

## Pre-Service English Language Teacher Readiness Before and After a Practicum Interrupted by the Pandemic

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### Abstract

With a quantitative research design, the present study aims to explore the teacher readiness of pre-service foreign language teachers during the practicum in terms of their perceived teaching self-efficacies, attitudes towards teaching, and teaching motivations. In order to uncover changes in pre-service foreign language teachers' perceived teaching self-efficacies, attitudes towards teaching, and teaching motivations, two sets of quantitative data from 80 last year English Language Teaching students enrolled in a teaching practice class at a Turkish state university were collected through three different scales before and after the practicum period, which was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed significant increases in the participants' perceived teaching self-efficacies and attitudes towards teaching at the end of the practicum. Moreover, the teaching motivations of the participants appeared to have changed towards more altruistic and intrinsic orientations at the end of the practicum. Considering the unique and unusual conditions emerged during the data collection period, the study sheds light on the cruciality of the practicum period in teacher education even in such crisis situations.

### Keywords

Teacher readiness  
Practicum  
Self-efficacy  
Attitude  
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## INTRODUCTION

Teaching as a profession has been accepted as a sacred and outstanding job in shaping the future of communities and nations since the earliest times of history. In that sense, teachers seem to undertake a crucial role in conveying knowledge, values and culture in order to integrate and develop the society (Doğan, 2003). In order to fulfill the requirements of such a meritorious profession, teacher candidates need to be prepared to teach alone in real classroom settings. Although there has not been a commonly accepted framework for teacher readiness, the literature attempts to shed light on the concept by resorting to a number of aspects and notions such as content and pedagogy knowledge (Shulman, 1987), self-efficacy perceptions (Giallo & Little, 2003; Strakova, 2015), motivation (Dörnyei & Ushido, 2011), attitudes towards the profession (Üstüner, 2006), student engagement (Gao & Liu, 2013), classroom management skills (Baker, 2005; Peters, 2012; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Woolfolk, Rosoff, & Hoy, 1990), effective use of teaching methods (Jusoh, 2012), personality traits (Aydın, Bavlı & Alcı, 2013; Bhargava & Pathy, 2011) and qualities of effective teachers (Dinçer, Göksu, Takkaç, & Yazıcı, 2013; Stronge, 2007).

According to Yıldırım (2015), teacher readiness can be achieved in two phases: during the teacher education programs that also include practicum periods (pre-service) and through professional development practices and activities after entering the profession (in-service). The importance of teacher training programs basically stems from the opportunity they provide the trainees to put their theoretical knowledge into effect in real teaching contexts with real students through practicum practices (Richards & Clough, 2004, p.80).

Practicum is one of the key components of pre-service teacher education that prepares the teacher candidates for their prospective professions (Vick, 2006). Although any pre-service teacher has an imaginary picture of teaching in an actual classroom, this image may easily collapse due to the mismatches between their idealized teaching image and the real teaching situation (Chang, 2018). The possible gap between the ideal and the real makes the practicum an essential part of pre-service teacher education. In this regard, practicum takes over the role of bridging the gap between theory and practice. Thus, effective teaching practicum can be considered as a direct determinant of the teaching readiness of prospective teachers.

### **Pre-service Teacher Education and the Practicum**

Pre-service teacher education is at the heart of a teacher's path to become a professional in the field (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Although theory and practice play equally important roles in shaping a prospective teacher's professional identity, the practical dimension of pre-service teacher education often seems to be a neglected aspect (Carr, 2009; Carroll, Choo, Dunlap, & Isenhour, 2003). However, as an important aspect of teacher education programs, practicum teaching engages pre-service teachers in teaching by enabling them to observe expert teachers in real classes, make necessary preparations such as lesson plans, teach in real classrooms, and reflect on teaching experiences while also receiving feedback from professionals (Graves, 2009, p. 118). Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, which introduces a four-stage model of learning from experiences, serves as the underlying theory for many of the practicum teaching programs. According to the model, the cyclical nature of learning begins with exposure to concrete experiences. The individual then observes and reflects on these experiences in order to create abstract notions and ideas. Lastly, these new ideas are tested through active experimentation. Thus, learning is explained as "the transformative process of reconstructing existing knowledge through experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38).

In the context of the present study, the outbreak of the global deadly pandemic of COVID-19 brought about serious consequences for education. With the suspension of schools all around the world, millions of students either became deprived of education for a while or were directed to online teaching and learning, which is also referred to as 'emergency distance education (EDE)', 'emergency remote teaching (ERT)' or 'emergency online learning (EOL)' (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020; Yin, 2019; Zhang, Wang, Yang, & Wang, 2020). Pre-service foreign language teachers studying and doing their practicum in Türkiye were not exceptions either. COVID-19 intervention

in education changed the nature of pre-service foreign language teacher education and practicum practices in Türkiye.

### **Teacher Readiness**

As an ambivalent concept in the educational research literature, teacher readiness is not an easily measurable aspect of prospective teachers. Yet, in the educational research literature, readiness has recently been attempted to be identified and measured through a variety of variables such as attitudes towards teaching (Fan, Leung, Hon, & Fan, 2019; Parylo, Süngü, & Ilgan, 2015), content knowledge (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Wang, Lai, & Lo, 2014), self-efficacy perceptions (Gao & Benson, 2012; İnceçay & Keşli Dollar, 2012; Strakova, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), type and level of teaching motivations or interests (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Lee & Yuan, 2014), and personal qualities (Haigh, Ell, & Mackisack, 2013). In the light of the equivocality of the exact components of pre-service teacher readiness, and due to the constraints of measuring it with a single valid instrument, the present study explores the concept through pre-service language teachers' perceived teacher self-efficacies, attitudes towards the teaching profession, and motivations to choose teaching as a job.

#### **Perceived Teacher Self-Efficacy**

From the perspective of Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), a person's efficacy beliefs are shaped by his or her prior knowledge, expectations and attitudes as well as social norms and influences of others. Besides, those efficacy beliefs also affect a person's expectations, attitudes, and conformity to norms and openness to external influences. This mutual interaction is labeled as reciprocal determinism (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Bandura (1997) hypothesizes four distinct sources of self-efficacy as enactive mastery experiences (previous achievements or failures), vicarious experiences (observations, role models), verbal/social persuasion (comments, feedback from others), and physiological and affective states (emotions such as anxiety or physical conditions).

Self-efficacy, as an originally psychological and sociological concept, also has a reflection on the readiness of teachers to teach in the form of teacher self-efficacy. The crucial role of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs lies behind the fact that when teachers have a high level of self-efficacy, they tend to believe that they can profoundly affect learners' success and motivation (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). What is more, teacher self-efficacy is reported to be an important factor determining the length of time intended to spend in the teaching profession and commitment to teach (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

In the educational research literature, Atay (2007) carried out a mixed methods study with 78 last year ELT students from a Turkish state university to explore the effects of practicum teaching on pre-service ELT teachers' beliefs of efficacy. The results showed that there was a significant decrease in the self-efficacy scores of the pre-service English language teachers in the use of instructional strategies after the practicum. On the other hand, it was reported that the student teachers had significantly higher perceived self-efficacies in engaging the students. It can be inferred from this study that sub-dimensions of teacher self-efficacy may not show a parallel increase or decrease with each other during a given period of time or interference. Likewise, Liaw (2009) attempted to explore the effects of practicum teaching and group discussions on pre-service EFL teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. 26 participants provided qualitative data for the study through videotaped practicum teaching sessions each week during a whole semester and through group discussions on these sessions during a method course. Besides, the participants were asked to complete an adapted version of the Teacher Efficacy Scale by Gibson and Dembo (1984) at the beginning and the end of the practicum period. The findings suggested that classroom management was the most outstanding consideration for the pre-service EFL teachers in this study. It was also discovered that the overall perceived teacher self-efficacy of the participants was significantly higher after the practicum teaching experiences and group discussions afterwards. The results clearly underline the impact of practicum experience on self-efficacy formation and signify the role of verbal persuasion through group discussions as a contributing source of teacher self-efficacy.

In brief, teaching self-efficacy perceptions of student teachers emerge as an important determinant of teacher readiness in the existing body of research. Therefore, the present study incorporates perceived teaching self-efficacies

of pre-service English language teachers among the components of teacher readiness as important predictors of preparedness for the job.

### **Attitudes Towards Teaching as a Profession**

The concept of attitude has also been a key notion in educational research with a growing interest in its effects on or relation with a number of aspects such as technology, diversity, language learning and teaching due to attitudes' apparent role as the key determinants of success (Cortes, 2016; Göktepe, 2014; Polat, 2017; Üstüner, Demirtaş, & Cömert, 2009). Studies focusing on the attitudes of pre-service foreign language teachers have been on the rise, though scarce. In his qualitative research, Cortes (2016) focused on the role of the practicum on pre-service English language teachers' attitudes towards the profession. The results presented that the participants showed mostly positive attitudes towards the teaching profession after their practicum experiences. Similarly, in their comprehensive study with 593 pre-service teachers studying at 12 different programs, including English Language Teaching at a state university in Türkiye, Üstüner et al. (2009) suggested that attitudes towards the teaching profession varied significantly among the departments involved in the study. In their research, Üstüner et al. (2009) also concluded that the attitudes of the pre-service teachers could serve to shape the teacher education programs in the future. Therefore, the current research focuses on the attitudes of student teachers towards teaching as another variable for determining professional readiness.

### **Teaching Motivations of Pre-Service EFL Teachers**

The focus of the present study on teaching motivations of pre-service foreign language teachers is primarily based on the propositions of Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles et al., 1983). The theory puts forward the idea that achievement-based actions are reinforced by expectancies of success in a particular task and values attributed to the task, and thus, these expectancies and values determine which tasks a person may want to pursue (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002). To exemplify, EFL teacher candidates are more likely to put effort into developing themselves as highly qualified teachers and will possibly remain in the profession for longer if they feel they will succeed in their prospective careers as teachers. With a similar perspective, Richardson and Watt (2006) drew attention to the need for investigation of pre-service teachers' motives to choose the teaching profession by putting emphasis on the changing role of teachers in society, the scarcity of empirical evidence exploring teaching motivations and reasons for quitting the job within a short period of time, the lack of research built on a comprehensive theoretical framework. In a related study, Lee and Yuan (2014) suggest that pre-service English teachers may have various teaching motivations, such as intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic, or sometimes a mixture of these motivation types. Besides, their study also presents findings showing the change of teaching motivations towards a more intrinsic, teaching-oriented dimension at the end of the teaching practicum course. In the Turkish context, Damar (2018) found that the highest-scored motivational factors were making a social contribution and working with children and adolescents which make up social utility values. She also implied that the social status of the profession needs to be improved since there was little tendency among the participants to choose the social status factor as a motivation to choose the teaching profession. Wong (2020) also pointed to the changes occurring during the practicum and concluded that pre-service language teachers' motivations were predominantly affected by their emotional states and perceived skills in teaching before the practicum periods. However, after the practicum, social interactions and feedback from mentors, supervisors or students, as well as their own positive experiences in real teaching situations, played important roles in determining their motivations. Unlike many other studies, Kyriacou and Kobori (1998) came up with the conclusion that Slovenian English language teacher candidates reported a number of extrinsic motivations among the leading reasons of the participants to choose the teaching profession such as job security, short working hours, satisfaction with the salary, and long holidays. Kılınç, Watt and Richardson (2012) adapted and employed the "Factors Influencing Teaching Choice Scale (FIT-Choice Scale)" developed by Watt and Richardson (2007) and found that altruistic factors in the scale were the most influential factors affecting teaching profession choice. Job security factor as an extrinsic motivation also emerged as an important determinant of teaching choice. Intrinsic values and

teaching ability perceptions followed those factors while choosing the teaching profession as a fallback career appeared as the weakest factor affecting pre-service teachers' choices.

Although there have been studies on the teaching self-efficacies (Atay, 2007; Yang, 2023), attitudes (Cortes, 2016; Polat, 2017), and teaching motivations (Damar, 2018; Wong, 2020) of pre-service EFL teachers, the literature lacks sufficient research with a broader perspective on the readiness of EFL teacher candidates. Combining a multitude of variables under the umbrella notion of teacher readiness, the present study aims to have a comprehensive look into the practicum interrupted by the global pandemic, and in particular, the changes in their teacher readiness during this period. Taking all the suggested components of teaching readiness and the dynamic nature of teaching practicum into consideration, the present study intends to investigate the changes taking place in the pre-service foreign language teachers' readiness in terms of their perceived self-efficacies, attitudes, and teaching motivations during the practicum period of their pre-service teacher education. Therefore, in line with the research purposes, the study seeks to answer the following research questions to uncover their state of professional readiness to teach:

- 1) What are the levels of pre-service foreign language teachers'
  - a) perceived self-efficacies
  - b) attitudes towards teaching
  - c) motivations to teach before and after the teaching practicum?

## **METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative research design (Creswell, 2014) in which the data were collected through the survey method since it enables the researcher to gather data from a relatively larger number of subjects, and thus, more participants are able to report on their teacher readiness in the present research. In this descriptive study, professional readiness of pre-service EFL teachers was explored in terms of selected variables as perceived teacher self-efficacies, attitudes towards teaching profession, and teaching motivations before and after the practicum experiences.

### **Research Context and Participants**

The research setting for the study is the English Language Teaching (ELT) Department of Anadolu University in Türkiye. The pre-service teachers have to attend 6 hours of teaching at schools in a week and the period lasts for 12 weeks, which make a total of 72 hours. However, it should be noted that the pre-service foreign language teachers experienced an unexpected pandemic interruption in the 6th week of the spring term and, the practicum was carried out online afterwards. Therefore, the student teachers prepared lesson plans to be implemented in imaginary teaching situations, and they received feedback on their teaching plans and discussed how to implement these plans in real classrooms.

The participants were selected through convenience sampling, and the intended participants of the study were 106 senior students taking the Teaching Practice course in the ELT Department at Anadolu University. The students who did not complete all three data collection instruments or take both pre- and post-tests were excluded from the study. So, a total of 80 students took part in and provided valid data for the present study. The scales were first submitted as the pre-test of the study at the end of the fall term of 2019-2020 academic year in regular classrooms before the beginning of the practicum period. However, as the global COVID-19 pandemic broke out at the beginning of 2020, the post-tests were prepared and sent to the participants online at the end of the practicum period.

### **Data Collection Tools**

In the present study, three different instruments were utilized to collect data from the pre-service EFL teachers before and after the practicum period interrupted by the pandemic.



### Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES)

In order to measure the perceived self-efficacy beliefs of the participants, the Turkish version of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) (Çapa, Çakıroğlu, & Sarıkaya, 2005), which was originally developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) was used. The scale consists of 24 9-point (from "nothing" to "a great deal") Likert-scale items covering student engagement ( $n=8$ ), instructional strategies ( $n=8$ ), and classroom management ( $n=8$ ) dimensions of teacher self-efficacy. As for the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were found as .82, .86, and .84, respectively. The values indicate that the scale is a reliable tool to uncover the self-efficacy perceptions of prospective teachers in all three dimensions.

### Attitude Scale of Teaching Profession (ASTP)

With the purpose of exploring the attitudes of teacher candidates towards the profession of teaching, "Attitude Scale of Teaching Profession (ASTP)" developed by Üstüner (2006) was used in the present study. The scale consists of 34 5-point Likert-scale items. Cronbach's Alpha value for the overall scale was calculated as .93 which demonstrates a high reliability for the instruments.

### Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice Scale

In order to investigate the pre-service English language teachers teaching motivations, an adapted version of the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) Choice Scale (Kılınc et al., 2012), which is composed of 56 7-point Likert-scale items, was utilized. The FIT-Choice scale consists of three main parts defining different motivational and perceptual factors. The major parts are the 'intrinsic values' that describe pre-service teachers' teaching interests and desires; the 'personal utility values' that refer to factors like job transferability, job security, income, and leisure time for family; the 'social utility values' referring to the desire to contribute to the students' future and the society and the desire to work with children or adolescents; the 'self-perception of abilities' focusing on the pre-service teachers' teaching abilities; the 'fallback career choice' which can be explained as the candidates' choice of teaching as a second option; and lastly the 'social influences' that describes the influences of parents, peers or previous teachers of the teacher candidates on their choice of profession. Under the previously explained domains, there were 12 motivational and 6 perceptual factors influencing the teaching choice of pre-service teachers as a profession. The reliability coefficients of the factors in the scale ranged between .57 (fallback career) and .93 (work with children/adolescents) in the motivational factors, while the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values for the perceptions about teaching were between .61 (social dissuasion) and .89 (satisfaction with choice).

### Data Analysis

The data for the present study were analyzed using the 22<sup>nd</sup> version of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) data analysis software using a series of measurements. Since the normality test scores of skewness and kurtosis yielded values between  $\pm 1.5$ , revealing a normal distribution of the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013), the analyses were done using parametric statistical tests. In order to explore the changes in the analyzed aspects of teacher readiness, Paired Samples T-test scores of all three scales were computed.

### Ethical Authorizations of the Research

Name of the ethical review board: Anadolu University Social Sciences and Humanities Ethics Committee

Date of ethical assessment decision: 29/01/2020

Ethical assessment protocol number: 3785

### FINDINGS

In the present study, mean scores of the overall perceived teaching self-efficacy of the student teachers showed an increase from the pre-test ( $M = 6.539$ ,  $SD = .837$ ) to the post-test ( $M = 7.288$ ,  $SD = .799$ ). The participants' self-efficacy in classroom management subscale was the highest in the pre-test with a mean score of 6.663 ( $SD = .940$ ). In

the second place, Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale data from pre-service foreign language teachers revealed a mean score of 6.581 in self-efficacy in instructional strategies ( $SD = .930$ ). Self-efficacy in student engagement ( $M = 6.373$ ,  $SD = .955$ ) appeared as the last type of perceived teaching self-efficacies in pre-test of the present study. These results suggested that the participants felt most efficient in classroom management skills, followed by using a variety of instructional strategies, and finally engaging students in the learning activities before the practicum period. As for the post-test scores, classroom management self-efficacy ranked first with a mean score of 7.383 ( $SD = .920$ ), while efficacy in instructional strategies ( $M = 7.324$ ,  $SD = .975$ ) came second and self-efficacy in student engagement ( $M = 7.158$ ,  $SD = .903$ ) followed them. The results obtained from the post-test also provided a similar ranking of the participants' perceived self-efficacies in three subscales of the TSES.

**Table 1:** Comparison of the Perceived Teaching Self-Efficacy Scores Before and After the Practicum

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Overall self-efficacy	Teacher self-efficacy (Pre-test)	6.539	.837	79	-9.525	.000**
	Teacher self-efficacy (Post-test)	7.288	.799			
Pair 1	Student engagement (Pre-test)	6.373	.955	79	-8.270	.000**
	Student engagement (Posttest)	7.158	.903			
Pair 2	Instructional strategies (Pre-test)	6.581	.930	79	-7.893	.000**
	Instructional strategies (Post-test)	7.324	.975			
Pair 3	Classroom management (Pre-test)	6.663	.940	79	-7.228	.000**
	Classroom management (Post-test)	7.383	.920			

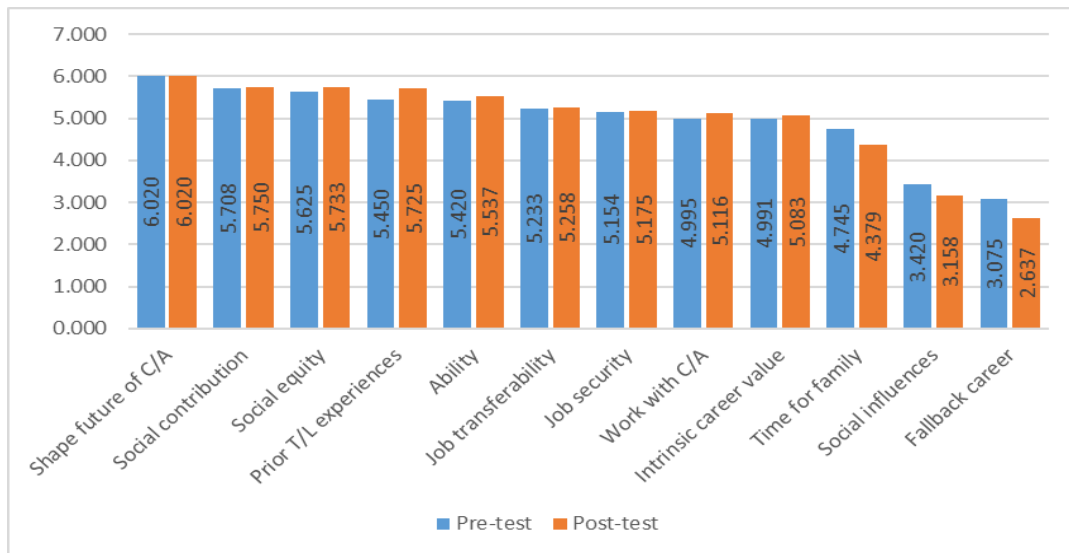
In order to make a statistical comparison of the perceived self-efficacy levels before and after the practicum period, the data were analyzed using the Paired Samples T-Test. As shown in Table 1, the findings of the Paired Samples T-Test revealed that there was a significant difference between the pre-test mean scores ( $M = 6.539$ ,  $SD = .837$ ) and the post-test mean scores ( $M = 7.288$ ,  $SD = .799$ ) of the perceived overall teaching self-efficacy levels of the pre-service teachers in the study ( $t(79) = -9.525$ ,  $p < .001$ ). A similarly significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test ( $M = 6.373$ ,  $SD = .955$ ) and the post-test mean scores ( $M = 7.158$ ,  $SD = .903$ ) of the participants in the "efficacy in student engagement" sub-scale of the TSES ( $t(79) = -8.270$ ,  $p < .001$ ) was also found in the statistical analysis of the TSES scores. Likewise, it was seen that the participants' post-test mean scores ( $M = 7.324$ ,  $SD = .975$ ) significantly outweighed their pre-test mean scores ( $M = 6.581$ ,  $SD = .930$ ) in the "efficacy in instructional strategies" sub-scale ( $t(79) = -7.893$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Lastly, in the "efficacy in classroom management" sub-scale, the participants scored significantly more in the post-test ( $M = 7.383$ ,  $SD = .920$ ) than in the pre-test ( $M = 6.663$ ,  $SD = .940$ ) ( $t(79) = -7.228$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

The analysis of the attitude scale data revealed that there was a mean score of 3.689 ( $SD = 0.889$ ) before the practicum, while that mean score climbed up to 4.013 ( $SD = 0.778$ ) after the practicum period. In order to find out the changes in attitudes of the participants towards teaching between the pre-test and the post-test, Paired Samples T-Test was computed. It was found out that the mean scores of the pre-test ( $M = 3.689$ ,  $SD = 0.889$ ) of the participants were significantly lower than their post-test ( $M = 4.013$ ,  $SD = 0.778$ ) mean scores in the Attitude Scale of Teaching Profession (ASTP) ( $t(79) = -3.865$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 2:** Comparison of Participants' Attitudes Towards Teaching Before and After the Practicum

		<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Attitudes towards teaching	Pre-test	3.689	80	0.889	79	-3.865	.000**
	Post-test	4.013	80	0.778			

As for the factors influencing the participants' choice of teaching, it can be seen in Figure 1 that the most dominant motivational factor appeared as shaping future of the children and adolescents ( $M = 6.020$ ,  $SD = 1.194$ ). This factor was followed by two other similar reasons for choosing the teaching job, which were social contribution ( $M = 5.708$ ,  $SD = 1.355$ ) and social equity ( $M = 5.625$ ,  $SD = 1.312$ ) factors respectively. When taken all together, it was seen that most dominant factors affecting the participants' choice of the teaching profession fell under the category of "social utility values". Prior teaching and learning experiences ( $M = 5.450$ ,  $SD = 1.298$ ), ability ( $M = 5.420$ ,  $SD = 1.309$ ), job transferability ( $M = 5.233$ ,  $SD = 1.496$ ), job security ( $M = 5.154$ ,  $SD = 1.485$ ), work with children/adolescents ( $M = 4.995$ ,  $SD = 1.820$ ), intrinsic career values ( $M = 4.991$ ,  $SD = 1.636$ ), time for family ( $M = 4.745$ ,  $SD = 1.623$ ), and social influences ( $M = 3.420$ ,  $SD = 1.695$ ) factors followed the above stated three leading reasons for choosing foreign language teaching as a profession. In the pre-test, the least important motivational factor appeared as choosing teaching as a fallback career choice ( $M = 3.075$ ,  $SD = 1.687$ ). In the post-test, it was found that the order of the importance of the factors affecting the choice of teaching as a profession did not differ much from the pre-test results. However, the prior teaching and learning experiences factor ( $M = 5.750$ ,  $SD = 1.136$ ) came out as the second most influential factor, and the ability factor ( $M = 5.733$ ,  $SD = 1.139$ ) showed up as the third most important one in the post-test.



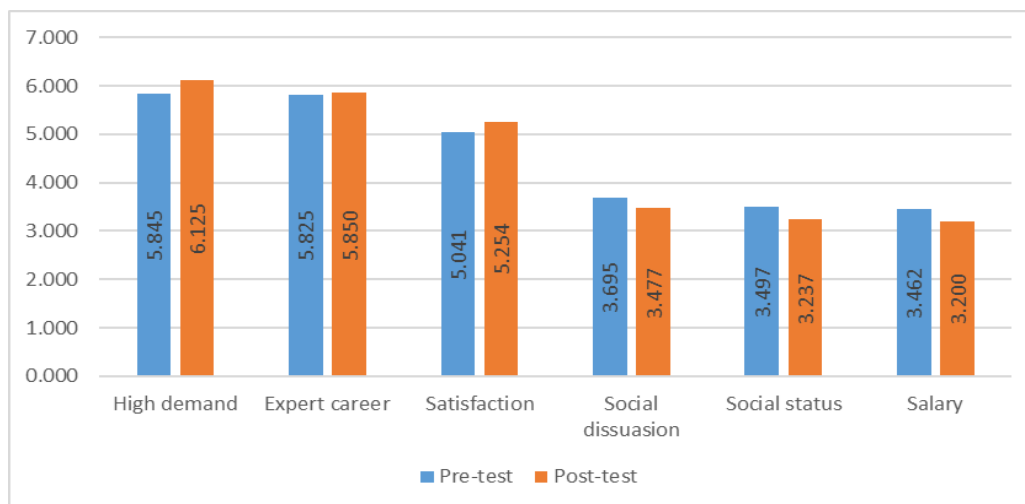
**Figure 1:** Teaching motivations of the participants towards teaching (motivational factors)

As shown in Figure 2, among the perceptual FIT-Choice factors in the pre-test, the high demand factor ( $M = 5.845$ ,  $SD = 1.003$ ) showed up as the most important perception of the pre-service foreign language teachers. In other words, most of the participants reported that they believed teaching is a highly demanding job. Similarly, they also believed teaching is a job requiring expertise in career ( $M = 5.825$ ,  $SD = .831$ ). In the third place, participants commonly expressed their satisfaction with their choice of teaching as a job ( $M = 5.041$ ,  $SD = 1.415$ ). On the other hand, it was clear that participants of the present study did not consider social dissuasion ( $M = 3.695$ ,  $SD = 1.526$ ), social status of teachers ( $M = 3.497$ ,  $SD = 1.240$ ), and salary of the teaching profession ( $M = 3.462$ ,  $SD = 1.435$ ) as important considerations while choosing this profession. Namely, they were not influenced by other people's discouragements, social positioning of the teaching job, and financial benefits of the profession while choosing the teaching profession.

The perceptions of the participants regarding choosing English language teaching as a profession appeared in a slightly different order after the practicum period. In the post-test, pre-service foreign language teachers mostly thought that teaching is an expert career ( $M = 6.125$ ,  $SD = .724$ ) and it is a demanding career choice ( $M = 5.850$ ,  $SD =$



1.088). To be more precise, they predominantly thought that the teaching job required a high level of expertise and, unlike many people, it is a challenging job. Besides, they also reported satisfaction with their career ( $M = 5.254$ ,  $SD = 1.515$ ) as an important consideration. Social status ( $M = 3.477$ ,  $SD = 1.356$ ) and salary ( $M = 3.237$ ,  $SD = 1.526$ ) of the teaching profession were among the last perceptual FIT-Choice factors affecting their choice of profession. Lastly, they reported in the post-test that social dissuasion ( $M = 3.200$ ,  $SD = 1.460$ ) was not a key perceptual factor in making their mind to choose the teaching job as it was in the pre-test.



**Figure 2:** Teaching motivations of the participants towards teaching (perceptual factors)

Lastly, a comparison of pre-test and post-test scores of the participants on the FIT-Choice Scale were calculated using Paired Samples T-Test and the results are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Comparison of Motivational FIT-Choice Factors Before and After the Practicum

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair 1	Ability (Pre-test)	5.421	1.310	.146	-2.836	79	.006*
	Ability (Posttest)	5.733	1.139	.127			
Pair 2	Intrinsic career value (Pre-test)	4.992	1.636	.183	-1.092	79	.278
	Intrinsic career value (Post-test)	5.117	1.606	.180			
Pair 3	Fallback career (Pre-test)	3.075	1.687	.189	2.724	79	.008*
	Fallback career (Posttest)	2.638	1.672	.187			
Pair 4	Job security (Pre-test)	5.154	1.486	.166	-0.671	79	.504
	Job security (Posttest)	5.258	1.517	.170			
Pair 5	Time for family (Pre-test)	4.746	1.624	.182	2.265	79	.026*
	Time for family (Posttest)	4.379	1.718	.192			
Pair 6	Job transferability (Pre-test)	5.233	1.497	.167	0.425	79	.672
	Job transferability (Post-test)	5.175	1.489	.166			
Pair 7	Shape future of C/A (Pre-test)	6.021	1.195	.134	0.000	79	1.000
	Shape future of C/A (Posttest)	6.021	1.325	.148			
Pair 8	Social equity (Pre-test)	5.625	1.312	.147	-0.773	79	.442
	Social equity (Posttest)	5.725	1.464	.164			
Pair 9	Social contribution (Pre-test)	5.708	1.356	.152	1.196	79	.235
	Social contribution (Post-test)	5.538	1.657	.185			
Pair 10	Work with C/A (Pre-test)	4.996	1.821	.204	-0.555	79	.581
	Work with C/A (Posttest)	5.083	1.717	.192			
Pair 11	Prior experiences (Pre-test)	5.450	1.299	.145	-2.545	79	.013*
	Prior experiences (Post-test)	5.750	1.136	.127			
Pair 12	Social influences (Pre-test)	3.421	1.695	.190	1.402	79	.165
	Social influences (Posttest)	3.158	1.745	.195			

Statistical analysis of the data revealed that four motivational factors out of twelve differed significantly between the pre-test and post-test. Participants' pre-test scores ( $M = 5.421$ ,  $SD = 1.310$ ) of the ability factor were significantly lower than their post-test scores ( $M = 5.733$ ,  $SD = 0.522$ ) ( $t(79) = -2.836$ ,  $p = .006$ ). In other words, after the practicum period, the pre-service teachers believed more strongly that their existing teaching abilities played an important role in choosing teaching as a profession. Likewise, their choices of the language teaching profession as a fallback career differed significantly ( $t(79) = 2.724$ ,  $p = .008$ ) between the pre-test ( $M = 3.075$ ,  $SD = 1.687$ ) and the post-test ( $M = 2.638$ ,  $SD = 1.672$ ). It was, thus, seen that fewer students reported that they chose the teaching profession as a fallback career after the practicum when compared to the pre-practicum period. Another factor that tended to change significantly ( $t(79) = 2.265$ ,  $p = .026$ ) before and after the practicum was the time for family factor, which implies that the participants believe that they will have more spare time to spend with their families when they become teachers. Pre-service teachers' scores in the pre-test ( $M = 4.746$ ,  $SD = 1.624$ ) outweighed their scores in the post-test ( $M = 4.379$ ,  $SD = 1.718$ ). Lastly, it was also found that the participants' pre-test scores ( $M = 5.450$ ,  $SD = 1.299$ ) of the prior learning and teaching experiences factor, which indicates that they were influenced by previous teachers or their own teaching experiences while choosing the teaching profession, were significantly less than their post-test scores ( $M = 5.750$ ,  $SD = 1.136$ ) ( $t(79) = -2.545$ ,  $p = .013$ ).

**Table 4:** Comparison of the Perceptual FIT-Choice Factors Before and After the Practicum

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair 1	Expert career (Pre-test)	5.825	0.832	.093	-3.116	79	.003**
	Expert career (Posttest)	6.125	0.724	.081			
Pair 2	High demand (Pre-test)	5.846	1.003	.112	-0.035	79	.972
	High demand (Posttest)	5.850	1.088	.122			
Pair 3	Social status (Pre-test)	3.498	1.241	.139	0.153	79	.879
	Social status (Posttest)	3.477	1.356	.152			
Pair 4	Salary (Pre-test)	3.463	1.436	.161	1.249	79	.215
	Salary (Posttest)	3.238	1.526	.171			
Pair 5	Social dissuasion (Pretest)	3.696	1.526	.171	3.121	79	.003**
	Social dissuasion (Posttest)	3.200	1.461	.163			
Pair 6	Satisfaction with choice (Pre-test)	5.042	1.416	.158	-1.780	79	.079
	Satisfaction with choice (Post-test)	5.254	1.515	.169			

As for the perceptual factors influencing the foreign language teaching choices of pre-service teachers (Table 4), it was found out that the expert career factor yielded a significant difference ( $t(79) = -3.116$ ,  $p = .003$ ) between the pre-test ( $M = 5.825$ ,  $SD = 0.832$ ) and the post-test ( $M = 6.125$ ,  $SD = 0.724$ ). This finding suggested that the participants perceived the teaching profession as a job that requires a high level of field expertise overwhelmingly more after the practicum when compared to the beginning of the practicum period. Similarly, another significant difference was identified between the pre-test ( $M = 3.696$ ,  $SD = 1.526$ ) and the post-test ( $M = 3.200$ ,  $SD = 1.461$ ) scores of the pre-service language teachers on the social dissuasion factor ( $t(79) = 3.121$ ,  $p = .003$ ). To be more clear, the participants reported that their choice of the language teaching profession was less affected by the others' dissuasion or discouragement after the practicum period when compared to the onset of it.

## DISCUSSION

Educational research suggests that practicum is a transformative process which is likely to create changes in pre-service teachers' perspectives on teaching and teaching motivations (MacDonald, 1993), attitudes (Costello & Boyle, 2013), and self-efficacy perceptions (Hoy & Spero, 2005). The changes discovered in the current research seem to support this assertion with significant differences between pre-practicum and post-practicum research data.

In terms of perceived teaching self-efficacy, the findings are in line with a number of the existing studies (Liaw, 2009; Wong, 2020), which have presented significant increases in the levels of teaching self-efficacy during the practicum. The findings clearly indicate that the pre-service participants of this study mostly got rid of their "insidious self-doubts" (Bandura, 1997) regarding their skills in using appropriate teaching methods and strategies, engaging students in learning activities, and managing disruptive behavior. The results also validate the hypothesis of Bandura (1997) on the sources of self-efficacy. In Liaw's (2009) study, for instance, increased self-efficacy beliefs were mostly attributed to mastery experiences while in the case of the present study, the increase may be associated with the absence of reality shock. In the present context, due to the suspension of face-to-face classes because of the pandemic, the pre-service teachers had very limited experience in real classrooms and they were not observed by the mentors and supervisors, and thus they received very limited feedback, which may not have affected their teaching self-efficacy perceptions negatively, or even made a contribution to their self-images as prospective teachers. Besides, limited practicum experiences may have also served as a reinforcing source of self-efficacy since the student teachers did not have bad teaching experiences, did not receive discouraging comments during the several weeks of practicum teaching, and thus, their affective states were not negatively affected in this limited period. Likewise, they were not under the pressure of being observed in real classroom teaching contexts and these may have also contributed to their self-efficacy perceptions.

On the other hand, the results partly contradict the findings of some of the studies in the literature. For instance, Atay (2007), found a significant decrease in the self-efficacy of pre-service English teachers in the subscale of instructional strategies at the end of the teaching practicum, while there was a rise in the scores of the participants in the student engagement and the classroom management subscales of teaching self-efficacy. Such contradictory findings might be explained by the nature of the interrupted practicum practices during the present study. The difference between Atay's study and the present one may also be explained by the sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The participants in the present study may not have experienced the reality shock (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998) during their practicum experience in virtual classrooms. Moreover, this difference proves that self-efficacy perceptions of pre-service language teachers do not always change in the same direction in all the sub-dimensions of teaching self-efficacy during the practicum, and they need to be explored separately. In a similar vein, in the aftermath of the breakout of the pandemic, Beckmann and Ehmke (2023) discovered that the challenges experienced by pre-service teachers such as limited contact with pupils, limited opportunities for teaching practices negatively influence their confidence and teaching self-efficacies. Pointing at similar challenges, Fokkens-Bruinsma et al. (2023) also reported relatively low self-efficacy perceptions during a pandemic period practicum, and discussed their findings with limited teaching experience and absence of alternative scenarios in the virtual practicum environments when things went wrong. Lastly, Symes, Lazarides and Hußner (2023) concluded that the student teachers in their study showed significantly lower self-efficacy perceptions during the COVID-19 period than those before the pandemic.

In the present study, the attitudes towards teaching were an important component to determine the preparedness of foreign language teachers to teach as it is proposed that attitudes are shaped by experiences and, in turn, they shape behaviors (Bandura, 1986). The findings briefly suggest that, though limited in duration and interrupted by the pandemic, the practicum experiences affected the attitudes of the participants significantly positively. In the context of the current study, the sudden transition to EDE practices seems to have worked in favor of the student teachers' affective states. To be more precise, due to the limited amount of practicum teaching experience, they may not have received discouraging feedback or may not have experienced anything to decrease their attitudes towards the profession. Furthermore, planning lesson plans and creating imaginary teaching situations and discussions with supervisors may have increased the participants' positive attitudes towards teaching. As for the changes in attitudes, Cortes's (2016) qualitative study revealed similar results with an increasing level of positive attitudes towards teaching among the pre-service English teachers. In the emergency distance education period, Koç (2023) also reported positive attitudes towards teaching English to preschoolers through distance

education. These common findings regarding the teaching attitudes may suggest that the disruptions and difficulties did not change the prospective teachers attitudes towards teaching during the pandemic. However, there is also contradictory evidence in the literature that does not report upsurging levels of attitudes towards teaching. In a similar study with pre-service teachers in a pedagogical content knowledge certificate program, which also included a practicum teaching component, Parylo et al. (2015) reported moderate attitudes towards the teaching profession, and the researchers did not come up with any significant differences in terms of the participants' attitudes towards teaching before and after the program. In a recent study, Kosar (2021) explored the pre-service EFL teachers' readiness to teach and came up with overwhelmingly negative views reported by the participants due to the nature of pandemic period distance practicum practices. Those views were shaped by the participants' practicum experiences, which in turn, shape their attitudes. Therefore, it can be concluded that changes in attitudes towards teaching during the practicum do not necessarily occur similarly in any given context.

It is suggested in the literature that pre-service English teachers possess various motivations while choosing the profession (Lee & Yuan, 2014), and these motivations are apt to change during the practicum experience (Sinclair, 2008; Wong, 2020). Consistent with the findings of the previous research, the differing teaching motivations of the participants also tended to change before and after the practicum experience. The findings are also consistent with the previous studies (Lee & Yuan, 2014; Yuan & Zhang, 2017), which concluded that the teaching motivations of pre-service language teachers were mostly a mixture of altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic factors at the beginning of the practicum while they were transformed through practicum experiences and turned out to be more intrinsic after the practicum. This shift may be due to the supervisors' support and sharing of their personal teaching experiences while commenting on and correcting the pre-service teachers' lesson plans during the pandemic, and they considered perceived teaching ability as a more important factor in determining their choice of teaching.

The results demonstrated that the participants predominantly reported altruistic and intrinsic factors as important reasons for choosing the teaching job, especially after the practicum. These two domains of motivation to choose the teaching profession were also reported by Wong, Tang, and Cheng (2014) as the leading reasons among the pre-service teachers to choose the teaching career. In the Turkish pre-service teacher education context, Damar's (2018) large-scale research with 210 pre-service English language teachers also revealed that social utility values such as making a social contribution and working with children and adolescents were ranked as the key factors influencing the participants' teaching choices. Similarly, Kılınç et al. (2012) asserted that pre-service teachers and foreign language teachers were mostly influenced by altruistic factors while choosing their future profession. Since altruistic and intrinsic motivations were more influential on the pre-service foreign language teachers' career choices in the present study, it can be deduced that they are more likely to remain in the job for longer periods of time with enthusiasm and devotion (Boz & Boz, 2006; Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010). Therefore, it turns out to be an important task of teacher education programs to cater pre-service teachers' motivations to keep them in the profession for longer (Lee & Yuan, 2014). As an overall discussion of the predominantly intrinsic and altruistic motivations in the context of the present study, several points should be considered. For instance, high pre-practicum intrinsic motivations may have been affected by the participants' nonprofessional teaching experiences and micro teaching sessions they joined in the first semester of the last year of their teacher education. Besides, it should be noted that the participants could not complete their face-to-face practicum in real classrooms due to the pandemic, and they may somehow have overestimated their perceived teaching abilities, especially if they had positive mastery experiences in the first several weeks of practicum teaching. Additionally, upon the suspension of face-to-face education, the pre-service teachers may have sympathized with the students as they were deprived of education in physical classrooms and may have felt the need to contribute to and support them, which eventually ended up with increased levels of altruistic motivations.

Another significant finding is that, after the practicum, fewer participants considered teaching job as a profession that allows them to spend time with their families when compared to the pre-practicum period. This change in perception may most likely be due to the fact that they experienced the workload of teaching in their

teaching practicum even though they had just written lesson plans because of the pandemic. A similarly significant change was measured in the expert career perceptual factor which pinpointed that the participants regarded teaching as a job requiring expertise significantly more after the practicum than before that period. Furthermore, the participants considered other people's discouraging remarks as a significantly less important factor influencing their career choices at the end of the practicum. It can be inferred from this result that the pre-service teachers had become personally more aware of the realities of the profession during the practicum, and thus, they perceived that social dissuasion or persuasion would no more influence their professional choices at the end of the period.

Among all the motivational and perceptual FIT-Choice factors, the fallback career choice factor was found to be the least important determinant of the teaching choice of the participants both before and after the practicum. Furthermore, the fallback career factor showed a significant decrease after the practicum, which indicates that the student teachers did not consider the teaching job as a last resort after their practicum experience. Along with the similar findings of the present study, such findings can be attributed to the social values of the participants and the sacred status of the teaching profession in Turkish society. These findings seem to contradict the findings of an earlier study by Kyriacou and Kobori (1998) with Slovenian pre-service English language teachers. Unlike the present study, extrinsic factors such as job security, working hours, salary and long holidays were reported as the outstanding determinants of the participants' choice of teaching profession. In this study, these extrinsic motivational factors were not reported among the top reasons to choose a teaching job by the participants. Such a prominent difference between the two studies can be handled with an awareness of socio-cultural norms and perceptions in Türkiye and Slovenia. Shortly after the liberation from the Soviet Union, Slovenian pre-service teachers may have felt the need to prioritize a profession in which they could work "ad vitam aut culpam" or "for life or until misbehavior" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). There are also studies coming up with teaching as a fallback career choice as the primary factor for choosing the teaching career. As a result of his comprehensive study with Bruneian pre-service teachers, Yong (1995) concluded that the leading motivations of his participants were extrinsic rather than intrinsic or altruistic. In contrast with the present study, in which the fallback career choice factor was ranked the last by the participants, Yong's study presented that the teaching profession was the last choice for Bruneian pre-service teachers when they had no other plausible career alternatives. Likewise, salary, job security, and working hours were also found to be influential in their decisions to choose teaching as a profession. These findings are closely associated with the contextual conditions in Brunei, where it is not easy to find jobs, the salaries of teachers are quite reasonable when compared to other professions, and teachers work shorted hours (Yong, 1995). It should also be seriously considered that the perceptions on teaching differ much among societies depending on their socio-economic conditions and values. To exemplify, several decades ago, Joseph and Green (1986) suggested that the teaching profession is not regarded as a respectable and prestigious one in developed nations, while developing and underdeveloped countries still consider it valuable due to its job continuance, stable salary, and working hours.

As for the effects of pandemic intervention on the the teaching motivations of prospective teachers, Wells and Daniels (2024) notified in their comparative research that the teaching motivations of pre-service teachers did not change significantly before and after the pandemic, and they remained committed to the teaching job. Another recent study (Chu, 2023) highlights that, along with other factors, the pandemic period experiences of the teacher candidates influenced their teaching motivations in a positive and altruistic way. Especially altruistic orientations towards teaching profession are thought to have resulted from the sufferings during the coronavirus pandemic, and emerging importance of education even in the most undesirable conditions.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The findings of the study indicated considerable changes in the participants' perceived teaching self-efficacy and attitudes towards teaching in a positive direction. This may prove that pre-service teachers' self-image and positive attitudes can be supported not only through real classroom experience but also through positive support and guidance even in the absence of real class experience, which could help them in their lifelong learning. Likewise,



it was discovered that student teachers reflected stronger intrinsic and altruistic motivations for choosing teaching as a profession after the practicum. These altogether demonstrate that practicum experience contributes positively to the professional readiness of pre-service EFL teachers, although the participants' practicum experience in real classrooms was limited by the suspension of the schools. For this reason, it is also important to consider the effects of the pandemic on the practicum process investigated in this study.

In the present study, two sets of data, having been collected before and after the practicum period, were analyzed in order to answer the research questions. However, face-to-face practicum in real classrooms was interrupted by the rapidly spreading Coronavirus pandemic after the first five weeks of the practicum. Due to this interruption, regular practicum practices such as in-class observations, practicum teaching sessions, discussion with mentoring teachers, and in-person interaction with students all had to be abandoned. As a result, the participants were obliged to switch to emergency distance education practices in all their courses and the rest of the practicum was completed through emergency distance education practices such as lesson plan writing and hypothetical teaching scenarios. Therefore, the findings of the present study should be interpreted under the special circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic rather than usual and normal teacher education conditions.

In the present study, the variables of teacher readiness are chosen on the basis of existing research evidence in the educational literature and may vary in different research settings depending on the dimensions of teacher readiness to be explored. Therefore, future studies can focus on different aspects of the pre-service foreign language teachers' teacher readiness. Another recommendation for the upcoming studies can be to expand the sample of participants preferably in a number of different ELT department settings. In this way, more comprehensive and generalizable results can be yielded. Similarly, qualitative data from more participants using multiple data collection instruments can provide the researchers with a much deeper insight into the issue of teacher readiness during the practicum. As a final suggestion, collecting data from all the stakeholders of pre-service teacher education, such as faculty members, supervisors, mentors and even school administrators, as well as student teachers, can provide the researchers with multilateral findings from different perspectives.

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