

# Australian Journal of Teacher Education

---

Volume 40 | Issue 6

Article 3

---

2015

## The Relationship Between University Learning Experiences and English Teaching Self-Efficacy: Perspectives of Five Final-Year Pre-Service English Teachers

Ksenia Filatov  
*Flinders University*

Shane Pill  
*Flinders University, shane.pill@flinders.edu.au*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Higher Education and Teaching Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Filatov, K., & Pill, S. (2015). The Relationship Between University Learning Experiences and English Teaching Self-Efficacy: Perspectives of Five Final-Year Pre-Service English Teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(6).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n6.3>

This Journal Article is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol40/iss6/3>

## **The Relationship Between University Learning Experiences and English Teaching Self-Efficacy: Perspectives of Five Final-Year Pre-Service English Teachers**

Ksenia Filatov  
Shane Pill  
Flinders University

*Abstract: No literature exists on English teaching efficacy or self-efficacy or on pre-service teachers' English teaching self-efficacy and its relationship to pre-service teacher education. This project addressed this conceptual and methodological gap in current teacher efficacy research literature. Five pre-service English teachers in their final year of double degree Bachelor of Education/Bachelor of Arts teacher education programmes at an Australian university were interviewed about their self-efficacy for specific English teaching skills. Results suggest that the pre-service teachers see a significant relationship between their self-efficacy to teach English and their degree. The data suggests that the relationship between university learning experiences and English teaching self-efficacy is determined by the nature of those experiences.*

### **Introduction**

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura as one's belief in "one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Self-Efficacy theory is grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory which views 'human behaviour', 'personal factors' and 'external environment' as interrelated causal factors (Bandura, 1989, 1997; Maddux, 1995). Self-efficacy is also domain specific, which means that it refers to a given task and context (Bandura, 1997). For example, a person can have efficacy beliefs about drawing, playing football or managing their weight. 'Teacher efficacy' is a related concept, which has some of its origins in self-efficacy theory. Teacher efficacy refers to a teacher's belief in their capability to impact student learning. However, there is still a lack of clarity surrounding this definition and its measures. This, as well as the formation of self-efficacy beliefs and their significance will be explored in the Literature Review. With these two concepts in mind, the overarching research question driving this study was: What is the relationship between learning experiences in a teacher education degree and the English teaching self-efficacy of pre-service teachers? This question was explored from the perspectives of pre-service teachers in their final year of a teacher education degree.

In undertaking this research, no studies were found on the subject of English teaching self-efficacy, neither with in-service nor pre-service teachers, which address the topic from Bandura's perspective, or adaptations of it. Thus we have very little understanding of how self-efficacy beliefs are shaped by learning experiences in teacher education degrees. This project is significant because it addresses conceptual and methodological gaps apparent in current teacher efficacy research literature. By situating this study within the context of

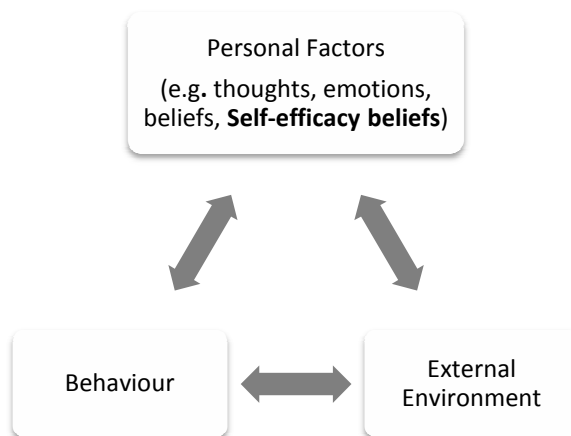
teacher education, its data may inform the future design of English teacher education programmes. The following research questions have guided the design of this project:

1. What is the nature of English teaching self-efficacy within a group of pre-service English teachers (PSET)?
2. What insights can PSET at the end of their degree provide about the experiences that have most contributed to their self-efficacy to teach English?
3. What kinds of learning experiences do PSET believe will enhance self-efficacy to teach English?
4. What is the nature of the relationship between the English teaching self-efficacy beliefs of PSET and their learning experiences within a teacher education degree?

## Literature Review

### Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1997, p. 3) defines self-efficacy as, “one’s belief in ‘one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments’”. The concept of self-efficacy is grounded in Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1989). Social Cognitive Theory is based on the assumption that human beings act with purposeful intent. Human behaviour is in constant dynamic interrelationships with a person’s inner beliefs and intentions and the external environment (Bandura, 1989; 1997, see Fig. 1; Maddux, 1995). This triad is illustrated in Figure 1. The relationships between the items in the triad are “reciprocally deterministic” (Bandura, 1997, p. 31) , impacting on one another bi-directionally.



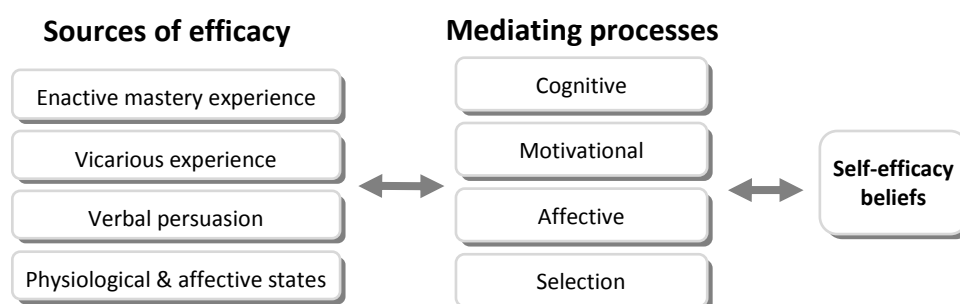
**Figure 1: Triad representing Social Cognitive Theory (Adapted from Bandura, 1997, p.6)**

For Bandura, self-efficacy is a key force behind human agency and the exercise of control over one’s life. Self-efficacy is distinguished from confidence because it is a construct which refers to both “affirmation of capability” and the strength of that affirmation as applied to a particular action or skill (Bandura, 1997, p. 382), whereas confidence describes a person’s general belief about the self in a given context. Therefore, self-efficacy is task and domain specific; it can apply to playing football, drawing or buying healthy food. Perceived self-efficacy is thus a predictor of whether a person will begin a task, how long they will

persist at it, how much effort they will invest in it, whether they will give up in the face of obstacles and ultimately whether they will accomplish the task (Bandura, 1982, 1997).

There are four main sources of efficacy beliefs: 1) Enactive mastery experiences, 2) vicarious experiences, 3) verbal persuasion, and 4) physiological and affective states (Bandura, 1997). A mastery experience comprises a person's past successful performance of the task. Vicarious experience is observation of and learning from a model performance of the task. Verbal persuasion includes support, reassurance and feedback from mentors, peers, friends, family or colleagues about one's capabilities. The fourth source relates to factors such as the person's health, level of arousal, physical strength and mood. Bandura (1997) states, however, that "not only do people have to deal with different configurations of efficacy information conveyed by a given modality, but they also have to weight and integrate efficacy information from these diverse sources" (p. 114). The processes by which information from sources of efficacy is turned into efficacy beliefs are mediated by the way a person thinks and feels. These are cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes (see Figure 2, adapted from Bandura, 1997). Some examples of cognitive processing in the formation of efficacy beliefs include:

- deciding whether or not the effort it took to achieve success is sustainable in the long term (effort expenditure, task difficulty) (Bandura, 1997, p. 83);
- positioning oneself as a novice vs. professional (goal setting, attainment trajectories) (p. 86);
- whether success is attributed to personal effort or chance factors (attribution) (p. 123);
- deciding whether or not the model or persuader is credible (p. 87, 105).



**Figure 2: Sources of Efficacy and Mediating Processes**

Bandura (1982, 1989, 1995, 1997) distinguishes efficacy beliefs — beliefs about one's *performance* capability, — from outcome expectations — beliefs about the *outcomes* which result from those performances. Self-efficacy and outcome expectancy are two different factors which predict human behaviour. The degree to which either of these factors predict behaviour depends on how contingent the outcome is upon the quality of performance (Bandura, 1997). Positive outcome expectations act as incentives, whereas negative ones act as deterrents to behaviour. Outcomes can be physical, such as anticipated pain, injury or pleasure; social, such as praise, acceptance or exclusion; and self-evaluative, such as feelings of self-satisfaction or disappointment (Bandura, 1997). The level of contingency between outcome expectation and performance differs depending on the task and context. For example, a person may believe that he can successfully perform the duties of his job; however, the person may not believe that success in the job will result in a promotion. The

two factors act in concert to predict his behaviour. A high-jump athlete, on the other hand, may believe that he/she can successfully clear a certain bar height and that clearing this bar height will result in him/her winning an Olympic medal. Thus, a job promotion and an Olympic medal are the outcomes of successful performances in two different domains, but their contingency on the performances differs. Around the mid-1980s researchers began to draw on self-efficacy theory to make sense of another construct altogether — “teacher efficacy”.

### Teacher Efficacy And Existing Approaches In Teacher Efficacy Research

The construct of teacher efficacy was first conceived in the 1970s as a result of a RAND corporation study by Armor and colleagues (Armor et al., 1976). As part of a study on factors which contribute to academic achievement of minority students, the researchers surveyed some 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, and two of the items in the survey were:

<b>When it comes right down to it, a teacher really can't do much — most of a student's motivation and performance depends on his or her home environment</b>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>If I really try hard, I can get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students</b>				
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Figure 3: Original Teacher Efficacy Questions (Armor, et al., 1976, p. 73)

These two items were named *teacher efficacy*. Since its conception teacher efficacy has been the subject of over 30 years of empirical research. Two different conceptual strands have informed such research: Bandura's self-efficacy theory and Julian Rotter's (1966) locus of control theory (Henson, 2002; Labone, 2004; Tschannen Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Locus of control is an indication of whether one attributes their ability or success in a particular task to personal efforts, which are factors within their control, or to outside factors which appear beyond their control. Bandura explicitly situates task locus of control within social cognitive theory as a mediating motivational process in the formation of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). Locus of control is related to, but not the same as self-efficacy for a given task. According to social cognitive theory, the more a person's self-efficacy increases the more internal control they have over their life and therefore agency (Bandura, 1997).

Teacher efficacy has been defined as “a judgment a teacher makes of his/her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p. 783). The use of the word “outcomes” may be confusing, in terms of self-efficacy, therefore a simplified definition may be a teacher's judgement of his/her capability *to help students learn* (Schunk, 1995) or to *facilitate students' learning*. However, definitions of teacher efficacy are, by no means, clear. Pajares (1992), for example, distinguishes between beliefs about “confidence to affect students' performance (teacher efficacy)”, “causes of teachers' or students' performance' (locus of control)”, “confidence to perform specific tasks (self-efficacy)”, and “specific subjects or disciplines” (p. 316). We argue, however, that a teacher's confidence to affect students' performance is strongly linked to beliefs about the

causes of teachers' or students' performance, which renders teacher efficacy, as defined by Pajares, redundant. Thus, a teacher's confidence to perform specific tasks may be considered the very essence of teacher or *teaching* efficacy or self-efficacy, because the tasks of teaching are primarily concerned with facilitating students' learning. Dellinger, Bobbett, Olivier and Ellett (2008), however, distinguish between teacher efficacy and teacher self-efficacy by defining the latter as "teachers' individual beliefs about their own abilities to successfully perform specific teaching and learning related tasks within the context of their own classrooms" (p. 751).

Nevertheless, empirical data suggests that a highly efficacious teacher is more likely to offer praise to students, adopt a student-centred approach, have motivated, engaged and high-achieving students, and be less likely to experience stress and burnout (Armor, et al., 1976; Bandura, 1997; Enochs & Riggs, 1990; Labone, 2002; Schunk, 1995; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Thus, sources of this complex yet powerful concept of teacher efficacy warrant further investigation. This study sought to gain insight into what helps to build teacher efficacy as early as possible in a teacher's career.

### Measuring Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy has been traditionally measured using questionnaires which asked participants to indicate their agreement or level of confidence on a scale or choose between options. The early measures of teacher efficacy were strongly grounded in locus of control theory. Thus they frequently asked teachers whether they believed that student outcomes were contingent upon the quality of teaching and whether teachers felt they could achieve those outcomes. More recently, both locus of control and self-efficacy theory have been integrated into measures of teacher efficacy, which have been largely based on Gibson and Dembo's (1984) teacher efficacy scale (TES). In 1998, Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998) proposed a model of teacher efficacy that weaves together both conceptual strands of *teacher efficacy* and *self-efficacy*.

There have been some examples of subject-specific teacher efficacy measures. The most widely used one is the Science Teacher Efficacy Belief Inventory (STEBI) (Enochs & Riggs, 1990) which has been adapted by others. Riggs and Enochs also adapted this instrument to suit pre-service science teachers (STEBI-B). The STEBI is closely based on Gibson and Dembo's TES. The issue is that Riggs and Enochs claimed they were testing self-efficacy and outcome expectancy, whereas it was later shown that the two factors on the TES did not correspond with Bandura's theory of self-efficacy. In addition Riggs and Enochs formulated their statements in the future tense using the word 'will', which Bandura suggests is a statement of *intention* rather than *capability* (Bandura, 2006).

Bandura advised that in measuring self-efficacy, a clear idea of the task is necessary, because "if one does not know what demands must be fulfilled in a given endeavour, one cannot accurately judge whether one has the requisite abilities to perform the task" (Bandura, 1997, p. 64). Thus, phrases used in the STEBI, such as "teach science" or "teaching science", become problematic, and furthermore do not reflect the complexity of classroom practice. Therefore, any research into English teaching self-efficacy must clearly define the tasks of English teaching and develop a specific measure.

## Furthering Teacher Efficacy Research

The gap in teacher efficacy research is well put by Dellinger and her colleagues: “teacher efficacy, as defined in the literature, confounds (or overlooks) the unique, and possibly crucial, role played by teachers’ beliefs in their ability to perform the wide variety of teaching tasks (particularly those tasks that work!) required in various teaching and learning contexts” (2008, p. 753). On this matter, Wheatley (2005) also pointed out: “one cannot determine from a teachers’ self-reported “teacher efficacy” level (e.g., 3.75) the teaching tasks for which teachers feel more or less efficacious” (p. 751). As a solution, Dellinger et al. 2008 proposed the Teachers’ Efficacy Beliefs System—Self (TEBS-Self) which is grounded in self-efficacy theory and based on the Professional Assessment and Comprehensive Evaluation System (PACES).

Dellinger and her colleagues conducted three studies using the TEBS-Self with over 1000 elementary school teachers. They demonstrated that *teacher efficacy* is a different construct to *teacher self-efficacy*, and that strong relationships exist between teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs and the effectiveness and performance of their schools. They also found, consistent with Bandura’s earlier research, that self-efficacy changes when measured against task difficulty/demands. The factors emerging from their analysis indicate that teacher’s self-efficacy can be measured for the following sets of tasks: accommodating individual differences in students, classroom management, communication, and encouraging higher order thinking skills. However, these tasks are still very general, partly because the TEBS-Self was designed for elementary teachers. The kinds of tasks carried out by a secondary school teacher would undoubtedly be closely linked with their subject area. Furthermore, research has shown that teachers develop much of their professional knowledge within specific subject areas (Darling-Hammond, Hamerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005; Grossman, Wilson, & Shulman, 1989; McDiarmid, Loewenberg Ball, & Anderson, 1989). Shulman termed this ‘pedagogical content knowledge’ (1987): a teacher’s ability to organise, represent and adapt the topics, problems and issues associated with a subject for the diverse abilities and interests of the students (p. 8). No literature exists on English teaching efficacy or self-efficacy, as conceptualised by Bandura.

A number of authors have called for a reconceptualisation of teacher efficacy research, and more research using qualitative methods (Labone, 2004; Wheatley, 2005). Frequently, quantitative researchers also acknowledge that their findings are limited and more qualitative research is needed (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). Labone (2004) summarises what we have learnt so far from teacher efficacy research and how teacher efficacy researchers can employ interpretivist and critical theory paradigms. The key issues, she argues, are *context, meaning, perspectives* and *conceptions of teaching* (Labone, 2004). Both Bandura’s social cognitive theory and Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy and Hoy’s model of teacher efficacy place emphasis on how efficacy beliefs are formed, defining the task, contextual factors and cognitive processing of efficacy information. However, simple survey instruments cannot capture this complexity.

Although there exists a gap in the literature on pre-service English teachers and initial English teacher preparation in Australia, several recent studies with novices and pre-service teachers have been concerned with the general effectiveness of teacher education courses in Australia, and the level of preparedness of graduates (Ingvarson, Beavis, & Kleinhenz, 2005; Ure & Lysk, 2008). Goddard and O’Brien (2007) also showed that the relationship between teacher education and burnout for beginning teachers was significant. Since this is also true for teacher efficacy and burnout (Labone, 2002) and self-efficacy and stress (Bandura, 1997), it is fitting that the teaching self-efficacy of pre-service teachers at the end of their degree be studied in the context of teacher education. A study of 49 pre-service teachers in the context

of student-teaching was conducted by Fivesa, Hamman and Olivarez (2007). They measured teacher efficacy (using the TSES), burnout levels and perceptions of guidance from cooperating teachers using quantitative instruments on two occasions throughout a semester of student-teaching. Findings showed that pre-service teachers who received higher levels of guidance over the course of the teaching placement developed significantly higher levels of efficacy for instructional practices than those who received lower amounts of guidance.

## **Defining English Teaching Practice in Australia**

As evident in recent debate and publications on the teaching of English in Australia, English curriculum, classroom, and teaching practice are sites of ongoing contestation (Doecke, Green, Kostogris, Reid, & Sawyer, 2007; Howie, 2008; Meiers, 2007; Misson & Sumara, 2006; Morgan, 2007; Patterson, 2008; Sawyer, 2010). Ideology, neo-conservative political agendas, standardised testing, literacy, ICTs, professional standards, existing state curricula and the Australian Curriculum are just a handful of factors and discourses which shape the definition of 'English teaching' in Australia. Doecke et al. (2007) have pointed out the difficulty of reducing English teaching to a set of tasks, and have instead offered a view of English teaching as complex practice embedded within context.

The Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE), formed in 1964, has played a significant role in shaping English teaching practice in Australia over the past few decades (AATE, 2015). In 1999 the AATE together with the Australia Literacy Educators Association (ALEA) developed The Standards for Teachers of English Language and Literacy in Australia (STELLA) (Doecke & Gill, 2001). These standards are one of the frameworks which inform the teaching of English in Australia. The STELLA were developed in consultation with teachers. Following this, in 2007, the AATE wrote their own policy and statement of beliefs (AATE, 2009a, 2009b; Philp, 2007) in an attempt to respond to the different discourses in English practice and curriculum and the purpose of English.

According to AATE, exploration of the human condition is central to what English teaching is about (Philp, 2007). The need to differentiate English teaching in Australia from other English teaching in other contexts can be justified by the fact that both AATE and the Australian Curriculum place emphasis on incorporating Indigenous Australian voices and cultures into the English classroom (AATE, 2009a; Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2010; Philp, 2007), while the Australian Curriculum emphasises texts from the Asian region (ACARA, 2010). In both cases the English classroom is expected to respond to matters of national interest and identity. Additionally, AATE policy on the teaching of English draws on the cultural context of contemporary Australian society, by calling for a need to include Australian authors and engage students through texts which reflect their heritage (AATE, 2009a).

Thus, the AATE policy can be seen as a descriptive and rich reflection of the work of an English teacher in Australia, which has a complex and dynamic relationship with the social and political context. Given this, Labone's (2004) call for a shift to interpretivist paradigms in teacher efficacy research is particularly appropriate for English teaching.

## **Method**

This study has conceptualised self-efficacy from an interpretivist perspective, exploring pre-service teachers' views about what learning experiences enhance their self-efficacy to teach English. Crotty (1998) refers to interpretivism as a broad theoretical



perspective emerging from a constructionist / social constructionist epistemology. Constructionism is based on the premise that human beings actively construct knowledge and meaning within social contexts, rather than discover objective truths (Crotty, 1998). Although the interpretivist paradigm encompasses a number of different schools of thought, it can be broadly defined in terms of its basic assumption about the nature of research: that research is concerned with describing what meanings people bring to their experience (Connole, 1993; Merriam, 2009) and that perspectives vary from person to person and between contexts (O'Donoghue, 2007). Furthermore, interpretivist research does not shy away from the researcher's subjectivity, instead seeking to expose it through reflexive practices (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005).

### **Case Study Research**

Henson (2002) has pointed out that “to fully understand the relationships between the sources of efficacy information, the meaning teachers attach to this information, and any ultimate change in their efficacy beliefs, in-depth study of teachers is necessary” (p. 147). A case study has the potential for in-depth exploration of English teaching self-efficacy and its relationship to learning experiences. Case studies have the advantage of in-depth exploration or *particularisation*, which allows researchers to make smaller generalisations about phenomena or modify existing understandings (Stake, 1995). Researchers learn *from cases about* phenomena by gaining “experiential knowledge” (Stake, 2005, p. 454) and discovering “patterns” in the data and the report will ideally answer the following question: “what can we learn from this particular case about x?” either directly or indirectly, leaving generalisations for the reader” (Stake, 1995, pp. 44-45). From the beginning, the research set out to explore the relationship between learning experiences in a teacher education degree and the English teaching self-efficacy of pre-service teachers. We were interested in learning about this relationship from a group of final year pre-service English teachers, at one institution, who have had similar degree experiences. In this way, both the individual pre-service teachers studying particular university degrees and these pre-service teachers as a group are “cases”.

Final year pre-service teachers make for an interesting case, because while they are still tertiary students, they are only a few weeks away from becoming professionals. This twofold student/teacher characteristic means that they can offer a dual perspective into both learning at university and their English teaching self-efficacy. What we hoped to gain from this case study is insight into pre-service teachers' beliefs about how teacher education degrees can facilitate growth in English teaching self-efficacy. As double degree teaching programmes become more and more commonly adopted by universities throughout Australia, pre-service teachers at this university can be said to be somewhat representative of the broader population of pre-service teachers in Australia.

### **Research Context**

This research was conducted with participants who were final year undergraduate Bachelor of Education and graduate Master of Teaching students at an urban Australian University. In order to achieve a qualification in primary, middle or secondary English teaching, students at the university where the study occurred must complete either a four year combined degree programme (Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Arts), or a two year graduate Master of Teaching if they have an existing English or creative writing major or equivalent. English (both literature and creative) topics are administered by the Department

of English within the School of Humanities, whereas education topics are administered by the School of Education. English topics within the School of Humanities are also undertaken by students who are not studying teaching degrees at this university. In the Discussion section they will be referred to as “English literature” or “English creative writing” topics. Within the education degrees (Bachelor of Education and Masters of Teaching) there are three topics administered by the School of Education in either a four year or two year degree programme dedicated to English or literacy teaching. In the Discussion section they will be referred to as “English method” topics.

The five participants included four completing Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education combined degrees and one completing a post-graduate Masters of Teaching degree in secondary education. Of the double degree students, there was one student of Arts and Secondary Education, one student of Arts and Middle School Education, and two students of Arts and Primary Education. At the time of this study, undergraduate double degree programmes at this university required students to complete a total of 30 days’ observation in a school and two teaching practicums – 4 weeks in length during their third year, and 6 weeks in their final year. The Masters degree programme required 20 days’ observation in a school and two teaching practicums of the same length as the undergraduate programmes. The three pre-service teachers who were completing Secondary and Middle degree programmes had completed two English method topics and six compulsory English literature/creative writing topics/electives over four years. The Primary pre-service teacher had completed one method topic that covered all the arts disciplines (English, visual art, drama, media and music), and 6 literature/creative writing topics/electives over four years. The pre-service teacher studying a Masters programme had completed two English method topics over two years.

## Research Delimitations

For the purposes of this research project, we have delimited the definition of “English teaching” to policy statements outlined on the Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) website (AATE, 2009a, 2009b; Philp, 2007). This presents challenges to the process of data collection, including potential disagreement by participants about AATE’s definition of English teaching, and, therefore, low self-efficacy judgements (Wheatley, 2005). However, as we are interested in exploring pre-service teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs in relation to English teaching tasks that will be expected of them in a school setting and are endorsed by a professional association such as AATE this definition of “English teaching” was adopted. The list of English teaching skills, which was used during interviews, is shown in Table 1. This list has been delimited to tasks that are *characteristic* of and *unique* to English teaching. Initial content validation occurred via the president of the local branch of English Teachers’ Association. Other teaching tasks, such as assessment and reporting were not included in the list. Although these practices differ across subject areas, and are a necessary part of a teacher’s work, they were not within the scope of this research, as we were interested only in tasks that were specific to the work of an English teacher.

A predefined list of teaching tasks more or less controls what efficacy beliefs we are seeking from participants, thus addressing Wheatley’s (2005) criticism that a general teacher efficacy level does not tell us which teaching tasks a person is actually confident in.

<p><b>Developing English language skills in students (genre, writing, reading, speaking)</b></p>	<p><b>Facilitating deep understanding and intellectual engagement in students (critical discussions and thinking, critical writing, engagement with moral, ethical or social issues)</b></p>	<p><b>Facilitating creative engagement and appreciation of cultural complexity and diversity (creative writing, performance, aesthetic appreciation, cultural issues)</b></p>	<p><b>Selecting engaging texts for the English classroom (visual, written, audio, digital) which expose students to a range of issues, authors and cultures and facilitate the development of the points across &lt;</b></p>
<p>Facilitating the development of students' skills in using Standard Australian English, including linguistic features, grammar, spelling and conventions.</p>	<p>Facilitating understanding of the links between power, function, culture, texts and identity in students</p>	<p>Facilitating the appreciation of artistry in the use of language in students</p>	<p>Selecting texts which cater for the diverse language abilities of students</p>
<p>Explicitly teaching a range of written and oral discourses to students.</p>		<p>Using students' language, experience and culture as a basis for facilitating further language development</p>	<p>Selecting texts which reflect the cultural heritage of students in Australian society</p>
<p>Facilitating the development of effective writing strategies in students</p>		<p>Creating opportunities for students to celebrate the pleasures and satisfactions of language (e.g. through performance, improvisation, publication, reflection)</p>	<p>Selecting a range of texts which will aid the development of factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values and ethical judgements in students</p>
<p>Facilitating the development of oral language skills in students</p>	<p>Creating opportunities for students to engage with moral and ethical issues</p>	<p>Creating opportunities for students to celebrate the pleasures and satisfactions of language (e.g. through performance, improvisation, publication, reflection)</p>	<p>Selecting a range of imaginative, personal, literary, informative, argumentative and persuasive texts for the classroom</p>
<p>Facilitating learning in the English classroom through the following activities with students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) writing</li> <li>b) talking</li> <li>c) reading</li> <li>d) listening</li> <li>e) observing / viewing</li> <li>f) presenting</li> <li>g) performing</li> </ul>	<p>Creating opportunities for students to engage with different representations of ethnicity, culture, class, gender, language, sexuality, and socio-economic status</p>	<p>Fostering links between the English classroom and the wider community</p> <p>Creating opportunities for students to respect and learn about Australia's Indigenous cultural heritage</p>	<p>Selecting a range of texts which will include voices of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Male and female writers</li> <li>b) Historical and contemporary writers</li> <li>c) Young writers</li> <li>d) Australian writers</li> <li>e) Indigenous Australian writers</li> <li>f) Non-Australian writers</li> <li>g) Writers other than from a White Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage</li> </ul>

**Table 1: The Skills of an English Teacher (Adapted from the Australian Association for the Teaching of English – AATE)**

## Data Collection

Five individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with final year pre-service English teachers. Semi-structured interviewing was the primary method of data collection. Luft and Roehrig (2007) suggest that one-on-one in-depth interviews provide access to teachers' thinking and complexity of belief systems. The aim of the one-on-one interviews was to explore the nature of pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs in relation to the list of English teaching skills. Participants were also asked about learning experiences that helped to enhance their English teaching self-efficacy. The interviewing method of data collection is quite new to efficacy research, and although some examples exist (Milner, 2002; Milner & Woolfolk Hoy, 2003; Mohan, 2009), none of them deal with *English teaching self-efficacy*.

The design of the interview protocol was based on Bandura's advice for creating self-efficacy scales (Bandura, 2006). Bandura suggests using the term "confidence" rather than "efficacy", and presenting respondents with a rating scale from 0 to 100, where 0 is defined as "Cannot do at all", 50 is defined as "Moderately certain can do" and 100 as "Highly certain can do". Noting use of the word "certain", one can conclude that a person's certainty and uncertainty in their ability is a means of gauging their self-efficacy for a particular task. The resulting interview question for each of the English teaching skills is "How confident are you in your ability to do that?"

Of the full cohort of 59 final year pre-service English teachers who were invited to participate in the study via three rounds of recruitment calls, five agreed to give a one-on-one interview. Interviews were conducted casually in a public space at a time negotiated with the participants. Interviews varied in duration between 60 and 110 minutes and were audio recorded on a digital device. Interviews were semi-structured, and began with general questions about how participants felt about their degree and themselves as English teachers. Following these were more specific questions about each of the English teaching skills on the list. The interview concluded with questions about what changes pre-service teachers would make to the degree in order to raise the confidence of pre-service English teachers. The interviews occurred after university ethics approval for the research.

## Introduction

Thank participant for their time. Explain the aim of the interview: to get a sense of the participant's confidence as an English teacher, and the relationship between their confidence and learning experiences they have had throughout their teacher education degree. Explain audio recording, confidentiality, anonymity in publication, and rights to withdraw from the session at any time. Offer to answer any questions and get participant to fill out consent form and demographic information sheet.

## Prepared list of questions and activities:

1. How do you feel generally about your education degree in terms of preparing you to teach English?  
*More effective and less effective learning experiences and why were they so*  
*Probe if participant says something was good, how was it helpful?*
2. How do you feel about the structure of the degree in relation to building your confidence to teach English?  
*Elaborate/describe in more detail*
3. At this moment, do you feel adequately prepared to teach English?
4. What are your general thoughts/feelings about yourself as an English teacher?

*How do you feel about your ability to be an effective English teacher? Explain.  
What aspects of English teaching are you best/worst/OK at? Why?  
What are some positive words that describe you as a teacher of English? Why?  
What are some negative words? Why?*

**Show participant the English teacher skill set and give them a moment to read through it. This is a list of the essential skills of an English teacher at any school level according to the Australian Association for the Teaching of English.**

5. When you read through that list, what are your first thoughts about yourself as an English teacher?  
*Explain / Elaborate*  
*What points stand out for you? Why?*
- Going through each skill in the table, ask the following question:**
6. How confident do you feel in your ability to demonstrate this skill in the classroom?  
*Explain / Elaborate*  
*Where does your confidence come from?*
7. In your opinion, were there any gaps in your university education in terms of preparing you to perform those skills in an English classroom?  
*Where? Why?*
8. If you were in charge of English teacher training what learning experiences would you create to build the confidence of pre-service English teachers like yourself?  
*What is the role of the university teacher/practicum supervising teacher/other?*  
*What is your role as a pre-service teacher?*  
*How/why would it help?*

#### **Session conclusion**

Invite the participant to make any additional comments in relation to anything which was discussed. Offer to answer any questions. Thank the participant for their time.

**Figure 4: Interview Protocol**

#### **Data Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed with the aid of qualitative data analysis software NVivo 8 by QSR International ("NVivo qualitative data analysis software," 2009). Place, personal and university topic names were immediately substituted. Transcripts were coded three times. The first method was done with the aid of software NVivo 8 (2009). The codes addressed aspects of the research questions as well as interesting or unexpected occurrences in the data. This method produced fifty codes and was followed by reflection, memo writing (Charmaz, 2001) and concept mapping. These codes were then narrowed down and organised into six main categories:

- Teaching placement
- University topic relevance
- Luck/uniqueness/opportunity (e.g. unplanned/lucky experiences)
- Characteristics of pre-service teachers as learners
- Teacher's work and its relationship to the university degree

The second method included manually annotating the transcripts, noting the ideas expressed by interviewees in relation to their confidence, and consistencies and contradictions in these ideas. This was followed by more reflection and concept mapping. The third method was manually highlighting the transcripts using four colour codes:

- Positive ideas/statements
- Self-efficacy statements

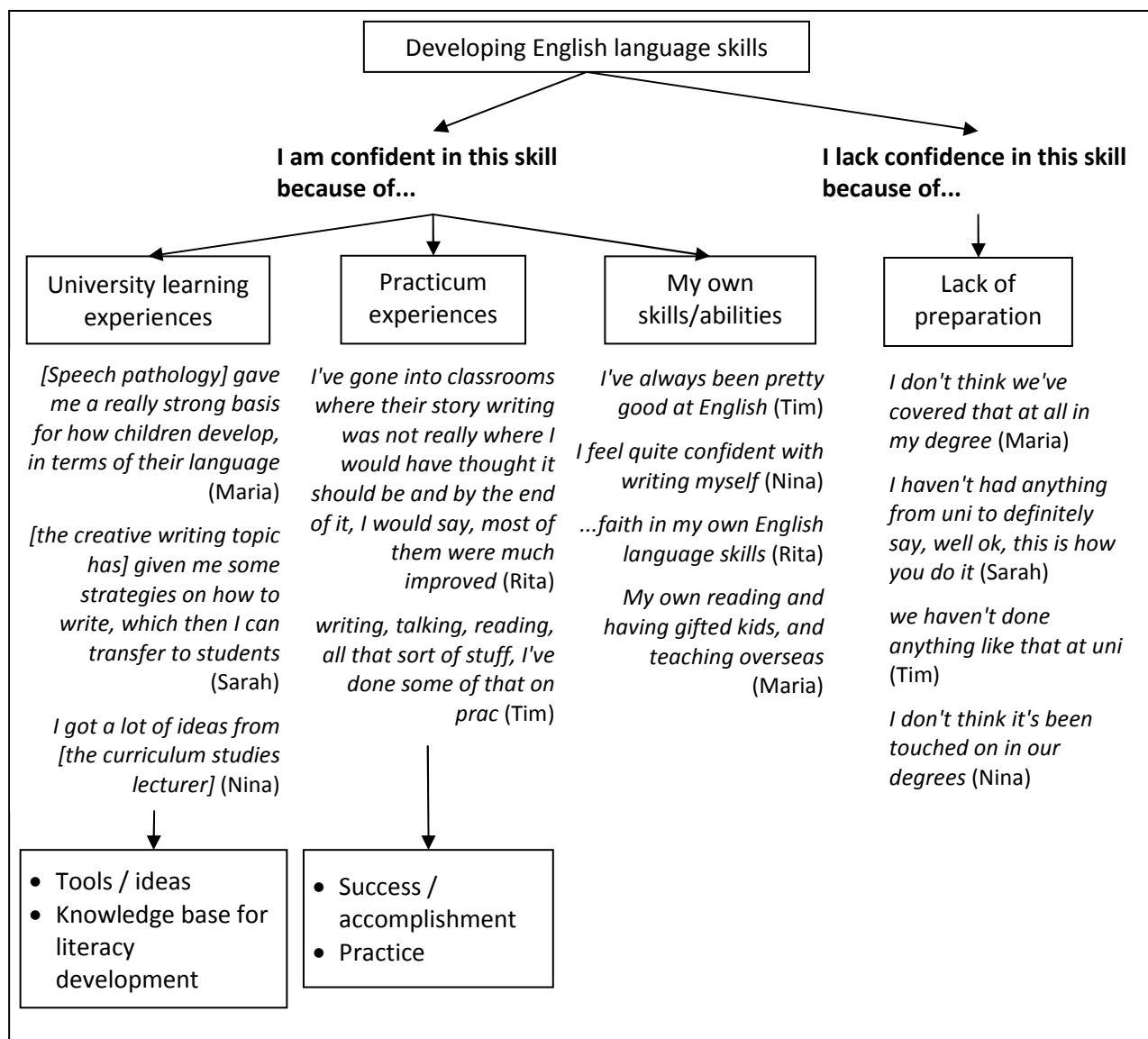
- Negative statements
  - Suggested changes to degree/imagined learning experiences
- Themes were also generated by working from each case. Case summary tables were made for each interviewee, which contained the following column headings:
- Existing helpful learning experiences
  - What the degree lacked
  - Imagined helpful learning experiences
  - Helpful things outside of the degree

Pre-service teachers' self-efficacy responses to each of the English teaching skills were sorted into *statements of self-efficacy* and *sources/reasons for those statements*. These responses were tabulated. These tables were used to observe patterns in the data. Emergent themes from all three coding and tabulating methods, which related to the research questions, were identified and concept mapped.

## Results

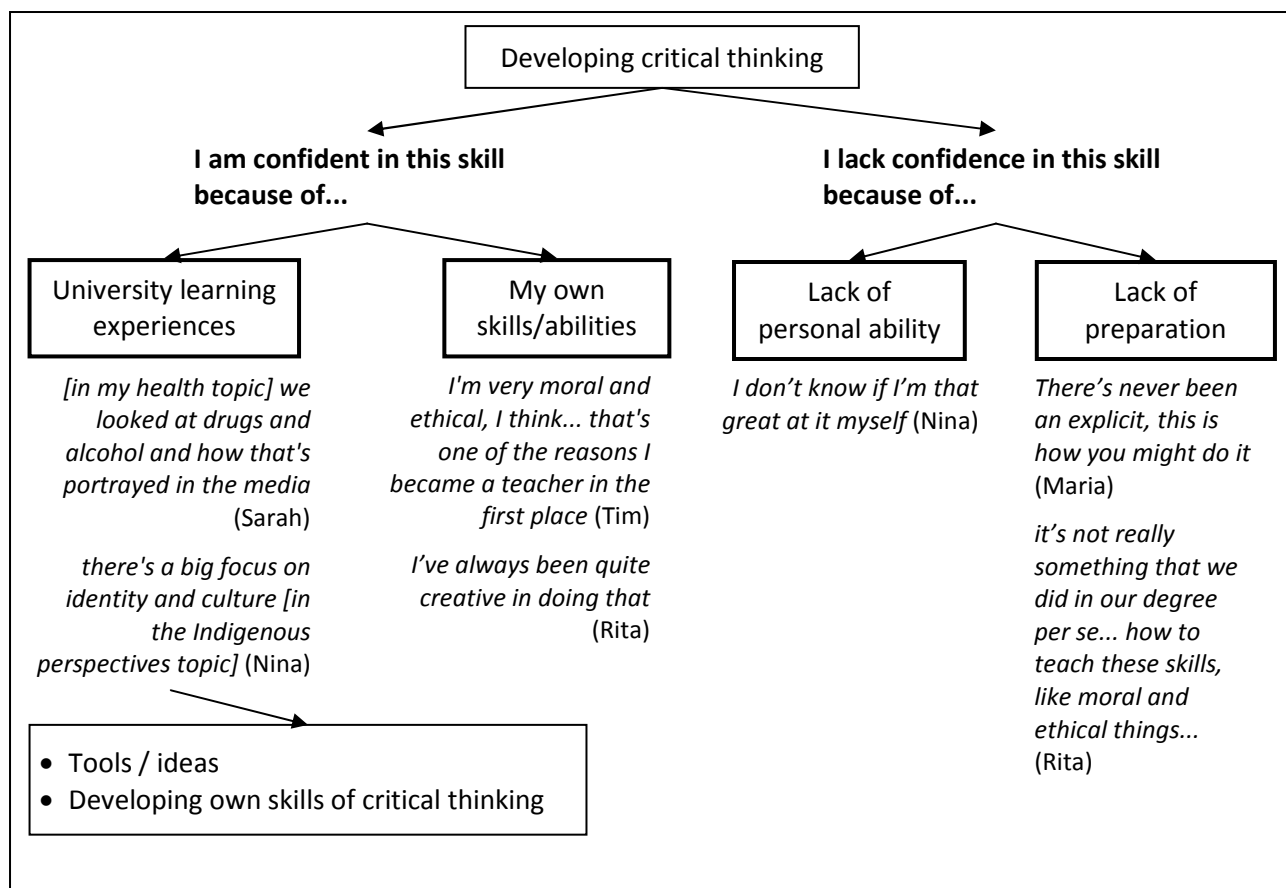
The interviews revealed few instances of weak self-efficacy. Pre-service teachers expressed strong to moderate self-efficacy in their ability to perform the majority of the English teaching skills. In the interviews, they consistently used phrases such as *very confident* (Maria), *confident* (Sarah, Maria), *fairly confident* (Tim, Rita, Maria) / *fairly good* (Rita), *pretty confident* (Sarah) / *pretty good* (Rita) and *that's easy* (Tim). Weak self-efficacy phrases included *I don't know* (Nina, Rita), *Not really* (Nina), *That's probably a weakness for me* (Maria), *I'm not confident at all* (Maria), *definitely require some research* (Tim) / *I'd have to do the research myself on that one* (Nina). At other times interviewees implied having strong self-efficacy by talking about the skill in terms of their passion, but without explicitly stating their degree of confidence: *I LOVE teaching kids to read!* (Maria's response to: Facilitating learning in the English classroom through reading).

Figure 5 provides a sample of reasons pre-service teachers gave for statements of self-efficacy within the English teaching category of Developing English Language Skills. The single reason given for lack of confidence by pre-service teachers in this category was lack of preparation at university. The key ideas emerging from the data about how efficacy for developing English language skills is enhanced at university are: exposure to practical ideas and techniques for developing literacy skills, building a knowledge base around how children develop literacy, gaining practice through the professional teaching placement and experiencing successful performance of this teaching skill.



**Figure 5: Sources of Efficacy for Developing English Language Skills**

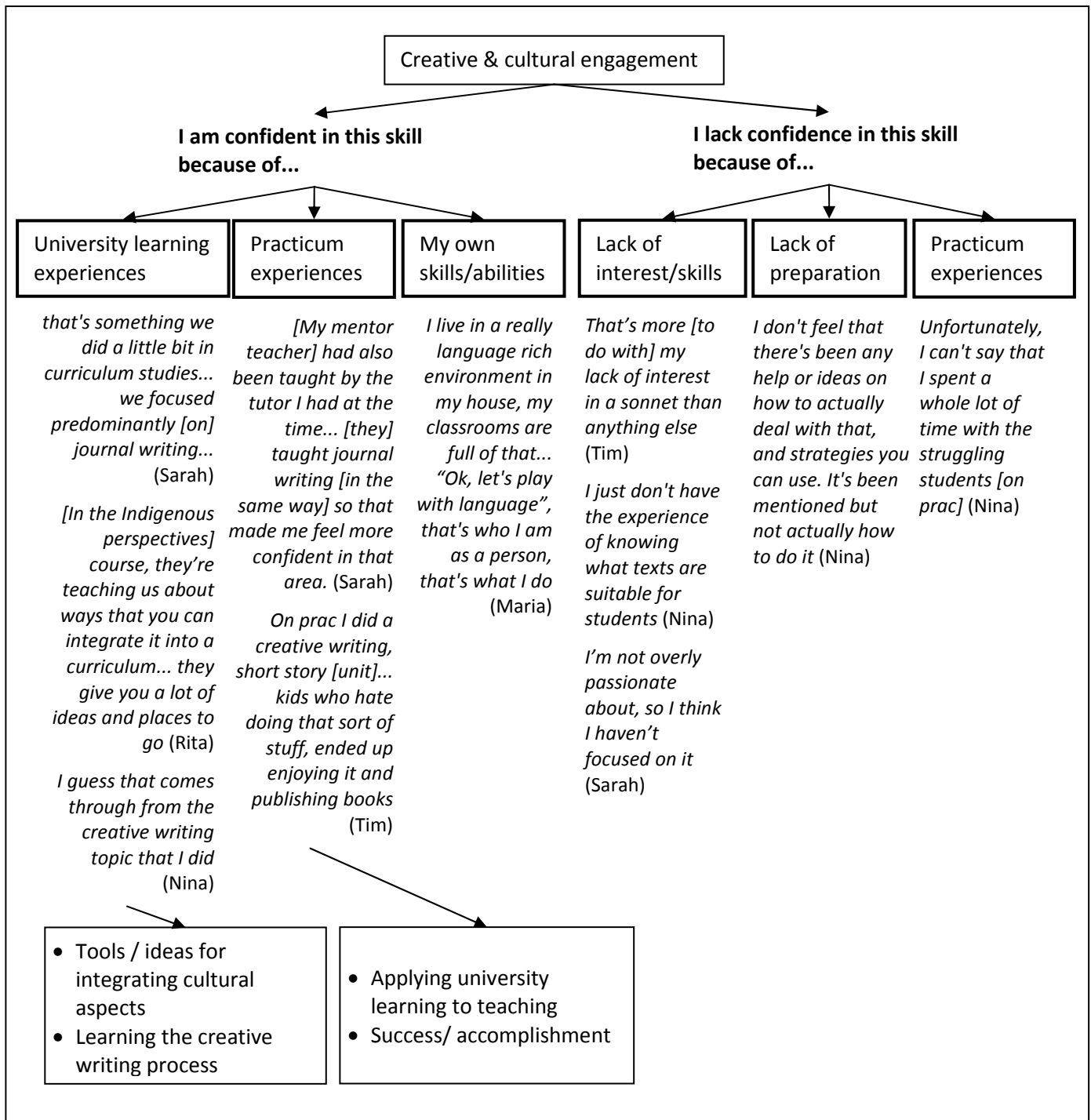
Figure 6 shows the reasons pre-service teachers gave for self-efficacy statements in relation to Developing Critical Thinking. Here they tended to focus on university learning experiences which developed their own critical thinking skills. There was no mention of practicum experiences in this category.



**Figure 6: Sources of Efficacy for Developing Critical Thinking**

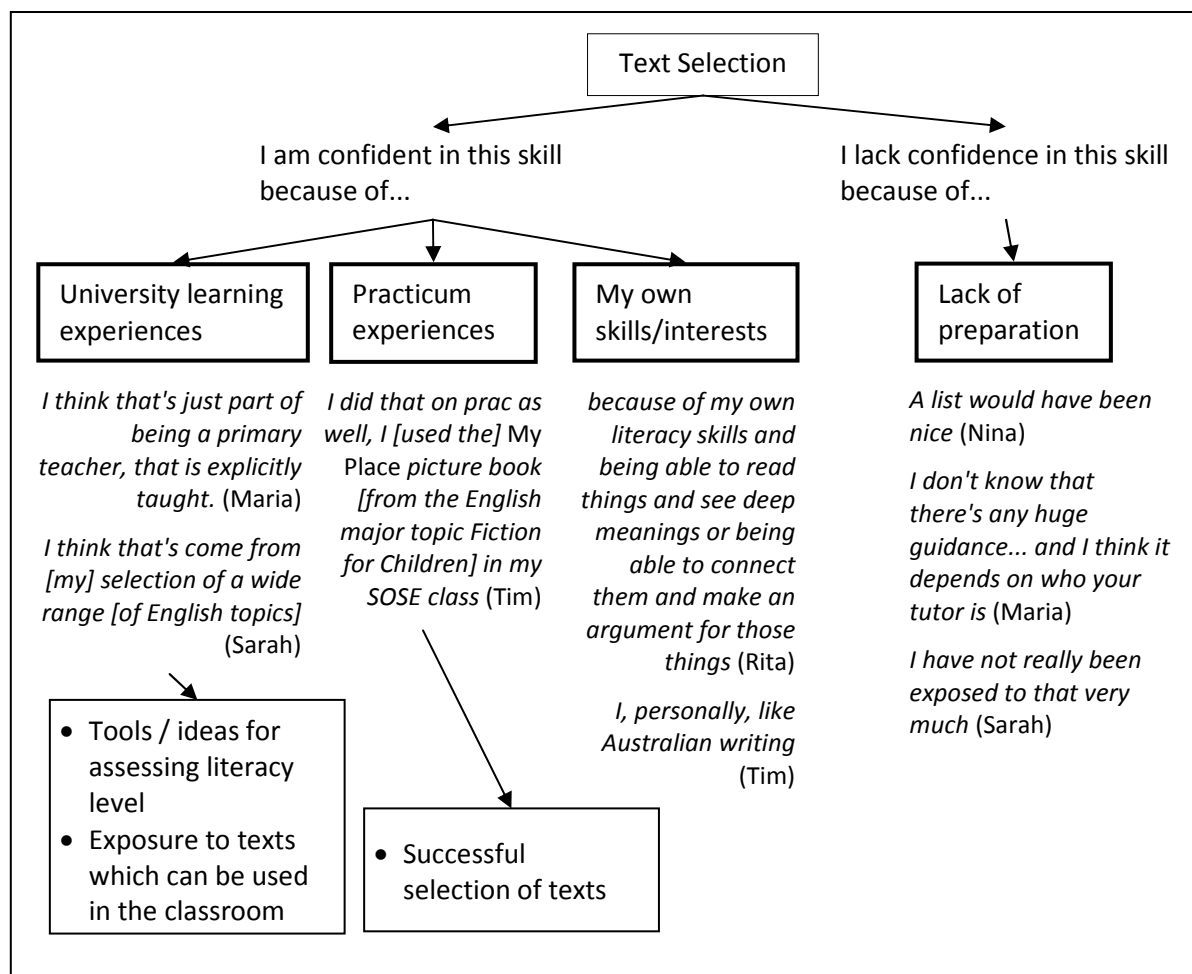
Figure 7 shows how pre-service teachers responded to the category Facilitating Creative and Cultural Engagement. One of the strong ideas emerging from this category is the notion of applying the concepts that are taught at university on the teaching placement. Pre-service teachers Nina and Sarah also mentioned creative writing electives as sources of self-efficacy in this category.





**Figure 7: Sources of Efficacy for Facilitating Creative and Cultural Engagement**

Figure 8 shows the reasons pre-service gave for their statements of self-efficacy in the category of Text selection. English topics featured more strongly in this category than in all the others. Generally pre-services teachers responded with low to moderate self-efficacy statements in this category, and the main reason they gave for this was a lack of exposure to texts which can be used in the classroom throughout their degree.



**Figure 8: Sources of Efficacy for Text Selection**

Across all interviews, the first part of each interview was dominated by pre-service teachers' descriptions of negative and positive aspects of their degree, including suggestions for how the degree could be improved. With the exception of international student, Rita, all of the pre-service teachers had something negative to say. Stories about negative and positive learning experiences continued after the formal self-efficacy questions were over. Negative comments about the degree programmes in relation to English teaching are briefly summarised in the next section. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate the learning experiences that pre-service found helpful throughout their degree programmes in relation to both general confidence and self-efficacy to teach English. In Figure 9, each helpful aspect is assigned a number.

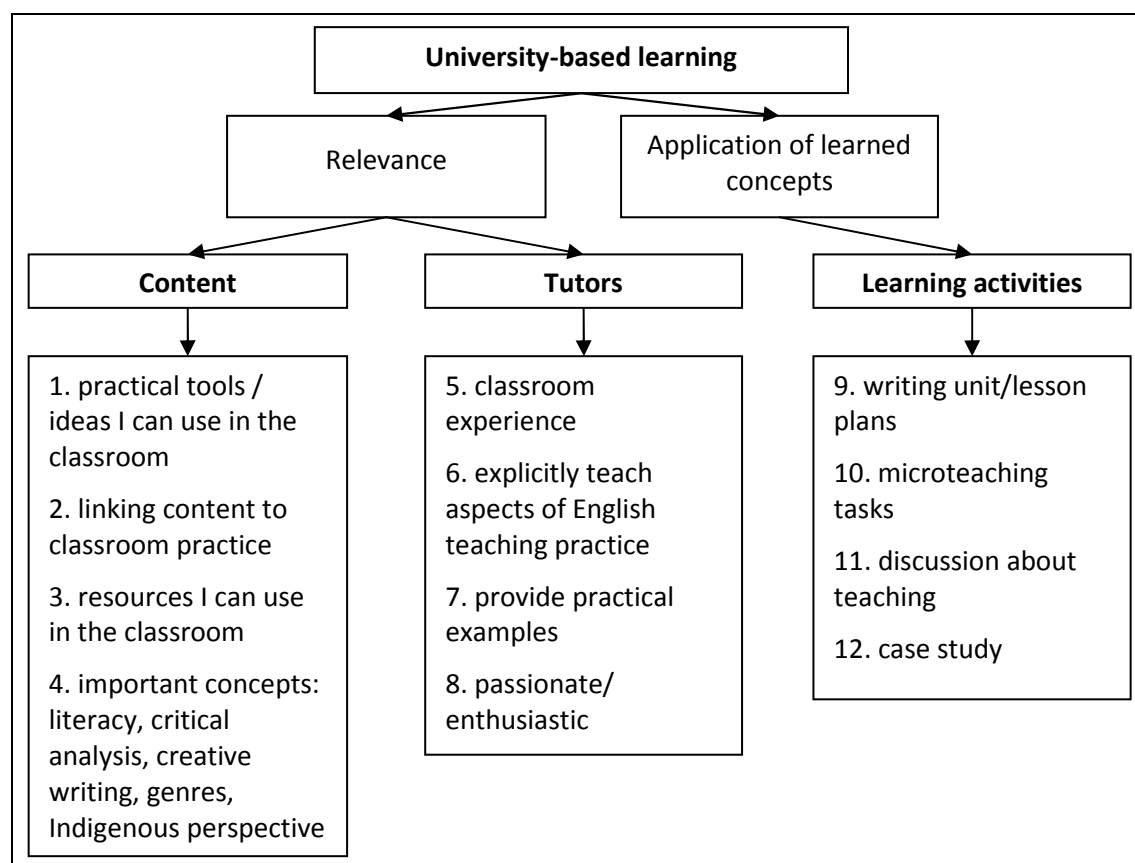


Figure 9: Helpful aspects of university-based learning experiences

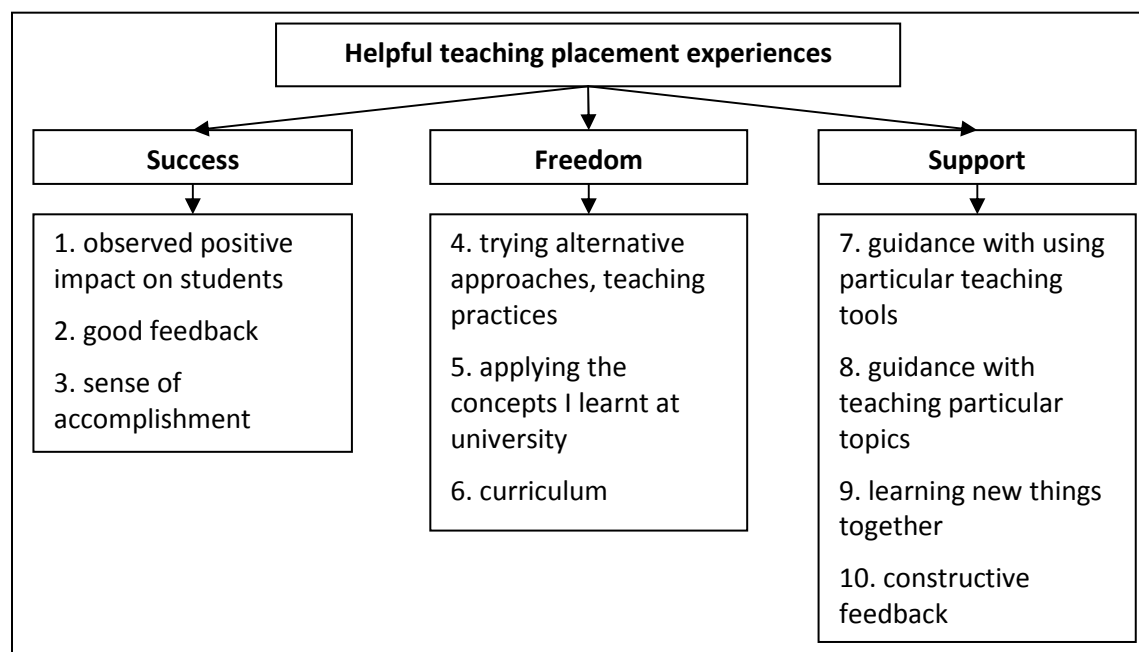


Figure 10: Helpful aspects of professional teaching placements

## Discussion

### University-Based Experiences and Feelings of Self-Efficacy

When talking about university-based experiences, the pre-service teachers spoke in terms of the content that was covered, characteristics of tutors and actual learning activities in classes. Recommendations for change and imagined experiences were often mixed with criticism about the structure and content of existing degree programmes. For example, Nina commented that:

*Not one topic in this course, nor my previous course, has been adequate to prepare me for teaching English at school. There were a couple of ideas that will be helpful, but far too much time is spent on theories and not enough on how to apply these theories to the teaching of particular subjects (Nina)*

Both Tim and Nina expressed frustration at not having any preparation to teach different year levels of secondary English curriculum:

Nina: *I can teach from year 8 till 12 that's a huge scope and I don't really feel that we've focused at all on the [senior school] aspects of it. And so I don't really feel prepared to teach year 11 and 12*

Tim: *[in] the two [English method topics] I've done, the unit plan developed was for my year 9s this year on prac, you know I've never developed a unit plan for year 10 English or year 6, 7, 8 for that matter, or year 11, 12. So you're very, because of the time constraints, very narrow and limited in what can be done...*

*we haven't looked at the [state] curriculum at all [or] how to report or organise unit plans, whatsoever. I personally hadn't experienced that until final semester of my fourth year.*

Sarah also echoed these sentiments. She also said that most English major topics offered within the Arts degree *[don't] really help me to become a teacher, [they] don't really help to know how I can teach English in a classroom*. Nina found that throughout her degree there was a lot of talk about *[how] you need to meet the needs of the students* across the full spectrum of abilities, but, she added, *I don't feel that there have been any help or ideas on how to actually deal with that, [or] strategies you can use*. Nina linked this gap in her education with her weak sense of self-efficacy for using students' language, experience and culture as a basis for facilitating further language development. Tim said that the in-class activities for the purpose of teaching instructional strategies were *extremely simplistic*. Tim's frustration is reflected in his lack of self-efficacy for developing (in his words), *students if they were at a low level in English*.

One final point of interest in the data was the link between pre-service teachers' efficacy and their perceived knowledge of the task. Bandura states that "if one does not know what demands must be fulfilled, one cannot accurately judge whether one has the requisite abilities to perform the task" (1997, p. 64). For example, in the relation to the text selection category Nina said, *there's that sense of not knowing what is going to be expected of me that leads onto not feeling very confident in myself knowing how to pick out these texts. So that's a bit daunting. Just not knowing what's going to be expected and not being hugely confident in my knowledge*. While Sarah responded in the following way to fostering links between the English classroom and the wider community:

Sarah: *I'd feel confident in doing that, but I wouldn't be sure what to do, like what could I do in the community that would directly relate to English? I think sometimes my view of English as a topic is a bit limited so I think that's*

*where I lack confidence: I'm not one hundred percent sure what fits in English. Because most of my pracs were in high school so, it's sort of like, this is English, it's a standalone topic, what do you do in English? Well, books and film and poetry...*

Both Nina and Sarah express a frustration about not having adequate knowledge of the occupational task of English teaching, and both of them link this lack of knowledge to feelings of low confidence. Perceived lack of understanding about English teaching might be explained by inadequate preparation for English teaching (i.e. content, curriculum, pedagogical knowledge) or insufficient practical experience dedicated to English teaching. However, viewed from the perspective of Bandura's means of measuring self-efficacy on a scale of certainty about one's competence, the pre-service teachers' lack of knowledge about their ability to teach English is an indicator of low English teaching self-efficacy. This underscores the crucial role of teacher education in developing pre-service teachers' understanding about English teaching practice, and consequently their self-efficacy.

The learning process that pre-service teachers identified as most helpful to their self-efficacy to teach English have certain elements in common with Bandura's notion of mastery modelling in occupational preparation: "First, the appropriate occupational skills are modelled to convey the basic skills rules and strategies. Second, the learners receive guided practice under simulated conditions so they can perfect the skills. Third, they are helped to apply their newly learned skills in work situations in ways that will bring them success" (Bandura, 1997, pp. 440-441).

### **Characteristics of University Lecturers/Tutors**

Four of the five interviewees mentioned their university teachers when talking about helpful learning experiences. Bandura's notion of vicarious experience and the importance of modelling was affirmed by interviewees' comments about university lectures and tutors. In particular, the importance of the model's credibility (Bandura 1997, p. 107) in the eyes of the pre-service teachers. A recurring example of a good tutor (in an English method topic) emerged from the interviews with the three secondary and middle school pre-service teachers, Nina, Tim and Sarah. What they valued most about this tutor was his experience. This "good" tutor was described by Tim as having more than thirty years of English teaching experience and being *still pretty involved in the classroom*. Nina also said that this "good" tutor had *real experience* and was *actively teaching still*. Tim mentioned that the "good" tutor *provided us with stacks of documents* (that he had developed over many years, adding *that's the sort of standard he's at, he's fantastic*. According to Tim, *good tutors* are those who:

*have been out there teaching for long enough they know what's been done, they know what can be done better, and they are able to bring that back to the classroom more effectively than the doctorates who have been in the university setting for the last ten to fifteen years.*

### **Content Knowledge**

The value of a particular learning experience for English teaching self-efficacy was strongly related to the content being taught. Pre-service teachers consistently praised topics that gave them practical classroom ideas.

Tim: *The hard copies [the tutor] gave us were very definitive, — This is how I do it, you can do it this way or that way, but this is how I found it most efficient and effective. It gave us a clearer understanding of exactly what is required*

Sarah: *[The tutor] brought in a lot of his own resources and then explained to us how he would use these and then gave us student examples... I think that was the most beneficial thing because at that point that is what we need, because when you go out into the classroom, you've got no resources — well, you sort of pick them up here and there and hope that they work, — whereas that's giving you resources but also how to implement them...*

The above two interview excerpts place emphasis on the *how* of teaching English.

In general the pre-service teachers tended to associate their English literature elective topics only with one category of English teaching skills — text selection. Nina and Sarah talked in terms of deficit, mentioning that they were not exposed to certain types of texts and authors. The pre-service teachers wanted more of a focus on preparation for teaching curriculum at different year levels in the English literature elective topics.

## Pedagogy

The pre-service teachers used phrases such as *definitive* and *explicit* to describe the most helpful learning experiences at university. Such learning experiences centred around pedagogical content knowledge and content knowledge for the English classroom, i.e. ways of teaching particular concepts in English and what to teach. As well as explicit teaching, practical tasks, such as writing unit plans and microteaching, were also valued.

The key element of Bandura's concept of mastery modelling is the application of knowledge and skills to real life situations. Maria's description of how she was taught to teach writing at university is a good example of mastery modelling:

*The tutor explicitly taught us the writing process, as is suggested in most text books these days, you know pre-writing, and drafting and editing and revising and publishing... She explicitly taught us that and then asked us, how would you go about teaching that process? So we came back with lesson plans... Then she gave us a handout, "take it home, laminate it, put it on your wall, this is how you teach writing"*

For Maria, the combination of writing lesson plans and microteaching was particularly helpful:

*I really found that these activities or learning tasks that were asked of me that were most helpful were the ones where [they] said, "Ok if you're going to teach handwriting these are some of the ways that we, as teaching staff, have found have worked really well — we might do it this way, we might do it this way — here are some books that we really liked, here are some ideas [...] So being exposed to the intricacies and the practicalities of what teaching English or literacy is about.*

While some of the pre-service teachers spoke about the process of learning in English creative writing topics as transferable to teaching and helpful in the development of their self-efficacy, no such connections were made between English literature topics and teaching. For example none of the pre-service teachers referred to the process of learning in English literature topics as helpful in relation to developing critical thinking in the English classroom. This may point to the need for explicit teaching and modelling of metacognitive skills (e.g. evaluating their own thinking about the origins of classroom practice in English) to pre-service teachers, which would empower them to make connections between the study of literature and teaching English.

All of the other comments about effective tutors, content and learning processes in university topics referred to topics administered by the School of Education, including English method topics, while it was recognised that English literature/creative writing topics are not designed specifically for pre-service teachers. Interviews suggest, however, that even education topics provided pre-service teachers with only a few isolated experiences that directly enhanced their English teaching self-efficacy.

### Personal Characteristics of Pre-Service Teachers

One of the most interesting things that emerged from the data is the central role played by individual differences between the pre-service teachers. Of particular significance is how pre-service teachers approach their learning, as well as their life experiences. Interview data has strong links to Bandura's concept of "learner self-efficacy" and mediating factors, such as motivation and goal setting (Bandura, 1997).

Pre-service teachers Maria and Rita referred to their life experiences as sources of self-efficacy in aspects of English teaching. Maria generally emphasised that she has a *language rich* environment at home, which shapes her teaching practice, particularly in the area of literacy and English. She also referred to teaching English in a *third world country* on a student exchange programme as an experience that cemented her desire to become a teacher. This may explain why, for instance, Maria felt quite confident *in spite* of the shortcomings of her degree. She often hypothesised that pre-service teachers without her life experience would not have the same learning outcomes. At the very beginning of the interview she stated, *the degree fails us as students in a number of ways*, however, she added *I feel lucky because I have children and I was a volunteer in a couple of schools for 6 or 7 years so I've seen how schools work, I think if I didn't have that experience I would feel a little overwhelmed*. She also mentioned that raising gifted children has meant that she did her own research into literacy before coming to the degree.

Rita referred to her previous experience being a private tutor of French as a source of self-efficacy for engaging students through creative activities. For Rita, the degree *just showed how important it is to do those things*. Towards the end of the interview, Tim said the following of the value of his previous experience as a swimming coach:

*I'm a swimming coach, I've been doing that for 7 years, so I have 30 guys every morning and every night that I coach, and so that's why I'm confident in my ability to teach. Content-wise is a different story, but the actual teaching side of it... I daresay I've learnt more from my job than the degree*

While Tim's statement may sound disappointing coming from someone at the end of their teacher education degree, it must be viewed in the context of his earlier statement:

I: What did you expect from your degree going in?

Tim: *I think I expected to learn how to teach... I understand that there are educational theories you have to understand, but I sort of think the bulk of the course has been on that, rather than how to actually teach, so I think a lot of the areas that are fundamental to teaching aren't taught at all. Stuff like, for example, voice projection, how to portray yourself in the classroom, how to position yourself for effective learning, how to set up a classroom, all of those things.... constructing your curriculum wasn't done until the last year... so all of the bolts of actually teaching [aren't] taught at uni.*

Tim felt that there was no transition made from broad *educational theories* to teaching methods. If this is the case, then there is a danger of pre-service teachers adopting teaching techniques and methods which teachers they work with tell them have been "tried and

tested”, as “learning to teach” has mostly occurred while on professional teaching placement. This is both a deterrent to innovation and reflexivity in teaching practice as well as being counter to what teacher education courses aim to achieve.

### Imagined Learning Experiences

All pre-service teachers, with the exception of international student, Rita, made suggestions for how their degree could be improved to enhance the English teaching self-efficacy of pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers’ imagined ideal learning experiences closely matched Bandura’s concept of mastery modelling. Maria’s envisioned *apprenticeship* style degree with term-length teaching placements alternating with term-length university-based *reflection and theory* is consistent with Bandura’s call for an ‘adequate transfer program’ which allows people to practice occupational skills in work situations (Bandura, 1997, p. 444).

All of the domestic pre-services teachers wished for ongoing English teaching preparation throughout the degree (an English teaching strand) to replace the existing system of two method topics in third and fourth year. This methods preparation centred on having a foundation to teach English curriculum and the demystification of the work of an English teacher: *what you should expect when you get a job as an English teacher* (Nina). Sarah expressed a desire for explicit teaching of methodological theories in one dedicated topic, *this [tool] is for this, this [tool] is for this, and this is how you can use it*. Tim’s vision of the English teaching strand is one where there is an explicit focus on the practical aspects of teaching, which meets the learning needs of the students:

Tim: *if we had an English topic that was solely to design a unit, for example, we could choose whatever we wanted to and the whole thing is focused on that, so that would be design of curriculum. Another topic may be selecting appropriate texts, so in that case the uni teacher might be [saying], these are good examples, these are good authors to choose for different year levels, and so directing us for that sort of learning, and the opportunity exists for us to explore that avenue ourselves, find what we like and what suits our teaching styles.*

Overall, pre-service teachers envisioned writing unit/lesson plans and microteaching in the English teaching strand as effective ways of boosting their self-efficacy. This further emphasises that pre-service teachers want to learn how to teach by a process of mastery modelling, which begins with explicit instruction in PCK and ends in the application of these newly acquired skills.

### Conclusion

Interviews with the five pre-service teachers in this study suggest that there is a strong relationship between learning experiences at university and English teaching efficacy. All of the interviewees referred to learning experiences within their degree when speaking about the origins of their self-efficacy for specific English teaching skills. The pre-service teachers also identified numerous gaps in their preparation, and often cited them as the reason for having low self-efficacy for some aspects of English teaching. Lack of training in content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge for English was most strongly linked to lack of confidence for English teaching by pre-service teachers.



A desire for training in content, curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge featured strongly in pre-service teachers' ideal imagined learning experiences, which had the single common vision of an English teaching strand, covering the "what" and "how" of English teaching. More often than not, however, the pre-service teachers referred to their own knowledge, experiences and character as the main sources of self-efficacy for teaching English. It was, perhaps, the pre-service teachers' interactions with existing learning experiences (both at university and on the teaching placement) that accounted for the differences in self-efficacy. However, the quality of the teaching placement, as determined by factors such as the level of support, also accounted for differences in self-efficacy. Mastery experiences on the teaching placement were the most commonly cited reasons for high self-efficacy. Interviews did not shed much light on the precise nature of the type of curriculum, content and pedagogical content knowledge that would enhance each particular English teaching skill.

Interview data suggests that the effectiveness of learning experiences to impact English teaching self-efficacy depends on the following factors: degree structure, university teachers, mentor teachers, and whether topics were administered by the School of Education or the School of Humanities. The most helpful learning experiences which pre-service teachers identified and imagined in an English teacher preparation course were similar to Bandura's process of mastery modelling: a progression from explicit teaching of skills, opportunities to apply skills in a safe university setting and opportunity to experience success in the application of those skills on a teaching placement.

Due to the design of the interview, pre-service teachers spoke about their confidence using their own terms, which made their statements harder to compare and often difficult to interpret for direct self-efficacy information. Tim and Rita tended to avoid directly stating their lack of confidence. For example, Tim's phrase, *I'm confident in my own ability and to teach it adequately, but not to a high level* implies gradations of performance, e.g. *adequate* versus *high level*, rather than gradations of self-efficacy. Also consider Rita's statement, *I think it is really important, it's something that I definitely would aim to do. I don't know how well I'd be able to do that*, where she claims not to know her level of competency. Ambiguous statements, such as *'this is just part of being a primary school teacher'* (Maria) / *You would do that anyhow, as a teacher* (Rita), can also be interpreted in two ways, either as reflecting high self-efficacy, by implying that this skill is the norm for their practice as teachers, or the choice not to answer the question. Such lack of clarity could have been avoided through follow up questioning, which is a limitation of the interview technique. Time-permitting, a second and third round of interviews would have provided more depth and clarification about pre-service teachers' self-efficacy beliefs (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) but this time was not available within the limits of the study.

Overall, the relationship between university learning experiences and English teaching self-efficacy in pre-service teachers, as found in this study, underscores the key premise of self-efficacy theory: "People must experience sufficient success using what they have learned to believe in themselves and the value of the new ways" (Bandura, 1997, p. 444). However "what they have learned" and how they learn it may determine which particular aspects of English teaching pre-service teachers have the most confidence in. In this study pre-service teachers saw a significant relationship between their learning experiences in a teacher education degree and their self-efficacy to teach a particular subject. This suggests that further investigation can be done into the nature of this relationship for different subject domains, for junior-primary/primary versus secondary pre-service teachers, and for both campus-based and teaching placement learning. Concerning the relationship between pre-service teacher education and the English teaching self-efficacy of pre-service teachers, the findings of this study suggest a need for future research to investigate the effect

of mastery modelling training in English on pre-service teachers' self-efficacy to teach English.

## References

- The Australian Association for the Teaching of English. (2009a). *Censorship and text selection*. Retrieved 20 January 2010, from <http://www.aate.org.au/index.php?id=41>
- The Australian Association for the Teaching of English. (2009b). *The teaching of English in Australia*. Retrieved 20 January, 2010, from <http://www.aate.org.au/index.php?id=39#11>
- The Australian Association for the Teaching of English. (2015). *Association History*. Retrieved 29 April, 2015, from: <https://www.aate.org.au/about-us/aate-history>
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2010). *F-10 Curriculum > English > Rationale*. Retrieved 27 April, 2015, from <http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/english/rationale>
- Armor, D., Conry-Oseguera, P., Cox, M., King, N., McDonnell, L., Pascal, A., et al. (1976). Analysis of the School Preferred Reading Program in Selected Los Angeles Minority Schools. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-Efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency. *American Psychologist*, 37(2), 122-147. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.37.2.122>
- Bandura, A. (1989). Social cognitive theory. In R. Vasta (Ed.), *Annals of child development. Vol.6. Six theories of child development*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Bandura, A. (1995). On Rectifying Conceptual Ecumenism. In J. E. Maddux (Ed.), *Self-efficacy, adaptation, and adjustment: theory, research, and application* (pp. 347-375). New York: Plenum Press. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-6868-5\\_13](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-6868-5_13)
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control*. New York: W. H. Freeman and Company.
- Bandura, A. (2006). Guide for constructing self-efficacy scales. In F. Pajares & T. C. Urdan (Eds.), *Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents* (pp. 307-337). Greenwich, Conn.: Information Age Publishing.
- Connole, H. (1993). The research enterprise. In H. Connole, B. Smith & R. Wiseman (Eds.), *Issues and methods in research: Study Guide* (Rev ed., pp. 21-40). Adelaide: University of South Australia.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin Pty Ltd.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hamerness, K., Grossman, P. L., Rust, F., & Shulman, L. S. (2005). The Design of Teacher Education Programs. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do* (pp. 390-411). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Dellinger, A. B., Bobbett, J. J., Olivier, D. F., & Ellett, C. D. (2008). Measuring teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: Development and use of the TEBS-Self. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, 751-766. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2007.02.010>
- Doecke, B., & Gill, M. (2001). Setting Standards: Confronting Paradox. *English in Australia*(129-130), 5-15.
- Doecke, B., Green, B., Kostogris, A., Reid, J., & Sawyer, W. (2007). Knowing practice in English teaching? Research challenges in representing the professional practice of English teachers. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 6(3), 4-21.

- Enochs, L. G., & Riggs, I. M. (1990). *Further Development of an Elementary Science Teaching Efficacy Belief Instrument: A Preservice Elementary Scale*. Paper presented at the 63rd Annual Meeting of the National Association for Research in Science Teaching, Atlanta, GA. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1949-8594.1990.tb12048.x>
- Fivesa, H., Hamman, D., & Olivarez, A. (2007). Does burnout begin with student-teaching? Analyzing efficacy, burnout, and support during the student-teaching semester. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 916-934. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.03.013>
- Gibson, S., & Dembo, M. H. (1984). Teacher Efficacy: A Construct Validation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(4), 569-582. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.76.4.569>
- Goddard, R., & O'Brien, P. (2007). *Pre-service teacher education and beginning teacher burnout*. Paper presented at the International Educational Research Conference, Fremantle, WA.
- Grossman, P. L., Wilson, S. M., & Shulman, L. S. (1989). Teachers of Substance: Subject Matter Knowledge for Teaching. In M. C. Reynolds (Ed.), *Knowledge Base for the Beginning Teacher* (pp. 23-36). Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Henson, R. K. (2002). From Adolescent Angst to Adulthood: Substantive Implications and Measurement Dilemmas in the Development of Teacher Efficacy Research. *Educational Psychologist*, 37(3), 137-150. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3703\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S15326985EP3703_1)
- Howie, M. (2008). Embracing the other within: Dialogical ethics, resistance and professional advocacy in English teaching. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 7(1), 103-118.
- Ingvarson, L., Beavis, A., & Kleinhenz, E. (2005). *Factors Affecting the Impact of Teacher Education Courses on Teacher Preparedness*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Montreal.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: learning the craft of qualitative research interviews* (2 ed.). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Labone, E. (2002). *The role of teacher efficacy in the development and prevention of teacher burnout*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Australian Association for Research in Education, Brisbane, QLD. <https://www.aare.edu.au/02pap/lab02593.htm>
- Labone, E. (2004). Teacher efficacy: maturing the construct through research in alternative paradigms. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 341-359. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2004.02.013>
- Luft, J. A., & Roehrig, G. H. (2007). Capturing Science Teachers' Epistemological Beliefs: The Development of the Teacher Beliefs Interview. *Electronic Journal of Science Education*, 11(2), 38-63.
- Maddux, J. E. (1995). Self-Efficacy Theory: An Introduction. In J. E. Maddux (Ed.), *Self-efficacy, adaptation, and adjustment: theory, research, and application*. New York: Plenum Press. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-6868-5\\_1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-6868-5_1)
- Meiers, M. (2007). Reflections on the Use of Research to Inform Teaching. *English in Australia*, 42(2), 50-58.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A guide to design and implementation* (2 ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Milner, H. R. (2002). A Case Study of an Experienced English Teacher's Self-efficacy and Persistence through "Crisis" Situations: Theoretical and Practical Considerations. *The High School Journal*, 86(1), 28-35. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hsj.2002.0020>
- Milner, H. R., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2003). A case study of an African American Teacher's self-efficacy, stereotype threat, and persistence. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19, 263-276. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(02\)00099-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(02)00099-9)
- Misson, R., & Sumara, D. (2006). Reclaiming the "creative" in the English/literacy classroom. *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 5(2), 1-5.

- Mohan, A. M. (2009). *Teacher Efficacy in Geography: A Mixed Methods Study of Formal and Informal Teacher Education*. Doctor of Philosophy, Texas State University-San Marcos, San Marcos, Texas.
- Morgan, W. (2007). The Literary Work, or the Work We Do with Literary Texts. *English in Australia*, 42(2), 34-43.
- NVivo qualitative data analysis software (Version 8). (2009): QSR International Pty Ltd.
- O'Donoghue, T. (2007). *Planning Your Qualitative Research Project: An introduction to interpretivist research in education*. London: Routledge.
- Pajares, F. (1992). Teachers' Beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning up a Messy Construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3), 307-332.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00346543062003307>
- Patterson, A. (2008). Teaching Literature in Australia: Examining and Reviewing Senior English. *Changing English*, 15(3), 311-322.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13586840802364236>
- Philp, K. (2007). AATE Statements of Belief. *English in Australia*, 42(2), 13-16.
- Rotter, J. (1966). Generalized Expectancies for Internal versus External Control of Reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs*, 80(1), 1-28.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0092976>
- Sawyer, W. (2010). Writing (in) the Nation. *English in Australia*, 45(2), 7-20.
- Schunk, D. M. (1995). Self-Efficacy and Education and Instruction. In J. E. Maddux (Ed.), *Self-efficacy, adaptation, and adjustment: theory, research, and application* (pp. 281-303). New York: Plenum Press. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-6868-5\\_10](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-6868-5_10)
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2007). Dimensions of Teacher Self-Efficacy and Relations With Strain Factors, Perceived Collective Teacher Efficacy, and Teacher Burnout. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 99(3), 611-625. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.99.3.611>
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Book of Qualitative Research* (3 ed., pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17, 783-805.  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(01\)00036-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00036-1)
- Tschannen Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2007). The differential antecedents of self-efficacy beliefs of novice and experienced teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 944-956. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.05.003>
- Tschannen Moran, M., Woolfolk Hoy, A., & Hoy, W. K. (1998). Teacher Efficacy: Its Meaning and Measure. *Review of Educational Research*, 68(2), 202-248.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00346543068002202>
- Ure, C., & Lysk, J. (2008). *Professional Learning in Pre-service Teacher Education: Placement experiences in graduate teacher education programs*. Paper presented at the AARE International Education Research Conference, Brisbane, QLD.
- Wheatley, K. F. (2005). The case for reconceptualizing teacher efficacy research. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 747-766. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.05.009>