# Reconstruction of Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Conceptual Understandings About SLA and Language Pedagogy Through Experiential Tasks

İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Dil Edinimi ve Dil Öğretimine İlişkin Kavramsal Anlayışlarının Deneyimsel Etkinliklerle Yeniden Yapılanması

Sibel SÖĞÜT[1]   iD

[1] Sinop University, Education Faculty, Foreing Language Education, English Language Teaching, Sinop, Turkey
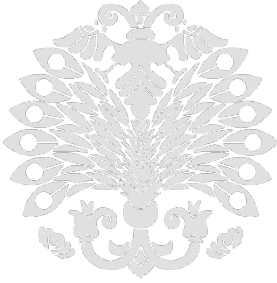
ABSTRACT

The course on Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which is a component of language teacher education programs, includes consciousness-raising and experiential activities that prepare pre-service teachers for the profession. Pre-service English teachers need to have a well-grounded understanding of how SLA relates to language teaching to comprehend how SLA theories contribute to their language teaching processes. To address this need, this study examined the effects of an SLA course on pre-service teachers' conceptual changes and beliefs regarding language pedagogy. To identify the extent of their conceptual changes and awareness, a language-learning autobiography project was used to decode multifaceted processes and elements of their first and second language acquisition. Pre-service teachers were asked to describe their language acquisition processes before taking the SLA course and then to revise their autobiographies in line with the theories and concepts covered in the SLA course. Content analysis was used to compare the two versions gathered from 54 pre-service teachers, and emerging themes and concepts in both forms were identified. The overall findings indicate that their initial versions are limited to basic linguistic descriptions, whereas they have gained a rich repertoire of grounds and connections and an understanding of the relevance of SLA to language pedagogy. Relatedly, instructional implications were suggested to facilitate their professional stance and understanding of the relationship between SLA and language pedagogy.

Keywords: Language acquisition, experiential learning, pre-service English language teachers, conceptual changes

ÖZ

Dil öğretmeni yetiştirme programlarının bir bileşeni olan İkinci Dil Edinimi dersi, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının mesleki beceri ve yeterliliklerini artıran bilinçlendirmeyi ve deneyimsel etkinlikleri içermektedir. Dil edinim kuramlarının dil öğretim süreçlerine nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu anlamak için dil ediniminin dil öğretimiyle bağlantısına dair sağlam temelli bir anlayışa sahip olmaları da önem taşımaktadır. Bu çalışma bu ihtiyaca cevap vermek için dil edinimi dersinin öğretmen adaylarının dil öğretimine ilişkin kavramsal değişimleri ve inançları üzerindeki etkilerini incelemiştir. Kavramsal değişimlerinin ve farkındalıklarının kapsamını belirlemek için, birinci ve ikinci dil edinimlerinin çok yönlü süreçlerini ve öğelerini çözmek için bir dil öğrenme otobiyografi projesi kullanılmıştır. Öğretmen adaylarından dil edinim kuramları dersini almadan önce kendi dil edinim süreçlerini anlatmaları ve daha sonra dil edinimi dersinde işlenen teori ve kavramlar doğrultusunda otobiyografilerini gözden geçirmeleri istenmiştir. 54 öğretmen adayından toplanan bu iki versiyonun karşılaştırılmasında içerik analizi kullanılmış ve her iki metinde ortaya çıkan temalar ve kavramlar belirlenmiştir. Çalışma sonucunda, ilk versiyonların temel dilbilimsel açıklamalarla sınırlı olduğunu, gözden geçirilmiş metinlerde ise dil edinimi ve öğretimine dair bağlantıların ve öğretmen adaylarının dil edinim kuramlarının

kendi dil öğrenme yaşantıları ve dil öğretimine ilişkin bağlantılarla ayrıntılandığı saptanmıştır. Sonuçlar ışığında İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının dil edinimi ve öğretimine yönelik ilişkileri kavramsallaştırmalarına yönelik öğretimsel öneriler paylaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dil edinimi, deneyimsel etkinlikler, İngilizce öğretmen adayları, kavramsal anlayışlar

Introduction

Experiential and Reflective Learning Tasks in English Language Teacher Education

Pre-service English language teachers' beliefs, conceptual understandings, knowledge, and practice are at the center of teacher training programs. Pre-service English language teachers need to cultivate optimistic mindsets and a strong dedication towards teaching, their subject matter, and their students, as well as their perspectives regarding the profession (Firestone & Pennell, 1993; Pennington, 1992). Most recent studies in the literature have focused on a fundamental inquiry regarding the degree to which teacher training programs have an impact on bringing about profound cognitive modifications in pre-service teachers (Cheng et al., 2009) and their conceptual understandings of language acquisition and learning. Several studies have also documented the impact of teacher training programs on pre-service teachers' belief systems and mindsets (Borg, 2011; Clark-Goff & Eslami, 2016; Kızıltan, 2011; Peter et al., 2012).

Teacher education programs should offer educational inquiry which "will require clear conceptualizations, careful examination of key assumptions, consistent understandings and adherence to precise meanings, and proper assessment and investigation of specific belief constructs" (Pajares, 1992, p. 307). To address these needs, pre-service teacher education programs offer a variety of courses. Language acquisition course is one of these courses delivered to provide pre-service teachers with the explication of the first and second language acquisition theories. Teacher trainers provide pre-service teachers with language acquisition processes and elucidate potential challenges that learners may encounter in their classes (Markham et al., 2017). As part of this course, teachers can gain advantages by reflecting on their personal experience of acquiring a new language (Ellis, 2009).

Previous studies have suggested that teacher training in language education could promote pre-service teachers' perspectives and mindsets to reflect on their past experiences as language learners and modify or validate their convictions regarding language acquisition (Brown &

McGannon, 1998; Peacock, 2001). The findings of previous research suggest that pre-service teachers' beliefs undergo a slow and occasionally noteworthy evolution throughout the teacher training program, while their participation in teaching activities appears to have a limited effect on the progression of their beliefs (Mattheoudakis, 2007). To challenge the aforementioned limitations, experiential learning can help teacher candidates develop the skills and knowledge needed to become effective language teachers (Gao, 2015; Richards & Farrell, 2005). Experiential learning pertains to "the ideals of active and reflective learning, building on previous learning experiences and requiring the personal involvement of the learner" (Knutson, 2003, p. 53).

Experiential learning tasks and reflective activities in English language teacher training programs promote a change in pre-service teachers' beliefs towards their profession (Angelova, 2005; Bartels, 2005; Busch, 2010; Mattheoudakis, 2007). Research suggests that pre-service teachers' pre-existing beliefs are flexible and can undergo development (Cabaroğlu & Roberts, 2000). Studies show that a course structure that facilitates pre-service teachers' self-regulated learning promotes positive growth in their beliefs by providing an early awareness of pre-existing beliefs which contribute to subsequent development (Cabaroğlu & Roberts, 2000). Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning defines the learning process as a cycle that involves immediate experience, reflection, abstract conceptualization, and action (Kohonen et al., 2001, p. 27). According to Kolb (1984), abstract conceptualization takes the experience to a higher level and involves the creation and use of theoretical models and concepts (p. 43). Learners reflect on their experiences through guided observation and questioning, leading to further experimentation and practical learning stages. Overall, this model emphasizes the cyclic nature of the learning process, which involves learners reflecting on their experiences through guided observation and questioning to lead to further practical learning.

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of experiential learning tasks and reflective activities in teacher education programs. One line of research shows that pre-service teachers' beliefs change significantly (Macdonald et al., 2001; Mattheoudakis, 2007) yielding the internalization of SLA concepts through reflective and experiential learning

(Thompson & Erdil-Moody, 2015). Another line of research findings suggests that these beliefs do not change significantly (Peacock, 2001). To shed light on this issue, the effects of a variety of courses on the pre-service teachers' beliefs and assumptions were examined in the literature. For example, Nazari et al. (2022) found that a teacher education course centered on grammar instruction positively influenced in-service teachers' grammar beliefs and practices. In a recent study, Eslami and Fatahi (2019) explored project-based learning as an experiential learning task in an English language teacher education program in Iran, noting that it helped pre-service teachers develop their lesson planning, classroom management, and assessment skills. In a research article, Olson and Jimenez-Silva (2008) investigated how pre-service teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards English language learners changed after they took required ESL endorsement courses. The researchers observed that the ESL courses had a beneficial impact on the pre-service teachers' self-assurance and fundamental ideological beliefs about teaching ELLs. In a twelve-week SLA course, MacDonald et al. (2001) conducted a similar study. Also, they noted that pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about English language learning were modified after taking second language acquisition courses. In contrast, no significant changes were observed in the control group who did not take the course. Previous research delved into the integration of reflective journals into the graduate-level SLA course content and documented a deeper understanding of SLA concepts and co-construction of knowledge about their language teaching and learning (Thompson & Erdil-Moody, 2015). In the Turkish context, pre-service teachers expressed positive attitudes about the significance of the SLA course on their future language teaching, nevertheless, they noted that their existing conceptual schemata were not sufficient for an SLA course (Kızıltan, 2011).

Overall, these studies suggest that experiential learning tasks and reflective activities can provide promising contributions to enrich pre-service English language teachers' critical understanding of the relationship between language acquisition theories and language pedagogy in teacher education programs. Nevertheless, further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of different types of experiential learning tasks and to identify potential affordances for specific teaching contexts and groups of pre-service teachers. Different from the existing research, this study investigates a process-oriented co-construction and reconceptualization of SLA and language pedagogy by pre-service English language teachers through their engagement with experiential tasks.

Before in-service training experiences, teacher education programs are required to equip pre-service teachers with opportunities to explore and understand significant social and cultural issues that greatly influence educational practices within specific contexts (Gao, 2015). This study was motivated by a need to raise questions about pre-service language teachers' language acquisition experiences and the use of experiential learning tasks to establish grounds and connections between language acquisition theories and future language teaching practice(s). The rationale behind carrying out this study is that language teacher education programs need to incorporate exercises for pre-service teachers to express their existing views on teaching and learning, as suggested by Farrell (2006). In light of this rationale, this study aimed to examine pre-service EFL teachers' initial conceptual understandings of SLA and language pedagogy and their reconstruction of these concepts through their engagements with experiential tasks provided as part of the Language Acquisition Course. Accordingly, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What are a group of pre-service EFL teachers' initially held conceptual understandings about SLA and language pedagogy?
2. How do their stances and understandings evolve through their engagements with experiential tasks provided as part of the Language Acquisition Course?
3. In the light of elicited concepts, how do these participants perceive the impacts of the Language Acquisition Course on their future language teaching?

Methods

Research Design
A phenomenological approach was adopted to reveal and present a composite description of the pre-service English language teachers' language acquisition experiences. A data-driven annotation and coding of the whole autobiographies were used for the exploration of the pre-service EFL teachers' conceptual understandings of SLA and language pedagogy. Based on the Transcendental Phenomenology "phenomenology seeks meanings from appearances and arrives at essences through intuition and reflection on conscious acts of experience, leading to ideas, concepts, judgments, and understandings" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 52). In light of this approach, the pre-service language teachers' first and second language acquisition processes were examined through inductive analysis and intertwining textural and structural descriptions of their experiences.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted as part of the Language Acquisition Course, which was delivered to 62 pre-service English language teachers enrolled in the second-year English Language Teaching Department. Of the 62 pre-service teachers who began filling out their language autobiography projects, 54 completed both the initial and revised versions. Before this course, the participants had taken a prerequisite introductory linguistics course and were familiar with basic linguistics concepts. The course introduced participants to first and second-language acquisition theories and the relevant perspectives regarding the underlying arguments. Specifically, the participants were introduced to the field of second language acquisition (SLA) by investigating language acquisition in general, explicating the theories of SLA, and focusing on the factors that contribute to SLA. Throughout the course, scenarios were provided to students, and they were expected to relate the cases to language acquisition theories. Classroom discussions and group work were conducted on Padlet to elicit their understanding of language acquisition theories and their underlying positions. Additionally, a variety of scenarios and example cases regarding various features of learners' interlanguage were used to make the theoretical concepts more concrete and to facilitate the pre-service language teachers' conceptual schemata.

Data Collection and Analysis

For data collection, Initial and Revised Language Learning Autobiography Projects were used. These projects were developed by Dr. Drew S. Fagan from the University of Maryland and they were used with the consent of the researcher through personal contact.

Table 1.

Task Descriptions of Initial and Revised Language Learning Autobiography Projects

Initial Language Learning Autobiography Project	Revised Language Learning Autobiography Project
● A brief introduction of what you think it means to be a language learner	● Specific theories that can be attributed to how you acquired the language(s).
● The languages other than your first language you have learned (formally and informally)	● The incorporation of different concepts learned throughout the course that can be attributed to helping and/or hindering you learning the language(s).
● The conditions under which you have learned these languages	
● Some consideration of what factors you feel have most helped or hindered your learning of those languages beyond just how you were taught (provide specific examples).	● Revised Conclusion: change the conclusion to focus on how your understanding of your own learning of languages has evolved over this course and how that will specifically impact your future teaching of language learners.
● A conclusion describing how you think your language learning experiences have affected your perceptions of how you think languages other than the first language are acquired.	

The task description for the Initial Language Learning Autobiography Project was shared with the participants in the first week of the course to elicit in-depth information about their language acquisition processes. These autobiographies consist of a total of 47,079 words. Upon the completion of the course and administration of the final exams, the task description for the Revised Language Learning Autobiography Project was shared with the participants. They were expected to incorporate language acquisition concepts and theories covered throughout the semester into their previously formed reflections. These autobiographies consist of a total of 58,206 words. After the collection of autobiographies, an initial corpus analysis of the initial and revised language learning autobiography projects were carried out through the use of AntConc 3.5.9 to reveal an overall picture of repetitive and frequent multi-word units and frequent clusters. A sample visualization of four-word clusters is presented in *Figure 1*.

	Type	Rank	Freq
	N-Gram Types 43865 **N-Gram Tokens** 47079 **Page**		
1	being a language learner	1	32
2	my language learning process	1	32
3	a language learner means	3	23
4	I started to learn	4	21
5	I can say that	5	18
6	I was able to	5	18
7	learning a new language	5	18
8	On the other hand	8	17
9	a language learner is	8	17
10	Being a language learner	10	16
11	I was exposed to	10	16
12	when I was in	10	16
13	to learn a language	13	15
14	I tried to learn	14	14
15	the language learning process	14	14

Initial language learning autobiography projects

	Type	Rank	Freq
	N-Gram Types 54475 **N-Gram Tokens** 58206 **Page Size**		
1	my language learning process	1	62
2	with the help of	2	32
3	I was able to	3	28
4	I was exposed to	4	26
5	in my language learning	5	24
6	On the other hand	6	23
7	I can say that	7	20
8	I started to learn	7	20
9	Krashen s Monitor Model	9	17
10	language learning process I	9	17
11	to learn a language	9	17
12	I didn t know	12	15
13	the language learning process	12	15
14	to learn the language	12	15
15	second language learning process	15	14

Revised language learning autobiography projects

Figure 1.
Four-word Occurrences in the Initial and Revised Language Learning Autobiography Projects

Following this step, an open-coding process was conducted using the prior codes that were derived from the review of literature on second language acquisition and learning theories. The data were then reduced using Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological reduction method, which involved bracketing the data and equalizing the value of each statement through horizontalization. The data was then read, re-read, analyzed, and coded to cluster them into themes. These themes were given a thematic label and represented the core themes of the experience, according to Moustakas (1994). Additional codes were added subsequently to the emerging themes in the thematic analysis and overall findings along with examples for each emerging theme and concept were presented. A sample qualitative data analysis is provided in *Figure 2*.

For the validity and reliability of the data analysis, the strategies suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018), Denzin (2017), and Moustakas (1994) were employed. Applying the principles and steps of the phenomenological method and presenting a comprehensive overview of relevant literature was the first set of strategies. The documentation of confirming and disconfirming evidence in the data through reflective self-awareness was enabled. Individual coding and peer debriefing were used to enable an increasing agreement across the codes and themes revealed from the data analysis.

The study adhered to the guidelines recommended by the American Psychological Association (APA), including their principles and code of conduct. Additionally, ethics committee approval was obtained from Sinop University Human Research Ethics Committee (Date: 17.11.2022, Number: 2022/190-218). Written informed consent forms were obtained from the participants. To safeguard confidentiality, the survey responses and scenario cases were kept anonymous to prevent any collection of identifying information related to the respondents.
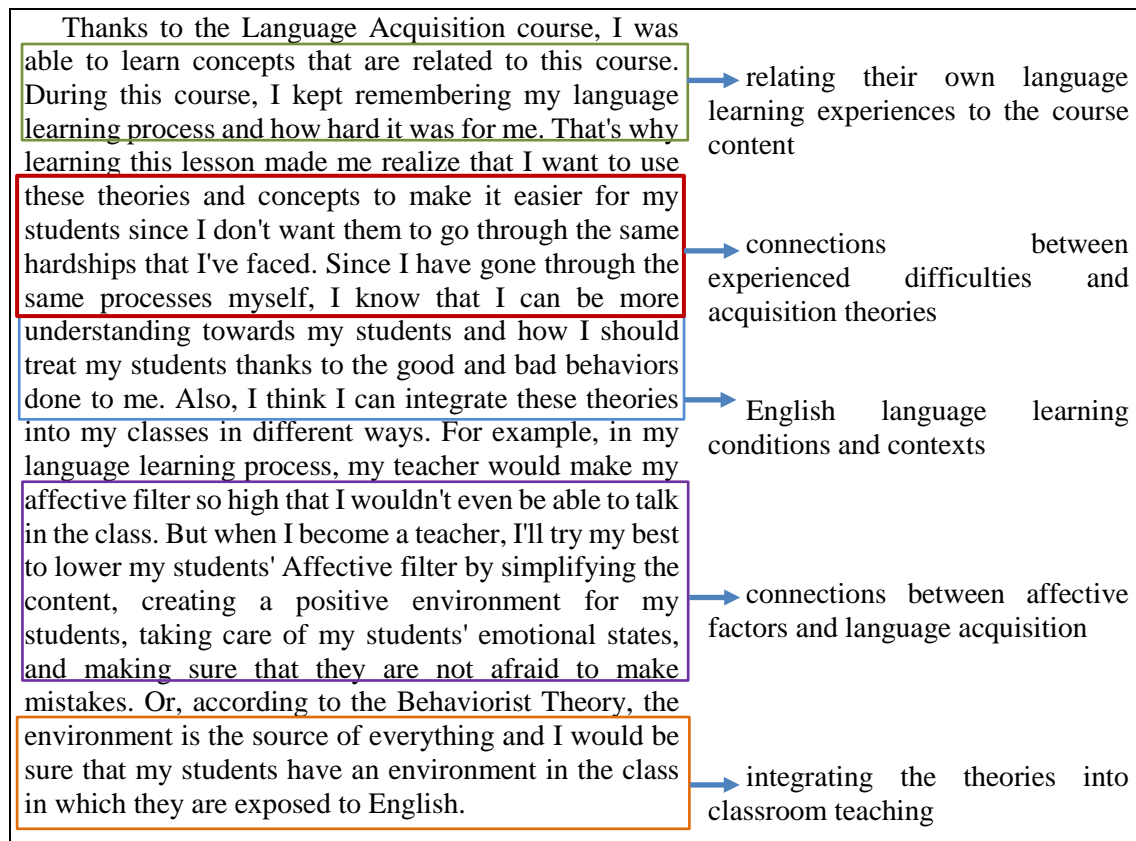
Thanks to the Language Acquisition course, I was able to learn concepts that are related to this course. During this course, I kept remembering my language learning process and how hard it was for me. That's why learning this lesson made me realize that I want to use these theories and concepts to make it easier for my students since I don't want them to go through the same hardships that I've faced. Since I have gone through the same processes myself, I know that I can be more understanding towards my students and how I should treat my students thanks to the good and bad behaviors done to me. Also, I think I can integrate these theories into my classes in different ways. For example, in my language learning process, my teacher would make my affective filter so high that I wouldn't even be able to talk in the class. But when I become a teacher, I'll try my best to lower my students' Affective filter by simplifying the content, creating a positive environment for my students, taking care of my students' emotional states, and making sure that they are not afraid to make mistakes. Or, according to the Behaviorist Theory, the environment is the source of everything and I would be sure that my students have an environment in the class in which they are exposed to English.

→ relating their own language learning experiences to the course content

→ connections between experienced difficulties and acquisition theories

→ English language learning conditions and contexts

→ connections between affective factors and language acquisition

→ integrating the theories into classroom teaching

Figure 2.
Sample Coding in the Qualitative Data Analysis

Results

The analysis of the elicited data revealed three emerging themes in their language learning autobiographies: (a) initial conceptualization of SLA and language pedagogy which are centered on characteristics of a language learner, learning conditions, and contexts, factors hindering and facilitating English language learning, (b) the evolution of their stances and understandings through experiential learning tasks, (c) perceived impacts of the language acquisition course on their future language pedagogy. Based on these themes, the participants' references to specific first/second language acquisition theories, incorporation of different concepts into their descriptions, conceptual changes in their understanding of learning languages, and elaborations regarding the impact on future teaching of language learners were presented concerning the emerging themes in the revised forms of their autobiographies.

Pre-Service English Language Teachers' Initial Conceptualization of SLA and Language Pedagogy

Considering the first research question, the pre-service teachers shared perspectives regarding the characteristics of a language learner, language learning contexts, and factors hindering and facilitating English language learning in their initial conceptualization of second language acquisition and language pedagogy.

First, the pre-service teachers elaborated on the features of a language learner and attributed adjectives such as difficult, enjoyable, thrilling, exciting, challenging, dynamic, confident, and curious to being a language learner. Regarding their detailed descriptions, personality traits, qualifications, and learning strategies were significant responses emerging from the data. Their discourse was situated around personal traits with a reference to self-confidence, empathy, motivation, ambition, enthusiasm, perseverance, curiosity, interest in learning, and ongoing personal development. These characteristics are exemplified in the following statement:

> (1) Learning another language is different in many ways such as conscious effort, which is not in native language learning, to learn language from L1 acquisition. Thus, a language learner has necessary motivation, ambition, enthusiasm, and determination to acquire the target language (P41).

The pre-service teachers highlighted that cultural awareness is a prominent feature of being a language learner. They referred to willingness to learn/discover/explore other

cultures, being a citizen of the world, willingness to get in contact with different people, and not having stereotypical views about different cultures.

> (2) Being a language learner means acquiring new cultural background knowledge, vocabulary, and structural characteristics of the target language (P37).
> (3) Being a language learner is a part time abstract traveler. When you learn a language, you are not only acquiring the language that they speak but also you learn language's culture (P43).

Another recurrent theme in the autobiographies was a sense amongst participants that awareness of learning strategies is one of the language learner characteristics. These were overcoming barriers, having specific goals and purposes, having metalinguistic awareness, seeing and adopting new perspectives, and regulating their learning processes. These characteristics are echoed in the following extracts of the participants:

> (4) I think interacting with the target language not just necessitates learning its grammar rules or vocabularies but exposing the target language by means of different techniques such as imitation, observation, memorizing, practicing etc. (P21).

Second, the pre-service teachers highlighted their English language learning conditions and contexts. The findings unfolded three important and yet polarized findings: (a) formal and informal language learning environments, (b) techniques, tools, and materials used in language education, (c) ways of exposure to different languages. Several pre-service teachers referred to formal environments, such as intensive language education in preparation classes, kindergartens, and workplace settings, and to informal environments, such as playgrounds, interaction with friends and family members, and computer games. These references to both formal and informal learning contexts were examined to better understand their impact on language learning outcomes.

> (5) I have learned Arabic and English languages besides my mother tongue. And I have learned the Arabic language in an informal way by family and environment. This learning process took place daily life experience. While the learning Arabic, I was not trained by any professional, course or trainer. Learning had happened uncontrollably, casual, unplanned. Moreover, I did not receive any formal training for second language and I have spontaneously learned second language by living among speakers of language and interacting with them (P.11).

As for the techniques, tools, and materials, the pre-service teachers noted both challenges and effectiveness of language learning activities. They highlighted the insufficient number of teachers, classrooms, and tools, which can result

in a decreasing interest in language learning. Traditional English classes with a focus on memorizing words, explicit presentation of grammar structures, reading several texts, and using the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) were reported to be prevalent stumbling blocks in the language learning processes. Additionally, they underlined the tools and materials used in language education with a particular emphasis on the effectiveness of activities such as drama and discussion, as well as self-paced and designed learning conditions, including the use of technological tools such as Duo lingo. They also stressed the effectiveness of songs, movies, TV series, books, multimedia tools, and computer games like Minecraft, and articles, short stories, and blogs, their use of animes to learn Japanese words and videos, which are exemplified in the following extract:

> (6) For example, while games assisted me in acquiring new vocabulary, viewing videos assisted me in understanding how to construct sentences. I could construct basic sentences despite having little knowledge of the grammatical principles essential for forming sentences, such as what is subject, verb, and object, since I was exposed to many instances while watching films and videos (P2).
> (7) I benefitted from foreign sources that contribute to informal language learning-movies, TV series, music, books, foreign magazines, twitter and Instagram pages, foreign blogs, YouTube channels-contributes to the student's language learning outside of school (P52).

Further, they pinpointed ways of exposure to different languages by relating them to formal and informal learning environments. They reported having exposure to German, French, and Russian in formal settings, as well as exposure to Spanish, Korean, Japanese, Arabic, and Greek in informal contexts, which is echoed in the following extract:

> (8) My first foreign language that I have learnt is Korean. I have been listening to K-pop since I was 8. At first, I was analysing and trying to imitate the Korean words, then I started to watch K-dramas in subtitled version. By this way, I have started to learn what they were saying and have a familiarity to their pronunciation. I have also joined a language community through KakaoTalk. I have learnt how to write Korean through their help (P19).

Finally, the pre-service teachers established grounds and connections among factors that hinder and facilitate English language learning. The factors hindering language learning are situated around the elements related to geographic location (i.e. living in a rural area), physical features of the classroom (i.e. language teaching in crowded classrooms), affective factors, L1 interference, inadequate and ineffective tools and materials, and English language teachers. The participants noted the role of affective factors regarding feeling insecure in speaking, demotivation,

anxiety, and fear of making mistakes. They also reflected on differences between their L1 and L2 by referring to different sentence structures, grammar rules, and pronunciation patterns between Turkish and English. Loaded assignments, the use of memorization, and no exposure to English outside the class were other reported overwhelming factors in English language learning processes. The participants explained these elements by stating:

(9) I was not aware when I was learning the language but I realized it later; there was a barrier that prevented me from acquiring language even though there was an appropriate input. I could not acquire the language because of emotions such as anxiety, negative attitudes, fear of the unknown, etc. (P31).

(10) I remember while performing dialogues, I would always think in Turkish, and it would cause me to make a negative transfer…For example, I would create sentences with the Turkish word order and transfer them into English, which caused me to make mistakes since the word order of these two languages is not transferable (P5).

Acknowledging these factors, the pre-service teachers pointed out that tolerance to mistakes, exposure to language, access to technology, affective factors, teacher support and positive attitudes, and rich English repertoire were factors facilitating language learning. More specifically, teachers with strong teaching skills, teacher feedback, motivation, and encouragement provided by the teacher, and their use of technological tools such as YouTube videos and games were reported to impact language learning positively. In addition, the use of authentic materials, using the language in real-life situations, recognizing similarities between/among languages, imitation, practice, and rich lexical knowledge were facilitating elements of language learning processes, which were highlighted in the example extracts below:

(11) I constantly practice and try to analyze my own speech. My learning environment was sufficient thanks to feeling relaxed, material support, being able to take effective feedback, guided discovery in the class, interaction and group work (P14).

The role of practice and memorization in language learning and relevant activities were reported to be critical for building fluency and developing essential language skills by the participants. Additionally, lifelong learning was considered to be essential for continued language acquisition, and the support of family and friends could play a crucial role in maintaining motivation and engagement in the learning process. In line with the aforementioned benefits, the pre-service teachers reflected on the use of a variety of activities and tools by stating:

(12) Activities such as theater performances, singing and word memorization competitions not only allowed us to have fun and loved the language, but also taught us the language in the best way possible (P36).

(13) Thanks to the internet, I was able to play online games. These games were highly competitive and played with teams like 5v5 or 3v3. Beyond the individual performance, team communication and harmony were critical. That made me start trying to speak and give orders to my teammates with broken English. In the moment of adrenaline and excitement of the games, I talked with zero anxiety about making mistakes (P33).

The essential key factors to successful language learning were also prevalent stressed elements in the participants' autobiographies. One of the key factors that influence language learning was an understanding of the culture and history of the target language which was considered to be crucial for developing a deep understanding of the language and its use in real-life situations. Positive language learning experiences were also essential for successful language acquisition as they were reported to lead to positive perceptions of the language, which in turn could increase motivation and the willingness to learn other foreign languages. Exposure to other language skills, beyond grammar and vocabulary, was also critical for developing a well-rounded set of language skills. Avoiding the cultivation of stereotypes was considered to be another essential element for successful language learning. The pre-service teachers noted that understanding and accepting other cultures and beliefs without judgment was important for developing a deep appreciation of the language and its cultural context as stated by the participants below:

(14) I studied academic listening by focusing on the larger frame of vocabulary with subject-specific expressions. As another example, I had an academic reading class that focused on aspects like vocabulary, content, and structural knowledge…our reading passages had a social and cultural context (P6).

(15) The new lexical chunks and frequent usages that I encountered many times build and shape my L2 variation. However, I had my head in the clouds in terms of discourse since I was exposed to informal and simplified speaking mostly (P. 17).

Pre-service Teachers' Evolving Stances and Understandings through Engagements with Experiential Tasks

The second research question sought to document the evolution of stances and understandings throughout engagements with experiential learning tasks. The pre-service English Language Teachers established grounds and

connections between their prior language learning experiences and SLA concepts and theories. Different from their initially held conceptualizations, the pre-service teachers attributed key concepts to the role of mediation, scaffolding, object regulation, and self-regulation in their revised language learning autobiography projects. A newly arising idea they presented in their revised language learning autobiography project was their adoption of the term interlanguage to describe their evolving L2 system. These concepts can be facilitated by course instructors, teachers, family members, classmates, movies with subtitles, online tools, course materials, computer games, and feedback. Additionally, affective factors such as integrative and instrumental motivation, acculturation opportunities, communication with foreign friends, belonging to the language community, and passing classes were underscored as the influential elements of language acquisition in their experiential learning tasks. The example below illustrates one of the learners' connections among the concepts of language acquisition and pedagogy:

> (1) …prominent theories in the field of education and especially in the field of language acquisition are not independent of my learning process. Although I cannot observe the effects of each theory in my process, the main highlights and their bullet points are active in my first and second language learning process… (P22)

As for the relevant theories and their underlying principles, the pre-service teachers mostly referred to parameter setting as an aspect that can affect language acquisition. According to their reports, the behaviorist perspective was emphasized because of the role of reinforcement and conditioning in learning. U-shaped development was also noted while referring to the dynamic nature of their language-learning processes. They were also found to form a connection among exposure to the target language, L1 transfer, macrosocial factors, and interaction due to their significant role in language acquisition. One of the emerging concepts was their emphasis on the Innatist perspective which they highlighted as part of the significance of comprehensible input, learning English word order. The impacts of the acquisition of sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence were also elaborated in their revised language learning autobiographies. Their stances were found to center on the significance of exposure to the target language through a variety of ways, which they considered as a crucial component of successful language learning. They linked exposure to lexical chunks and frequent usages due to their role in shaping their L2 variation. In these reports, they expressed an increased awareness regarding L1 and L1 acquisition, cognitive, affective, and social factors underlying the language acquisition procedures.

Perceptions about the Impacts of the Language Acquisition Course on Their Future Language Teaching

Regarding the third research question, which sought to document the perceptions regarding the impacts of the Language Acquisition Course on their future language teaching, pre-service teachers drew attention to the complementary impacts of course topics and their personal language learning experiences on their future language teaching. The subjects that had the greatest impact on their beliefs were the ones that they deemed most applicable to their future teaching. These areas of focus included the duration required to acquire a language, the significance of cultural understanding, the role of grammar and vocabulary, the identification and correction of mistakes, and learning methods. Furthermore, they recognized the multifaceted and multi-layered nature of language acquisition. The participants also reported an increased awareness about the role of exposure to input, collaborative learning, the role of environment, mediation, feedback, acquisition order, affective factors, age of acquisition, interaction, L1 background among others. One of the participants elucidated this specific point:

> (1) In conclusion, my understanding of my own language learning has evolved over this course in a positive way. Thanks to this course, I've realized for the first time what I was going through while learning English. Before I take this course, I used to think that the second language was only learned through lessons at school, but after this course, I've found out that there are actually multiple different ways to learn a second language, and each person can learn it differently. (P49).

Regarding the impact of the SLA course on their perspectives and approaches to their future classroom instructions, the participants underscored their increased cognizance of the dynamics of classroom atmosphere and variables about teachers, students, and their individual differences. They reported that they gained familiarity with the language through practice, which in turn informed their understanding of the language learning process. Through the course, they emphasized their awareness of the sources of errors that arise in the classroom, enabling them to provide constructive feedback to students. Additionally, the importance of creating a positive classroom environment that encourages interaction, exploring cultural nuances, and engagement in negotiation was underscored ways of promoting effective language learning as stated by one of the participants:

> (2) While teaching grammatical structures, I will include games, role-plays, and dramas to lower their affective filter to make their comprehensible input more meaningful by creating a positive classroom environment (P7).

They also noted gaining insights into the nature and features of interlanguage, which were reported to help them better understand their students' individual learning processes and tailor their language pedagogy approach accordingly.

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The main goal of this study was to decipher the pre-service English language teachers' perspectives on the characteristics of a language learner, their English language learning conditions and contexts, factors hindering and facilitating language learning, and the effect of language learning experiences on the second language acquisition process through experiential learning tasks, which were initial and revised language learning autobiography projects.

Based on the thematic analyses of these projects, the pre-service teachers provided detailed insights into how their participation in the language acquisition course affected their teaching approach towards language learners and the relationship between language acquisition and pedagogy. They elaborated on the characteristics of a language learner and attributed adjectives such as difficult, enjoyable, thrilling, exciting, challenging, dynamic, confident, and curious to being a language learner. The participants highlighted the importance of personal traits, cultural awareness, and learning strategies in the language learning processes. They also identified formal and informal learning contexts, techniques, tools, and materials used in language education, and ways of exposure to different languages. Their explanations in the autobiographies revealed that being a language learner requires motivation, self-confidence, empathy, ambition, perseverance, curiosity, and interest in ongoing personal development. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of cultural awareness and the ability to use effective learning strategies. Throughout the procedure, they put forth evolving

In these reports, pre-service teachers shared gaining an increased awareness regarding L1 and L1 acquisition, and cognitive, affective, and social factors underlying the language acquisition procedures. They specifically discussed their English language learning conditions and contexts, including formal and informal environments, techniques, tools, and materials used in language education, and ways of exposure to different languages. They noted both the challenges and effectiveness of language learning activities, including traditional English classes, multimedia tools, computer games, and exposure to different languages in formal and informal settings. Similar to these findings, previous research suggested that teachers' beliefs about

language instruction could change as they integrate what they have learned in the SLA course, drawing from their current teaching practices and personal experiences with language learning (Markham et al., 2017). This increased awareness and change in their perspectives were echoed in the previous research which reported pre-service teachers' developing a positive attitude towards the lesson and an awareness regarding linguistics concepts (Kızıltan, 2011) and a sense of awareness and acceptance of English language learners (Clark-Goff & Eslami, 2016).

Overall, the findings of the current study can be summarized as three-fold: (a) a facilitating impact of the experiential and reflective learning tasks on the pre-service teachers' grounds and connections between language acquisition and pedagogy and better conceptualization of the language acquisition concepts, (b) increased awareness and co-construction of what they have experienced as a language learner and what they would like to do as a teacher, (c) a positively reported and perceived impact of the language acquisition course on their future language teaching. These findings align with previous research that documented an increased willingness and readiness to modify their initial informal theories and intentions for language teaching based on the knowledge gained from relevant courses (Markham et al., 2017). As the revised language learning autobiography projects were gathered upon the completion of the course, "the campfire effect" refers to an overwhelming report of a positive effect on their beliefs immediately after completing the course (Olson & Jimenez-Silva, 2008, p. 247), maybe one of the reasons behind these findings.

As the teachers' beliefs have a crucial impact on their perceptions, judgments, and classroom behavior, it is necessary to provide them with professional preparation and teaching in the pre-service teacher training programs, nevertheless, it is difficult to challenge and change their deeply rooted ideas during the implementation of the program (Pajares, 1992). In this regard, incorporating experiential and reflective activities into professional coursework appears to be more effective in shaping belief systems than solely teaching declarative knowledge (Angelova, 2005; Bartels, 2005; Pennington, 1996). For this reason, experiential activities should occur early on in teacher education programs (Busch, 2010) to provide the pre-service teachers a platform to carry out reflective practices to establish connections between language acquisition and pedagogy. To respond to this relationship, previous research suggested the integration of innovative strategies such as incorporating teachers' perspectives,

their critical reflections, collaborations, and co-construction of knowledge (Gorsuch & Beglar, 2004). In this respect, teacher educators can adopt different roles such as being a transmitter of knowledge about SLA, mentors, and awareness raisers based on the specific needs of the pre-service teachers (Ellis, 2010). These roles along with the integration of experiential tasks will yield a promising contribution as an agent of change to teacher training programs.

Overall, several pedagogical implications could be integrated into pre-service English language teacher training contexts. First, experiential learning tasks could be integrated into pre-service teachers' courses to raise their awareness and co-construction of language acquisition and pedagogy. Their engagements with such tasks can effectively raise awareness among pre-service language teachers on the significance of fostering learners' self-confidence, motivation, and curiosity, as well as their awareness of effective learning strategies. Teacher training courses could incorporate such experiential tasks and reflective activities through drama, discussion, multimedia tools, and computer games so that pre-service language teachers can bridge the gap between their conceptual understanding and the practical effectiveness of various techniques, tools, and materials in language education as prospective English language teachers. Furthermore, these tasks can be used to help them become aware of the impact of both formal and informal learning environments on language learning outcomes, while also recognizing the significance of exposing learners to diverse languages and cultures. To achieve these goals, we need a process of restructuring teacher education programs, which involves continuous learning and collaboration between both teacher educators and pre-service teachers, resulting in mutual growth and development (Kaufman, 1996). Previous research has shown that by providing insights into the order in which students acquire phonological and grammatical features, pre-service teachers can reflect on their students' progress in English language skills more accurately and design appropriate instructional activities accordingly (Markham et al., 2017). Incorporating experiential learning tasks into the earlier years of pre-service teacher education could be a promising way to enhance their awareness and understanding of the conceptualizations of language acquisition and pedagogy. To create a well-rounded co-construction of English language learning and teaching, an explicit reference to the constructs and concepts of second language acquisition and future language teaching practices could be useful. This could be achieved by increased recognition of learners' diverse characteristics, continuous exposure of language input, support and feedback,

responsiveness to affective factors, and integration of formal and informal learning contexts, which are echoed prominently through pre-service teachers' engagements with experiential tasks provided as part of the Language Acquisition Course. To support this, we could start by recognizing the roles of such tasks and the multifaceted nature of the connection between language acquisition and teaching to help pre-service teachers grow a professional mindset.

Further research could be carried out by administering pre- and post-course beliefs surveys to pre-service language teachers. Building on the findings of the current study, tracking the beliefs of teachers over time, particularly as they begin practice teaching, would yield valuable insights into the lasting impact of consciousness-raising related to their initial professional education courses. A further study can be designed to explore the impact of language education courses on the beliefs of pre-service teachers. This study can be conducted in different educational contexts and with a large number of participants to increase its generalizability. Another potential study design is to use think-aloud protocols to examine the thought processes of language teachers as they engage in classroom instruction. This approach can provide insights into the beliefs and assumptions that underlie their instructional decisions. This study can also be conducted cross-nationally and cross-culturally to examine differences in teaching practices across different contexts. A longitudinal analysis of pre-service teachers' conceptualization of the grounds and connections between language acquisition and pedagogy will provide insightful contributions to the existing literature.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Giriş

İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının dil edinim süreçlerine yönelik inançları, kavramsal anlayışları, bilgileri ve uygulamalarının geliştirilmesi öğretmen yetiştirme programlarının temelinde yer almaktadır. Öğretmen adaylarının iyimser bir bakış açısı ve öğretime, konu alanlarına ve öğrencilerine yönelik bir bağlılık geliştirmeleri ve mesleklerine ilişkin bakış açılarını geliştirmeleri gerekir. Alanyazında bu konuda yapılan çalışmalar deneyimsel öğrenme ve yansıtıcı etkinliklerin, öğretmen yetiştirme programlarında dil edinim kuramları ve dil öğretimi arasındaki ilişkiye yönelik öğretmen adaylarının eleştirel bakış açılarını geliştirmek için katkılar sağlayabileceğini göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, farklı türdeki deneyimsel öğrenme etkinliklerini araştırmak ve belirli öğretim bağlamları ve öğretmen adayları grupları için katkılarını saptamak için daha fazla araştırmaya ihtiyaç vardır. Mevcut araştırmalardan farklı olarak, bu çalışma, hizmet öncesi İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının deneyimsel etkinliklerle etkileşimleri yoluyla dil edinimi ve öğretimene ilişkin süreç odaklı bir gelişimi ve yeniden kavramsallaştırmasını incelemektedir. Bu bağlamda aşağıdaki araştırma soruları sorulmuştur:

1. İngilizce Öğretmen adaylarının dil edinimi ve öğretimine ilişkin sahip oldukları kavramsal anlayışlar nelerdir?

2. Öğretmen adaylarının dil edinimi konusundaki deneyimsel etkinliklerle etkileşimleri yoluyla bakış açıları ve kavramsal anlayışları nasıl gelişmektedir?

3. Öğretmen adayları dil edinimine ilişkin kavramsallaştırmalarının ve deneyimsel etkinliklerinin gelecekteki dil öğretimleri üzerindeki etkilerini nasıl öngörmektedirler?

Yöntem

Bu çalışma, İngilizce Öğretmenliği Bölümü ikinci sınıfta öğrenim gören 54 İngilizce öğretmen adayına verilen Dil Edinimi dersi bağlamında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın veri toplama aşamasında Başlangıç ve Gözden Geçirilmiş Dil Öğrenme Otobiyografi Projeleri kullanılmıştır. Bu projelerin içeriği Maryland Üniversitesi'nden Dr. Drew S. Fagan tarafından geliştirilmiştir ve araştırmacının izni doğrultusunda bu çalışma kapsamında kullanılmıştır. Başlangıç Dil Öğrenme Otobiyografi Projesi için etkinlik içeriği, dil edinim süreçleri hakkında derinlemesine bilgi edinmek amacıyla dersin ilk haftasında katılımcılarla paylaşılmıştır. Dersin tamamlanması ve yarıyıl sonu sınavlarının uygulanmasının ardından Gözden Geçirilmiş Dil Öğrenme Otobiyografi Projesi için etkinlik içeriği katılımcılarla paylaşılmıştır. Otobiyografilerin toplanmasının ardından başlangıç ve gözden geçirilmiş dil öğrenme otobiyografi projelerinin içerikleri karşılaştırılarak tekrarlayan ve sık kullanılan sözcük birimlerin ve kümelenen ifadelerin genel bir resmini ortaya çıkarmak için AntConc 3.5.9 kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu analize ek olarak her bir araştırma sorusu kapsamında her iki veri toplama aracı ile toplanan veriler nitel olarak da karşılaştırılarak incelenmiş ve raporlanmıştır.

Bulgular

Araştırmanın sonucunda İngilizce Öğretmen adaylarının önceki dil öğrenme deneyimleri ile dil edinim kavramları ve teorileri arasında bağlantılar kurarak aktardıkları bulgulanmıştır. Öğretmen adayları, başlangıçtaki kavramsallaştırmalarından farklı olarak, gözden geçirilmiş dil öğrenimi otobiyografi projelerinde dil edinim ve öğrenim süreçlerinde anahtar kavramlardan olan ara dil, yapı iskelesi (scaffolding), öz düzenlemenin rolüne değinmişlerdir. Gözden geçirilmiş dil öğrenimi otobiyografi projesinde sundukları yeni ortaya çıkan fikir, gelişen ikinci dil sistemlerini tanımlamak için ara dil terimini benimsemeleri olmuştur. Öğretmen adayları ders konularının ve kişisel dil öğrenme deneyimlerinin gelecekteki dil öğretimi üzerindeki tamamlayıcı etkilerine dikkat çekmişlerdir. Mesleki inançları üzerinde en büyük etkiye sahip olan konular dili edinimi için gereken süre, kültürel anlayışın önemi, dil bilgisi ve sözcük dağarcığının rolü, hataların belirlenmesi ve düzeltilmesi ve öğrenme yöntemleri yer almıştır.

Sonuç ve Tartışma

Araştırmadan elde edilen bulgular üç boyutta özetlenebilir: (a) deneyimsel ve yansıtıcı öğrenme etkinliklerinin, İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının dil edinimi ve öğretimi arasındaki temeller ve bağlantılar üzerinde kolaylaştırıcı bir etkisi ve dil edinimi kavramlarının daha iyi kavramsallaştırılmasına etkisi olması; (b) bir dil öğrencisi olarak deneyimledikleri ve bir öğretmen olarak yapmak istedikleri konusunda artan farkındalık ve karşılıklı etkiye dikkat çekme, (c) dil edinimi dersinin gelecekteki dil öğretimleri üzerinde olumlu etkisinin paylaşılması bulgulanmıştır. Bu sonuçlara dayanarak deneyimsel etkinliklerin dik edinim süreçlerine ilişkin mesleki farkındalığı ve olumlu bakış açısı geliştirmek için İngilizce öğretmeni yetiştirme bağlamlarına dahil edilmesi önerilebilir. İlk olarak, deneyimsel öğrenme etkinlikleri dil edinimi ve öğretimi konusunda farkındalıklarını artırmak için hizmet

öncesi İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının derslerine dahil edilebilir. Bu tür deneyimsel etkinlikler aracılığıyla gelecekteki öğrencilerinin öz güvenini, motivasyonunu ve merakını desteklemenin önemi ve etkili öğrenme stratejileri konusunda farkındalıklarını etkili bir şekilde artırabilir. Öğrencilerin çeşitli özelliklerinin daha fazla tanınması, dil girdisine, desteğine ve geri bildirimin önemine ve duyuşsal faktörlere farkındalık kazanma ve sınıf içi ve sınıf dışı öğrenme bağlamlarının bütünleştirilmesiyle başarılabilir. Bunun için bu araştırmada kullanılan deneyimsel etkinlikler yoluyla öğretmen rollerini ve dil edinimi ile öğretim arasındaki bağlantının çok yönlü doğasını tanıyarak, hizmet öncesi İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının mesleki kimliklerinin geliştirilmesi de desteklenebilir.