

Exploring the Teaching Readiness of Bael Graduates: Bridging Knowledge and Practice

Blesie Joy Albis Alos¹, Micah Bogayon Gumalwid¹, John Rey Osben Pelila¹

¹Benguet State University, Philippines

Corresponding Author: johnpelilalpt@gmail.com

Article History:

Submitted: 26/07/2025

Revised: 19/08/2025

Accepted: 30/09/2025

Keywords:

Teaching experiences;
Opportunities and
challenges; State
university; Philippines

Abstract. Although Bachelor of Arts in English Language Learning (BAEL) graduates have diverse career options, many are drawn to teaching. This path remains underexplored in terms of their experiences and challenges. This study aimed to explore their motivations, challenges, and level of success in pursuing teaching as a career. Using a qualitative, phenomenological design, the researchers interviewed 16 BAEL graduates from a state university in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Philippines. The findings revealed that BAEL graduates are motivated to teach by personal growth, a passion for learning, and meaningful connections with others. However, despite their strong language skills, many encounter difficulties in classroom management and applying appropriate teaching methods due to limited pedagogical training. These gaps affect their job satisfaction and sometimes lead them to shift careers outside of teaching. The study concludes that teaching remains a viable path for BAEL graduates, with some finding fulfillment and long-term commitment in the profession. Although the study recommends conducting a needs assessment before on-the-job training (OJT) to help students identify career preferences. It is also suggested that integrating teaching methodology courses and providing targeted training on instructional strategies strengthen their readiness for teaching roles.

Citation: Alos, B.J.A., Gumalwid, M.B., & Pelila, J.R.O. (2025). Exploring The Teaching Readiness of Bael Graduates: Bridging Knowledge and Practice. *Journal of English Language and Pedagogy (JELPA)*, 3(2), 23-35. <https://doi.org/10.51826/jelpa.v3i2.1633>

INTRODUCTION

English proficiency is essential for accessing opportunities across different cultures and regions in today's globalized world. It is a communication tool and a core part of education worldwide. Olores et al. (2023) explain that English has become essential to most educational systems, symbolizing a gateway to knowledge and opportunity. Besides, English is a fundamental subject worldwide and is required for admission to numerous higher education programs. Lugolobi-Nalunga (2017) highlights its pivotal role, noting that proficiency in English serves as a transformative tool, enabling academic achievement and professional success. Domingo (2020) emphasizes English's critical role in driving national progress, serving as the primary language of global commerce, banking, and media. Its widespread use is affirmed by the dominance of English in publishing, with more newspapers and books produced in English than in any other language, solidifying its status as the global lingua franca.

Beyond its practical advantages, English proficiency emerges as a form of "cultural capital" in the contemporary job market (Le & Pham, 2024). According to their research, mastering English gives individuals a unique edge, making them more employable in our interconnected

world. Communicating effectively, leading presentations, and interpreting complex instructions enhance job prospects and open doors to international opportunities and clients, highlighting English's essential role in global business dynamics (Le & Pham, 2024).

Moreover, English language teaching and learning play a vital role in national development and individual growth. Teaching English in Thailand has become one of the most sought-after professions for native and non-native speakers (Ulla, 2018). Mastery of English and various teaching techniques is essential for educators to gain students' trust and establish a professional identity. The English-for-Teaching component focuses on three core areas: classroom management, effective communication of lesson content, and assessment of students while providing constructive feedback (Freeman et al., 2015). This holistic approach ensures comprehensive skill development for English language educators.

As the journey of English language education unfolds across the globe, Turmudi et al. (2020) mention that in the Philippines, English is extensively promoted and integrated across various sectors, including media, homes, schools, tourism, and business. The country's commitment to English language education is evident in its international deployment of English teachers. For educators, proficiency in English is crucial, as it underpins effective teaching practices and enhances student learning outcomes (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Teaching English effectively requires linguistic competence and pedagogical skills that foster language acquisition and the development of communication skills (Wu et al., 2020).

In academic and professional development, Bachelor of Arts programs in English often equip graduates with robust pedagogical skills through coursework and practical teaching experiences (Thornbury, 2017). Supervised teaching practices during these programs play a pivotal role in cultivating teaching competence among graduates by providing hands-on experience and mentorship that are crucial to their professional growth (Freeman et al., 2015). English majors entering academia find profound fulfillment in the satisfaction they derive from their students' progress and learning (Domingo, 2020). This fulfillment enhances their overall job performance by balancing tangible gains such as salary, status, and appreciation with the educational outcomes they achieve (Domingo, 2020).

In line with this, English major graduates entering academia find profound fulfillment (Domingo, 2020), effective classroom management and engagement (Osai et al., 2021; West & Meler, 2020), developing professional identity (Pennington & Richards, 2016), and resourcefulness and flexibility (Domingo, 2020). Particularly through the satisfaction derived from their students' progress and learning, this fulfillment enhances their overall job performance by balancing tangible gains such as salary, status, and appreciation with the educational outcomes they achieve (Domingo, 2020). Moreover, effective classroom management and engagement strategies are crucial for overcoming challenges such as overcrowding. Teachers employ flexible group work and improvised teaching materials to accommodate diverse student needs and maintain classroom effectiveness (Osai et al., 2021; West & Meler, 2020). In addition, developing a professional identity involves gaining confidence and expertise in using English for instruction, shaping an "insider" identity crucial to effective teaching (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Furthermore, resourcefulness and flexibility are essential traits among English teachers, who adeptly navigate challenges by developing innovative instructional materials, engaging in alternative activities, and integrating technology alongside traditional resources (Domingo, 2020).

In contrast, most research studies examining the experience of English educators predominantly emphasize negative aspects. These challenges include subject misalignment (Montero et al., 2022), overcrowded classrooms (Osai et al., 2021), training and resource

deficiencies (Domingo, 2020; Madalinska-Michalk & Bavli, 2018), implementation issues with language policies (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014), and discrimination (Richards, 2017). Specifically, for English educators in academic settings, subject misalignment poses significant hurdles, particularly when teachers are assigned to subjects outside their expertise, such as MAPEH, which can impact their self-confidence and overall effectiveness (Montero et al., 2022). Moreover, overcrowded classrooms hinder effective teaching methodologies and student engagement, challenging educators to manage learning environments effectively (Osai et al., 2021). In addition, training and resource deficiencies, including inadequate preparation, low student contact hours, and limited facilities, contribute to issues in teaching quality and teacher retention (Domingo, 2020; Madalinska-Michalk & Bavli, 2018). Further, implementation issues with language policies like MTB-MLE can undermine English language teaching outcomes, while the lack of ESOL materials and expertise threatens sustainable education in the Philippines (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). Furthermore, perception and discrimination toward non-native English-speaking teachers can affect classroom dynamics and relationships with students, impacting educational effectiveness (Richards, 2017).

Spanning the curriculum and career prospects, the Bachelor of Arts in English Language (BAEL) is a comprehensive four-year program that aims to produce graduates with excellent, functional knowledge of English. Its curriculum provides balanced exposure to English and literature, equipping students with the skills and competence for future careers in language consultancy, language coaching, tutoring, writing, and translation. Graduates of the AB in English Language/AB in English Language Studies program are in demand in fields that require effective use of English to achieve specific goals. Career opportunities include academic work such as teaching and research; business and industry jobs such as public relations, advertising, and documentation; and media and publishing roles such as writing, translating, and editing (Commission on Higher Education, 2017).

Most AB English graduates find employment shortly after graduation, demonstrating their strong employability and adaptability (San Jose, 2014). They often pursue careers as English tutors, instructors, Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) agents, proofreaders, and journalists, where their communication and critical thinking skills are highly valued. Some graduates advance into fields such as law or medicine, while others thrive in teaching English and literature at various academic levels (Diones et al., 2022). As many AB English graduates transition into teaching, questions arise about how their academic training supports their professional success. While their expertise in language and literature provides a strong foundation, their background often differs from the specialized preparation that education graduates receive. This distinction offers an opportunity to explore how AB English graduates adapt to teaching roles, leveraging their strengths while addressing potential challenges.

The success of the BAEL program is crucial in this context. Its effectiveness can be assessed through the relevance and impact of the subjects its graduates have studied. Examining the curriculum's alignment with the skills and knowledge required in teaching, research, and communication highlights the program's strengths. Therefore, this study aimed to document the professional trajectories of BAEL graduates from a target university, including their motivations for pursuing teaching careers and the success stories and challenges they faced in the teaching field.

.

METHOD

The study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore BAEL graduates' challenges and opportunities in their teaching careers. As Hatch (2023) highlighted, this approach provided a direct pathway to “up-close information” from individuals dealing with these professional issues in their natural contexts. Phenomenology, much like a journey into the depths of human experience, enabled researchers to immerse themselves in participants' subjective worlds, uncovering the intricate layers of their lived realities (Langdridge, 2007). Through this method, the researchers aimed not only to gather data but to unearth the profound meanings individuals attributed to their teaching experiences, illuminating the essence of their professional journeys and the unique insights they offered (Giorgi, 2009). This narrative-driven approach enabled the capture of participants' stories, contextualized their challenges within the educational landscape, and identified transformative opportunities (Polkinghorne, 1989).

The study focused on BAEL graduates of a state university in the Cordillera Administrative Region who are currently employed as teachers, in English as a Second Language (ESL) companies, or in basic or higher institutions. An interview guide, developed from an a priori code and validated by five experts, included open-ended questions that addressed the research focus. Interviews lasted 30–60 minutes, were audio-recorded with consent, and conducted in English. Demographic questions were asked at the start to profile participants, followed by inquiries into their professional experiences. Probing questions were used when clarification was necessary.

Colaizzi's phenomenological analysis method was employed for data analysis (Praveena & Sasikumar, 2021). Four main steps were followed, and these are bracketing (setting aside preconceived notions about BAEL graduates' teaching experiences), intuiting (immersing in the data to grasp participants' perspectives), analyzing (coding and categorizing themes), and describing (presenting detailed accounts of their teaching experiences). Data were organized and thematized using Microsoft Excel, and then interpreted in relation to the research questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Professional Trajectories of BAEL Graduates Who Chose Teaching

This section examines the professional paths of BAEL graduates who decided to enter the teaching profession. In particular, the records of the concerned college in the target university in CAR, which offers Bachelor of Arts in English Language (BAEL), Figure 1 shows that the first batch of graduates from 2021-2022 produced 45 BAEL graduates, 37 graduates in the second batch from 2022-2023, and 33 graduates in the most recent batch from 2023-2024. Furthermore, when asked about the current professions of these graduates through inquiry, most were found to be in the teaching field. This finding supports the observations of Pontillas and Fajardo (2023), who noted that English language programs, including BAEL, often lead to careers in teaching or ESL work. The researchers used purposive sampling to target BAEL graduates with teaching experience after graduation. However, the researchers interviewed 16 individuals: 2 from Batch 1, 4 from Batch 2, and 10 from Batch 3.

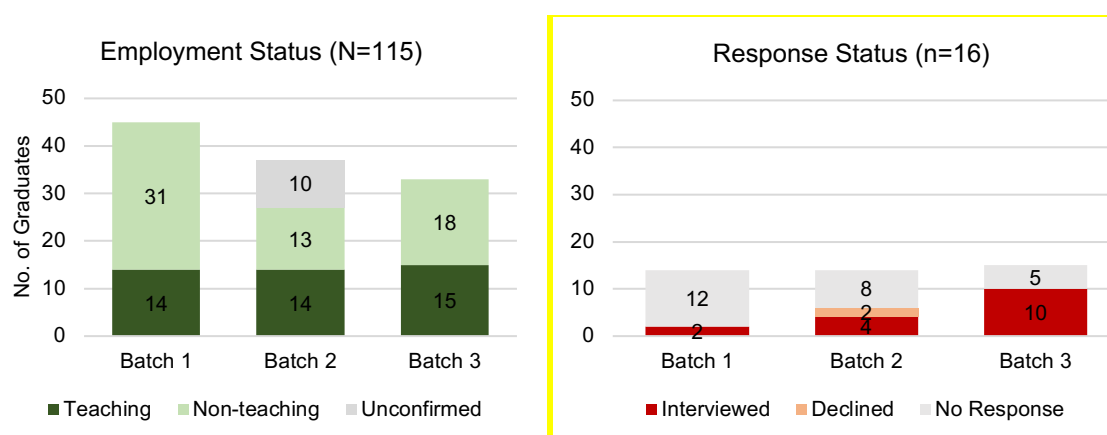


Figure 1. Profile of the Employment Status and Response Status of BAEL Graduates

While Creswell (2007) recommended 3 to 25 participants for qualitative research to achieve depth over breadth, the researchers reached saturation, as recurring data patterns emerged (Saunders et al., 2023), which remains within the threshold for the number of participants to be interviewed. On the other hand, Figure 2 shows the career paths of the 16 participants after graduation, highlighting their different roles in teaching.

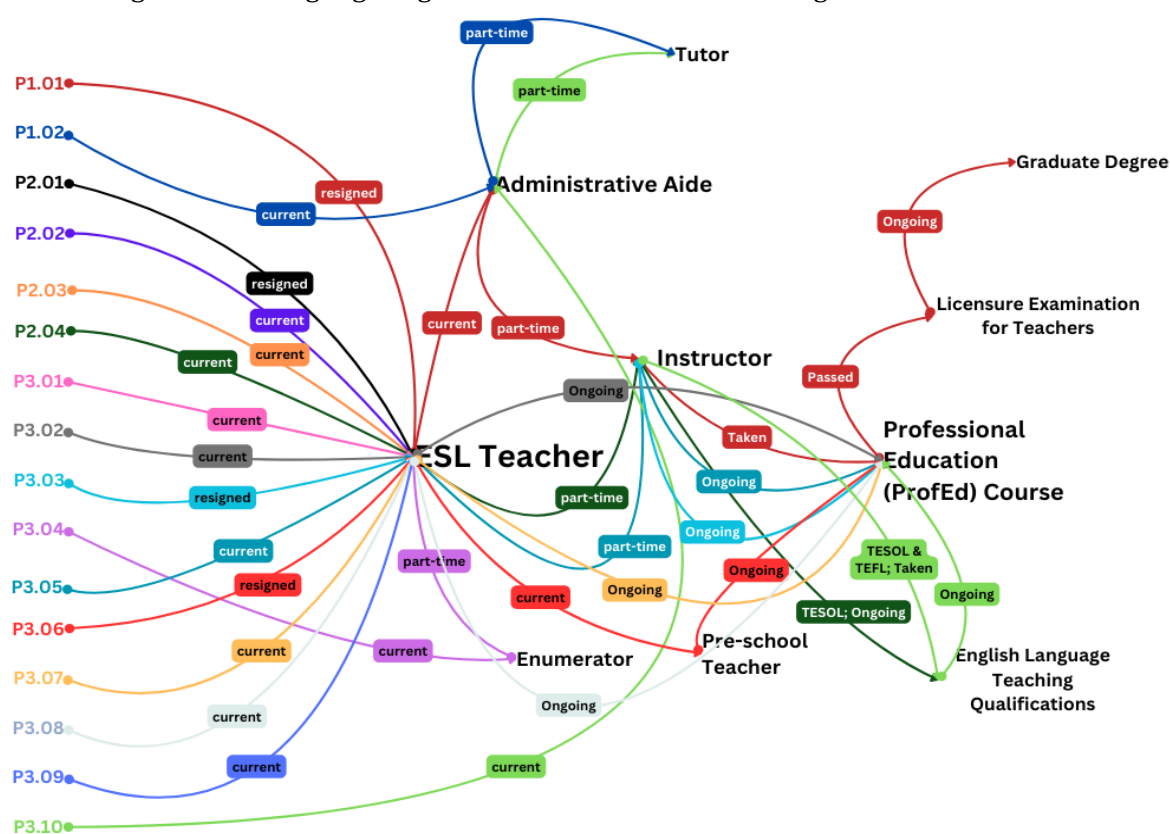


Figure 2. Career and Professional Development Trace Map of the Participants (N=16)

Note. Data as of October 2024; subject to validation if used as a basis for academic research.

Starting with P1.01, this former ESL teacher moved to a dual role as an admin aide and adjunct instructor while pursuing a master's degree in Education and preparing for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Meanwhile, P1.02 became an admin aide and worked as an on-call teacher/tutor in the English Language Program (ELP). P2.01, who left an ESL teaching position, transitioned to an adjunct instructor role. P2.03 continued as an ESL teacher/tutor,

committed to practical teaching. P2.04 balanced being an administrative aide and an adjunct instructor while pursuing TESOL training.

Similarly, P3.01 worked as an ESL teacher, while P3.02 combined administrative work with teaching as an adjunct instructor while studying Professional Education (Prof Ed). P3.03, a former ESL teacher, also started Prof Ed courses. P3.04 took a different route, working part-time as an ESL tutor and a PSA Enumerator. P3.05 stayed on as an ESL teacher. P3.06 moved from ESL to preschool teaching while taking Prof Ed, indicating an interest in exploring new teaching areas. P3.07 and P3.08 continued as ESL teachers while studying Prof Ed to improve their teaching skills. P3.09 remained an ESL teacher, while P3.10 was an admin aide and part-time tutor while pursuing professional education (Prof Ed), with certificates in TESL and TEFL.

The data show BAEL graduates' diverse career paths, especially those teaching ESL and pursuing Professional Education (Prof Ed). Participants such as P1.01, P3.02, P3.03, P3.07, P3.08, and P3.10 demonstrated commitment to teaching and to enhancing their skills. Others, such as P2.03, P3.01, P3.05, P3.06, and P3.09, continued as ESL teachers, while participants such as P3.04 and P3.02 balanced teaching with administrative roles, demonstrating adaptability in their careers. Those pursuing Prof Ed, such as P1.01, P2.04, and P3.03, aimed to build more knowledge and skills for their teaching careers.

2. Motivations of BAEL Graduates in Choosing Teaching as a Career

This section explores the motivations that lead BAEL graduates to pursue teaching as a career, emphasizing how passion for the profession shapes their initial choice and sustains their growth and long-term commitment.

a. Growth Fueled by Passion

BAEL graduates often view teaching not merely as employment but as a deeply personal journey that nurtures professional and emotional growth. Their reflections reveal that passion is central to their teaching identity, rooted in a genuine desire to make a difference in students' lives. One participant noted, *"I love teaching"* (P3.07), capturing the joy many associate with their role. Others emphasized how witnessing students' progress brings fulfillment and strengthens their commitment to the profession. These experiences highlight how passion serves as a sustaining force, keeping graduates motivated in the face of challenges.

This passion is intertwined with their love for the English language itself. Several participants described English as more than an academic subject; it is a medium for connection, creativity, and cultural exchange. For instance, one graduate explained, *"My curiosity and passion for English motivated me to teach ESL"* (P3.05). Such reflections suggest that for these educators, the language is not only a tool for instruction but also an inspiration that fuels creativity in lesson design and joy in classroom interactions. This demonstrates how subject matter interest directly shapes professional motivation.

In addition, passion also translates into personal growth. Graduates frequently reported becoming more patient, confident, and emotionally resilient through teaching. One shared, *"I have improved. I became more patient when I started teaching and learned much about the world"* (P3.09). This indicates that teaching is reciprocal; while graduates support students' development, they also experience transformation. Importantly, these narratives underscore that passion is not just an initial motivator but a sustaining element that deepens teachers' skills and shapes their professional identity over time.

b. Influences through Meaningful Connections

Mentorship and peer support strongly influenced BAEL graduates' decision to pursue teaching, with many attributing their career choice to their teachers' inspiration. One participant shared, "I was inspired by my teachers, which is why I decided to teach" (P3.10). Others recalled encouragement from specific mentors who sparked an interest in teaching, even among those initially hesitant. These accounts reveal how personal relationships with role models are powerful catalysts in shaping professional identity, reinforcing that teaching aspirations are often socially nurtured rather than individually formed.

In addition to mentorship, graduates emphasized how their undergraduate training provided a foundation for confidence and competence in the classroom. They highlighted the usefulness of subjects such as Pragmatics, Language Acquisition, and Translation Studies, which equipped them to simplify complex concepts and tailor lessons to students' needs. For example, one participant explained that their background in translation helped them clarify difficult grammar points (P3.02). These reflections suggest that the BAEL curriculum strengthened linguistic knowledge and prepared graduates to transform theory into practice, aligning with their students' varied learning contexts.

Graduates also connected their preparation to broader teaching skills, such as lesson planning, assessment design, and classroom management. Their training in TESOL methods and educational theories was particularly valuable for working with learners from diverse backgrounds. One graduate emphasized that applying Piaget's Cognitive Theory guided the creation of developmentally appropriate lessons. Such insights illustrate that BAEL graduates enter the profession with technical language expertise and pedagogical strategies that allow them to adapt and respond effectively to student diversity.

These findings demonstrate that BAEL graduates' teaching motivations are shaped through personal relationships and structured academic training. Mentorship instills inspiration and a sense of purpose, while the program's curriculum equips them with the tools and confidence to enact that purpose in the classroom. This interplay between social influence and academic preparation highlights that their teaching identity is co-constructed, emerging from lived experiences, supportive networks, and disciplinary knowledge.

3. Positive Experiences of BAEL Graduates as Teachers

This section highlights the positive experiences of BAEL graduates in teaching, particularly how they use their language proficiency as an edge, practice student-centered teaching, and grow through reflection and collaboration.

a. Leveraging Language Proficiency as a Professional Edge

BAEL graduates consistently identified their English proficiency as their most distinctive advantage in teaching. Their advanced knowledge of grammar, phonetics, and discourse allowed them to establish authority and gain students' trust. One graduate explained, "I can explain grammar rules better because we studied them in detail, even the IPA and phonetics, which education majors did not" (P3.04). Another added, "Students trust me when I explain why English works the way it does" (P5.02). This depth of expertise positioned them as language specialists whose credibility stems from fluency and the ability to unpack complex rules for learners. The implication is that BAEL graduates are not merely teachers of English but content experts who bring a unique strength to language-focused instruction. Their proficiency enables them to bridge gaps in student understanding while distinguishing themselves from peers who may be trained primarily in pedagogy rather than linguistic detail.

b. Developing Responsive and Student-Centered Teaching Practices

Beyond their linguistic expertise, BAEL graduates highlighted adaptability and responsiveness as central to their classroom approach. One shared, “If one activity doesn’t work, I immediately adjust and try another way to explain” (P2.03). Reflection further guided their practice, as expressed by a participant: “I always think about what worked and what didn’t after every class” (P6.05). Such openness to evaluation indicates that teaching is seen as a process of continuous refinement rather than fixed routines.

Moreover, communication also emerged as integral to this responsiveness. Graduates consciously adjusted their explanations, with one stating, “I make sure to use simpler terms and examples so students don’t get intimidated” (P4.02). Others emphasized building rapport: “What matters is that students feel comfortable asking questions, even if it’s outside the lesson” (P1.06). These reflections show that language proficiency alone is insufficient; what sets them apart is translating expertise into accessible and engaging instruction. In other words, the graduates showed that being flexible, reflective, and good at connecting with students helps them adapt to diverse classroom needs and teach more effectively.

c. Sustaining Growth Through Reflection and Collaboration

Graduates framed their teaching careers as ongoing personal and professional development journeys. One reflected, “I gained more confidence in writing and research, but I also realized there’s always room to improve” (P7.01). Another emphasized humility and openness: “I’m open to feedback because it helps me become a better teacher” (P8.03). This growth mindset reveals an orientation toward lifelong learning and adaptability within evolving educational contexts.

Also, collaboration was equally valued. One participant shared, “I learned a lot from colleagues with different approaches, and it helped me improve my style” (P9.04). Another added, “Teaching is not a solo journey, you need others to share ideas with” (P1.02). These reflections highlight how BAEL graduates refine their practice through self-awareness, collegial exchange, and shared professional responsibility. Thus, their success stems from their skills and willingness to learn and grow with others, showing that teaching works best as a shared, ongoing journey.

4. Challenges Faced by BAEL Graduates in the Teaching Profession

This section discusses the challenges BAEL graduates face in the teaching profession, including gaps in pedagogy and training, as well as issues of identity, recognition, and economic stability.

a. Pedagogical and Curriculum Gaps

BAEL graduates frequently described gaps in their preparation, particularly in pedagogy and curriculum design. While they acknowledged the strength of their English language and literature training, they felt underprepared for the realities of classroom teaching. One participant reflected, “I don’t know how to make a lesson plan or a syllabus because it wasn’t given much attention in our TESL course” (P3.10). Another explained the challenge of applying content knowledge to diverse learners, noting, “At first, we faced challenges, like figuring out how to teach grammar and how to approach students at different levels” (P3.09). These statements reveal a significant tension between theoretical language expertise and practical teaching skills.

The lack of focus on pedagogy meant that graduates often relied on self-learning or mentorship from colleagues once they entered the classroom. Without structured training in instructional design, classroom management, and learner-centered approaches, they experienced difficulties translating their linguistic proficiency into effective teaching practices. This gap placed additional pressure on them, as they had to adjust quickly and independently in professional settings where expectations for teachers were high. On a broader level, these narratives suggest

the need for curriculum reform in BAEL programs. While content expertise remains essential, embedding stronger pedagogical training would better equip graduates for the teaching profession. Integrating education units, practical workshops, and collaborative teaching simulations could bridge the divide between knowledge and practice. The graduates' experiences demonstrate that a curriculum that underemphasizes pedagogy can leave them vulnerable in complex classroom environments.

b. Limited Practical Training and Classroom Experience

Another pressing challenge for BAEL graduates was the lack of authentic classroom exposure during their academic training. Participants repeatedly emphasized the minimal opportunities for actual teaching practice, which made the transition to professional teaching particularly daunting. One graduate explained, *"We only had very limited time for practice teaching, and when I started working, I was overwhelmed"* (P3.14). Another added, *"More OJT hours would help because the reality of teaching is so different from what we only imagined"* (P4.07). These reflections highlight how limited immersion left them unprepared for classroom dynamics.

Because of these gaps, many graduates felt they entered the teaching profession at a disadvantage compared to education majors, who undergo more extensive practicum experiences. Graduates often struggled to manage large classes, handle student misbehavior, and adapt to diverse learning needs. The lack of structured mentorship during their training years compounded the problem, leaving them to experiment through trial and error in their first jobs. The implications here are twofold: BAEL programs must reassess the adequacy of their practicum and internship components, and collaboration with schools to provide structured mentorship could smooth the transition into professional practice. Without these measures, BAEL graduates risk burnout and low retention due to the overwhelming adjustment required at the beginning of their careers.

Furthermore, communication emerged as another difficulty for graduates, particularly in ESL teaching contexts. Many admitted that their mother tongue affected their pronunciation and delivery. One participant confessed, *"Sometimes my accent or pronunciation gets in the way, and I feel students don't understand me clearly"* (P4.09). Another added, *"I struggled with voice modulation, especially when teaching online"* (P5.06). These communication barriers often undermined their confidence and hindered effective student engagement.

Beyond pronunciation, participants also described challenges in mastering professional jargon and adapting to the expectations of diverse learners. A graduate teaching international students explained, *"They expected me to know certain technical terms that were not taught in BAEL, and I had to learn on the spot"* (P6.11). These experiences suggest that while BAEL graduates possess strong general English skills, they sometimes lack the professional communication strategies required in specialized contexts.

Improving communication training within BAEL curricula could address these issues. Incorporating topics on pronunciation, classroom discourse strategies, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) would prepare graduates for global ESL teaching. Since communication is central to teaching, addressing these barriers would boost graduates' confidence and enhance their overall professional effectiveness.

c. Emotional and Confidence-Related Challenges

Emotional struggles were a recurring theme in the participants' accounts. Graduates openly described nervousness, inferiority, and self-doubt when entering the teaching profession. One participant shared, *"I felt nervous on my first day, and I didn't know if I was doing things right"*

(P2.04). Another revealed, *"Sometimes I feel inferior compared to education graduates because they are licensed and trained"* (P1.03). These expressions emphasize how emotional barriers affect classroom performance and the sense of professional belonging.

Graduates also shared that critical feedback from colleagues or mentors often deepened their insecurities. Rather than boosting confidence, feedback sometimes discouraged them, leading to anxiety about whether they were suited for teaching. The absence of a well-developed teaching philosophy amplified their vulnerability, as they lacked a clear guiding framework to anchor their professional decisions. These emotional hurdles extended beyond the classroom, shaping their outlook on teaching as a long-term career. This points to the importance of building pedagogical competence and emotional resilience in BAEL graduates. So, structured mentorship programs, professional support networks, and confidence-building workshops could mitigate these struggles.

d. Professional Identity, Recognition, and Credentialing Issues

Another significant hurdle BAEL graduates faced was professional recognition. Because BAEL is not an education degree, graduates cannot immediately qualify for the Licensure Exam for Teachers (LET). One participant said, *"We're always compared to education majors, and since they're licensed, schools prefer them"* (P7.02). Another added, *"We have to take additional education units just to be allowed to take the licensure exam, which feels unfair"* (P7.05). These statements reflect how credentialing policies limit their professional opportunities.

The lack of licensure eligibility restricted access to permanent teaching positions and affected how graduates were perceived in the workplace. Many reported feeling undervalued or treated as "second-choice" applicants compared to education graduates. This situation reinforced insecurities about their qualifications and created an additional burden of proving their competence despite having specialized training in English. Besides, from a practical standpoint, the system needs to be more flexible in recognizing BAEL graduates. Creating bridge programs or alternative pathways to licensure could give them a fairer chance to prove their abilities. More importantly, officially acknowledging BAEL as a valid preparation for teaching would help graduates feel respected in their profession. With such recognition, they would be able to compete for jobs on an equal footing and strengthen their confidence and sense of belonging in the education sector.

e. Career Uncertainties and Economic Pressures

Participants highlighted career uncertainty and economic challenges as major concerns. Several graduates admitted that teaching was not their first choice, but a default path. One noted, *"It felt like teaching was the only option available, even if it wasn't what I originally wanted"* (P8.03). Others shared that limited job options in their field forced them into teaching positions, even when their passion lay elsewhere.

Economic realities further complicated their situation. Graduates working in ESL centers and private schools reported low pay, high workloads, and a lack of job stability. One participant remarked, *"The salary in ESL is too low compared to the effort, so many of us end up resigning"* (P9.04). Another echoed this sentiment, *"I left my first teaching job because it was unsustainable financially"* (P9.07). These testimonies reflect the structural challenges BAEL graduates face in establishing stable careers.

The persistence of economic pressures highlights the importance of institutional and policy interventions. Strengthening career guidance within BAEL programs could help graduates identify alternative career tracks beyond teaching. At the same time, improving salary structures

and employment stability in the ESL and private education sectors would enhance job satisfaction and retention. Without such reforms, the mismatch between graduates' training, economic needs, and career aspirations will continue to push many away from the teaching profession.

CONCLUSION

BAEL graduates can pursue various pathways after graduation, with many choosing teaching careers driven by growth, fueled by passion, and shaped by meaningful connections. Some graduates view teaching as a means to inspire and positively impact others, often influenced by their teachers. Their familiarity with teaching aligns well with their studies, and they derive joy from witnessing their students' growth, which enhances their sense of purpose and job satisfaction.

However, a key challenge these graduates face is effective classroom management, compounded by a lack of training in this area. While BAEL graduates possess language proficiency, the absence of formal classroom management and discipline training often hinders their ability to maintain control and create an ideal learning environment. This challenge can lead to frustration and job dissatisfaction, especially when graduates feel unprepared to handle classroom dynamics. To address this, many graduates take the initiative to pursue additional training or mentorship to improve their classroom management skills. Despite these challenges, their passion for teaching and commitment to professional growth drive them to seek solutions and enhance their effectiveness as educators.

Moreover, BAEL graduates are also recognized as competitive in business, communications, and other areas where strong language skills are highly valued. Their expertise in English and transferable skills make them versatile in various professions beyond teaching. While teaching is a viable career path for BAEL graduates, not all envision themselves in this field, leading them to search for other roles until they achieve job satisfaction. However, it is important to acknowledge that some BAEL graduates remain dedicated to becoming effective teachers despite the challenges associated with non-board program credentials. Their passion for teaching and desire to positively impact students drives them to pursue additional training and professional development. By enhancing their skills and qualifications, BAEL graduates can overcome the limitations of their non-board program status and find fulfillment in teaching careers. Although they may encounter obstacles, their determination to succeed in education underscores the importance of providing support and opportunities for growth within the teaching profession.

However, this study focuses only on BAEL graduates who chose teaching, which limits its scope. While continuously conducting tracer studies helps understand the career paths of BAEL graduates, adding qualitative data would better explain the trends and factors influencing their career choices. Such research could support the ongoing longitudinal study. Also, to better prepare BAEL graduates for teaching, the program should include a course on teaching methods, focusing on classroom management, lesson planning, and effective lesson delivery. This course would give students practical experience and help them handle classroom challenges. Offering short courses on lesson planning and student assessment would also help them become more effective teachers. These changes would help the program better meet the needs of the teaching profession.

Although teaching is the most common profession for BAEL graduates, the BAEL curriculum may need to be revisited. This could involve introducing a dedicated pedagogy course or integrating teaching methods into selected subjects to provide practical experience. Alternatively, offering crash courses on teaching, including pedagogy and classroom content delivery, could also be beneficial. Additionally, the college should regularly check what students want to do after

graduation. The college can give better advice and support by understanding their career interests. The college can provide information and guidance on those options if students are interested in careers outside teaching, like in public relations, advertising, or media. This would help students choose the right career path and be prepared for success in teaching or another field.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers extend their heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Ronda Bataclao Tullay and Dr. Kara Salazar Panolong for serving as the panel of evaluators for this study. Their invaluable insights, constructive feedback, and professional guidance greatly contributed to the refinement and overall quality of this research.

The researchers also wish to express their sincere appreciation to all participants who accepted the interview invitations, despite time differences, work-related demands, and other personal commitments. Their willingness to participate is a clear testament to their commitment to supporting the continuous improvement of the BAEL program.

REFERENCES

- Commission on Higher Education. (2017). CHED memorandum order no. 24 s. 2017: Policies, standards, and guidelines for the Bachelor of Arts in English Language/Bachelor of Arts in English Language studies.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.) Sage Publications, Inc.
- Diones, L. L., Derasin, C. V. C., Anlagan, D. B., Nelmidia, A. F. C., & Aharul, J. A. (2022). The graduates of CNU's Doctor of Arts in Literature and Communication, and Master of Arts in Literature: A Tracer Study. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education*, 14(2), 6383–6388.
- Domingo, P. (2020). Triumphs and struggles in teaching the English language. *International Journal of Studies in Education and Science*, 1(1), 59–79.
- Freeman, D., Katz, A., Pablo, G. G., & Burns, A. (2015). English-for-teaching: Rethinking teacher proficiency in the classroom. *ELT Journal*, 69(2), 129–139.
- Giorgi, A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified Husserlian approach*. Duquesne University Press.
- Hatch, J. A. (2023). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. State University of New York Press.
- Langdridge, D. (2007). *Phenomenological psychology: Theory, research, and method*. Pearson Education.
- Le, T. T., & Pham, T. T. (2024). Navigating new horizons: Vietnamese English-major graduates in non-traditional careers. *The Electronic Journal for English as a Second Language*, 27(4).
- Lugoloobi-Nalunga, M. (2017). *Teaching English grammar: A study of approaches to formal grammar instruction in the subject of English in Swedish upper secondary school* [Independent thesis, Karlstad University]. Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet.
- Madalinska-Michalak, J., & Bavli, B. (2018). Challenges in teaching English as a foreign language at schools in Poland and Turkey. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 41(5), 688–706.

- Montero, R. V., Padin, J. B., Cagat, J. L., Juliane, J. R. S., Bonotan, A. M., & Derasin, L. M. C. (2022). English major teachers teaching MAPEH in a junior high school: A phenomenological study. *International Journal of Science and Management Studies (IJSMS)*, 5(5), 23–31.
- Olores, J., Pradia, A., & Parcon, M. (2023). English language teachers' experience teaching English among the struggling junior high school students. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 14(6), 764–788.
- Osai, J. A., Amponsah, K. D., Ampadu, E., & Commey-Mintah, P. (2021). Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a basic school in Ghana. *International Online Journal of Primary Education (IOJPE)*, 10(1), 73–88.
- Pennington, M. C., & Richards, J. C. (2016). Teacher identity in language teaching: Integrating personal, contextual, and professional factors. *Regional Language Centre (RELC) Journal*, 47(1), 5–23.
- Polkinghorne, D.E. (1989). Phenomenological research methods. In R. S. Valle, S. Halling (Eds.), *Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology*. Springer.
- Pontillas, M., & Fajardo, D. F. (2023). Employability status of English language studies graduates in a Polytechnic State College in the Philippines. *English Journal Literacy Utama*, 8(1), 718–727.
- Praveena, K. R., & Sasikumar S. (2021). Application of Colaizzi's method of data analysis in phenomenological research. *Medico-Legal Update*, 21(2), 914–918.
- Richards, J. C. (2017). Teaching English through English: Proficiency, pedagogy and performance. *Regional Language Centre (RELC) Journal*, 48(1), 1–24.
- San Jose, A. E. (2014). Finding the linguist: An AB English graduate tracer study. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 2(2), 241–252.
- Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2023). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Thornbury, S. (2017). *30 language teaching methods: Cambridge handbooks for language teachers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Turmudi, D. & Hajan, B. H. (2020). Education system and English language teaching in the Philippines: Implications for Indonesian EFL learning. *Journal of English education and applied linguistics*, 9(1), 78–93.
- Ulla, M. B. (2018). English language teaching in Thailand: Filipino teachers' experiences and perspectives. *Issues in educational research*, 28(4), 1080–1094.
- Wa-Mbaleka, S. (2014). Teaching English to speakers of other languages: The case of the Philippines. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 3(3), 64–78.
- West, J., & Meler, C. (2020). Overcrowded classrooms – the Achilles heel of South African education?. *South African Journal of Childhood Education* 10(1), 1–10.
- Wu, Z. L., Guo, Y. Q., & Wei, L. (2020). Applying a mixed teaching model to the academic English teaching for graduate students at Inner Mongolia University. *Creative Education*, 11(1), 105–114.