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Foreign language teaching practicum beliefs of student teachers

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Abstract

This study to be conducted with English Language Teachers at the secondary education in our country during the first semester 2014-2015 academic year, aims to explore the beliefs of these in-service ELT teachers during the micro teaching sessions by the prospective ELT teacher candidates. This study aims at reporting the progress in-between the feedback sessions provided by the mentor teachers for micro teaching practices to be performed by about 120 student teachers attending the ELT department at Hacettepe University. The goal of the micro teaching is to provide the student teachers with the opportunity to practice the teaching skills and evaluate themselves concerning these skills before their future roles as teachers. In the study, the participants are asked to comment on the micro teaching practice in terms of positive and negative sides of it, its difficulty, and the gains of it. The data of the study are collected through a survey designed by the Ministry of National Education for this aim 4 sections, namely (1) Content Area Knowledge, (2) Planning, (3) Assessment, and (4) Other Professional Competencies. The data to be obtained will be analyzed through descriptive analysis method and discussed based on the quotations from the reports of the participants. The findings to be obtained are considered to show that the micro teaching practice is useful for student teachers to reduce their deficiency in teaching skills and help these teacher candidates to develop much more positive attitudes towards their future professions.

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Keywords: ELT, micro teaching, teacher education.

5. Introduction

In Turkish higher education system as is indicated by the Counsel of Higher Education (HEC) it is compulsory for the undergraduate programs to offer practicum courses to 4th year students. These courses are of two types: one is "School Experience" and the other is "Practicum" (Sarıçoban, 2008). The former aims to enable teacher trainees to obtain information about English teaching in real classroom situation and reach the necessary cognitive level before starting the actual teaching practice by observing the English teaching practices in the actual classroom (Kasapoğlu, 2015).

The teacher-trainees are expected to (1) have knowledge about the way the school works, (2) analyze teacher duties and responsibilities, (3) analyze teacher-student, teacher-administrator, and teacher-parent relations, (4) have knowledge about preparing instructional materials and tests, (5) observe teachers' attitude towards student groups of different abilities during the course of the lesson, and (6) analyze student interaction, attitudes and behaviors in the classroom. Teacher training programs

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should effectively prepare teachers to meet the demands and standards of the 21st century (Schwab, Defranco, and McGivney-Burelle, 2004) by redesigning the related curriculum (Webb-Johnson & Artiles, 1998; Burns, Grande, & Marable, 2008). On the other hand, the latter aims to enable teacher trainees to teach in real classroom situations, to develop the skills to plan and teach lessons in accordance with the education system and to display the behaviors necessary for teachers. "Teacher education programs should offer extensive field experiences and courses that highlight the conditions in …. schools" (Haberman, 2004, p.103). In this course the teacher-trainees are expected to (1) identify teacher qualifications, (2) design lesson plans which are appropriate for the teaching program in the practicum schools and for the level of the students, (3) teach a lesson in a natural context by preparing instructional materials appropriate for the lesson, (4) gain teaching experience and skills, and (5) evaluate their and other teacher trainees' practices in line with the feedback received. Therefore, this study aims to explore the beliefs of these in-service ELT teacher-trainees during their micro teaching sessions. For this purpose in mind the following research questions have been formulated.

1. What are the beliefs of in-service ELT teacher-trainees about their micro teaching sessions in terms of (1) knowledge of the content area and content area training, (2) instructional and learning period, (3) assessment and keeping records, and (4) other professional competencies?

2. Do males and females differ in their beliefs about their micro teaching sessions in terms of (1) knowledge of the content area and content area training, (2) instructional and learning period, (3) assessment and keeping records, and (4) other professional competencies?

3. What are the opinions of in-service ELT teacher-trainees about their micro teaching sessions?

6. Method

6.1. Sample / Participants

The researcher has conducted his study with 4th year prospective ELT teacher candidates at a state university where he has been offering different courses on methodology, testing, materials development, technology use in ELT, etc. The study has been conducted with a total number of 48 students, 9 of whom are males and 39 of whom are females.

Table 1. Gender

		Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	Female	39	81,3	81,3	81,3
	2	Male	9	18,8	18,8	100,0
	Total		48	100,0	100,0	

6.2. Instrument(s)

In order to collect data a survey developed by the Ministry of National Education and used by the faculties of education in our country has been administered to the participants of this research (http://egt.kocaeli.edu.tr/okul_deneyimi.html). The questionnaire consists of three parts: (1) demographic information of participants, (2) self-assessment form, and (3) open-ended questions. In the first part the participants are asked to provide info about their gender. The second part that seeks their self-assessment about the micro teaching sessions that includes (1) content area knowledge, (2)

planning, (3) assessment, and (4) other professional competencies, and the last section has 7 open-ended questions. As for the reliability level of the questionnaire the Cronbach Alpha was found .96.

Table 2. Overall Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,962	46

Table 3. Content Area Reliability Statistics

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Content Area Knowledge	,75	4
Content Area Training	,73	5
Planning	,87	6
Instructional Period	,81	8
Classroom Management	,88	9
Communication	,87	6
Assessment and Keeping Records	,85	4
Other Professional Competencies	,58	4

7. Data analysis and discussion

The current study aims at scrutinizing the participants' beliefs about their practicum studies. To do so the above mentioned survey has been administered to collect data about the issue. As for the data analysis SPSS 20.0 has been utilized.

What are the beliefs of in-service ELT teacher-trainees about their micro teaching sessions in terms of (1) knowledge of the content area and content area training, (2) instructional and learning period, (3) assessment and keeping records, and (4) other professional competencies?

As to the interpretations of the means in the questionnaire, the means between 2,1-3 is considered that students believe that their micro-teaching is good (high level of positive attitudes), the ones between 1,1-1,9 is considered acceptable (moderate level of positive attitudes), and the below indicates that they do not think their micro-teaching is good enough. Therefore, as a result of the analysis of the overall beliefs of in-service ELT teacher-trainees about their micro teaching sessions, it can be said that the participants have a high level of positive attitudes towards their micro-teaching in the real classroom environment (M=2,49) (Table 4). Therefore, in the analysis of findings the items over the mean value of 2,49 are referred.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
KNOWLEDGE OF THE CONTENT AREA AND CONTENT AREA TRAINING					
Content Area Knowledge					
possess the fundamental principles and concepts	48	1	3	2,54	,544
be able to associate the fundamental principles and concepts about the topic under discussion	48	1	3	2,56	,580
be able to effectively use both visual and audile materials	48	1	3	2,48	,652
be able to make associations among topics in his/her field	48	1	3	2,52	,583
Total				**2,53**	
Content Area Training					
know the instructional approaches, techniques and methods	48	1	3	2,31	,589
make use of instructional technologies	48	1	3	2,52	,545
determine the incorrect concepts the learners develop	48	1	3	2,44	,616
give appropriate and sufficient answers to the learners' questions	48	1	3	2,50	,619
provide confidential learning atmosphere	48	1	3	2,46	,617
Total				**2,45**	
INSTRUCTIONAL AND LEARNING PERIOD					
Planning					
write a clear, understandable and well-organized plan	48	1	3	2,35	,699
clearly state the aim of the lesson	48	1	3	2,50	,652
determine the appropriate method and techniques for this aim	48	1	3	2,50	,583
select and prepare appropriate materials for this aim	48	1	3	2,52	,583
determine appropriate evaluation criteria	48	1	3	2,38	,570
make associations with the previous and the next lessons	48	1	3	2,73	,494
Total				**2,50**	
Instructional Period					
use various teaching methods and techniques appropriately	48	2	3	2,44	,501
use the time efficiently	48	1	3	2,29	,651
organize effective activities for the learners to take part in	48	1	3	2,50	,715
take the individual differences into consideration	48	1	3	2,25	,700

make use of the materials s/he has prepared effectively, in line with the classroom proficiency level	48	1	3	2,60	,574
be able to make summary and give appropriate feedback	48	1	3	2,65	,526
associate the subject matter they are studying with the real-life	48	1	3	2,69	,512
determine the ways to reach the aim	48	1	3	2,52	,545
Total				**2,49**	
Classroom Management					
make an appropriate introduction to the lesson	48	1	3	2,65	,565
draw students' attention to the lesson, increase interest motivate the learners	48	1	3	2,54	,651
provide a democratic learning environment	48	1	3	2,38	,761
help learners to keep their interest and motivation towards the lesson	48	1	3	2,23	,722
take precautions against any inconveniencies likely to happen during the instruction	48	1	3	2,19	,704
make use of at least oral rewarding	48	1	3	2,48	,618
make an overall review of the lesson	48	1	3	2,56	,580
give information about the next lesson and homework	48	1	3	2,60	,536
prepare the learners to end up and leave the classroom	48	2	3	2,67	,476
Total				**2,48**	
Communication					
establish an effective communication among the learners	48	1	3	2,58	,613
make clear explanations and give directions	48	1	3	2,63	,606
ask questions which will make learners to think and comment	48	1	3	2,38	,703
have a good and effective tone of voice	48	1	3	2,60	,644
listen to the learners carefully	48	1	3	2,50	,744
make use of oral and body language effectively	48	1	3	2,54	,582
Total				**2,54**	
ASSESSMENT AND KEEPING RECORDS					
prepare appropriate measurement tools	48	1	3	2,42	,577
give appropriate feedback according to the comprehension level of the learners	48	1	3	2,50	,619
grading learners' products in a short time and inform the administration	48	1	3	2,56	,580

keep a record of daily advancement for the learners	48	1	3	2,54	,582
Total				**2,51**	
OTHER PROFESIONAL COMPETENCIES					
be aware of the official articles and rules related to his profession	48	1	3	2,13	,733
be open to professional comments and suggestions	48	1	3	2,48	,714
participate in school activities	48	1	3	2,38	,606
be a model for the his/her learners and to others	48	1	3	2,54	,617
Total				**2,38**	
Valid N (listwise)	48				

A further analysis of Table 4 also indicates the participants' beliefs about their micro teaching in terms of (1) knowledge of the content area and content area training, (2) instructional and learning period, (3) assessment and keeping records, and (4) other professional competencies. As for the analysis, the items whose means are equal to or above the average mean of the questionnaire are considered to indicate a high level of positive attitudes towards their micro teaching practices. Therefore, only these items will be focused as follows.

Content Area Knowledge and Content Area Training

a) Content Area Knowledge

The participants of this study reported that they possess the fundamental principles and concepts, associate the fundamental principles and concepts about the topic under discussion, and make associations among topics in his/her field.

b) Content Area Training

This section also includes information about content area training and for this issue they believe that they make use of instructional technologies and give appropriate and sufficient answers to the learners' questions.

Instructional and Learning Period

a) Planning

In designing an instructional program, the most important initial step is planning. An analysis of the findings of this study indicates the importance of clearly stating the aim of the lesson, determining the appropriate method and techniques for this aim, and selecting and preparing appropriate materials for this aim.

b) Instructional Period

As to this issue, they seem to organize effective activities for the learners to take part in, make use of the materials s/he has prepared effectively, in line with the classroom proficiency level, be able to make summary and give appropriate feedback, associate the subject matter they are studying with the real-life, and determine the ways to reach the aim.

c) Classroom Management

During lessons in overcrowded classrooms noise is inevitable especially in foreign language classes not only in our country but elsewhere, as well. To this end the participants of this study believe that they are able to make an appropriate introduction to the lesson, draw students' attention to the lesson, increase interest, motivate the learners, make an overall review of the lesson, give information about

the next lesson and homework, which will in a way to help them to keep the classroom under control and have effective and efficient lessons. Last but not the least of course, they report that they have the ability to prepare the learners to end up the lesson and leave the classroom.

d) Communication

During instructional period it is our natural aim to help our learners to communicate with each other in the target language. Therefore, they need to improve themselves in their interaction. With this in mind, it is reported in this study that the participants seem to be able to establish an effective communication among their learners, make clear explanations and give directions, have a good and effective tone of voice, listen to their learners carefully, and most importantly make use of oral and body language effectively for non-verbal communication.

Assessment and Keeping Records

As to the assessment and keeping records, they report that they are able to give appropriate feedback according to the comprehension level of the learners, grading learners' products in a short time and inform the administration, and keep a record of daily advancement for the learners.

Other Professional Competencies

The last issue seeks for info about other professional competencies. They view themselves as be a model for his/her learners and to others only because we know that each learner always chooses a specific teacher as his ideal model for his future professional life.

Do males and females differ in their beliefs about their micro teaching sessions in terms of

(1) knowledge of the content area and content area training, (2) instructional and learning period, (3) assessment and keeping records, and (4) other professional competencies?

In order to see if any statistical difference occurs in between male and female participants of the study in terms of (1) knowledge of the content area and content area training, (2) instructional and learning period, (3) assessment and keeping records, and (4) other professional competencies Mann-Whitney U Test was run because the number of the male participants is below 30.

As demonstrated in Table 5, Mann-Whitney U Test revealed a significant difference in the evaluations of *content area training* between female students (Md = 13, n = 39) and male students (Md = 11, n = 9), U = 97.500, z = -2.098, p = .036.

Table 5 Difference between Male and Female Students in Terms of Content Area Training

Female Students			Male Students					
n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	z	p
39	26.50	1033.50	9	15.83	142.50	97.500	-2.098	.036

A careful analysis of Table 6 indicates that a statistical difference between male and female participants of the study is seen in four teaching behaviors in favor of females. It is reported that female teacher candidates perform better in making use of instructional technologies, determining the incorrect concepts the learners develop, giving appropriate and sufficient/satisfying answers to the learners' questions, and providing confidential learning atmosphere.

Table 6. Difference between Male and Female Students in Terms of Different Language Teaching Behaviors in Content Area Training

Gender		know the instructional approaches, techniques and methods	make use of instructional technologies	determine the incorrect concepts the learners develop	give appropriate and sufficient answers to the learners' questions	provide confidential learning atmosphere
Female	N	39	39	39	39	39
	Std. Deviation	,590	,502	,498	,600	,601
	Median	2,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00
Male	N	9	9	9	9	9
	Std. Deviation	,500	,707	,667	,707	,707
	Median	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00
Total	N	48	48	48	48	48
	Std. Deviation	,589	,545	,616	,619	,617
	Median	2,00	3,00	2,50	3,00	3,00

What are the opinions of in-service ELT teacher-trainees about their micro teaching sessions?

As to the last research question of this study students were posed seven open-ended questions in the 3rd part of the questionnaire. These questions and some sample answers to these questions are as follows.

A brief definition of micro-teaching practices

Relying on the answers given to this question the participants seem to define it as an experience to move from theory into practice. It prepares those teacher candidates for their real professional lives that will take place in the real classroom atmosphere. That is, it helps them to improve themselves in their professions.

Difficulties teacher-trainees encounter during the micro-teaching practices

The participants provided answers by focusing on the difficulties of providing a confidential learning atmosphere, ignoring the proficiency level of the students due to being inexperience in the profession, and keeping the class calm. They also reported that there is lack of technological materials provided by the school, of time to get to know the learners in a one-month micro-teaching practice. The learners seem to be unwilling to learn a foreign language. They need to have empathy with the students in order to have a look at the back side of the medal to see what kind of problems they are encountering. They are unable to prepare an appropriate and effective lesson plans. They need to draw learners' attention to the lesson. The classrooms are overcrowded, so it is impossible for them to keep the class under control.

Positive and negative sides of micro-teaching

As to the positive sides of micro-teaching practices, they report that it helps them to gain experience before they start their professions, develop self-confidence, to get to know themselves, how to employ the theoretical knowledge of the techniques they learn from theoretical courses in the real classroom, notice their own teaching deficiencies and mistakes, and increase interest in teaching profession. On the other hand, they report only one negative side of this practice such as it might not develop all the teaching skills in this short period of time (only one month). The teacher candidates may develop a high level of anxiety.

Feedback given by your (mentor) professor and regular teacher (class teacher)

Feedback sessions are vital in the sense that teacher candidates have the chance to see their strong and weak points in their teaching behaviors in terms of content knowledge, classroom management, communication, assessment, etc. Therefore, these candidates have been asked if they have got feedback from their mentors and/or their regular teachers. Most of them report that they have received feedback from them. They get prepared for the next lesson, paying attention to the teaching deficiencies and mistakes in their previous micro-teaching lessons. They get informed about how to keep the class under control. They have been informed about using an effective tone of voice and reducing anxiety by time.

Correction of the mistakes that are impossible to overcome immediately

The errors/mistakes are inevitable parts of any learning process, so teachers should know how to deal with them. To some there should be a delayed correction procedure. However, some other educators believe that they need to be overcome immediately. Keeping these two different viewpoints, they state that we should first notice the mistake, know what it is, and decide in a specific time period about what should be done to overcome it. May be repetitive exercises can be a solution for some type of mistakes, but an immediate correction technique with explanation either in the target language or in learners' mother tongue can be a certain solution. However, we should not ignore the fact that the fossilized errors are too difficult to correct. Thus, we need to find solutions for these types of errors immediately in the right time. Of course, getting more experienced in teaching will provide the inexperience teachers with some insights about the issue, too. Teachers may get together (feedback meetings) to discuss these sorts of problems. The last solution could be conducting a remedial teaching for the issue.

The most contribution of micro teaching practices

Micro-teaching practices are assumed to contribute teacher-trainees in different aspects. The participants indicate that this practice provides them with teaching experience, teach them how to display teaching behaviors in different issues such as planning, managing classes, communicating, assessing learners, establishing an effective learning environment, using the target language in line with the proficiency level of learners, keeping class under control, developing self-confidence, understanding procedures, etc.

Contributions of micro teaching practices in terms of teaching skills, content knowledge, and content area teaching

This practicum also aims to develop some further issues like designing, preparing and/or making some necessary changes in the lesson plans by negotiating with learners in order to see their real needs, interests, etc. It also contributes to practical applications in the classrooms by making use of theoretical knowledge of the field in terms of methods, approaches, techniques, activities, materials development, managing classes, etc. It helps develop human psychology to get to know individual differences in terms of learning styles, strategies, and multiple-intelligences and use time effectively and efficiently. Most importantly, they become aware that knowing a language (a competent user) does not necessarily guarantee teaching it effectively.

8. Conclusions

The ultimate aim of this study is to scrutinize the beliefs of ELT teacher-trainees micro-teaching practices and discuss their views about the issue. The participants are given a questionnaire that search for their beliefs about their own micro-teaching practices in terms of four main topics: (1) content area knowledge and content area training, (2) instructional and learning period, (3) assessment and keeping

records, and (4) other professional competencies. The findings of this study reveal that the participants have an overall high level of positive attitudes towards their micro teaching practices. They seem to have the fundamental principles and concepts, associate the fundamental principles and concepts about the topic under discussion, make use of instructional technologies and give appropriate and sufficient answers to the learners' questions, become aware of the importance of clearly stating the aim of the lesson, determining the appropriate method and techniques for this aim, and selecting and preparing appropriate materials for this aim, organizing effective activities, utilizing the materials s/he has prepared effectively, making summary and giving appropriate feedback, associating the subject matter they are studying with the real-life, and determining the ways to reach the aim, drawing students' attention to the lesson, increasing interest and motivating learners, establishing an effective communication among their learners, having an effective tone of voice, giving appropriate feedback according to the comprehension level of the learners for daily advancement, and being a model for his/her learners and to others. Most importantly, these findings are supported by the answers to open-ended questions by the participants. In addition, they state the importance of micro-teaching practicing by focusing on getting experienced through trying to find solutions to the difficulties they have encountered such as using time, dealing with overcrowded classrooms, having empathy, keeping class under control, developing self-confidence, moving from theory into practice, feedback sessions, correcting mistakes, designing, preparing and/or making some necessary changes in the lesson plans by negotiating with learners in order to see their real needs, interests, knowing individual differences in terms of learning styles, strategies, and multiple-intelligences and use time effectively and efficiently, and knowing a language (a competent user) does not necessarily guarantee teaching it effectively.

In conclusion the micro-teaching practices help teacher-candidates help became aware their own strong and weak points. To help them they need to be intrinsically motivated to gain experience and to develop positive attitudes towards their professions although some negative sides appear. It is important to get feedback from the mentors and instructors about the difficulties they encounter during their real classroom teaching practices. They should provide these teacher candidates with good, effective instructional and managerial support for the difficulties they report in this study. Of course, the schools should also provide them with the necessary technology for use in the classrooms. The micro-teaching-practice period should be increased because the participants always mention that one-month period is too short to gain the necessary experience before they start their professions. The classroom size should be reduced because they report that these classrooms are overcrowded. As a final word to conclude, more studies should be conducted to have more satisfactory generalizations.

Last but not the least, "the student teachers should be guided, planned, organized, given regular feedback, and much more opportunities to teach according to the professional requirements and expectations of the schools where they are placed to do their practicum studies" (Sarıçoban, 2008).

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Öğretmen adaylarının yabancı dil öğretimi uygulama eğitimine yönelik inançları

Öz

Bu çalışma, 2014- 2015 eğitim öğretim yılının ilk döneminde, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi öğretmen adaylarının mikro öğretme uygulaması sürecine yönelik inançlarını belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu çalışma sonunda, Hacettepe Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümünde eğitim gören 120 öğretmen adayının mikro öğretme uygulamaları sürecinde, danışman öğretmenlerinden aldıkları dönütler çerçevesinde, kendilerini ne derece geliştirdiklerini ortaya çıkarılması hedeflenmektedir. Mikro öğretme uygulamasının amacı öğretmen adaylarına, öğretmenlik mesleğine başlamadan önce, öğretmenlik becerilerini deneme ve kendilerini değerlendirme fırsatı sunmaktır. Çalışmada öğretmen adaylarından mikro öğretme uygulamasını hakkında yorum yapmaları istenmiştir. Verileri toplamak için Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından tasarlanan bir ölçek kullanılmıştır. Ölçek (1)içerik alan bilgisi, (2) planlama, (3) değerlendirme ve (4) diğer mesleki yeterlikler olmak üzerine dört bölümden oluşmaktadır. Toplanan veriler betimsel analiz yolu ile incelenecek ve katılımcıların yorumları ile birlikte değerlendirilecektir. Çalışma sonunda, mikro öğretme uygulamasının, öğretmen adayları için yararlı olduğuna yönelik olumlu sonuçların elde edilmesi beklenmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: İngiliz dili eğitimi, mikro öğretme, öğretmen eğitimi

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Dr.Arif SARIÇOBAN has been working as an associate professor of ELT at Hacettepe University since 1997 and acting as an editor-in-chief, an editor, and a reviewer for various national and international journals in the field of Language and Linguistic Studies. He has numerous national and international articles and also presented numerous papers at both national and international conferences. His main focus of interest is EFL, ESL, TEFL, ELT and recently the Teaching of Turkish as a Native Language (TNL) and the teaching of Turkish as a Foreign and/or Second Language (TFL/TSL). He has so far authored various ELT course books. He has recently acted as an editor on Instructional Technologies and Materials Design in which he also has two joint book chapters on the development and use of technology and another book on linguistics in ELT studies. He has many other book chapters in both national and international ELT course books.