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Research Article

Turkish EFL Teacher Candidates' Research Article Reading: A Two-pronged Approach

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study reports on how 107 English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher candidates have read and interpreted research articles (RAs) in a course they took in a teacher education program in Turkey. By using the basic principles of sociocognitive views of literacy, I analyzed the interview data to have a descriptive analysis of my students' (i.e., teacher candidates who are pre-service EFL teachers) engagements and also challenges with research article (RA) reading. The findings revealed a two-pronged approach toward RA reading by the participants. While the participants have found this engagement new and edifying, at the same time they have complained of their challenges in several parts. Similarly, while most of them found reading RAs useful, they also claimed that they could not a see a real value in reading them. The findings obtained therefore call for a detailed scrutiny and design of pre-service teachers' academic text reading.

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Introduction

Within each academic community, there are certain expectations for the design of the language used. As for the human language, admittedly the main purpose is to communicate with others. In essence, it has two primary functions: "to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions" (Gee, 2005, p. 1). These two functions are connected to each other as people use language to express their activities and while doing so they also reflect upon their identities (both personal and professional) and also indicate or claim certain memberships to their targeted social or professional groups.

To begin with, we should realize that for English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher candidates, the language learnt and practiced within their teacher education program via reading and writing is expected to prepare them for their targeted memberships. In line with this vision, it would not be wrong to claim that teacher education programs should provide teacher candidates with essential reading and writing activities to help create certain identities as social activities; and thus, identities are shaped and practiced in tandem. To exemplify, teacher education programs "often use journal articles to impart novice teachers with the professional knowledge and skills they need, with the hope that they will be able to use this professional knowledge in the particular professional situations they find themselves in" (Bartels, 2003, p. 737). To put it succinctly, as Bartels (2003) emphasizes, in the field of language education, teacher candidates should be guided with necessary knowledge on how to access and evaluate journal articles in the field of language education and applied linguistics. Following this caveat and keeping in mind the importance attached to reading and writing in teacher education programs, I decided to examine the engagements and also challenges of a group of EFL teacher candidates with research article (RA) reading.

Literature review

Notion of literacy and Discourses

Before I spell out the intricacies attached to academic text reading, interpreting and creating memberships to certain targeted groups for teachers and/or teacher candidates, we should consider what reading is. Reading is a process shaped by different dynamics such as the text itself, the reader's background and the situation where the reading occurs (Grabe

& Stoller, 2011). "The ability to read English efficiently for academic purposes is widely recognized in EFL/ESL contexts as a critical skill in a wide range of secondary and university settings, and especially for more advanced students" (Grabe, 2014, p. 8). For Freire (1974), literacy is not simply a process of acquiring and sharing information but a state of social and political consciousness. In other words, literacy is not solely a matter of reading and writing words but also of attending to the dynamic, dialectical relationships between words and worlds (Freire & Macedo, 1987). If literacy is a social construct, our students can learn much about languages, cultures and societies through practicing the values reflected in the ways texts are created (Kern, 2000). Therefore, we as teacher educators "need to encourage learners to take an active, critical stance to the texts and discourse conventions we teach them" (Kern, 2000, p. 37) so that they can be better equipped with the necessary tools of meaning making and text interpretation while reading academic texts.

We have to remember that when people use language, they not only communicate information, but they constantly signal a membership in different groups. This refers to what Gee (1990) calls as Discourse. Gee uses the term 'Discourses' with a capital 'D' "for ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity" (2005, p. 21). Being trained as a linguist means or indicates being able to speak, think and act like a linguist.

Related studies

This notion of Discourse calls us to examine the way teachers and/or teacher candidates speak, think, act and read academic texts. Related to this line of thinking, a question is due here. If RAs are organized in a way that is useful for the practice of researchers, can they still be useful for teachers? This question prompted Bartels (2003) to see if the ways teachers act and think when they read journal articles was similar or different from those used by researchers' Discourses. With this purpose, Bartels (2003) investigated to what extent teachers and researchers evaluated and used academic texts differently. Three second language (L2) teachers and three L2 researchers were asked to read and comment on two RAs; one teacher-oriented and the other, researcher-oriented. Using Gee's theory of Discourses in the analysis and discussion of the results, Bartels (2003) realized that these two groups of readers had different ways of validating ideas in journal articles and had different ways of using information in the articles in their professional knowledge. "Furthermore, they also appeared to be members of different

professional Discourses and object to the use of Discourses other than their own in journal articles" (p.748).

In a more recent study, Tavakoli and Howard (2012) investigated 60 teachers' views and beliefs about the relationship between L2 research and practice in England. The participating teachers were observed to have doubts about research practicality and its implementation possibilities in class. Their results confirmed that "most teachers perceived a gap between research and practice and believed that teachers' and researchers' views were only *sometimes* similar" (p.238, italics added). Similarly, with the purpose of investigating 40 English-language teachers' engagement with educational research in Bangladesh, Anwaruddin and Pervin (2015) used questionnaires and in-depth interviews to find that there is an absolute absence of teachers' research engagement for professional development. Nevertheless, a word of caution is due here. All this does not mean that academic text reading has no place in teacher education. The message given by all these participating teachers warns us that practitioners and researchers are members of different professional Discourses, and teachers do not spend much time reading, participating in or conducting research as they have serious questions and doubts about their potential needs for research. These results reveal a contradictory nature to the contention that teachers and academics share a common Discourse (Hedgcock, 2002). This contradiction observed and an absence of such studies with pre-service teachers calls for a need to investigate the academic text consumption practices by teacher candidates who are in the process of literacy development and identity building within teacher education programs.

Method

In a few related studies reviewed above (Anwaruddin & Pervin, 2015; Bartels 2003; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012), the qualitative data collection and data analysis techniques were used. At the present study I also opted for a qualitative data collection and analyses. However, to be more specific and create a sounder guideline for my analysis of a group of EFL teacher candidates' views on their RA reading, I used Kerns' (2000) views of literacy as a tool for my interpretation of the qualitative data. Since RA reading is not a simple, neutral and natural act of reading focusing on the language itself only but a communicative act which requires the mediation and transformation of meaning and since the importance attached to certain research genres such as RAs (Swales, 1990; 2004) and "the enormous role the knowledge of discourse conventions and registers of specific fields plays … in helping scholars become insiders in their disciplinary communities" (Yaylı &

Canagarajah, 2014, p. 95) gave me the impetus to investigate of a group of EFL teacher candidates' views on their RA reading under the guidance of Kern's notion of literacy.

Admittedly, the views of the most distinguished scholars who have formulated the sociocognitive views of literacy such as Kern (2000), Gee (1990), and Freire (1974) have led to a number of implications for foreign language teaching and teacher education upon which this qualitative study has been based. In order to investigate a group of EFL teacher candidates' views on their acts of RA reading, I asked them to reflect critically on how they read and evaluated RAs which they were supposed to read as a course requirement. I collected their views with some open-ended questions I prepared. Keeping in mind the warning that if observational methods are properly used, they can avoid the possible biases and inaccuracies of other data collection methods (Gall et al., 2003), I used my observations while describing, analyzing, coding and interpreting qualitative data.

Research setting

This study was conducted in an English Language Teaching (ELT) program of a state university in Turkey. The students of ELT programs are EFL teacher candidates as the graduates of this program are employed as English teachers at both public and private schools at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. Like the other teaching programs under the faculties of education, this program accepts students who pass the annually held University Entrance Exam (UEE) which is highly competitive. According to the language scores the candidates get in the UEE, they are placed into ELT programs within the country. Also, 70 % of all the courses in most ELT programs are given in English language.

Participants

107 students studying at an ELT program, a four-year English medium program, participated in this study. I have been affiliated with this ELT program for nearly two decades and every academic year, I give academic texts (i.e., both book chapters and RAs related to skills instruction) in the two mandatory third year courses (i.e., INO 305 Teaching Language Skills 1 in the fall semester and INO 306 Teaching Language Skills 2 in the spring semester). Each year I have observed that many of these students complain of the difficulties they have with reading RAs.

Data collection

The focus of the discussions in Teaching Language Skills 1 course was reading, listening and viewing skills and the first RA I provided was on listening by Bekleyen (2009) and the other was on the use of movies by Seferoğlu (2008). The reason for this choice stemmed from the fact that these two RAs were both conducted with pre-service EFL teachers studying at two other ELT programs in Turkey. The participants were very similar to my students. Also, the problems studied in these RAs (i.e. foreign language listening anxiety) and the practices employed (i.e., the use of movies in the oral communication course of the freshmen pre-service EFL teachers) were familiar for the participants of the present study. The RAs I gave in this course in the fall semester was limited to these two due to time constraints. These teacher candidates were however exposed to other RAs in other courses as well.

The participating teacher candidates did these RA readings as a part of their course requirement. I was the course instructor, and this qualitative study employed convenience sampling. Out of 136 third and fourth year students enrolled in a third-year mandatory course (i.e., INO 305 Teaching Language Skills 1), 107 students agreed to participate in the written interview. In fact, for the collection of data, I designed two interview sessions: (1) a written interview with a set of open-ended questions and (2) an oral interview with the same set of questions.

Having perused several studies on academic reading acts of teachers (Anwaruddin & Pervin, 2015; Bartels 2003; Borg, 2009; Hall, 2009; Gall et al., 2003; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012), I formed the interview questions. I specifically the participants to express (1) how they identified RAs, (2) targeted readers of RAs, (3) the possible contributions of these texts to their knowledge base/their teaching, and (4) their challenges and difficulties in reading RAs. While designing the interview questions, I paid attention to all the principles about preparing interviews as put forward by Dörnyei (2007, pp. 136-143). For instance, I asked for opinions from some students in our program (except for the participating ones) and some colleagues working in the teacher education field. With some discussions on the content of some questions to beat possible misunderstandings by students, I revised to achieve the final form of the questions (See Appendix).

Before collecting interview data, I formed an initial contact with my students to see if they were willing to participate in the study. I also informed them of the necessary ethical issues including consent, privacy, and confidentiality. Because of time constraints, I decided to collect participants' views with a written interview first and in the last class

hour of the semester. Finally, for oral interviews, we agreed on some suitable time periods after school. 14 of the participants accepted to participate in semi-structured oral interviews which aimed to elaborate on their views. Oral and written interview questions were the same but with oral interviews I had a better chance of probing into details of their statements. I held these face-to-face oral interviews in my office with each participant individually, which lasted between 15 to 20 minutes. I audiotaped these interviews and transcribed them verbatim. In order to ensure privacy and confidentiality, I kept all personal information as anonymous as possible and used some abbreviations in the parentheses (e.g., Wr Int stands for written interview data; Oral Int stands for oral interview data; and P for participants).

Data analysis

For the data analysis and also interpretation, I used some salient tenets of Kern's notion of literacy (2000), Gee's notion of Discourses (1990) and New London Group's concept of design (1996) which have all been contributive. In his description, Kern identifies literacy-based approach as "a style of teaching educators ought to consider if they wish to prepare learners for full participation in societies that increasingly demand multilingual, multicultural, and multitextual competence" (2000, pp.15-16). Connectedly, New London Group's (1996) central concept is design of meaning, and they view every act of designing (i.e., reading, writing, speaking and listening) as a productive way of recycling the old material in new and fresh ways (i.e., redesigning).

Put succinctly, I used the seven principles of a sociocognitive view of literacy as proffered by Kern (2000) in the analysis of the qualitative data I collected. These are (1) interpretation, (2) collaboration, (3) conventions, (4) cultural knowledge, (5) problem solving, (6) reflection and (7) language use. I used these as my guiding concepts in the qualitative data analysis. This kind of analysis is similar to the template of codes concept which suggests that "…transcribed texts are coded using this predetermined template" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 253). In this type of qualitative data analysis, the emphasis is not on the emergent nature of the codes but on starting out with a template of codes. As these seven principles are not limited to the acts of reading and writing only, and the macro principle is "*literacy involves communication*" (Kern, 2000, p. 17, italics original), my literacy-based perspective in the analysis of the data aimed at achieving a better analysis and understanding of the challenges in RA reading which is not a universal or ideologically neutral kind of reading but a culturally constructed one.

According to Creswell (2009), in order to achieve validity, researchers must ensure that their findings are accurate from the perspective of the participant(s), the researcher and/or the readers. To be able to increase the validity of my interview questions and the accuracy of the findings, I first of all asked some of my students and colleagues to examine the quality of these interview questions and enriched these two interviews with their comments. "Reliability indicates that the research approach is consistent and well documented; for example, would another researcher following the same approach come up with similar results?" (Bolderston, 2012, p.74). To ensure reliability in the present study, I did the transcriptions carefully and paid real attention to the coding process to "make sure the themes (or codes), as they emerge, are consistent across all data" (Bolderston, 2012, p.74). Also, I asked a colleague to analyze a quarter of the all data collected and informed him about the seven principles of a sociocognitive view of literacy as put forward by Kern (2000) beforehand. A high agreement was achieved (91%).

Findings and discussion

Despite the power RAs have in dissemination of information, an enormous disparity between research and practice in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) has often been emphasized. For instance, one of the main reasons for language teachers' limited research engagement is that they find published research hard to understand (Borg, 2007, 2009; Worrall, 2004; Yaylı, 2012). Therefore, it is judicious to start presenting the findings with the interpretation concept which is also the first of these seven principles I used as my guiding concepts in the analysis:

Interpretation

According to Kern (2000), *"[i]nterpretation* requires declerative and procedural knowledge, an ability to create relationships among symbolic elements (for example, linguistic elements), and transformation of one's knowledge, but it also requires apprenticeship in the particular interpretative practices of a given community, as well as familiarity with relevant genres and styles" (p. 38, italics original). In the present study, except for a few participants, the pre-service EFL teachers commonly complained of their limited success in their interpretations of RAs. Some possible reasons were that they were exposed to RAs only in three courses in the program with a few RAs in each (i.e., Teaching Language Skills courses 1 and 2- a third year course, Young Learner courses 1 and 2- another third year course and Methodology course- a second year course). Their

limited declarative knowledge both in the language content of the texts and in the genre (i.e., RA) was observed to create a handicap for their procedural knowledge. Such limited exposure to RAs can be taken as a problem in terms of the design metaphor of New London Group (1996) as the participants' already existing engagements with RAs was limited to reading and mostly at the level of designing, and their acts of redesigning (i.e., reproducing and transforming their available designs) were nonexistent.

Quite expectedly, their interpretation of the RA knowledge observed in their statements rooted within their own perspective/scope which was of a language learner and of a pre-service EFL teacher, but not of a researcher candidate. They had a tendency to interpret the RAs in coordination with their recognized identities (i.e., both as a language learner in the ELT program and a pre-service EFL teacher). This recognition brought about a certain Discourse (i.e., teachers' Discourse) which was observed to help them to evaluate the information in RAs. In both interviews, I asked the participants to express how reading these RAs helped to contribute to their knowledge base and for most of the participants, the RAs were useful in terms of giving them some tips for their future teaching:

> I knew that listening anxiety was common but after this RA I have learnt also how teacher candidates deal with it and I can make use of these ways with my future students if I observe listening anxiety in them. (Oral Int, Participant 1)

> I already knew that films should be integrated into language classes but now I better know how to do it. (Wr Int, Participant 89)

Not surprisingly, the participating pre-service EFL teachers mostly evaluated the knowledge given in the RAs from teachers' perspective and expressed how they can make use of this knowledge in their future teaching. The reason for this might be that both RAs they were asked to read as a part of course content were teacher-oriented. The authors were teacher educators like the course instructor and the author of this study. The participants in both RAs were pre-service EFL teachers studying in ELT programs just like the participants of the current study, and the problems studied were familiar to the participants of the present study. Besides reflecting a teacher's perspective in interpretations, a few of the participants evaluated these texts from language learners' perspective as well. Some sample statements are as follows:

> With this RA, I have realized that I need to develop some strategies while using movies to improve my speaking outside the class. (Wr Int, P. 30)

Bekleyen's RA showed me that there are many students like me who suffer from listening anxiety and how common this problem is. (Oral Int, P. 12)

Collaboration

It is certain that writers write for an audience. In his book on critical academic writing, Canagarajah (2002) aptly reminds us that "[w]riting is not a one-way transmission of ideas, nor are constructs like *writer* and *text* autonomous. The writer's "intentions" and "thoughts" are considerably influenced by the expectations, norms, and values of the audience (or community)" (pp. 4-5, italics and quotation marks original). Therefore, the interpretation of any text requires a careful examination of "the struggle/collaboration/interplay between the writer, reader and the community" (Canagarajah, 2002, p.5). While writers are under the influence of their targeted readers' expectations and struggle hard to satisfy these, readers have their own challenges. "Readers in turn must contribute their motivation, knowledge, and experience in order to make the writer's text meaningful" (Kern, 2000, p. 16).

For most of the participants (80 participants out of 107), comprehending these RAs was not a difficult task. They stated that they were able to understand most of the ideas reflected. During our class discussion on these RAs, however, I observed that mostly they were able to grasp the main meanings visible on the surface. I also observed that they suffered from two issues: (1) a lack of motivation toward reading RAs and (2) a limited success in anticipation of writers' knowledge and intended meanings. Therefore, in our discussions I always tried to prompt them to see the communicative purposes behind these RAs and how the authors (i.e., Bekleyen and Seferoğlu) achieved these purposes in different sections of their texts (e.g., introduction, methodology or results sections). Insufficient practice with such texts in the sense of New London Group's (1996) design metaphor I believe formed a hindrance for the participants who failed to make attempts to see writers' intentions in detail. Their reading was mostly based on comprehending the content knowledge by focusing on "abstract, value-free features of textual form" (Canagarajah, 2002, p.5). Without my prompts, they failed to analyze writers' purposes, or see these texts as embodiments of certain values and intentions.

When I read an RA I know that I can understand most of it but it is always easier for me to understand a chapter by Harmer or Ur. (R: Why do you think that reading them is easier?) They talk about teaching skills and they always provide some

examples as teaching acitivities. Their claims and examples match perfectly, which provides a smooth kind of reading but this is not the case in RA reading. (R: Why do you think RA reading is not a smooth kind of reading?) RA writers refer to other writers a lot, give very long sentences or give a lot of statistics the purpose of which I do not fully see. They jump from one part to another only giving teaching suggestions at the end. (Oral Int., P 4)

Conventions

 "How people read and write texts is not universal, but governed by cultural conventions that evolve through use" (Kern, 2000, p. 17). In terms of the conventions governing RA writing/reading, again the participating pre-service EFL teachers could not be considered highly competent. The cultural conventions that help researchers to shape the text of their RAs or that help them to interpret others' RAs were not readily available in participants' history of practice. They stated that they read only a few RAs as a part of course requirements in some courses and an actual practice with RA writing was completely missing in their educational past. This lack of practice was evident in their statements:

These texts were very different than the ones we normally read (i.e., book chapters). (R: What do you mean?) I do not know what to expect while reading an RA, I mean what information is coming next in different parts. And the tone of the authors was different. (R: How?) It was too scientific and too distant. (Oral Int, P. 11)

Cultural knowledge

Similar to the conventions concept above, cultural knowledge also emphasizes the social dimension of text production and consumption. As said earlier, the participating pre-service EFL teachers interpreted RAs mostly from a teacher's perspective and they did so by mostly focusing on the information that conformed to their own values. At the same time, they failed to see RAs as communicative acts of researchers. Having teachers' or pre-service teachers' perspective and having no actual participation in any kind of research practice naturally prevented them from having an insider's or a researcher's perspective. Without such perspectives, it is hard for one to grasp different forms of communication successfully in an academic text. As we all know, "[r]eaders and writers operating from outside a given cultural system risk misunderstanding" (Kern, 2000, p. 17) and that is why

in some parts of their RA readings, the participants felt an urgent need for my explanations for a better understanding of the issues dealt in RAs.

> Since for the first time I saw the term likert scale in one of the RAs, I asked what it meant and after your explanation that part made sense. (Oral Int, P. 6)

> I do not think that teachers should know some research terminology. (R: What do you mean with that?) I mean we will be language teachers so we do not need to read the results of some RAs conducted by some researchers. What we can do is focus only on the conclusion part where researchers give some tips to teachers or learners about what to do or not to do in classes. (Oral Int, P. 11)

Considering these teacher candidates' needs in their future teaching activities in local contexts, and their nearly non-existent probabilities for doing research in their future careers, providing RA reading activities more frequently than needed would create an apparent incongruity and increase the risk of colonizing teacher candidates (Bartels, 2003). What is meant with the term colonization is that teachers would feel threatened when the Discourse of researchers is imposed on them, which may lead them to feel less knowledgeable and inferior individuals (Gee, 1990).

In Turkey, once teacher candidates are appointed as teachers to schools, they do not need to do any research to hold their jobs or to be promoted. As evident in many of the views expressed by the participants, they lacked some of the necessary components of "research 'skill set'" (Hall, 2009, p. 671). This would not mean that they should not be trained according to the principles of enquiry process or evidence-based teaching which enable both teachers and pre-service teachers to have agency and impetus for innovation and change in their teaching settings. However, while doing this, teacher educators should also pay attention to the concept of "contextual relevance of research" (Anwaruddin & Pervin, 2015, p. 31). Although some tenets such as "teachers should be critical consumers of educational research, using it to inform their instructional decisions" (Borg, 2010, p. 410) are widely accepted without questioning in mainstream language teaching contexts, there is also an unequal power relationship observed between researchers and practitioners at the same time. This disparity and also the different ways of validating and using research knowledge have been emphasized by several different studies conducted in educational contexts in various inner and outer circle countries such as the USA (Bartels 2003), the United Kingdom (Tavakoli & Howard, 2012) and Bangladesh (Anwaruddin &

Pervin, 2015). In these studies, the authors emphasize that researchers and practitioners in the field of TESOL are by and large seen as different communities with different priorities and preferences, and teachers are generally seen to be skeptical about the practical value and relevance of second-language research to their classroom practice.

Problem solving

Reading, whether academic or not, poses problems as it involves "figuring out relationships between words, between larger units of meaning, and between texts and real or imagined worlds" (Kern, 2000, p. 17). Interpreting the ideas in RAs was a bit different experience for the participants as these texts were different from the ones they frequently read such as theoretical book chapters with pedagogical foci (i.e., the ones focusing on the practice of English language teaching), novels or short stories. Therefore, they complained that they did not know what to find in different subsections or could not fully understand the real meanings and/or communicative purposes of information provided (i.e., participants, data collection instruments or results). They found RA writing style unpredictable on the ground that they were not familiar with this text design and lacked some necessary previous practice with RA reading and/or writing. In the oral interviews, I asked their ways of dealing with their difficulties and heard that they got help from dictionaries and googled some long phrases to make the complicated meanings clear. When none of these problem-solving tactics worked, they discussed these difficult parts with their classmates before or during the class and asked for help for a better understanding.

> Since I have not read an RA before, I have found many things difficult, I mean language used, complicated ideas, statistics, tables and very long sentences. (Wr Int, P. 63)

Reflection

Just like problem solving, reflection is both a cognitively- and socially-mediated process. Literacy involves reflection and self-reflection. When discussing these RAs in class, I urged the participants to focus on the actual messages in RAs by forming connections to our own teaching and learning contexts. Therefore, they caught some similarities between their lives and the issues dealt in RAs. These were either in the problematic issues discussed (e.g., teacher candidates' listening anxiety and their own) or in the practices presented (i.e., the integration of movies into language classes and their

own integration of movie segments for their microteaching tasks). With the help of my prompts and as a result of their observations of similarities, the participating pre-service EFL teachers were able to sustain their restricted interest during classes.

To be able to ease the comprehension difficulties and help pre-service EFL teachers to incorporate information in RAs into their professional knowledge, teacher educators should spare more time and effort for a better design of their courses. In literacy-based teaching, teachers give importance to three Rs; responding, revising and reflection (Kern, 2000). If we decide to follow the premises of literacy-based teaching, we as teacher educators need to create some opportunities for pre-service teachers so that they can respond, revise and reflect upon their academic reading performances. Put it succinctly, if pre-service teachers in language teacher education programs are allowed and encouraged to respond to RAs to participate in a dialogic exchange with these authors, reread, reframe and redesign the language used in RAs, and reflect upon their acts of meaning making, they can better know how to judge the empirical knowledge in RAs.

Language use

In terms of language use concept, I need to admit that the participants gained a certain amount of apprenticeship toward RA reading during our class discussions, which was a relatively new kind of reading for them. I tried to model them of the kind of reading appropriate to such texts and informed them about the lacking points in their declarative knowledge. With the help of my prompts, at least they gained some familiarity with this Discourse. Their meanings emerged out of the negotiations of my prompts and their problem solving skills. Although many of them found RAs beneficial for their future teaching practice as these texts provide new ideas for teaching in general and solutions for some common problems, many of them also felt that specific vocabulary, long sentences and scientific tone of writing made it hard for them to fully understand. In fact, when asked directly, the participants stated that they were able to understand most of the ideas reflected in RAs but they also identified and complained about some comprehension obstacles. Thus, their RA reading can be said to consist of a two-pronged approach which was a relatively new and edifying kind of reading engagement that came together with some language use challenges for these participants:

> I sometimes find RA reading difficult. Although some parts give very interesting information, there is too much statistical information in other parts, many new words and lots of nouns together so I get bored and give up reading. (Oral Int, P. 2)

In terms of these challenges observed, I need to admit that these participating EFL teachers did their best while trying to comprehend these texts considering the fact that they lacked some necessary earlier practice with academic reading. The kind of readings they did in their previous reading courses which is typically designed with an EAP focus rather than an ESP one was less demanding. Success at the university level mainly depends on the mastery of some fundamental academic skills such as reading, writing, critical thinking, oral presentation, and media literacy. "Despite the importance of these skills for academic success, professors seldom teach them" (Hermida, 2009, p.1). The literacy experience the participants gained with these two RAs might seem scarce but during our class discussions, the participants increased their practice with and apprenticeship into the Discourse presented in teacher-oriented RAs.

Conclusion

In the present study, I aimed to examine how RAs were interpreted and evaluated by a group of pre-service EFL teachers and I used a literacy-based orientation as a guide for the analysis and the interpretation of the data I collected. The analysis revealed that interpreting these RAs was not difficult for most of the participants (i.e., 80 participants out of 107). Although they stated that they were able to understand most of the ideas reflected, during our class discussion on these Ras, they at the same time complained of some of their failures in comprehending some parts. Similarly, I observed that their understanding was limited to grasping the main meanings visible on the surface. Mainly, they suffered from two issues: (1) a lack of motivation and interest toward reading RAs and (2) a limited success in anticipation of writers' knowledge and intended meanings. Although contextual relevance of research is a debated issue and teachers and researchers are seen to belong to different discourse groups with their own Discourses, we cannot deny the significance of pre-service teachers' cognizance of RAs. In the light of the findings of the present study, how RA reading activities can be designed and integrated in teacher education programs calls for a literacy-based design. In essence, if all acts of reading and writing are done in contextually relevant ways as recursive acts of communication, teacher candidates might be more willing for designing and redesigning their available resources. However, a warning is due here. If chances of collaboration and reflection cannot be created for pre-service teachers, they cannot inspect the specific reasons of their comprehension and transforming difficulties (Kern, 2000); and thus, their interpretations

of RAs will always hang in the air. Without creating opportunities for attempts of transforming available knowledge, teacher educators cannot help EFL teacher candidates to develop their "understandings of the world, of communication, and of literacy" (Kern, 2000, p. 64).

While analyzing the participants' statements from the conventions and cultural knowledge perspectives especially, I observed that although most of these participating pre-service EFL teachers touched upon the benefits they earned through reading these RAs, they at the same time stressed that they did not see a real value in reading RAs. In fact, as highlighted above, several studies (Anwaruddin & Pervin, 2015; Bartels 2003; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012) emphasize a disparity in teachers' and researchers' conceptualizations of research knowledge. As being members of a different professional Discourse (i.e., teacher candidates' Discourse), the participants in this study revealed a stronger preference for reading theory and practice books with a pedagogical focus to reading RAs. Their ease in reading practice books on teaching and their difficulty with the newly encountered text design and scientific vocabulary in RAs led them to see RAs as not so useful texts. With more research with teachers and pre-service teachers from various EFL settings (i.e., peripheries of language teaching) "our understanding of the role of inquiry and research in schools" (Hall, 2009, p. 669) may increase as the importance attached to these roles (i.e., teachers and researchers) and the necessity of research engagement for the professional development of teachers and teacher candidates might show variation in different local settings. In sum, the answers to the question of *how teachers learn and develop as professionals* should be scrutinized further and such intense scrutiny will unarguably contribute much to the literacy content of teacher education programs.

Implications for practice and theory

In essence, for any kind of engagement with research to be effective for teacher candidates, they firstly must be exposed to relevant and meaningful texts that are appropriate in terms of teacher candidates' own contexts and teaching/learning problems. Thus, some possible risks of "*colonizing* teachers" (Bartels, 2003, p. 750, italics added) can be avoided in teacher education programs. This need is aptly put forward By Bartels (2003) as follows:

> Perhaps more attention needs to be paid to what kind of Discourse novice teachers are apprenticed into in teacher education programs. Is the aim of the activities, homework and classroom interaction in teacher education courses to get novice teachers to think, act, value and function like teachers or

like academics? There is a great need for research on the kind of practices, values and ways of being and viewing the world which are valued in teacher education and their compatibility with localized teaching contexts (p. 750).

As seen in the present study, exposing teacher candidates to such contextually relevant RAs with research content that is familiar to teacher candidates' academic lives has not been enough. What was missing was that the participants had not been a part of any research activities. Research engagement can contribute to the professional Discourse of teacher candidates if one of the main aims of teacher education programs can be to empower teacher candidates. Then together with such research engagements with real researchers, *a literacy-based design of academic reading activities in teacher education programs* can provide real benefits. This requires creating opportunities for teacher candidates so that they will both design and redesign their available resources related to academic text reading and leaning. According to Kern (2000), success in literacy cannot be achieved through use of available designs (i.e., designing) only but there is a need for redesigning of these available designs by learners in every act of their reading and writing. In other words, teacher candidates should not be limited to the passive roles of being naïve readers of RAs in the field, but they should be allowed and encouraged to suggest research ideas, design study proposals and be parts of a researchers' team. As emphasized by Owen et al. (2018), in many developing countries like Turkey, there is a heavy reliance on centrally provided training for professional development of teachers, and teacher training activities are not performed in a coordinated and systematic manner. However, what teacher candidates need more is an establishment of organizations for professional learning and research team memberships. In line with this, opportunities for collaboration with researchers could be provided for teacher candidates. To sum up, teacher candidates' interpretation of RAs can then be enhanced if research engagement is not blindfoldedly done, which means that local concerns about the types of needs for research engagement for teachers and the realities of their preferred professional Discourses should be carefully taken into account.

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Appendix

Pre-service Teachers' Research Article Reading Interview Questions:

1. In what courses have you read research articles (RAs) in English?

2. In what courses have you read RAs in Turkish?

3. Considering the RAs you have read in our course (i.e., Bekleyen's (2009) and Seferoğlu's (2008) studies) what textual features help you to identify an RA?

4. Who are the targeted readers of these RAs?

5. In what ways do you think reading these RAs has contributed to your knowledge base?

6. In what ways do you think reading these RAs will contribute to your teaching?

7. Can you easily understand the ideas in RAs? If not, what are the reasons of your difficulties?

8. What are the difficulties in reading RAs?