Pre-service Teachers' Language Sensitivity Experiences and Endeavors During Internship Program: Insights for Character and Social Education

Ryan R. Pecson[1], and Normita M. Lugtu[2]
[1,2]College of Education, Bataan Peninsula State University-Balanga Campus, City of Balanga, Bataan, Philippines

ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: What teachers say in class affects learners' behaviours and understanding. As a harbinger of equitable and transformative education, teachers are mandated to promote sensitivity and inclusivity, making it imperative to conduct studies contextualizing preparatory practices to equip future teachers (pre-service teachers) in fostering inclusive education and social inclusion as part of their internship program.

Methodology: The study examines the challenges experienced, strategic measures applied, and instructional resources utilized by pre-service teachers in promoting language sensitivity practices among public secondary schools during their student teaching program through the lens of descriptive qualitative (exploratory study) research. Fifteen (15) pre-service teachers acting as team leaders in their respective schools in the City of Balanga and Bataan, Philippines, handling Grades 7 to 10 students, are purposively selected as key informants for the interview. Upon validation of the research instrument, data gathering commenced, assuring compliance with stringent research protocols (i.e., anonymity, consent, and data confidentiality). Thematic analysis, proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), is employed for the data analysis.

Main Findings: The findings reveal that teaching language sensitivity faces key challenges, including a lack of awareness, peer influence, and the normalization of insensitive language. Such challenges may implicate character education initiatives, specifically in catapulting the roles of student-teachers as agents of social value formation. However, strategies to address such challenges are evident, such as vocabulary building, creating safe learning environments, and experiential learning. Instructional resources range from visual aids and reflective writing to multimedia resources and interactive activities.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The study posits novelty in its approach in contextualizing language sensitivity endeavors through the lens of pre-service teachers to intensify technical assistance during their internship program.

Corresponding Author:
Ryan R. Pecson,
College of of Education, Bataan Peninsula State University-Balanga Campus, City of Balanga, 2100, Bataan, Philippines
Email: rrpecson@bpsu.edu.ph

1.   INTRODUCTION

Language sensitivity is crucial for promoting effective communication and developing inclusive learning environments. It helps address linguistic and cultural barriers, enhancing learning outcomes and fostering mutual respect among learners from diverse backgrounds [1]. Language sensitivity can liberate learners from cultural narrowness, making them aware of and respectful of diverse cultures and traditions globally [2]. Teachers must

also demonstrate heightened sensitivity in their language use [3], cultivating appropriate attitudes and intercultural competence [4], [5]. This includes developing intercultural language learning skills—such as cue recognition, processing, awareness, mindset, and comprehension [6]-[12]

Despite its importance, teaching language sensitivity presents several challenges as words can be a double-edge sword with both positive and negative impacts [13]. Ethnocentric intercultural sensitivity, stemming from traditionalist teaching approaches and limited cultural exposure, can lead to cultural misunderstandings and biases [14]. Teachers often face difficulties due to inadequate training and professional development opportunities, which are essential for effective teaching in transnational environments [15].

Several strategies have been proposed to enhance language sensitivity in educational settings. Engaging in culture-specific activities and utilizing informative multicultural materials can foster intercultural sensitivity [16]. Additionally, voluntary work in nongovernmental organizations increases cultural sensitivity among pre-service teachers, underscoring the importance of experiential learning [17]. Additionally, cross-cultural experiences are crucial for preparing language teachers to navigate diverse classrooms effectively. Teachers with extensive global experiences exhibit increased linguistic skills, intercultural competence, and adaptability in their teaching approaches [18]. These experiences are crucial for understanding and responding to the complexities of language teaching in a globalized world.

The impact of language sensitivity on classroom dynamics is significant. Positive language interactions, characterized by politeness and respect, enhance language sensitivity, whereas negative interactions, such as bullying or culturally biased language, diminish it [19]. Therefore, fostering an inclusive and respectful classroom environment is essential for promoting language sensitivity, enabling learners to develop the ability to understand, appreciate, and engage with people from diverse cultures and orientations [20].

Integrating cultural sensitivity into pedagogy can enhance learning outcomes and cultivate global citizenship skills. Understanding learner needs, incorporating authentic materials, and promoting cultural sensitivity are key to creating more inclusive and effective learning environments [21]. As noted Aliwadang [1], cultural differences shape learning experiences, affecting communication styles, perceptions of language proficiency, and classroom dynamics. These factors underscore the need for teacher candidates to enhance their personal and professional development—particularly in using sensitive language—to further develop their critical thinking skills and intercultural competence [22].

In general, teaching language sensitivity requires a multifaceted approach that includes tailored training, experiential learning, and the integration of cultural elements into language teaching. By fostering an environment of respect and inclusivity, educators can enhance intercultural communicative competence and prepare students to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world. By doing so, pre-service teachers are prepared for their future teaching careers, which mandate the use of appropriate languages of teaching and learning and inclusive education [23], as well as fostering inclusivity and inclusiveness as part of the teaching standards [24]. Such ensures the attainment of quality education (SDG No. 4) because in order for pre-service teachers to foster higher standards of inclusivity in their future classes, they need to be trained in a way that fosters higher quality pre-service training for inclusive education, making the Pre-service Teacher Training Programs of the College of Education (COEd) of Bataan Peninsula State University-Balanga Campus (BPSU-BC) compliant with the guidelines set by the Commission on Higher Education (CHEd) and the Department of Education (DepEd).

Indeed, teachers play a crucial role in advancing equitable and transformative education by championing sensitivity and inclusivity, especially in language, to align instruction with academic and sustainable development goals. Yet, few studies address how to prepare pre-service teachers for inclusive education during their internships, highlighting the timeliness and importance of this research and the need to retool them in exemplifying good character, personality, and competence in the field. The study's results can help design targeted pre-deployment orientation and seminar (PDOS), ensuring future educators enter schools better equipped to foster meaningful, high-quality learning experiences.

With that information and baselines in hand, the study's primary intention was to explore the challenges experienced, strategic measures applied, and instructional resources utilized by pre-service teachers in promoting language sensitivity practices among public secondary students during their internship program. Such information can serve as a baseline to strengthen the partnership between Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and the DepEd in providing meaningful, practical, and reformative internship experiences for pre-service teachers.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This section provides details on the research design, participants, instrument, data gathering procedure, ethical considerations, and data analysis used in the study.

2.1. Research Design

A descriptive qualitative (exploratory study) research design was employed in the study. This design described phenomena by focusing on research questions aimed at gaining insights into a poorly understood area, using semi-structured interviews [25]. As shown in Figure 1, using semi-structured interviews, the researchers

determined the challenges experienced by the pre-service teachers in promoting language sensitivity practices in their respective classrooms during the internship program; the strategic measures they applied in addressing the challenges they experienced; and the instructional resources they utilized in promoting language sensitivity practices. The researchers identified patterns and trends by analyzing the interview transcripts.
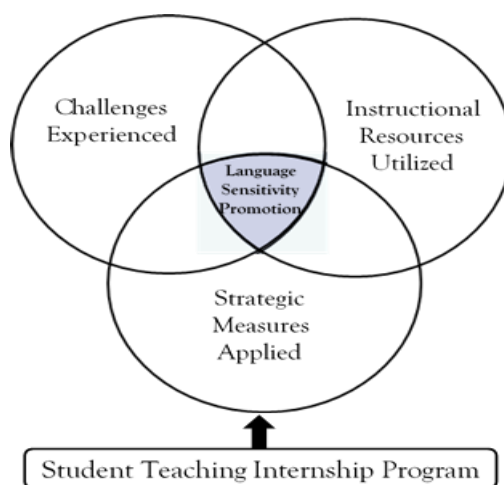

Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

2.2. Participants

The study was conducted among public secondary schools, specifically junior high schools, within two school divisions: (i) the Schools Division of Balanga City and (ii) the Schools Division of Bataan, Philippines, where the pre-service teachers were deployed, to understand their challenges experienced, strategic measures applied, and instructional resources utilized in promoting language sensitivity practices in their respective classrooms during the internship program among public secondary students during their internship program comprehensively. Out of the 80 pre-service teachers who volunteered for the first phase (quantitative) of a two-phase study conducted by the researchers, 15 pre-service teachers, who served as team leaders in their respective schools, were selected to participate in the interview process using a purposive sampling technique. As mentioned [26], purposive sampling is a non-random method in which researchers intentionally select participants who possess specific traits to meet the study's goals best. The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select the sample, where pre-service teachers were chosen based on the following purposes: (i) to gather firsthand data on the challenges experienced, strategic measures applied, and instructional resources utilized in promoting language sensitivity practices in their respective classrooms during the internship program among public secondary schools; and (ii) to improve instructional practices, taking into account their knowledge and experience as team leaders during the internship program.

2.3. Instrument

The study employed a semi-structured interview as the primary data-gathering tool. This interview utilizes open-ended, predetermined questions with follow-up questions to facilitate flexibility [27]. Below is the grid of the semi-structured interview as guide in the interview process.

Table 1. Guide for the Semi-structured Interview

Sections / Parts	Main Question	Follow-up Questions
I. Challenges Experienced by the Pre-service Teachers in Promoting Language Sensitivity Practices in Their Respective Classrooms During the Internship Program	What is the most pressing challenge/difficulty you encountered in teaching language sensitivity among secondary students?	Why is that a challenge/difficulty? How does that impact your advocacy/goal in promoting language sensitivity?
II. Strategic Measures Applied by the Pre-service Teachers in Addressing the Challenges They Experienced in Promoting Language Sensitivity Practices in Their Respective Classrooms During the Internship Program	What strategic measures did you apply to address your challenges in teaching language sensitivity among secondary students?	How do you use them in your class? What makes them effective in addressing the challenges you encountered?

III. Instructional Resources Utilized by the Pre-service Teachers in Promoting Language Sensitivity Practices in Their Respective Classrooms During the Internship Program	What are the instructional resources (learning materials) you used that effectively teach language sensitivity among secondary students?	What makes them effective?

The said semi-structured interview guide has three sections: (i) the challenges experienced by the pre-service teachers in promoting language sensitivity practices in their respective classrooms during the internship program; (ii) the strategic measures applied by the pre-service teachers in addressing the challenges they experienced in promoting language sensitivity practices in their respective classrooms during the internship program; and (iii) the instructional resources utilized by the pre-service teachers in promoting language sensitivity practices in their respective classrooms during the internship program. It contained open-ended questions with follow-up questions to expound and substantiate further the responses given by the participants. Before conducting the interviews, an endorsement was solicited from the Supervising Instructors (SIs) of the pre-service teachers. Additionally, consent letters were sent to the pre-service teachers to gather the necessary information.

2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

Using the semi-structured interview guide, data were gathered from pre-service teachers from the COEd of BPSU, who were deployed in public secondary schools. Consent forms were obtained from them, and the interviews were scheduled according to their available schedule and preferred modalities. After gathering the data, these were prepared for data analysis using the thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke [28].

2.5. Ethical Considerations

Consent forms were obtained from pre-service teachers deployed to public secondary schools before the actual data collection. The researchers also ensured the anonymity of their identities and the confidentiality of the data gathered from them. The objectives of the study were carefully explained to them, outlining the extent of their participation in the research.

2.6. Data Analysis

The data gathered in the interviews were treated using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke [28], following its six stages (Figure 2). The formulation of themes was done using the following steps: (i) familiarizing onself with the data; (ii) generating initial codes; (iii) generating initial themes; (iv) reviewing themes; (v) defining and naming the themes; and (vi) writing up. Initially, the recorded interviews were transcribed into written transcripts for easier handling. Subsequently, during the analysis phase, the researchers identified key points or significant segments within these transcripts. These key points were then systematically coded to categorize and organize the data. Codes that share commonalities and relevance were grouped, allowing for the emergence of overarching themes. Ultimately, these themes were assigned to provide a structured and comprehensive understanding of the challenges, strategic measures, and instructional resources that pre-service teachers use to promote language sensitivity during their internship. Lastly, the themes were presented in the write-up using diagrams and narratives.
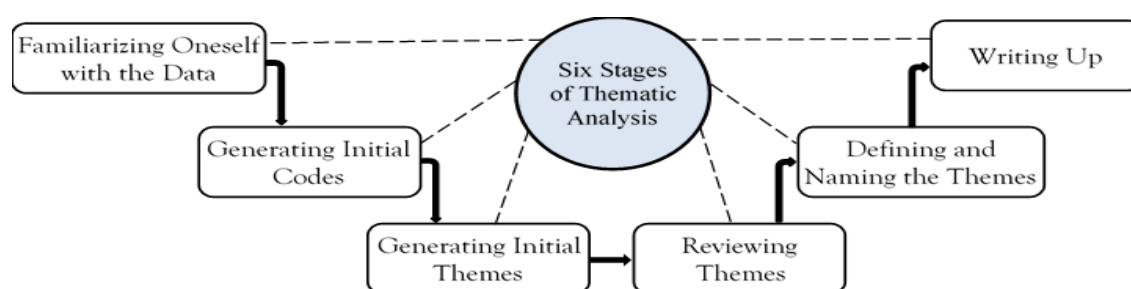

Figure 2. Six Stages of Thematic Analysis

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Challenges Experienced by the Pre-service Teachers in Promoting Language Sensitivity Practices in Their Respective Classrooms During the Internship Program
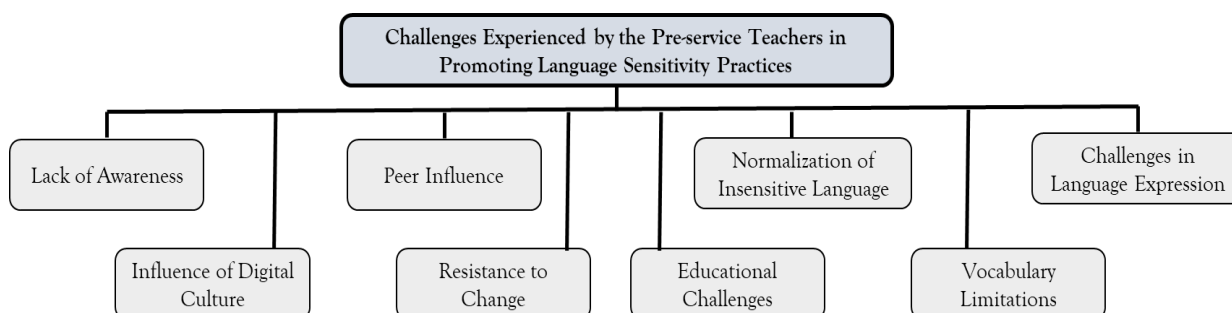

Figure 3. Diagrammatic Representation of the Themes on the Challenges Experienced by the Pre-service Teachers in Promoting Language Sensitivity Practices in Their Respective Classrooms During the Internship Program

Figure 3 presents various challenges faced by pre-service teachers in promoting language sensitivity practices in their classrooms during their internship program.

One significant theme is the lack of awareness regarding the unconscious use of language. Many participants noted that there is a casual use of insensitive or discriminatory language, often without realizing its impact. For instance, Participant 1 mentioned the "casual use of insensitive or discriminatory language without even realizing it," while Participant 2 highlighted the challenge of "helping them understand the impact of their words." This lack of awareness is further emphasized by Participants 3 and 11, who pointed out the general lack of understanding about how words can affect others.

Peer influence also poses considerable challenges. Participants observed that students often focus on fitting in with their peers and may fear being judged or excluded. Participant 1 noted that students are "focused on fitting in with their peers," and Participant 5 mentioned that students "may fear being judged or excluded by their peers." Additionally, Participant 12 indicated that "Peer influence and digital culture further reinforce these habits."

The normalization of insensitive language, influenced by cultural and environmental factors, is another critical theme. In environments where insensitive language is normalized, students tend to adopt negative language patterns from others. Participant 5 described "environments where stereotyping, casual slurs or offensive jokes are normalized," and Participants 12 and 14 both noted that such language is often normalized, leading students to mimic it.

Challenges in language expression, particularly language barriers, were also highlighted. Participants noted that students often struggle to express themselves effectively in a second language. Participant 4 mentioned that "students have difficulty expressing themselves using a second language," and Participant 13 observed that "Students often find it hard to learn these different language styles."

The influence of digital culture, particularly social media, plays a significant role in promoting the use of informal language. Participant 10 pointed out the "strong influence of social media on their language use," and Participant 12 reiterated that "Peer influence and digital culture further reinforce these habits."

Resistance to change presents additional challenges. Some students do not take language sensitivity seriously and struggle to understand their responsibility in using sensitive language. Participant 8 noted that students "did not take language sensitivity seriously," and Participant 9 mentioned the "difficulty understanding that although they are raised with a different language, they also have the responsibility towards having sensitivity."

Educational challenges, including the need for varied instructional strategies and vocabulary limitations, were also discussed. Participants emphasized the need for clear explanations and up-to-date, engaging content. Participant 13 mentioned that "teachers do not always explain them clearly," and Participant 15 noted the need for "up-to-date, engaging, and multimodal content and activities."

Vocabulary limitations were highlighted by Participant 6, who mentioned that students "lack the vocabulary or understanding of inclusive, non-discriminatory language," and Participant 7 noted "Limited vocabulary and comprehension."

In general, the pre-service teachers face several challenges in fostering language sensitivity among students during their internships. Key issues include a widespread lack of awareness about the impact of insensitive language, with many students unconsciously using discriminatory language. Peer influence exacerbates this problem, as students often prioritize fitting in and fear judgment from their peers. The normalization of insensitive

language in specific environments further perpetuates this behavior, as students mimic the negative language patterns they observe around them. Language barriers also pose significant challenges, particularly for students struggling to express themselves in a second language. The pervasive influence of digital culture, particularly social media, reinforces the use of informal and often insensitive language. Resistance to change is another hurdle, as some students fail to recognize the importance of language sensitivity and their role in promoting it. Additionally, educational challenges, such as the need for varied instructional strategies, clear explanations, and engaging content, as well as limitations in vocabulary, hinder effective teaching and understanding of language sensitivity practices.

More so, pre-service teachers struggle to promote language sensitivity due to students' low awareness, peer pressure, normalized insensitive language, digital culture influence, and resistance to change—issues that highlight the need for character education. This theoretical perspective advocates for fostering empathy, ethical awareness, and social responsibility, suggesting that intentional values-based instruction and modeling can help students develop both the moral reasoning and respectful communication skills needed to address these challenges.

The challenges faced by pre-service teachers in fostering language sensitivity—such as students' lack of awareness, peer influence, normalized insensitive language, language barriers, and resistance to change—reflect broader issues identified in the literature, including ethnocentric intercultural sensitivity stemming from traditional teaching methods and limited cultural exposure [14]. Moreover, inadequate training and professional development opportunities hinder teachers' ability to effectively address these challenges in increasingly transnational and multilingual classrooms [15]. These findings underscore the need for enhanced teacher education programs that provide comprehensive support to pre-service teachers in developing both linguistic competence and intercultural sensitivity to overcome these barriers.

3.2. Strategic Measures Applied by the Pre-service Teachers in Addressing the Challenges They Experienced in Promoting Language Sensitivity Practices in Their Respective Classrooms During the Internship Program

Figure 4 outlines the various strategic measures pre-service teachers apply to address challenges in promoting language sensitivity practices in their classrooms during their internship program.
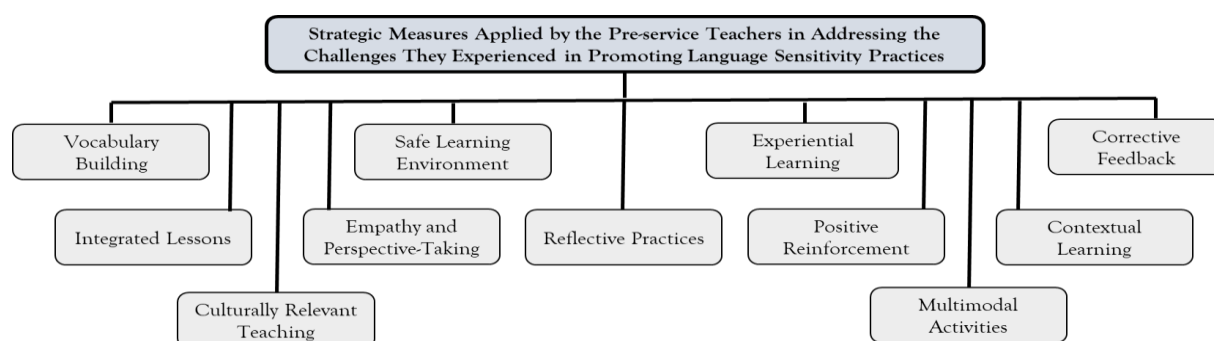

Figure 4. Diagrammatic Representation of the Themes on the Strategic Measures Applied by the Pre-service Teachers in Addressing the Challenges They Experienced in Promoting Language Sensitivity Practices in Their Respective Classrooms During the Internship Program

One of the key strategies is vocabulary building, where teachers introduce new words daily to foster respectful and inclusive communication. For instance, Participant 1 mentioned, "Introducing 'Words of the Day' that promote respectful and inclusive communication."

Creating a safe learning environment is another crucial strategy. Teachers aim to create a safe space for open discussions, enabling students to reflect on and share their thoughts about language use. Participant 2 emphasized the importance of creating "a safe space for discussion," while Participant 3 noted that "open discussions gave them a safe space to reflect and share their thoughts." Participant 6 further highlighted the practice of analyzing "how different word choices can impact an audience's feelings and understanding."

Experiential learning through real-life examples is also employed to help students understand the impact of their words. Participant 3 mentioned that "real-life examples helped students understand the real impact of words." Similarly, Participant 9 used "real-life examples and short activities," and Participant 12 had students "practice responding to insensitive remarks or stereotypes."

Corrective feedback is another essential measure, where teachers provide immediate correction and explanation for inappropriate language use. Participant 4 recounted, "Every time my student answered and there were some words misused, I repeated it by applying the correct term in the sentence." Participant 10 stated, "I openly address it and explain why it may be inappropriate."

Integrating inclusive lessons into the curriculum is a strategy used by some teachers. Participant 5, for example, integrated "mini-lessons on inclusive terms, gender-sensitive language, and respectful communication."

Empathy and perspective-taking through role-playing are also used to engage students in practicing respectful language and developing empathy. Participant 3 noted that "role-playing allowed them to practice using respectful language," while Participant 6 engaged students in "role-playing scenarios." Participant 12 mentioned, "They take roles in dialogues and reflect on how to respond with empathy."

Reflective practices, such as using reflective teaching and open-ended questions, are employed to encourage students to engage in reflective thinking. Participant 7 utilized "reflective teaching and learning," and Participant 9 "asked open-ended questions to make students reflect."

Positive reinforcement is another strategy where teachers recognize and praise students who model respectful language. Participant 11 aimed to "recognize and praise students who model respectful language."

Contextual learning is also emphasized, with teachers explaining how language use varies according to the subject matter. Participant 13, for example, explained to students "how the way we use language changes depending on the subject."

Culturally relevant teaching involves designing lessons with examples and content that connect to students' backgrounds. Participant 14 designed "lessons with examples and content that connect to students' backgrounds."

Lastly, incorporating multimodal activities that align with students' interests is another strategy. Participant 15 mentioned incorporating "various activities that will help them and also align with their interests."

Generally, pre-service teachers employ strategic measures to promote language sensitivity in their classrooms during internships. Key strategies include vocabulary building, where teachers introduce new, inclusive words daily. Creating a safe learning environment is emphasized to encourage open discussions and reflections on language use. Experiential learning through real-life examples helps students understand the impact of their words and actions. Corrective feedback is provided to address inappropriate language use immediately. Inclusive lessons are integrated into the curriculum to teach respectful communication. Empathy and perspective-taking are fostered through role-playing activities. Reflective practices, such as open-ended questions, encourage student reflection. Positive reinforcement recognizes and praises respectful language use. Contextual learning explains how language use varies across different subjects. Culturally relevant teaching connects lessons to students' backgrounds, and multimodal activities align with students' interests to enhance engagement and understanding.

As can be noted further, the findings show that pre-service teachers' strategies—like vocabulary building, experiential learning, corrective feedback, and culturally relevant teaching—not only enhance language sensitivity but also strengthen character education by embedding empathy and respect into daily practice. For teacher training, this means prioritizing values-based, inclusive pedagogies; for policy, it calls for systemic support to ensure all classrooms reflect and respect diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The strategic measures employed by pre-service teachers—such as vocabulary building, creating safe learning environments, experiential learning, corrective feedback, and culturally relevant teaching—reflect effective practices recommended to foster language sensitivity and intercultural competence. These strategies align with a study [16] that emphasized culture-specific activities and multicultural materials to enhance intercultural sensitivity, and with a study [17] that highlighted the role of experiential learning in developing cultural awareness. Furthermore, a study [18] emphasized the importance of cross-cultural experiences in preparing teachers to navigate diverse classrooms, which supports the integration of empathy, perspective-taking, and multimodal activities observed in the results, as well as applying language sensitivity in various linguistic contexts [29]. This focus is crucial, as pre-service teachers often enter classrooms without adequate intercultural preparation for language instruction [14]. Meanwhile, a study [30] emphasized the importance of interactive engagement as a means to foster cultural sensitivity in language use, advocating for tailored strategies that address learners' diverse needs and stimuli [31], [32]. Collectively, these approaches help create inclusive, engaging, and culturally responsive language learning environments. Further exploration is warranted, as teachers continue to report a variety of strategies for supporting learners' language needs [33].

Indeed, creating language-sensitive and inclusive environments aligns with literature advocating teaching methods that incorporate local culture and resources to boost academic performance and student engagement [34]-[36]. These settings require teachers to adapt their skills for addressing learning gaps through targeted interventions [37], [38], while fostering design-based thinking to develop tailored instructional materials that target least-mastered competencies via interactive, independent activities [39]-[43]. Contextualized, interactive, and self-paced resources further promote independent learning, 21st-century skills, and student-centered approaches [44]-[48].

3.3. Instructional Resources Utilized by the Pre-service Teachers in Promoting Language Sensitivity Practices in Their Respective Classrooms During the Internship Program
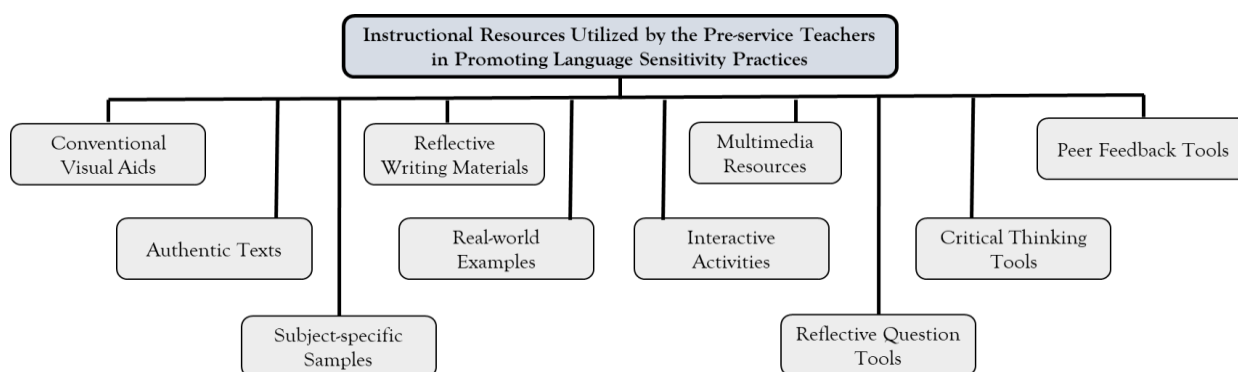

Figure 5. Diagrammatic Representation of the Themes on the Instructional Resources Utilized by the Pre-service Teachers in Promoting Language Sensitivity Practices in Their Respective Classrooms During the Internship Program

Figure 5 outlines various instructional resources utilized by pre-service teachers to promote language sensitivity practices in their classrooms during their internship program.

One of the key resources is the use of conventional visual tools such as cartolina and dictionaries. For instance, Participant 1 mentioned using "Cartolina, visual aids, and a dictionary" to aid in teaching.

Reflective writing materials are another crucial resource, encouraging students to express their thoughts and reflections through journals. Participant 2 highlighted the use of "reflective journals" to facilitate personal expression and reflection among students.

Multimedia resources are also extensively employed to engage students. These resources include videos, short stories, social media posts, and news articles. Participant 3 utilized "videos, short stories, social media posts/issues, and news articles," while Participant 7 incorporated "videos, pictures, and PowerPoint presentations." Participant 8 used "short videos and real-life scenarios," and Participant 9 included "videos, relatable stories, and memes." Similarly, Participant 11 used "videos and social media posts" to make the learning process more engaging and relatable.

Peer feedback tools are another essential resource, where students exchange papers with their peers for feedback, enhancing collaborative learning. Participant 4 mentioned the practice of exchanging "paper with their seatmates where their peers are giving feedback," which helps students learn from each other.

Authentic texts, such as news articles, blog posts, social media excerpts, advertisements, poems, speeches, and articles, are used to provide real-world language contexts. Participant 5 used "news articles, blog posts, social media excerpts, and advertisements," while Participant 10 incorporated "poems, speeches, and articles" to bring real-world language into the classroom.

Real-world examples from diverse cultural contexts are used to illustrate language use and biases in the media. Participant 6 used "stories, news, and videos from different cultures" and analyzed "how language is used in media to find hidden biases," providing students with a broader understanding of cultural contexts.

Interactive activities, such as role-playing and group discussions, are employed to engage students in experiential learning. Participant 6 engaged students in "acting out different situations," while Participant 12 used "group discussions and role-plays." Participant 15 tasked students "to have a role play," making the learning experience more interactive and hands-on.

Critical thinking tools, including visual aids, graphic organizers, and real-text examples, are used to enhance students' analytical skills. Participant 13 utilized "visual aids, graphic organizers, and real text examples" to foster critical thinking among students.

Subject-specific samples, such as authentic reading and writing samples from various subjects, are provided to contextualize learning. Participant 14 used "authentic reading and writing samples from various subjects" to make the lessons more relevant and contextual.

Lastly, reflective question tools are incorporated into every lesson every week to encourage self-assessment and continuous reflection. Participant 15 used "reflective questions every week in every lesson" to promote ongoing self-assessment and reflection among students.

Generally, pre-service teachers utilize various instructional resources to foster language sensitivity in their classrooms during their internships. Key resources include conventional visual tools, such as cartolina and dictionaries, which aid in teaching and learning. Reflective writing materials, such as journals, encourage personal expression and reflection. Multimedia resources, including videos, short stories, and social media posts, are extensively used to engage students. Peer feedback tools enhance collaborative learning by having students

exchange papers for feedback. Authentic texts, such as news articles and blog posts, provide real-world language contexts. Real-world examples from different cultural contexts illustrate language use and media biases. Interactive activities, such as role-playing and group discussions, provide experiential learning opportunities. Critical thinking tools, including visual aids and graphic organizers, enhance analytical skills. Subject-specific samples contextualize learning, and reflective question tools encourage continuous self-assessment and reflection.

Interestingly, the findings also show that pre-service teachers' use of visual aids, reflective journals, multimedia, and peer feedback aligns with Social Learning Theory (SLT) where students learn from teacher modeling and the character education framework, fostering empathy and respect). This highlights the need for teacher training programs to embed values-based instruction, for progressive curricula to include inclusive language modules, and for schools to adopt policies promoting ethical communication—ensuring educators are prepared to model and nurture responsible, empathetic classrooms.

Indeed, the variety of instructional resources used by pre-service teachers—ranging from conventional visual tools and reflective writing materials to multimedia, authentic texts, and interactive activities—aligns with research emphasizing the importance of integrating cultural elements and authentic materials to enhance language awareness and pragmatic usage in diverse classrooms [16], [21]. Such resources can be more effective when integrated and reinforced by meaningful immersion experience and classroom exposure in fostering language sensitivity in the classroom [49]. These resources can support the development of intercultural sensitivity and inclusive learning environments by providing real-world contexts and opportunities for reflection and critical thinking, which are essential for fostering language sensitivity among students.

4.   CONCLUSION

The following are the key findings incurred from the data gathered: (i) pre-service teachers encounter numerous challenges in promoting language sensitivity, including a lack of awareness about insensitive language, peer influence, normalization of negative language patterns, language barriers, the impact of digital culture, resistance to change, and educational challenges such as the need for varied instructional strategies and vocabulary limitations; (ii) pre-service teachers use a variety of strategic measures to promote language sensitivity, including vocabulary building, creating safe learning environments, experiential learning, corrective feedback, inclusive lessons, empathy and perspective-taking activities, reflective practices, positive reinforcement, contextual learning, culturally relevant teaching, and multimodal activities; and (iii) pre-service teachers utilize a variety of instructional resources, including visual tools, reflective writing materials, multimedia resources, peer feedback tools, authentic texts, real-world examples, interactive activities, critical thinking tools, subject-specific samples, and reflective question tools, to promote language sensitivity in their classrooms.

Meanwhile, the following are the corresponding recommendations made for the conclusions incurred from the data gathered: (i) the College of Education (COEd) may increase awareness through workshops that focus on recognizing and addressing insensitive language, peer influence, and the impact of digital culture on language use; (ii) the COEd may encourage further the pre-service teachers to utilize diverse teaching strategies by incorporating a wider range of interactive and experiential learning activities to promote language sensitivity; and (iii) the COEd and the University may expand resource availability by providing access to a broader array of multimedia and culturally relevant instructional materials to support language sensitivity education.

The findings also underscore the value of collaborating with parents and guardians in fostering language sensitivity among learners. Research shows that both mothers and fathers contribute significantly to early language development through sensitive parenting, especially in teaching-based interactions [50], by nurturing language receptiveness [51], [52], and by providing early exposure to language sensitivity [53].

Finally, further exploration could examine how pre-service teachers implement language-sensitive classroom practices through action research or innovative projects, comparing their approaches with those of in-service teachers. This analysis could inform more effective retooling and mentoring strategies, ensuring the integration of language sensitivity competencies into both personal and professional development. Such a focus would also shed light on the impact of these practices on pre-service teachers' character formation and social growth, ultimately strengthening their readiness to foster inclusive, respectful learning environments.

REFERENCES

[1]   C. T. C. Aliwadang et al., "Cultural sensitivity in English language teaching: Understanding and addressing linguistic and cultural barriers," *Iconic Research and Engineering Journals*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 556–572, 2024. Available: https://www.irejournals.com/formatedpaper/1706073.pdf

[2]   P. C. Pradhan, "Cultural sensitivity and English language teaching," *Teresian Journal of English Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, Jul.–Sep. 2021.

[3]   E. C. Kapnoula and A. G. Samuel, "Sensitivity to Subphonemic Differences in First Language Predicts Vocabulary Size in a Foreign Language," Language Learning, vol. 74, no. 4, pp. 950–984, 2024. Available: doi:10.1111/lang.12650

[4]   H. V. Akcin, "Turkish Language Teachers' Intercultural Sensitivity," Int. J. Educ. Literacy Stud., vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 145–156, 2023. Available: doi:10.7575/aiac.ijels.v.11n.3p.145

[5]   M. Basman and D. Bayram, "Cultural Intelligence and Attitudes towards Multicultural Education: Mediating Role of Intercultural Sensitivity," Educ. Process: Int. J., vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 177–189, 2024. Available: doi:10.22521/edupij.2024.133.10

[6]   H.-J. You, H.-C. Yeh, and G. Y. Qi, "Fostering Intercultural Sensitivity in Language Learning: Quality Talk in Telecollaboration," Language Learning & Technology, vol. 29, no. 1, 2025. Available: https://hdl.handle.net/10125/73624

[7]   M. F. Pulido and P. López-Beltrán, "When Native Speakers Are Not 'Native-Like:' Chunking Ability Predicts (Lack of) Sensitivity to Gender Agreement during Online Processing," Cogn. Sci., vol. 47, no. 10, Art. no. e13366, 2023. Available: doi:10.1111/cogs.13366

[8]   C. Seaman, L. Rincón Herce, and A. Yamada, "Processing Polarity Sensitivity in L2 Spanish," Second Language Research, vol. 40, no. 4, pp. 989-1007, 2024, doi: 10.1177/02676583231176378.

[9]   H.-T. Nguyen, "An Analysis of Undergraduate EFL Students' Perceptions of Intercultural Sensitivity," IAFOR J. Educ., vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 7–29, 2023. Available: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1393753.pdf

[10] J. Xu, Y. Wang, and B. Peng, "Differentiating the Role of Growth Language Mindsets in Feedback-Seeking Behaviour in L2 Writing through Perspective-Taking: A Mixed-Method Study," Eur. J. Educ., vol. 60, no. 1, Art. no. e12876, 2025. Available: doi:10.1111/ejed.12876

[11] G. Starr and J. Cho, "QUD Sensitivity in the Computation of Scalar Implicatures in Second Language Acquisition," Lang. Acquis.: J. Dev. Linguist., vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 182–197, 2022. Available: doi:10.1080/10489223.2021.1990930

[12] J. D. Wilang, J. Anthoney, and A. K. Sulankey, "'Mistakes Help Us Improve': Beliefs of High School Students on English Language Learning," J. Engl. Teach., vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 92–104, 2025. Available: doi:10.33541/jet.v11i1.6717

[13] N. Lugtu and R. Pecson, "Disarming words: Pre-service teachers' pedagogical approaches in catapulting language sensitivity toward a harmonized instructional plan," *International Journal of Teaching and Learning (INJOTEL)*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 30-45, 2025. Available: https://injoqast.net/index.php/INJOTEL/article/view/356/435

[14] S. M. Linares, "Intercultural sensitivity and cultural othering in English language pre-service teachers," *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language (TESL-EJ)*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2023. Available: https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.26104a5

[15] Y. Wu and H. Gao, "From challenges to transformation: The professional development journey of transnational language teachers in the United States," *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 135–153, 2025. Available: https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v19i2.8977

[16] S. Kazazoglu and E. Ece, "Exploring pre-service and novice EFL teachers' intercultural sensitivity," *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 76–89, 2021.

[17] S. Arcagok and C. Yilmaz, "Intercultural sensitivities: A mixed methods study with pre-service EFL teachers in Turkey," *Issues in Educational Research*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 1–18, 2020. Available: http://www.iier.org.au/iier30/arcagok.pdf

[18] S. Çelik, "Teaching without boundaries: How global experiences shape future English language educators?" *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 96–109, 2025. Available: https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202532604

[19] Quimosing-Ocay, "Phenomenology of language sensitivity in the classroom," *IOER International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 139–148, 2023. Available: https://doi.org/10.54476/ioer-imrj/979372

[20] T. G. Yepes, E. Etchezahar, M. Á. Albalá Genol, and A. M. Rico, "The Intercultural Sensitivity in Education: Critical Thinking, Use of Technology and Cyberbullying," Electron. J. Res. Educ. Psychol., vol. 22, no. 64, pp. 559–574, 2024. Available: https://ojs.ual.es/ojs/index.php/EJREP/article/view/9710/8422

[21] Madkur *et al.*, "Context-responsive pedagogy in English language teaching in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools," *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)*, vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 626–638, 2024. Available: https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v18i3.21085

[22] Z. Yaprak and K. S. Özmen, "Developing Critical Intercultural Competence in Second Language Teacher Education," Int. Online J. Educ. Teach., vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 1022–1037, 2021.

[23] Republic Act No. 10533, *An act enhancing the Philippine basic education system by strengthening its curriculum and increasing the number of years for basic education, appropriating funds therefor and for other purposes*, 2013. Available: https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/05/15/republic-act-no-10533/

[24] DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017, *National adoption and implementation of the Philippine professional standards for teachers*, 2017. Available: https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/DO_s2017_042-1.pdf

[25] D. Ayton, *Qualitative descriptive research*. Pressbooks, 2023, ch. 5. Available: https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/qualitative-research/chapter/unknown-5/

[26] K. Nikolopoulou, "What is purposive sampling? Definition & examples," *Scribbr*, Jun. 22, 2023. Available: https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/purposive-sampling/

[27] T. George, "Semi-structured interview | Definition, guide & examples," *Scribbr*, Jun. 22, 2023. Available: https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/semi-structured-interview/

[28] V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77–101, 2006. Available: http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735

[29] Q. Deng, K. Lentejas, and S. X. Tong, "The Primacy of Prosody in Bilingual Reading Comprehension: Uncovering Morpholexical Pathways in First-Language Chinese and Phonolexical Pathways in Second-Language English," J. Speech, Lang., Hear. Res., vol. 68, no. 9, pp. 4304–4319, 2025. Available: doi:10.1044/2025_JSLHR-24-00143

[30] Boudouaia, K. W. Htun, A. H. Al-Qadri, Y. Saroh, and A. Beddiaf, "Intercultural Sensitivity of English Language Teachers in Algeria," Cogent Educ., vol. 9, no. 1, Art. no. 2042034, 2022. Available: doi:10.1080/2331186X.2022.2042034

[31] M. Hisaizumi and D. Tantam, "Enhanced Sensitivity to Pitch Perception and Its Possible Relation to Language Acquisition in Autism," Autism Dev. Lang. Impair., vol. 9, 2024. Available: doi:10.1177/23969415241248618

[32] C. C. Muscat, M. Molnar, and J. Pejovic, "Language-Specific Sound-Shape Matching at 12-Months of Age," Lang. Learn. Dev., vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 15–26, 2025. Available: doi:10.1080/15475441.2024.2334213

[33] F. Woltran, M. Pozas, and S. Schwab, "Microcosm of Multilingualism: Examining Language Sensitivity through an In-Depth Case Study," Peabody J. Educ., vol. 100, no. 4, pp. 467–481, 2025. Available: doi:10.1080/0161956X.2025.2535920

[34] R. R. Pecson, "Localization and contextualization in teaching K-12 Social Studies," Jun. 01, 2014. Available: https://ryanramoletepecson.blogspot.com/2014/06/localization-and-contextualization-in.html

[35] R. R. Pecson, "Interactive word guessing games: Enhancing the conceptual learning of Grade 8 and Grade 9 high school students in social studies," Feb. 21, 2015. Available: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2779447

[36] R. R. Pecson, "Self-learning kit in improving the academic performance of senior high school students," May 14, 2020. Available: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3572917

[37] R. R. Pecson, "Innovation skills of secondary teachers: Trajectory for technical assistance," International Journal of Applied Educational Research (IJAER), vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 287–296, 2025. doi: 10.59890/ijaer.v3i5.123.

[38] R. R. Pecson, "Pagtataya ng mga gurong mag-aaral sa mga salik kung bakit nahihirapan ang mga sekundaryang mag-aaral sa pag-aaral ng Araling Panlipunan (Assessment of student-teachers on the factors why the secondary students encountered difficulties in learning Social Studies)," International Journal of Research, vol. 12, no. 7, pp. 155–164, 2025. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.16562310.

[39] R. R. Pecson, "Effectiveness of QR-based modified strategic intervention materials in improving the academic performance of SHS students in Disciplines and Ideas in the Social Sciences," Indonesian Educational Research Journal, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 52–61, 2025. doi: 10.56773/ierj.v3i2.88.

[40] R. R. Pecson and M. S. Romero, "Design-based thinking among secondary student-teachers: Input for a contextualized teaching plan," International Journal of Advanced Research and Innovative Ideas in Education, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 2557–2569, 2023.

[41] R. R. Pecson, L. C. Canare, L. T. Olubia, M. S. Romero, and G. C. Adraneda, "Juxtaposing design-based thinking practices of secondary student-teachers during the internship program: Input for an improved pre-service training," Social Sciences, Humanities and Education Journal (SHE Journal), vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 387–392, 2024. doi: 10.25273/she.v5i2.20977.

[42] R. R. Pecson, L. C. Canare, L. T. Olubia, M. S. Romero, and G. C. Adraneda, "Dichotomy of design-based thinking intentions and practices among secondary student-teachers: Input for an instructional design teaching handbook," International Journal of Social and Education, vol. 1, no. 7, pp. 1892–1901, 2024.

[43] L. C. Canare, R. R. Pecson, L. T. Olubia, M. S. Romero, and G. C. Adraneda, "Design-based thinking intentions among secondary student-teachers: Implications to instructional delivery," Indonesian Journal of Education (INJOE), vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 692–700, 2024. Available: https://injoe.org/index.php/INJOE/article/view/145

[44] G. C. Magno, N. G. Bardemorilla, and R. R. Pecson, "Student teachers and cooperating teachers' practices in the 21st century classroom: Developing 21st century skills among learners," International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 539–546, 2016.

[45] R. R. Pecson and J. R. Sarmiento, "Student teaching and instructional materials in the 21st-century classroom: A literature review," Indonesian Journal of Teaching in Science, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 55–60, 2025. doi: 10.17509/ijotis.v5i1.82628

[46] Pecson & Morales, 2026

[47] R. R. Pecson and F. E. Morales, "Praxes for culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in basic and higher education", J. Bs. Edu. R, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 56-65, Jan. 2026. doi: 10.37251/jber.v7i1.2696

[48] R. R. Pecson and J. Sarmiento, "Integrating 21st-century skills into instructional materials for sustainable education," Indonesian Journal of Instructional Media and Model, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 89–99, 2024. doi: 10.32585/ijimm.v6i2.5934.

[49] Domazetoska and H. Zhao, "First and Second Language Speakers' Sensitivity to the Distributional Properties of 'Wh'-Clauses: Effects of Proficiency, Acquisitional Context, and Language Experience," Austral. Rev. Appl. Linguist., vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 28–54, 2025. Available: doi:10.1075/aral.23011.dom

[50] L. Taraban, D. S. Shaw, K. B. Nordahl, and A. Naerde, "Teaching Lessons, Learning Words: Mothers' and Fathers' Sensitivity during Teaching Uniquely Mediates Associations between Early Familial Socioeconomic Risk and Preschoolers' Receptive Language Development," Child Dev., vol. 96, no. 5, pp. 1645–1659, 2025. Available: doi:10.1111/cdev.14260

[51] S. Madigan, A. Plamondon, and J. M. Jenkins, "Association between Maternal Sensitivity and Child Receptive Language Development: Quasi-Causal Evidence Using a Sibling Comparison Design," Dev. Psychol., vol. 59, no. 12, pp. 2265–2276, 2023. Available: doi:10.1037/dev0001604

[52] E. Foley, T. M. Olino, and M. Weinraub, "On the Broader Significance of Maternal Sensitivity: Mothers' Early and Later Sensitive Parenting Matter to Children's Language, Executive Function, Academics, and Self-Reliance," Dev. Sci., vol. 28, no. 1, Art. no. e13594, 2025. Available: doi:10.1111/desc.13594

[53] P. O. Omane, T. Benders, and N. Boll-Avetisyan, "Vowel Harmony Preferences in Infants Growing Up in Multilingual Ghana (Africa)," Dev. Psychol., vol. 60, no. 8, pp. 1372–1383, 2024. Available: doi:10.1037/dev0001776