Linguistics courses in pre-service foreign language teacher training programs and knowledge about language

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Abstract

The introductory linguistics courses have been a constant component of the pre-service English Language Teaching (ELT) curricula in Turkey since 1944 when the ELT Department at Gazi Institute of Education was establishment (Hatipoğlu 2017; Hatipoğlu & Erçetin, 2016). In Turkey, no ELT student can graduate and become a language teacher without taking and passing these courses. The aim of the linguistics courses, as defined by the Council of Higher Education (YOK 2005), is to equip future language teachers with essential information about the elements and the structures of the (foreign) language, how these units are arranged and what patterns they follow. In other words, it is believed that, while on one hand, these courses will help pre-service foreign language teachers broaden their knowledge and understanding of the workings of the foreign language they are going to teach on the other they will help future teachers improvement of their language knowledge competence (YOK 2005). This article aims to uncover what pre-service teachers taking these courses belief and think about the usefulness of these courses in developing their "language knowledge". The data examined in the study were collected from second and fourth year undergraduate students in the ELT Department at Middle East Technical University (METU) using a questionnaire specifically developed for this study. While the first section of the questionnaire elicited detailed information related to the background of the participants, its latter part, using closed and open-ended questions, asked students to evaluate the contributions of the introductory linguistics courses to the development of their foreign language skills and proficiency. The results of the study show that interesting, well set up and properly taught Linguistics courses can exhilarate and enhance the language learning experience of students in the ELT departments. By showing students how languages work, what skills they utilize when producing/perceiving a language and by equipping them with the necessary eye for details, accuracy and metalanguage, Linguistics courses can help pre-service teachers gain a deeper and fuller understanding of the target language.

Keywords: pre-service foreign language teacher training, linguistics courses, foreign language proficiency, content and teaching approach selection for the Linguistics courses in ELT departments

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Introduction

In the last half century the definition and criteria of effective language teaching have been in the centre of educational research and many studies have been conducted to identify and define the characteristics of the "good language teachers" (Andrews & McNeill, 2005; Brosh, 1996; Huang, 2010; Shishavan & Sadeghi, 2009). Given the fact that every teaching situation is one-of-a kind, it is not surprising that even after such a long time there still is not a unanimously agreed definition or an "omnivalid" list of his/her characteristics, qualifications and behaviour (Borg, 2006; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Ornstain, 1991). What is more, both theoretical and empirical work that has been done in this area shows how complex and multifaceted the notion of the "good language teacher" is. Researchers such as Allen (1980) and Brown (2001) offer checklists against which language teachers can rate themselves. In the list prepared by Allen (1980) there are nine characteristics while in Brow's (2001) list there are four main and 30 sub-characteristics. What is common to those two list, however, is the emphasis of the "technical knowledge" of language teachers. That is, both experts stress how important it is that language teachers know the linguistics system of English (i.e., phonology, grammar, discourse), have fluent competence in all skills (i.e., speaking, reading, writing, listening), understand the tight interdependent relation between language and culture, and are willing to continue to develop and learn by reading, researching and attending conferences and workshops related to the field (Brown, 2001).

Empirical studies in the area have approached the question of the "good language teacher" from various angles. Some collected data from students, others from the foreign language teachers themselves, while still others asked administrators for their opinions and views. Finally, in a number of studies data coming from a combination of some or all of the abovementioned groups were used, in order to uncover what the most important characteristics of successful language teachers were.

In an earlier study, Girard (1977) asked students to describe the good language teachers and they stated that s/he was the one who spoke good English, taught good pronunciation and was patient. They also listed as desirable characteristics features such as finds ways to make his/her courses appealing and manages to include all students in the class activities, does not have favourites and treats all the pupils in the same way. Brosh (1996:125) conducted his study in Israel and collected data from both foreign language teachers and high school students. Three main characteristics emerged from his study: "teacher's command of the target language; his/her ability to organize, explain, and clarify; and his/her ability to arouse and sustain interest and motivation." In a more recent study, Huang (2010) focused on a successful English language teacher (Miss H) and collected data from her, her students and her colleagues. Huang (2010) tried to uncover why Miss H was considered a successful EFL teacher in China. Miss H's students and colleagues described her as knowledgeable, responsible, enthusiastic and kind. Her students stated that she was flexible and was able to accommodate her teaching method according to the needs of her students, and her colleagues underlined the facts that she was a cooperative team member who coordinated and encouraged their professional development. What Miss H emphasised when she was asked about the reason behind her success, however, was her desire and effort to "get more

proficiency in the language" and her struggle to "help more people in China to use the beautiful language to communicate with people from all over the world" (Huang, 2010:23).

The contexts, data collection procedures and data sources in the above-mentioned studies might be different but there is one characteristics of the language teacher that comes to the forefront repeatedly, i.e., language teacher's knowledge and command of the target language. Both practitioners and researchers agree that strong profound knowledge of the foreign language is a "prerequisite for the other competencies since incomplete knowledge of language interferes with effective language teaching" (Şallı-Çopur, 2008:11; also see Curtis & Cheng, 2001; Hatipoğlu, 2013). Andrews and McNeill (2005:159) warn teacher trainers about situations where pre-service teacher training programs give more importance to issues of methodology and classroom management than "the object of learning, the language itself". In contexts where the foreign language teacher does not have a fluent competence in the target language, they say, the lessons are

> "…presenting learners with confused and confusing messages about the language to be learned. Since messages about language mediated by the teacher constitute a major part of the input for learning within any lesson, we have become increasingly convinced that the extent and the adequacy of L2 teachers' engagement with language content in their professional practice is a crucial variable in determining the quality and potential effectiveness of any L2 teacher's practice." (Andrews & McNeill, 2005:159).

These findings are not surprising, according to Hammadou and Bernhardt (1987:302) because in "foreign language teaching, the content and the process for learning the content are the same. In other words, in foreign language teaching the medium is the message." Hammadou and Bernhardt (1987:302) also argue that the challenge to increase foreign language teachers knowledges of the subject they are teaching (i.e., the foreign language) comes from the fact that "language is a developmental, dynamic, and interactive" subject and that "in contrast to other teachers, who may be able to acquire new facts about their subjects and keep them in memory, language teachers, who do not teach a "factual product" but rather a process of communication, may lose their use of that process if they themselves do not use it on a regular basis".

Following all this research, the question frequently asked in the field has been, "How can the development of the foreign language knowledge of pre-service language teachers be facilitated/improved?" Among other things (e.g., making it possible for the future teachers to spend a year in the target language country), quite a big number of experts suggest offering linguistics courses to pre-service teachers (i.e., courses in the field of science that studies language and its structure) (Attardo & Brown, 2005; Busch, 2010; Correa, 2014; Fischer-Starcke, 2009; Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Hatipoğlu, 2008; Hornsby, 2003; Hudson, 2003; Kaş 1990; Katz & Watzinger-Tharp, 2005; Kubota, 1999; Moulton, 1961; O'Neil, 1998; Onursal, 2006; Petrucci 2002; Sezer 1988; Spring et al., 2000; Wu, 1995). Their claim is that by studying linguistics, first of all, pre-service language teachers will get acquainted with the intricate processes taking place in our mind since the "study of language is ultimately the study of the human mind" (Akmajian et al., 2010:10) and this, in turn, will allow them to

better understand why they experience difficulties while learning and interpreting some structures/expressions and will be able to decode the messages uttered by others much more easily. These then will also lead to the development of more efficient learning strategies. Another reason why linguistics should be a part of the training of pre-service language teachers, according to these experts, is since the more we know about language the more we will be able to understand how language works, the more effective we will become in discovering and decoding how language elements are arranged and work (Chomsky, 1975; Freeman & Freeman, 2004).

These are the claims of researchers but what do pre-service language teachers think? Do they believe that the introductory linguistics courses they take during their undergraduate training consolidate and further their language competences? The aim of the current study is to answer these two questions because discovering the views of future language teachers is vital for the success of their training and for guaranteeing the quality of their work as teachers (Bernat, 2008; Peacock, 2001). The erroneous beliefs about how foreign languages are learned could be detrimental and could lead to deficient language learning and language development. Second, the 'underlying Beliefs, Assumptions and Knowledge' (BAK) of the teachers and the attitudes and practices that they have developed through individual experiences, make up teachers' "culture" (Cloudet 2006; Sowden 2007; Woods 1996:196). This 'culture' is brought into the classroom and it heavily affects everything happening during the lessons they teach (Hatipoğlu, 2009, 2012).

Background of the Study

The way teacher training is viewed and done in Turkey changed considerably in 1981 when a major reform (Act No. 2574) was implemented (Hatipoğlu, 2010, 2017; Hatipoğlu & Erçetin, 2016). With this reform, the responsibility of training teachers was taken from the Ministry of National Education (MONE) and was given to the Council of Higher Education (YOK) (Çakıroğlu & Çakıroğlu, 2003; Kavak et al., 2007). As a result, since 1982, English language teachers in Turkey are trained in the Faculties of Education (FE) where they are expected to follow the same four-year long curriculum prepared and prescribed by YOK. The curricula which was introduced in 1982 was changed once in 1995 and for the second time in 2006 (Hatipoğlu, 2015, 2016, 2017). From 2006 on, FEDs were permitted to modify up to 30% of their curricula based on perceived needs in the local context (Akyel, 2012).

The current curriculum includes three groups of courses:

(i)   **Subject content knowledge** (e.g., Literature, Linguistics, Translation, English Grammar, Speaking in English) (62.5%)

(ii) **Professional pedagogical/teaching knowledge** (e.g., Education Management, Educational Psychology) (25%)

(iii) **Liberal education/general culture** (e.g., Physical Education, Arts) (12.5%) (Binbaşıoğlu, 1995).

The Linguistics courses, together with the Literature, Translation and English Grammar courses, are placed among the "subject content knowledge" courses in the YOK curriculum. There are in total three linguistics courses - *Linguistics I, Linguistics II and Language Acquisition* - in this this curriculum. A close examination of the curricula of 18 of the ELT departments in the public Turkish universities showed, however, that only *Linguistics I* and *Linguistics II* are common to all those programs and that a number of changes have been made to the Language Acquisition courses. The *Language Acquisition* which is a single course placed in the fourth semester of the YOK program has been split into two courses in some of the ELT programs (e.g., the ELT program at Marmara University has two Language Acquisition courses: *First Language Acquisition* or *Second Language Acquisition*, http://ydio.aef.marmara.edu.tr/lisans-programi/ders-icerikleri/); or its focus and place in the curriculum have been changed (e.g., Anadolu University put the course in the fifth semester and named it *Introduction to Language Acquisition* meaning that its scope has been narrowed to accommodate better for the needs of beginner students*; https://www.anadolu.edu.tr/akademik/fakulteler/162/ingilizce-ogretmenligi-programi/dersler*). Due to the described differences between the Language Acquisition courses in the ELT programs in Turkey, the current study focus only on Linguistics I and Linguistics II, so that the results of this could be more generalizable and relevant to many of the ELT programs in Turkey.

The courses on which this study fouces have been described in the following manner by the Council of Higher Education (YOK):

Linguistics I

This course gives an introduction to the basic concepts in linguistic analysis; understanding the nature, structure, and use of language by way of awareness-raising activities, error analysis of language learners' production, case studies, and comparative analysis of native and target languages. The topics under investigation are the components of language as a system: linguistic competence and performance, branches of linguistics, types of grammar, language universals, creativity of linguistic knowledge, arbitrariness of language, sign languages, artificial languages and animal communication; brain and language:, lateralization and handedness, evolution of language, human language processing models, research on language and disorders (e.g. dichotic listening, split brain, WADA); phonetics: acoustic, auditory and articulatory phonetics, speech organs, phoneme, vowels and consonants, IPA, diphthongs, tripthongs, manner and place of articulation; phonology: sound patterns, assimilation, dissimilation, linking, consonant clusters, silent letters, suprasegmentals, stress and intonation; semantics: componential analysis, entailment, semantic relations, sense and reference, collocational meaning (YOK 2007:128).

Linguistics II

Error analysis of language learners' production data, case studies, and comparative analysis of native and target languages; morphology; free and bound morphemes, compounds, inflectional morphology, derivational morphology, morphemic analysis, morphological typology of languages, analysis of the internal hierarchical structure of words, morphological variation; syntax: word categories, phrase and clause structure, transformational-generative grammar, government and

binding, minimalist program, argument structure, theta-roles; pragmatics: deixis, implicature, conversational maxims, speech acts and politeness; sociolinguistics; dialects, register, style; discourse: criteria for textuality, types of cohesive devices, discourse connections, functions, the discourse situation, institutional discourse and similar topics (YOK 2007:130).

Methodology

Informants

The data fort his study were collected from 76 (F=62, 81.6%; M=14, 18.4%) undergraduate students in the department of English Language Teaching (ELT) at Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara. An overwhelming majority of the participants (N=66, 86.8%) stated that were planning to work as foreign language teachers after graduation. Only 13.2% stated that they wanted to try different jobs.

The age range of the students was 18-48 (mean age: 21) and there were either sophomore (N=50, 65.8%) or senior (N=26, 34.2%) year students. These two groups of students were chosen as participants for the current study because of the following two main reasons:

(1) The *Linguistics I* (LING I) and *Linguistics II* (LING II) courses are placed in the second and third semesters of the METU FLE curriculum (see Appendix A). Year 2 (Y2) students were asked to evaluate LING I and LING II at the end of the third term. That is, they filled in the questionnaire immediately after the completion of the two Linguistics courses and before they took the remaining three Linguistics and many of the Methodology, Literature and Education courses included in the curriculum and directly related to their future jobs.

Year 4 (Y4) students were asked to evaluate the contributions of the introductory Linguistics courses on the development of their language proficiency towards the end of their last term of their BA studies (i.e., after taking almost all courses in the FLE curriculum at METU). It was taught that they would have a more complete picture of the program and better understanding of the effects of the introductory Linguistics courses on the development of their language proficiency after taking almost all of the undergraduate courses in the program.

(2) In their last year in the program students at METU take *FLE425: School Experience* and *FLE404: Practice Teaching* courses. These are the courses during which FLE students either observe teachers or themselves teach in various public and private schools. While taking these courses students have the chance to test whether their language proficiency is high enough to support their 'real' teaching and their 'real' interactions with students (e.g., while explaining why some structures should (not) be used in some contexts). While Y2 students were asked to evaluate the effect of LING I and LING II before they had had a chance to test themselves in actual foreign language classrooms, Y4 students' evaluations were done after they had taken FLE425 and while taking FLE404. It was believed that this difference in experience would also affect Y2 and Y4 evaluations of the introductory linguistics courses.

Table 1

Linguistics I - Grades Distribution

GRADES	LING I YEAR 2		LING I YEAR 4		TOTAL YEAR 2 & YEAR 4	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
AA	11	22	4	15.4	15	19.7
BA	6	12	4	15.4	10	13.1
BB	9	18	7	27	16	21.1
CB	7	14	3	11.5	10	13.1
CC	7	14	4	15.4	11	14.5
DC	4	8	1	3.8	5	6.6
DD	2	4	3	11.5	5	6.6
FD/FF	4	8	0	0	4	5.3
TOTAL	50	100	26	100	76	100

Table 1 displays information related to the distribution of the grades with which pre-service ELTs in both groups passed LING I. The data show that students were generally successful in this course; 52% of Y2) and 57.8% of Y4 students passed LING I with AA, BA or BB (i.e., grades that lead to 'honour' and 'high honour' studentship) (METU Student Handbook, 2010:7). A pretty good number of the students in both groups (Y2=28%, Y4=26.9%) got CB and CC (i.e., grades that lead to satisfactory GPAs) in LING I. Finally, the percentages of the students who passed LING I with grades leading to "unsatisfactory academic record" (i.e., grades such as DC, DD, FD and FF lead to a GPA below 2.00) were 20% for Y2 and 15.4% for Y4 students, respectively.

Table 2

Linguistics II - Grades Distribution

GRADES	LING II YEAR 2		LING II YEAR 4		TOTAL YEAR 2 & YEAR 4	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
AA	12	24	5	19.2	17	22.4
BA	13	26	9	34.6	22	29
BB	14	28	5	19.2	19	25
CB	4	8	2	7.7	6	7.9
CC	3	6	0	0	3	3.9
DC	0	0	3	11.5	3	3.9
DD	4	8	2	7.7	6	7.9
FD/FF	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	50	100	26	100	76	100

Table 2 presents information related to the grades of students in LING II. Comparison of the data in Tables 1 and 2, shows that the participants in this study were more successful in LING II and when the grades of both groups were matched it was seen that Y2 students were more successful than Y4 in this course. Differently from LING I, none of the participants in the current study failed LING II. What is more, the percentage of 'honour' grades in LING II is 1.4 higher than in LING I. More than three-fourths of Y2 (78%) and 73.1% of Y4 students passed LING II with 'honour' grades and only 8% of Y2 students got DC and DD. The only deviation from this positive trend is the high percentage (19.2%) of Y4 students who got unsatisfactory grades in LING II. That is, the number of students who got DC and DD among the Y4 student was 2.4 times higher than the students in Y2.

The natural question to ask with these statistics at hand was "Whether or not these grades reflect students' satisfaction and evaluation of the usefulness of the LING I and LING II courses?"

Data Collection Tools

The data examined in this study were collected from undergraduate students in the ELT Department at METU using a questionnaire specifically developed for this study. The questionnaire comprised two sections and the aim of its first section (Section A) was to elicit biographical data related to informants participating in the study (e.g., age, gender, year at university, the grades with which they passed each linguistics course and their intentions to work as teachers after graduation). Sections B had two subsections. Sub-section 1 asked students to rate from 1 (the most) to 5 (the least) the contributions of the Linguistics courses to the development of their own foreign language proficiency while in Sub-section 2 they were instructed to provide longer answers to the abovementioned question by including explanations, descriptions and specific examples (e.g., topics covered in Linguistics courses, the materials and teaching techniques employed by the lecturers) that would show why they found the courses useful or less relevant to the development of their language skills. The language of the questionnaire was Turkish but the students were informed that they could answer the questions in either Turkish or English. During the analysis of the data, it was found that there were students who answered the questions only in Turkish or only in English but in the majority of the students' answers the two codes were mixed.

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected for this study, therefore, different techniques were utilized to evaluate each set of data. The structured data were analysed using SPSS and both descriptive and parametric tests were employed to uncover the relationships between the different variables examined in the study.

The qualitative data gathered via open ended questions were scrutinized in two stages. The aim of Stage 1 (i.e., the first cycle of coding, Saldana, 2013), was to devise an appropriate

grouping system for the answers provided by the two groups of participants. This stage was needed because differently from the quantitative data, with the qualitative data there was not a pre-determined set of answers (Gillham, 2000). Since the major objective of the current study was to prioritize and honour the voices of the pre-service foreign language teachers (Miles et al., 2014:81), the *In Vivo Coding* method (Saldana, 2013) was selected for use. In this method the "words or short phrases from the participant's own language" are utilised as codes (Miles et al., 2014:80). The first cycle of coding led to the identification of 24 categories for LING I and 26 categories for LING II. A closer examination of the answers provided by Y2 and Y4 students showed that the number of categories differed for the two groups of participants, therefore, the aim of the Second Cycle of Coding was to establish the ground for cross-case analysis. That is, the analysis focused on uncovering common themes among the answers of the participants in both of the groups.

Results and Discussions

The results of the study show that LING I and LING II are viewed and evaluated differently by Y2 and Y4 students. Therefore, the answers of the students related to each of the courses will be presented and discussed separately.

Linguistics I (LING I)

LING I is the first linguistics course in the METU program. It is offered in the second semester of the freshman year and it is intended to establish a solid background for the following four linguistics courses in the program. The course is taught for three hours each week during a 14-week long semester. The main objectives of the course are to develop awareness of the workings of the language as a system and to enable students to answer questions such as *"What is language?, How do languages and communication systems work?"* Lecturers teaching the course are free to change the weight and order of the topics taught in the course but core topics usually covered in LING I are ***Human languages*** (spoken vs. sign languages, origin of the language), ***Artificial languages*** (e.g., Esperanto, Klingon, Elvish), ***Animal Communicative Systems, Brain and language, Semantics*** and ***Pragmatics***. The assessment procedures in this course could change from year to year but due to METU regulations, every semester, at least one mid-term and one final exam are administered (METU Student Handbook 2010:6). The exams usually last for two and a half to three hours and include two main types of questions: questions testing students' knowledge of the theoretical material covered in lectures and practical data analysis. Since this is the first linguistics course that the students take the instruction is mostly in form of lectures and/or discussions but where appropriate students are also asked to analyse linguistics data.

When the students participating in the study were asked to rate from 1 (the most) to 5 (the least) the contributions of LING I to the development of their own foreign language proficiency, the picture presented in Table 3 emerged. Almost two-thirds of Y2 students (62%) ranked the contribution of LING I as high and only 26% as having a negligible effect on the development of their language proficiency. Y4 students' ranking of LING I was more

negative; only 46% of the students in this group stated that LING I had an important positive effect on their proficiency while 27% stated that it either did not have any effect or its effect was minor.

Table 3

Year 2 and Year 4 pre-service English language teachers' rating of the contribution of Linguistics I to the development of their language proficiency

Rating	YEAR 2		YEAR 4	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
1	13	26	6	23
2	18	36	6	23
3	6	12	7	27
4	8	16	4	15
5	5	10	3	12
TOTAL	50	100	26	100

One plausible explanation for the more negative evaluation of LING I by Y4 students might come from Peacock's (2001) longitudinal study where he examined the change in the beliefs about second language learning of 146 pre-service ESL teachers in Hong Kong. Peacock (2001) reported that at the end of the three year teacher training program and after taking various TESL methodology and language learning courses many of the pre-service teachers still believed that learning a foreign/second language meant learning the grammar and vocabulary of the target language. None of the topics covered in LING I directly aims to teach students grammar or new words. What is more, Y4 students who were in their last semester of training at the university were observing and teaching in various public and private schools at the same time. Many of their observation reports mentioned how important the grammar and vocabulary exercises were in the foreign language classes in Turkey and what a big proportion of the questions in the exams were related to those topics. Just by looking at these initial results, it could be argued that the combination of factors such as high level of abstractness of the topics taught in LING I, the experiences of Y4 students in 'real' language classrooms and their knowledge of the other linguistics course taught in the department might have led to the more negative evaluation of LING I by Y4 students. In order to understand students' evaluations better, the qualitative data gathered in the study were scrutinized. In this section of the questionnaire, Y2 and Y4 students were asked to answer the following question: *Briefly explain whether or not, why (not) and how Linguistics I has contributed to the development of your foreign language proficiency.*

Table 4

*Year 2 and Year 4 students' views about the effect of **Linguistics I** on their foreign language proficiency development*

	Evaluation Categories	YEAR 2		YEAR 4	
		N	**%**	**N**	**%**
1	**Did not contribute**	42	39.3	25	45.5
2	**Workings of language**	17	15.9	8	14.5
3	**Sentence level/Grammar**	17	15.9	11	20
4	**Word level/Vocabulary**	16	15	4	7.3
5	**Language use**	7	6.5	0	0
6	**Speaking**	5	4.7	4	7.3
7	**Comprehension**	3	2.7	3	5.4
	TOTAL	107	100	55	100

These analyses of these data showed that Y2 students evaluated the contributions of LING I to the development of their language proficiency in seven while Y4 students evaluated the contributions of the course in six different categories (see Table 4). What is more, a quick glance at the data revealed that there were important similarities but also intriguing differences between the evaluations of the two groups.

The most important similarity between the two groups was the high percentage of negative answers. More specifically, 39.3% of Y2 and 45.5% of Y4 students stated that LING I did not contribute/did not have any effect on the development of their language proficiency. When the answers in the "Did not help/contribute" category were examined more closely, it was seen that there were two major sub-groups of answers. The students in sub-group 1, only stated that "LING I did not contribute to my language development at all" (*Hiç katkısı/faydasi olmadı*) and they did not provide any further explanation. The number of these answers in the Y2 and Y4 groups were 16/42 (38%) and just 4/25 (16%), respectively. A much bigger number of students in Y2 (26/42, 62%) and Y4 (21/25, 84%), similarly to F54 (see Example 1), argued that LING I did not help with the development of their language proficiency since it was an introductory linguistics course where students learned many important facts related to the basis of linguistics and the workings of the language but the course was presented to them in a manner that did not in any way contribute to the development of their language proficiency.

Example 1

F54: Dil bilime giriş yaptığımız bir dersti. Dili nasıl algıladığımız, dilin beynimizde hangi işlemlerle söylem haline dönüştüğünü ilk defa öğendim bir dersti. Dilbilim hakkında önemli şeyler öğrenmemize rağmen özel olarak yabancı dilimi gelişmesinde bir farklılık gözlemlemedim.

[It was an introductory course to the field of Linguistics. In this course, for the first time, I learned how language is perceived, or which processes take place in our brain so that language is transformed into discourse. Although we did learn important things about linguistics, I did not notice any difference in the development of my foreign language in particular.]

This finding supports the claim put forward above (i.e., abstractness of the taught topics) and brings to the forefront the long lasting discussion of what and how we teach linguistics in ELT departments (Correa 2014; Hatipoğlu 2008; Hudson 2003; O'Neil 1998; Treffers-Daller 2003; Wu 1995). A number of researchers have already pointed out that there should be differences between the content and teaching approaches of linguistics courses offered to Linguistics vs. ELT majors. Treffers-Daller (2003:13), for instance, argues that it is obligatory that "the content of Linguistics is adapted to the needs of the Languages students". It should not be forgotten that many of the ELT students take linguistics in order to better understand how the foreign language they are learning and going to teach works and that they see linguistics courses as relevant only in as far as they support the foreign language learning/teaching process. This finding is also parallel to the one discussed by Hatipoğlu (2008) in an earlier study where she found that due to the theoretical nature of some of the topics and the way these topics are taught in LING I, 8.2% of the students in her study thought that the course was either boring, too difficult to follow and understan or not contributing to the improvement of their language proficiency. What is worrying when the findings of the earlier and current study are compared, though, is the steep rise in the percentage of students who think that LING I is too abstract and irrelevant to their interests (4.8 bigger for Y2 and 5.5 times bigger for Y4). These results make us question the topics and approaches we use to teach linguistics in ELT departments in Turkey.

Apart from these negative comments, 60.7% of Y2 and 54.5% of Y4 statements were positive and were discussing how LING I contributed to the development of their language proficiency. A similar percentage of students in each of the groups (Y2=15.9%; Y4=14.5%) thought that LING I improved their language proficiency because it explained the workings of the language (see Example 2).

Example 2

M13: *Dilbilim alanına genel bir giriş niteliğinde olan ders, dilbilimin tanımı, özellikleri ve ilgili olduğu alt dalların incelenmesi, yabancı dil öğrenirken ne öğrendiğimi anlamama yardımcı oldu.*

[The course, which is a general introduction to the field of linguistics, helped me to understand the definition of linguistics, its properties and sub-branches. All these have helped me to understand what I am learning while I am learning a foreign language.]

This is an important positive finding for the students and lectures taking/teaching linguistics since Hudson in his 2003 article argues that "understanding how language works" is one of the important life skills that a course in linguistics can develop in students. Hudson's

(2003:3) claim is based on the following chain of thought: A skill is much more easily transferred if it is conscious and if the learners are aware of it. Since linguistics courses help students make their implicit knowledge of language explicit, then, by studying linguistics, students are able to transfer the skills they use while speaking a language they know very well into a language they are trying to master. Hornsby (2003:11) also argues that the likely attraction of most of the linguistics courses is to enhance the language learning experience of the students.

Even though teaching English grammar and vocabulary were not among the objectives of LING I, students in both of the participating groups argued that this course improved (Y2=30.9%; Y4=27.3%) their grammar and vocabulary knowledge. What students did not concur with was which area of knowledge benefited more from taking LING I (see Table 4). Y2 students thought that LING I contributed to their grammar and word knowledge development in a similar manner (see Example 3) while Y4 students thought that LING I contributed much more to the improvement of their grammar than to their vocabulary/word knowledge (see Example 4). The types of vocabulary most frequently mentioned by both groups were language concepts (e.g., arbitrariness of language, pragmatics, tabula rasa) and relevant linguistics terminology (e.g., dialect, pragmatics). They argued that these helped them to understand and learn English (i.e., their foreign language) better and faster.

Example 3 (Year 2 student)

F40: Gramer açısından gelişim oldu. Kurduğum cümlelerde ve yaptığım telaffuzlar gelişti. Kelimelerin oluşum biçimini öğrendim.

[There was a development in terms of grammar. The sentences I started to construct and my pronunciation have improved. I have learned how words are formed.]

Example 4 (Year 4 student)

M11: Universal grammar, syntax, phrase structure, possible and impossible combinations of words into phrases.

Improvement in their language comprehension and speaking skills were two other gains named by both of the groups albeit in different frequencies. Y4 (Speaking=7.3%, Comprehension=5.4%) mentioned these two categories 1.7 times more than Y2 (Speaking=4.7%, Comprehension=2.7%) students. When Y4 students were discussing the gains related to the areas of speaking and comprehension, they frequently mentioned that learning the biological basis of the language in the Brain and Language section and examining topics such as arbitrariness of the language, language universals, sign languages provided them with the content base that helped them understand language learning better, which in turn, enabled them to speak and understand English better.

Finally, the Language Use category was mentioned only by Y2 students where they argued that thanks to all the topics and exercises done in LING I they were now able to use their foreign language better and more appropriately in different contexts (see Examples 5 and 6).

Example 5

F3: *Dile daha hakim olmamı daha güzel kullanmamı sağladı.*

  [It improved my command of the language; it helped me use the language better.]

Example 6

F19: *Pragmatics'in günlük yaşamda birçok faydasını gördüm.*

  [I have seen many benefits of Pragmatics in my everyday life.]

Many of them expressed their surprise in learning how different the interactional rules in English and Turkish were and how thanks to the Pragmatics section of the course they were now more careful while requesting or suggesting something or apologizing for an offence in English.

Linguistics II (LING II)

LING II is the second linguistics course that students at METU take. It is placed in the third semester of the curriculum (i.e., Fall term of the sophomore year) and the main objective of the course is to deepen students' understanding of the workings of the (English) language as a system (see Appendix A). Therefore, in LING II, the Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology and Syntax mainly of English are examined in detail but central linguistics theories put forward in these areas (e.g., Chomsky's *Government and Binding*, and *Minimalist* Theories) are also presented and discussed. Stated differently, this is the course where English (i.e., the language the participants of the study are learning as a foreign language and training to teach) is scrutinized at different levels.

The course meets three hours per week for 14 weeks. Each session in the course is usually composed of two hours of lecturing and one hour of tutorial. Lectures aim to provide the overall framework while tutorials present the forum for discussion of issues touched upon in the lectures. Students are expected to be actively involved in the discussions and practical analyses during tutorials. The number and type of assessment procedures can change from one term/lecturer to the other but every time this course is taught, students are given at least one midterm and one final written exams including both theoretical and practical data analysis questions.

When the students were asked to rate the usefulness of LING II in developing their language proficiency the picture given in Table 5 emerged. That is, 82% of Y2 students thought that it was really influential in developing their language skills. Only 12% of Y2 students evaluated this course as negligibly influential. Y4 students, who had taken three more courses after LING II, were a bit more cautious. While more than half of them (57%) stated that LING II really positively contributed to the development of their language proficiency, 35% of the students stated that is was one of the least influential courses. To uncover why students evaluated LING II in the described manner a thorough analysis of the

qualitative data collected in response to *"Briefly explain whether or not, why (not) and how **Linguistics II** have contributed to the development of your foreign language proficiency"* was done.

Table 5

*Year 2 and Year 4 pre-service English language teachers' rating of the contribution of **Linguistics II** to the development of their language proficiency*

The Rating Scale	YEAR 2		YEAR 4	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
1	25	50	4	15
2	16	32	11	42
3	3	6	2	8
4	3	6	6	23
5	3	6	3	12
TOTAL	50	100	26	100

Examination of the qualitative evaluation data provided by the participants revealed a statistically significantly smaller (p<.05) number of negative answers for LING II than LING I. Only 3 of the Y2 and 2 of the Y4 students thought that LING II did not contribute to the improvement of their proficiency in English while all of the remaining comments were positive (see Table 6).

Table 6

Year 2 and Year 4 students' views about the effect of Linguistics II on their foreign language proficiency development

	Evaluation Categories	YEAR 2		YEAR 4	
		N	**%**	**N**	**%**
1	**Did not help**	**3**	**2.2**	**2**	**2.7**
2	**Theoretical material**	**9**	**6.5**	**0**	**0**
3	**Morphology/Word level**	**22**	**15.8**	**16**	**21.6**
4	**Syntax/Structure of languages/how languages work/noticing mistakes**	**35**	**25.2**	**32**	**43.2**
5	**Skills**	**60**	**43.2**	**17**	**23**
	a. Speaking	57	41	17	23
	b. Reading	1	0.7	0	0
	c. Writing	1	0.7	0	0
	d. Listening	1	0.7	0	0
6	**Language comprehension and use**	10	7.2		**0**
7	**Language learning ability**	0	0	7	9.5
	TOTAL	139	100	**74**	**100**

A closer look at Table 6 shows, however, that Y2 and Y4 students disagree on what the main contributions of LING II were. Y2 students stated that LING II contributed the most to the development of their language skills (43.2%) and particularly to the improvement of their speaking skills (41%). They argued that the Phonetics section of the course taught them which organs were used during the production of various sounds and how to produce the consonants, vowels and diphthongs that are problematic for the native speakers of Turkish speaking English. They also liked the topics discussed in the Phonology section of the course (e.g., phonological processes such as assimilation, dissimilation, feature addition/deletion) and stated that thanks to them they were now able to understand and explain why native speakers of English utter some of the combinations of words in a particular manner and why native speakers of Turkish tend to deviate from some of the norms. Thanks to the discussions in the Phonetics and Phonology lectures, they said that they were able to correct some of their incorrect pronunciations. These findings provide support for the claim that teaching the rules of pronunciation (i.e., phonetics and phonology) could on one hand positively affect the overall intelligibility of accented speech while on the other could improve how well listeners understand accented speech (Derwin et al. 1997, 1998; Foote et al. 2011).

Y4 students also mentioned that LING II contributed to the development of their pronunciation and speaking skills (23%) but for them the biggest gain brought by LING II was related to their knowledge of grammar. They argued that LING II equipped them with knowledge that allowed them to understand, explain and analyse spoken and written sentences/utterances much more easily (see Examples 7 and 8). What is more, because they were equipped with detailed knowledge about the workings of the English language, they said they were able to notice their own mistakes much more easily. They were also able to explain to themselves why they were making particular types of mistakes.

Example 7

F48: Bu derste daha detaylı bir şekilde anlam ve yapıya odaklanmıştık. Yapıların mantığını daha kalıcı hale getirdi benim için. Syntax hakkındaki bilgi dağarcığımı ciddi şekilde geliştirdi.

[In this course we focused more on/examined in detail meaning and structure. This really rooted me understand of the logic behind the (sentence) structures. The course has seriously widened my knowledge of Syntax.]

Example 8

F51: İngilizcenin cümle yapısı konusunda gerçekten kendimi geliştirdiğimi hissediyorum. Dili kullanırken daha dikkatli olmamı sağladı. Hatalarımı fark ediyorum.

[I really feel that I have my knowledge related to English sentence structure has improved a lot. I am now more careful while using the language. I notice my own mistakes.]

Another area which was mentioned by both groups albeit with different frequencies was "morphology/word level". This is clearly the effect of the Morphology section of the LING II course since in this section, students are taught the different categories and sub-categories of morphemes, the groups of affixes, inflectional and derivational morphological processes, hierarchical structure of words and the morphological processes used to create new words. That is, this section focuses on decoding and grasping "the first trick, the word", which, according to Pinker (1999:1) is the first condition to understanding the "boundless expressive power" of our language.

More than one-fifth of Y4 (21.6%) and 15.8% of Y2 answers were related to this topic. Y4 students mainly talked about the effect of morphological knowledge on the improvement of their speaking skills (see Example 9) and language learning ability, while Y2 students' evaluations of the gains were more 'isolated'. That is, they talked about the fact that they learned about the structure of the words but in the bulk of their answers they did not connect it with any other area/topic (see Example 10). It looks as if the Morphology section of LING II developed Y4 students' synthetic morphological knowledge (i.e., the ability to rearrange/reassemble smaller meanings to create new words) more while it was more effective in improving Y2 students' analytic morphological knowledge (i.e., breaking down complex words into smaller meaningful units). Both of these areas, are, according to Khodadoust et al. (2013) and Morin (2003), important in broadening students' vocabulary knowledge in their foreign language. These findings also support Baumann et al.'s (2003) claim that knowledge of the morphological structure of words (e.g., knowing how to separate the prefix and suffix from the root) begets richer vocabulary and Anglin et al.'s (1993) statement that word knowledge plays an indispensable role in foreign language learning because it makes language comprehension and language production possible.

Example 9 (Year 4 student)

F60: *Özellikle morfoloji ve syntax bölümleri çok faydalı oldu. Kelimelerin yapısını bilmek bence konuşurken kelimeleri daha kolay hatırlamamızı ya da daha kolay seçmemizi, dolayısıyla daha akıcı konuşmamızı sağlıyor.*

[The morphology and syntax sections of the course were particularly useful. In my opinion, knowing the structure of the words makes it easier for us to remember or select them; this, in turn, makes our speech more fluent.]

Example 10 (Year 2 student)

M7: *Morphology: Dildeki kelimelerin nereden geldiğini nasıl oluştuğunu, bir kelimenin hangi eklere vs. sahip olduğunu öğrendik.*

[Morphology: We have learned where the words in a language come from, how they are formed, what kinds of affixes are there etc.]

The remaining three categories were mentioned only by one or the other group of participants. Y2 students argued that LING II considerably improved their overall language comprehension and use as well as their understanding of the available linguistics theories

while Y4 students, who did not mention these two areas at all, stated that LING II noticeably improved their language learning ability.

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to uncover the beliefs of second and fourth year pre-service language teachers related to the usefulness of the introductory linguistics courses in developing their language proficiency. The study focused on this topic because previous literature in the field had shown that above anything else 'good language teachers' need to know the foreign language that they are going to teach. Therefore, together with providing information about teaching methods, classroom management, assessment techniques and use of new technology, undergraduate programs training pre-service language teachers should make sure that the language proficiency of future teachers is consolidated and improved.

The results of the study show what an important role Linguistics courses could play in developing pre-service teachers' proficiency in the target language and how much they could contribute to the training of good ELT teachers. First, it has been shown that linguistics courses are the "primary antidote that academic linguistics can offer to commonly held, yet basically wrong-headed, views about language" (Spring et al., 2000:110). Students argued that linguistics courses introduce them to rigorous classifications of special aspects of human language, equipped them with the necessary eye for details, accuracy and metalanguage, which in turn, helped them gain a deeper and fuller understanding of the target language. Due to the clearer understanding of the workings of the language, according to the students, all of their foreign language skills but particularly their speaking and comprehension abilities had developed. Many of them argued that their ability to assemble appropriate utterances for the specific contexts, combine smaller morphemes into bigger more interesting units had been furthered while their ability to spot proper vs. deviant speech had be sharpened.

These gains are only evident, however, at the end of courses which are 'tailor made' for ELT students. The study supports claims put forward by researchers such as Correa (2014), Spring et al. (2000) and Treffers-Daller (2003) that the content and teaching approaches utilised to teach language students linguistics should be different from the ones taught in the Linguistics departments. The character of the linguistics courses should be meaningful to ELT students. These courses should allow pre-service teachers to "reflect upon the process of language learning itself" (Treffres-Daller, 2003:14), and should help them "distance themselves from traditional, superficial, previously-learned prescriptive grammar content" (Correa, 2014:164). The failure of the linguistics courses offered in the ELT departments to accommodate the needs of the students, results in them being feared, misunderstood and even evaluated as courses that should be moved to the periphery of the curricular. For that reason, lecturers teaching linguistics in the ELT department should find a way to make these courses more compelling for nonmajors.

The study also shows how eliciting various kinds of data and employing data analysis techniques that honour the voices of the participants could provide researchers with a more realistic, reliable and valid picture of the informants' beliefs and thoughts related to the examined topic.

Finally, the paper demonstrates the importance of working with the end-users (i.e., students) when the aim is to evaluate the processes and practices employed in a teacher training program. Even though changing the educational contexts is usually a multifaceted enterprise, uncovering what students' beliefs and evaluations are, may allow teacher trainers to act fast and amend flowed policies, negative beliefs and insufficient teacher training practices in the early stages of the training program.

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APPENDIX A: FLE Program at METU

FIRST YEAR

First Semester				**Second Semester**		
Code	**Name**	**Credits**		**Code**	**Name**	**Credits**
FLE 129	Introduction to Literature	(3-0)3		FLE 134	Contextual Grammar II	(3-0)3
FLE 133	Contextual Grammar I	(3-0)3		FLE 136	Advanced Reading & Writing II	(3-0)3
FLE 135	Advanced Reading and Writing I	(3-0)3		FLE 138	Oral Communication Skills	(3-0)3
FLE 137	Listening and Pronunciation	(3-0)3		FLE 140	English Literature I	(3-0)3
FLE 177	Second Foreign Language I	(3-0)3		**FLE 146**	**Linguistics I**	**(3-0)3**
EDS 200	Introduction to Education	(3-0)3		FLE 178	Second Foreign Language II	(3-0)3
TURK 103	Oral Communication	(2-0)2		TURK 104	Written Communication	(2-0)2
IS 100	Introduction to Information Technologies and Applications	NC				

SECOND YEAR

Third Semester				**Fourth Semester**		
Code	**Name**	**Credits**		Code	Name	Credits
FLE 238	Approaches to ELT	(3-0)3		FLE 200	Instructional Principles & Methods	(3-0)3
FLE 241	English Literature II	(3-0)3		FLE 221	Drama Analysis	(3-0)3
FLE 261	**Linguistics II**	**(3-0)3**		FLE 262	ELT Methodology I	(3-0)3
FLE 277	Second Foreign Language	(3-0)3		FLE 270	Contrastive Turkish-English	(3-0)3
EDS 220	Educational Psychology	(3-0)3		FLE 280	Oral Expression & Public Speaking	(3-0)3
CEIT 319	Instructional Technology & Materials Development	(3-0)3			Departmental Elective I	(3-0)3

THIRD YEAR

Fifth Semester				**Sixth Semester**		
Code	**Name**	**Credits**		**Code**	**Name**	**Credits**
FLE 304	ELT Methodology II	(3-0)3		FLE 308	Teaching English to Young Learners	(3-0)3
FLE 307	Language Acquisition	(3-0)3		FLE 324	Teaching Language Skills	(3-0)3
FLE 311	Adv. Writing & Research Skills	(3-0)3		FLE 352	Community Service	(3-0)3
FLE 315	Novel Analysis	(3-0)3		EDS 304	Classroom Management	(3-0)3
HIST 2201	Principles of Kemal Atatürk I	NC		EDS 416	Turkish Educational System & School Management	(3-0)3
	Departmental Elective II	(3-0)3		HIST 2202	Principles of Kemal Atatürk II	NC
	Non-Departmental Elective I	(3-0)3			Non-Departmental Elective II	(3-0)3

FOURTH YEAR

Seventh Semester				**Eighth Semester**		
Code	**Name**	**Credits**		**Code**	**Name**	**Credits**
FLE 405	Materials Adaptation and Development	(3-0)3		FLE 404	Practice Teaching	(2-6)5
FLE 413	English Language Testing & Evaluation	(3-0)3		FLE 426	The English Lexicon	(3-0)3
FLE 423	Translation	(3-0)3		EDS 424	Guidance	(3-0)3
FLE 425	School Experience	(1-4)3			Departmental Elective IV	(3-0)3
	Departmental Elective III	(3-0)3				