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English language testing and evaluation (ELTE) training in Turkey: expectations and needs of pre-service English language teachers

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Abstract

Assessment is one of the cornerstones of the educational process but perceptions and needs related to assessment are evolving and changing and might be context dependent. Therefore, foreign language teacher training programs should monitor, revise and regularly innovate their English Language Testing and Evaluation (ELTE) courses so that they prepare future teachers better for the challenges of language assessment in their specific contexts. In order to be able to prepare the best course syllabi, however, detailed information related to the plans, views and beliefs of students should be collected and carefully analysed. The aim of this study is to contribute to this field of research.

Data from 124 pre-service English language teachers using needs analysis survey questionnaires and interviews were collected between 2009 and 2012. The aim was to uncover what pre-service teachers in an English Language Teaching department knew about language testing and what they thought their ELTE course should include in terms of content and teaching methodology so that it prepares them better for their job as language teachers.

Results of the study illustrated the effect of local assessment cultures and contexts, and previous assessment experiences on pre-service teachers' perceived needs related to language assessment literacy. The findings also showed why lectures should work with their students if the aim is to create more useful ELTE courses.

Keywords: English Language Testing and Evaluation courses, language assessment literacy, needs analysis, perceived needs and beliefs of pre-service teachers, local assessment culture

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Introduction

Assessment plays a crucial role in the process of teaching and learning (Lam 2015:196). When it is done well it provides clear goals for language teaching and it reveals whether the learning process results in success or failure (Davies 1990; Dochy 2009; Kozhageldiyeva 2005). The problem is, however, that perceptions related to assessment and assessment needs are shifting (i.e., from behaviourism-based to constructivist-based assessment, Rueda & Garcia 1996) and together with these the knowledge base needed for successful testing and evaluation of students' performance in various contexts is changing (Inbar-Lorie 2008). Therefore, the programs training foreign language teachers should monitor their English Language Testing and Evaluation (ELTE) courses. They should regularly revise and adapt the existing courses and, if needed, should design new modules that will provide future teachers with the knowledge and skills in assessment that will increase the effectiveness and efficacy of learning in schools (Dochy & Sigers 2001; Hatipoğlu 2010, in press).

In Turkey, English language teachers (ELTs) are trained in the English Language Teaching Departments (ELTD) placed in the Faculties of Education. The graduates of these programs can become teachers at any level of the educational system in the country (i.e., primary, middle, high schools and universities). Therefore, the language assessment literacy (LAL) needs of the students even in the same cohort can vary widely as different students may be preparing to work with different groups of students. In the curriculum of the ELTD in Turkey there is only one ELTE course and the lecturers teaching this course are usually faced with the dilemma of what to cover (i.e., which topics should be included, how much time should be devoted to each of the topics, which coursebooks should be used) and how to proceed with the training of the teachers (e.g., more theory vs. more practice; how should the students' performance in ELTE course be evaluated) (Hatipoğlu 2010, 2013, in press; Hatipoğlu & Erçetin in press). Therefore, it is important to know the teaching plans of the pre-service teachers (i.e., where they are planning to work after graduation) so that the ELTE course caters for their needs. That is, it is essential to know how to prepare language teachers for their testing responsibilities.

In order to be able to prepare the best syllabi for the target-situation (i.e., ELTE course) and to support these with the appropriate teaching methods and materials, extensive consultation with pre-service teachers about their learning needs and interests is required (Brindley 1989; West 1994). The needs analysis (also called *needs assessment*) procedure allows instructors to gather information related to the beliefs, opinions and views of the learners that serves as the basis for the development of a curriculum/course syllabus that will meet the learning needs of the particular group of students (Pushpanatahn 2013; West 1994). When the needs analysis procedure is thoroughly performed, it leads to a number of positive developments in the teaching programs. First, it facilitates the creation of training programs which are more attuned to the needs of the trainees; and second, it enhances students' motivation and success since students are able to see how the curriculum content, materials and teaching methodologies are related to their perceived and actual needs. Given these facts, it is surprising that no study so far (as far as the author is aware) tried to uncover the needs of pre-service English Language Teachers (ELT) related to the area of assessment in Turkey. Therefore, this study aims to be the first step in filling in this gap and reports the findings of a

needs analysis survey that attempts to uncover the beliefs and perceived needs of the pre-service English language teachers in the ELTD at Middle East Technical University related to testing and evaluation.

Literature review

Language testing is a “notoriously difficult domain of knowledge for students in second language teacher education programs” due to the intricate balance between its highly abstract theoretical concepts and their practical applications (O’Loughlin 2006:71). In the recent years there is also an increased professional demand on teachers to accurately assess their pupils’ language development. Furthermore, research in various educational contexts has shown that “the typical teacher can spend as much as a third to a half of his or her professional time involved in assessment-related activities” (Crooks 1988; Dorr-Bremme 1983; Newsfields 2006; Olake 1993; Stiggins 1999:23). That is, “assessing student performance is one of the most critical responsibilities of classroom teachers” (Merter & Campbell 2005:1). Because of these, language teacher training programs around the world have started to offer compulsory or elective language testing courses as part of their curriculum (Bailey & Brown 1996; Brown & Bailey 2008; O’Loughlin 2006). However, many administrators and teacher educators find themselves confronted with the fundamental question as to what these courses should focus on so that future teachers are adequately equipped for their day-to-day work as assessors (Berger 2012). Despite these facts and given the importance of assessment literacy in second/foreign language teacher education, it is surprising that only few studies so far have been specifically devoted to the discussion of the development and evaluation of the ELTE courses offered in various programs (Bailey & Brown 1996; Brindley 2001; Brown & Bailey 2008; Hatipoğlu 2010; Inbar-Lourie 2008; Jin 2010; Johnson et al. 1999; Kleinsasser 2005; O’Loughlin 2006; Orr 2010).

Among the few studies related to this topic are the ones conducted by Bailey and Brown (1996), Brown and Bailey (2008) and Jin (2010). Those three studies aimed to uncover the basic features of the ELTE courses taught around the world and what lecturers teaching them thought students’ general attitudes were towards language testing courses (Bailey & Brown 1996; Brown & Bailey 2008; Jin 2010). Using questionnaires, Brown and Bailey showed that even though there was “a great deal of diversity in the sorts of language testing preparation provided to teachers” in the different teacher preparation programs (Bailey & Brown 1996:250), there was still a stable knowledge base related to testing and evaluation presented in the ELTE courses that was evolving and expanding, rather than shifting radically (Brown & Bailey 2008:371). Bailey and Brown’s claim was based on the fact that many of the most frequently taught topics in the ELTE courses in the 1996 and 2008 studies were overlapping and included classroom testing practice, measuring the different skills, item writing for different skills, test critique and test analysis, item content and item quality analysis, item discrimination, the basic descriptive statistics for central tendency and dispersion, the theoretical issues involved in reliability, and the overall strategies for demonstrating validity. When the lecturers’ participating in the studies were asked about their perceptions of students’ general attitudes toward ELTE courses, majority of them stated that they believed that their students thought that ELTE courses were interesting, useful and with a nice balance between theory and practice (Brown & Bailey 2008:364).

Jin's (2010) study focused on the ELTE courses in a particular country – China. She wanted to uncover what was being taught in the ELTE courses, how they were conducted and what the students thought of their necessity and usefulness. Jin (2010:566) reported that the ELTE courses in Chinese institutions were “relatively new, with a history of less than a decade”. They prioritised theory and practice in ELTE over educational and psychological measurement and gave little attention to classroom practices in test development and statistical analysis. The bulk of the lecturers (70%) who participated in her study stated that they combined instructor lectures with student practices in their classes, but Jin's analysis of the teaching content of the courses suggested that student practices occupied significantly smaller proportion of the instruction time. The results also showed that Chinese students taught these courses were necessary and were motivated to take them mainly due to their practical usefulness and theoretical value.

These three studies are clearly very valuable but they all collected ‘second hand data’ (i.e., asked lecturers what they thought their students thought about the ELTE courses) and did not give students a chance to voice their opinions. Therefore, a second group of ELTE course evaluation studies tried to overcome this limitation and gave students a chance to discuss their needs, beliefs and evaluations of the ELTE courses they took (Hatipoğlu 2010; Kleinsasser 2005; O'Loughlin 2006; Orr 2010).

The first of those studies was conducted by Kleinsasser (2005) and it discussed how the lecturer and the students worked together to change a postgraduate *Applied Linguistics and TESOL Studies Assessment and Testing* course from a content focused to a learner-centred teaching content focused course. The initial aim of the course was to “provide a survey of issues in language testing and assessment to give Master of Arts students experience in critiquing and developing second language (SL) assessment materials” (Kleinsasser 2005:81). To fulfil this objective, texts related to the basic rules for creating language tests, performance assessments, validity, educational assessment and its changes in general were read and discussed each week. Soon the lecturer and the students noticed, however, that there were two important problems (i.e., focusing on learning the material about language testing and assessment, and lack of materials that would help students learn about testing and assessment) that impeded the integration of theory and practice, and prevented the involvement of the teacher educator and students in material development. Therefore, learning and professional development was centred in practice and instead of just reading, discussing and participating in activities about texts, the lecturer and the students in this course “developed assessment materials while reading and discussing texts and participated in activities that encouraged the development of assessment materials” (Kleinsasser 2005:97). This in turn, helped them to see why Wenger (1998:52) claimed that “Practice is about meaning as an experience of everyday life”.

Another more recent study which emphasised the importance of collaborative learning for the improvement of ELTE courses was conducted by Orr (2010) who talked about an MA module in language testing offered by the University of Balamand, North Lebanon. Orr (2010) used student and lecturer diaries maintained during the progression of the course, students' projects and test reports, and data from interviews conducted with students six months after the completion of the course to assess the usefulness of the course content and its

potential practicality in students' later-life situations. The researcher reported that after the analysis of the collected material, he saw that even though all students were able to express themselves knowledgeably about the aims of assessment, students' (in)experience as teachers affected the quality and quantity of comments placed in students' diaries related to the techniques for assessing language proficiency. He also noted that even though all of the students were aware of Bachman and Palmer's (1996) criteria for evaluating test usefulness, it was apparent from students' entries, test evaluation reports and their interview transcripts that some of the criteria were more easily understood and more readily used in real contexts than the others. Third, when students' ability to apply the criteria for test usefulness to readymade language tests and their skills in using the criteria to inform their own writing of tests for use in school were evaluated, it was found that "students all showed an ability to make principle decisions" (Orr 2010:9) but the frequency with which the various criteria were mentioned or used varied widely. When Orr (2010) checked whether the students were able to successfully collaborate with each other and to reflect on their collaborative experiences, he found that even though students were aware of the benefits of collaborating with each other they replaced collaborative work with the "less useful, cooperative type of teamwork" from time to time (Orr 2010:10). Finally, he asked students whether they perceived the course as directly contributing to their work as teachers. Students evaluated the course as being useful for their development as teachers and they thought that thanks to it the separation between teaching and testing was 'broken down'.

In 2006, O'Loughlin published a paper which also focused on a postgraduate course titled *Assessment in the Language Classroom* taught in TESOL and Modern Languages programs at the University of Melbourne. The course had three main objectives: (i) to enable students to develop a thorough understanding of key concepts in second language assessment, (ii) to develop their ability to critically examine available assessment instruments, and (iii) to advance students' skills and knowledge to write or adapt assessment instruments for their specific teaching contexts. To achieve these goals the discussions of conceptual themes (e.g., social issues in language testing) and theoretical aspects of designing assessment tools were followed by practical exercise such as designing assessment tools for assessing various skills. To be able to monitor students' involvement with the content of the testing course and to enable students to actively reflect on class sessions in a supportive collaborative environment, an asynchronous online forum was offered to the students as an adjunct to the classroom sessions (O'Loughlin 2006:74-75). Twelve students coming from different countries and cultures (Australia, China, Fiji, Vietnam, Thailand) and having widely varying teaching and assessment experiences participated in the study and were asked to make regular (at least one substantial posting per week) written contributions to the forum (i.e., each student had to facilitate one week's discussion and be a respondent in the other weeks). Two of the students (one Australian and one international), who were regular and substantial contributors to the forum, were followed over the 12-week duration of the course. The aim in following their contributions was to examine how different students engaged with the content presented in the course. The findings of the study showed that students' capacity and readiness to understand and accept the new concepts and techniques presented to them during testing class were strongly influenced by two important factors: (i) their previous encounters with assessment

both as language learners and teachers, and (ii) the course design and quality of input received in the class sessions. Therefore, according to O'Loughlin (2006:84) it is of primary importance for "faculty staff to carefully consider their students' diverse cultural backgrounds, professional experiences and learning needs when planning and conducting their courses in second language teacher education programs".

When it comes to the evaluation of the ELTE courses in Turkey, as far as the author is aware, there is only one published research and it was conducted by Hatipoğlu in 2010. In her study, the author used questionnaires and interviews to elicit data related to pre-service English language teachers' evaluations of the ELTE course taught at METU, Ankara. Students were first, asked to list and talk about the topics covered during the course that they thought would positively contribute to their preparation as language teachers and, then, to list and discuss topics, methods, techniques that they thought should be changed so that the course becomes better. The findings of the study showed that the students considered the testing language skills/knowledge, reliability and validity topics as the most relevant ones to their future careers. They argued that there was one to one parallelism between the testing language skills/knowledge topics covered in class and the responsibilities in-service teachers were expected to take in foreign language classes. They argued that

F42: Teachers should know how to prepare tests assessing different skills because in Turkish schools skills are taught separately. If we teach skills separately, then we will need to test them separately (Hatipoğlu 2010:46).

The students also stated that learning about test reliability and validity would help them prepare fair tests measuring what they intended to measure.

When the students' suggestions for improvement were analysed it was seen that the most important problem, according to students, was the lack of enough practice opportunities in class. They asserted that more time should be devoted to evaluation and discussion of questions from various commercially available exams since this practice not only flagged the possible problems that they might encounter while writing exams but also improved their material selection skills. The students also thought that they should be required to write more than one test and that more time should be allocated to the discussion of the exam questions prepared by them. A group of students complained about crowded classes which, according to them, hindered productive class discussions while another group thought that it is not possible to cover all important topics related to ELTE in just one course. They argued that the ELTE course was central to their development as educators hence their suggestion to increase the number of ELTE course to at least two.

Methodology

Research questions

The research questions for which answers are sought in this study are:

- (1) What is the language testing and assessment training received by pre-service English Language teachers graduating from METU, Ankara?
- (2) What are the pre-service English Language teachers' expectations from an ELTE course in relation to its content and methodology?

Participants

Total of 124 (M=24, F=100) pre-service English language teachers at Middle East Technical University (METU) Ankara, Turkey participated in this study. Their age range was 19-25 and none of them had spent more than 6 months in a foreign country. Almost all of them were Anatolian Teacher Training High School graduates and all of them were planning to work as EL teachers after graduation.

Data collection

The data discussed in this study were collected between 2009 and 2012 and four cohorts of students were involved. The data collection procedures were needs analysis survey questionnaires and interviews. These tools aimed to uncover what pre-service teachers in an English Language Teaching department thought their testing and assessment needs were by stating what an undergraduate ELTE course should include in terms of content and teaching methodology so that it prepares them better for their job as language teachers.

The needs analysis questionnaire given to the students had three sections and was given to the students each year, at the beginning of the first session of the course. The first session of the course was chosen as a data collection day since the lecturer wanted to elicit pre-service teachers' ideas, beliefs and thoughts related to the course before they were exposed to any other information presented by her.

The first part of the questionnaire (i.e., Background Information) asked students to provide information related to their age, gender, permanent place of residence and previous education.

The aim of the second part of the questionnaire (i.e., Evaluation of the English Language Testing and Evaluation (ELTE) course in the program) was twofold: a) to collect information related to students' previous experience of assessment training and b) to elicit pre-service teachers' evaluations, beliefs, thoughts and feelings of the ELTE course offered in the department. The following four questions were included in this section of the questionnaire:

- (1) Have you ever taken any 'English Language Testing and Evaluation' (ELTE) courses before?
- (2) There is only ONE ELTE Course in the English Language Teaching Curriculum. Do you think it is enough? Explain your answer.

(3) The ELTE Course in your curriculum is placed in the 7th semester. Do you think that its place in the curriculum is correct? Explain your answer.

(4) Do you think that taking an ELTE Course would help you develop as a future English/foreign language teacher? Explain your answer.

The objective of the last part of the questionnaire (i.e., Testing and assessment needs) was to uncover what pre-service teachers thought their testing and assessment needs were. Therefore, they were asked to first, list five topics which, in their opinion, **MUST** be taught in an ELTE Course and, then, to explain how these would help them with their future careers.

After the analysis of the needs analysis questionnaire data, to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions of how course-based language testing and evaluation training promotes language assessment literacy, focus group interviews with selected participants were conducted so that pre-service English language teachers' views, attitudes and suggestions were understood more clearly. In order to allow informants to express their views and beliefs related to language testing and assessment better the main language of the interviews was Turkish but English was frequently used by informants while discussing various topics. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed to elicit more detailed information related to the pre-service teachers' opinions of the design, content and methodology of the ELTE course so that it contributed more to their language assessment literacy and they became better language teachers.

Data analysis

The data collected for this study were varied and required different analysis techniques. Part of the answers were structured and coming from questionnaires. These quantitative data were analysed using SPSS.

The remaining information was elicited via open ended questions and semi structured interviews. Since there is no canonical approach to qualitative data analysis, it is usually more problematic than the analysis of quantitative data. Therefore, an appropriate coding system had to be found. After scrutiny of the literature, it was decided to follow the procedures recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994: 58-69) who warn researchers to always keep in mind the research questions and aims of the study. Hence, the initial step was to design a data-coding matrix using the topics included in the course outline. Thus, a priory coding matrix was created since it was believed that it would help the researcher answer one of the main research questions of the study (i.e., What are the perceived needs of the students related to the ELTE course offered in the department?) and would also make a solid foundation for a scheme that would allow the addition of inductive coding categories coming from the students' data.

Results and discussions

The first research question aimed to uncover information related to the language testing and assessment training received by pre-service English Language teachers graduating from METU, Ankara. The question that participants had to answer was “Have you ever taken any ELTE course before?” and the data presented in Table 1 shows striking information related to students’ experience with ELTE training. The answers given by the students revealed that 90.3% of the students who graduated between 2009 and 2012 were given the right to become English language teachers after taking just one ELTE course. This result is parallel to the ones reported by Haznedar (2012) who collected data related to the background education of English language teachers working in state primary schools in Istanbul and found that only 31.8% of those teachers had taken any course on testing and evaluation during their undergraduate training. The meaning of these is that the majority of the teachers working in Turkish public schools lack basic training related to one of the most important parts of the educational process (i.e., testing and evaluation).

Table 1

Pre-service English Language Teachers’ Experience with ELTE Training

QUESTIONS	<u>YES</u>		<u>NO</u>		<u>DON'T KNOW</u>	
	N	%	NO	%	N	%
1. Have you ever taken any ELTE courses before?	12	9.7	112	90.3		
2. Do you think that taking an ELTE Course would help you develop as a future English/foreign language teacher?	122	98.4	2	1.6		
3. There is only ONE ELTE Course in the English Language Teaching Curriculum. Do you think it is enough?	66	53.3	53	42.7	5	4

This finding is also alarming mainly due to the following two reasons. First, language assessment is a broad and “notoriously difficult domain of knowledge” (O’Loughlin 2006:71) which includes highly abstract theoretical concepts that trainee teachers should have a sound understanding of. After presenting the theoretical materials to the students, teacher trainers have to make sure that the following seven domains related to the area of assessment are well developed so that the practicing teachers are able to design reliable and valid assessment instruments (The American Federation of Teachers, the National Council on Measurement in Education, and the National Education Association 1990; <http://buos.org/standards-teacher-competence-educational-assessment-students>).

The in-service teachers should be:

- (1) ready to choose assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions;
- (2) skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions;
- (3) ready to administer, score and interpret the results of both externally produced and teacher produced assessment methods;
- (4) able to use assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and improving schools;

- (5) competent in developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessment;
- (6) skilled in communicating assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences and other educators;
- (7) experienced in recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information.

The question is whether or not it is possible to achieve all these in a single course.

When asked whether they thought that taking an ELTE course would help them with their professional development (i.e., Question 2), all but two students replied “Yes” (98.4%, 122/124). Students’ explanations related to this positive answer showed that they were actually aware of the importance of testing in their jobs and knew how much would be expected from them in relation to assessment when they started working as teachers. Maybe because of these, a group of students insistently talked about the importance of testing in language education during their interviews:

F92: I think evaluation is a very important part of ELT, since students will show us whether they learned what we taught them or not. So developing appropriate tests for evaluation is very important, that’s why I think this course is beneficial for me.

While another group of students pointed at the heavy load related to testing awaiting for them in the schools where they were planning to work

F65: As future teachers, we will be faced with a lot of exams, questions, tests etc. and we should know how to evaluate our students.

This finding of the study supports Fulcher (2012) and O’Loughlin (2006) who claimed that trainee teachers’ familiarity with test processes in the given context and their prior experience with assessment as language learners would affect their views about the field of assessment. All of the participants in this study were educated in Turkey and they knew well that the “Turkish education system is very examination oriented” (Hatipoğlu 2010:43). Throughout their education in primary, secondary and high schools, they had to take a big number of compulsory classroom exams (e.g., at least a midterm and a final exam every semester). In order to gain entry to any of the more prestigious schools or tertiary institutions, students also had to take the various centralised exams (e.g., The Level Identifying Exams-SBS, The Student Selection Examination-ÖSS) administered by the Ministry of Education or the Student Selection and Placement Centre in Turkey. Therefore, they knew well how much work related to assessment they would need to do when they started working as teachers in schools; hence, their positive answers to Question 2.

Despite these, at the beginning of the term before taking the ELTE course, a big number of students (42.7%, 53/124) answered Question 3 (i.e., There is only ONE ELTE Course in the English Language Teaching Curriculum. Do you think it is enough?) positively. They stated that just one ELTE course was enough and that there was not a need for another testing and evaluation course in the curriculum. Analysis of the explanations of the students who answered Question 3 positively showed that factors such as unfamiliarity with the field of

testing and evaluation (i.e., the fact that they had not taken a testing and evolution course before) (as in F83's and F100's answers) and lack of experience in creating tests (see F14's answer) might have affected their responses.

F83: I just assume yes, because I haven't taken the course before.

F100: I think it is enough. I have not taken this course before but I think a semester is enough to cover things on Foreign Language Testing and Evaluation.

F14: I think it is enough in terms of learning the basic steps of preparing tests to evaluate the students' learning process.

In the second section of the questionnaire, students were asked to do two things: first, to list five topics they thought must be taught in an ELTE course so that they are better prepared for their jobs as language teachers and then, to explain how the topics they listed would help them with their future careers. The students were asked to share their views and suggestions related to the content of the course, since according to Newfields (2006:51), "the biggest challenge in promoting assessment literacy seems to be convincing end-users that the topic is actually worth learning".

Instead of the expected 620 topics, only 185 items were listed by the students. The more surprising fact about this finding was that 61.3% (76/124) of the participants did not or maybe could not write any topics (see Table 2) that they thought should be included in an ELTE course. Only 27.5% (34/124) of the pre-service teachers mentioned 4 or 5 topics while the rest of the students were able to list only 1-3 topics. This result supports Bailey and Brown's (1996) and Jones's (1985:16) claims that language testing is a "sub-profession within language teaching" and that its "level of sophistication has become so great that an understanding gap has emerged between the testing specialist and their colleagues in other areas of language teaching". That is, if we expect language teachers to gather dependable information related to their students' progress then they need to be carefully and systematically trained in language assessment concepts, techniques and strategies (Stiggins 2002).

Table 2
Number of Topics Listed by Students

PART B Instruction: List **FIVE** topics which, in your opinion, must be taught in an ELTE Course and explain how these will help you with your future career

N OF TOPICS LISTED	N OF STUDENTS	%
0	76	61.3
1	4	3.2
2	6	4.8
3	4	3.2
4	13	10.5
5	21	17
TOTAL	124	100

When the topics listed by the students were examined it was seen that they could be gathered in nine categories (see Table 3). More than one-fourth of the students (27.1%, 50/185) were not able to list even one specific topic related to testing and evaluation to be taught in an ELTE course, so, they put down answers such as ‘*F15: An ELTE course should teach us how to evaluate/test our students*’. That is, students thought that the course should teach them the general/basics rules of testing but what these were, was not known. The fact that, after more than a decade of learning English and taking numerous exams those students did not have any specific topics or techniques related to testing in mind was surprising. It looks as if this finding of the study supports Jin’s (2010:556) claim that language teachers are not born testers and “they need to be thoroughly trained in language assessment concepts, skills and strategies”. If they are not trained well, instead of creating test that will help educators collect, synthesize and interpret information that will aid educational decision making (Airasian 1994), the results will be tests that lack reliability and validity. Köksal (2004) and Sarıçoban (2011) examined the tests prepared by English language teachers working in primary and secondary schools in Çanakkale and Ankara, respectively, and both concluded that the exams had serious reliability and validity problems and that teachers should be given in-service training related to testing and evolution.

Table 3
Topics Listed by the Students

	TOPICS	N	%
1.	General (e.g., how to evaluate/test our students)	50	27.1
2.	Testees (e.g., characteristics of target group, effect of age on testing, young learners, advanced students)	40	21.6
3.	Specific Topics (e.g., how to test relativisation, compound N, idioms)	30	16.2
4.	Testing skills (e.g., testing speaking, reading, listening)	25	13.5
5.	Types of testing techniques (e.g., how to prepare MCI, cloze tests, fill-in-the blanks, classic question-answer)	15	8.1
6.	Theoretical knowledge (e.g., theories of LT, SLA)	12	6.5
7.	Test administration (e.g., when is the most appropriate time to test students, how should the students be seated)	8	4.3
8.	Test score evaluation (e.g., good or bad questions, statistics)	3	1.6
9.	Alternative ways of testing (e.g., portfolios)	2	1.1
	TOTAL	185	100

Forty students (21.6%) stated that the course must focus on testing groups with different characteristics (e.g., young learners vs. adults). This answer might be a result of a number of interrelated factors. First, graduates of the ELTD in Turkey have the right to work with any group of students and they might be willing to work with a specific age group. But, if they want to work in public schools, they can choose neither the school nor the group of students they will work with. Appointment of teachers to public schools in Turkey is a centralised procedures and it depends on the scores candidates get from the Public Personnel Selection Exam (i.e., KPSS) prepared by the Student Selection and Placement Centre (ÖSYM) in

Ankara. The school to which the candidates are appointed might not be the kind of school they were planning to work at or it could be a schools including primary, middle and high school sections and they might be asked to teach at every level. Therefore, pre-service teachers have to be prepared to work with all groups of students. Another factor affecting their responses might be the material discussed in courses such as *Language Acquisition* and *Teaching English to Young Learners* where they are discussing both the language development of individuals with different age groups and the various classroom methods and techniques that could be used to teach foreign languages to young learners. That is, because of some of the courses they had taken, they might be aware of the fact that the effective testing and evaluation procedures for young learners are different from those that work with adults. In sum, it could be claimed that students' local and educational contexts affected the way they approached the items in the needs analysis questionnaire.

Topics such as creating tests assessing students' knowledge on different topics (26.2%, 30/185; e.g., simple past vs. present perfect tense) or skills (13.5%, 25/185; e.g., listening, reading, speaking, writing) were also mentioned by a relatively big group of participants while two small groups of students stated that different techniques of testing (e.g., Multiple Choice Items, cloze tests) (8.1%; 15/185) and theoretical knowledge related to the field of testing (6.5%, 12/185) should be taught in an ELTE course. Only two students (1.1%) suggested that alternative ways of testing (e.g., portfolios) should be included in the course.

Results reported by Haznedar (2012), who worked with 538 primary school teachers, can be used to complement and explain the findings in this section of the study. Haznedar (2012) found that the majority of primary schools teachers who participated in her study were still using outdated written exams (98.9%), drills (80.2%) and multiple choice questions (78.2%) to evaluate the performance of young learners. It looks as if their teachers did not have time (Sarıçoban 2011) to talk about process oriented assessment and innovative techniques such as preparing/creating portfolios, picture dictionaries, maps, poems, stories, puzzles and successfully taking place in role-plays, games, reading sessions etc. (Cameron 2001; McKay & Guse 2007; Phillips et al. 1999). Lack of sufficient training, according to Köksal (2004:3), also led to the semantic narrowing of the word *test* in Turkey and now it only means "multiple choice tests" for many English language teachers. In this group too, students envisaged the ELTE course as the one that should prepare them to create classic pen-and-paper exams taking place in big scary rooms. This again shows how teachers' background and learning experiences can affect the way they teach and assess English in class (Cheng 1999).

The results of the current study also have partial and interesting relation to the findings of Kıkğöz and Ağçam's (2012) study where the researchers examined the written assessment practices of 25 primary school teachers teaching 4th and 5th grade students in public schools in Adana before and after the educational curriculum reform in 2005. The teachers who participated in Kıkğöz and Ağçam's (2012) study, differently from the teachers in Haznedar's (2012) study, used a bigger number of Constructed Response Items (CRI) (81%) in their exams than Selected Response Items (SRI) (Brown & Hudson 1998). The most frequently utilized CRI techniques by the teachers were translation, question word question, Yes/No questions and sentence completion. SRI items such as matching and multiple choice items

were used much more rarely by the teachers in Kıkğöz and Ağçam's (2012) study. So, even though a small number of the pre-service teachers who participated in our study talked about the need of learning various assessment techniques, it was good to know that at least some of the students were aware of the importance of variety for eliciting a more realistic evaluation of the students' progress with various characteristics.

Eleven students thought that topics such as test administration (4.3%; 8/185) and test score evaluation (1.6%; 3/185) should be part of the ELTE course and this relatively small number of answers, according to Cizek at al. (1996:160) is related to the fact that "in contrast to the recent attention to information gathering, comparatively little attention has been given to information reporting" (i.e., scoring/grading of exams). What these researchers argue is that this topic should be examined more closely by teacher trainers and experts since despite all of the attempts to change and standardize assessment procedures grades are still assigned 'widely and unpredictably' by teachers (Cizek at al. 1996:161).

Conclusions

The aim of this study was to uncover what pre-service English language teachers knew about foreign language testing and to elicit what their perceived training needs were (i.e., asked students what their expectations from an ELTE course were). The results of the study not only revealed intriguing facts related to the training of pre-service teachers in the field of language testing but also provided a broad picture of what would be happening in these students' classes when they become teachers since "assessment practices and purposes are mostly affected by teachers' beliefs and attitudes about assessment" (Han & Kaya 2014:77).

First, it was found that almost all of the students (90.3%) would be expected to evaluate, select and write English language tests as well as to prepare their students for various national and international language exams based on a single ELTE course they would take at the university. This finding raises questions related to the readiness of those future teachers to deal with the testing requirements that are waiting for them and support Stiggins' (2002:762) claim that "Few teachers are prepared to face the challenges of classroom assessment because they have not been given the opportunity to learn to do so".

Second, the results showed, as predicted by O'Loughlin (2006), that the local context (i.e., the Turkish educational system being exam oriented), the local assessment culture (i.e., what, why and how is assessment used) and students' prior experience with assessment as language learners may affect students' beliefs about ELTE training and the perceived level of centrality of such training for their professional development.

Third, it was shown that after taking numerous English language exams and being trained for four years in the ELTD at METU, students still had very limited knowledge about testing in general and English language testing in particular. Even though they believed that an ELTE course would contribute positively to their professional development more than half of them (53.3%) thought that just one course would be enough to prepare them for the challenges of the testing expected from them. What is more almost two thirds of the students could not suggest a single topic for inclusion in the ELTE course syllabus. This result was

surprising, if not alarming, since with the obvious importance of language testing and assessment in Turkey, a serious lack of professional knowledge and training among language teachers, may lead to deepening discrepancies between the ‘new learning cultures’ targeted in the educational curriculum reforms in 2005 and 2014, and the traditional testing and assessment practices followed by teachers in Turkey. If this turns out to be the case, then the ultimate goal of employing assessment “with the aim of improving learning” (Brindley 2001:127) becomes difficult, if not impossible to reach.

The topics listed for inclusion in the ELTE course demonstrated that old beliefs about testing and evaluation are perpetuated by new generations of teachers and that they defined the field only within the domain of ‘testing’ and overlooked ‘evaluation’ as well as ‘assessment’ (see Inbar-Lourie 2008 for a detailed discussion about the difference between ‘language testing’ and ‘language assessment’ courses). Therefore, it is time to give language testing and evaluation training the importance it deserves in our teacher training programs so that the educational system in Turkey progresses in the right direction.

The data for this study were collected from a single institution in a single country but we believe that the findings of this study are relevant to the wider contexts of undergraduate assessment courses and professional development of students training to become language teachers. What is more, the result of the current study could guide the decisions of lecturers teaching ELTE courses at the universities, assessment professionals and administrators, and curriculum developers as well as future employers.

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