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EFL Pre-service Teachers' Enactment of Agentic Capacities in their Online Pedagogical Practicum

Kevin Lopez-Paez

*M.A. in English Didactics, Part-time teacher educator at Universidad del Tolima, Ibagué, Colombia,
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6723-2645>*

***Correspondence email:** kblopez@ut.edu.co.

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Abstract: The global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed how education is delivered and accessed. In the evolving landscape of pre-service teachers' pedagogical practicums within teacher education programs, both teacher educators and school supervisors continue to follow traditional national bilingual policies and curricula. These frameworks, often marked by discourses of accountability, control, and prescription, fail to address the post-pandemic realities faced by second and foreign language student-teachers. Factors influencing the pre-service teachers' capacities to take initiative and make decisions in online pedagogical practices have not yet been thoroughly explored. This case study aimed to explore how 16 pre-service teachers exercised their agency in their online EFL pedagogical practicum classes and the factors that influenced their actions. Data were gathered through surveys, focus groups, recorded class observations, whole-class discussions, and teacher's journal. The findings suggested that an intermediate competence on educational software enabled EFL pre-service teachers' agentic capacities, which were manifested in transformative online teaching strategies centered on learners. Likewise, the lack of computer-mediated communication literacy, bad perceptions towards online teaching, unstable connection, and unequal power relations with school practicum teachers related to textbook coverage and impossibility to address social issues critically restricted their agentic capacities. These findings urge teacher educators, practicum supervisors, and curriculum developers to incorporate innovative, teacher

agency-based policies, designs, and practices in both face-to-face and online instructional environments. Doing so will raise pre-service teachers' awareness and empower them in decision-making processes during their pedagogical practicum, ultimately contributing to societal transformation through remote education.

Keywords: EFL pre-service teachers, FL curriculum, language teacher agency, online FL teaching, pedagogical practicum

Introduction

The global pandemic at the beginning of the decade triggered shifts not only in how people meet and communicate but also in educational settings. In the case of teacher education programs, the pre-service teachers around the world had to carry out their pedagogical practicum online. Many of such student-teachers were not prepared for this sudden shift of modality (König et al., 2020). Yet, both macro-level national bilingualism policies and meso-level licensure (B. A.) programs' curricula have not undertaken up-to-date syllabus-based courses and assessment that take into account computer-mediated communication (CMC) and post-pandemic contextualised realities wherein pre-service teachers are enabled so as to disrupt traditional language educational practices that were deemed as canonical before the pandemic.

Research Problem

Traditional architectures of bilingualism policies and curricula in initial foreign language teacher education programs have long been focused on accountability, control, and prescription (Teng, 2019). These traditional approaches to teacher education and development are also meant for face-to-face FL delivery mode, resulting in unprepared both in- and pre-service foreign language (FL) teachers in order to face online educational challenges and make decisions with the resources and materials in remote instruction. As a result, teacher educators keep on employing practicum evaluation criteria that do not account for the online teaching particularities such as factors that influence FL teachers' performance and practices in online synchronous classes. As a concomitant phenomenon, unequal power relations between student-teachers and school practicum supervisors are also involved in the constraints and limitations of FL teachers' autonomy and initiatives (Mutlu, 2014). While school in-service teachers help student-teachers in the process of pedagogical practicum, the position of authority of the former can hinder different FL teaching practices and decisions the latter bring with them.

Considering the abovementioned phenomena, it becomes the key to explore the experiences of pre-service teachers in order to understand the elements affecting their agentic capacities in online pedagogical practicum in a Global South context such as Colombia. Investigating these issues leads to important advancements in the field of English language teaching (ELT) and remote learning processes. Examining the factors affecting EFL student-teachers' professional agentic capacities in online teaching is paramount given the increase of hybrid and remote education (World Bank, 2021) and considering that remote educational dynamics came to stay in tertiary education as it is the case of several initial teacher education programs in Colombia (Puentes et al., 2023), and their shift of educational delivery around the world.

A growing body of research has undertaken in-service teachers' professional agentic capacities both in face-to-face (f2f) education (Kitade, 2015; Li, 2023; Priestley et al., 2015) and in online language educational environments in Western, European, and Asian settings (Ashton, 2022; Cai & Zheng, 2022;

Janes & Chen, 2024; Lim, 2021; Sari, 2021; Zaiti & Zaidah, 2021). However, there is a lack of attention given to literature that examines the experiences of pre-service teachers when conducting their teaching internships online in Global South countries where English is not the first language. This study then sought to address the abovementioned research gaps by exploring EFL student-teachers' post-pandemic realities and the factors that affected their capabilities to take action and make decisions when starting to teach in their online pedagogical practicum, which is a phenomenon that has not yet been well explored, especially in settings such as Colombia or surrounding Latin American countries.

Research Aim and Research Questions

This study contributed to literature on second and foreign language (S/FL) teacher professional agency by investigating the agentic capacities enactment of 16 Colombian EFL pre-service teachers in an online teaching context throughout their pedagogical practicum. It sought to answer the questions *how do 16 EFL pre-service teachers enact their agentic capacities in their online pedagogical practicum? What factors influence the supported or hindered enacted pre-service teachers' agentic capacities?*

Literature Review

Language Teacher Agency

In the endeavour of language teachers' professional identity construction and negotiation, agency becomes a key ontological component. It is individuals' capability to act and self-determine, which involves taking control, making choices, taking ownership of their goals, and provoking social and personal transformation (Priestley, et al., 2015; Van Der Heijden et al., 2015). Simply desiring change is not sufficient; one must also work to address and dismantle these larger obstacles in order to bring about meaningful and lasting progress (Block, 2013) that can restrict individuals' agentic capacities. In the case of language teachers, factors such as professional identity awareness, second and foreign language (S/FL) policies, digital literacy, resources, among others can support or downplay such an agency, i.e., their empowerment position to initiate, make decisions, and carry out actions that make significant differences at school and SL/FL classroom level. Such differential actions can involve the enhancement of their language teaching practice and their students' learning, as well as eliciting communication and collaboration work among colleagues, supervisors, and parents; leading to transforming professional and S/FL educational realities.

Inquiring about the agency of language teachers is essential in the face of the widespread colonial influence on knowledge and existence within the English language teaching (ELT) field (Canagarajah, 2023) the standardisation and accountability in FL pedagogy, as well as institutional neoliberal discourses entails the marketization of education at a global level (Guerrero-Nieto & Castañeda-Trujillo, 2023; Pennycook, 2021; Van Lier, 2010), all of which are internalised and reproduced by institution administrators or teachers themselves and that aim at constraining teachers' epistemes and autonomy, maintaining thus the status quo and fulfilling neoliberal agendas such as thorough uses of mandated textbooks and canonical methodologies. These discourses, norms, and power structures influence language teachers during their careers and force them to perform in the classroom in the ways they establish (Flores, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Moore et al., 2002), depriving them of adopting an agentic positioning; restraining their agentic capacities by reducing their control and autonomy in their FL teaching practices.

The construct of teacher agency is increasingly taken heed of over the past decade. Studies have been examining the elements that supported or downplayed in-service teachers' agency both face-to-face

education (Kitade, 2015; Li, 2023; Priestley et al., 2015) and in online language educational settings in Western, European, and Asian settings (Ashton, 2022; Cai & Zheng, 2022; Duff, 2012; Janes & Chen, 2024; Lim, 2021; Sari, 2021; Zaiti & Zaidah, 2021). These studies have mostly explored the experiences of American, European, or Asian language in-service teachers in both L1 and L2 contexts with less than 10 participants under the predominance of narrative inquiry over case study designs in the context of the global pandemic COVID 19. Therefore, the identified factors impacting their ability to take action are related to the signs and societal influences experienced by students, parents, and supervisors in this particular situation. These include feelings of alienation due to the abrupt change in teaching methods, the diminished role of teachers in online learning, students' mental health, anxiety about world events, and parental scrutiny.

Studies of the abovementioned literature have identified several research gaps related to context and sample population. First, the existing literature has not thoroughly explored how the pre-service (student-) teachers enacted their agentic capacities when starting to exercise their teaching endeavour in online environments. Second, it has not addressed such a phenomenon in pedagogical practicum contexts; and third, the literature on language teacher agentic capacities, to the best of my knowledge, has not been well undertaken in Global South contexts, specifically in Latin America in countries such as Colombia.

Online Language Teacher Identity and Agency

The interdependent relation between language teachers' professional identity and agency lies in the fact that teachers' identity influences the teachers' agency (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Tao & Gao, 2021). Depending on a teacher's experience and interactions in online environments, they may feel more empowered or limited in their ability to take action, make choices, and use innovative teaching methods. This can also lead to personal and social growth in the classroom. Online language teacher identity is how a teacher sees themselves and is seen by others in an online setting, influenced by their personal and professional experiences with technology, knowledge of how to use it for teaching a foreign language, and familiarity with online education. Agency is then the way teachers act based on these roles they have developed. That is, the capacity to act (or not) from such positioning, especially in an online synchronous context. It is also worth noting that language teachers' assumed or assigned roles and positionings can enhance or hinder the efficacy and quality in practices such as the design, facilitation, and assessment of online experiences, all of which comprise efficient online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2013).

Materials and Methods

Drawing on the qualitative paradigm to deeply understand the dynamic complex experiences in identity construction and agency exercise (Norton & McKinney, 2010), this study adopted a case study design since it analysed in depth a process of one or more individuals which was little known or poorly understood (Creswell, 2003; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001), as it was the process of EFL pre-service teachers' agentic capacities enactment in an online instructional context.

Sample and Participants

This study was carried out at a public university in Colombia. The participants were 16 undergraduate EFL pre-service teachers aged from 20 to 24 from the B.A. in English and Spanish program taking the online English teaching pedagogical practicum courses in their last two semesters. These student-teachers just

finished developing their linguistic skills and their average English proficiency level is B2+ according to a faculty-driven test. They had scarce experience in face-to-face English teaching from previous pedagogical practicums and occasional replacements at local private English institutes. It is worth noting that none of these pre-service teachers had experience in online English teaching.

Instruments and Procedures

Data were collected employing multiple sources involving surveys, focus groups, recorded class observations, whole-class discussions, and teacher's journal. The process of data collection lasted two academic semesters and was focused on the four months of the participants' practicum intervention during each semester, which was fully mediated by ICT. Given that the author was acting as the participants' practicum instructor, he administered the informed consent for their participation in the study, which involved observation of their mediated lessons and the audio recording of whole-class conversations and subsequent focus group discussions.

After one week of pre-service teachers' online interventions at both public and private institutions, synchronous practicum encounters were initiated with students on a weekly basis through the use of Microsoft Teams. In such whole-class conversations in English and Spanish, student-teachers were engaged in and were asked about critical reflections, perceptions, practices, and experiences in their online English lessons each week while I wrote down notes and reflections on such information on the teacher's journal. Likewise, every two weeks their recorded online English classes were observed and notes and reflections on evidenced issues and both personal and online environmental factors affecting their agentic capacities during their online classes were written down. Some comments were also written down to be used in the individual feedback sessions with each student-teacher every other week.

In late semester B, students were divided in two focus groups so each of them had more time and felt free to engage in discussions and answer questions about past and present personal and academic experiences, as well as about their adopted and assigned positions in their online classes. Both focus groups were conducted in the same week with students using Spanish during the discussions. Three days after the pre-service teachers finished their online practicum at institutions; they were sent a survey via Microsoft Forms in order to get deeper information for data analysis as well as for triangulation purposes. These surveys comprised open-ended questions in Spanish that inquired about the pre-service teachers' past and present experiences that may have contributed to shaping their identities prior to their online practicum intervention, as well as self-assigned and assigned roles as online English teachers throughout their six-month online practicum intervention. With these surveys, the data was completely collected and ready to be analysed.

Data Analysis

The journal reflections on the whole-class discussions and on the student-teachers' recorded classes, as well as the focus groups transcripts and the survey answers were first coded, then categorised, and finally themed up following an iterative process according to the principles of thematic analysis. In the thematic analysis process, one started by looking for patterns among the identified phrases and sentences or coded data in order to build more abstract categories. These categories were interconnected, organised, and integrated in order to end up with recurring broad concepts or thematic clusters (Creswell, 2021). The prevalent themes in this analysis were named, refined, and filtered until ensuring they provided insights on the way the EFL pre-service teachers enacted their agentic capacities throughout their online classes.

Results

The main themes that emerged from the data analysis in order to answer the research question were: (1) a nuanced online teacher identity construction, (2) transforming online EFL learning through resourcefulness, student-centeredness, and empowerment, and (3) agency constraints in online EFL teaching. For the aim of this article and due to the word limit, only the findings related to the second and third theme were presented. Nonetheless, identity-related findings when necessary due to the close-knit relationship between agency and identities were noted (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Tao & Gao, 2021). For the sake of illustrating the elaborations on such themes, hereafter excerpts¹ that were translated from Spanish to English with some of the pre-service teachers' reflections and notes of mine were presented. Participants' names were deliberately changed in order to guarantee their right to be protected from identification when addressing them in such extracts.

Transforming Online EFL Learning through Resourcefulness, Student-centeredness, and Empowerment

This theme pertained to the exhibited and enhanced agentic capabilities of the pre-service teachers in their virtual classrooms, and how these abilities facilitated their implementation of revolutionary online English as Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy. Their responses and reflections indicated that their powerful agentic capacities allowed them exploring and using different software to present, practice, produce, and assess language. They manifested creative facilitator identities by being inquisitive on the pursuit of different software that allowed enhancing their English classes. By the same token, such agentic capacities also led them to go beyond the management of these programs to actively address students' backgrounds through the choice and creation of material thought for their learners. They asserted that although there were already-existing activities in the platforms, they preferred to develop them by themselves from scratch or adapt them thoroughly since such collective activities did not take into account their learners' particular cultural practices, contexts, interests, and needs.

In the course about software in education I saw some resources to practice different topics for Spanish classes mostly, so I started to look for other websites to widen the variety of resources in my English lessons and to provide them more personalised experiences. (John, survey)

I really liked Wordwall, Educaplay, and Edpuzzle... those ones let one adapt or... yes, I mean, besides there is like material already done by other people, they also gave us the option to create activities by our own out of nothing, and it's cool because that allows one to put examples, exercises, tasks that reflected the students' daily life, the customs they have... their needs, so... that was nice. Obviously, it required time, but, well, I helped myself with YouTube tutorials and so. (Ariana, focus group 1)

The thematic analysis also showed that through the pre-service teachers' enabled agentic capacities, they empowered their learners and initiated encouragement strategies and material for them to stay mentally strong and keep on doing their tasks in the online EFL class. Their comments and reflections depicted that they also accommodated their teaching to lead active breaks so that learners rested their mind and stretched their body. They utilised these diverse class activities to enhance vocabulary and provide a subtle foreign language experience for their students, embodying roles as compassionate motivators and innovative guides.

¹ All excerpts hereafter were translated from Spanish to English for publication purposes by me.

Well, as you know teacher, having English classes at that time of the day after a fully online shift is not so easy, so what I've done is implement some active breaks and take advantage of that to work on commands, expressions... I mean communication in English, which was not necessarily in the contents. (Mariah, whole-class discussion 13)

I like to share my screen and show and tell them encouraging messages that I have previously created whenever I see they are a little tired there while developing a task that I have just left them. (Gabriel, survey)

The student-teachers were also agentive in developing instructional material for students with internet connection problems and in creating strategies for them to join the synchronous encounters through the use of asynchronous resources such as WhatsApp voice messages and pictures, as well as PDF-turned input and practice for students who did not have any way to communicate at the moment of the class. These teacher-led actions made learners feel included in the online classes and did not deprive them from investing in them.

I consider that all students should have access to education either in English and the other subjects. So, I not only take into account the ones who are connected in the class, but also think about those who type me on the [WhatsApp] group saying, let's say, 'teacher, I don't have internet data for Meet on my parents' phones'. So, I tell them to send me voice notes doing their participation... or pictures... the idea is not to leave them forgotten just because they're not in the online class, you know. (Jonathan, whole-class discussion 9)

As I already know the connectivity troubles of some of my students, I always convert my notes written during the classes as explanations or language topic examples, and of course, the previously planned slides, and convert it all like to... a didactic guide in PDF format... so they revise the seen in the class and send the requested. (Jennifer, focus group 1)

Further, the pre-service teachers' responses and the recorded classes' observations illustrated that they enacted their enabled agentic capacities by promoting social justice and critical pedagogy in their online English class. They implemented multimodal texts such as videos, readings, cartoons, and infographs in which inequality and power issues were portrayed. Although the pre-service teachers' pupils did not have a proficient level, they actively raised their awareness on such issues and had them engage in small critical discussions as far as possible and use emojis and sentences to react on the topic in English. These actions were also motivated by the pre-service teachers' empathic empowerers identities.

I think our students need to be sensitive to the things that are happening around the world, I mean, they should be aware that just because they have a computer, internet, a warm house where to spend these difficult times, it doesn't mean others do too... and... well, I think I can help them talk about that from my English classes, so... I prepare basic paragraphs, graphic aids, news photos... and material like that in order to portray it on my screen and make them use English based on that. (Carolynne, focus group 2)

Teacher, well, as you have insisted that we teach under real-life situations, I, for example, include topics about the privileges that people with wealth and power get and... similar matters... and I push them to use their receptive and productive skills to analyse cartoons and memes on Google or Facebook, and write some phrases or short sentences so they read them aloud and we have kind of like a discussion about that. (Julian, whole-class discussion 18)

These findings illustrated that the pre-service teachers, empowered with agency, were able to make important pedagogical decisions and facilitate transformative changes in online EFL instructional settings

through didactic, socio-affective, and personal interventions. Such agentic capacities were enabled by personal factors such as their strong identities as creative facilitators and empathic empowerers and their basic competence on ICT and some software. This was not the case for all participants, though. Some other student-teachers experienced the opposite by being restrained to carry out actions of this kind, as was observed next.

Agency Constraints in Online EFL Teaching

This theme comprised the online personal and environmental factors and social structures that restricted some participants' agentic capacities, i.e., their capabilities to take control and initiative, make decisions, and lead transformative actions in their online EFL classes. Reflections and recorded class observations of some pre-service teachers portrayed that their lack of software-specific expertise deprived them of choosing and implementing suitable software and websites that were focused on EFL teaching and learning. Likewise, these student-teachers were not capable of adapting or developing activities so as to address their learners' backgrounds, interests, and needs, as well as to consider and maintain the contexts proposed by the textbook that the school managed.

I struggled a bit in the implementation of online resources. Maybe I didn't count on a repertoire of software and material of that kind and I know my students perceived that. I still consider myself weak in that matter. It is something I need to work on either by myself or with the help of some colleagues that do have a good competence in the management of several programs. (Megan, survey)

Teacher, well, I think my students could have received better [online] classes if I had had like a little training on apps and programs, although obviously you have provided us with some which I have been exploring when I have time, because you know I've been very busy with the issue that I told you last time. It is just also that... this virtual thing came so fast that I couldn't get prepared much. (Myriam, whole-class discussion 28)

The activities in this website look kind of isolated and generic. Make sure to do a deeper search on more pertinent activities or try to adapt them somewhat taking into account the contexts under which the topics are presented in the students' coursebooks. (Teacher's journal)

The thematic analysis also revealed that some EFL pre-service teachers' lacked of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and computer assisted language learning (CALL) literacy restrained their agentic capacities to incorporate and promote online collaboration, autonomy, and problem-solving components in the tasks they posed during their English lessons. Recorded class observations and their comments illustrated that although the individual activities they developed to practice the contents were centred on their learners, some student-teachers did not provide them with opportunities to produce and use language freely framed within discourse modes, as well as collaborate and autonomously negotiate meaning and interaction online through pair or group work. They claimed that they did not have enough time in their online classes to carry out these actions, but they were aware of online strategies and resources to help them do so.

My students enjoy the software like Wordwall, Educaplay, Edpuzzle, Socrative... Kahoot... they really like those activities because they are short, practical... they just have to click and choose from the interactive options... they practice the topics over there... it was a good way for me to assess their advance in their skills in English. (Peter, whole-class discussion, 24)

I consider that my students achieved the objectives in each class and I carried a good process with them. Maybe I feel they didn't do much group work, for example to develop specific

assignments in which they had to write or speak among them to end up with something or things like those. Perhaps it is something I will explore in future opportunities when I have a little more experience on tools that allow them to work that way. (Lady, survey)

Although my students didn't have the opportunity to perform certain tasks like creating stories, posters, presenting news, surveying people in class, and working some more autonomously because of resources and time issues, I think the skills that my students developed the most were reading comprehension, grammar, and vocabulary; and I feel glad they reached a higher level than the one they were in when we started. (Mario, survey)

In the same line, participants claimed that they were restrained to incorporate and deliver the content pertaining to criticality related to contemporary societal issues as well as to carry out projects in their online practicum as the institution supervisors did not allow them to do so since class time should be devoted to developing textbook content, and also because they were not acquainted with certain software that allowed to carry out project work similarly to the way it is done in in-person education. These power relation dynamics with instructors from schools seemed to deprive them of having the freedom and autonomy to perform different and uncommon FL pedagogical endeavours.

In my case, I really wanted to develop a project with the guys in this semester as I had told you... but it was impossible teacher because as you saw in the last recording, the [school] teacher wouldn't let me. She just said that those were the rules mandated by the coordinator. That we had to teach the activities in the book at its full... that we [trainee teachers] could only develop activities in each lesson... that the project work was to be done by her. (Vanessa, focus group 1)

I would have developed projects with my students, but I consider it is better to wait and go back to normal. I think we're not ready to apply the stages and rules that we learned about projects in seventh semester, I mean... with online resources one cannot replicate all the things and benefits that one can develop with projects in f2f teaching. (Michael, whole-class discussion 29)

One final factor that hindered the capabilities of some participants was the unstable and at times non-existent internet connection on both their end and their learners'. They often felt disappointed and complained that such an event downplayed their initiatives regarding online creative material, literacy practices, critical thinking, students' language use, and feedback strategies.

Among the hardest things I have had to face in this practicum are the internet breakups. When it is not my internet, it's theirs haha... sometimes I've even had to quit planning activities on the programs I use and tasks in which my students can actually use English to react let's say... to authentic reading and current controversial material in the class because that is something I have been very focused on in these practicums... but with those issues, it is kind of complex, teacher. (Emily, focus group 2)

Truth be told, teacher, it is very frustrating that you have planned something innovative, cool, interactive and all of a sudden... students cannot do anything... just because the broadband broke. Only 3 students are permitted to access the activity, but unfortunately they are currently located outside of the designated city or zone, which goes against the intended purpose. In response to potential internet outages, it is important to develop a contingency plan, such as creating a Plan B. This may involve preparing PDF materials that can be readily sent to students via messaging applications like WhatsApp. While asynchronous communication can be beneficial in ensuring continued access to materials, synchronous classes offer opportunities for students to actively engage in discussions, share critical opinions, and receive immediate

feedback from the instructor. This interactive approach can enhance the overall learning experience for students (Eve, whole-class discussion 16)

Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the way the pre-service teachers enacted their agentic capacities in online pedagogical practicum along with the factors that hinder or support such agentic actions as well as the influence of their self-perceived roles in them. Regarding the factors that downplayed their agentic capacities, these EFL pre-service teachers' initiatives and decision-making power were constrained by social and power structures such as school supervisors' mandates. The pre-service teachers were not agentic in making decisions regarding the implementation of methodologies or online innovative and beneficial strategies for their EFL learners' L2 acquisition as well as in the promotion of online collaboration, task and problem solving, as well as autonomy. The unequal power relation dynamics with instructors from schools seemed to deprive them of having the freedom and autonomy to improve FL teaching-learning practices as well as to engage in innovative methodologies in online environments that were not mandated and prescribed in the coursebook. Such onto-epistemic and power differences have long unleashed clashes in terms of disagreement and contradictions between the pre-service teachers and cooperating teachers (Mutlu, 2014), resulting in student-teachers' restriction of initiatives to undertake transformations in technology-mediated FL education.

In addition to identifying another factor that impacted pre-service teachers' agentic capacities, Ashton (2022) discovered that teachers tend to align their actions with their current or future desired identities. In the present study, the student-teachers' self-assumed roles as diffident risk-takers due to lack of CMC literacy, poor software skills, and newness sensation in online teaching also influenced their hesitations to take action in the online FL education environment. Likewise, their self-perceived roles as creative facilitators and empathic empowerers played a significant role in their initiatives to improve online EFL pedagogy.

Likewise, Taghizadeh and Basirat (2022) found that poor connectivity and lack of training on online teaching methodologies in teacher professional development courses configured technical, supportive, and pedagogical challenges in remote education delivery. In this case, student-teachers' lack of CMC and software-specific competence, and their frustration and negative predisposition provoked by bad previous experiences with internet connection also accounted for hindered agentic capacities. This also echoed Lim's (2021) findings, which posited that external factors restricting language teacher agency were macro-level policies, which do not include clear-cut and well-communicated initiatives pertaining to technological learning environment and resources as well as meso-level school's lack of resources and devices. In the same line of thought, Hampel and Stickler (2005) call for the importance of training language teachers in online language teaching and software-specific application so as to develop the necessary skills to address issues in environments of this nature.

With respect to affordances for online EFL pre-service teachers' agency, the found factors that supported and enabled their capabilities to undertake transformations support existing literature on this phenomenon. The self-training and autonomous skills developed from the pre-service teachers' creative facilitator and empathic empowerers identities enabled them to prioritize their students' physical and mental well-being. Additionally, they became proficient in various software and apps to design online tasks, exercises, and spaces tailored to their students' individual contexts and needs, rather than simply adopting pre-existing materials. In the same findings fashion, Ashton (2020; 2022) contends that despite the

challenges and constraints that language teachers may encounter in their endeavour, they managed to find and rely on nuances of techniques and resources that are suitable to their students' needs.

Initiatives of the kind ultimately aim at improving not only teachers' own skills in online teaching, but also at caring for their pupils' well-being and access to online education as well as providing an efficient and equitable online language educational delivery (Sari, 2021). In the study, the pre-service teachers managed to find strategies to help learners with low connection by adapting the synchronous content to asynchronous delivery of material and topics through worksheets and downloaded multimodal texts via WhatsApp.

The pre-service teachers also enacted their enabled agentic capacities by engaging in critical pedagogy and social justice despite the school's teacher supervisor strong recommendations on not to carry out activities that were out of the coursebook. Such critical reflective practices contributed to allow them to better inform pedagogical choices, self-develop, modify their underlying assumptions about online teaching and learning, and ultimately transform their online EFL practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Morgan, 2017). In this regard, it is important to remember the viewpoints of Lamy and Hampel (2007) on teachers as reflective practitioners in the realm of computer-mediated language learning: "engaging in self-reflection on teaching practices using online tools; and reflecting on their own online teaching methods" (p. 73). The former exhorts online language teachers to exchange their thoughts and reflections on their online practice with colleagues or teacher educators, and the latter encourages them to reflect on their own practice by employing instruments such as journals, critical peers, and self-observation based on their own recorded classes.

Limitations of the Research

As in all research works, there exist limitations. There were three limitations that affected and impeded the generalizability of the results and the strong drawing of universalising conclusions. One limitation of the study was the relatively short duration of data collection. While valuable insights were gained, a longer period of observation and analysis would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of how pre-service teachers enact their agentic capacities. This could have provided more consistent insights on the factors affecting the enactment of said actions and initiatives. Another limitation was the lack of rigor in the selection and starting measurement of the 16 participants' ICT and software-specific skills. The results could increase the generalizability and external validity if all of the pre-service teachers had been measured through a test for the sake of homogeneity and follow-up analysis of possible reasons why some of them self-constructed from weak online teacher identities that in turn may have constituted inner factors affecting their agentic capacities.

Conclusions and Implications

S/FL education underwent sudden shifts in its delivery and access mode after the global pandemic at the beginning of this second decade. This resulted in innovative approaches to conducting pedagogical practicum, as seen in various teacher education programs in Colombia. What seems not to update are the bilingual policies and licensure (B.A.) programs' curricula and syllabi wherein online language teaching education and assessment and the pre-service teachers' initiatives and decisions within online settings are incorporated and acknowledged.

This case study sought to explore the way 16 EFL pre-service teachers enacted their agentic capacities and the factors that enabled or downplayed such actions in their online pedagogical practicum. The findings showed that the student-teachers' agentic capacities were hindered mainly due to external factors such as unequal power relations with their school's teacher supervisors, poor internet connectivity, lack of CALL and CMC literacy, and low software-specific skills. These factors led them to construct themselves with weak self-assumed positioning and in turn restricted them from selecting and using appropriate efficient apps and software programs to deliver content and provide feedback, as well as engaging their pupils in literacy and linguistic features practices, online collaboration in tasks, and implementing online methodologies that aimed at disrupting the traditional techniques and activities based on the classroom textbook.

Despite these constraints, however, some pre-service teachers' agentic capacities were supported and enabled due to rather inner ontic factors such as resilience-driven identities as creative facilitators and empathic empowerers, resourcefulness traits, and empathy with the pupils on the other side of the screen. These factors led them to take actions related to self-expertise on some programs to deliver online experiences centred on their pupils' needs, encourage low-investing and unmotivated learners and care for their well-being, adapt FL content delivery to those with insufficient connectivity, and strive for fostering critical pedagogy and social justice themes in their EFL online activities.

These findings have significant implications for various stakeholders in the field of FL teaching education. It is expected that licensure programs plan and design curricula and syllabi that put online teacher agency and identity at the centred and that incorporate teaching methodologies and assessment components such as CMC and CALL training specifically focused on FL pedagogy that go in line with contemporary digital realities in the Global South as well as situated understanding of teacher agentic capacities. This can involve offering courses for student-teachers to enhance their competency in technology and software, as well as their skills in teaching languages online through S/FL methods. Likewise, practicum teacher supervisors both from universities are exhorted to address factors affecting pre-service teachers' self-assumed and assigned roles and agentic capacities in online pedagogical practicum courses. By doing so, EFL teachers are not only able to enact their online teaching literacy, but also be aware of the agentic positioning and strong identities when taking initiatives and making decisions related to resources, content delivery, and online methodologies to ultimately transform FL teaching-learning experiences in remote settings.

Suggestions for Future Research

Even though the present study employed multiple data gathering instruments that provided paramount findings, further research on this research topic is expected to examine agentic capacities experiences from EFL pre-service teachers through narratives in order to gain insights on detailed critical incidents and key events associated with specific factors that lead to empowering or hindering EFL pre-service teachers' agentic capacities told by their voices. This research endeavour may be suitably carried out with fewer participants than the sample in the present study. By doing so, the pre-service teachers' narratives can be analysed in depth. Likewise, future studies can profit from in-depth examinations of individualities of the participants over longer periods of time. Undertaking longitudinal explorations on the way agentic capacities are enacted may provide fruitful insights that contribute to enrich this research topic.

Given the challenges faced in logistics, such as coordinating group meetings for focus groups and class discussions, it is recommended for future research to utilize online tools like video call platforms or apps

for data collection. This can be an also be an opportunity for pre-service teachers to keep on engaging in online environments and can contribute to more openness regarding identity- and agency-related talks.

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Conflict of Interest

Teachers' identities are formed through the negotiation of meanings between convention and innovation, between fixed meanings and an individual's developing beliefs gained through participation.

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