The Program of Pedagogical Courses at an English Language Teaching Department: A Summative Evaluation

Zekiye Müge TAVİL (*)

Abstract: *As teaching English has been a major educational field, evaluating English language teachers' education programs are steadily getting more and more important. In this study, therefore, the program of the pedagogical courses in ELT departments is evaluated to find out whether they achieve the intended outcomes or not. To triangulate the study a document analysis, a questionnaire and the interview findings are combined to provide valid and reliable results. The piloting and the face validity of the questionnaire, the inter-rater reliability of the interview and the defined objectives of the pedagogical courses are determined before the main study. In the light of the data collected, the weak and the strong sides of the program are defined to improve the efficiency and the quality of the contents of the pedagogical courses.*

Keywords: *Pedagogical courses, Evaluation, Summative evaluation, Educational program*

İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümündeki Pedagojik Derslerin Programları: Bir Son Değerlendirme

Öz: *İngilizcenin öğretimi temel eğitim alanlarından biri olduğundan beri, ingiliz dili eğitimi programları daha da artarak önem kazanmıştır. Bu yüzden, bu çalışmada İngilizce öğretmenliği bölümündeki pedagojik derslerin hedeflenen amaca ulaşıp ulaşmadığının belirlenmesi amacıyla bir son değerlendirme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmada farklı kaynaklardan faydalanmak amacıyla döküman analizi, anket ve görüşme bulguları içiçe geçirilerek değerlendirilmiştir. Ana çalışmada, önce pilot uygulama, anketin güvenilirlik çalışması, görüşmelerin iç geçerlilik oranı ve hedeflenen ders amaçları belirlenmiştir. Elde edilen verilerin ışığı altında, pedagojik ders içeriklerinin zayıf ve güçlü yönleri belirlenerek etkili ve kaliteli ders içeriklerinin geliştirilmesi hedeflenmiştir.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Pedagojik dersler, değerlendirme, eğitim programları, son değerlendirme*

*) Yrd. Doç. Dr., Department of Foreign Language Teaching Gazi University
(e-posta: mtavil@gazi.edu.tr)

Introduction

English is generally favored as the primary means of communication among people with different first language backgrounds, so it has gradually and indispensably become the lingua franca. In most cases, as Firth (1996) states, it is the "contact language" between persons who share neither a common native language nor a common culture and for whom English is the chosen foreign language communication. The more importance English language gains, the more crucial it becomes to teach and learn the language effectively. Hence, more and more people are involved in this learning and teaching process, English language learning and teaching plays an important role in Turkish education system, as well. Within this framework, training and guiding future teachers is one of the main objectives of English Language Teaching (ELT) departments. Therefore, providing the prospective teachers to become equipped not only with current trends and innovations but also with the skills of teaching in the field is defined within the coverage of higher education institutions' curriculum all through the country. Challenged by the technological changes and increasing demand, these institutions have embarked restructuring and recycling by means of new teacher education program, initiated by Higher Education Council in 2006-2007 academic year. English language teacher education departments are among the departments of which curriculum has recently been recycled and restructured to follow the changing social requisites and educational innovations in Turkey (Grossman, Onkol and Sands, 2007). This new program depends mostly on Common European Framework of Reference for languages, which aims to enhance unity among the language programs.

As teaching English has become an educational field, evaluating English language teachers' education programs become more significant correspondingly. The most vital emphasis on teaching derives from the need to improve the efficiency and the quality of the program at higher education institutions, and the evaluation of these programs is the starting point on the way towards professionalization of the field of ELT (Peacock, 2009). In spite of the importance given to language learning and teaching by the national educational system, Turkish students generally fail to become communicatively competent. In most cases, the ineffectual implementation of the methodologies has been considered as the main cause behind this failure. Therefore, the significance of the use of methods in English language teaching should not be underestimated in the process. Because of this reason, the new program relatively centers on and around developing the pedagogical competencies of the prospective teachers (teaching theory and teaching practices) in foreign language teaching with a deeper involvement in teaching grammar, writing, reading, listening, speaking, pronunciation and vocabulary not only in isolation but also in integration. In addition to these, second language teaching methods and teaching English to young learners are also among the focal points of the program. The objectives of these courses are fundamentally based on building language awareness through a detailed study of techniques used in teaching grammar in the context of language skills,

development of classroom management and planning skills through peer teaching and supervised peer evaluation. Apart from the detailed study of techniques used in teaching skills, developing an awareness and appreciation of theory and practice in teaching English to young learners by focusing on teacher training, assessment, syllabus design and materials preparation are within the coverage of the mentioned courses. To add up, evaluation and surveying approaches and methods used in second language teaching, their theoretical foundations and techniques employed in their implementation are also the expected outcomes.

Thus, a systematic and incessant evaluation of the program comes up to be the key factor for its improvement, which pinpoints the need for curriculum evaluation. There are two main kinds of evaluation types: formative and summative. The purpose of formative evaluation is to guarantee that the goals of the program are being achieved and to improve the instruction through the determination of problematic aspects (Weston, Mc Alpine, and Bordonaro, 1995). In this evaluation type, researchers collect data to shape or reconstruct a curriculum in a development stage and it is implemented by the designers of the program with the intent to improve (Scriven, 1991). On the other hand, summative evaluation can be conducted when the development of the program has been completed to determine the effect of it. It is a way of assessing the value of a program at the end of the process and the main consideration is on the outcomes that needs to be achieved (Bhola, 1990). In formative evaluation the audiences is program personnel whereas in the summative one the audience is supposed to be the potential users because in order to improve a program it is necessary to make decisions during the developmental stages, which is also crucial to ascertain its ultimate worth and resolve its future once the program is stabilized (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). A side from that, summative evaluation provides the information from which changes and adaptations can be made to maintain the products efficacy.

This study, therefore, is based on both objectives-oriented approach and participant-oriented approach; it is founded on objectives-oriented approach as the focus is on specifying goals and determining if they have been achieved, and it is also rooted in participant-oriented approach as involvement of the stakeholders are central in determining the data for the evaluation. According to McMillan and Schumacher "objectives-based evaluation is probably the most frequently used approach for several reasons because most educators would agree that successful attainment of objectives does indicate both the merit and worth of a practice. No other approach has such an elaborate technology and scientific basis" (1997, p.548). Within this framework, this study is set to discover whether the pedagogical courses in ELT departments achieve the intended outcomes or not. With the help of the summative evaluation, the study aims to answer the following research questions;

1. Do the pedagogical courses achieve their objectives in the program?

2. To what degree does the current program of pedagogical courses meet the needs and expectations of the ELT prospective teachers?

1. Method

2.1. Data Collection and Participants

In this evaluation study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Throughout the research, qualitative data were gathered through interviews to reflect the perceptions of the prospective teachers and quantitative data were gathered through a questionnaire to provide overall opinions of the participants about the program.

Totally 70 fourth grade students participated in the study in the 2010-2011 academic year from the department of English Language Teaching, Gazi University. The majority of them are female (n: 55) and only 15 of them are male. Their age range is 21-25. The target population that was aimed to gather data for the questionnaire consisted of 60 prospective teachers and to understand their opinions regarding the courses 10 students, who were not previously carried out the questionnaire, answered the interview questions.

2.2. Data Analysis

Questionnaire, interview and document analysis were applied in order to triangulate the data. The objectives of the courses were downloaded from the Higher Education Council's website (http://www.yok.gov.tr/egitim/ogretmen/yeni_programlar_ve_icerik. htm) as the questions of the questionnaire and interview are formed by considering the goals of the pedagogical courses to figure out if they have achieved the intended outcomes.

To reach reliable and valid results, the questionnaire developed by the researcher was administered to the prospective teachers. Primarily, the questionnaire was piloted to determine the abnormalities and the missing data. Then, the poor and ambiguous items were revised. The improved form of the questionnaire was used as data collection instrument. The collected data was statistically computed through SPSS 15 statistical software program and Cronbach alpha coefficient of the instrument was found out to be .90. To achieve face validity, 3 experts in the field were consulted to determine the appropriateness of the questionnaire. The three point scale (agree, undecided, disagree) questionnaire is intended to reveal prospective teachers' opinions about the research questions of the current study. After the implementation of the questionnaire, the researcher examined the collected data via frequency and percentage distribution.

The analysis of the interviews included descriptive data and they were evaluated by 2 researchers to reach inter-rater reliability. During the process, note-taking technique was used. All the answers of the interviewees were analyzed by organizing the points obtained from the statements of each question. In addition, thematic analysis was employed for the analysis of interviews which are identified by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone"

(Leininger, 1985). So, in this study the researcher combined all the data collected by detailed observation and evaluation during the process by providing an understanding of the phenomena stated.

2. Findings and Results

2.1. Questionnaire Findings

The questionnaire is related to the pedagogical competencies of the prospective teachers determined by the desired outcomes of the program and the frequency, percentage distributions are shown in the following tables.

Table 1: The prospective teachers' perceptions on their competencies in teaching four skills (listening, reading, writing, speaking), grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Pronunciation	31	51	23	39	6	10
Vocabulary	21	36	10	17	29	48
Listening	52	87	5	8	3	5
Speaking	48	80	5	8	7	12
Writing	48	80	7	12	5	8
Reading	50	84	5	8	5	8
Grammar	45	75	10	17	5	8

As can be seen from the frequency percentage distributions of the answers, participating prospective teachers mentioned that they are good at teaching skills whereas they do not feel the same about teaching pronunciation. On the other hand, the majority of the students agreed with the item about teaching grammar that "I can teach any grammar point in the context of language skills" but the item related to teaching of vocabulary has a low rate of agreement.

Table 2: The prospective teachers' perceptions on their competencies in teaching sub-skills, preparing pre-while-post stages of a skill, correcting the errors of the students and teaching language components in integration

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Pre/ While / Post Stages	45	75	6	10	9	15
Sub-skills	24	40	7	12	29	48
Error correction	50	84	5	8	5	8
Integrating	52	87	3	5	5	8

Most of the respondents claim that they can prepare pre, while and post stages of a skill easily whereas they do not think the same for the teaching of sub-skills. Apart from that, the majority of the prospective teachers highlighted that they are aware of how to teach language components in integration and agreed that they can correct the errors of their students that may arouse in a teaching and learning context.

Table 3: The prospective teachers' perceptions on their competencies in developing, adapting and evaluating language materials

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	F	/ %	F	/ %	F	/ %
Develop	35	62	20	30	5	8
Adapt	50	84	5	8	5	8
Evaluate	52	87	5	8	3	5

Most of the surveyors stated that they can develop, adapt and evaluate the language materials but the lowest agreement level is about the development of them as the students generally find designing new materials challenging.

Table 4: The prospective teachers' perceptions on their competencies in dealing with the management problems that may occur in the classroom

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	F	/ %	F	/ %	F	/ %
Management Problems	31	51	6	10	23	39

Only 51% of the students agreed the item about knowing what to do when a management problem occurs in the classroom and 39% of the prospective teachers stated that they are not aware of the strategies to handle the management problems.

Table 5: The prospective teachers' perceptions on their competencies in discriminating the learning differences of adults and young learners

	Agree		Undecided		Disagree	
	F	/ %	F	/ %	F	/ %
Young Learners	56	94	1	1	3	5
Adults	51	86	5	8	4	6

The majority of the participants mentioned that they have the required information about the different learning styles of young learners and adults while there are some students who feel the need of dealing more with the topic.

Table 6: The prospective teachers' perceptions on the benefits of micro-teaching, the overlap or the linkage among the pedagogical courses and their satisfaction about them

	Agree F / %		Undecided F / %		Disagree F / %	
Micro-teaching	55	91	2	4	3	5
Linkage	43	72	11	18	6	10
Overlap	37	62	12	20	11	18
Meet my need	40	66	9	16	11	18
Satisfied	38	64	20	30	2	6

Almost all (91%) of the participants agreed with the following item, "I find micro-teaching beneficial" moreover, 72% of the prospective teachers think there is linkage, nevertheless; 62% of them stated the overlap within the pedagogical courses. Half of the surveyors claimed that they are satisfied with the program and the content of the courses meet their expectations to a great extent.

2.2. Interview Findings

The data collected through interview is evaluated in terms of research questions of the study to provide the required information.

Do the pedagogical courses achieve their objectives in the program?

All the students, except two, mentioned that they learned how to teach grammar in the context of language skills. However, two of the students stated that "They can generally teach grammar points at the beginning level but when it comes to teach more complex points, they get confused." As they stated, they need to learn more about teaching grammar to advanced level students. Four of the students put forth that they really practiced how to design pre, while and post stages of a skill but six of them asserted that the activities they prepared in the stages were completely different according to the instructor's point of view. One added the following "The instructors expect different things for the stages so, what we do or present in the classroom changes regarding from whom we get the course." Generally, they agreed that they were all good at preparing activities but to get high marks what they had done in the classroom differentiate considering the expectations of the instructors. Apart from that, most of the prospective teachers maintained that "We mostly are not focusing on theory. I feel good at practice but not the same for theoretical

aspects of teaching." The data provided reflects that the theoretical part of the program is one of the weakest sides of it and it should be given more attention in the content of the pedagogical courses.

Most of the prospective teachers highlighted that they studied teaching pronunciation when they were second graders so they were really not conscious about what they were doing and they added that they acquired more information about the teaching and learning process of a foreign language during the third year of the program. One of them mentioned the following "For example, we focused on writing and speaking skills during the third year and we also studied error correction of these two skills and the most important thing is micro-teaching which created great opportunities for us to put theory into practice. So, I really feel satisfied with the error correction stages of these two skills but I actually do not remember what to do about pronunciation errors." Most of the students told the similar things about teaching pronunciation. They generally uttered parallel ideas about vocabulary teaching and at last they added that they learned how to teach vocabulary while studying reading. When the researcher asked their opinions about the teaching of sub-skills, most of the students stated that they focused on the sub-skills of listening and reading but they think they do not have enough knowledge about the sub-skills of writing and speaking. All the interviewees said that they had prepared integrated lesson plans and presented them in the classroom environment which they found really beneficial for their future profession. They also pinpointed that they got feedback about each of the presentations they had demonstrated, so this process helped them to develop themselves and become autonomous.

Except one, all the students stated that they discussed several teaching methods in the classroom and in the end they came up with eclecticism. Furthermore, one of them mentioned the following "We generally studied the theoretical aspects of various methodologies and also we had micro teaching to see the examples but we couldn't get the same chance for management problems. Owing to this, the most challenging problem for me is to control the classroom atmosphere". Generally most of the students emphasized the same things about management. Five of the students mentioned that their favorite course was young learners. They enjoyed and learned a lot during the process and three of them added that they currently work in kindergartens and have private sessions with young learners. One of them underlined that "We prepared several activities during the course; it is one of the most difficult times of my life as I was always in need of preparing materials like dolls, puppets….etc. but on the other hand I now realize that I learn much during these sessions and also we get the chance of discriminating the learning differences of adults and young learners." Six of the students mentioned that they learned how to develop and evaluate activities to be used in the classroom while two of the students stated they can easily adapt activities but they cannot design new ones. They added that they studied adaptation of authentic materials during the courses whereas developing new

ones was really difficult for them. Lastly, all of the students spotlighted that they partly know how to assess their students' work and added the following "Micro teaching is very advantageous to understand how to cope with the unexpected things that may happen in the classroom and we also learned much by the help of the feedback. But we do not have much classroom experience; I think it would be better if we had the chance of being in the classroom more."

By the help of interviews, the strengths and weaknesses of the pedagogical courses are determined and it revealed that the students find microteaching the most beneficial, nonetheless; they are not satisfied with the theoretical component of the program.

To what degree does the current program meet the needs and expectations of the prospective teachers?

During the interview, the researcher asked the suggestions of prospective teachers about the program and the results showed that they claim that sometimes the courses may overlap which means the repetition of the same things over and over again and they verbalized their demand for more opportunities to be in actual classroom environment.

As a last step of the interview, the researcher asked whether the current program meets the needs and expectations of the prospective teachers and they replied that they are generally satisfied with the pedagogical courses in their department but somehow they find the third year more fruitful because they do not feel competent enough about the content of pedagogical courses they had during the second year of their education. They also stated that they want to put theory into practice in the real setting which is one of the inefficient points of the program according to the interviewees.

Conclusion

As part of teaching and learning process, evaluation is turning into a center of increasing demand in developing the quality of education (Richards, 2001). Evaluation is providing evidence about the curriculum in terms of process, designing and implementing (Skilbeck & Reynolds, 2002 and Richards, 2001). Brown (1995) defines evaluation as the systematic collection and analysis of the required information to enhance the development of the program and evaluate its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as participants' attitudes within a context of particular institutions involved. More to the point, summative evaluation is a technique to assess the worth of a program at the end of the courses followed. As Widdowson (1983) points out, outcomes are pedagogic intentions to be reached within the period of a specific course and they can be evaluated by some assessment tools at the end and additionally when the student learning goals are achieved, the program developed means successful. In the current study, the aim is to make out whether the pedagogical courses in ELT departments achieve the intended outcomes or not.

The above findings of this study lead to some suggestions for the improvement of the program of pedagogical courses at the department where this study was conducted. In light of the data collected, it seems necessary to flash on the following items in completion of this research process:

1. Students think that they can prepare pre, while and post stages of the skills and overwhelmingly support the view that they are adequate to teach skills in a language classroom. Thus, within the coverage of pedagogical courses, prospective teachers learn how, when and why to teach skills deeply but they also underline the fact that they have problems about the teaching of sub-skills. Based on the data collected, it should be stressed that the pedagogical courses in the new program should also focus on how to teach sub-skills in a language classroom.

2. The majority of the prospective teachers believe that they can teach grammar in integration. So the data collected reflect that the participants feel competent in teaching grammar. Still, it should be accentuated that the students are in need of making practice about more challenging grammar topics. Hence, advanced level grammar teaching should also be excessively included in the program.

3. The findings reveal that the prospective teachers are not satisfied with the second year program of their education so they feel that they will not be able to make prolifically use of what they learn in these courses in their teaching contexts. Owing to this, the departments' program should be reconsidered for the applicability of the contents of the pedagogical courses for second graders.

4. The theoretical and practical parts of the courses should be kept in balance but the results of this study highlight that the practice highly overweighs the theory, which is particularly weak point of the program. As Ur mentions "a teacher education program should only be neither theory (received knowledge) nor practical (experiential knowledge) and the components of a teacher education program reflect the harmony of both knowledge and application" (cited in Coşkun & Daloğlu, 2010, p.36).

5. The participants of the study expressed that they are not good at dealing with the management problems that may arise in a learning-teaching context so the prospective teachers articulated the need for new courses to improve their managerial competence.

6. The interview findings verify the questionnaire results that some courses intersect when their contents are concerned. In order to avoid such a situation, the teachers should be in touch with each other while designing the course contents. Yet, most of the prospective teachers address the linkage within the pedagogical courses which is one of the good sides of the program followed and it should be supported and reinforced throughout the implementation of the program.

7. Furthermore, the data obtained reflect that the students find the contents of young learners' courses very constructive because the content and the practices covered in the

course enable the prospective teachers not only develop and adapt a variety of material but also to distinguish the learning differences of young learners from those of the adults.

8. One of the major findings of the study is about the materials development. The majority of the students voiced that they can adapt and evaluate materials but they have difficulties in developing materials. Since the students should be creative and use their cognitive skills while designing new materials, they find it more challenging. In the new program, the students are in need of more access in developing materials since it is one of the major characteristics of a good teacher.

9. The participants of the interview put into words that they learn the most significant issues regarding teaching but the application process varies when the instructors are taken into consideration because it is stated that lecturers generally expect different things within the stages of a lesson plan which creates a dilemma among the prospective teachers.

10. Almost all of the students expressed that they make use of micro-teaching and they said they get the chance of putting theory into practice by means of presentations. It also helps the learners to become self-dependent. The last but not the least important item mentioned by the prospective teachers is the feedback given by the instructors. They said that they develop their teaching skills during the process as they get feedback both from their peers and lecturers for any of the stages they had demonstrated.

To sum up, with the help of the data collected via document analysis, interview and questionnaire findings, the summative evaluation of the pedagogical courses in ELT departments has been maintained. In the light of the data collected, the content of pedagogical courses that second graders follow should be reconstructed with an emphasis of experiential knowledge about the management strategies. The results also reveal that the prospective teachers find micro-teaching and feedback sessions very supportive. They make use of them while teaching skills or grammar in context whereas they do not find the theoretical part of the program sufficient so with completion of this study, some additions and adaptations can be done regarding the results obtained.

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