

## A Comparative Analysis on the ELT Graduate Course Syllabi between a Turkish University and an American University\*

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### Abstract

Syllabus is an important and indispensable part of teaching. Further, it has a crucial role in motivating and inspiring not only teachers but also learners. When looking at the English language teaching (ELT) programs, syllabus design and application appears to be an important factor in the level of graduate education as in other levels of education. This study aimed to investigate the syllabi for five ELT graduate courses between Turkey and United States to see whether there were any similarities and differences regarding student learning objectives (SLOs), course requirements and course contents. For this purpose, this study compared syllabus designs in two higher educations for five MA and PhD courses in Turkey and the United States. The number of the syllabi for both settings are ten in total. Although the titles of the courses in Turkey and the USA may not be the same, they are counterparts. The data about ELT graduate courses were collected from the universities separately. After collecting the data, document analysis technique was used and several themes were identified. The results showed that the syllabi in the USA seem to have more comprehensive, practical and applicable designs in comparison to the syllabi in Turkey. In addition, classroom observations and informal conversations can indicate the applicability of the syllabus design in the USA whereas this may not be the case in Turkey all the time. In conclusion, it seems that the ELT graduate syllabi in the USA create a classroom environment which is more conducive to teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** ELT graduate courses, syllabi, Turkey, United States, qualitative study

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# Türk ve Amerikan Üniversiteleri Arasında İngiliz Dili Eğitimi

## Lisansüstü Ders Müfredatı Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz

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### Öz

Ders programları eğitim-öğretimin önemli ve ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır. Bununla birlikte öğretmen ve öğrencileri motive etmede oldukça önemi bir rol oynarlar. İngilizce öğretim programlarını (ELT) ele aldığımızda müfredat tasarımı ve uygulaması tıpkı diğer eğitim düzeylerinde olduğu gibi lisansüstü eğitimde de önemli bir etmendir. Bu çalışmada Amerika ve Türkiye’de okutulan beş lisansüstü ELT dersine ait programlar arasında öğrencilerin öğrenme hedefleri, ders gereksinimleri ve içerikleri bakımından bir farklılık ya da benzerlik olup olmadığı incelenmiştir. Bu amaçla Amerika ve Türkiye’de yüksek lisans ve doktora yüksek öğretim programlarına ait beş ders programı kıyaslanmıştır. Toplamda 10 müfredat ele alınmıştır. Seçilen derslerin isimleri her ne kadar Türkiye ve Amerika’da farklı olsa da içerik olarak birbirlerine eş değer derslerdir. ELT müfredatı ile alakalı veriler üniversitelerden ayrı ayrı toplanmıştır. Veri toplama sürecini takiben belge analiz tekniği kullanarak farklı temalar belirlenmiştir. Sonuçlar, Türkiye ile kıyaslandığında Amerika’da uygulanan müfredatların daha kapsamlı, pratik ve uygulanabilir bir tasarıma sahip olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Buna ek olarak, sınıf gözlemleri ve yapılan enformel görüşmeler Amerika’da uygulanan müfredatların Türkiye bağlamında uygulanabilir olmadığını da ortaya çıkarmıştır. Sonuç olarak, Amerika’da uygulanan ELT lisansüstü müfredatının eğitim-öğretim için daha uygun bir sınıf ortamı yarattığı söylenebilir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** İngiliz dili eğitimi lisanüstü dersleri, müfredat, Türkiye, Amerika, nitel çalışma

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## **1. Introduction**

Among the various aspects of foreign language teaching, although it has been ignored much, curriculum or syllabus design is one of the most important areas. Yalden (1983) states that “in any case, teachers of English as a second language are on the whole more used to thinking about methodology rather than about syllabus design” (p. 17). According to Krahnke (1987), language teaching syllabi is a linguistic, grammatical, semantic or informational matter which makes up the teaching. To put it another way, course syllabus can be defined as a kind of written text or document between the stakeholders and provides a way to lead the teaching smoothly. Altman (1999) proposes that the syllabus is a guide for faculty and students, but that it can achieve that goal only if sufficient information is provided. In the literature, there is a clear-cut difference between curriculum and syllabus, the former covers the latter one, in which curriculum is more comprehensive and general than syllabus, which is concrete and specific. Generally, curriculum refers to “what schools teach ... a specific educational activity planned for a particular student for a particular point of time” (Eisner, 2002, p. 25). But, the main focus is not on this distinction here. Rather, this study tries to understand the ELT syllabus design regarding SLOs, course requirements and contents by comparing two contexts.

There are some recent studies related to teacher involvement, cooperative study and needs analysis for the purpose of preparing syllabi. For example, in a qualitative study about teacher involvement in the USA carried out Sharkey (2004) found that teachers’ contextual contribution and involvement enhances the process of preparing an effective curriculum. Similarly, Sezgin (2007) in the Turkish context investigated teachers’ attitudes towards a new tool which is followed by the stages such as needs analysis, training and evaluating in a case study concluding that these processes help teachers develop positive attitudes towards preparing curriculum and syllabus.

There are not so many studies regarding ELT graduate programs in Turkey. One of the studies related to ELT MA program was conducted by Kırmızı and Sarıçoban (2013) which investigated the professional targets and motives of ELT students embarking on their academic careers. There are also some studies related to existing English teaching program and evaluations. For example, Karataş (2007) investigated the syllabus of English II in Modern Languages Department at a Turkish state university. In the same vein, the research conducted by Erozan (2015) examined the undergraduate courses of the Department of ELT in a university context. To my knowledge, however, there is no research that directly compares the ELT graduate programs between Turkey and another country. In this respect, this study tries to fill the gap in ELT graduate syllabus.

In the literature review, there are so many definitions and sub-sections of syllabus related to curriculum design. Firstly, there is a need to make a distinction between curriculum and syllabus. A curriculum can be defined as “the whole body of knowledge that children acquire in schools” (Richards, 2001, p. 39). In other words, it is more related to principles and procedures of the whole program, that can be called an umbrella term which is about materials, methodology and evaluation. According to Brumfit (1980), a syllabus is defined as:

a way of describing something which must be learnt for pedagogic purposes, and the chief characteristic of an educational institution is its focusing function; that is, an educational institution acts as a physical and temporal focus for learning. The limitations in time and place provide the major differences between formal and informal learning: there is an implicit promise in setting up an educational institution to use procedures that will in

some sense be more efficient than the more or less random ones of informal learning in the world outside. And a syllabus is a statement of efficient learning (p. 57).

As a necessary part of educational progress in all kinds of teaching not just ELT graduate courses, syllabus and its design and implementation are of vital importance. From my point of view, syllabus is a kind of written document or a kind of communication between the teachers / instructors and learners and it should be coherent, realistic, adaptable, applicable and well-integrated. In relation to coherent syllabus, Darling- Hammond (2006) clearly underlines the importance of a coherent syllabus in the following lines:

...course work in highly successful programs is carefully sequenced based on a strong theory of learning to teach; courses are designed to intersect with each other, are aggregated into a well-understood landscape of learning, and are tightly interwoven with the advisement process and students' work in schools. Subject matter learning is brought together with content pedagogy through courses that treat them together; program sequences also create cross-course links... (p. 223).

Taking the literature into account, some common approaches to syllabus can easily be seen such as structural syllabi, situational syllabi, notional-functional syllabi, core and spiral syllabi, *relational syllabi*, *lexical syllabi*, *task-based syllabi*, *skills-based syllabi*, *content-based syllabi*.

It is not my primary aim to discuss the syllabus types / approaches or its classifications. Rather, it is to explore and shed light on the comparisons ELT graduate course syllabi in regard to two contexts. The primary purpose of this study is to identify and explore the student learning objectives (SLOs), course requirements and contents of ELT graduate syllabi in the contexts of Turkey and United States. The rationale behind searching this topic was the nearly lack of systematicity and flexible applicability of the ELT graduate syllabi in Turkey. Further, another rationale for carrying out this study is to observe and analyze ELT graduate courses in two contexts in order to have a broader perspective. The purpose of this study is two-fold: First, it is important to reveal any syllabus-wise differences and similarities between Turkish and USA contexts. Second, there has not been much research which investigates the syllabus design and its applicability in Turkey within the field of ELT. Depending on these reasons, the aims of the study were:

1. to identify and compare SLOs in terms of five ELT graduate courses in two higher education systems
2. to explore the course requirements and contents
3. to make implications and draw conclusions for future syllabi designs

## 2. Method

The data for this study came from a variety of ELT graduate syllabi collected from two universities. Five ELT graduate course syllabi called as (a) Program Evaluation, (b) Second Language Acquisition & Bilingualism, (c) Theory and Practice in Teaching and Learning of ESOL/Foreign Languages, (d) Implementing Innovation in TESOL and Foreign Languages and (e) Language & Literacy in Education in the United States were collected for the data probing SLOs, course requirements and contents. In addition to this, (a) Program Evaluation in ELT, (b) Language Acquisition, (c) Concepts and Theoretical Considerations in ELT, (d) Material Evaluation and Development and (e) Approaches to ELT Teacher Education courses were collected for the data

in Turkey, respectively. Table 1 shows course names, course levels, credits/hours etc. in Turkish and American university.

**Table 1. Courses names, course level and other information about syllabi in Turkey and the USA**

Turkish						USA				
N	Course name	Course level	Credit	Attendance and Participation	Restrictions	Course name	Course level	Credit	Attendance and Participation	Restrictions
1	Language Acquisition	MA	3	No information given, even in evaluation part	N/A	SLA and Bilingualism	MA and PhD	3	%15	None
2	Program Evaluation in ELT	MA and PhD	3	Attendance and active participation is expected of all enrolled	N/A	Program Evaluation	MA	3	%10	Doctoral students or students in program evaluation certification, or by permission of instructor; NO AUDITS
3	Concepts and Theoretical Considerations in ELT	MA and PhD	3	Students are required to attend all class sessions; absences should have legitimate	N/A	Theory and Practice in Teaching and Learning of ESOL/Foreign Languages	PhD	3	%25	Pre-service teachers must take this course concurrently

document ation										
4	Material Evaluation and Development	MA and PhD	3	No informati on given, even in evaluatio n part	N/A	Implement ing Innovation in TESOL and Foreign Languages	MA	3	%20	Pre- service teachers must take this course concurr ently with their student teaching experie nces
5	Approach es to ELT Teacher Education	MA and PhD	3	%10	N/A	Language & Literacy in Education	MA and PhD	3	%17	None

By looking this table, it can be said that attendance / participation and restriction part between Turkey and American syllabi seems different. The American syllabi pays attention to attendance / participation criteria too much and this information is given at the very beginning of the documents, whereas this part is not given much attention in Turkey syllabi even in the evaluation part. Another point about the table is related to restriction part. In this selected American university, every student needs to take some prerequisite courses in order to attend the following ones, that is, they are connected to each other or in other words, there is a kind of consecutive process in the syllabus design. However, this does not always appear in Turkish university syllabi, there is even no information about this issue in the syllabi.

The researcher completed PhD education and so had already ELT syllabi in hand, took already ELT graduate classes and made informal conversations with at least ten lecturers in Turkey and in the USA from different universities. The data also came from 5 classroom observations and several informal conversations with ELT lecturers in order to provide the triangulation of the study, which can be regarded as a strategy or a test for improving the validity and reliability of qualitative research or evaluation of findings. The researcher took five graduate courses as an audit and had the chance to audit a few ELT graduate classes and observe them as a guest and make informal conversations with the eight lecturers in the USA. The researcher was in the United States while writing and preparing this paper. So, the researcher had the chance to arrange these conversations mostly via email and met them in their offices and sometimes stopped by their offices if they were suitable and these conversations lasted approximately 40-50 minutes in length. Some of the questions addressed in these informal conversations were as follows:

1. How do you prepare and organize your syllabus?
2. How do you determine the course requirements?
3. Do you follow up your syllabus strictly?

4. What kind of criteria do you use and apply in your syllabus?

The collected data were analyzed by using document analysis procedure in the context of actual research experiences. Prior (2003) conducted an extensive work about the use of documents in research and claims that "in most social scientific work, of course, documents are placed at the margins of consideration" (p. 4). According to Brown (2009), regardless of whether the document is printed or online, document analysis can be called a kind of systematic analysis of reviewing and evaluating the documents. As stated, in data analysis, document analysis procedure was employed to compare the student learning objectives (SLOs), course requirements and contents. The documents were analyzed using constant comparative analysis in order to identify the themes and then they were coded inductively related to SLOs, course requirements and contents, lastly overarching themes were determined and implications were given. Brown (2009) stated that "the rationale for document analysis lies in its role in methodological and data triangulation, the immense value of documents in case study research, and its usefulness as a standalone method for specialized forms of qualitative research" (p. 29).

One of the qualitative research methods, document analysis is mostly used with the combination of other qualitative research techniques, so the researcher used triangulation, which is "the combination of the study in the same phenomenon" (Denzin, 1970, p. 291). Thus, in order to obtain validity and reliability of the data, the researcher used triangulation. As it is widely known, as a validity procedure, "triangulation is a step taken by researchers employing only the researcher's lens, and it is a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas" (Creswell & Miller, 1994, p. 127).

### **3. Findings**

The findings of the study indicated that comparison of the two universities' ELT graduate course syllabi between Turkey and the USA in terms of SLOs, course requirements and contents has some considerable contributions to ELT field in terms of syllabus design.

Taking five ELT graduate course syllabi into consideration, first of all, it can be said that each syllabus does not have a general template which is valid for both settings. However, there are some similarities and differences in each setting for different courses. For example, the syllabi in Turkey are generally made up of these elements: (a) course description, (b) requirements, (c) assessment, (d) evaluation, (e) weekly schedule, (f) supplementary texts. However, the syllabi examined in the USA include (a) course objectives, (b) course requirements, (c) recommended engagement, (d) class format, (e) class etiquette, (f) classroom community, (g) grading criteria, (h) course schedule, (i) additional readings/videos, (j) academic integrity/honesty, (k) assignments. It can be said that the syllabi in Turkey have limited scope while the syllabi in the USA are more comprehensive, evident and applicable in terms of SLOs, course requirements and contents.

The overarching themes obtained from the syllabi regarding SLOs, course requirements and contents are such as research, evaluation, innovation, feedback, interaction, academic integrity, critical thinking, instruction, culture, contemporary, practice and group discussion. In relation to this, the following table shows the frequency distribution.

**Table 2. Frequency distribution of overarching themes in Turkish and American ELT syllabi**

<i>Overarching themes</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>f</i>	
		<i>Turkish</i>	<i>American</i>
Evaluation	18	%26	23
(Group) discussion	17	%24	9
Research	16	%23	18
Feedback/reflection	7	%10	15
Instruction	4	%6	13
Culture	3	%4	13
Interaction	2	%3	13
Critical (thinking)	2	%3	4
Practice	1	%1	10
Innovative	0	%0	5
Contemporary/current	0	%0	9
Academic Integrity / Class etiquette	0	%0	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>%100</b>	<b>138</b>

Looking at the table in terms of overarching themes, it can be said that innovative, contemporary / current and academic integrity / class etiquette are never used in the syllabi of the Turkish university, however they are available in almost every syllabus examined in this study. Again, while feedback and interaction themes are used highly in American syllabi, there is a lot of usages in the Turkish syllabi. However, group discussion is highly used in Turkish university syllabi. The following sections give the findings about SLOs, course requirements and contents and classroom observations and informal conversations.

### 3.1. Findings about SLOs

The findings about SLOs in Turkey's ELT syllabi indicated that SLOs and course objectives are given in one or two paragraphs without putting so much attention to the writing process regarding objectives. In relation to the course objectives, Çakır (2007) stated that The Higher Education Council in Turkey determines the objectives, however, English course syllabus is not clearly specified, which needs to be designed in order to attain the objectives. In addition, it can be said that more general writing and information is used while forming the objectives, that is, it is not much specific to the point. However, in the USA, the objectives and students learning objectives are given item by item and it is more specific, that is, to the point. Further, the lecturers in the US made some remarks about SLOs stating that course objectives are the essential part in the syllabus and they should be placed at the very beginning of the syllabi and given item by item which is related to the writing process about objectives. Thus, this situation can easily be seen in the syllabi examined in detail.



The following figures show SLOs examples related to both contexts.

### **Course Objectives**

- To develop an understanding of the factors that affect second language acquisition (WS standards 1, 2, 4; TESOL standard 1.b; ACTFL standard 3a)
- To become familiar with current thought in second and foreign language pedagogy, cross-cultural issues in language education, and how second/foreign language classrooms operate (WS standards 2, 3; TESOL standards 2.a, 2.b; 3.a, 3.b, 3.c; 4.c; ACTFL standards 2a, 2c; 3b; 4a, 4b, 4c)
- To become a —critical consumerl of research and instructional ideas, and to be able to independently evaluate and apply ideas from research and practice them in your own classroom. (TESOL standards 5c; 6b)

*Figure 1. SLOs of the syllabus in the USA (Second Language Acquisition and Bilingualism)*

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- To develop an understanding of the factors that affect second language learning/acquisition (WS standards 1, 2, 4; TESOL standard 1.b; ACTFL standard 3a)
- To become familiar with current thought in second and foreign language pedagogy, cross-cultural issues in language education, and how second/foreign language classrooms operate (WS standards 2, 3; TESOL standards 2.a, 2.b; 3.a, 3.b, 3.c; 4.c; ACTFL standards 2a, 2c; 3b; 4a, 4b, 4c)
- To understand and apply current theories and practices in language assessment (WS standard 5; TESOL standards 4a, 4b, 4c; ACTFL standards 5a, 5b, 5c)
- To become a “critical consumer” of research and instructional ideas, and to be able to independently evaluate and apply ideas from research and incorporate them into your classroom practice (TESOL standards 5b; 6b)

*Figure 2. SLOs of the syllabus in the USA (Theory and Practice in the Teaching and Learning of ESOL/Foreign Languages)*

**Course description:** This course is an introduction to major theoretical issues in first and second language acquisition, and what role language acquisition plays in cognitive science, in particular, how a computational approach can contribute to the field.

*Figure 3. SLOs of the syllabus in Turkey (Language Acquisition)*

**Goals and Objectives:** This course is designed to provide a thorough account of concepts, influential theories and related research in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). It aims to explore theoretical considerations and empirical findings dealing with English language learning and teaching with reference to both the global world and the immediate local context. Issues in English Language Teaching arising from linguistic, psychological, sociopolitical, cultural and cognitive perspectives will also be discussed.

*Figure 4. SLOs of the syllabus in Turkey (Concepts and Theoretical Considerations in ELT)*

One of the important points here, as for above figures, is that the course objectives of the syllabi in the American university was written item by item which is suitable for writing process. However, taking the Turkish syllabi into consideration in relation to the objectives, they were written in a paragraph and there is not even course objective part in some of the syllabi. For both settings, while forming the syllabi, the lecturers prefer using the titles such as student learning objectives (SLOs) or course objectives and sometimes course description, goals/aims of the course interchangeably. Here is another fact about the syllabi in Turkey which is about the process of the classes. Some of the syllabi which the researcher investigated in Turkey are comprehensive

and everything is available for the syllabus design but just in theory, not in practice. Of course, this is not valid for all of the ELT graduate syllabi in Turkey.

### 3.2. Findings about course requirements and contents

The findings about the course requirements and contents showed that the syllabi about course requirements in Turkey are not given in a different section, just embedded in the course description part. In addition, it is generally made up of attendance, performance and presentations. The students can get points for each part at the end of the terms and this part forms the final point. However, in the USA, course requirements are given separately and more comprehensive in that they cover attendance, preparation, participation in person and online, dialog journal reflection, review and evaluate a professional resource for teachers, leading discussions of an assigned article and interviews. Thus, the overall findings about course requirements showed that the syllabi can be said to have again more comprehensive items and to the point, which is compatible with the results of classroom observations and informal conversations.

Considering the contents of the syllabi, the systematicity can easily be seen in the weekly schedule / course schedule in the US syllabus. Here are the figures showing two weeks course schedule, which is called Theory and Practice in the Teaching and Learning of ESOL/Foreign Languages and Implementing Innovation in TESOL and Foreign Languages.

<b>COURSE SCHEDULE</b>		
<b>Week/Date</b>	<b>Topic/Activity</b>	<b>Assignments due</b>
Week 1 8/31  SNACK: MJC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Introduction to class and syllabus</li> <li>▪ Contextualizing ESL/FL issues</li> <li>▪ Where does theory come from? How does theory relate to teaching practice?</li> <li>▪ Assign dialog journal partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Blueprint for ELL Success</i> (on BB)</li> </ul>
Week 2 9/14  SNACK: Christy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interaction in language learning</li> <li>▪ Output hypothesis</li> <li>▪ Backward design in developing curriculum and instruction</li> <li>▪ Using standards in planning curriculum and instruction</li> <li>▪ See standards for LOTE/ESOL (download from BB) Common Core Learning Standards: <a href="http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/">http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/</a>; also see <a href="http://www.engageny.org">www.engageny.org</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Wiggins &amp; McTighe (<b>WM</b>), Introduction, Chs 1 &amp; 2</li> <li>▪ Herrell &amp; Jordan (<b>HJ</b>), Theoretical Overview</li> <li>▪ Fairbairn &amp; Jones-Vo (<b>FJV</b>) Chs 1-2</li> <li>▪ WS LP Format, Instructions and Rubric (three parts) on BB—please bring printouts to class for reference during the semester</li> </ul> <p><i>Reflection 1 to partner sometime this week—discussing first 2 weeks' readings and classes</i></p>

Figure 5. An example part of ELT graduate course syllabus in the USA (Theory and Practice in the Teaching and Learning of ESOL/Foreign Languages)

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Week	Date	Topic/ in-class activities	Readings & Assignments
			<b>(Don't forget to read for strategy demo and Folse for language demo for each class. The strategy readings are in the Course Readings section in a folder at the top)</b>
1 Snack: Alicia	1/4	Overview of course: reflective teaching  Overview of assignments  Sign up for strategy and language demos	Read a sample innovative unit: on Bb in Assignments section (some FL and some TESOL)  Bring required texts to class! Folse and Herrell & Jordan
2 Snack: Yvonne	1/11	Action research: tools and strategies  Guest speaker: Erin Hoover	Chamot (1998) Hendricks (2009) Ch. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6  <i>Strategy demo:</i> Alison Brainstorming  <i>Language demo:</i> Folse Key 12: Modals pp. 224-231
	1/18	No class Dr. MLK day	<b>Résumé and philosophy of teaching statement due.</b> Submit on Bb by 1/19

Figure 6. An example part of ELT graduate course syllabus in the USA (Implementing Innovation in TESOL and Foreign Languages)

It is clear from this figure that course schedule includes date, topic/in-class activities and reading-assignments part. Further, every week course schedule is putting one stone into previous one and complements each other. However, the case for syllabi in Turkey is different in that it does not give any detail about the course process, that is, it is so superficial. The example for showing this is given below with two figures:

Weekly Schedule		
Week/ Date	Topics & Reading Assignments	HW & Suggested Readings
W1, Feb. 20	Course intruduction, survey and theory task.	
W2, Feb. 27	<b>Perspectives on foreign language learning and teaching</b> Knapp, Seidlhofer, & Widdowson, 2009, Chp. 8, The linguistic perspective (Widdowson); Chp. 9 Cultural perspectives on language learning and teaching (Kramersch).	
W3, Mar. 6	<b>Perspectives on foreign language learning and teaching</b> Knapp, Seidlhofer, & Widdowson, 2009, Chp. 10, The political perspective (Brutt-Griffler) & Chp. 11, The cognitive perspective: Age effects and/or critical periods? (Dewaele).	<b>WRP (trial)</b>

Figure 7. An example part of ELT graduate syllabus in Turkey (Concepts and Theoretical Considerations in ELT)

SCHEDULE		
WEEK	DATE	TOPIC
1	24.09.2013	Introduction to the course and its requirements-Initial discussion on the field of ELT Teacher Education
2	01.10.2013	The Landscape of Second Language Teacher Education (Models, perspectives, trends, etc)

Figure 8. An example part of ELT graduate syllabus in Turkey (Approaches to ELT Teacher Education)

Thus, the overall findings showed that the syllabus design is of vital importance in teaching graduate ELT courses in the American University and the lecturers prepare their syllabi in exhaustive detail and stick to their syllabi in general whereas the syllabi in Turkish University seem important but there are some drawbacks from syllabus writing to its application.

### 3.3. Findings about classroom observations and informal conversations

The findings demonstrate that the observations in the classroom and informal conversations with the Turkish and American lecturers are in compatible with the findings of SLOs, course requirements and contents of the syllabi. The researcher attended the classes as an audit while in the USA and had some observations in the classes. Firstly, it can be given some information about the class environment in the USA. The physical atmosphere of the class is generally made up of U-shaped classroom seating which enables to create discussion easily and so everybody in the class can easily see each other. The class also includes some pin boards for sharing information about the course and overhead projector and board for reflecting documents and teaching. During the class, all of the students can have the chance to share their opinions and freely ask questions and give comments about the topic. In order to give concrete example to this situation, one student taking SLA course asked a question about acquisition and asked the same question three times and the instructor of the SLA, who got PhD in ELT field, responded to the student without any hesitation and offered extra specific material related to topic. The important point here is to show that the attitude of the instructor towards the student is highly acceptable and this situation is compatible with the instructors' remarks in the informal conversations.

In relation to Turkey's classroom environment, the same good class atmosphere and physical facilities are available in most of the universities, however it can be said that group discussion can sometimes fail and it can also be said that the interaction between the academics and students in the class can sometimes be weak. But it can be stated that all of the students in Turkey are so eager and self-confident for carrying out PhD level in ELT programs. This is also supported by the study carried out by Küçükoğlu (2015) stating that most of the participants are satisfied with ELT departments and they think they are treated with respect and positive manners by the faculty members and professors. The lecturers in Turkey are also eligible to teach in ELT and they had enough experiences for teaching and doing research in the field of ELT.

It is a fact that the lecturers in the US adapt the syllabus in the class properly and make the class more beneficial and practical for the students in the USA. For one side, they can do this by making

use of technological facility that means the students are aware the syllabi were prepared before and they can have it through university student network system. The students are also aware that the syllabi are almost never changed for one year, if it is the case, they are informed earlier. Further, academics in the USA try to create a safe and flexible but disciplined classroom atmosphere. Another way to do this is through providing a classroom environment in which all of the students can have the right to speak and share / exchange ideas. Even if the students can't be able to attend the classes, they can show up by using internet technology. However, this is not so applicable in some of the Turkey's ELT graduate courses. This can be stemming from the flexibility of the course syllabi and the unwillingness of the lecturers and students. The informal conversations with the lecturers in the USA also showed that the syllabi should be very understandable and once the students look at the syllabi, they shouldn't have almost any questions in their mind. If they have, they contact the academics via email, or sometimes just stop by to their office. So, the academics in the US always update and revise their syllabi in accordance with the learners' needs and current technology as well. They believe that the syllabi should not be just in written document, whereas it should be in action and practical and applicable in all senses.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The study has the unique benefit of comparative point of view in that the researcher shared their own experiences and observations concerning the topic in Turkey and United States which means that this study is not just stick to the written documents. Based on the comparative document analysis of a university in Turkey and a university in the USA in terms of ELT graduate course syllabi, the following suggestions can be made. First, the SLOs and contents of the syllabi in the American University is more comprehensive and given in a such a way that it is more applicable to be adopted by the lecturers / instructors in their classroom environment. Second, one of the most important topics, academic integrity or honesty, is always evident in the syllabi of the USA, however, it is not almost always the way in which lecturers / instructors use in their syllabi in Turkey. Similarly, in a study carried out by Liu and Wang (2016) found out that academic integrity is one of the special components for American syllabi. Last but not least, learner needs are evaluated and kept in mind all the time in the USA and when compared to the ELT syllabi in Turkey, the course discipline (attendance, assignment etc.) is stricter, which is also supported by Zhao's (2010) study concluding that American syllabi was strictly put into practice, but teaching methods in the USA are more flexible and more interactive than their counterparts. In relation to learners' needs, Küçüköğlü (2015) conducted a study and concluded that the ELT programs in Turkey should reconsider their teaching programs and syllabuses for the purpose of giving more importance to teaching language skills, and the departments should provide a wide variety of PhD level courses (both required and elective), and the teaching methods should be moderately well-prepared and targeted for the learners' needs.

In conclusion, although it may not be possible to develop an ideal syllabus that meets the needs and concerns of all stakeholders, the academicians and researchers especially in Turkey may use the findings of this study to evaluate, and possibly improve, their course syllabi.

The limitation of the study is that ELT graduate syllabi are just for five courses in Turkey and the USA, ten syllabi in total and therefore are not representative of all ELT graduate schools in Turkey and the USA. Future research and efforts should consider more syllabi for more courses both in Turkey and the USA to have broader perspectives about ELT graduate syllabi.

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