiences, opinions, and expectations of online practicum they were part of either as university lecturers or teacher mentors during the pandemic. The survey questions were prepared on Google Documents and sent out to all participants. The participants responded to these open-ended questions

via notes, which meant survey participants were given as much time as they needed to answer the questions.

At the university where this study was conducted, ten university lecturers acted as the trainers of language teacher candidates. All of them were invited to participate in the qualitative survey via e-mails. However, only six of them agreed to participate. Similarly, out of 18 teacher mentors, only three agreed to complete the qualitative surveys. The profiles of these participants are shown below:

Table 1

Participants in Qualitative Surveys

University Lecturer			Teacher Mentors
Lecturer 1	(F)	(8 students)	Mentor 1 (F) (4 students)
Lecturer 2	(M)	(8 students)	Mentor 2 (F) (4 students)
Lecturer 3	(F)	(8 students)	Mentor 3 (F) (4 students)
Lecturer 4	(M)	(8 students)	-
Lecturer 5	(M)	(8 students)	-
Lecturer 6	(M)	(8 students)	-

Data Analysis

This study adopted the data analysis traditions of Grounded Theory (GT). In terms of GT (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the study focused on exploring the online practicum procedure for a group of pre-service language teachers at a specific institution during the pandemic. The data analysis followed a bottom-up protocol to generate codes, categories and themes. Also, the data analysis had three stages: open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding to seek explanatory themes around the online practicum during the pandemic.

In the open coding stage, interviews with pre-service language teachers were handled. As has been recommended by GT, interview transcripts were first read to become familiar with the content. During this stage, codes were generated first, then reviewed, reorganized, and a set of more robust categories were generated (Charmaz, 2006). These categories were developed depending on the similarities and differences among the codes.

The second stage of the data coding was selective coding. During this stage, the researcher was engaged with the qualitative survey data. The findings from the open coding stage informed the selective coding stage.

The final stage was theoretical coding, where the researcher connected the analytic categories to establish relationships among them. The theoretical coding indicated that the online practicum during the pandemic had critical junctures, which must be examined closely when designing teacher training programs in emergencies.

Throughout the procedure, both manual and computer-assisted analysis were used. Only the early stages of data analysis consisted of manual coding, while as more

codes were generated, computer-assisted data coding was adopted. More details for each analysis stage with examples are presented next.

Open Coding: Student Interviews

The initial coding followed an incident-to-incident approach, as has been recommended by other GT scholars (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Interview transcriptions were put into excerpts before the analysis. These excerpts were created according to Strauss and Corbin's (2008, p. 163) recommendation of "using natural breaks in the data manuscript as cutting off points". In this research, natural breaks consisted of "changes in what is being talked about in the interviews" (Ünlü & Wharton, 2015, p. 32). While analyzing, the excerpts were placed on the left-hand column of a table. On the right-hand column, these excerpts were given labels to show what specific events students were talking about. Also, the researcher kept memos as the analysis continued to "keep track of the brainstorming taking place" (Ünlü & Wharton, 2015, p. 27) (Table 2).

Table 2

Initial Excerpt-Based Coding

| Excerpts	Excerpts Labels
I think a classroom setting is always more advantageous because you cannot make eye contact with students	Interactivity
You cannot control what students are interested in.	Classroom Management
I mean, you cannot ensure complete control in the class	Classroom Management
Or it is very different in front of the screen. I think face-to-face is more advantageous for me. *(Süheyla, Pre-service teacher)*	Preference for face-to-face practicum

Generation of Concept Labels. After the generation of excerpt labels (i.e., codes), GT recommends comparing the excerpt labels (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, the researcher in this study also compared the codes and the memos on them. At the end of this procedure, higher-level concepts were generated. These concepts contained more abstract ideas compared to the codes (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). An example of this procedure is shown in Table 3:

Table 3

Generation of Concepts

Excerpts	Excerpts Labels	Concepts
I think a classroom setting is always more advantageous because you cannot make eye contact with students	Interactivity	Practice
You cannot control what students are interested in.	Classroom Management	Practice
I mean, you cannot ensure complete control in the class	Classroom Management	Practice
Or it is very different in front of the screen. I think face-to-face is more advantageous for me. *(Süheyla, Pre-service teacher)*	Preference for face-to-face practicum	Practice

In the end, the concepts of *design, practice, assessment, affective impacts, individual reflections,* and *peer collaboration* were generated from the interviews.

Generation of Category Labels and Overall Theme. Once the concepts were generated, the analysis continued with the generation of categories. Categories are defined as "higher level, broader structures" (p. 52) with "more explanatory power and greater abstraction than lower-level concepts they are constituted of" (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 52). The constant comparative method was also utilized during the generation of categories. This means that the researcher compared the "similarities and differences of lower-level concepts" (Ünlü & Wharton, 2015, p. 29). This comparison and contrast procedure allowed the researcher to reach the categories of antecedents, impact, and consequences. This is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Critical Junctures in Online Teacher Training
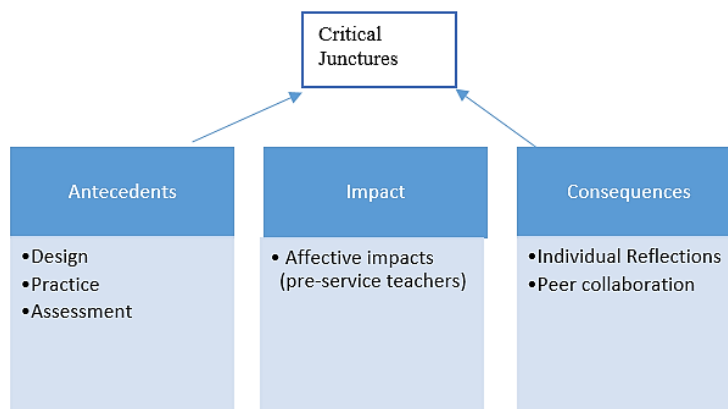
An earlier comparison and contrast of the categories also led the researcher to reach the theme of Critical Junctures in Online Language Teacher Education in Emergencies. The category labels on the diagram will be described next. Antecedents meant something that happened or existed before a situation. These antecedents had a causal relationship with the critical junctures.

Impact indicated what the antecedents led during the practicum procedure. Mostly, students experienced affective impacts, which resulted from the various challenges they encountered during the emergency remote training. The fact that the remote practicum procedure was introduced with its own uncertainties created a great amount of pressure on pre-service teachers, which shaped their participation in the procedure.

Consequences showed the resulting status of the pre-service teachers in the post-practicum procedure. More specifically, these meant that the pre-service teachers developed the skills of individual reflections and peer collaboration skills at the end although the emergency remote practicum period was challenging for them. In terms of individual reflections, pre-service teachers were able to analyze the difficulties of the period and see how best they could benefit from the procedure. Additionally, they were able to assess their practicum procedure in terms of its professional contributions in the long term.

As for peer collaboration, the interviews showed that the challenges encountered during the practicum turned the procedure into a more collaborative one during which students approached their peers for a variety of purposes (e.g., receiving feedback, asking for ideas, reviewing lesson plans, team teaching and preparation and so forth).

Selective Coding: Using Qualitative Surveys to Understand Consensus Around the Critical Junctures

To better understand the antecedents, impacts, and consequences of the critical junctures, qualitative surveys that were conducted on teacher mentors and university lecturers were analyzed selectively. Selective coding started when core categories (i.e., the theme in this study) were established as Jones and Alony (2011) recommended earlier. During the selective coding, the researcher focused on only relevant information from the qualitative surveys. New data from qualitative surveys strengthened and refined the existence of antecedents, impacts, and consequences in the critical junctures by presenting supporting findings from the perspectives of university lecturers and teacher mentors.

Theoretical Coding: Displaying Relationships Between Analytic Categories

In the diagram below, the relationships which have emerged through data analysis are presented. This relationship shows that antecedent conditions created an impact on pre-service teachers, mostly as affective impacts. Both the antecedents and impact eventually led to the consequences of individual reflections and peer collaborations. All the components, namely antecedents, consequences, and impact, constructed the critical junctures of online teacher training in emergencies. The findings of the study posit that

the critical junctures in the online teaching practicum which were examined in the context of this study should be constantly evaluated during emergencies through a cyclic approach. This is because this cyclic approach would allow us to consider and well-establish the components in potential emergencies and increase the chances to better benefit from the procedure with the least negative effects.

Figure 2

Critical Junctures in Online Language Teacher Training in Emergencies
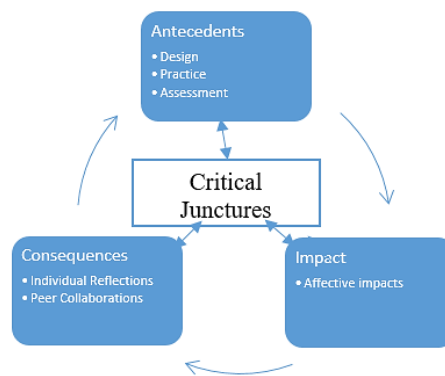
Now that how the theme emerged via analytical stages of GT has been detailed, findings in relation to research questions will be detailed and exemplified after detailing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

To ensure credibility and dependability, the strategies recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were implemented. One strategy was prolonged engagement, which meant "spending sufficient time in the field to learn the culture, test for misinformation provided the distortions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301). This study achieved prolonged engagement as it continued between February-June 2021.

The prolonged engagement was achieved because the study was conducted in two phases: Phase I in February and Phase II in May. Prolonged engagement helped the researcher increase the range and number of the data, which led to the establishment of logical links between the data and the coding (Ünlü, 2015).

The second strategy to ensure credibility and dependability was peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is defined as "the process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and to explore aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). In this study, sharing the analysis and the codes with colleagues, experts in qualitative research, "provided a check against biases within the analysis" (Barber & Walczak, 2009, p. 6).

Results

In this section, the findings will be presented through a bottom-up approach to show how the themes inductively emerged via the coding procedure of the GT. After showing how the themes emerged, findings in relation to the research questions will be detailed.

Challenges Pre-service English Language Teachers Faced in the Online Practicum During the Covid-19 Pandemic

In terms of the critical junctures, the challenges pre-service English language teachers faced emerged via the categories of antecedents, impact, and consequences. Under antecedents, pre-service teachers faced challenges in terms of design, practice, and assessment of the online practicum procedure.

Design-related challenges were mostly about how the online practicum procedure was organized. Pre-service English language teachers' interviews showed that design-related problems were mostly about the lack of sufficient observation, interactivity, and technical issues. Lack of adequate observation resulted from the limited amount of time that pre-service teachers could observe their mentors at the practicum schools. Several pre-service language teachers indicated that they could have benefited more from the practicum if they had had the option to spend more time with observations before teaching. In the extracts below, several pre-service teachers refer to this challenge:

> *Extract 1: Süheyla*
> We are pre-service teachers after all to gain an experience about… Like how teachers act. Actually, we could have learned more by observing teachers. But we were limited here, so we couldn't learn much.

> *Extract 2: Özlem*
> Actually, seeing someone else first is motivating. Like learning how they do it. But I thought the practicum teacher was going to show us a platform or a model, and then we were going to use that model while we were teaching. I never thought we were going to do it completely by ourselves. Because that was our first time, and we were going to do something like that for the first time.

Another design-related problem was interactivity. Comments from pre-service teachers highlighted the key role the interaction with mentor teachers and university lecturers had on their practicum.

> *Extract 3: Banu*
> Our mentor teacher at the practicum school was so helpful. But I can't say the same thing for the university lecturer. They didn't offer any guidance (…) But our mentor teacher was really there all the time and guided us.

Extract 4: Semra
We had to do everything on our own. I would expect my university lecturer to create a group meeting and tell us about the practicum procedure. This didn't happen, really, and that made me really upset.

Comments from pre-service teachers also indicated the necessity to better plan the coordination and interaction between the mentor teachers and the university lecturers before the practicum started:

Extract 5: Selim
I did teach twice during the practicum. In the first time, my advisor from the university was there too. And I was the first to teach in the group. My teacher mentor gave me a very easy topic, but the problem was that the group we were assigned to was a vocational school. And the language level of students there is usually very low. So they told me that the easier the content, the better my teaching would be. But, my university lecturer liked everything I did except she found it too easy for the students. But later my teacher mentor told the university lecturer that that was her decision because I was to teach vocational school students with a low language level.

Candidate teachers also encountered technical problems during the online practicum. These challenges were usually due to internet connection or the lack of necessary equipment to join the classes:

Extract 6: Selim
Some of my friends from the same group had problems. Some didn't have any laptops or computers. Some had to join the classes via their cell phones, then lost the connection and had to try to join the sessions again.

Other pre-service teachers indicated problems with the digital illiteracy, which complicated the practicum teaching for them:

Extract 7: Hasan
I think it could have been better in face-to-face education. For example, I wasn't familiar with Zoom. And when we brought an activity, I didn't know how to follow whether students did or did not do the activity. I was asking the teacher mentor to pick students. I think I had that challenge with the software we used.

Extract 8: Atıf
They told us that we would use Zoom. I'm good at using computers, but I had never used Zoom previously.

Pre-service teachers encountered challenges during the practice, which was the second component of the critical junctures. Practice-related challenges were mostly about learner engagement, which was usually difficult for pre-service language teachers to control.

Extract 9: Banu
That students didn't turn on their cameras upset us. We didn't know whether they were actually listening to us or not. My younger brother is at high school, and he just turns on Zoom and then either plays a video game there in the background or just goes to another room. He never listens. I was always thinking about that. If my brother is doing that, could my students also do that? I think probably yes. We were asking some students to do the task and never getting any response. They didn't turn on their microphones. The same 2-3 students always ran the classes.

Extract 10: Hasan
Some of them turned on their cameras, and some didn't. Normally, you can see their faces and understand what they feel or whether they understand or not. But on Zoom… That was difficult.

Extract 11: Sima
Language is learnt through practice. Here on online practicum, it gets difficult to give this practice to students. Other than that, we also didn't know what sources the students had when we were teaching. We wanted translation, but they could be doing that by using another source at the same time. We couldn't know that.

Pre-service language teachers indicated that face-to-face practicum could enable them to be better at controlling learner engagement, as is detailed below by Süheyla.

Extract 12: Süheyla
Classroom setting is always more advantageous because you can have eye contact with learners. (In online practicum) you can't see what students are doing. You can't control whether they have learnt or not. I mean you can't control the learners. On the screen, it gets very different.

A final challenge for pre-service teachers was related with assessment. Regarding assessment, inappropriate assessment tools for the online practicum platforms was the major challenge. This meant that the assessment tool utilized to evaluate the performance of the pre-service teachers was not suitable for online platforms. The answers received from several participants showed that they could not perform the assessment tool items during the online practicum. The assessment items that could not be performed during the practicum were mostly consisted of other professional abilities (e.g., being aware of professional laws and regulations, being open to criticism and suggestions, participating school events), assessment and recording (e.g., preparing suitable assessment and evaluation tools, recording the results of the assessments, assessing student products in a short time), classroom management at the end of the sessions (e.g., wrapping up, informing about the next session, preparing students to leave the class, using an effective body language), classroom management during the sessions (e.g., establishing a democratic atmosphere, being ready for interruptions), and classroom management at the beginning of the session (e.g., utilizing special teaching approaches, methods and techniques, bringing activities to increase learner engagement). All pre-service language teachers stated that it was either too difficult or impossible to perform these items on Zoom.

Extract 16: Yasemin
Researcher: Bringing activities to increase learner engagement?
Yasemin: If we were in the class. We didn't know the students.
Our mentor teacher helped us, she was telling the names of the students.
Usually, only the students who already knew the topic participated. Others did not.
Researcher: How about using a variety of teaching methods and techniques?
Yasemin: It was limited, honestly. In the real classroom settings, we could do that more effectively. But, in the online practicum, we couldn't.

Pre-service English Language Teachers' Coping with the Challenges They Encountered in the Online Practicum during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Pre-service English language teachers utilized two mechanisms to cope with the challenges they encountered. One was individual reflections, which was observed through pre-service teachers' conscious attempts to improve their teaching skills based on the problems they encountered or foresaw.

Extract 17: Ezgi
I didn't have any problems with the time management. Mainly because I had practiced earlier. I recorded myself two-three times to see how long my teaching would last. So, in the practicum teaching, I managed the time very well on Zoom.

Extract 18: Tuğçe

I think I was affected by many things in my practicum. Some of the students' levels were too low. So, I sometimes had a great deal of difficulty. One student understood it very well while the others did not. So, that student with a better level didn't want to listen to me, I could see that. But the other couldn't even read a simple word. So, I tried to help those students. I matched the higher-level students with the lower-level ones so that the one with the higher level could help his friend.

Extract 19: Atıf
I didn't know anything about Zoom, but there were videos on YouTube on how to use Zoom. These videos showed how to set up a session and various settings on Zoom. I learnt Zoom through these videos.

Pre-service language teachers also attempted to solve the problems they encountered via *peer collaboration.* Since pre-service teachers were put into pairs in each practicum group, partners were most of the time the most important source of knowledge for pre-service teachers.

Extract 20: Süheyla
We were in touch with my peers. About what we needed to do. My only advantage was to be in the same group with one of my classmates. I was already friends with her when the practicum started.

Extract 21: Özlem
My groupmates learnt about how to contact with our mentor at the practicum school. We then created a WhatsApp group but didn't add our mentor there. We first met with each other as the pre-service teachers. We added the mentor later.

Design-related Challenges for Teacher Mentors in the Online Practicum during the Covid-19 Pandemic

One challenge for teacher mentors during the online practicum was resulting from design-related issues. In the qualitative surveys, all teacher mentors stated that conducting an online practicum was a novel experience for them, which required time for teachers to adapt to the new setting. This indicated the need for the *training of teacher mentors.*

It was a sudden and new experience for all of us (Teacher Mentor 3).

Online practicum influenced the English language teachers in that teachers weren't experienced in online teaching (Teacher Mentor 1)

Another challenge was related to the practice. Teacher mentors stated that ensuring the interaction between the pre-service teachers and their students during the practicum was difficult:

It was hard for the pre-service teacher to bring interactive materials (Teacher Mentor 1)

My students didn't attend sufficiently, and they didn't turn on their cameras and microphones (Teacher Mentor 4)

It was not easy to catch each student's attention. Their attention span is short. It was hard to keep young learners and teenagers engaged throughout the class.

Challenges University Lecturers Faced in the Online Practicum during the Covid-19 Pandemic

The data analysis indicated that the challenges of university lecturers concentrated around the *Antecedents* and the *Impacts.* In terms of the antecedents, university lecturers encountered design-related challenges. One particular design-related challenge was *the lack of a monitoring mechanism.* For example, the university lecturers indicated that it was impossible to follow how much pre-service language teachers participated in their online practicum sessions.

There wasn't enough attendance of the students; on the other hand, we couldn't see them because of turned-off cameras. (University Lecturer 4)

Lack of attendance was one particular difficulty (University Lecturer 1)

University lecturers also encountered practice-related challenges. More specifically, classroom management skills of pre-service teachers, according to the university

lecturers, were left undeveloped as the online practicum made it impossible to provide necessary feedback on these skills:

> The difficulties I experienced during the online practicum were to give feedback about pre-service teachers' practice (University lecturer 6)

Likewise, the assessment was also a challenge for university lecturers. Some lecturers indicated that it was impossible to conduct a practical assessment during the online practicum since it was a novel setting for all participants. This resulted in higher grades, which mostly did not reflect the actual performance of pre-service language teachers.

> The assessment during the online practicum was not done as it was supposed to be because of the extraordinary situations resulting in higher grades for pre-service teachers. (University Lecturer 6)

In terms of the *impact*, which emerged due to the antecedents, *loss of motivation* and *increased stress* were what university lecturers often encountered, which was also supported by pre-service student interviews:

> Online practicum influenced the training of the English language teachers in that pre-service teachers were a little bit stressed. (University Lecturer 4)

> The difficulties I experienced during the online practicum was the lower motivation of students (University Lecturer 1)

Discussion and Conclusion

Covid-19 has shown that online education will substitute traditional education, when necessary, thus requiring commitment to a high-quality investment. In the context of language teacher training, this study has revealed that increasing the quality and efficiency of online language teacher training will be possible via due attention to critical junctures in emergencies. Remote teacher training was unavoidable during Covid-19; however, the findings of the study revealed that simply moving the training onto online platforms was not enough to make language teacher training a fruitful experience for future teachers. The critical junctures in language teacher training in emergencies show the areas that require immediate attention in emergencies. Also, these junctures present a road map for those who develop training programs.

The study findings highlighted the critical role of antecedents in the components of design, practice, and assessment. Design-related challenges indicated that the organization of online practicum required close examination, especially in terms of sufficient observation, interactivity, and technical issues, which were in line with what Donitsa-Schmidt and Ramot (2020) and Terenko and Ogienko (2020) earlier found. In the case of this study, pre-service teachers' lack of sufficient observation and interaction together with technical problems created anxiety, thus leading to decreased engagement with the practicum as is needed.

Similarly, teacher mentors' need for *training* and the university lecturers' *lack of a monitoring mechanism* were parallel to the challenges pre-service teachers experienced. This study, therefore, demonstrated findings in line with what Kidd and Murray (2020) highlighted as inefficient student learning. Likewise, the teacher mentors or the university lecturers in this study did not experience difficulties with the online tools they used in terms of digital illiteracy as Hassani (2021) indicated. However, the findings implied that teacher trainers and university lecturers needed time and training to adapt to the online platforms as that was a new experience for all of them. This finding also supports Pozo-Rico et al. (2020) who have shown that "training teacher competencies are key in responding to the pandemic situation" (p. 14). Also, teacher trainers' practice-related challenge of not being able to provide feedback supports Hassani (2021) as the online platforms utilized were either not appropriate or not carefully planned beforehand for teaching practicum. Regarding the assessment component of the antecedents, teacher trainers stated that the tools they utilized were not sufficient to conduct a fair assessment of the pre-service teachers' performances, which expands the literature in that presenting equal opportunities in terms of assessment to pre-service language teachers was also a point that needed close examination. Additionally, the use of unsuitable assessment tools as was shown in the interviews foregrounds the fact that the traditional assessment tools need to be adopted first during emergencies for a fairer and more realistic assessment.

The critical junctures finding of this study can also be evaluated in relation with the instructional strategies presented earlier by Bao (2020). Knowing the components of the junctures support Bao (2020) and show the significance of the instructional strategies for an efficient online education in emergencies. However, the findings on the junctures expand Bao (2020) by showing implications to consider when conducting online education and teacher training: a) ensuring the existence of affective support to all those who are involved in the online education, b) developing strategies to monitor practice better during the practicum, c) developing suitable assessment tools for online practicum, as earlier stated by Surahman and Wang (2021), d) encouraging constant reflection from all participants to improve the online practicum, and e) explicitly encouraging peer collaboration among the pre-service language teachers.

This study has several limitations. One of them is that the study consisted of only one interview with participants due to restrictions on the access to the participants. Furthermore, the lack of interviews with university lecturers and teacher mentors also limits the depth of the findings. Still, qualitative surveys with university lecturers and teacher mentors are significant because these solidify and refine the results from interview data. Additionally, the study shows "what happened in a particular context when the practicum was forcibly removed due to (g)local circumstances, and how with this 'practical space of practice' gone, the online informal spaces became the new sites of learning." (Kidd & Murray, 2020, p. 554). Therefore, the study presents a meaningful and genuine understanding of improving language teacher education practices in emergencies (Kidd & Murray, 2020).

To overcome the limitations of the study, further studies are needed across different contexts with different groups of participants. Similarly, studies focusing on

discipline-specific needs of the pre-service language teachers in emergencies might be conducted to reveal better the components of the critical junctures in remote teacher training in emergencies. Further studies might also be conducted on each component of the critical junctures. For example, in terms of the practice component, other studies might examine how to incorporate strategies such as teacher moments (Sullivan, 2020) and reflective practice in teacher training in emergencies. Further studies will certainly provide a deeper "evidence-based perspective on the characteristics, the processes, the outcomes and the implications of online practices" (Carillo & Flores, 2020, p. 467).

Code of Ethics

The ethics approval of this study was granted by the Social and Humanities Research Division of Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University on February 26, 2021, during the fourth session with the approval decision numbered 01-18.

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Acil Durumlarda İngilizce Öğretmeni Eğitimi: Kritik Bağlantı Modeli

Öz

Covid-19 salgını sırasında öğretmen eğitimleri çevrimiçi platformlarda gerçekleştirildi. Bu durum tüm alan için yeni bir deneyim olmasına rağmen, bu dönem acil durumlarda dil öğretmeni eğitimi için faydalı bir kaynak olarak ön plana çıkmaktadır. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, dil öğretmeni adaylarının, uygulama öğretmenlerinin ve öğretim üyelerinin deneyimlerini ortaya koymak amacıyla yürütülmüştür. Çalışma, Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde bir üniversitede Şubat-Haziran 2021'de yürütülmüştür. Temellendirilmiş kuramın veri analiz süreçleri ve vaka çalışması araştırma tekniklerini takip eden bu çalışmada, 2020-2021 güz döneminde 22 aday dil öğretmeni ile yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Ayrıca, altı öğretim üyesi ve üç uygulama öğretmeni ile nitel çevrimiçi anketler yapılmıştır. Veri analizi, öncüller, etki ve sonuçlardan oluşan kritik bağlantıların, dil öğretmeni eğitiminin çevrimiçi platformlarda etkin bir şekilde uygulanması için belirleyici çıkarımlar sunduğunu göstermiştir. Bu kritik bağlantıların çevrimiçi dil öğretmeni eğitiminde dikkate alınması olası problemlerin öngörülmesi ve önlenmesini yardımcı olabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Covid-19, kritik bağlantılar, acil durumlar, çevrimiçi öğretmen eğitimi,

Appendix 1

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about your experiences during the online practicum?

2. What were the difficulties for you?

3. What aspects of the online practicum could have been different?

4. What was the best aspect of online teacher training?

5. How would you describe your interaction with the university lecturers?

6. How would you describe your interaction with the teacher trainers?

7. Would you like to add anything else?

8. How did this procedure help your teaching?

Appendix 2

Qualitative Online Survey Questions

Online Language Teacher Training during the Pandemic: Reflections from Prospective English Language Teachers

Teacher Trainers, and Mentor Teachers

Dear Participants,

We would like to learn your experiences and perceptions of the online practicum that was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic. Your personal details will not be shared with any third parties. The information you share will ONLY be used for academic purposes. If you would like to receive more information about this study, you may reach me via zuleyha.unlu@gop.edu.tr

Thank you for your participation.

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* Necessary

1.   What was your role during the practicum? *

   Please select only one option.

   ◯   University Lecturer

   ◯   Teacher Mentor at the Practicum School

Perceptions about the Online Practicum

2.   Online practicum influenced the training of the English language teachers in that...

3.   The online practicum was challenging because.... *

4.   The online practicum should be part of conventional teacher training because....

5.   There are no differences/ a lot of differences between online and face-to-face practicum because...   *

6.   The difficulties I experienced during the online practicum were.... *

7.   The assessment during the online practicum was...because.... *

Any additional comments

8.   Please share any other issues that were important and meaningful to you during * the online practicum in the pandemic: