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Challenges in Implementing English-only Instruction: Insights from EFL Student Teachers in Taiwan

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Abstract

English-only instruction is promoted intensely by the Taiwanese government as an effective method to enhance students' English language skills in primary schools. Determining how to effectively employ English-only instruction is a major concern for many English educators and authorities in Taiwan. This study explored the challenges encountered by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student teachers in their English language proficiency while providing English-only instruction in an English language teaching practicum at a Taiwanese elementary school. A qualitative research design was employed in this study. The participants of this study consisted of 11 EFL student teachers. Lesson plans, class observations, and reflective journal entries were the sources of the research data in this study. A thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data of this study. The results indicate that EFL student teachers' English language proficiency gave them challenges while employing English-only instruction due to inappropriate and inadequate English usage, poor presentation, and infallible native speaker models. Moreover, there is no clear link between EFL student teachers' English proficiency and their teaching effectiveness. The results also imply that the challenges encountered by EFL student teachers regarding their English language proficiency in employing English-only instruction are related to micro (classroom) and macro (Taiwanese society) relations. The results further provide insights for those involved in designing

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English-only instruction training programs to be more critically concerned about designing effective pre-service or in-service training programs for EFL teachers.

Keywords: challenges, EFL student teacher, English-only instruction, teaching practicum.

1. INTRODUCTION

To increase Taiwan's international competitiveness and improve the Taiwanese overall English language ability, the Taiwanese government plans to transform Taiwan into a Mandarin-English bilingual nation by 2030 (National Development Council, Taiwan, 2018). According to the blueprint for developing Taiwan into a bilingual nation by 2030, the Teaching English in English (TEIE) instruction is implemented in English classes, and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is promoted in subjects other than English in primary and secondary schools (National Development Council, Taiwan, 2018). The terms, including EMI, TEIE, and TETE, have been mentioned in recent Taiwanese education guidelines. English as a medium of instruction (EMI) refers to "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English (Dearden, 2014, p. 4). Dearden and Macaro (2016) explained that the focus on EMI is not directly aimed at improving students' English language proficiency. Meanwhile, Teaching English in English (TEIE) or Teaching English through English (TETE) is the practice of teaching English conducted by non-native English speakers who possess sufficient English language proficiency and professional competence to improve their students' language proficiency (Richard, 2017). In Taiwan, terms such as Teaching English in English (TEIE), Teaching English through English (TETE), English as a Medium Instruction (EMI), all-English teaching, whole-English teaching, and English-only instruction have been used interchangeably (Cao, 2020; Chou, 2014; Chuang, 2022; Huang, 2019; Kuo, 2017; K. Y. Chen, 2016; Lee, 2014; Qi, 2018; Wu, 2018; Y. M. Chen, 2022). To avoid confusion, this study uses English-only instruction, which is the most common term employed among English educators in elementary schools in Taiwan. English-only instruction refers to teaching English to language learners whose mother tongue is not English by using English as the medium for instruction (Liu, 2023; Y. M. Chen, 2022). In response to this bilingual policy, the Ministry of Education (MOE hereafter) aims to train 5,000 local English teachers or non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs hereafter) to employ English-only instruction in primary and secondary schools by 2030 (Lin, 2018). Determining how to educate current or future primary and secondary NNESTs to employ English-only instruction is a challenge for English educators, researchers, English language policymakers, and universities offering English teacher education programs in Taiwan.

An English language teaching practicum is an essential component of the Teacher Education Center and English Department at S University (pseudonym). Both English and non-English teaching majors in the elementary English credential program of the

Teacher Education Center at S University are required to complete an English language teaching practicum at an elementary school before graduation. In this study, EFL student teachers refer to students who are not native English speakers and who use English-only instruction to teach English subjects in their practicum as a requirement of their degrees in an EFL context. NNESTs' English language proficiency has been one of the main concerns for many scholars, educators, and researchers (Alolaywi, 2020; Butler, 2004; Freeman et al., 2015; Lear, 2019; Liao, 2017; Marashi & Azizi-Nassab, 2018; Mohd-Asraf et al., 2019; Richards, 2017; Tseng et al., 2018; Wang, 2021). In Taiwan, the English proficiency requirement for elementary school English teachers' is a *vantage B2* – high intermediate level or above on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Karas and Faez's (2020) study illustrated that to teach children English in EFL settings, NNESTs need to possess at least a B1 level on CEFR. Therefore, a B1 level on CEFR or above is required for students to take the English language teaching practicum course at S University.

As previously noted, many scholars, educators, and researchers have been significantly concerned about the English language proficiency of NNESTs. An increasing number of studies on the learning effects, challenges, and strategies of English-only instruction by NNESTs in elementary schools have been conducted in Taiwan (Cao, 2020; Chou, 2014; Chuang, 2022; Huang, 2019; Kuo, 2017; K. Y. Chen, 2016; Lee, 2014; Qi, 2018; Wu, 2018; Y. M. Chen, 2022). However, there has been a lack of studies on English language challenges encountered by NNESTs or EFL student teachers in employing English-only instruction in elementary schools in Taiwan; therefore, the study which aims to explore the English language challenges encountered by EFL student teachers in employing English-only instruction in their English language teaching practicum at a Taiwanese elementary school is significant in filling this gap. The results will be used as a basis for further development in the English language teaching practicum program at S University. Moreover, the results of this study can provide pertinent information to teachers, educators, and authorities involved in employing or promoting English-only instruction, as well as to those planning pre- and in-service teacher training programs to achieve the goal of producing competent English-only instructors at elementary schools in Taiwan.

This study aims to investigate English language challenges encountered by EFL student teachers. These challenges arose when the student teachers employed English-only instruction in a Taiwanese elementary school during their teaching practicum. Based on the purpose of the study, the research question is: What are the English language challenges faced by EFL student teachers when employing English-only instruction in a Taiwanese elementary school during their English language teaching practicum?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review addresses two main aspects. First, it explores studies on NNESTs using English-only instruction in elementary schools in Taiwan. Second, it

discusses the language challenges experienced by ESL or EFL student teachers in EFL contexts.

2.1 NNESTs' English-only Instructions in Taiwanese Elementary Schools

The implementation of English-only instruction in elementary schools has recently been endorsed by the Taiwanese government. Therefore, many scholars (Cao, 2020; Chou, 2014; Chuang, 2022; Huang, 2019; Kuo, 2017; K. Y. Chen, 2016; Lee, 2014; Qi, 2018; Wu, 2018; Y. M. Chen, 2022) have conducted studies on effective English teaching and learning, problems faced, and strategies used in English-only instruction by experienced NNESTs to teach English subjects in elementary schools. The results of those studies demonstrated that English-only instruction is an effective method for improving Taiwanese elementary school students' language abilities (Cao, 2020; Chou, 2014; Chuang, 2022; Huang, 2019; Kuo, 2017; K. Y. Chen, 2016; Lee, 2014; Qi, 2018; Wu, 2018; Y. M. Chen, 2022) and increasing their motivation to learn English (Cao, 2020; Chou, 2014; Chuang, 2022; Huang, 2019; Kuo, 2017; K. Y. Chen, 2016; Lee, 2014; Qi, 2018; Wu, 2018; Y. M. Chen, 2022). NNESTs also encountered various problems when employing English-only instruction. These problems included students' mixed English ability (Chuang, 2022; Huang, 2019; Lee, 2014; Wu, 2018), students' negative English learning attitudes (Cao, 2020; Kuo, 2017; K. Y. Chen, 2016; Y. M. Chen, 2022), discipline problems (Cao, 2020; K. Y. Chen, 2016), and insufficient English teaching time (Cao, 2020; K. Y. Chen, 2016; Huang, 2019; Lee, 2014; Wu, 2018). The use of Chinese language for abstract words or concepts, the emphasis on grammatical rules, discipline maintenance (Cao, 2020; Chuang, 2022; Huang, 2019; Kuo, 2017; K. Y. Chen, 2016; Lee, 2014), as well as the use of body language (Cao, 2020; K. Y. Chen, 2016; Qi, 2018) and more teaching aids (K. Y. Chen, 2016; Qi, 2018; Wu, 2018) were strategies for overcoming problems in employing English-only instruction. However, the aforementioned studies did not indicate that NNESTs' English language proficiency is an issue when employing English-only instruction, which somewhat contradicts many scholars' study results (Marashi & Azizi-Nassab, 2018; Saeed et al., 2012; Tseng et al., 2018; Wijayatunga, 2018) that NNESTs lack sufficient English proficiency to teach English classes in non-native English learning contexts.

2.2 ESL or EFL Student Teachers' Language Challenges

As for English student teachers, not only in English as a Second Language (ESL) but also in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) countries, it is a major challenge for them to enhance their English language proficiency (Abou-Assali, 2013; Barahmeh, 2016; Darwish, 2017; Gan, 2013; Nel & Müller, 2010; Jannah et al., 2023; Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018). However, studies on English student teachers' English language challenges during their teaching practicum in ESL and EFL contexts remain scant (Gan, 2013; Kunta & Tümb, 2010). The following presents seven studies concerning ESL or EFL student teachers' English language proficiency problems during their practicum teaching at secondary and elementary schools.

There were two studies (Gan, 2013; Nel & Müller, 2010) concerning ESL student teachers' teaching. Gan (2013) investigated the challenges faced by 16 non-native ESL student teachers during their teaching practicum at a secondary school in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, Nel and Müller (2010) focused on 17 ESL student teachers' limited English proficiency at elementary schools in South Africa. One preliminary result of these two studies was that non-native ESL student teachers made several English phonetic, lexical, and grammatical errors. The findings of Nel and Müller (2010) illustrated that student teachers' inadequate English proficiency was transferred to their students, affecting their English language learning. Consequently, the ESL student teachers' inadequate English proficiency negatively affected their students' academic progress and English language learning in South Africa. Gan's (2013) study revealed that some student teachers had difficulties providing explicit English instruction or explaining complex grammatical rules during their teaching practice. As a result, non-native student teachers had to code-switch to their L1, Cantonese. Gan's (2013) study also demonstrated that non-native student teachers' inadequate English language proficiency influenced their teaching effectiveness and their professional development as English teachers.

Two studies were conducted in Indonesia, involving 22 student teachers (Jannah et al., 2023) and 30 student teachers (Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018) regarding EFL student teachers' anxiety during their teaching practicum. First, their anxieties were caused by their lack of vocabulary and English grammar knowledge. As a result, EFL student teachers felt anxious about explaining their lessons or teaching grammatical rules during their teaching practicum (Jannah et al., 2023; Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018). In other words, EFL student teachers' English language proficiency influences their anxiety in teaching.

Furthermore, three studies involving 16 student teachers in the United Arab Emirates (Abou-Assali, 2013), 22 student teachers in Palestine (Barahmeh, 2016), and 103 student teachers in Kuwait (Darwish, 2017) examined the English language challenges faced by EFL student teachers. The results of these studies indicated that the biggest challenge for EFL student teachers was their low English language proficiency, resulting in ineffective teaching and learning process, negative feelings (Abou-Assali, 2013; Barahmeh, 2016), and inability to be a good teacher model (Abou-Assali, 2013). Therefore, EFL student teachers in these three studies used L1 instead of English during their teaching practicum to minimize their anxiety due to their inadequate English ability.

Based on the literature as elaborated above, the impacts of non-native ESL or EFL student teachers' inadequate English proficiency include negative feelings such as anxiety and frustration. Other impacts include ineffective teaching and learning processes and outcomes, inability to be a good model of an English teacher, and insufficient benefit in their English teaching professional development. One common strategy employed by non-native ESL and EFL student teachers was using L1 during their teaching practicum. Richards (2017) argued that teaching English through English is somewhat complicated and varies from one country to another. Although the findings of these seven studies offer valuable information on some aspects of non-native ESL and EFL student teachers' English language practicum in different teaching contexts, the

current research on the challenges related to English language proficiency faced by EFL student teachers in employing English-only instruction in an elementary school in Taiwan may provide different results or insights. As stated in the introduction, there has been little research on the English language challenges faced by EFL student teachers when implementing English-only instruction in elementary schools in Taiwan; thus, this study is crucial in bridging this gap. Furthermore, the results of this study will be significant to teachers, educators, and authorities involved in employing or promoting English-only instruction. This study will contribute to the development of teachers' training in employing English-only instruction in elementary schools in Taiwan.

3. METHODS

This section begins with a description of the research design. Then, information regarding the participants and the practicum school is provided. In addition, the data collection and data analysis are explained. Finally, this section concludes with information about the trustworthiness of this study.

3.1 Research Design

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that “qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 250). The purpose of the present study was to explore English language challenges encountered by EFL student teachers when employing English-only instruction during their teaching practicum. A qualitative research design and an inductive thematic approach for data analysis were employed in this study. A total of 77 lesson plans, 11 classroom observations, and 77 reflective journals were collected from the participants and analyzed to generate themes. Then, broad themes or categories were established to generalize EFL student teachers' English language challenges in employing English-only instruction.

3.2 Participants

The study involved 11 students (one male and ten female students) between 21 and 24 years of age. Five of them were English majors, and the remaining six were non-English majors. Of the 11 participants, six students (P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, P11) had English proficiency at B2 (high intermediate level) and five students (P1, P3, P4, P7, P10) at B1 (low intermediate level) on the CEFR. The tests that the students completed are detailed in Table 1.

Based on the participants' English language proficiency levels, all participants could understand conversations in a social setting and adequately produce English sentences in both spoken and written form. Every participant in this study never had English-only teaching experience in elementary schools before their teaching practicum. It is also important to note that before starting their English language teaching practicum, participants were required to complete two EMI courses taught by the

researcher (the Children English course and the English Listening and Speaking Instruction course).

Table 1. English proficiency test completed by the participants.

No of participants	Type of test	Level	Participants
6	Test of English for International Communication (TOIC)	B2	P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, P11
2	Test of English for International Communication (TOIC)	B1	P3, P4
3	General English Proficiency Test (GEPT)	B1	P1, P7, P10

3.3 Practicum School

The participants in this study were placed in a well-funded school for the practicum. The school had small or regular class sizes (16 – 24), was located in a city, and was close to S University. In the practicum school, English was taught from grades one to six, and many students took extra English lessons in private English language institutions after school. There were two English teachers at the practicum school, one NNEST from Taiwan and the other from South Africa. During the English teaching practicum, the English teachers at the practicum school were not involved in the participants' English teaching activities.

3.4 Instruments

Three instruments were used for data collection in this study. The instruments include lesson plans, classroom observations, and reflective journal writings. Each instrument is described as follows.

3.4.1 Lesson plans

The participants were required to develop English lesson plans that cover the class description, learning objectives, teaching processes/stages, instructional activities, problems and their anticipated solutions, teaching materials and resources, and assessment. The participants had seven weeks of teaching practicum. Therefore, 77 lesson plans from the 11 participants were collected to analyze errors in their writing.

3.4.2 Classroom observations

During the teaching practicum, the participants were observed by their practicum supervisor. A total of 11 classroom observations were completed by the practicum supervisor. During the observations, information was noted regarding the participants' English errors and problems related to their level of English language proficiency and the impact of inadequate or inappropriate English usage. Once an observation was made, the practicum supervisor provided the participants with a copy of the classroom

observation report containing information regarding their English language challenges in employing English-only instruction.

3.4.3 Reflective Journal Writing

After every week of practice teaching, each participant was asked to write reflective journals on problems, coping strategies, or related issues related to English-only instruction, with a particular focus on their English language proficiency. In total, 77 journal entries were collected. From the reflective journal writing, relevant data about the participants' English language problems and coping strategies in employing English-only instruction was examined.

3.5 Data Analysis

A six-phase thematic analysis model, as proposed by [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) and [Clarke and Braun \(2013\)](#), was employed to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning or themes in textual data that were significant to the research questions. The first phase of the proposed model was data familiarization. In this phase, [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) and [Clarke and Braun \(2013\)](#) claimed that researchers should immerse themselves in and become familiar with the data. In this study, the researcher was also a practicum supervisor who worked closely with student teachers before, during, and after the practicum to investigate how the participants employed English-only instruction in their teaching practicum. Therefore, the researcher was familiar with the research data and was deeply involved in its collection. Familiarity with the data was crucial for the researcher, particularly in determining how the data were coded and how themes were merged appropriately. The second phase involved coding. The participants' English language difficulties in employing English-only instruction were reread and coded carefully in the second phase. The third phase involved theme identification. Patterns or overarching concepts or codes of the participant's English language difficulties were combined into potential themes in this phase. The fourth phase was reviewing the themes. In this phase, the main or subthemes of English language difficulties were either discarded or combined with other themes. The fifth phase involved defining and naming themes. [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) argued that themes cannot be too diverse or complex. Meanwhile, the last phase was reporting the findings. The findings from this study on EFL student teachers' English language challenges in employing English-only instruction are presented in the result section.

3.6 Trustworthiness

In this study, three strategies to ensure trustworthiness were applied: prolonged engagement, triangulation, and cross-checking of code and themes ([Creswell & Creswell, 2018](#)). An 18-week study was conducted, and the researcher was acquainted with both the participants and the collected data. The researcher also employed a triangulation of data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic challenges experienced by EFL teachers when using English-only instruction.

Furthermore, the process of data coding and analysis was conducted by the researcher first and then re-examined and re-confirmed by one research assistant to ensure the data were themed correctly and accordingly.

4. RESULTS

To answer the proposed research question about what English language challenges were faced by EFL student teachers when employing English-only instruction in a Taiwanese elementary school during their English language teaching practicum, the researcher used a thematic analysis to analyze the participants' lesson plans, classroom observations, and reflective journals. The results related to the research question are described in the following subsections.

4.1 Lesson Plans

The first theme that emerged from the data was inadequate English used by the participants. Table 2 illustrates three subthemes under this theme from the 77 lesson plans. The subthemes include lexical errors, syntactic errors, and Chinglish.

Table 2. Error analysis of English lesson plans.

Theme: Inadequate English	
Sub-themes	Descriptions
Lexical errors	- Count and non-count nouns (fishes, a chalk) - Mistakes with meaning (ground vs. floor) - Singular and plural nouns (two boat) - Spelling (color pen) - Phrases (listen music)
Syntactic errors	- Comparatives and superlatives (Sing more slower.) - Definite article (Draw face on the board.) - Mistakes with meaning (what is he? vs. What does he look like?) - Sentence fragment (What to see?) - Subject-verb agreement (She don't like it.) - Verb tenses (What does he draw now?)
Chinglish	Taiwanese-style English (Close the chair.)

Table 2 shows that the participants made fundamental writing errors in various areas. The errors in lexical and syntactic aspects were generally applicable to each participant to different extents. Taiwanese-style English or Chinese English was also found in four lesson plans. For example, in P1's (B1 level) lesson plans, she wanted her first-grade students to "chairs close in" (Chinese English). The Chinese phrase "椅子靠攏" — 椅子 means "chair" and 靠攏 means "close in", which translates to "push in your chair" in English. P1 (B1 level) translated the Chinese term "椅子靠攏" into English word by word. The error analysis of the lesson plans indicates that EFL student teachers encountered the challenge of writing lesson plans in English.

4.2 Classroom Observations

Four themes were merged from the participants' classroom observations. These four themes include inadequate English, inappropriate English, poor presentation, and the native speaker model. Table 3 presents these subthemes.

Table 3. Analysis of classroom observations.

Themes	Sub-themes	Descriptions
Inadequate English	Lexical errors	• Counts and noncount nouns • Mistakes with meaning • Singular and plural nouns • Spelling • Phrases • Prepositions
	Syntactic errors	• Comparatives and superlatives • Definite article • Infinitive • Pronoun disagreement • Mistakes with meaning • Sentence fragment • Verb tense • Subject-verb agreement
	Chinglish	• e.g., "Close your chair". "I very like it."
Inappropriate English	English instruction	• Complicated, difficult, illogical, length, unclear
Poor presentation	Verbal	• Talk too fast, use a soft voice, use too many pet phrases (you know, good job)
	Non-verbal	• Lack body language, make no eye contact, feel nervous
Native speaker model	American English	• Pronunciation and usage

In terms of inadequate English use or grammatical errors, the results indicate that the participants made basic English errors in various areas, not only in written English (lesson plans) but also in spoken English (see Table 2 and Table 3). The participants' inadequate English did not interfere with the student's learning pace if they used visual aids or body language in their teaching practicum. For example, when P1 (B1 level) said "chairs close in" (Chinese English) to her students, her students understood what she meant since P1 (B1 level) showed her students how to push in a chair. Another example was that while P8 (B2 level) was describing a person by using vocabulary flashcards (such as tall, short, and thin), she asked her second-grade students, "What is he/she?" instead of "What does he/she look like?" P8 (B2 level) made a mistake with the meaning of these two sentences, and the same errors were found in her lesson plan. However, the use of flashcards gave the students clues on how to answer P8's (B2 level) question correctly.

Inappropriate English usage in this study refers to unclear, complicated, and lengthy English instruction. The results demonstrate that conducting an activity in English-only instruction effectively was challenging for all participants because they tended to use complex vocabulary, complicated sentences, or insufficient transition signals (such as first, then, next) while conducting the activity, including a game. Inappropriate English usage resulted in classroom discipline problems and ineffective teaching and learning activities. The following excerpt describes how P5 (B2 level) conducted a bingo activity with fourth-grade students.

- (1) P5 (B2 level): “Now, we are going to play a bingo game. I am going to give out a bingo sheet. This is a four-by-four grid bingo sheet. There are 12 words on the whiteboard. Please write down these 12 words on your bingo sheet randomly. Please write four numbers from number one to number ten on your bingo sheet. To win this game, you need to make a complete row horizontal, vertical, or diagonal ...”

The class: The students were confused and started talking to each other in Chinese.

Student A (in Chinese): “Teacher! What a complicated activity!”

Student B (in Chinese): “Teacher! Teacher! Can you speak Chinese? I do not understand!”

Student C (in Chinese): “Teacher! Can we play another game?”

P5 (B2 level) (in Chinese): “Ok, be quiet! Everyone! Let me explain the rule in English first and then in Chinese.”

The participants’ poor presentation (lack of body language, no eye contact, speaking too fast, soft voice, and nervousness) also resulted in discipline problems and ineffective teaching and learning activities in classes with English-only instruction. For example, when P7 (B1 level) introduced a “hide and seek” activity to her first-grade students, she appeared very nervous and spoke very fast without body language. As a result, her students became perplexed and restless because they did not know what to do. Some students said, “I do not understand,” loudly in Chinese. Therefore, P7 (B1 level) used Chinese to explain the rules quickly without using body language. After explaining the rules in Chinese, most of her students still had difficulty understanding them, so they continued asking questions regarding the “hide and seek” activity in Chinese.

The last theme was the native speaker model, which refers to native speakers’ possession of correct or accurate English. An example was when P1 (B1 level) taught first graders how to pronounce the letter W correctly. One student said in Chinese that her American English teacher at her private English language school pronounced it differently. P1 (B1 level) did not know how to answer her question; thus, she moved on to the next activity. In another classroom observation, P2 (B2 level) presented flashcards showing “father”, “mother”, “grandfather,” and “grandmother” and then asked her second-grade students to repeat these words. Mary (pseudonym) replied, “No-no! Not father, mother, grandfather, or grandmother”. Mary said in Chinese to the class that her American English teacher at the private English language school taught her “daddy, mummy, grandpa, grandma”. P2 (B2 level) told the whole class, “They are the same”. However, Mary said, “Really?” in Chinese.

4.3 Reflective Journal Writing

Five themes emerged from the reflective journals, i.e., inadequate English, inappropriate English, poor presentation, English proficiency vs. teaching effectiveness, and the native speaker model. These themes are illustrated in Table 4, along with their subthemes and coping strategies.

Table 4. Analysis of reflective journals.

Themes	Sub-themes	Coping Strategies
Inadequate English	Lexical errors Syntactic errors Chinglish	• Consult with the practicum supervisor • Consult with an online English dictionary and online grammar checker
Inappropriate English	English instruction	• Use Chinese if necessary • Increase the English ratio gradually • Pre-teach in the group • Use clear and short instruction
Poor Presentation	Verbal & non-verbal	• Use more body language • Use more visual aids • Step-by-step instruction • Use normal and natural voice • Learn from other student teachers with good presentation
English Proficiency vs. Teaching Effectiveness	No clear link	• Not applicable
Native Speaker Model	American English	• Not applicable

Based on Table 4, the participants indicated that their inadequate and inappropriate English instructions and poor presentations contributed to ineffective English-only classes. The participants provided various coping strategies. They all affirmed that Mandarin Chinese was necessary to create a more effective class with English-only instruction, particularly for explaining abstract concepts, solving discipline problems, and giving tests. Furthermore, to provide effective classes with English-only instruction, the participants also claimed that they needed more teaching practice to overcome their obstacles.

Regarding English language proficiency, six participants had B2, and five participants had B1 English proficiency level based on CEFR. The results of lesson plans, classroom observations, and reflective journals indicate that every participant (both B1 and B2 levels) experienced English language problems during their teaching practicum in classes with English-only instruction. Therefore, it can be stated that there was no clear link between the participant's English ability and their successful use of English-only instruction. The following are two journal entries from P9 (B2 level), who had the highest TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) score of 870, and P4 (B1 level), who had the lowest TOEIC score of 650 in this study.

- (2) I was confident about my English language proficiency. I got very frustrated in my English-only classes since my third-grade students complained that I used challenging, complicated, and complex sentences while teaching. As a result, sometimes I had to code-switch, i.e., using Chinese to explain the activity rules. I realized that when teaching English through English, apart from English ability, many things need to be considered. (P9, B2 level)
- (3) I was so worried about my English ability before the practicum because my English was not very good. However, I insisted on using 100% English in my English-only instruction during my practice teaching from the first to the last week. I realized that to achieve 100% English-only instruction, I needed to use a great deal of body language and visual aids, provide many examples and demonstrations, and use simple English during my teaching. My fifth-grade students understood my explanation and instruction, and they seemed to have a good time in my class. (P4, B1 level)

The last theme was the native speaker model. The student teachers were compared to native English speakers' English language proficiency, predominantly their non-native-like pronunciation. The following is an excerpt from P2's (B2 level) journal entry.

- (4) I felt kind of annoyed when one of my second-grade students said that my pronunciation was different from that of her American English teacher at her private English language school. There is one thing I do not understand. There is a full-time NEST from South Africa who teaches at the practicum school. Why was my pronunciation compared with her American English teacher, not her South African English teacher? (P2, B2 level)

Moreover, P6 (B2 level) indicated that English pronunciation was crucial for her fifth-grade students and planned to include extra pronunciation exercises in her teaching practicum. However, she felt frustrated because other student teachers asserted that her pronunciation was not good enough to teach students English pronunciation, especially since her English is not so-called American English. P9 (B2 level) also stated that she felt uncomfortable because her British accent was regarded as "strange" or "weird" by her students or other student teachers.

In one of P11's (B2 level) journal entries, she stated that Jack (pseudonym), who was born and completed his grade one to grade five of elementary school in the USA, made her feel very nervous and pressured during her teaching practicum. She always felt apprehensive about her English proficiency, be it in pronunciation or in other language aspects. Therefore, if her students had questions regarding English pronunciation, she would always ask Jack to answer them. This result demonstrates that English pronunciation is crucial for the participants because they are challenged by a native English speaker model with an American accent.

5. DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of this study are summarized and discussed, along with the research question proposed in the introduction section. It is essential to reexamine the research question and discuss the findings to provide implications, contributions, and recommendations. These efforts aim to address EFL student teachers' English language

challenges in employing English-only instruction during their English language teaching practicum at a Taiwanese elementary school.

5.1 Challenges in EFL Student Teachers' English Proficiency

Many studies on NNESTs' English language proficiency have confirmed that NNESTs need to require a certain level of English proficiency to teach English (Butler, 2004; Karas & Faez, 2020; Gul & Aziz, 2015; Young et al., 2014) because it plays a crucial role in the success of their teaching. However, the results of this present study demonstrate that the participants' general English proficiency was not equivalent to their English teaching ability. Additionally, the results of classroom observations in this study indicate that inadequate or inaccurate English use did not result in ineffective teaching if the participants used various teaching strategies or techniques, such as teaching aids and body language, during their teaching practicum.

Moreover, the results of this study illustrate that even when the participants used good English, inappropriate English instruction (complicated, lengthy, and illogical) and poor presentation (speaking too fast or using inadequate body language) could result in ineffective English teaching and learning activities and student discipline problems. These results concur with Merç and Subaşı (2015), who claimed that in an English classroom, classroom discipline problems stem from student teachers' teaching styles and techniques. Pigott's (2008) study revealed that, apart from teachers' English proficiency, how they presented teaching materials was identified as the most influential factor in motivating students' English learning. In short, EFL student teachers' inappropriate English usage and poor presentations were interwoven, resulting in classroom discipline problems or ineffective English teaching activities. Furthermore, many scholars (Faez & Karas, 2017; Faez et al., 2021; Freeman, 2017; Freeman et al., 2015; Marashi & Azizi-Nassab, 2018; Richards, 2017) have questioned whether or not a teacher's English proficiency is connected to his or her English teaching ability in an EFL context since many other factors (such as pedagogical skills, personality aspects, and subject matters) play a more important role in the success of English teaching. In other words, English proficiency is not the only indicator of successful teaching in classes with English-only instruction.

A significant finding was that EFL student teachers' English proficiency was challenged by NESTs, which was not documented in other related studies on EFL student teachers' teaching practicums. In this study, native English speakers were perceived as ideal English teachers or models because of their linguistic competence, especially their pronunciation. Similar arguments have also been made in other EFL countries (Alqahtani, 2021; Furqan & Rahman, 2019; Özmen et al., 2018). Karas and Faez (2020) explained that EFL preservice teachers struggled to teach in ESL contexts because their students found it challenging to understand their English, especially their non-native accents. The results of this study indicate that EFL student teachers felt pressure on their non-native accent because they were compared with native speakers even though they were teaching in an EFL context. Therefore, in Taiwan, the challenges related to EFL student teachers' English proficiency while employing English-only

instruction can be regarded as not merely encompassing English teaching and learning skills but also involving NNESTs' identities in the EFL teaching context.

Finally, the results demonstrate that at the end of the English language teaching practicum, the participants were able to employ coping strategies in English-only instruction classes. They could accordingly overcome the challenges stemming from themselves. However, the difficulties associated with the native speaker model still existed, originating both inside and outside the classroom.

5.2 Implications of EFL Student Teachers' English Proficiency Challenges

The results of this study have implications for English language teaching programs, especially for English-only instruction at S University or in Taiwan in general. The first implication is the relationship between EFL student teachers' English language proficiency and their English language teaching effectiveness. This study indicates that the success and failure of English-only instruction classes do not merely rely on English teachers' English ability; other skills, such as teaching, classroom management, presentation, and communication, must also be considered. Richards (2017) suggested that English teacher preparation or education programs must emphasize the importance of ensuring English teachers to be proficient to effectively teach English using English. Freeman et al. (2015) further argued that in-service or pre-service English training programs tend to focus more on teachers' general English language proficiency and less on teachers' knowledge of how to teach English. There is no specific English-only instruction training program for pre-service or in-service elementary English teachers at S University. Hence, S University is required to provide an English-only instruction training program with a particular focus on English-for-teaching, which refers to English as a medium for "managing the classroom, understanding and communicating lesson content, and assessing students and giving feedback" (Freeman et al., 2015, p. 1).

The second implication is that a native speaker model exists in Taiwan elementary schools. The main reason for preferring a NEST is because a native speaker is more related to standard English, especially American English. The findings of this study imply that native-speaking pronunciation is a benchmark for EFL student teachers and learners in Taiwan. Furthermore, the results indicate that because American English was viewed as the standard English (Chien, 2014), American English teachers were regarded as superior to other NESTs in Taiwan. The issues raised in this study, such as the native speaker model and American English as the standard English, have substantial impacts on EFL student teachers' identities and English language learners. EFL student teachers should become more aware of the native speaker model in their teaching practicum.

The Taiwanese government plans to train 5,000 NNESTs to use English-only instruction and recruit 4,600 NESTs by 2030 for elementary and secondary schools (Lin, 2018). Consequently, as an implication of this study, in developing Taiwan into a bilingual nation by 2030, English teachers and English education authorities need to raise their awareness of English-only instruction's social implications in both micro (classroom) and macro (Taiwanese society) contexts. English learners, English educators, and policymakers must re-examine the issues discussed in this study, such as

the relationship between English teachers' language proficiency and teaching efficacy, the effectiveness of English-only training courses, the infallibility of the native speaker model, and the status of English teachers at the micro and macro levels of English teacher education in Taiwan.

6. CONCLUSION

This section begins by summarizing the significant findings of the study. The section then discusses the limitations of the study. Finally, it offers suggestions for future research based on the results of the study.

The participants' English language proficiency problems while employing English-only instruction were diverse but could be primarily categorized into two parts: challenges from the participants themselves and those from others. In terms of participants' difficulties, they had problems in writing and speaking English and poor presentations while employing English-only instruction. However, their English language proficiency was not necessarily equated with their English language teaching effectiveness. Challenges from others referred to the participants' English language proficiency as challenged by the English native speaker model, especially Americans. Native speakers with an American accent as a model strongly impacted the participants' identity and English language learners. This model presented challenges for participants both inside and outside the classroom. The main limitation of the current study is that it is based on a seven-week teaching practicum in an elementary school. Longitudinal studies on EFL student teachers employing English-only instruction would be beneficial for exploring the entire process of how novice EFL student teachers become competent English-only instruction teachers. This will help reveal how EFL student teachers overcome their challenges at different stages when employing English-only instruction.

Research into EFL student teachers' English language proficiency has received little attention and has not been documented in Taiwan. This study is significant because it addresses this gap. Additionally, it offers suggestions for future research.

Additionally, this study was conducted in an urban area in Taiwan. Urban students can afford to study at private English language schools with NESTs, but the schools in rural areas lack teaching and learning resources and English teachers. Studies on EFL student teachers' challenges in employing English-only instruction to elementary school students in remote areas may provide different findings related to the issues presented in this study.

Moreover, based on the results, EFL student teachers' role as English teachers while employing English-only instruction is challenged by the native speaker model. Despite this, there has been little research on their identities in this context. This study highlights the need for further exploration of this issue.

As mentioned earlier, an increasing number of studies have investigated the effectiveness of experienced NNESTs who employ English-only instruction in elementary schools in Taiwan. However, little research has been conducted on the effectiveness of English-only instruction training courses in Taiwan. The significance of

English-only instruction courses in pre-service and in-service training programs requires further investigation.

Finally, in Taiwan, much of the research on English-only instruction in elementary schools has focused on the pedagogical factors of English-only instruction's success in the classroom (microdomain). The results indicate that the challenges related to EFL student teachers' English language proficiency should not be viewed as purely involving pedagogic activities. Future studies should focus on how factors outside the classroom, such as social, cultural, and economic factors, impact NNESTs' English-only instruction implementation in the education systems in Taiwan.

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