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Kuram ve Uygulama Arasındaki Farka Bir Bakış: İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının Öğretmenliklerine Dair Öz Değerlendirmeleri

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ÖZ

Bu çalışma İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümü 3. Sınıf öğrencilerin öğretmenlik uygulamalarına dair farkındalıklarını hızlandırmak amacıyla 'Çocuklara İngilizce Öğretimi' dersinde yapılan mikro öğretim uygulamalarını incelemektedir. Bu uygulamalar sırasında toplam 72 öğrencinin en sık kullandığı 45 olumlu veya olumsuz öğretmen davranışı tanımlanmış ve bu davranışlar temel alınarak, hayali bir öğretmenin bir dersinin metni yaratılmıştır. Sonrasında bu hayali ders metni bir sınav formunda öğrencilere verilerek 45 öğretmen davranışından istedikleri herhangi 20 tanesini olumlu ya da olumsuz olarak yorumlamaları istenmiştir. Sınav kâğıtlarının analizinde öğrencilerin mikro öğretim sunularında gözlemlenen öğretmenlik davranışları ile aynı davranışların kâğıt üzerindeki yorumlamaları arasında bir uyumsuzluk olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Öğrencilerle kuram ve uygulama arasındaki boşluğun nedenleri, dört aylık bu sürecin öğretmenliklerine dair anlayışlarına olan etkileri tartışılmıştır. Bu tartışmaların saha notları çalışmanın bir diğer veri kaynağı olarak kullanılmıştır. Öğrencilerin deneyim ve güven eksiklikleri, utangaçlık, heyecan ve sınav üzerinde yapılan değerlendirmenin öğrencilerin geldikleri sistemle uyuşuyor olması çalışma sonuçlarına yön veren etkenler olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: yabancı dil öğretmen eğitimi, yansıtıcı uygulama, öz-değerlendirme, akran değerlendirme, öğretmenlerin mesleki bilgileri.

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Mirroring the Gap between Theory and Practice: ELT Juniors' Auto-Criticism on their Teaching

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ABSTRACT

To trigger the ELT sophomores' awareness on their teaching practices, in the Teaching English to Young Learners course, most frequent 45 positive and negative teaching practices of 72 students were identified during their micro teaching sessions. On the basis of these, a script of an imaginary session of an anonymous teacher was created. Then, as a sit-down exam, the students were asked to criticize any 20 out of 45 behaviors in the script. Analysis of the exam papers revealed a mismatch in how students conducted their lessons and how they evaluated the same teaching practice. The discrepancies in theory and practice and the consequences of this procedure on students' understanding of their own teaching were discussed with the students. Field notes of these discussions constituted another data source. Lacking in experience and confidence, feeling of shyness and nervousness and finally the exam, harmonizing with the existing educational system through which the students came to the university, appeared to be the underlying reasons for the results.

Keywords: Language Teacher Education, Reflective Practice, Teachers' Self-Evaluation, Peer Evaluation, Teachers' Pedagogical Knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

When we briefly go through the history of teacher education, with a common aim as leading the students to professional competence, we find that a variety of models were used to train teachers at faculties of education. Through the craft model or the applied science model (Wallace, 1991) trainers aimed at paving the way for professional competence either by observing and imitating a master teacher or conveying the results of scientific research to students and expecting them to put these into practice. Richards, (2008) calls such traditional standpoints as sterile and dependent view promoted by a technicist approach to teaching and criticised them as not leaving room for student thinking research.

However, with the spread of constructivism, traditional viewpoints left their place to a more contemporary understanding of the issue. For example, consideration of individual differences, teacher beliefs and perceptions, practices as skills training, more hands on teaching experience, critical reflection, self-evaluation began to be deemed as important components of teacher education. In addition, all these were believed to be leading to change in teachers and as a consequence, instead of imitation of master teachers' practices or applying the findings of scientific research in the classroom with an aim for professional growth, conceptual development was sought after. (Richards, 2009) In line with these changes in the concept of teacher education, in the reflective model class observation, interaction, self and peer evaluation, discussion and reflection activities, gained value. Thus, terms as liberatory education, (Freire, 1970), social justice teacher education (Zeichner, 2011) multicultural teacher education (Sleeter & Grant, 2007) critical teacher education and transformative intellectuals (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) came into use. (in Tezgiden, 2016 p.121) However, as Yildirim (2013) points out teacher education research was ignored in restructuring teacher education programs and reforms were unfortunately not realised on the basis of research results.

Yet, Farrell (2008) emphasises the positive consequences of reflective practice in initial English language teacher education by means of reflective microteaching sessions. As he puts forth, teachers can improve their understanding of their own teaching by consciously reflecting on their teaching experiences in short sessions. Holding the belief that not many studies had been conducted in this area, he studied the impact of a reflective microteaching assignment in a pre-service English language teacher education program. The results show that having the requirements of the assignment were made clear to the prospective teachers, micro teaching sessions have positive consequences in either real or perceived manners.

In line with Farrell's study summarised above, Eroz-Tuga (2013) underlines the role of critical reflection sessions during practicum. Practicum, providing the ELT students with a chance to put their theoretical knowledge into practice and through follow-up reflective feedback sessions trainees become insightful and realistic about their own teaching practices. In addition, they find out about their own strengths and weaknesses as teachers. Micro teaching sessions, as similar but much shorter versions of this real experience in teaching, may have a similar impact as well. In a similar vein, Tuluce and Cecen (2015) asked pre-service teachers to reflect on video-recordings of their own micro-lessons in their university-based methodology courses directly after delivering the micro-lessons and retrospectively after their practicum experience. The data for the study came from pre- and post-self-evaluation reports and pre- and post-focus-group interviews on the pre-service teachers' video-recorded microteaching sessions. Pre-service teachers noticed the same pedagogical, psychological, and physical factors about their microteaching sessions before and after the practicum. Still, over time they became more learner-oriented and found to have a more reflective view after the practicum.

In their study on teachers' epistemological beliefs, May et al (2009) suggest that instead of encouraging passive reception of knowledge from authority figures, teacher education programmes should model reflective thinking and judgment to realise change in the students' beliefs. To achieve that, modelling real teaching learning environments and practicing in these environments adding up on the students' experiences sound to be a viable constructivist idea.

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Many different activities happening at the same time, much of what is really happening in the classroom for the most part actually remains largely unknown. (Richards and Lockhart, 2004) Farrell argues that by systematically reflecting on classroom teaching… language teachers can develop greater awareness and understanding of not only their own instructional processes but also their students' learning. To achieve that, as he puts it, teachers must subject their own teaching beliefs and practices to critical examination. One way of facilitating reflective practice in ...teachers is to encourage them to engage in classroom observations as part of their professional development (p. 265). Pre-service teacher education in the English Language Teaching field is not an exception for the situation. As of Ocober10, 2018, University of Cukurova states the objectives of the English Language Teaching programme in the information package of its course catalogue. These are to increase the prospective teachers' language proficiency and equip them with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge they will need to teach English as a foreign language (http://eobs.cu.edu.tr/ProgAmac_tr.aspx?ProgID=30). In order to achieve similar aims, in the course of language teacher education, prospective teachers take a variety of courses to prepare and professionally develop themselves in theoretical as well as practical terms for their future careers. One of these courses is the Teaching English to Young Learners course. In the English Language Teaching undergraduate programme by the Council of Higher Education, we read that this course is designed to equip students of the English language teaching departments with knowledge to teach English to children who are between five to 12 and the course involves the teacher candidates in practicing teaching in the form of presentations or micro teaching sessions (p.10 and p.11).

Although these micro teaching sessions are not held in a real school context with real young learners, still they may provide opportunities for the ELT students for accumulating teaching experiences, reflecting critically upon their own teaching practices, receiving feedback from both their teachers and peers as well as giving feedback to their peers. Another contributing aspect may be said to be observing, evaluating, reflecting upon and expressing criticism toward their peers' sessions. As a consequence, we may at the same time suggest that such activities, among others, may trigger the students' awareness on their own teaching in terms of relevance to child learning theories, young learner characteristics and they may constitute a ground for more critical whole class reflective discussions. All these may serve as a basis for decision making, planning and action for teachers. (Richards and Lockhart, 2004). In order to find evidence on whether or not the assumptions of this study above prove themselves to be valid in the research context, that is, the Teaching English to Young Learners course in the ELT department of a Turkish university, the following research questions were formed:

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1. How do 3rd year ELT students, on the basis of pre-determined criteria, comment on:

   a) their peers' and
   b) their own micro-teaching practices in the Teaching English to Young Learners course?

2. How do students criticise the imaginary lesson script created on the basis of the teaching behaviours they displayed in the microteaching sessions?

3. What are the probable similarities and differences between the students' reactions toward the same teaching behaviours in theory and in actual practice?

4. On what grounds, if any, do students make their comments?

5. Do students think that going through a critical reflection process, in any ways, contributed to their awareness on their own teaching?

PARTICIPANTS

In order to meet the set objectives, seventy-two third year ELT students from a Turkish university participated in the study. Having taken their consent, both males (29) and females (43) took part in the study. The age range of the participants varied from 21 to 24. All the participants were similarly accepted to the English Language Teaching department after having succeeded in the governmental university exam and its language component and they were in their third year at their department. During the first two years, the students received courses such as reading writing listening and speaking skills, literature,

linguistics, and first language acquisition. However, at the time of the study, the participants were taking a foreign language teaching course for the first time. In other terms, the study was conducted within the context of taking Teaching English to Young Learners course.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

At the beginning of this four-month study, as is the nature of the course, the participants studied the theories on child learning, characteristics of young learners, priorities in a young learner class, the nature of the activities, how to teach skills and grammar in English and how to maintain the class order, as well as assessment of young learners in sequence. Having accumulated a certain knowledge base on the issue, studied sample lesson plans and watched demo lesson videos, students were asked to prepare their own plans for imaginary young learner classes of their choice and conduct 10 to 15-minute-long micro teaching sessions in their classes. During these sessions, the classmates were considered as the members of the imaginary young learner class. After each session a uniform procedure was followed: first of all, the presenting students were invited to critically reflect upon their own teaching, then peers held critical discussions about their friend's teaching and commented positively and negatively where they thought appropriate and finally the teacher made her comments based on her notes she took during each micro teaching session. A whole class reflective discussion marked the end of each session.

Holding the belief that a pre-fabricated rubric would not embrace every probable teaching behaviour the students may put into practice while conducting their micro-teaching sessions, a scoring rubric was not used for evaluation purposes in the study. In fact, the micro teaching sessions were not thought to be means for student assessment and no grades were given for them but rather they constituted a real life like ground for students to practice teaching, for critical reflection, discussion, opinion sharing and awareness raising on the students' weaknesses and strengths as prospective language teachers. Instead of a rubric, topics covered as mentioned above issues as theories on child learning, characteristics of young learners, priorities, the nature of the activities, how to teach English and how to maintain the class order in a young learner class, and assessment of young learners as well as the English Language Curriculum by MoNE and the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR) constituted the reference points for the evaluations, comments, discussions and criticism for all parties.

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METHOD

With a qualitative approach attempting to describe what naturally occurs in the study context (Mc Kay (2006), the study strived not to overlook any probable points that may be significant for the interpretation of the happenings that took place in the study process. Thus, a variety of procedures were utilised to capture these throughout. First of all, the lecturer held field notes for each of the 72 participating students' micro teaching sessions. These served to the identification of the participants' weaknesses and strengths in their actual practices as teachers during these sessions. The positive and negative comments made for each session were also included in the field notes. Second, the students' exam papers created on the basis of their own teaching behaviours they displayed during the micro teaching sessions were used to uncover probable parallelism or incompatibility between their comments and actions for the same teaching behaviours. Notes of whole class reflective discussions by lecturer constituted the third data source and finally, interviews were held with 17 volunteering students. The procedure is explained in detail in the following section.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

In this study, data came from a variety of qualitative sources. The table below summarises the data collection and analysis procedures.

Table 1: Summary of procedures

Data Source	Participants	Analysis Procedure
Field notes of micro teaching sessions by lecturer	Individually held for each 72 students	Content Analysis Double check-consensus
Sit down exam	72 students	Content Analysis Double check-consensus
Notes of whole class reflective discussions by lecturer	72 students	Content Analysis Double check-consensus
Tape script of Interviews	17 volunteering students	Content analysis Double check –consensus

The first data source for the study was the notes taken on an individual basis by the course lecturer on the comments and criticism provided for each 72 students during microteaching sessions. This process lasted four months. The analysis of all the data collected was realised in cooperation with a colleague in order to maintain the reproducibility of the results for reliability and validity purposes (Elo and Kyngas, 2008). Having come to terms on how the data were to be analysed by the two coders, analysis took place individually on the basis of each data group followed by a discussion gathering. The themes and codes emerged were double checked and when all were agreed upon by the two parties, the most frequently cited positive and negative aspects in the sessions were identified. The findings reached at the end of the analysis of the first group of data gave way to the second data collection tool.

On the basis of the most frequently cited comments and criticism, a lesson script of an imaginary teaching session of an anonymous young learners' teacher was created and used as a sit down exam. In the exam, the students were asked to comment on any 20 out of 45 behaviours deliberately embedded in the script either in positive or negative terms. In addition to the evaluations, the students were also asked to justify and base their comments on the standpoints they referred to during the micro teaching sessions. The content of the exam papers was then analysed, double checked and probable coherence or discrepancy was sought after between what students did in the sessions and what they criticised in the exam papers. Through a final whole class reflection session, the reasons for the incoherence detected in their practices and their comments on the imaginary lesson script, and the consequences of the procedure on their understanding of their own teaching were brought up for discussion. Field notes of these discussion and the transcripts of the interviews were the final data sources for the study.

In order to analyse the data which were gathered by qualitative means, as the first step microteaching notes were read to determine different categories that are in the data as in open coding. Themes that were not congruent with the inquiry of the study were excluded from the analysis. Later, axial coding principles were used to see how the identified categories related to one another. The categories and codes that emerged at the end of the analysis procedure were double checked by a colleague to ensure the reliability of the results. At the end of this procedure, a general understanding of the core inquiry of the study, that is how third year ELT students criticised certain teaching behaviours in theory and practice, was reached. The same process was applied to all the data sources. That is, the analysis of teachers' notes of micro teaching sessions, the content of exam papers and the field notes of whole class discussions were all double checked. Then, the results reached at the end of each data group were compared and contrasted to one another. Finally, an interview was held to bring depth to the study regarding the students' opinions, how they felt about the procedure and whether or not they benefitted from it. The interviews were both recorded and, as Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) suggest, notes were taken during the data collection process. These data were then subjected to content analysis.

RESULTS

As the first question of the study, we explored how 3rd year ELT students commented on their peers' and their own micro-teaching practices on the basis of pre-determined criteria. During the sessions, the students expressed both positive and negative criticism after they observed one another's microteaching sessions. The following table displays the positive criticism that emerged in the analysis

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of the notes taken during the sessions on the performance of totally 72 students on a one to one basis.

Table 2: Received Positive Comments (18)

	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4
Codes	Attending to the learner Attitude Appraisal Praise Involvement	Materials Visuals Videos Materials Flashcards	Activities TPR Games Pair/group work Warm-up	Support Clues Revision Demonstrating Language Checking Correction

Four themes and 18 codes emerged in the content analysis of the student's comments toward their peers' sessions. These are related with the peers' way of attending to the learners, materials and activities they used, and finally the support they gave to the students. Regarding their attitude to the learners, the participants found their peers successful as they behaved positively, used appraisal words in accordance with Bruner's explanation for effective praise (1983 in Cameron, 2001 p.9) and finally, they highly evaluated the support their peers gave to the learners as well as the way they involved the students in their lessons. The students found the use of colourful visuals and flashcards suitable for young learner classes knowing that young learners do not analyse the language but they analyse visual clues. In addition, they valued the use of games because of three reasons. First, as they are relevant to the characteristics of young learners who are highly active, second they cannot sit for a long time but want to move (Scott & Ytreberg, 2004), and lastly because games are powerful tools to teach young learners (Bakhsh, 2016.) The students also positively commented on the way their peers benefitted from pair and group work organisations, the warm-up phases used in micro-teaching sessions. Finally, the support provided with the students such as non-verbal clues, adaptation of language according to the imaginary students' levels, among others, were appreciated.

When we more closely look into the codes under each theme emerged regarding positive comments, we see that the use of flashcards, visuals and realia was the most frequently cited positive teaching behaviour (68) followed by use of body language facial clues tone of voice and eye contact (57). Effective praise (51), modelling the first question as an example for the students during an activity (44), adapting classroom language according to the students' level (13), involving the students in the lesson (9), reviewing the previous lesson (7) constituted the totally 249 positive remarks made during the micro-teaching sessions.

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The analysis further revealed that students expressed more negative criticism (26) toward their peer's sessions which can be placed under three themes; teaching behaviours, materials and tasks used and personal inadequacies as displayed below.

Table 3: Received criticism (26)

	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
	Behaviours	**Materials /tasks**	**Personal inadequances**
	Purposes	Songs	Technology use
	Elicitation	Visuals	Mistakes
	Clarity	Materials	
	Turn giving	Level	
	Wrong models	Task continuity	
	Reward /punishment		
	Teaching		
	Sequencing		
Codes	Blackboard use		
	Labels		
	Instruction		
	Translation		
	Revision		

Nature of class
Error correction
Checking
Involvement
Language
Objectives

In terms of the criticism expressed from the standpoint of teaching behaviours, we find that the students did not approve their peers' sessions as they did not give suitable purposes for young learners or they used no purposes at all for the activities they conducted, they did not use elicitation techniques but asked and answered questions themselves, gave unclear instructions rather than short, clear and understandable ones (Scott & Ytreberg, 2004). In addition, they did not give equal turns to all students, they were not good language models because they made mistakes themselves as teachers. One of the issues that was emphasised in the course was the inappropriateness of rewards and punishment in a young learner class (Galloway and Edwards, 2015). However, peers were criticised for using both during their micro teaching sessions. For example, one of the presenting students brought a bag of chocolates for her peers pretending to be their young learners at their imaginary classes and promised to give everyone one if they kept quiet. Similarly, another presenting student wanted to maintain the class order by threatening the class with extra homework if they did not keep silent. Some used translations for every sentence uttered in the target language, one student did not relate her session to the previous lesson, another one totally ignored the students and focused on her planned lesson without even giving turns to her students, one other student did not use any error correction techniques but corrected every mistake himself. Apart from all these, the ways classroom language was used, students were involved in the lesson, the way their understanding was checked were other aspects that were negatively criticised. Finally, most students were criticised as they did not meet the lesson objectives they declared in their lesson plans. Regarding the negative comments that bear the highest frequency of citation, we find totally 224 expressions. These are inappropriately reviewing the previous lesson (53) not using elicitation techniques (47) not using language according to students' level (32) not involving students in the lesson (26) ignoring the appropriate sequencing and grading of the materials (22) not giving a purpose for activities (17) not using technological equipment effectively (15) and finally using linguistic labels (12).

Looking from the point of view how students evaluated themselves on the basis of their micro teaching sessions, it appears that they cited almost equal number of positive (112) and negative remarks (119). Using visuals (52), conducting an enjoyable lesson (33), being able to follow their lesson plan and meeting the lesson objectives (17) doing even beyond their expectations during the session (6) and feeling very comfortable when teaching (4) were the aspects they were content with. In terms of the negative self-evaluation, they complained that they were nervous as it was their first time practicing teaching albeit it was not a real classroom experience (42). As a consequence of the discomfort some of the students felt, they forgot to follow some parts of their lesson plan (35). As they criticised themselves, this feeling also misled them and they focused on to show themselves and inevitably they did not involve the students in their lesson (19). The participants wanted to prove themselves as proficient teachers to their classmates and the course lecturer, they used more complicated language which was highly above their imaginary student population. As a matter of fact, during the course they regularly practiced the use of classroom language according to the students' level on the basis of various classroom incidents such as dealing with errors, spontaneous situations, grouping and pairing arrangements and the like (Salaberri, 1995). Some students also confessed that they never thought to check the national curriculum or the CEFR when planning the sequencing and grading of the materials they selected for their micro teaching sessions (11). Thus, some students graded and sequenced their lessons in such a way that they used more difficult language to teach something much simpler. On the other hand, though only a few some students highly evaluated their own performances and did not accept the negative criticism expressed toward their sessions.

The second research question looked for answers to how students criticised the imaginary lesson script created on the basis of the teaching behaviours they displayed in the microteaching sessions. The

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analysis demonstrates that the students criticised almost similar aspects in the script as they did during the sessions and the language used for the criticism revealed a more uniform pattern and that the students focused mainly on the technicalities of teaching. In terms of positive aspects, we find that the students detected some teaching practices in the script (181) they positively commented on as in the table below.

Table 4: Positive comments toward script

1.	Revising the previous lesson	49
2.	Using colourful work sheet	41
3.	Using flashcards	37
4.	Using pair/group work activities	21
5.	Using classroom routines	18
6.	Using various error correction strategies	11
7.	Making lesson plans A-B-C	4
	Total	**181**

Among 181 positive comments toward the script, revising the previous lesson (49) bore the highest frequency of citation. Use of colourful work sheets (41) and flashcards (37) were appreciated by the students. They referred to the young learner characteristics underlining that young learners benefitted from visuals to understand things. Pairing grouping arrangements (21) and using classroom routines (18) were highly evaluated by the students (18). In addition, the teacher in the script used a variety of error correction strategies, which is something good to do (11) and finally, the teacher had lesson plans A, B and C a vital strategy for especially inexperienced teachers (4). Concerning the criticism expressed toward the lesson script, the findings reveal that students more frequently cited negative comments (244) than positive ones (181).

Table 5: Criticism toward script

	Criticism	**Basis**	Fr.
1.	The way for reviewing the previous lesson	Difficult to understand for students	61
2.	Not benefiting from elicitation techniques	Teacher asking and answering	57
3.	Not involving students in the lesson	Teacher doing activities	38
4.	Giving rewards and punishment	Chocolate/ threating by minuses	22
5.	Level of the language	Above students level	19
6.	Not making a good model	Negative subliminal message	15
7.	Using labels	Adjectives-nouns /Propositions	9
8.	Not being familiar with the technology	Teacher can't run the video/projector	9
9.	Teaching explicitly	First adjective then noun comes	7
10	Making mistakes	Not being prepared	4
11	Not giving turns to students to talk	Excessive teacher talking time	3
	Total		**244**

These are in the order of frequency of citation, the way the anonymous teacher reviewed the previous lesson was negatively (61) because they thought the language was above the set level of the imaginary class in the script. In fact, this was one of the mostly observed behaviours the students used during their micro teaching sessions. Next, the use of elicitation techniques followed (57). As the students stated, the teacher in the script was asking and answering the questions herself instead of the students. Similarly, they criticised the teacher for not involving the students in the lesson (38) and doing the activities herself. This was also one of the most frequently observed teaching behaviour of the students during micro teaching sessions as well. The teacher in the script was offering chocolates and threatening the young learners by minuses depending on how they performed in the lesson. The teacher's use of reward and punishment (22) was perceived to be a negative behaviour as for the students. However, they themselves used both of these in their sessions. In fact, in the script one to one quotations from the students' micro teaching sessions were used to voice the teacher. While during the session they used the same language, on the script the students severely criticised the teacher's language level (19). In the script, they did not view the teacher as a good model (15) as she gave inappropriate subliminal messages by means of sentences such as "I don't like reading" or via the use

of a visual of a bottle of fizzy drink. As the ELT students commented, young learners should be encouraged to read from early ages but they should not consume fizzy drinks because these are not healthy especially for children. However, these were the exact student behaviours drawn from the field notes of the sessions. What's more, the fictitious teacher in the lesson script used labels as adjectives, nouns and prepositions (9) and the participants stated that it was wrong as young learners have not yet matured enough to understand abstract concepts such as linguistic labels as also Piaget (1958) explains (in Wood, Smith, and Grossniklaus 2001; Scott &Ytreberg, 2004; Saul McLeod, 2018). Yet, when we have a look at what they did in the sessions we find that this was another behaviour they actually displayed in their own sessions as all the ones used in the lesson script. They said that the teacher should have practiced and mastered the use of technological equipment (9) because the teacher was not able to run the video or start the projector and wasted a lot of time beside loosing face before the young learners. In addition, the teacher was explicitly teaching grammar to students (7) which was not suitable to young learner characteristics (Pinter,2006). Finally, the teacher did not seem to be prepared for the lesson (4) because she was making a lot of mistakes and not giving turns to students (3) and using all the talking time. Needless to say, these were the behaviours deliberately selected and duplicated from the instances of the students' sessions.

To sum up, the students appeared to bear the ability to identify the positive and negative aspects of teaching both in the micro teaching sessions and in the script of the imaginary teacher's lesson. In line with this finding, on account of the probable similarities and differences between the students' reactions toward the same teaching behaviours in theory (script) and in actual practice (micro teaching sessions), as the third research question explores, we find a similar picture. Namely, they cited 249 positive and 244 negative comments during the micro teaching sessions and 181 positive and 244 negative comments for the lesson script. Five of the students' positive comments for sessions cohere with the ones used for the script. Regarding the criticism, we find that ten criticisms cited for 244 times overlap in both procedures. Although Munby et al. (2001) note the difficulties with categorising what counts as professional knowledge and how to conceptualize it, the findings reveal that the students are already equipped with an understanding of what is good and not good to do in a young learner class. In other words, they accumulated the required content knowledge for language teaching to young learners. However, they were neither able to adequately display their pedagogical and nor technological pedagogical content knowledge in the sessions (Shulman,1986) contrary to the assumption that they are digital natives as age (Prensky, 2001).

The research question for the fourth inquiry of the study was designed to shed light on the grounds the ELT students based their evaluations. It appears that students had developed awareness on the theories and characteristics of young learners. To elaborate, they referred to 200 points. In the order of frequency of citation, these were related with theories on child learning (63), young learner characteristics (58), classroom discussions (52), and finally personal opinions (27) which in fact seemed to have already derived from any one of the reference points.

The findings also reveal that the third year ELT students demonstrated that they already possessed the related content knowledge during both evaluative processes. However, they appeared to display more confidence and awareness on teaching issues when they were working on the lesson script. In other words, while they did not find it easy to identify and evaluate the problematic sides in their own practices during the sessions, they were able to detect the negative aspects in the imaginary teacher's practices more precisely. The most frequently cited rationale the students alleged to illuminate the situation were totally 213. As they elucidated, they had more time to think in the exam (52), they were more accustomed to the sit down exams rather than evaluative and critical discussions as in microteaching sessions due to their relatively traditional educational background (45). In addition, they felt nervous during these sessions (43), they lacked in experience of actual teaching (36) a feeling of shyness prevented them from thinking critically (24), and finally they confessed that they did not feel confident as a teacher during the sessions (13).

The study finally looked for evidence on whether or not micro teaching sessions, through which the students involved in a critical reflection process on teaching practices for the first time in the third year of their education in the ELT department, contributed to them as prospective language teachers.

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According to how the students perceived, they benefitted from the procedure from a variety of standpoints. That is, the most frequently cited gains were achieved through the lecturer's evaluations toward the peers and criticism coming from peers (43). As they explained, they viewed the teacher's criticism toward the peers as the ultimate reference point and tried to behave accordingly during their own sessions. In addition, teacher's criticism toward their own sessions (39), whole class reflective discussions (34), and peers' criticism toward their own sessions played a role on their understanding of practical issues of teaching (30). As the students remarked, expressing and receiving criticism (27) contributed to their development as prospective teacher and created an awareness on their weaknesses professionally (18). Although this aspect had relatively fewer citations, the students stated that they experienced such a procedure for the first time in their educational repertoire and by means of this reflective process, the idea that criticism is not something to be offended by arose in their minds. Contrarily, they expressed that receiving criticism can very well serve to positive learning outcomes if done in a constructive manner (12).

CONCLUSION

The results of the study reveal that the third year ELT students were able to express constructive criticism toward their peers' and objectively evaluate one another's during their micro teaching sessions. Regarding what mostly valued in the peers' sessions student-centeredness bore the priority. This showed itself in the positive comments expressed such as attending to the learners, materials and activities selected according to the characteristics and proficiency levels of the learners, and the support given to the learners during the sessions. The nature of negative comments follows a similar path in that the prospective teachers negatively evaluated their peers who did not place the imaginary learners in the centre of the classroom happenings. For example, they criticised peers reviewing the previous lesson using irrelevant techniques for young learners, ignoring the language level of their students', not involving the learners in the lesson, using linguistic labels which is not suitable for young learners as well as technical aspects like neglecting the appropriate sequencing and grading of the materials, conducting activities without giving a purpose for them, not using technological equipment effectively.

According to the results of the study, we see that the participants used almost equal number of citations to evaluate their own teaching when compared to the criticism they expressed toward their peers. However, this time we find a more optimistic picture in that the students view themselves efficacious in various aspects. For instance, in spite of the negative comments they received from their peers and the lecturer, still they appear to be content with their way of using visuals, conducting enjoyable lessons, being able to follow the lesson plans, meeting the lesson objectives, performing even beyond their own expectations during the session and feeling comfortable when teaching. As a matter of fact, teachers resist information or methods that differ from their current beliefs, particularly if they already feel knowledgeable in this area (Westwood,1996). Such beliefs act as a 'filter' for interpreting their university experiences and, in particular, the place of theory (Pajares,2002). Similarly, during the discussions held, though only a few, some of the students claimed that they followed their lesson plans and met their objectives and did not look enthusiastic to give ear to criticism.

In terms of self-criticism, the students complained that they were nervous as it was their first time practicing teaching. Actually, pre-service teachers believe they will be good teachers even without any preparation and that instead, the majority of their knowledge about teaching will come from school placements or when they eventually enter the classroom (Gabriele,1998). Parallel to this idea, some students claimed that they were not able to show their potential selves as teachers because it was not a genuine classroom environment and their peers were not real young learners. The findings also show that the comments students expressed toward themselves and peers overlap with the ones used for the script. However, regarding the language used for the criticism we observe a more uniform pattern and that the students focused more on the technicalities of teaching. This may imply that they have already improved themselves in terms of content knowledge and conceptualised the features of effective and less effective teaching practices and are able to define them using relevant terminology and referring to related theories. In other words, they are able to attribute their comments, in the order of frequency

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of citation, theories on child learning, young learner characteristics, classroom discussions, and finally personal opinions which in fact seem to have already derived from any one of the above reference points.

Contrary to the confidence the students displayed in terms of their repertoire of theoretical knowledge in the field, they appeared tense and timid when it came to practice. The discomfort some of the students felt during their first experience of teaching, especially before their peers, inhibited their confidence and thus, they performed more poorly than they would have done during their micro teaching sessions. As a consequence, with the aim of proving themselves to their audience, they failed to use inappropriate techniques and complex language for the level. According to Watson (2006) the way we perceive ourselves influences our choice of action and judgment (p. 510). In this study, some students were observed to be experiencing a sense of shyness as echoed in Barahmeh (2016), distrust in themselves as teachers and this feeling led them to making more mistakes such as the way they dealt with errors and spontaneous situations, among many others.

As for the criticism toward the script, we see that students cited more negative comments than positive ones. Keeping in mind that the script was created on the basis of the teaching behaviours they used during the micro teaching, we may suggest that they find it easier to evaluate themselves in a pen and paper context when the pressure of being on the stage is not felt. In other words, most probably due to lacking in practical experience in teaching, students did not seem to realise that they were actually behaving in the way they criticised one another in the sessions and the imaginary teacher in the script. However, as prospective language teachers who are expected to be teaching in the classrooms in about a year, the sophomores need to have already accumulated more hands on experience in teaching and eventually should have felt more confident as teachers.

DISCUSSION

The findings imply that language teacher education programmes need to embed more opportunities for students to engage in real classroom settings. This may be achieved primarily through carefully planned systematic and structured observations for prospective language teachers to be held in a variety of school contexts followed by a critical reflection process (Merç, 2011). Moreover, discussion sessions for these experiences may be held through interaction with peers and course lecturers. The rationale for the activity should be made clear to the students in advance in order for them not to view this procedure as another course to pass but as a process that would contribute to their professional development before they graduate. Verloop et al. (2001) emphasise teacher practical knowledge as the basis of teachers' actions in practice and thus, to begin with ELT students should practice making presentations for various purposes which may lead them to getting ready for addressing various audiences. The courses at the language teacher education departments should be redesigned to embrace teaching experiences and follow up reflective sessions (Farrell, 2011) for the students to practice teaching well before they start practicum in the form of micro teaching sessions if not in real school contexts. In addition, university school collaboration should be reconsidered in a such a way to serve the genuine needs of prospective teachers from a realistic perspective (Ilin, 2015; Tuluce and Cecen, 2016; Ilin, 2016). Instead of counting on statistical documents only at surface level, what really is taking place in the ELT students' world should be explored in an in-depth manner and be used as a stepping stone for bettering the situation because understanding teachers … is important for gaining insight into the essential aspects of teachers' professional lives such as their … motivation, satisfaction, emotion, and commitment (Hong,2010), to … cultivate reflective practitioners (Schön,1983; Lee, 2005), and to incorporate the kinds of experiences in teacher education programs. Finally, teachers' experiences as learners are a strong influence on their cognitions and that teachers' classroom practices do not always reflect their cognitions. Teacher cognition has a reciprocal relationship with practice with each influencing the other Borg (2009) thus, they need to be explored.

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