

# Pre-Service Teachers' Perspectives on Learning and Teaching English as a Second Language

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## Abstract

This study used qualitative methods to discover pre-service teacher (PST) perspectives on learning and teaching English as a second language in the Japanese school system. To help understand and provide context to this study, a literature review was conducted using the themes of Teaching English in English (TEE), PST Beliefs About Learning and Teaching English, Self-Efficacy and Confidence, and The Needs of PST Teachers to Teach English. The study consisted of interviews with seven second-, third-, and fourth-year Yamaguchi Gakugei University (YGU) elementary, junior, and senior high school education students and an online Google Forms questionnaire given to 71 students from the same demographics, with n=8 or an approximate 10% response rate. The interviews were transcribed, analyzed, coded, and categorized into five categories representing the study's main findings. The interview findings indicated that YGU PSTs had a 40-60% confidence level in using English, they had a 0-70% confidence level in teaching English, with TEE being 70-90%, and the current YGU English Program successfully provides various learning opportunities, but changes are needed given weaknesses still exist. The results of the questionnaire were similar to the interview results, for YGU PSTs indicated they still needed to develop confidence in using and teaching English, they valued and learned a lot from their YGU English education, but the current program still needs changes. Some of the changes suggested were to add more English classes, such as practical teacher training and grammar, and to provide more communication and cultural learning opportunities with foreigners.

Based on the findings, YGU should acknowledge the successes of their current English education program but also need to make changes to help PSTs address the requirements of the new course of study by MEXT. Ultimately, changes are required to help PSTs become more vital educators who can help meet the needs of their future students to become productive members of the emerging globalized community.

## Introduction

The author of this paper, along with countless other post-secondary English educators in faculties of education, has been teaching methods of English education to PSTs specializing in English education, as well as in elementary and daycare education. The problem is that even though many PSTs perform very well in university English education courses, when they start to teach in the "Real" world, many lack the confidence and perhaps the ability to replicate similar results with their own students. One such example is the language usage ratios they

are taught to use when instructing English lessons, which, if possible, should be as close to 100% as possible in favour of TEE to their students. Many new teachers default to using Japanese first, given they need more confidence in their abilities, or perhaps senior teachers or administrators in their schools advise them to refrain from using the English first method. The English first method is the process where English is used as the primary instructional language before defaulting to using sparse traces of Japanese to instruct their students. Why new teachers default to using English teaching methods they were not taught during their four years in faculties of education is not known, so one of the aims of this study was to find out this answer from current YGU PSTs who are students of the author of this study in the faculty of education.

As mentioned earlier, to help understand the issues faced by PSTs, this study looked to literature to help better understand their learning contexts. One such issue is Teaching English in English, or TEE, a needed practice stipulated by MEXT in 2013 for all junior high school educators, where English classes should be conducted in 100% English only. This will be discussed at much more length in this paper. These types of expectations put on PSTs even before they begin teaching help us understand why many of them lack confidence in their own English skills, especially those needed to teach in live classes to actual students. Another issue this paper will cover is PST self-efficacy and confidence. Many future teachers often lack self-confidence in their own English skills, believing they need to be perfect before they can even consider teaching others, not knowing this unobtainable goal is too heavy a burden to carry. It seems only natural that when a PST graduates from university, this weight, in addition to the perfect expectations they feel they need to meet from supervisors, administration, and parents in their new schools, often results in in-service teachers not using TEE, as they default to using Japanese first.

PSTs feel many pressures, and to better understand them, this study purposed to explore the perspectives of university education students concerning the learning of English as a second language and their subsequent confidence in teaching the language to their future students.

## **Literature Review**

### **Teaching English in English (TEE)**

Teaching English in English or TEE is an acronym created to express the demand of the Ministry of Education or MEXT in 2013, where all instruction in junior high school classes was to start using English as the only medium of instruction (Takagaki & Iwai, 2017). Although, when English is taught in universities, the ratio of English to Japanese used in lessons is up to the instructors (Takagaki & Iwai, 2017). However, TEE is of great concern to teacher-educators, and research is needed to determine whether this goal is achievable.

Research conducted in a public university in Japan found that students felt more comfortable using TEE as long as it was not used in teaching primary content, and when needed, they should provide Japanese assistance (Takagaki & Iwai, 2017). Many students were reported as favouring TEE instruction, which also improved their willingness to communicate (WTC) (Takagaki & Iwai, 2017). It has been found that the higher a student's English proficiency level is, the higher they favour the use of TEE (Takagaki & Iwai, 2017).

A study conducted with 98 public JH school English teachers found that teachers were anxious about using TEE, given that they lacked the confidence to use English for instruction and felt their students might struggle significantly with the method (Machida, 2019). This anxiety led to many teachers requesting training opportunities to prepare them for implementing the 2013 MEXT policy (Machida, 2019). The anxieties felt by the JH teachers are very similar to those felt by PSTs, for they feared their own command of English, how well their students will learn essential information like grammar, and, in general, how enjoyable communication lessons will be (Machida, 2019).

Before 2013, MEXT recommended that, in principle, classes be conducted in English to increase the number of English learning opportunities students had as they transformed lessons into active communication hubs (Nagamine, 2014). Since the 2013 MEXT TEE enactment, repercussions have occurred for both PSTs and in-service EFL teachers (Nagamine, 2014). Such resistance to the enactment has resulted in some teachers saying that they feel unduly pressured to improve their English skills to native levels and that it is impossible for them to do so (Machida, 2019)! Some teachers even indicated they felt MEXT would ultimately lay off Japanese SH teachers if their English proficiency were insufficient (Nagamine, 2014). To help reduce such extreme anxieties, teacher educators, in collaboration with education administrators, should provide learning opportunities for EFL educators, both PST and in-service, to share information and develop their TEE practical teaching skills, with lesson planning focusing on essential skills such as grammar and vocabulary (Nagamine, 2014).

Parallel to TEE, English-medium instruction (EMI) is also being implemented at large in universities throughout Japan, whereby MEXT wants to internationalize tertiary education (Brown, 2016). National universities were the first to adopt EMI, followed by private universities. Unlike European universities, most Japanese universities do not offer complete EMI degree programs, favouring Japanese-medium programs, although government funding for such internationalized programs is increasing (Machida, 2019). One example of such programs appearing in institutions is the Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) program, where English is used as the medium of instruction to teach other subjects such as math, science, and history, which allows for interdisciplinary collaboration between educators and students (Brown, 2016). Such changes in tertiary education have the potential to positively influence the TEE practises of in-service secondary-level educators (Brown, 2016).

### **PST Beliefs About Learning and Teaching English**

Various anxieties exist for PSTs in English education programs at universities in Japan and worldwide. To help remove such anxieties from PSTs, we must first examine their beliefs about learning and teaching English. Research conducted in Macau with 60 fourth-year pre-primary PSTs taking English language courses showed that teacher education programs are more likely to influence PST practises than other factors (Reynolds et al., 2021). It was also found that PST teacher beliefs could still be changed, given that they have not had enough time to solidify, allowing teacher educators to positively influence their students' future teaching practices (Reynolds et al., 2021). The study also found that instead of learning pedagogical knowledge, PSTs preferred to spend most of their time improving their English proficiency levels (Reynolds et al., 2021). This tendency undoubtedly results in a deficiency of

pedagogical knowledge that negatively affects their teaching beliefs and practises (Reynolds et al., 2021). The study also found that pre-primary PSTs possessed higher self-efficacy belief levels if they were provided collaborative professional development activities such as teacher networks, peer observation, and learning communities (Reynolds et al., 2021). PST Lesson planning beliefs were also shared in the study, saying that lesson plans were vital to successful teaching (Reynolds et al., 2021).

In another PST study of 66 ELT students in a faculty of education in Turkey, beliefs about their needs for improved curriculum were shared as they expressed the desire for improved instructional/practical teaching skills and better development of content knowledge (Rocha Erkaya & Ergünay, 2021). Like other studies, the PSTs emphasized their desire to reduce the number of theoretical courses they received in trade for more practical courses that offer hands-on experience to develop their teaching skills (Rocha Erkaya & Ergünay, 2021). In addition, the PSTs also believed there was a need for courses that helped develop their emotions and attitudes towards the profession (Rocha Erkaya & Ergünay, 2021). The requests made by the students are supported by studies that indicate PST programs need both theoretical and practical courses to create a more balanced curriculum (Rocha Erkaya & Ergünay, 2021).

### **Self-Efficacy and Confidence**

The key to a successful educator is to believe in one's own abilities and the confidence to use those abilities. When it comes to a specific skill set that ESL educators need, those beliefs become even more essential to develop within PST educational programs. In a study conducted within an Australian faculty of education, PSTs who subscribed to a pragmatic orientation as a teaching philosophy had high self-efficacy toward teaching and believed that their skills and knowledge were suited to becoming good teachers in the future (Naylor et al., 2015). This study helped show that self-efficacy and confidence can be gained through positive experiences with children in various capacities in and outside the classroom (Naylor et al., 2015). It was also found that teachers who subscribed to what is known as a Transitional Orientation preferred to learn through a combination of theory, collaborative discussions, reflections, and autonomous learning (Naylor et al., 2015). When teacher-educators provide such learning opportunities, many PSTs want to try new things, be more creative, and experiment in new ways (Naylor et al., 2015). If teacher-educators can tap into such orientational beliefs of PSTs, we can help our students stop giving up when facing adversity and find new ways to learn and succeed (Naylor et al., 2015).

Empirical research supports that teacher beliefs about instruction are constructed through their own learning experiences (Nishino, 2009). In support of this, teacher-education programs should acknowledge the beliefs that PSTs bring with them at the beginning of their education and try to nurture those beliefs into becoming part of the students' professional teaching skill set in the future (Nishino, 2009). Even if such teaching beliefs appear unrealistic, naïve or inappropriate, teacher-educators should support PSTs' journeys to discover how those beliefs align with the needs they will require to gain self-efficacy and confidence in teaching ESL to their students one day (Nishino, 2009).

In a study that looked at teacher reflection, teacher resilience, and self-efficacy as

predictors of work engagement for 512 English educators in China, it was found that self-efficacy, teacher reflection, and resilience directly predicted outcomes of work engagement (Heng & Chu, 2023). The importance of this study for PST English educators is that they need to foster self-efficacy, reflection, and resilience in their students to promote work engagement (Heng & Chu, 2023). Self-efficacy has been found to play an essential role in PSTs' abilities to perform specific tasks effectively, approach challenges, solve problems, and handle stress (Heng & Chu, 2023). Of the three predictors affecting English educators' work engagement, self-efficacy was the most robust direct predictor (Heng & Chu, 2023).

Many factors contribute to the creation of anxiety for PSTs, such as confidence, English skills, lesson preparation and delivery, and classroom management (Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018). To help alleviate anxiety, PSTs need to recognize its causes, such as expectations placed on them by their teachers, supervisors, and themselves (Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018). If not appropriately treated, anxiety for PSTs can result in the inability to sleep, restless movements, and the inability to speak correctly (Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018).

### **The Needs of PST Teachers to Teach English**

A study conducted with PST English teachers in Indonesia found that the PST system was inadequate in preparing future teachers with the skills and knowledge they will need for the classroom (Zein, 2015). Many elementary educators are hired without proper English skills or teaching qualifications despite attending PST education programs (Zein, 2015). The Indonesia PST English educational system must be drastically revised to provide instructional components and language proficiency development for future teachers (Zein, 2015). The PST programs only require students to take a single unit of English training, which is supposed to provide them with a basic level of English proficiency. This indicates that most PSTs will never develop the required proficiencies for teaching the language to students (Zein, 2015).

In Japan, MEXT requires that PST education provide the necessary skills and knowledge to teach foreign languages and other subject activities (Honda et al., 2017). These directives were supported by the fact that English was to become an official subject in primary schools in Japan (Honda et al., 2017). To acquire such skills, the PST program at Chiba University offered English majors opportunities to do overseas teaching practicums (Honda et al., 2017). During such practicums, PSTs were encouraged to develop their intercultural understanding, acquire more English communication skills, and collaborate with others as they understand their roles (Honda et al., 2017). The main goals of the practicum were to acquire practical instructional competencies in multicultural environments, create various teaching materials, and acquire the ability to create, implement, and evaluate global partnership programs (Honda et al., 2017).

In Japan, teaching English in primary schools has been a challenge, to say the least, for many educators who never had the opportunity to study how to instruct the language before MEXT created the new course of study when they were PSTs themselves. Primary school English (PSE) teachers require a diverse skill set of knowledge, teaching ability, and English proficiency to be used in various educational contexts (Okumura, 2020). Like many other countries, elementary in-service teachers are generally trained to become homeroom teachers who cover the spectrum of subjects taught in the elementary curriculum. English, therefore, becomes a burden since they were not explicitly trained as ESL teachers (Okumura, 2020).

Although 90% of elementary homeroom teachers in Japan in 2007 were charged with teaching PSE, many of them reported not having self-efficacy beliefs in their own English and ESL teaching skills, which continues to this day to pose a massive problem for MEXT and PST English training programs (Okumura, 2020). Research has found that PSE training projects that utilize peer coaching can help PSTs acquire necessary skills in authentic contexts with children in learner-centred ways (Okumura, 2020).

As mentioned earlier, many new in-service educators default to using Japanese to instruct English to students, and the reason for this is not always clearly defined. Studies indicate a need for support to be provided to newly graduated PSTs when they begin working in the public school system, for if not supplied, they may revert to their pre-trained beliefs and practises (Kourieos & Diakou, 2019). Studies also indicate that in-service teachers' inability to use TEE confidently in class for purposes besides teaching premade lesson plans or instructions from textbooks often creates insecurities for the educators in the form of low confidence, anxiety, and overall frustration in their jobs (Kourieos & Diakou, 2019).

One need expressed by PSTs to help improve their self-efficacy and confidence in using and teaching English is to provide more live communication opportunities in various learning contexts (Kumaki, 2023). This need was perceived even more during the COVID-19 pandemic when most schools took classes online, allowing all learners and educators to see the full value of active communication, especially in face-to-face contexts (Kumaki, 2023). To help provide such valuable learning contexts, elementary school teachers who teach English must have proficient pronunciation, vocabulary, and speaking and listening skills to teach the language (Okumura, 2017). Especially when shortcomings are noticed for such teachers in their English skill sets, collaboration with peers in schools can help support and professionally develop skills that may be needed by in-service educators (Okumura, 2017). The value of such peer coaching collaborations cannot be overstated, as they provide opportunities for teachers to share knowledge, provide feedback, and support one another in various ways (Okumura, 2017). To help develop such collaboration skills, PST educators should provide similar learning opportunities in faculties of education (Okumura, 2017). In a 2016 study conducted with 21 third- and fourth-year PSTs, two groups were created: the seniors and the juniors (Okumura, 2017). The seniors were tasked with creating and conducting lessons, while the juniors were responsible for creating teaching materials and providing any other support needed (Okumura, 2017). The collaboration between the two groups allowed all participants to develop more robust knowledge bases, while the seniors also gained practical teaching skills which they would soon use after graduating (Okumura, 2017).

Another valuable need mentioned in research is that PST education should provide appropriate pedagogical foundations that prepare teachers to teach English using global and local contexts (Nishino, 2009). Part of this education should help PST learners realize that local contexts refer to classrooms as families, teachers as mentors, and that language is the unifying entity that bonds them all together (Nishino, 2009). In line with such learning, PSTs also need to learn that language must be taught using appropriate cultural understandings like interpersonal cultures, for without such knowledge, barriers can be created that stop the ability for effective collaborations to occur (Machida, 2022). Collaborations are essential learning opportunities, especially for PSTs, as they share their personal experiences and opinions with

others, creating their future identities as educators (Rodríguez, 2013). Such collaborations are essential for PSTs because such skills become indispensable for in-service teachers as they work together to educate real students (Rodríguez, 2013).

Finally, PSTs need to understand and be able to implement the new course of study proposed by MEXT, which indicates that English learning should form a foundation for active communication with others as learners acquire knowledge and skills in various contexts (Nakashima, 2021). Such learning should also develop students' abilities in self-expression and decision-making while cultivating learners' motivation to learn more and understand their place in the world (Nakashima, 2021). Most importantly, PST programs must teach how to make language learning more practical by providing enriching activities that allow students to fully use the vocabulary, expressions, and English skills they have already acquired (Nakashima, 2021).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants for this study consisted of seven second-, third-, and fourth-year Yamaguchi Gakugei University (YGU) elementary, junior, and senior high school education students who were interviewed using a semi-structured format. In addition, online links were given to 71 students from the same demographics to an online Google Forms questionnaire, with  $n=8$  or an approximate 10% response rate from those invited to participate. The questionnaire was conducted anonymously, so it could not be ascertained with 100% accuracy, but it was the author's feeling that some, if not all, of the PSTs who took part in the eight interviews were the same as those who completed the online Google Forms questionnaire. With this in mind, the number of participants can only be estimated to be between eight and sixteen, or an  $n=8$  value with 100% certainty.

### **Guiding Research Questions**

To help achieve the study's purpose, the following eight guiding research questions were used:

1. Do preservice teachers feel confident in their abilities to conduct English lessons for their future students, especially concerning the use of English as the main instructional language?
2. Do preservice teachers feel the current English education in their faculty is adequate to provide them with the skills and confidence levels needed to effectively teach their students in the future?
3. In what ways, if any, would preservice teachers change their current English education curriculum to better equip themselves to meet their learning needs and those of their future students?
4. What do preservice teachers feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the English education they have been receiving in their faculty of education?

Given that the study was qualitative, the research questions were created using open-ended questions, allowing the participants to answer them in a non-quantifiable way freely. The author believes such questions allow PSTs to express their thoughts and feelings openly without being restricted to perceived or defined values.

To answer the research questions, the study used two related data-gathering methods: interviews and questionnaires. Similar questions were used in both methods, but the medium of delivery and collection varied according to the nature of the methods.

## Interviews

To allow YGU PSTs the freedom to express and share their thoughts and perspectives on learning and teaching English as a second language, the author thought it best to use qualitative methods such as the semi-structured interviews that were conducted. To help guide the interview process, a 10-question interview guide was created, which used questions that closely aligned with the four research statements listed above. Figure 1 is a copy of the interview guide used in this study.

### Figure 1

*Interview Guide - Pre-Service Teachers' Perspectives on Learning and Teaching English as a Second Language (n=7, 20 Minute Interviews)*

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### Questions for 20-minute interviews:

1. How confident are you in using English, especially for oral communication?
  2. How confident are you in your ability to teach English to your future students?
  3. How confident do you feel about using English as the instructional language to teach the subject to your future students?
  4. How do you feel about the English education you have received at YGU?
  5. Do you feel the current English education in YGU is good enough to provide you with the skills and confidence levels needed to effectively teach your students in the future?
  6. What ways, if any, would you change the current English education curriculum to better equip you and your classmates to meet your learning needs and those of your future students?
  7. Do you think there is a need to add new additional YGU English courses?
  8. What do you feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the English education you have been receiving at YGU?
  9. Do you feel there are any English teaching or learning needs that have not been taught to you and your classmates in YGU?
  10. Are there any other English learning/teaching issues in YGU you think need attention?
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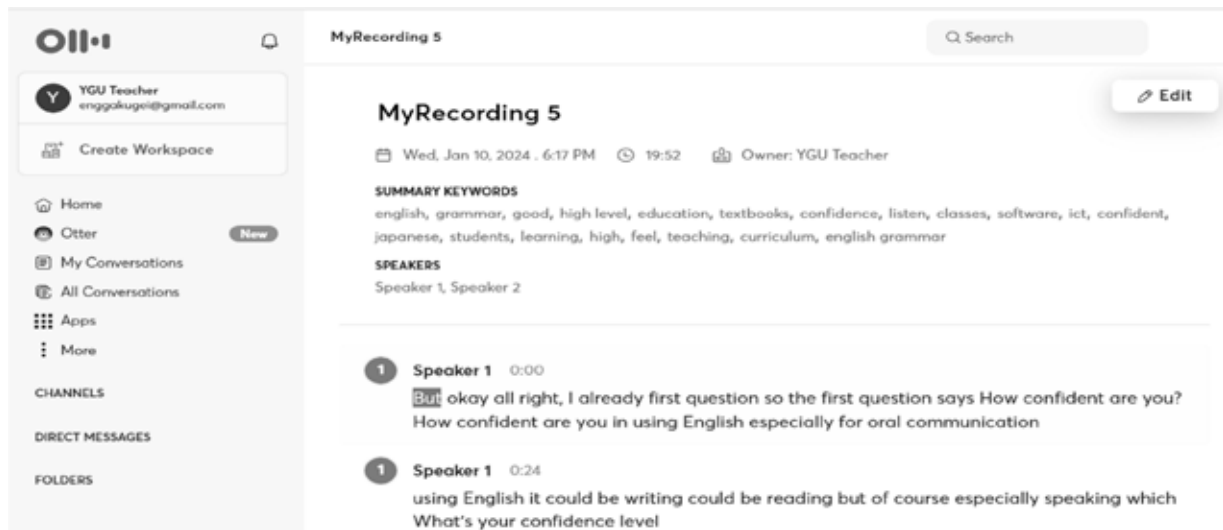
Initially, the goal was to conduct about three to five interviews. Surprisingly, the response rate to participate in this portion of the study was so high that we had eight PST students indicate they wanted to be interviewed, and in the end, seven interviews were conducted. The location for the interviews was in the author's YGU office, and they were scheduled intermittently throughout about one week, with a maximum of three interviews being conducted in one day. Several recording methods were utilized to record the interviews, to ensure the accuracy and safekeeping of the data, and to improve the efficiency of the



transcription process. The recording methods used were an HD Sony video camera with an SD card, a Panasonic audio recorder, an audio recorder on an iPhone 15, and the Otter.ai App on an iPad Pro. Otter.ai has the ability not only to record and store the audio in its cloud drives but also to transcribe the words and separate them by "Speaker 1, 2, 3, etc." After logging into your online account, the software allows you to access your recordings and transcriptions, and you can even download both so they can be saved on your own devices. Figure 2 is a copy of the online version of the software as it was used in this study.

**Figure 2**

*Otter.ai Online Software – Used for Recording and Transcribing the PSTs’ Interviews*



At the beginning of the 20-minute interviews, the interviewees were given a beverage as they were asked to relax. They were assured that their answers would remain strictly confidential and that aliases would be used instead of their actual names. They were also ensured that there were no incorrect answers and that they were free to ask questions to be repeated or explained further. When the interviewees indicated they were ready, the recording devices were switched on, and the interview process began. The Otter.ai recording/transcripts were all stopped at almost exactly 20 minutes, which was formally the maximum time given for the free accounts use. When the interviews were completed, the interviewees were thanked for their participation and were given small snacks in thanks for their help. After the Otter.ai recording was stopped, they were also asked if they had any further comments to make, as recordings were still made using the other devices. The interviewees usually declined to comment any further.

After all of the interviews were conducted, copies of the transcripts were downloaded in Word format, and the process of checking their contents began. Over about four days, the seven sets of transcripts were compared to the audio recordings to confirm their accuracy. It was found in several cases that the Otter.ai app did not correctly transcribe what was said, and corrections needed to be made by the author to ensure the reliability of the content. After the content from the transcripts was corrected, the coding process began over another three-to-four-day period, where each transcript was checked in line with the research questions and the study's stated purpose. Yellow highlights were made directly to the text, and then comment

bubbles were made to the right of the text, with green highlights of codes created to represent the most important points. After this, the codes were copied to a master table where all seven interviewees' alias names were listed. Please see Table 1 for more details. Aliases were used to help protect the identity of the PST students who participated in the study, as in most studies. After the codes were transposed to the table, they were grouped into five categories that best represented the overall statements made by the PSTs during the interviews. Once again, please see Table 1 for verification of this process.

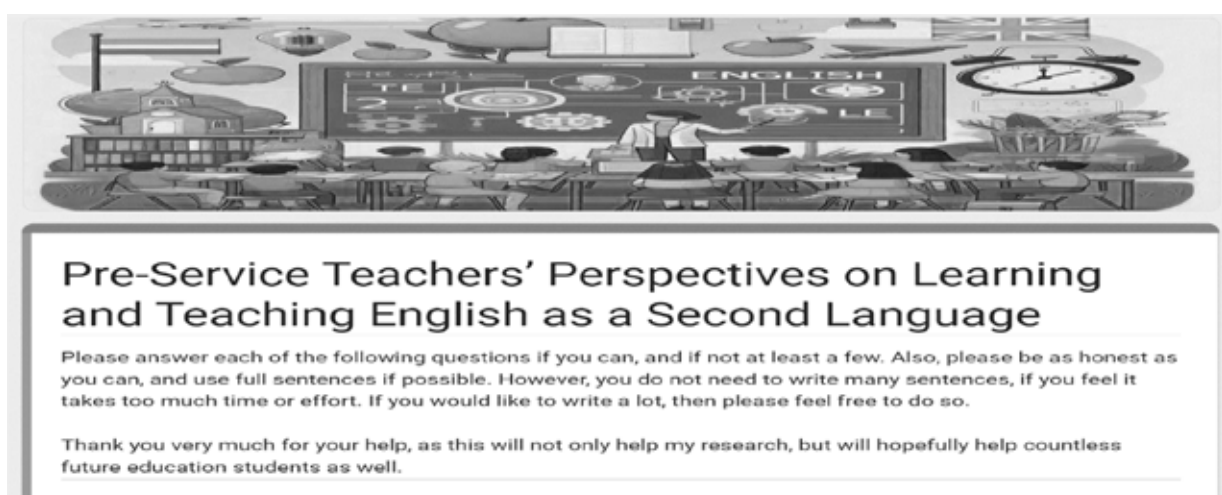
## Questionnaire

As mentioned, a questionnaire was also used in this study to allow those who did not participate in the interviews to share their thoughts about their perspectives on the YGU English education they received. In many ways, the questions resembled, if not directly mimicked, those of the questions used in the Figure 1 Interview Guide. To allow ease of access to the questions and for data processing, Google Forms, which can be seen in Figure 3, was used. A link to the questionnaire form was emailed to 71 students in second-, third-, and fourth-year Yamaguchi Gakugei University (YGU) elementary, junior, and senior high school education programs. The email indicated that the students were not required to complete the questionnaire, but if they were able to and had an interest, their responses would contribute significantly to helping to create better learning/teaching opportunities in the YGU English education program. Although the questionnaire and email were both written in English, it was believed that the contents were relatively easy for the intended PSTs and that many would reply, yielding at least a 10% response rate.

## Figure 3

*Google Docs Online Questionnaire (Given to 71 YGU Second, Third, and Fourth-Year Students - Response Rate  $n=8$  or Approximately 10%)*

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The image shows a screenshot of a Google Forms questionnaire. At the top, there is a header image of a classroom with a teacher at a whiteboard and students at desks. Below the image, the title of the questionnaire is displayed in bold: "Pre-Service Teachers' Perspectives on Learning and Teaching English as a Second Language". Underneath the title, there is a paragraph of instructions: "Please answer each of the following questions if you can, and if not at least a few. Also, please be as honest as you can, and use full sentences if possible. However, you do not need to write many sentences, if you feel it takes too much time or effort. If you would like to write a lot, then please feel free to do so." Below the instructions, there is a thank-you message: "Thank you very much for your help, as this will not only help my research, but will hopefully help countless future education students as well."

1. How confident are you in using English, especially for oral communication?
2. How do you feel about the English education you have received at this university?
3. How confident are you in your ability to teach English to your future students?
4. What ways, if any, would you change the current English education program in your

university?

5. How confident do you feel about using English as the instructional language to teach your future students?
  6. If you like, then please use this section to provide any other information, perspectives, or opinions.
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After about a week, nine responses were given, one being a false, incomplete response. The eight complete responses were then downloaded and saved in Excel format. The questionnaire results were then analyzed and compared to the eight interviews and to this study's purpose and questions.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Interviews**

The interviews for this study went surprisingly well, considering seven of them were eventually conducted, all within one week. During the interviews, it was noticed that most PSTs were understandably nervous, given the context. However, they usually relaxed after a few minutes had passed and then were able to successfully answer questions as they were guided and supported by the interviewer. It was found that questions often needed to be restated and sometimes rephrased to be better understood. Given that the interviews were only semi-structured, many linked questions were asked of the PSTs in response to their answers. Several interesting and thought-provoking statements were made as a result, such as "English has the positive power to raise my confidence" and "I was afraid of making mistakes and being laughed at in HS English lessons!" There was one upper-year interviewee who struggled with answering the first few questions. However, after some time had passed, they were able to open up and provide insights and recommendations such as "More levelled classes are needed to cater to the different learning needs of students" and "More ICT instruction is needed to better understand elementary software-based textbooks."

In the end, after 140 minutes of interviews had been transcribed, highlighted, coded, transposed, and categorized, five main categories were created from 100 codes, which can be seen on the left side of Table 1. Many of the 100 codes were cut so that a summary list of them could fit into this paper, as shown in Table 1. For a complete list of all the codes and their categories, please scan the QR code provided in Figure 4 directly below Table 1. The categories created in Table 1 and their corresponding codes will be discussed as they are presented under five summarized category headings.

**Table 1**

*Interview Results - Pre-Service Teachers' Perspectives on Learning and Teaching English as a Second Language (n=7, 20 Minute Interviews)*

Category / Theme	Carrie	Jake	Lisa	Liz	Mike	Rose	Sue
<b>Confidence in Using English is From 40-60%, Especially Speaking</b>	She has confidence when speaking to YGU teachers and students. Easier to express meaning using oral communication than writing.	He feels less confident than others because he usually gets nervous, especially in English.  Enjoys speaking to interact and share interesting information.	40-50% confidence in using English, because sometimes she cannot understand what people are saying and cannot decide what she wants to say. Speaking is easier than writing.	She normally is not friendly and is nervous when speaking to others when first meeting. English has the positive power to raise her confidence to 60% when using it, especially in YGU classes.	Believes in himself and is confident in his own character. Has confidence in himself but it is not complete.	Speaking is easier than writing because of not having to worry about grammar and you can use gestures while giving different feelings.	She has about a 45% confidence level in using English with high confidence in listening. Speaking is low confidence.
<b>Confidence in Teaching English is 0-70% With TEE Being 70-90%</b>	So so confident in using TEE but wants to use mostly English to teach grade five students. 90% and 60% grade three.	He has no confidence in teaching English and feels he still has lots to learn about teaching, for he finds it difficult to interact with students.	She does not have the confidence to teach English because she does not have real experience in teaching it.	70% Confident in teaching. Learned she needs to use plain English with short sentences to help students understand more.	Does not think he is a high level teacher now but in the future will be at least a 700-80% level teacher. Prefers 70% English Instructional Use.	40% confidence in using only English to teach, rather use 80% if teaching grade five in elementary school.	Says she has "So So" confidence and seemed to focus on the need/difficulty of following predefined textbooks.
<b>The Current YGU English Program is Successful as it Provides Many Skill Building Opportunities for Presenting, Speaking, Grammar, Vocabulary, Confidence, etc.</b>	She thinks YGU English is good because she has higher confidence in speaking English, due in part to her goal of wanting to speak fluently to professors.	YGU English has a high education level because it uses PowerPoint presentations, whereas other courses use only text reading and pronunciation lessons.	YGU English education has been good as she has learned vocabulary, grammar, speaking skills and ICT.  Strongest learning has been speaking.	She was very impressed with the interaction opportunities offered in the author's class and became highly motivated to want to communicate with the instructor and other students.	Not afraid in YGU to study English as opposed to HS where he did not like English and didn't speak. The author's class gives him confidence, like "I can do it!"	YGU has been interesting for it offered her first opportunities to do plays, presentations, and speech in English in front of others. Allowed her to cooperate with her friends.	She felt English was difficult in HS. She felt that the content in YGU textbooks was easier than textbooks in HS.

<p><b>Changes are Needed to the YGU English Program That Include More Classes and Opportunities to Interact with Senior Students, Learn More Grammar, Vocabulary, and Speaking Skills, Etc.</b></p>	<p>Wants more writing opportunities and to learn more about writing lesson plans for English lessons. Wants opportunities to talk with other foreigners in English and a new speech writing course.</p>	<p>Wants more English classes in YGU. Wants opportunities to learn more English skills and more English teaching skills. More writing and speech tests about social problems.</p>	<p>More teaching skills chances / opportunities are needed! Overall, need more learning opportunities for vocabulary, grammar, and speaking skills. Need more group activities and wants curriculum separated by teaching levels like elementary, JH, and SH.</p>	<p>Need to create more communication opportunities for students of all levels, motivation and skills. Have two or three students go in front of class and discuss various topics, while others in the class comment, question, and support.</p>	<p>He feels the need to have new courses that touch upon foreign cultures more, not just Canada but several other countries as well. Look at people, with food, lifestyle, clothes, etc. Should have more EIKEN prep classes.</p>	<p>Need more opportunities in YGU to connect with seniors. Do this by allowing classes to be taken together, allowing conversations and discussions. Need more reading classes, using textbooks and various English books.</p>	<p>She feels we need to have more levelled classes to cater to the learning needs of our students. Wants to learn more about how to use PC-based textbooks in lessons. She wants to learn more about the elementary school course of study.</p>
<p><b>Strengths of YGU English Program Include Practical Learning of Teaching and Speaking Skills, and Confidence Building, While Weaknesses Include Not Enough Courses Available and too Few Students in Classes</b></p>	<p>Good points to English in YGU is to learn real teaching and speaking methods. She appreciates all of the learning opportunities provided and suggested to her from professors.</p>	<p>Too few English classes offered in YGU! Small class sizes give more individual treatment from teachers in YGU. All YGU English teachers are good.</p>	<p>Strengths of YGU education is the ability to directly ask questions individually to teachers, which is very different than HS, because sometimes they are far too busy with many more students. YGU teachers make time to talk. Too few English classes.</p>	<p>She changed from being a nervous wreck to a more confident speaker that listens first and then engages in daily conversational practises. Skit acting served to metamorphosize her into a more confident speaker, due to repeated practising by herself and with others.</p>	<p>Teachers in YGU do not focus on mistakes so he was less afraid to try. He finds the more effort he devotes towards his English related challenges, the more he learns about other things.</p>	<p>YGU English offers many opportunities to use English, especially speaking, and acting in front of audiences. A lot of the English-speaking opportunities provide for students to build confidence, teamwork, and various abilities.</p>	<p>YGU English studying of grammar was good for the teacher test but no other good points existed.</p>

**Figure 4**

*QR Code to Full Table 1 Research Results*



**Confidence in Using English**

Several different responses were given by the interviewees when asked about their confidence in using English to communicate. Eventually, the category response created to this question was "Confidence in Using English is From 40-60%, Especially Speaking." This category

was formed from statements such as "I am normally not friendly and am nervous when first meeting and speaking to others. English has the positive power to raise my confidence to 60% when using it, especially in English classes." Although one student expressed that he felt less confident than others in using English due to usually being nervous in social interactions, most interviewees indicated a 40-60 level of confidence, which is surprisingly high compared to many Japanese students and especially adults, for that matter. One more significant finding was expressed by most of the interviewees and is represented by this response: "Speaking is easier than writing because of not having to worry about grammar, and you can use gestures while giving different feelings." This, in some ways, is surprising given the pressure of giving real-time responses to questions when writing allows much more time to consider your thoughts. However, these findings were very reassuring because they showed that the YGU English program successfully strengthens PSTs' speaking skills and their confidence in using those abilities. Although using English was admittedly hard for the PST interviewees, it was also mentioned as enjoyable, especially for "Oral communication, to interact and share interesting information, although it can be challenging at times."

### **Confidence in Teaching English**

After hearing the confidence levels in using English by YGU PST students, it would be natural to expect their confidence in teaching it to actual students to be even lower, especially when using the TEE methodology. What was found was categorized as "Confidence in Teaching English is 0-70% With TEE Being 70-90%", which is both understandable and surprising. Some students indicated they had absolutely 0% confidence in teaching English to actual students, but practising teaching with YGU students is easier because they understand the language more. One student indicated they were 70% confident in teaching English but needed to use plain English with short sentences, and they tended to use Japanese to teach grammar as all the other teachers did during her two-week JH placement. Using Japanese to instruct complex content like grammar is often the case; another student said, "It is difficult to use only English to instruct, but it is even more difficult for students themselves! 100% English is too difficult for students! 80% ratio (Favouring English as the instructional language) is best!" It was also mentioned that Japanese should be used when checking vocabulary and that translations can be made "Not only smartphone we can use paper index, index and textbooks and so on." This information seemed to echo almost word for word many of the studies referenced in the literature reviewed, that TEE is excellent in theory, but reality dictates the use of different methodologies.

### **The Current YGU English Program is a Successful**

To summarize how PSTs perceived the English education they had been receiving, codes were categorized into saying, "The Current YGU English Program is Successful as it Provides Many Skill Building Opportunities for Presenting, Speaking, Grammar, Vocabulary, Confidence, etc." This category title was created in response to the answers given during the interviews, such as "YGU English has a high education level because it uses PowerPoint presentations, whereas other classes are only text reading and pronunciation lessons." Other statements like "So the most the most impressive is your class because elementary school junior high school or

high school, there are ALT teachers who, foreign teachers, but I had almost I had almost no time to talk with them” were also made. One student indicated that the current English course of study at YGU is challenging but can be interesting for those who like English, and it is purpose-filled as it leads to future skills and confidence in using the language. This statement, like others made, indicates that the English program at YGU is not ideal, in that if you like English, then the courses can be exciting and purpose-filled while needed skills and confidence are built, but what if you do not like the language? The YGU English program was also celebrated by one student for providing a course that entails speed reading, which builds special skills, and activities like discussions conducted with partners and in groups. Even when one student indicated she still takes too long to respond to questions when communicating in English, she acknowledged that her courses helped her develop a 50% confidence level to teach her future students. Another student praised the English program for dramatically improving their speaking and listening skills since coming to YGU! Such comments were part of many responses that the PSTs gave, which indicated that the YGU English education program provided them with valuable skill-building opportunities.

### **Changes Needed to the YGU English Program**

Even though the interviews indicated that the YGU English education program had several characteristics deserving of praise, the interview codes also helped create another category titled “Changes are Needed to the YGU English Program That Includes More Classes and Opportunities to Interact with Senior Students, Learn More Grammar, Vocabulary, and Speaking Skills, Etc.” This long title/list is an indicator that even when many positives exist, a good program can always be improved. To improve the current English education program, the interviewees indicated the need for various items such as “More communication opportunities for students of all skill and motivation levels,” “More teaching skills chances/opportunities,” and “Create more writing opportunities and learn more about writing lesson plans for English lessons.” One of the essential items that several interviewees mentioned was the need for YGU to offer more English courses, given that few choices are currently offered. Although this need is accurate, it is still worth questioning if non-English-major PSTs would take extra classes, as research often indicates many students would default to only taking mandatory English classes such as PSTs in Indonesia (Zein, 2015). Usually, when PSTs enter the real world of teaching, they lack the necessary skills and subsequent confidence to become effective teachers of English. With this in mind, another useful/practical suggestion offered by one interviewee was the need to create courses/lessons to prepare PSTs for TOEIC and EIKEN tests. To tap into the current socially charged online community, one student recommended creating communication courses in the first and second year that have activities like using video channels on YouTube, like animation channels, that use slow easy to understand English, or TED Talks and Vogue, where they interview famous people. The interviewees provided several exciting and fun ideas to help improve the English program, with the main one being that “More” courses are needed.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of the YGU English Program**

As an overview of the interviews, the codes were used to create a category titled “Strengths

of YGU English Program Include Practical Learning of Teaching and Speaking Skills, and Confidence Building, While Weaknesses Include Not Enough Courses Available and too Few Students in Classes.” This summary title was created from comments that said English in YGU provides opportunities to learn actual teaching and speaking methods and that professors are accommodating by suggesting and providing further opportunities for personal/professional growth. Another interviewee indicated that even though the courses may be challenging, the more effort he devotes to his English-related challenges, the more he learns about other valuable things. One strength mentioned several times was that smaller classes in YGU allow for stronger relationships and connections between students and teachers. At the same time, lasting friendships are forged, even/especially in English lessons. Another interviewee expressed that skit acting had metamorphosed her into a more confident speaker due to repeated practises by herself and with others.

Although several positive comments about the English program can be found in Table 1 and in the complete list using the QR code in Figure 4, weaknesses that deserve appropriate attention were also listed. One such comment, which was made several times, was the need for more English lessons to be provided, while another comment indicated the need for larger class sizes in some lessons to make the learning more enriched and practical, even though smaller classes are often advantageous in their own ways.

In closing, it must be mentioned once more that the interviews indicate that the YGU PST English education program has several strengths and positive attributes that should be celebrated. However, certain needs must still be met, opening the dialogue to changing the current course offerings.

## **Questionnaire**

After the questionnaire had been created, posted to Google Forms, and a corresponding link was created, an email to 71 YGU students in three different year levels was sent, containing an https: address and a QR, which directs smart devices to the form. For the first week or so, no responses were given, so the author of this study sent another more focused email asking only 22 students still taking active English courses to help with the research. Although it took some time, eventually, nine responses with eight actual completed questionnaires were submitted. Almost a month after writing this paper, the submissions remain at nine. After the eight responses were downloaded in Excel format, the file was reformatted to create Table 2 below, which lists all the answers to the six questions from the eight participants. It must be specified that question six only received one usable response, while the other sections provided valuable insights. Unlike the interviews, the table for the questionnaire was left in its original form with no codes or categories used. The findings from the questionnaire provide similar information to the responses given by the seven PST interviewees. Examples of these responses include the need for more English credit courses to be provided and more classes that allow interaction with various foreigners, which could lead to study abroad programs. In addition, seven of the eight interviewees indicated they needed more confidence in their abilities to teach English to actual students. When conducting lessons using TEE, only one PST student said that 80% of their lessons could be conducted using English as the predominant language. Another interesting comment typical of the "100%



perfect or nothing" belief in much of Japanese society was, "When it comes to teaching others, I am still not very confident because it requires almost perfect knowledge." This highlights one message often mentioned by the author, where students are told to believe 100% in whatever skills they possess, which means understanding what they can do realistically and then fully using those skills to help themselves and others. Another interviewee echoed this insecurity in a series of answers that said "I'm reasonably confident. Because I can speak certain amount of English." "I'm not that confident yet. Because I'm learning." and "I'm not confident about that because I haven't taught in English yet." These responses were given to questions about their confidence in using English, teaching it, and using TEE to instruct students. However, another student said, "Having had many opportunities to speak English, I no longer felt reluctant to teach in English," which spoke volumes to the positive outcomes experienced in the YGU English program despite any personal shortcomings the interviewee may feel they had.

Many answers in the questionnaire support the insecurities that countless PSTs and in-service teachers have, which have been mentioned in numerous studies like those listed in the literature review section of this paper. However, despite the anxieties that such insecurities may cause, many educators can look past them and find the positives in their skill sets and contexts, as seen in several questionnaire comments below.

**Table 2**

*Online Questionnaire Results (Given to 71 YGU Second, Third, and Fourth-Year Students - Response Rate n=8 or Approximately 10%)*

Student #	1. How confident are you in using English, especially for oral communication?	2. How do you feel about the English education you have received at this university?	3. How confident are you in your ability to teach English to your future students?	4. What ways, if any, would you change the current English education program in your university?	5. How confident do you feel about using English as the instructional language to teach your future students?	6. If you like, then please use this section to provide any other information, perspectives, or opinions.
1	It is very difficult to come up with your own sentences and speak English.	It was a very new and practical class.	When it comes to teaching others, I am still not very confident because it requires almost perfect knowledge.	Education and English courses alone are not enough credits, so more English classes will be added.	I need more practice to be fluent in what I am thinking.	
2	I have 50 percent of confident when I talk in English.	I think all English teachers made grow up our English skills.	I have 30 percent of confident to teach English.	I think one of ways to change the current English education program is more increase the English class.	I have 30 percent of confident to use English as the instructional language to teach your future students.	

3	I don't have confidence.	Having had many opportunities to speak English, I no longer felt reluctant to teach in English.	I think 80% of the classes can be taught using classroom English.	I think it would be nice to have a class that learns how to practice classes in the actual educational field.	I am more confident than teaching other subjects.	
4	I'm reasonably confident. Because I can speak certain amount of English.	This university has a lot of opportunities to improve English skills. For example, presentation, discussion and conversation with teachers.	I'm not that confident yet. Because I'm learning.	I think it would be nice if there was a class to study about the English proficiency test.	I'm not confident about that because I haven't taught in English yet.	I think QC card questions improve speaking ability.
5	I don't have much confidence in correct grammar or speaking at native speed. I'm a little confident in my pronunciation.	it's really fun because I didn't have the opportunity to give presentations or give speeches in English in high school.	I haven't practiced in an English class yet, so I'm not confident.	I would like to speak English with teachers from various foreign countries.	I am about 60% confident in elementary school English.	
6	I don't have much confidence in using English. It's not enough to go and live in foreign countries. Also, I don't think I can speak in a situation where only native speakers are available.	The teachers were friendly and zeal. I got a lot of guidance to be an English teacher.	I don't have good ability. However, I would like to do my best for students' good learning.	I wanted to learn grammar better.	I don't have much confidence. However, I would like to do my best for students' good learning.	
7	I don't have confident. Because I don't remember grammar or the right words.	I think it's all useful information when you become a teacher.	I'm not confident at all at this point.	Nothing	I'm not confident at this point.	Nothing
8	I am not very confident in communicating in English.	I was able to learn new grammar and vocabulary knowledge.	I am not confident in my ability to teach grammar in an easy-to-understand manner and with correct pronunciation.	I think it would be good if there were more opportunities to speak English and experience foreign cultures, such as studying abroad.	I am not confident that I can use English to communicate my thoughts and feelings well.	

## Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of university education students concerning learning English as a second language and their subsequent confidence in teaching it to their future students. Qualitative methods were used to accomplish this study's purpose by utilizing interviews and a questionnaire with YGU PSTs in their first, second, and third years of a faculty of education in a Japanese university. To help guide the research methods, four research questions were utilized to gain the PSTs' perspectives on their confidence levels concerning the use of English to communicate, teach, and conduct TEE lessons to instruct their future students. The answers provided by the PSTs aligned in various ways with the information provided in the review of literature in this study, for many teachers both seasoned and new, suffer from anxieties caused by negative feelings of self-efficacy and confidence in their English teaching abilities. All too often, educators who teach English as a foreign and second language look to their weaknesses first to guide or, in many cases, misguide their beliefs about their teaching abilities and potential. Fortunately, as was evidenced in several of the findings in this study, PSTs, despite having various insecurities and anxieties, still felt positive about the English education they received at YGU and the potential to further improve the educator program for themselves and future students.

Key areas suggested to help improve the YGU PST English education program were to offer more English classes in general and to provide even more practical lessons concerning lesson planning, grammar instruction, and instructional pedagogies. To help achieve such goals, it was suggested to utilize more collaborative methods in lessons, such as having senior students be part of lower-year students' lessons, as they help to share their acquired knowledge and skills and further develop themselves as future users and teachers of English.

The proposed new course of study by MEXT has recently resulted in drastic changes to the Japanese English curriculum. The most impactful changes have occurred in elementary schools, in grades three and four, as students now study English as a foreign language, and in grades five and six, English is now studied as an actual subject. These changes have made this study even more purposeful in that PSTs at all levels are directly connected to a single mission. They must now fully use their skills and potential to help create a new united system that utilizes methods such as TEE and CLIL to educate a new generation of Japanese learners who no longer fear that dreaded word of English!

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