




Discourse, Knowledge, and Practice: Re-examining the Colombian English Language Teacher Practicum and Student-Teacher Constitution

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Abstract

This article presents the findings of a three-stage qualitative study examining how English language teacher education in Colombia conceives its teaching practicum and student-teachers. Insights emerged from three key sources: English language student-teachers' autoethnographies, Colombian-authored scholarly articles, and undergraduate programs' relevant institutional documents. We analyzed each source using tailored methodologies: narrative analysis, epistemic discourse analysis, and documentary analysis. The findings reveal that the practicum is understood by three points of convergence: foundation, knowledge, and practice. This framework defines English language student-teachers by their discourse, knowledge, and practice. The study highlights that the teaching practicum is a pivotal space where student-teachers apply language education discourses and their knowledge in practice. Reflecting on how English language student-teachers are formed and how the practicum is conceived has prompted the undergraduate programs and the community to advocate for a transformation from a theoretical approach to a more flexible, experience-based approach.

Keywords: discourse, EFL teacher education, knowledge, teaching practicum, student teachers

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El discurso, el saber y la práctica: una reexaminación de la práctica pedagógica y la constitución de los docentes de inglés en formación en Colombia

Resumen

Este artículo presenta los hallazgos de un estudio cualitativo de tres etapas que examina cómo se conciben la práctica pedagógica y los docentes en formación en la educación de profesores de inglés en Colombia. Usamos tres fuentes de información para explorar esta concepción: auto etnografías de docentes en formación, artículos de autoría colombiana y documentos institucionales de los programas de pregrado correspondientes. Se utilizó una metodología de análisis de datos para cada fuente de información: análisis narrativo, análisis epistémico del discurso y análisis documental. Los hallazgos indican que la práctica pedagógica se configura a partir de tres puntos convergentes: fundamento, conocimiento y práctica. Esta configuración define a los docentes en formación en lengua inglesa por discurso, conocimiento y práctica. El estudio resalta que la práctica pedagógica se ha concebido como un espacio donde dichos docentes en formación ponen en práctica sus discursos y conocimientos sobre la educación de lenguas. La reflexión sobre su formación de docentes y la práctica pedagógica ha llevado a los programas de pregrado y a la comunidad académica, en general, a proclamar una transformación desde un enfoque teórico hacia una experiencia más flexible y contextual.

Palabras clave: discurso, educación profesores de inglés, conocimiento, práctica pedagógica, docentes en formación

Introduction

This research article focuses on the teaching practicum (referred to as “the practicum” henceforth) and student-teachers in Colombian English language teaching (ELT) education. In this study, the practicum encompasses the academic space, processes, and experiences student-teachers engage with during their bachelor’s degree. Student-teachers are individuals preparing to become teachers within this space, stage, or moment.

As researchers and authors of this article, we have explored the relationship between the practicum and student-teachers since 2015. We have learned that any configuration of the practicum—and thus of student-teachers—emerges from how both are understood institutionally (from language policies to educational institutions), academically (through relevant scholarship), and individually (by each member of a practicum community). This understanding has guided our investigation into how the practicum is viewed in Colombia and who English language student-teachers are within it.

The National Law of Education 115 of 1994, Article 109, established the practicum as a foundational component of teachers’ knowledge, serving as a process of self-reflection and a space for conceptualization, research, and didactic experimentation. The Ministry of National Education (MEN) (n.d.) further defined the practicum for teacher education undergraduate programs as a space where student-teachers acquire pedagogical and didactic skills in an articulated manner, drawing from different disciplines that enrich their comprehension of the educational process and teacher work. The practicum also serves as a space for student-teachers to reflect on and confront Colombian education’s realities and diverse challenges. For this MEN’s document, student-teachers are viewed as individuals of the highest scientific and ethical standards, active and reflective observers, and direct participants in classroom dynamics.

In 2014 and 2016, MEN established the practicum as a key component of the teaching curriculum to enhance initial teacher education. Pedagogy, research, and evaluation are transversal axes that connect teaching, didactic design, teacher identity, and teacher roles. These publications specify that undergraduate programs in teaching education must incorporate training spaces into their curricula to promote the development of fundamental skills (in teaching, formation, and evaluation) for the effective performance of future teachers. These training spaces must also foster student-teacher abilities to apprehend and appropriate disciplinary content knowledge. Thus, student-teachers are practitioners who acquire teaching knowledge, competencies, and skills essential to their discipline (MEN, 2014). Undergraduate programs should prepare student-teachers not only as operators of educative processes and procedures but also as qualified human beings capable of undertaking significant social tasks that contribute to the country’s economic, social, and moral development (MEN, 2016).

Following various Administrative Resolutions (such as 02041 in 2015, 18583 in 2016, and 28115 in 2017), MEN established mandatory guidelines and criteria for universities to create and evaluate teacher education undergraduate programs, enabling them to obtain or renew their official registration in Colombia.⁴ Within these guidelines, the practicum is recognized as a fundamental component of the curricular design that ensures quality in initial teacher education through its formative and pedagogical aspects.

Reference Framework

Given this context, undergraduate ELT programs in Colombia have focused on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of English language education within the country. The goal is to develop quality training routes that better align with contemporary trends in English language education and student-teacher needs and objectives (see the ‘Findings’ section below). The training routes in Colombia have sparked significant academic debate regarding their impact on ELT education. Scholars have explored various issues, including marginalization, exclusion, and stratification (Bonilla-Medina & Cruz-Arcila, 2013; Cuasialpud-Canchala, 2010; Mora *et al.*, 2019; Usma-Wilches, 2009); as well as the trends of instrumentalization, marketization, and businessification (Guerrero-Nieto, 2008, 2018; Le Gal, 2018; Usma-

4 Executive Decree 1330 –*Registro Calificado*- in 2019; Administrative Act 021795 –*Auto-evaluación para el Registro Calificado*- in 2020.

[Wilches, 2009](#)). Additionally, concerns about externalization and standardization have been raised ([Escobar-Alméciga & Gómez-Lobaton, 2010](#); [Usma-Wilches, 2009](#)). These effects may have created inequalities and dependencies in the search for obeying the corresponding policies.

Another aspect of the academic debate focuses on student-teacher competencies. For instance, [González-Moncada \(2007\)](#) prompted more student-teacher involvement in driving change within schools by promoting more learner-centered classes, introducing content learning in English language curricula, and transforming traditional assessment practices. [Quintero-Polo and Guerrero-Nieto \(2018\)](#) discussed how student-teachers (re)construct their personal, academic, and professional selves amid the marginalization of local knowledge and practices, as well as the idealization of language teaching macro-narratives in their undergraduate programs. [Méndez-Rivera and Guerrero-Nieto \(2022\)](#) demonstrated that initial teacher education does not escape obedience to normative provisions while also struggling to develop schemes of resistance against the demands of Colombian language policies, expert reasoning, or social naturalizations. [Castañeda-Trujillo \(2018\)](#) inquired about the types of English language teaching knowledge that student-teachers construct within their practicum, noting that self-constructed knowledge often appears invisible. [Castañeda-Trujillo et al. \(2021\)](#) also examined how student-teachers perceive themselves as they transition into English language teachers within their undergraduate programs, finding that their voiced reasons are seldom regarded as primary professional objectives; and they are scarcely asked to reflect on teacher roles or resignify instrumentalized viewpoints of language education.

This debate has certainly made Colombian ELT education create an academic dialogue about the relationship between language policies, the characteristics and expectations of undergraduate programs, and the corresponding local scholarship. The dialogue has heightened awareness within Colombian ELT education of emerging ways of thinking ([Bonilla-Mora & López-Urbina, 2021](#); [Lucero & Castañeda-Londoño, 2021](#); [Mejía-Jiménez, 2011](#)). For instance, it has introduced concepts such as geo-pedagogy, which considers the realities and practices of education in context; border thinking, which encourages thinking 'otherwise' or 'thinking from outside' of the existing, taken-for-granted, or available theoretical perspectives; and post-structuralism, decolonial principles, and critical studies to emphasize the analysis, transformation, and discontinuity of established structures and discourses of ELT education.

Studies that have embraced these ways of thinking have begun to impact Colombian ELT education. As a result, there is increasing awareness of discriminatory practices and homogenizing discourses (as seen in [Castañeda-Peña, 2018](#); [Fandiño-Parra, 2021](#); [Granados-Beltrán, 2018](#); [Guerrero-Nieto et al., 2022](#)), as well as of Colombian scholarship approaches to local ELT education (as discussed in [Correa & González-Moncada, 2016](#); [Cruz-Arcila, 2017](#); [Le Gal, 2018](#); [Mackenzie, 2022](#); [Macias, 2010](#); [Ramos-Holguín & Aguirre-Morales, 2016](#)). Specifically, there is also greater awareness of how the practicum has been conceived and constructed locally (as in [Abad & Zapata-García, 2019](#); [Samacá-Bohorquez, 2018](#)) and how student-teachers have been constituted within it ([Gamboa-González & Hernández-Ochoa, 2022](#); [Lucero & Cortés-Ibañez, 2021](#)).

Research Problematization

Despite the numerous studies and debates mentioned above, there is a gap in the subject matter that the Colombian ELT community has not explored, specifically regarding (a) what the practicum is and (b) who the student-teachers are, either institutionally or academically. Colombian language policies likely treat this space technically and instrumentally, while ELT education undergraduate programs seem to define the practicum based on their general readings of Colombian English language education demands. We hope to contribute to fill that gap with this research. Two questions guide our inquiry 'What is the practicum in Colombian ELT education?' and 'Who is a student-teacher within that space?'. Consequently, we seek to explain how the practicum and student-teachers are understood in the institutional documents of ELT education undergraduate programs, in relevant scholarship published over the last two decades, and within the space itself.

This study is important for two reasons. First, although several studies have examined what ELT education is in Colombia ([Castañeda-Peña, 2012](#); [Díaz-Villa, 2001](#); [Fandiño-Parra, 2021](#); [Guerrero-Nieto, 2018](#); [Le Gal, 2019](#); [Méndez-Rivera, 2012](#); [Mora, 2022](#)), their critical perspective is primarily framed within specific views of language and

teaching/learning approaches. In our view, this perspective tends to overlook how such conceptions have specifically shaped what the practicum and student-teachers are during initial teacher education. Second, there has been growing interest in exploring how Colombian language policies have constituted the subject-teacher of languages (Camargo-Cely, 2018; Guerrero-Nieto, 2010; Méndez-Rivera *et al.*, 2019). The study presented in this article seeks to advance this significant knowledge, particularly about who student-teachers are since the cited studies mostly focus on teacher-graduates. Besides, we consider other acute sources to create that knowledge as the student-teachers themselves, the ELT education undergraduate programs' institutional documents, and the insights of relevant local scholarship. As a result, the Colombian ELT community can revise how they have educated new teacher generations within this space and what changes are required to improve this endeavor.

Research Design

The study followed a qualitative approach and was divided into three stages. The first stage involved a narrative analysis of 85 English language student-teachers' autoethnographies⁵. The aim was to unveil how they conceived their constitution during the practicum from an in-practice perspective. The second stage involved an epistemic discourse analysis⁶ of 72 Colombian-authored articles⁷ about English language initial teacher education to determine, from an academic perspective, what the practicum entails and what student-teachers are or do within it. The third stage consisted of a documentary analysis of 21 institutional documents from Colombian ELT education undergraduate programs⁸ to ascertain, from an institutional perspective, how each program defines the practicum and its processes, and the duties expected of student-teachers. Figure 1 shows the procedures conducted in each of the three stages of the study.

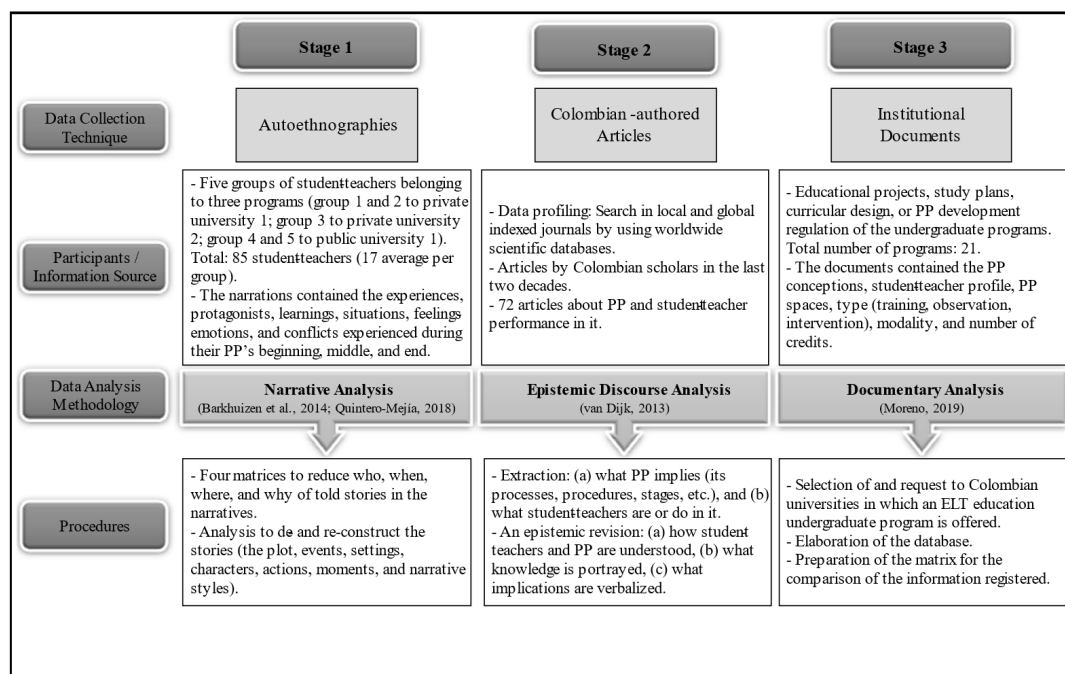


Figure 1. *Procedures in the study*

Note. Own work.

⁵ We call this *data source 1* henceforth in the article due to word count limits.

⁶ Following van Dijk (2013), epistemic discourse analysis implies a systematic analysis of how knowledge is “‘managed’ (activated, expressed, presupposed, implied, conveyed, construed, etc.) in the structures and strategies of text and talk” (p. 497).

⁷ *Data source 2* henceforth.

⁸ *Data source 3* henceforth.

[Mendoza-Mojica et al. \(2022\)](#) conducted the first stage of the study, with our direction, during 2019 and 2020. Following [Yazan's \(2019\)](#) principles, these three student-teacher researchers analyzed the 85 autoethnographies produced by five groups of student-teachers during the same period with our accompaniment. In general terms, this stage indicated that student-teachers changed their feelings and thoughts about the practicum and their own as language teachers from the numerous experiences and knowledge they had gained throughout the practicum.

The epistemic revision of the second stage happened in two synchronous moments: we analyzed the practicum in the articles ([Lucero et al., 2024](#)); meanwhile, [González-Bautista et al. \(2022\)](#) contributed to extracting the understanding of who student-teachers are in that space, also with our direction. Both moments occurred in 2021 and 2022, drawing from the 72 articles identified in the data profiling. In plain words, the epistemic revision revealed that the practicum is altogether an academic space, process, experience, and teaching work; student-teachers are commonly expected to practice the didactics of English teaching in the practicum. Thus, student-teachers are viewed as both models and tutors, equipped with extensive knowledge, and receiving linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, and emotional support and guidance.

[Alba-Mora \(2022\)](#) conducted the third stage of the study under the supervision of the research group's teacher-educators, during 2021 and 2022. This student-teacher researcher built the database and the comparison matrix, considering the information collected from the institutional documents of 21 Colombian ELT education undergraduate programs. In the analysis, he found that the practicum is a disciplinary area in which student-teachers apply all the knowledge they have acquired during their studies. In that area, student-teachers develop disciplinary, socio-emotional, and research competencies. Those contribute to their integral formation.

We revisited the analysis and findings of the three stages of the study to elaborate a general understanding of what the practicum is about in Colombian ELT education and who student-teachers are within it. With this in mind, we recompiled the data corresponding to the three stages and the student-teacher researchers' monographs. We reduced the data using matrices of inductive and relational coding and contrastive analysis. This process revealed commonalities: On one side, in the foundations, knowledge, and practices of the practicum; and on the other, in the practices, knowledge, and discourse that define who the student-teachers are within the practicum. The next section presents these findings by following the identified commonalities.

Findings

The Practicum in Colombian ELT Education

In the further revision of the study's three data sources, we concluded that the practicum is more than a component of an ELT education undergraduate program; it is the cornerstone of a transformative journey for student-teachers. Within this space, they navigate processes of formation, research, social construction, and innovation. The practicum serves as a means through which student-teachers combine cognitive, disciplinary, and pedagogical knowledge with real-world language teaching practices. This deeper understanding positions the practicum as a foundation of knowledge and practice. It untangles the intricate tapestry of the practicum found in the study's three stages: from its role as a bridge between theory and practice to its influence on emotional growth, reflective practices, and sociocultural awareness.

[Figure 2](#) below displays how we found that the Colombian ELT education community conceives the practicum. As mentioned, a foundation, knowledge, and practice converge to configure such a conception. These three aspects go together with several contextual factors and their affiliation principles. Then, they aim at student-teachers who are perceived according to their teaching-learning skills, growth, and performing roles. Following the figure, we will explain these three aspects in detail.

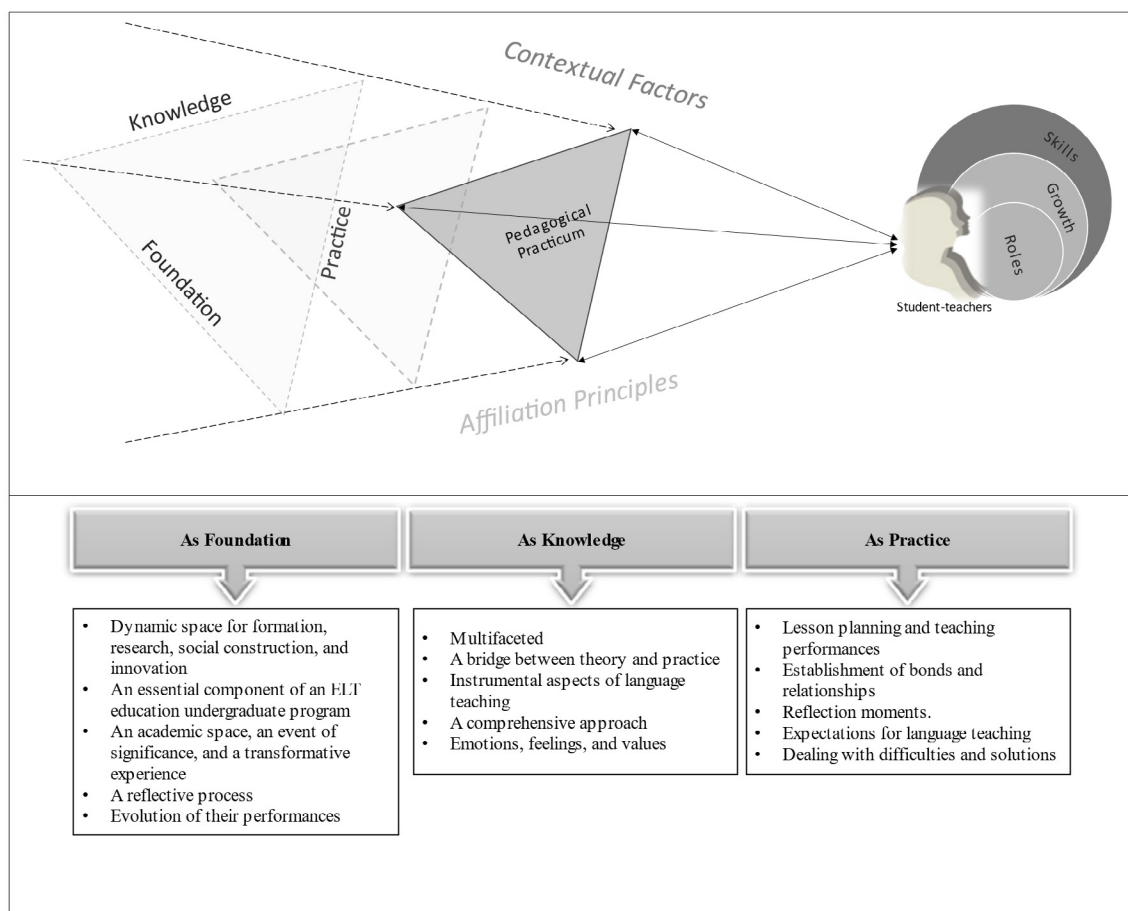


Figure 2. *The Colombian ELT Education Community's Practicum Conception*

Note. Own work.

The Practicum as Foundation

In data source 1, the practicum is conceived as a dynamic space for formation, research, social construction, and innovation. It is also a space for didactic, cultural, disciplinary, and cognitive development. Within this space, student-teachers develop their research abilities and can apply the learned cognitive, disciplinary, and pedagogical knowledge of language teaching. In data source 2, the practicum is consistently viewed as an essential component of an ELT education undergraduate program. It is designed to facilitate the integration of teaching skills and insights, encourage critical reflection, and foster teacher identity construction. It provides opportunities to deepen knowledge of the target language's linguistic aspects and to apply learned language teaching methods and approaches in practice. Likewise, it requires a profound sense of agency: The knowledge student-teachers should possess for the practicum must encompass technical abilities, socio-cultural awareness, and personal growth.

In data source 3, the practicum is considered a three-fold experience: an academic space, a process of significance, and a transformative journey. Under this view, the practicum offers the basis for student-teacher language teaching performance and reflective practices. It also intertwines experiences, didactic growth, and cultural learning. This is the practicum significance: while experiences provide teaching innovation opportunities, didactic growth and culture learning give the basis for the application of language teaching approaches and the development of cognitive, disciplinary, and pedagogical knowledge. Transformation is then expected by teaching performance and reflection.

Considering the three data sources, the practicum serves as a foundation that engages student-teachers in a reflective process, encompassing the exploration of their emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal dimensions within

practicum contexts and language teaching performance ([Aguirre-Morales & Ramos-Holguín, 2011](#); [Castañeda-Peña et al., 2016](#); [McDanel de García, 2013](#)). This reflective engagement prompts student-teachers to articulate their feelings and emotions, consider their thoughts, and delineate the influences of significant people ([Pinzón-Capador & Guerrero-Nieto, 2018](#); [Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018](#)). In line with this introspection, student-teachers accumulate practical experience and learning experiences in planning lessons, as they consider contextual variables and population, and design pedagogical activities that cater to students' needs and interests.

This foundation makes student-teacher experience the basis for enacting multifaceted roles, ranging from critical thinkers and social agents to dynamic teachers and evaluators, all essential for language teaching and learning performance. In each role, several emotions emerge (e.g., self-confidence, enthusiasm, engagement, and anxiety), contributing to the language teacher's developmental trajectory. Notably, those emotions have an impact on their beliefs, particularly for transformation, introspection, and evolution of their identities and performances ([Aguirre-Garzón et al., 2023](#); [Aguirre-Sánchez, 2014](#); [Garzón-Duarte & Posada Ortiz, 2020](#); [García-Chamorro et al., 2022](#)).

The Practicum as Knowledge

As knowledge, the practicum is multifaceted, highlighting trends and goals. The most significant trend identified in the three data sources is the portrayal of the practicum as a bridge between theory and practice. This bridge, grounded on reflection, allows student-teachers to confront teaching challenges and develop practical skills. It primarily focuses on training student-teachers in various aspects of language teaching, including cognitive, disciplinary, and pedagogical knowledge, as well as practical teaching strategies and approaches. This encompasses lesson planning, implementing teaching approaches, methodologies, procedures, and materials, adopting various teacher roles, and being sensitive to social issues to effect change within the practicum context. Reflection happens on instrumental aspects of language teaching, such as lesson planning, teaching procedures, and teacher-student interaction. This necessitates strong support from practicum advisors to facilitate student-teacher progress and construct effective teaching practices based on these skills.

Another trend is that practicums provide an opportunity for student-teachers to learn from real-life language teaching, learn about classroom challenges, and develop teaching practices. The development of this knowledge should primarily occur through observing learners' language-related problems and making informed decisions to enhance language learning in each situation ([Cárdenas & Suárez-Osorio, 2009](#); [Camargo-Cely, 2018](#); [Castañeda Trujillo et al., 2021](#)). Promoting reflective practices to evaluate and improve teaching consistently addresses these problems, leading to constantly re-evaluating personal beliefs. Based on this vision, this trend underscores the importance of and promotes a comprehensive approach that considers practical, emotional, and societal aspects of teaching.

Another trend highlights the practicum's varied goals, which include developing research skills when observing problematics and making decision processes to enhance language learning processes ([Barón-Pereira & Rojas-Espitia, 2014](#); [Viáfara, 2014](#)). Similarly, the focus is on promoting reflection to evaluate and improve student-teacher teaching practices, resulting in a constant de- and re-construction of their systems of beliefs—primarily in their values, feelings, and emotions. However, we, as researchers, perceive an inconsistency in this area. Data sources 1 and 2 emphasize the importance of emotions, feelings, and values that emerge before, during, and after the practicum. Data source 3 mentions only values as a chore that student-teachers must foster in their teaching procedures. Feelings and emotions are not even mentioned as a point of discussion.

The Practicum as Practice

During the practicum, student-teachers are expected to plan adequate lessons and deliver outstanding teaching performances to promote a language-learning atmosphere from classroom to classroom. Other teaching practices include promoting language-learning empathy, engaging in relationships, enhancing reflection and critical thinking, acknowledging sociocultural factors, and fostering social construction. The practicum is also a curricular requirement and a preparation moment for real-life language teaching, premised on more practice and experimentation, which results in gaining knowledge and experience.

The practicum provides future teachers with opportunities to establish affectionate bonds and reciprocal relationships with their students, peers, practicum advisors, cooperating teachers, and homeroom teachers ([Fajardo-Castañeda & Miranda-Montenegro, 2015](#); [Castañeda-Peña et al., 2016](#)). These relationships can serve as supportive connections during challenging teaching moments, as more voices and experiences can teach how to act in real situations and contexts. These relationships lead to reflection moments that take place in context and are based on facts that make the practicum a more humanistic process. Thus, qualities such as flexibility and a commitment to lifelong learning are essential for student-teachers.

As reflection is a fundamental practice in the practicum, it must lead to improved experimentation and student-teacher expectations for language teaching. Student-teachers must be critical enough to evaluate their language teaching performance and to seek solutions to emergent educational problems, which involves developing research skills ([Barón-Pereira & Rojas-Espitia, 2014](#); [Viáfara, 2014](#)). This reflection must be permeated by contextual and socio-cultural factors including students' backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, ethnicities, and beliefs, all under diverse and inclusive teaching. The three data sources' premise is that not just language teaching matters but also social factors and student-teachers as future society transformers. They must be able to deal with the context's social challenges and search for transformative solutions that assure better cognitive, pedagogical, disciplinary, and social practices.

Student-teachers within the Practicum

The practicum serves as a foundation, knowledge, and practice that directly constitutes student-teachers, as they are its primary focus. That constitution may happen in various forms. According to the three data sources, student-teachers are primarily critical and reflective agents to whom research should be a must to support educational processes. Additionally, they are emerging professionals in formation who hold principles, values, beliefs, feelings, concerns, expectations, and challenges about themselves and their language teaching performance. In this vision, teaching is a humanizing act that goes beyond contents involving a roller-coaster of emotions, confidence, and experience.

However, neither data source sees student-teachers into themselves. Instead, they are seen under the view of what they must be and do during the practicum. Despite emerging pedagogical perspectives that emphasize individuals' self is accounted for ([Aguirre-Sánchez, 2014](#); [Cárdenas & Suárez-Osorio, 2009](#); [Gutiérrez, 2015](#); [Herrera-Mateus et al., 2021](#)), student-teachers are still largely perceived from their performances within the practicum. Thus, they are simultaneously and progressively constituted by the practicum's institutional discourses and practices and the practicum community's⁹ demands and knowledge (see [Figure 3](#)). As a result, student-teachers are constituted from the intertwinement of discourse, knowledge, and practice within the practicum. After the figure, we explain each aspect.

Student-teachers as Discourse

The three data sources indicate that student-teachers are constituted by the discourse found in the institutional documents of their undergraduate program and practicum institution, and in the teaching and research texts that student-teachers read for language education. The former is usually acquired in the attended practicum meetings anchored by program coordinators or school representatives and teachers. In contrast, the latter is usually acquired in the sessions that student-teachers hold with practicum advisors and peers.

That discourse outlines what student-teachers must embody and accomplish within the practicum. It includes the demands, responsibilities, expectations, attributes, and qualities of their teaching actions and roles ([Gamboa-González & Hernández-Ochoa, 2022](#); [Lucero a Cortés-Ibañez, 2021](#)). That discourse also sees student-teachers as future teachers with principles, values, and convictions, holding beliefs and conceptions about (language) teaching ([Castañeda Trujillo et al., 2021](#); [Castellanos-Jaimes, 2013](#); [Carvajal & Duarte-Medina, 2020](#); [Díaz-Quero, 2006](#)). Therefore, they are expected to analyze, reflect, solve problems, and make decisions in the classroom. To do so, they should be aware of its different realities and transform them as they act on it.

⁹ Students, peers, practicum advisors, cooperative teachers, and the institution (usually a school) are part of a practicum community.

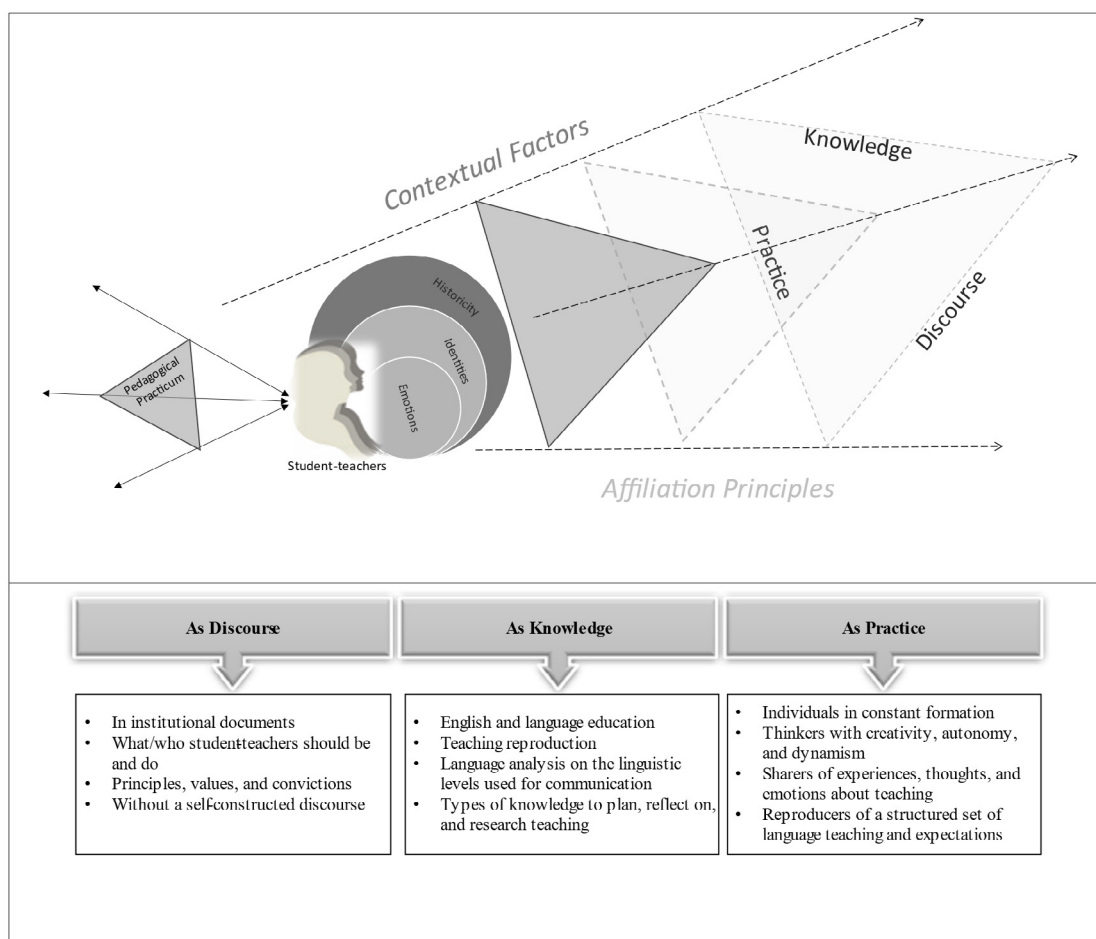


Figure 3. *The Colombian ELT Education Community's Student-teacher Conception within the Practicum*
Note. Own work

As a result, student-teachers become educators primarily without a self-constructed discourse. They want to be language teachers, although they ignore what type of teacher they want to be. Frequently, they end up being and doing as indicated in the mentioned discourses. Thus, they construct themselves primarily as the language teacher type encountered in those discourses. Any analysis, reflection, or action they do on language education or practicum contexts, and any position they assume for the profession, emerge and are framed fundamentally within such discourses. The possibilities to demonstrate how they see themselves and language education from their learnings and experiences are scarce, although this endeavor is contained in the three data sources.

Student-teachers as Knowledge

Student-teachers also know about English and language education. All this knowledge must be put into practice within the practicum. Their knowledge of English generally comes from the classes they have received during their undergraduate studies and their experiences using it elsewhere. This knowledge appears to be generally organized in two major dimensions: the syntactical and phonological aspects of this language and how these aspects can be used to express themselves to others. In data source 1, student-teachers likely tend to organize their knowledge of English in these two dimensions, primordially, due to the same major's organization of English language classes. Data source 3 also displays this issue. The curricula are sequentially organized in classes around English language grammatical contents, listed as language functions or purposes, and for communication around varied conversational topics. Student-teachers confirmed this approach in data source 1, commonly stating that they teach English as they have been taught during their undergraduate studies and that schools' English language syllabi are organized similarly.

Thus, they just apply this language vision in their lesson plans organized in linguistic topics with which they expect learners to be able to read, listen to, utter, or write simple ideas. Student-teachers also narrated that this knowledge of English is strengthened by teaching it under this approach, leading them to speak it transactionally in class. Consequently, with this knowledge, they become English language teachers who believe in developing activities communicatively but teaching the language linguistically.

Considering this context, data source 2 broadly prompts language education under a communicative-reflective approach. “Communicative” refers to viewing English as discourse, interaction, and thoughts, while “reflective” involves analyzing the language, situation, context, and speakers. Collectively, the three data sources show that this approach is possible; however, language analysis is only on the linguistic levels used for communication around the varied conversational topics in class. Aspects of cultural meaning, discourse, dyadic communication, and interactional practices, among others, receive only minimal attention. Thus, student-teachers are knowledgeable about language with an approach that sees it as composed of linguistic structures to construct and pronounce ideas that are, first, understandable for others in routinary interactions of the class, second, prompt for analysis of how its communication occurs to the level of the stated structures.

Student-teachers are also knowledgeable about language teaching ([Esteban-Núñez, 2021](#); [Fajardo, 2013](#); [Fandiño-Parra, 2013](#); [Lucero & Cortés-Ibañez, 2021](#)). This knowledge is subdivided into three types: technical, pedagogical, and socio-cultural.

Technical knowledge encompasses disciplinary knowledge acquired during their undergraduate studies, including theories of language, learning, and second-language acquisition; didactics, pragmatics, curriculum, language research, etc.). Student-teachers use this knowledge to construct their language teaching methodology, which also considers, at first sight, the teaching contexts and the reflective practices promoted within the practicum.

Pedagogical knowledge involves developing language skills—reading, listening, writing, and speaking—in themselves and their learners. It also pertains to the language itself, which means knowing the English language’s syntactical and phonological correctness and use, and the standard meaning of lexical items. As a keynote, this pedagogical knowledge implies awareness of learners’ needs, interests, and contextual realities for teaching English.

Finally, socio-cultural knowledge implies learning to relate to others and their contexts. This learning usually happens as getting in touch with others in context progresses.

These types of knowledge are an accepted premise for planning and delivering lessons, assessing language teaching and learning, gaining teaching experience, designing language activities and didactic material, and becoming a language teacher.

Student-teachers as Practice

There is an organized distribution of demands, tasks, knowledge, and assignments within the practicum that student-teachers must carry out. Within all of them, student-teachers are perceived as individuals in constant formation. They constantly go through a transformative journey of becoming language teachers in which their unique blend of teaching experiences, thoughts, emotions, and system of beliefs permeate such transformation. Considering this, they are not passive figures; rather, they are critical thinkers with creativity, autonomy, and dynamism who understand their roles beyond ‘a language teacher’ to social agents responsible for forming future generations. As they gain experience, they find opportunities to inspire, motivate, and leave an indelible mark on their learners.

Student-teachers engage in a reflective process within the practicum, as they are expected to share their experiences, thoughts, and emotions about teaching with those who guide and accompany them ([Castañeda-Peña et al., 2016](#); [Castañeda-Trujillo & Aguirre-Hernández, 2018](#); [Lucero & Cortés-Ibañez, 2021](#); [Pinzón-Capador & Guerrero-Nieto, 2018](#)). These interactions help shape their belief systems regarding English language teaching (ELT) and significantly influence their development. Recurrent topics for reflection are teaching experiences, classroom activity preparation, and lesson delivery (as suggested by [Lucero & Cortés-Ibañez, 2021](#); [García-Chamorro et al.,](#)

2022; [Gutiérrez, 2015](#); [McNulty, 2010](#)). Thus, the more they reflect, share, and perform on these topics, the more they gain teaching experience and knowledge.

Reflection on teaching occurs in the classroom, where the practicum's demands, tasks, knowledge, and assignments come into play. Student-teachers must consider learners' interests and needs, classroom realities, teaching styles, pedagogical approaches, lesson planning/delivery, and relationships with learners. Therefore, student-teachers follow a structured set of language teaching and expectations within the practicum engaging in an ongoing process of self-examination, growth, and development as language teachers.

Discussion and Implications

The findings reveal several aspects for discussion. Most notably, while there are a few commonalities, each data source fundamentally conceives the practicum and student-teachers from different perspectives. Nonetheless, insights in each data source maintain the belief that the practicum sets joint goals to educate student-teachers.

All three data sources align in viewing the practicum as an academic space for training student-teachers in English language teaching, a goal in which research abilities are developed. They collectively allow for characterizing the practicum as "social," primarily due to those goals of reflection and social construction. Additionally, student-teachers engage with a practicum community in context. This engagement fosters relationships focused on developing student-teacher English language teaching skills and knowledge. Consequently, the practicum activities are expected to make teaching and social changes within a reflection agenda.

However, data source 3 visualizes the practicum as a space to reproduce prescriptive language teaching methodologies in which student-teachers should administer a series of English language and cultural contents. These contents are 'adopted' by foreign language teaching methods and approaches, or established language curricula. In the undergraduate ELT programs, the practicum is mostly configured following (1) the institutional discourses and practices of the program; (2) the relevant academic scholarship and its underlying theories and concepts; and (3) the program's assumed expectations of society and the ELT community.

Certainly, student-teachers being the receivers of this configuration, each separated from the other, hold indirect and assimilative participation, incorporation of language teaching and learning as sequential, operationalized, or standardized, which complements a view of the practicum as experience, contribution, and addition ([Cote-Parra, 2012](#); [Lucero a Cortés-Ibañez, 2021](#); [Lucero et al., 2024](#)). This situation avoids the possibility of observing, operationalizing, and dynamizing the educational realities of schools from the target language. As a result, language teaching within the practicum tends to marginalize contexts, hindering potential improvements through learning a new language. Thus, teaching is fragmented, but practice must be conjointly.

Besides, the three data sources indicate that the practicum provides an opportunity for knowledge. At first glance, this can enhance English language learning and the theory-practice applicability that makes student-teachers know better and be able to make decisions during their teaching (as in [Castañeda-Trujillo, 2021](#); [Quintero-Polo, 2016](#); [Ramos-Holguín, 2013](#)). However, data source 2 reveals that student-teacher knowledge and teaching performance are more closely related to grammatical (language proficiency) rather than communicative-contextual aspects. Experiential and emotional factors and professional development systems are suggested as a counterpart.

In line with these ideas, the three data sources coincide to envision student-teachers as social agents in need of the practicum community in context to learn and improve being a language teacher. The practicum is the space to reach this goal by building social-academic relationships with practicum advisors, peers, learners, schoolteachers, contents, and contexts. To do so, there is a marked focus on a teacher knowledge base composed of (1) technical (disciplinary) knowledge, mostly adopted from the Global North; (2) pedagogical (language) knowledge, which is instrumentalized, mechanized, and linguistic-oriented; and (3) socio-cultural knowledge, which fosters the situated/ localized reflection and knowledge on how to teach the language within context, albeit based on established disciplinary and pedagogical frameworks.

However, the overarching conception of the practicum across the three data sources presents a particular framework for student-teachers that undermines their visions as language teachers. This general conception of the practicum limits student-teachers' ability to define themselves, forcing them instead to conform to pre-established configurations shaped by the existing knowledge base and outlined goals. In other words, the three data sources scarcely indicate a constitution of student-teachers by a 'this is what I see myself as a teacher' but a 'this is what you must be and do' within the practicum. There is insufficient interrogation of self-knowledge, thoughts, and attitudes as an interior exercise to reflect on what being a language teacher means for each student-teacher nowadays.

All of the above has important implications for undergraduate programs in ELT. As the practicum configuration scarcely contains the student-teachers' understanding of it; thus, the practicum constitutes student-teachers, but they do not configure the practicum. They are participants and products of this process; they do not have the agency to shape the practicum itself. The three data sources proclaim the practicum as a space to construct student-teachers and to learn how to teach English by reflection and context analysis. However, this often involves abrupt transitions from knowledge to practice, where they gradually assimilate their identity as language teachers by applying fragmented content learned during their studies. Since the practicum offers limited opportunities for student-teachers to influence its configuration or to define themselves as the type of language teacher they aspire to be, everything seems to keep the practicum as conventional and turn student-teachers into professionals who reach pre-established goals and a taxonomized teacher knowledge base.

Previous aspects prompt the belief that the practicum is a definition with a set of characteristics and demands that practicum advisors and student-teachers must comply with by assuming specified responsibilities and playing indicated roles ([Garzón-Duarte & Posada-Ortíz, 2020](#); [Montoya-López *et al.*, 2020](#); [Sarasa, 2016](#)). Thus, this belief reflects a combination of pre-established discourse, knowledge, and practice for the practicum and student-teachers. However, the practicum is action, and student-teachers are professionals in constant (self-) development. From this viewpoint, the practicum should also involve all those moments when student-teachers socialize, interact, learn, and reflect on language education with each member of the practicum community in context. This engagement allows their voices, feelings, experiences, and professional qualities matter in their constitution throughout time and contexts.

Conclusions

The study reveals that the practicum in Colombian ELT education has been seen as a space where student-teachers put language education discourses and knowledge into practice. While different Colombian ELT education undergraduate programs may have varying perspectives on the requirements of the practicum, common themes include the importance of research, innovation in language teaching, the development of teaching practices, and the social construction of knowledge are common aspects among them. The study also reveals that, although remarkable projects taking place at varied ELT education undergraduate programs, there is a claim to shift this likely structured and theoretical approach to a more flexible and contextual experience within the practicum. This evolving view requires collaboration between the ELT education scholarship, language-policy stakeholders, and practicum community to foster a student-teacher education that combines theory, research, and practice in context.

Integrating the practicum with research may also vary among Colombian ELT education undergraduate programs. Some prioritize research as part of the practicum; others emphasize more practical teaching skills. However, findings show that balancing these aspects is crucial to ensure that student-teachers are educated with language teaching discourses and knowledge coherent with real-life practices and contexts. There is no point in fragmenting, methodizing, and instrumentalizing language teaching/research, English, and student-teacher constitution. Instead, the practicum should offer educational experiences in diverse local and global contexts —when this is possible— by emphasizing interaction, representation, and reflection within a contextualized teaching-learning process and student-teacher constitution. There should be a shared responsibility to do so that goes beyond the practicum/research advisors and the programs. Again, more cooperation is required from the ELT education scholarship, language policy stakeholders, the practicum community, and the student-teachers themselves.

In the practicum, student-teachers reflect on the foundations, knowledge, and practices configured in Colombian ELT education. This situation requires further exploration: Do student-teachers enter the practicum with theoretical foundations and knowledge that can be aligned with the actual teaching experiences and contexts? Student-teachers are also formed as language teachers with knowledge, practices, and discourses. Although these aspects are essential for their professional development, they may have idealized perceptions of language classrooms, possibly emergent from the fragmented and sequenced technical, pedagogical, and socio-cultural knowledge studied during their undergraduate studies. Further research is needed to explore the relationship between current academic knowledge and its application in practice and context.

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