



ELT SOPHOMORES' EVALUATIONS ON THE APPROACHES AND METHODS COURSEⁱ

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Abstract:

Student teachers' reflections on their course activities play an important role in both teacher educators' reflective teaching practices and bettering pre-service teacher education programmes. Since teacher cognition is also shaped during pre-service education years, teacher educators should collaborate with student teachers to serve their needs better and refresh their academic identity. Thus, this study aimed to find out ELT sophomores' evaluations on the Approaches and Methods Course. The study was conducted at a state university in ELT Department during 2018-2019 Fall term and there were 31 participants (8 males, 23 females, aged between 19-22) taking the course. The participants filled out a 10-item survey regarding their experiences and their opinions about the course activities, and content analysis was applied to code and categorize their written answers. All the participants indicated that this course is a professional requirement, basis of ELT and they have learnt various classroom activities or techniques. 11 think the approaches and methods learnt in the course are applicable in their future teaching contexts while 4 think they are inapplicable and finally 16 think some of them are applicable stressing the contextual differences, time constraints, crowded classrooms, different learner characteristics and effect of technology. 27 stated that they were taught English via GTM in their previous learning experiences. 27 indicated that the course contributed to their professional knowledge and skills in terms of gaining valuable teaching skills, having different standpoints, developing teaching experience, improving reading, comprehension and vocabulary, serving changing student needs. All reported that the preliminary discussions held at the very beginning of the class about the last week's topic were a useful reminder of the previous topic, made easier adaptation to the lesson, were a good means for checking student understanding, reinforcement, better and easier understanding and getting ready for the new topic. 14 held negative perspectives about making theoretical presentations with their classmates. They focused on public speaking anxiety, presenter'

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incompetence, irresponsible members, complicated content. However, 13 held positive perspectives and focused on learner autonomy, cooperative skills, sharing responsibility, fun, feeling like a teacher. 29 stated that watching related videos about the approaches/methods at the end of the class was beneficial in terms of remembering the details, seeing real applications, fun, clear and better understanding, practical awareness, real life applications. 20 stated that they encountered some difficulties while making presentations such as public speaking anxiety, pronunciation mistakes, abstract language of the book, irresponsible members, intense content, lack of content knowledge. 14 stated that all course activities were useful, 10 found micro teaching as the most important activity whereas 10 found theoretical presentations as the least important activity. Finally, 14 recommended teacher lecturing instead of student lecturing for theoretical presentations. The findings offer significant clues for teacher educators for their delivery of instruction and give opportunities for a better understanding of student teachers' learning preferences.

Keywords: reflective teaching, pre-service teacher education, teacher cognition, approaches and methods in ELT, ELT sophomore

1. Introduction

Integration of English into Turkish education system has a long history and it can be divided into some stages like *The Tanzimat Period*, the second half of the nineteenth century, Republican Turkey period (1923-1997) and Education Reform starting in 1997. Although the Turkish government has made some changes in the foreign language teaching curriculum, teaching methods, teacher training and teacher education institutions, there is a discrepancy between policy objectives and classroom teaching practices (Saricoban, 2012).

Turkish government started to apply some educational reforms like 12-year compulsory education (4+4+4), FATİH Project and starting English education at Grade 2. With the collaboration of the British Council and TEPAV (Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı-The Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey), a needs assessment about Turkish EFL context report was published in 2013 based on the visits to 48 state schools in 12 cities. According to the report, English is seen as a school subject but not as a language of communication, pair work or group work were not efficiently applied, students' different language levels and needs were not addressed in the materials or curricula, teachers have little participation in the decision-making process, the inspectors are not experts of English teaching, more than 95% of the students receiving education at state schools cannot speak English at the end of Grade 10. Additionally, there was no effective connection between primary-secondary and high school due to the repetition of the same grammar aspects, there was a theory-practice gap in pre-service teacher education, Turkish was used in English classes, there were some infrastructure deficiencies in some schools, there was not a clear understanding of technological integration into the classes, some teachers lacked

technological competencies. Moreover, grammar-based teaching was the first reason of the failure of Turkish students to speak English after graduating from high school in spite of approximately 1000+ hours of English classes. Another issue was teacher-fronted lessons and grammar-based testing. As a result; a more comprehensive in-service English teacher training, curriculum revisions, a change from grammar-based teaching to communicative teaching approach, English specialist inspectors, involvement of teacher trainers, using only/mainly English in English classes, the use of portfolio and self/peer assessment, increased cooperation between Ministry of National Education (MoNE), university Faculties of Education and Schools of Foreign Languages were recommended.

Brodin (2014) also published a project report on the application of Communicative language teaching in Turkish EFL context and concluded that the participant teachers were following an eclectic approach by combining the old and new teaching methods. There were cultural, teacher-related -and contextual factors covering principals' directives, teacher culture and classroom realities and dynamics. The central education system's requirements in the form of strict governmental control were found to influence the learning atmosphere since the course books were thought not to reflect the Eastern tradition and culture.

Teaching English at different schools, at different language levels, at different grades and for different ages has its own requirements and challenges due to contextual differences. Being a hot issue in Turkish EFL context, teaching English in primary schools is not without problems. For this purpose, 20 English teachers working at a state primary school were held interviews and it was found out that poor institutional planning (lack of support and understanding the rationale of foreign language teaching, infrastructure related problems, heavy workloads, crowded classrooms) was the essential problem in addition to the instructional (loaded curriculum, inefficient textbooks, and an undesired placement test) and socio-cultural/economic problems (lack of parental support) (Kızıldağ, 2009).

As for the challenges of teaching/learning foreign languages at university level, there were student, teacher and testing related factors like lack of motivation, overloaded syllabus, lack of learner autonomy, unsuitable learning habits, teaching methodology, and the exam anxiety. To specify, 71% of the participant students found foreign language education in their university as inefficient while 80% of the participant instructors found it efficient. In addition, 48% of the students indicated that the instructors should use the translation method while teaching whereas only 3.3% of the instructors thought so. Finally, 61% of the students found the level of convenience of foreign language exams as inconvenient but 66.7% of the teachers found it convenient. Thus, instructors were suggested to consider their students' opinions and feelings to avoid boredom and increase participation in their classes (Yapıcı, 2016). Based on the findings, it can be said that there is a mismatch between the perspectives of the students and instructors and this disconnection might lead to the failure or undesired results in the long term at university level for teaching foreign languages. Students' GTM-based beliefs are likely to result from their previous learning experiences and teachers can

desuggest them by explicitly explaining the rationale behind their teaching practices on the very first day of their teaching so that there can be a change in students' learning habits and their desire to become autonomous learners. When necessary, English teachers need to make changes in their teaching and testing practices to promote an efficient and integrated way of language learning. As is seen, whether at primary school or university, the concerns and challenges regarding foreign language teaching/learning procedures have been demonstrated to be similar and result from the same basis.

Based on a qualitative study conducted with 22 university students in Turkey, it was concluded that there is a need for more realistic objectives, integrated skills model, using various materials, practice-based lessons, considering student characteristics, in-service teacher training programs for professional development. Grammar-based teaching method or following a specific method rather than an integrated skills approach is among the factors which challenge foreign language learners and impede oral production skills and cause negative learner attitudes towards learning English at state universities Turkey (Solak & Bayar, 2015). In Turkish context, it is claimed that learners achieve proficiency in terms of reading, grammar, vocabulary, listening and writing to some degree but they have fail to improve their speaking skills. The reasons were attributed to educational (lack of integrated skills approach, focus on grammar and vocabulary learning, uninteresting teaching materials, inadequate class hours) and social reasons (low amount of input, lack of adequate exposure to authentic language around them). In addition, some students with low-income families mentioned some financial problems to improve their speaking skills because of not being able to attend private language courses or to go abroad to contact with native speakers (Kara, Ayaz, & Dündar, 2017).

It appears that there have been a number of studies which question the reasons for Turkish learners' low level speaking skills and which are conducted at different grades and higher education institutions in order to examine the status of teaching methodology and the relationship between teaching methodology, student views and oral production skills. However, there seems to be no study which combines English teacher candidates' previous exposure to different teaching methodology, and their reflections about their theoretical and practical performances on the axis of the Approaches and Methods in ELT course. Therefore, this study aims to reveal ELT sophomores' reflections upon their previous learning experiences and their written reflections about the activities of the Approaches and Methods in ELT course in Turkish EFL context.

2. Review of Literature

There are various factors regarding the emergence or disappearance of a teaching approach or method such as paradigm shifts, support networks, practicality, teachers' language proficiency, published materials and tests and compatibility with local traditions (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Since methods connect teachers' ideas and performances and these ideas guide their practices, student teachers are exposed a

number of teaching approaches, methods and techniques to establish a theoretical background and work out an appropriate synthesis for their future teaching career (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). The fact that the era changes and so does knowledge, the modifications in teaching methods and techniques are inevitable in order to keep up with the requirements of the era and serve the real needs and expectations of the stakeholders in education. Thus, it is only natural that student teachers can believe in the importance of learning effort, changes in knowledge as well as the authority of the knowledge (Cheng, Chan, Tang, & Cheng, 2009).

Various researchers have attracted the attention to the problems of foreign language teaching in Turkey in spite of the changes, innovations, materials and financial resources allocated, and the possible causes were reported to be teacher-centred classes, focus on grammar, time limitations, lack of practice, lack of student motivation and participation (Oktay, 2015). Recent research studies also demonstrate the importance of English teaching-learning procedures of in Turkey in that in light of an overview of 130 research studies conducted between 2005-2009, it was revealed that practical concerns addressed in those studies were superior to theoretical issues (Alptekin & Tatar, 2011).

Although Turkey has made attempts and innovations in foreign language teaching policy at governmental level in order to respond to the requirements of globalisation and lingua franca status of English, there are still halting points at instructional levels including primary, secondary and higher education levels. More developmental opportunities, relevant teacher training programs, collaborative teaching, a change in the existing centralized system of administration for a more efficient management system and providing sufficient sources can contribute to more effective policy planning and application (Kırkgöz, 2009).

Turkey made some changes in English language instruction and one of these changes was to integrate English into primary school for the 2nd graders, which started for the 4th graders before. This change brought about responsibilities for different stakeholders including school principals who are responsible for the implementation of the new English teaching program at their schools. Based on the interviews, it was concluded that the school principals' opinions and attitudes regarding English language teaching are of great importance for an effective implementation and it was added that the participant school administrators supported the new reform but also held some concerns regarding teaching practices, ability level, student interest, lack of a communicative environment and unqualified teachers for teaching English to 2nd graders and suggested some revisions (Çelik & Kasapoğlu, 2014).

Although a communication-based curriculum was introduced for primary schools in Turkey, there are still problems with regard to an effective implementation like the discrepancy between curriculum objectives and applications, teacher beliefs, teacher training, crowded classrooms, time and resource limitations (Kırkgöz, 2008). Ineffective institutional planning seems to be the major cause of problems regarding teaching English in public primary schools in Turkey. Due to the lack of support and understanding about the application of teaching foreign languages, lack of management

support and parental involvement, heavy workload, crowded classrooms, lack of materials, discrepancy between learning goals and teaching context and focus on grammar, English teachers can face challenges in their teaching practices and this can hinder effective implementation of English teaching in Turkish EFL context (Kızıldağ, 2009). Based on a two-year case study, Kırkgöz (2008) concluded that especially the first few years of the curriculum innovation as well as the previous experiences are crucial to train and prepare teachers to implement the changes in primary schools to teach English to young learners on a communication-based understanding. Lack of English content in university entrance examination, attitudes of school principals, lack of audio-visual materials, focus on form rather than meaning were found to be some of the factors impeding an effective implementation of communication-oriented approach in elementary schools and the teachers were reported to refer to an eclectic approach, all of which requires a holistic view for a fruitful foreign language teaching in Turkey (Brodin, 2014).

English language teaching seems to be problematic in various educational stages and Turkish universities also seem to suffer from undesired linguistic level of students. Low motivation of students, ineffectiveness of preparatory schools, lack of support for the academic programmes or internationalisation, unsuitable teaching styles, lack of student-student interaction and lack of teacher qualifications for EAP/ESP were regarded to be among the problems for the foreign language teaching policies in higher education institutions (British Council & TEPAV, 2015). There has been an increase in English-medium instruction at higher education institutions in Turkish EFL context due to such reasons as the lingua franca status of English, student mobility programs and teaching staff exchange programs; however, different delivery of English instruction at universities due to the official instructional language in different departments, autonomous structure of universities, teaching practices of the lecturers, testing and evaluation strategies of the lecturers and student profile can distort program aims. In addition, students need more language support, various learning materials, more exposure to English, a developmental approach, inclusion of Turkish to some extent for aiding comprehension to be able to follow their courses more effectively (Arik & Arik, 2018).

Being involved in reflective practices can be regarded as a sign of professional development or the ensuring sustainability in career. Although the models and approaches might have created a kind of confusion and dilemma, a holistic approach including both theory, practice, beliefs and principles can pave the way for teacher to listen to their inner world and evaluate their teaching beliefs and practices critically (Farrell, 2018). Not only in-service teachers but also pre-service teachers can benefit from the power of reflective teaching when guided. Teacher educators can enhance reflective teaching practices of student teachers in practicum courses to highlight the importance of collaboration and develop their self-awareness about their teaching practices especially in terms of instructional processes, motivation, and classroom management (Şanal Erginel, 2006).

English teacher education in Turkey has received criticism for some lacking aspects in both pre-service and in-service teacher education. To illustrate, pre-service teachers are thought to lack 21st century skills, be occupied with theory rather than practice or real teaching experiences, receive insufficient feedback upon their progress, feel stressed due to high stake exams like KPSS, lack strategies to promote learner autonomy or motivation, lack teaching strategies to teach for different age groups other than young learners, experience problems about using technology, have some incompetencies about testing and evaluation and be dissatisfied with the delivery of instruction. As to in-service English teachers, it was found out that they are not encouraged to participate in activities for their professional development, there is no systematic in-service training, they are expected to adhere to a centralized curriculum and may not take full benefit due to quality of some teacher trainers. As a suggestion, an active cooperation among stakeholders and practice-oriented training is emphasized to build bridges between pre-service and in-service teacher education (Öztürk & Aydın, 2019).

Based on the existing literature, it can be said that some EFL contexts like Turkey may face some challenges in terms of foreign language education at both policy and practice levels. A growing body of research has dealt with the curriculum and implementation changes and problems. However, no body of research provides a straightforward answer about what happens during pre-service teacher education while introducing approaches and methods in foreign language teaching with an attempt to enhance student teachers' awareness about the nature of foreign language teaching-learning procedures. The relevant literature is in need of further studies to connect both foreign language teaching methods and student teachers' beliefs about teaching practices at universities. It is hoped that this research will contribute to an understanding of the approaches and methods adopted while teaching a foreign language and inner reflections of student teachers regarding their course activities. Thus, this study aims to reveal ELT sophomores' reflections upon their previous learning experiences and their written reflections about the activities of the Approaches and Methods in ELT course in Turkish EFL context.

3. Method

The study is a qualitative descriptive study since it aims to reveal ELT sophomores' reflections about teaching methodology based on their learning experiences in the Approaches and Methods in ELT Course (Cresswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Convenience sampling was preferred because the participant student teachers were within easy reach for the researcher due to fact that the researcher delivered the Approaches and Methods in ELT Course (Dörnyei, 2007).

The study was conducted at a state university in ELT Department during 2018-2019 Fall term. The participants 31 ELT student teachers (28 sophomores, 2 juniors and 1 freshman) taking the Approaches and Methods in ELT course. There were 8 males, 23 females, and they were aged between 19-22. 2 of the students did not answer any

questions so they were excluded and the total number was 31. None of the participants had previous teaching experience.

The participants filled out a 10-item survey regarding their experiences and their opinions about the course activities, and content analysis was applied to code and categorize their written answers.

During the term, the lecturer followed a similar pattern in that she first held a preliminary discussion period where she asked some questions about the last week's or previous week's approaches and/or methods and required each student in the class to make a comment or talk about its principle, theory of language and learning, historical background, the pioneering figure, teacher-learner roles, materials, L1-L2 usage, in-class activities, advantages and disadvantages, criticism for applying it in different contexts, especially whether and how to integrate it into Turkish EFL context. Then, there were theoretical presentations about the related approach or, method by the participant students each week. After the theoretical part, the students conducted micro teaching activities based on the principles of the related approach or method. At the end, there was the video analysis part where a sample video showing the application of the related approach/method was watched and the lecturer stopped the video several times and asked questions about what is happening in the video, why it is happening and what do the ELT sophomores think about it. At the end of the day, the PowerPoint presentations and video are shared on EDS which is an online platform provided by the university to facilitate communication and file sharing between lecturers and students so that everybody can reach course content and videos easily every week. There were two different course books one covering theoretical issues mostly and giving small lesson samples for application while the other gives partial theoretical information and gives larger lesson samples, shares pictures of classroom applications and sample activities/exercises.

At the end of the course, the participants were applied a survey regarding their experiences and perspectives about the course in return for extra 10 points for their final grades. There were 10 question items in the survey and the participants were required to share their perspectives and reflect their feelings as detailed and realistic as possible. The written responses of the participants were subjected to content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994) with the help of the Excel programme and some quotations were included to exemplify and support the related emerging theme. The participants were given different codes and numbers respectively (P1 for the first participant and P2 for the second participant) in order to ensure anonymity. Since the author examined the related literature before analysing the results in order to not to exclude important aspects or end up with unrelated items, the author referred to the Informed Grounded Theory in the analyses (Thornberg, 2012).

4. Results

All the participants indicated that this course is a professional requirement, basis of ELT and they have learnt various classroom activities or techniques. All of them think that

they have learnt new ideas or content in the course. They indicated that this course is a professional requirement, basis of ELT and that they have learnt various classroom activities or techniques.

"The course showed me that there are plenty of other methods to teach a language. Mostly in the teaching world we are used to one particular method which (grammar translation method) I neither approved nor liked because I think that we should never use the native language while teaching a language (only if really necessary), we should learn the target language how we learned our native language, with experiences and mistakes. So, this course really showed and taught me that there are plenty of other methods, approaches and theories." (P12)

"I think it's one of the most important courses in our department I think it's one of the basis courses of our department. It is difficult to teach the methods because they all similarities and we as students should read a lot. I have learnt new ideas and contents especially via the micro teaching sessions of each method. For me it was necessary to be prepared before the classes and the presentations to be able to follow the content otherwise it has no sense to come to the course." (P16)

"I think the Approaches and Methods course is very useful for our future life because we are going to be an English teacher and with these methods we can learn which ones are good and which ones are not. We can practice and apply the useful ones in our future classes and to our students. I have learnt new ideas and contents like how I can teach and improve myself and how I can be a good teacher for my future students with these methods." (P17)

11 participants think that the approaches and methods learnt in the course are applicable in their future teaching contexts while 4 think they are inapplicable and finally 16 think some of them are applicable stressing the contextual differences, time constraints, crowded classrooms, different learner characteristics and the effect of technology. The following participant is in favour of eclectic teaching.

"I will definitely use the methods I have learnt in this course, but I do not think that I will use a specific one. I mean that I will use some parts from some methods. For instance, from the Total Physical Response I will use the part where the classroom environment should be stress free and the part with relaxing music in the background from Suggestopedia. What I mean is that I won't use a specific method but some parts from some methods." (P5)

"Every teacher must know these approaches/methods for sure. But in Turkey, we have a lack of opportunity and resource. We have limited time; we have lots of students. Because of these reasons, it is difficult to use approaches and methods. I hope I can change this situation in the future." (P9)

"I think some of them won't be applicable in my future teaching conditions like Grammar Translation Method because in this method teacher always speaks and communication is not a main goal. So, students get bored and they cannot learn without sharing their own ideas. But except that, the rest of them will be applicable because every method includes different techniques such as realia, charts, musics, drama... Students can learn better with them because each of them has to speak and reflect their opinions." (P17)

27 participants stated that they were taught English via Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in their previous learning experiences. Some also indicated Audio Lingual Method (ALM) and some of the other approaches and methods.

"At secondary level I was very lucky as I had one American teacher, one teacher got degree from UK and one got degree from Turkey but also had experiences in the UK and USA. Those teachers were using different styles in their teaching in each lesson. I can say that they used the combination of grammar translation method, direct method, audiolingual method. At high school, mostly grammar translation and direct method were used. But I can say that in some cases my teachers used a method which had some similarities with audiolingual method. At university, grammar translation was used. During reading-writing-listening-speaking and grammar courses at preparation degree, CLT is mostly used along with direct method in some cases." (P8)

"This is cliché, but Turkey has rote-learning based education system. In primary school, secondary school and high school, I did not see any of methods and approaches that I learnt. I expected to learn subjects in different way in university but surprisingly, it is same as high school. So, in university, I cannot see any of methods or approaches either." (P9)

"I was living in Germany when I went to primary school and we always had a teacher who either was a native or someone who had studied there. So, in English most of the time we spoke English and little German and I do remember that we always listened to native speaker's voices and were exposed to a lot of daily conversations so I think I can say that they taught us English between a mixture of the direct, audiolingual and GTM method. My high school years in English to be honest were very useless mainly because of the teacher she always translated everything into Turkish and taught us everything in Turkish so most of the time we used to GTM method. I think my best years are here at university ALL of my teachers speak English and only when really necessary in Turkish so the direct method is taught at its best. From time to time we play funny games and listen to listening parts. So it's really a mixture of everything (GTM, situational language teaching, direct method, audiolingual)." (P12)

"I was exposed to English since I was a kid. So basically, our country has been using English as the official language of education. Content-based instruction is being used to teach the universal language English. This instruction was very effective in learning

English. In my country major subjects such as Math, Science, etc. were taught in English including the textbooks were in English.” (P20)

27 participants indicated that the course contributed to their professional knowledge and skills in terms of gaining valuable teaching skills, having different standpoints, developing teaching experience, improving reading, comprehension and vocabulary, serving changing student needs.

“I think it is very important and it contribute to my knowledge and skills because every teacher has her or his own skills in presenting and teaching something so it is important to get knowledge about all these different methods and theory’s, so we can learn about those methods whose fit into every different character, for example if someone can teach something better in Native language, he or she can use GTM but if someone thinks that language should be taught with musical features she or he can use Suggestopedia. For example, if I’m not very good at acting something out I’ll be aware of that TPR method is not the right teaching method for me.” (P16)

“To be honest, at first, I was really intimidated and scared of it because it looks and is really difficult to learn all of these methods by heart and I still don’t think that’s it’s that important to know it to the very last detail, but later on I realised that it’s really important like I said earlier I am happy that I know that there are different methods that I couldn’t even have thought about. I also do think that the historical backgrounds of these methods should not be that detailed for example who invented it for came up with it.” (P12)

All the participants reported that the preliminary discussions held at the very beginning of the class about the last week’s topic were a useful reminder of the previous topic, made easier adaptation to the lesson, were a good means for checking student understanding, reinforcement, better and easier understanding and getting ready for the new topic.

“Preliminary discussions are really helpful and useful to keep fresh the information we have learned before and they remind us the little points we have missed in the previous class. They are also effective while adding new information on what we already know.” (P7)

“It’s very helpful to sum the last method we had learned up. I was able to write everything down what I have either skipped or missed from the last week’s class. Also it is a good reminder and I like it more when the teacher gives us extra information since it’s a very difficult class.” (P12)

“I think it was good for revision, but it would be better for us if we would summarize the most important key points of each method at the end of each presentation. From the other

point I think that it is necessary to sum up the most important points in the class, so it is more memorable, and we can take new notes and can complete missing points and ask questions if it's something unclear. But to do this in an effective way we have to be prepared for such sessions otherwise it has no sense and takes too much time for being active and participate.” (P16)

14 participants held negative perspectives about making theoretical presentations with their classmates. They focused on public speaking anxiety, presenter's incompetence, irresponsible members, complicated content. However, 13 held positive perspectives and focused on learner autonomy, cooperative skills, sharing responsibility, fun, feeling like a teacher.

“I get that we have to start practicing teaching in a way but these presentations were so useless in my opinion because most of the time the presenter was not even fully aware of the subject or the presenters' intonation or speaking abilities were just not good (including mine) so it's very difficult to understand something that even the presenter has little knowledge about. I can say that I have not learned much from the presentations. I either studied the subject myself or learned something from the teacher. But I liked the micro teaching parts because it really showed us how the class is approached.” (P12)

“I don't like presentations since we just copy what's written in the book. I can't remember all of my part after the presentation. Other presentations also are boring again because we just read the book. I don't think that people can enjoy presenting theories from books and I don't think that these presentations are useful/easy to remember.” (P14)

“Generally, yes I liked because making presentations as a group reduced the number of subject per person and provided cooperation.” (P15)

“I don't like making theoretical presentations with my classmates. I think it is not beneficial enough for me because, while I make presentations with them, we share the topics. Every student has one topic or part. In fact, it seems to be a good thing for us; however, this is not a good. When the student is given one part or topic, she/he only focuses on her/his own part. This type of work does not contribute to me enough. As well as, there may be disagreements between the group members in group work and this affects the efficiency of the homework.” (P18)

29 participants stated that watching related videos about the approaches/methods at the end of the class was beneficial in terms of remembering the details, seeing real applications, fun, clear and better understanding, practical awareness, real life applications.

“Yes, I really enjoy watching these videos because they are very funny and very helpful even though they are very long. We are able to really see how the lesson is lectured

according to each method/approach. Since they are really long I like it that the teacher tries to shorten it in a way.” (P12)

“I didn’t much like because It was not very effective for me. I was bored while watching it because we learned a lot of things before the video.” (P15)

“I liked watching the videos the most because after the theoretical part, the videos helped to most to be aware and understand the application of the method and how it works in real life, what is for me the most important point. To learn something theoretical is easy but to know and learn how it is applied or to apply the methods is quite difficult, so the videos helped me to build a picture about the method in my mind.” (P16)

“Yes, I really liked that part of the course. Because often times the approach or method that were presented by my classmates were not that clear for me. But by watching some related videos about the applications of the methods and approaches made me feel that I have understood the content.” (P22)

20 participants stated that they encountered some difficulties while making presentations such as public speaking anxiety, pronunciation mistakes, abstract language of the book, irresponsible members, intense content, lack of content knowledge.

“I did the micro teaching part of community language learning and I really enjoyed preparing and making up things for class. So, I did not face much difficulties, maybe just the excitement (which happens all the time). Other than I had no difficulties whatsoever, I was very happy with my group but doing the presentation right after the midterms was a bit exhausting which was unfortunate but all in all I liked it very much. It just took me a few hours to prepare my speech and prepare the materials for class.” (P12)

“Not at all, I try to make my presentations naturally as possible and not to read or memorize any points. I didn’t change any techniques but from now on I will try to make use of my different intonations, not to make my friends bored while listening to my presentations because either for me it was very hard to listen to the theoretical parts when they took too long. Another point could be building the groups and choosing the topics on our own. Maybe this would make preparing the presentations easier and more enjoyable.”

(P16)

“Yes, I did. Making a presentation is never easy. I really was indecisive in choosing which information should I put on my presentation. I thought every information were important and relevant. So, it made it hard for me to prepare it. Since I was indecisive, I put almost all the information on my slides and made my presentation too crowded with

sentences. The textbooks used were too informative and were a great help in elaborating the given approaches and methods in class.” (P20)

The participants had varied preferences as to the importance level of the course activities and experiences in that 14 participants stated that all course activities were useful, 10 participants found micro teaching as the most important activity whereas 10 participants found theoretical presentations as the least important activity. In addition, 7 participants found watching a related video the most important course activity, 3 participants found the preliminary discussions the most important one whereas 2 participants found discussing the video the least important course activity and 2 participants found micro teaching as the least important one.

“I definitely disliked the theoretical presentations the most like I explained earlier. The preliminary discussions were very helpful from time to time like I explained earlier as well. The micro teaching part was definitely my favourite, it was fun and if showed correctly it was very understandable. I also liked the ‘Key word’ thing, when the teacher or student wrote the most important things on the board.” (P12)

“For me they were all important equally. They are all important because learning about the approach/methods in ELT is one of the most important subjects. So, we must not skip any details. Integrating all these course activities is helpful and effective in learning the methods/approach. Linking these activities also made the course less boring. Different activities also make the course more interesting to learn. The different activities used were really helpful in terms of sharing the principles of each approach and methods.” (P20)

“I think all of them are equally important. Because in the preliminary discussion session, we summarize the method and its basic rules, in theoretical presentation part we learn the method with its details and features, in presenters’ short application of the approach/method part we learn how to use that method, in watching a related video part we decide which ages and which subjects we can use in the future and the discussing about the video part our teacher makes us to realise the method’s using details.” (P23)

“Short application of the approach was the most important for me because it was permanent in my mind due to visual learning. It affects me and leads to my learning wish. Various activities, games and applications provide some points remind me in the exams and I can write something from thing reminding via them. As to say up, theoretical presentations were the least because I didn’t remember them even if I studied the topics. It makes me put off from this lesson and it creates stress on me.” (P29)

Finally, 14 participants recommended theoretical teacher lecturing instead of student presentations.

“Actually, at the beginnings, I didn’t like this course because it was too hard for me. But then, when the lessons are progressed, I started to understand better with the help of preliminary discussions, presentations and videos. As I said before, just a few people in the class cares the presentations. Because of them, we can’t understand the methods well. Also, many people copy our book in their presentations; it would be good that they just summarize it.” (P17)

“I don’t think I have any criticisms about it. I think almost all the different approaches and methods’ common principle is to communicate. I do believe learning is acquired by doing. To converse is the only most effective way of learning a language. Approaches and methods are used to make language learning easier and fun. So, I think without the approaches and methods, learning a language would be difficult and impossible. The approaches I have learned are very unique and easy to use in teaching.” (P20)

“Yes, I have some suggestions and comments about the Approaches and Methods in ELT course. I think our teacher should describe the approaches and methods not students. Because she has better pronunciation and teaching skills than us. So, if our teacher describes the approaches and methods, I believe we all learn this course much better. Another suggestion is, sometimes presenter’s short application of the approach/method are very short. Maybe that part can take little longer.” (P23)

“Yes, I have. I suggest that we should first listen to the method after that a group of students can do an object lesson according to this method because without listening to the features of language and trying to figure out that method on your own by only using the book is hard from my point of view. Because we know people who makes this sample course our minds will automatically will make a connection for us to learn better.” (P25)

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to find out ELT sophomores’ reflections on the Approaches and Methods in ELT course and concluded that the participants were mostly taught English via GTM or ALM in their previous learning experiences. They mostly underlined the importance of the course and stated some of its professional contributions for their future teaching practices. However, they were found to have some concerns regarding the application of the approaches and methods due to some contextual, technological and student-related issues. They also favoured micro teaching activities, video analysis and preliminary discussions against making theoretical presentations.

This study bears some similarities with the existing literature. First of all, it is seen that in parallel with Sarıcoban (2012), there seems to be a disparity between course objectives and classroom teaching practices at primary, secondary, high school levels in that although on paper the integrated skills and CLT is encouraged in detail, in-class activities seem to fall behind these objectives due to such reasons as crowded classrooms, overloaded curriculum (Kırkgöz, 2008; Kızıldağ, 2009); like lack of

motivation, lack of learner autonomy, teaching methodology, and the exam anxiety (Yapıcı, 2016), all of which are indicated in the written responses of the participant student teachers with regard to their opinions about their previous foreign language learning experiences. However, the emphasis is heavily put on the GTM usage in classes for the lack of students' speaking skills (TEPAV & British Council, 2013; Solak & Bayar, 2015; Kara, Ayaz, & Dündar, 2017). The theory-practice gap in pre-service and in-service teacher education as well as the disconnection and repetition of items at different grades are the other highlighted aspects for foreign language failure in Turkey (TEPAV & British Council, 2013).

When we look at the stages of English teachers, they are first learners of English, and then learners of teaching and finally they become in-service teachers. That is why they are first exposed to learning experiences as students and then learn about various approaches and methods to teach a foreign language and finally they draw their conclusions and form own teaching identity based on their previous learning and pre-service teacher education experiences.

Pre-service teacher education has an undeniable effect on student teachers' knowledge, beliefs, identity and competencies and that is why teacher educators need to consider their reactions, feelings, suggestions and criticism regarding the courses delivered. In this way, there will be an open communication channel between the two parties and the rationale of the course activities, the activities' contribution and merit as well as their influence on student teachers can be explicitly foregrounded. There is a mutual feedback procedure in that student teachers can make changes in their knowledge and skills based on the feedback they get from the teacher educator. In a similar vein, the teacher educator can also make some adaptations in his/her teaching practices, assessment tools, course activities based on student teachers' reflections. In sum, they both parties contribute to each other's professional development. Within the scope of this study, the participant ELT sophomores received feedback from their instructor upon their theoretical presentations, micro teaching activities, pronunciation, video usage and examination papers during the term so that they could see their strong and weak points, notice their pronunciation errors, improve their social and cooperative skills, cope with difficulties and enhance their technological competencies while making presentations. As to the instructor, thanks to the student teachers' written responses to the survey, she could see what is appreciated, what is found difficult, easy, fun, boring, facilitative or impeding so that she can make some adaptations in her future classes in terms of sources, testing, activities and feedback types. In short, both student teachers and teacher educators can benefit from reflective practices to detect what goes right or wrong how to make changes or take precautions in advance. The importance of reflective teaching practices takes us to Schön. According to Schön (1983, 1987), there are two types of reflective practice namely reflection in action and reflection on action. The former is an interaction reflection where decision making is led by tacit knowledge which emerges at the time of action whereas the latter is a retroactive reflection where the reflection takes place after the action. In this regard, the teacher can be involved in reflection either while teaching or after teaching in order to see what worked, what

failed, what to do next time, what to add, what to remove and how to better their teaching practices in the course of time. However, while student teachers were reported to benefit from reflection on action, they were reported to have difficulties when engaged in reflection in action due to the wide range of personal and professional experiences and changes at the time of teaching practice (Zhu, 2011). Similarly, in this study, both the student teachers and the instructor were involved in mutual reflection practices during the term for the Approaches and Methods in ELT course and the student teacher benefitted more from reflection on action after completing their presentations.

As educational implications; Turkish government needs to activate more cooperation between pre-service teacher education institutions and MoNE schools, students should receive foreign language education appropriate for themselves rather than completing the same book in all classrooms at the same level and for this reason, students with similar linguistic abilities should receive the same instruction after a placement test so there can be English classes specifically at schools; different course books for the same level can be employed or there should be some adaptations on the same course books used for all students at the same grade, to exemplify the same course book and content do not seem realistic to be covered wholly and efficiently at a vocational high school, Anatolian school, religious high school or science high school due to different student profile and course content; the transition between primary-secondary-high school should be well coordinated in order not to repeat the previously learnt items but to add on and build a bridge between previous learning experiences, ELT students should receive a different and higher level instruction compared to the students in some of the other departments at preparatory classes before starting the B.A. programme, ELT students' awareness should be enhanced about the practical constraints and realities while conducting the Approaches and Methods in ELT course and they should be lead to think critically about their future classes based on the theoretical-practical presentations and video analysis done to grab the rational and application of a specific approach and method, ELT students should be encouraged to take a multifaceted and eclectic approach to cope with contextual differences, ELT instructors and students should feed each other via sharing their reflections about the course activities, assessment tools and criteria, last but not the least, employment of communicative, integrated and/or eclectic approaches should be encouraged depending on learner characteristics by authorities and policy makers and the required infrastructure and professional support should be offered by the legal organs.

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