Full Length Research Paper

Self-efficacy of student teachers about teaching Turkish to foreigners course

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This study explored the perceptions of student teachers about Teaching Turkish to Foreigners (TTF) course offered as a part of the Turkish teacher training program which aims to educate pre-service Turkish language teachers. In the study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire and interview from student teachers enrolled in Turkish language teacher training program at two state universities in Turkey in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 academic years. The aim of the questionnaire was to identify 326 student teachers’ perceptions about the TTF course that intends to provide student teachers with the necessary professional development needed in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language (TFL). The focus group interview, carried out with 10 volunteering student teachers, aimed at gathering more in-depth data in terms of gaining needed professional teaching skills regarding TFL. In order to triangulate the data, besides the questionnaire and interview, document analysis was applied in the survey. The questionnaire results revealed that student teachers are partially satisfied with the outcomes of the course. Related to the interview results, regarding the practice component of the course, majority of the student teachers expressed their views about the necessity of actual teaching opportunities and more teaching hours of the course. Overall, the results revealed that student teachers need less theory teaching, and more students’ involvement in the teaching-learning process of the TTF classes.

Key words: Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language, student teachers’ professional needs, curriculum and evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of curriculum, as it makes it easier to cope with, specialists believe that it is vitally important to break down the curricula into components. It gives the curriculum designers a better chance to organize the processes and sub-processes of curricula that is already a complex issue (Hutchinson, 1987; Nunan, 1985 cited in Albakwai, 2013). In order to be able to set the objectives of a language course more easily and clearly, the needs of learners should be clarified at the beginning of the process (Mackay and Mountford, 1978). Similarly, Graves (1996) states that the initial component in curriculum design needs assessment in order to obtain and evaluate the data. In this sense, in curriculum design, the focus issue is the need of learners. 'As needs and resources change and develop into adjusted forms, the course design will have to respond to these necessary changes and developments through feedback channels which are already defined' (Albakrawi, 2013). It is well known that...
evaluation and needs analysis studies give curriculum designers a better chance to design more effective and targeted curricula for learners in terms of general and specific goals, content topics, and teaching and evaluation methods dimensions.

In the context of teaching Turkish as a foreign language (TFL), the effectiveness of TFL curricula and course contents is still an area which has not been focused on and worked upon intensively in and out of Turkey. In other words, scanning of the relevant literature of TFL reveals that there are not enough studies conducted on the effectiveness of TFL courses and curricula regarding the general and specific goals of the courses/programs, content topics, teaching-learning environments, teaching materials and assessment tools. Teaching TFL has not been yet accepted as a discipline by Higher Education Council (HEC). Besides, the research carried out focusing on the needs assessment of learners and curricula of TFL is very limited. In this sense, it may be assumed that intensity and number of discussions on teaching programs, methods and problems faced in teaching Turkish as a native language (TTNL) and teaching Turkish as a foreign language (TTFL) gathered more pace from the beginning of 1990s in the relevant literature. (Ekmekçi 1992; Yorulmaz, 2000; Öden, 2001; Özbay, 2003, 2006, 2007; Akyol 2008; Özay and Melanlioğlu, 2012; Koçer, 2013; Karababa and Karagül, 2013).

As mentioned above, research number on this topic is very limited and some probable reasons of this may be discussed as follows. It may be assumed that the researchers believe that HEC is the only authority in this field, and they do not have a say in the process of designing and/or redesigning the curricula of higher education institutes, except the syllabi of elective courses. Another reason may be assumed as the lack of both TFL and curriculum specialists, who are eager and/or competent in this new discipline.

Turkish language teacher training department is one of these departments mentioned above. In this study, the course that will be focused on is Teaching Turkish to Foreigners (TTF). The aim of TTF course is to provide candidate Turkish language teachers with needed teaching skills in the field of TFL. The course is included as a compulsory course in a four year BA program of the department of Turkish language teacher training. It is offered in the spring semester of the program in the third year.

In relevant literature, there is not much literature addressing student teachers’ needs and perceptions regarding these TTF courses. Even though there are some studies investigating the needs of the TFL learners in the related literature (Balciøanlı, 2010; Çangal, 2013; Karababa and Karagül, 2013; Koçer 2013; Yılmaz, 2014), the studies focusing on the evaluation of courses aiming at developing professional competency in TFL are very limited. Scanning of related literature has revealed only two studies focusing on the TTF courses and student teachers’ perceptions about these courses. Şahin et al. (2013) conducted a study investigating the self-efficacy of 236 student teachers about the course of TTF. Their study aimed at assessing self-efficacy beliefs of student teachers, who took TTF course in the Education Faculty of a state university in Turkey. The study results revealed that female student teachers perceived themselves more competent in motivating students, using assessment and evaluation tools and teaching approaches as compared to male student teachers after taking the TTF course. The study, additionally, has revealed that the fourth year student teachers perceived themselves more competent in TTFL as compared to third year student teachers. Results of the study may be summarized as follows:

1. Student teachers believe that after completing TTF course, they have become aware of differences between TTFL and TTNL.
2. They also believe that it was the first and only time, during their studies at the department; they had a chance to get familiar with the topics and concepts regarding the TFL.
3. The fourth year student teachers perceived themselves more competent in foreign language teaching approaches as compared to third year student teachers.

Another study conducted by Şahin (2013) with 123 participants investigated the student teachers’ attitude towards the course of TTF at two state universities in Turkey. The results of the study revealed that student teachers had positive attitudes towards the TTF courses.

Context of the study

This particular study focused on the student teachers’ attitudes toward the TTF courses and its perceived effectiveness at two state universities in Turkey. As of the foundation of Turkish language teacher training departments at the faculties of education, the course of TTF, which is a two-hour per week course, has been offered. In recent years, it has proved to be one of the most widely accepted ideas that the TFL processes should be carried out by the graduates of the departments of Turkish Language Teacher Training, Teaching Turkish Language and Literature, and Turkish Language and Literature. However, when the syllabi of these departments are studied, it is seen that either there are no special courses focusing on TFL at these departments, or only in the curriculum of Turkish language teacher training department there is a two-hour per week course offered for only one semester in four years. There are a few divisions/departments for training the specialists in the field. On the other hand, it is also observed that HEC has not taken any actions in order to constitute the divisions/departments in this particular
field. It easily renders that the only solution to train specialists in the field, at least for now, is the departments stated above. However, there are not enough TTF courses in the curricula of these departments. Then the following question comes to mind: To what extent the TTF course, which is conducted only for one semester and two hours a week, would meet the professional needs of the student teachers, who will work in the field? Looking at the increasing demand in teaching TFL in recent years, it becomes quite evident that there is an imbalanced relation between the supply and demand equilibrium in the field.

In such a situation of no option, the following questions are posed to examine the current status of TTF courses and how much it appeals to the needs of the student teachers in terms of gaining the needed professional competencies in the field:

1. Are the general and specific objectives of teaching TFL set? If so, which criteria and needs have been taken into consideration and by whom they were established?
2. Is the content of the TFL courses framed? If so, which criteria and needs have been taken into consideration and by whom they were designed?
3. Does the content of these courses/programs include the approaches, methods and techniques needed in teaching environments of TFL?
4. Are the assessment and evaluation tools chosen? If so, which criteria and needs have been taken into consideration and by whom they were chosen?

If the answers to these questions are all “yes” the following questions may be asked:

1. Are these courses providing student teachers enough linguistic and pedagogic competencies needed in the TFL field?
2. In teaching TFL environments, in terms of knowledge and pedagogic competencies, what are the needs of the student teachers, who will work in the field?
3. In terms of field knowledge, what are the needs of the student teachers who will work in this field? In relation to this, has any needs analysis been carried out?
4. What are the needs of the student teachers, who will work in the field of TFL in terms of interdisciplinary and complementary knowledge and competencies?

As the only official option so far, the TTF courses promise to provide benefits to student teachers at most and develop competencies regarding teaching TFL. However, for one reason or another, it is assumed that student teachers attending these courses are not fully satisfied with the outcomes of these courses. Most of the graduates of these courses also very often complain about the course. Thus, the curricula of the TFL should be well-planned and structured so as to meet professional needs of novice teachers. However, there is not much literature addressing this issue that is under discussion. This problem is leading other problems of gathering data such as:

1. What are the current and desired statuses of TTF courses?
2. To what extent the TTF course content is meeting the student teachers’ professional needs?
3. To what extent the courses are providing the participants with necessary professional competencies needed in the teaching environments of TFL?
4. What dimensions of the TTF courses can be left, deleted and/or strengthened?

**Objectives of the study**

This particular study explored the perceptions of student teachers about the TTF courses. The study aimed to answer the following questions as perceived by the student teachers:

1. To what extent the student teachers are interested in teaching TFL?
2. What are the student teachers’ attitudes towards the TTF course?
3. Are the general and specific objectives of the TTF course set and clear for student teachers?
4. Are the content topics of the TTF course framed and clear for student teachers?
5. Is the TTF course providing student teachers the necessary competency regarding the field knowledge needed in TFL?
6. Is the TTF course providing student teachers with the necessary competency regarding the foreign language teaching methods and techniques needed in TFL?
7. Is the TTF course providing student teachers with the necessary competency regarding the effective use of teaching materials needed in TFL?
8. Overall, is the TTF course providing student teachers with the necessary professional development needed in TFL?

**Significance of the study**

Overall, this particular study aimed at contributing to the lack of research in the field of TTFL and to underline the need for similar studies to be done in different TTFL contexts. In a direct sense, the study may help the HEC, AU and MAEU administrations learn about how effective the current TTF courses are. It is also hoped that the study will reveal some ideas about the instruction of other skills in the contexts of this particular course. The researcher hopes the results of this particular study may be used and/or considered as a guideline to improve the quality of the instruction not only at AU and MAEU, but also at other institutions in and out of Turkey where
Turkish is taught as a foreign language. Finally, it is hoped that the study may reveal necessary and useful data in order to modify the TFF courses continuously in the future.

METHODOLOGY

In this section design of the study, participants, data collection procedure and data analysis are presented.

Design of the study

In this descriptive study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the student teachers through questionnaires and interviews. The aim of the questionnaire was to identify the student teachers’ perceptions on some specific dimensions of the TFF course. The interview aimed at gathering more in-depth data related to research questions of the study. In order to triangulate the data document analysis data collection technique was used in the survey. The aim of triangulation model is ‘to gather different and complementary data on the same issue’ (Morse, 1991). Similarly, McMillan and Schumacher (2000) state that using different sources in data collection procedures, researchers receive more reliable and valid results.

Participants and data collection procedure

The participants in the current study were 326 junior (third grade) and senior (fourth grade) student teachers at two different state universities in Turkey; Akdeniz University (AU) in Antalya and Mehmet Akif Ersoy University (MAEU) in Burdur (Table 1).

Participants were the student teachers at the department of Turkish language teaching at AU (n:225) and MAEU (n:101) who are taking and have taken the TFF course. In the study, 173 participants were females and 153, males (Table 2).

Participants’ age range was between 20 and 26. Regarding the study year, out of 326 student teachers 167 were 3rd year, 159 were 4th year student teachers. From AU, among volunteering student teachers 10 of them randomly selected for the focus-group interview.

Data were collected thorough quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. In order to triangulate the data, questionnaires, interviews and document analysis were applied in the data collection procedure of the study. The first data collection instrument was questionnaire filled in by participants in 2013-2014; 2014-2015 academic years at AU and 2014-2015 academic year at MAEU. In the questionnaires, participating student teachers were asked to state their ideas on the given items by choosing either ‘Agree/Strongly Agree’ or ‘Disagree/Strongly Disagree’. The questionnaire also included one multiple choice and one open ended item. The questionnaire aimed to find out whether the student teachers were aware of the objectives of the program they attended and if they were satisfied with the course in terms of gaining the necessary teaching skills regarding TFL. In the preparation process of the questionnaire, some dimensions of the questionnaire of Yildiz (2004) partially adapted. For a focus group interview, 10 student teachers were randomly selected among the volunteers at AU.

Focus group interviews are giving the interviewees a chance to discuss issues on (a) specific topic(s) among themselves by taking into account their experiences. During the interview procedure, the researcher takes the role of a moderator introducing the subject under discussion, moderating the discussion, and trying to keep the focus of the interviewees on the questions under investigation (Çoskun and Daloğlu, 2010).

Table 1. The participants of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akdeniz University</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>69,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehmet Akif Ersoy University</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>31,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>100,0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Distribution of participants by gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>46,9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>53,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>100,0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the document analysis technique, the syllabi of the universities, course contents, and information about the student teachers such as the number of students and classes were analyzed thorough the official web sites of the universities and/or the registrar’s office. Two general questions were discussed during the focus group interview:

1. What dimensions of the TFF courses at AU and MAEU should be improved, deleted and/or maintained?
2. What suggestions can be given by the student teachers in order to improve the current TFF course at AU and MAEU?

The student teachers were provided a list of 4 questions:

1. Did the TFF course improve your language skills in Turkish? If yes, how? If no, why not?
2. Did the TFF course improve your teaching skills regarding teaching grammar to foreigners? If yes, how? If no, why not?
3. Did the TFF course improve your teaching proficiency regarding teaching language skills to foreigners? If yes, how? If no, why not?
4. Do you have any other additional comments?

Data analysis

Three experts were consulted at AU whether the items in the questionnaire and the interview were appropriate collecting reliable and valid data regarding the TFF courses. Based on the feedback obtained from one Turkish language field expert and two experts in educational sciences, minor modifications were made in terms of wording of one of the items in the questionnaire. In addition, the data collected with the interviews were analyzed by two educational sciences experts at AU.

The data collected through questionnaires were analyzed in SPSS 20, (The Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) program. Regarding the analysis of the questionnaire, frequency and percentage tables are given in the results and discussion part to present participating student teachers’ opinions about the items they were provided. Content analyses were applied for analyzing the focus-group interview that was carried out with 10 student teachers who attended the TFF course at AU.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this part of the study, the data collected through questionnaires and interviews are presented.
Results of the questionnaires

As can be seen in Table 3, participants have a strong agreement with the interest level of teaching Turkish to foreigners. Among all items in the questionnaire, majority [(F:278),(%:85.3)] of the participants agreed with item “I have a particular interest in the field of teaching Turkish to the foreigners”. The observed high level of interest can be interpreted as teaching TFL, as a new discipline, attracts high attention by the student teachers as a future profession.

Regarding item 1, as it can be observed in Table 4, more than half of the student teachers [(F:199),(%:61.0)] stated that they were not aware of the general and specific goals of the course they attended. The document analysis results revealed that the content and objectives of the course were briefly stated on the web page of the faculties. It can be interpreted that student teachers either were not overtly informed about the objectives of the course at the beginning of the course, or objectives were not clear enough for the attendants. Regarding item 2, majority of the student teachers [(F: 255), (%:78.2)] are not satisfied with the content of the course. It can be interpreted that they do not think that the content topics of the course is rich/good enough to prepare them for teaching TFL environments.

As can be seen in Table 4, majority of the student teachers [(F: 231), (%:70.9)] do not think that they have gained the teaching skills after completing the course. Regarding item 3, only 31.8% of the participating student teachers think that teaching methods and techniques were presented during the course effectively in such a way that they could benefit.

As it can be observed in Table 4, about item 4, student teachers do not think that the course helped them to be competent enough in using the current materials, and preparing and choosing the appropriate teaching materials needed in the TFL environments. Regarding item 5, majority of the participants stated that the course did not help them to become competent in using the current assessment tools. They do not feel themselves competent enough to prepare teaching materials for TFL environments. Regarding item 6, majority of the student teachers [(f: 279), (%:85.6)] stated that the class hours of the course should be more than 2 hours a week. This can be interpreted as the student teachers are interested in teaching Turkish to foreigners, on the other hand, they find the current teaching hours insufficient.

As it can be seen in Table 5, for item 1, 55.2% of the student teachers stated that there are not any other elective courses at their faculty/department apart from the course they attended. Interestingly, 36.8% of them were not sure whether there are similar courses or not.

As it can be observed in Table 5, 68.7% of the student teachers did not agree with item 2. It was observed that some of the student teachers [(f: 52),(%:16.0)] were not sure.

Finally, student teachers were asked to express their opinion about the item 3. As it can be seen in Table 5, majority of the student teachers [(f: 277),(%:85.0)] do not think that they feel competent in teaching Turkish to foreigners. The results have also revealed that student teachers do not find the course effective in terms of providing them with necessary professional competencies in the field. Regarding item ‘I think …should take part in the process of teaching Turkish to foreigners’, 48.2% student teachers stated that graduates of Turkish Language Teaching Departments should take part in the process of TTFL. 42.0% of them were in favor of the graduates of Special Language departments specialized in this field. It can be said that student teachers think TFL processes should be carried out either by Turkish Language Teaching Department or Turkish Language Teaching as a Foreign Language Department graduates. These results once again revealed the need of establishment of the departments that are specialized in TTFL field (Table 6).

In the questionnaire, the last question was an open ended question in which participants were asked to state 3 concepts/subjects/activities that are not taught in the course and they should be included in the content of the course to improve the effectiveness of it. The topics that were the most frequently mentioned were chosen by their frequencies. The topics suggested by the student teachers to improve the course effectiveness are summarized in three categories as follows: 1) Giving student teachers practice opportunities in real TFL classroom environments with foreigners, 2) doing micro-teachings in TFL classes and getting feedback from the classmates and/or teachers, 3) more theory about how to teach language skills, and practice opportunities in TFL classes.

Results of the focus-group interview with student teachers

As perceived by the participating student teachers, the TTF course provides them with theoretical background about foreign language teaching methods. Majority of the student teachers agreed with the idea mentioned by their classmate; “In TFF classes, I think we had enough information about the theory of foreign language teaching methods.” The existence of such a course in the program was also perceived positively by student teachers. Most of the student teachers (n: 9) agreed with their friend who stated: “Even though the class hours are not enough for
Table 4. Perceptions regarding the goals, content, teaching methods, materials, assessment tools and class hours.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Agree/Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I know the general and specific goals of the Teaching Turkish to Foreigners course which is a single-term two-hour per week compulsory course taught at my faculty.</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I think the content of the course Teaching Turkish to Foreigners is rich enough to gain the needed knowledge and/or competencies in the process of teaching Turkish to foreigners.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I think, after completing the course, I have gained/would gain competencies in terms of teaching approaches, methods and techniques that are needed in the process of teaching Turkish to foreigners.</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I, after completing the course, have gained/would gain the needed skills to use, prepare and choose the appropriate teaching materials in teaching TFL.</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I, after completing the course, have gained/would gain the needed skills to use current evaluation tools and methods, and have become competent in preparing authentic evaluation tools for TFL environments.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I think it is necessary that the class hours of course should be more than 2 hours per week as the current class hours are insufficient to gain needed skills in TTFL.</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Perceptions regarding the elective courses, variety of courses and competency in teaching.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Agree/Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>No Idea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>There are elective courses at my faculty apart from Teaching Turkish to Foreigners.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I think all the compulsory/elective courses of Teaching Turkish to Foreigners are rich in variety at my faculty.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Finally, completing the course, I am/would be competent in teaching Turkish to foreigners.</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

us to become competent in teaching Turkish to foreigners, it is still very important that there is such a course in our program. Otherwise, we would never have had even any basic information about the issue of teaching Turkish as a foreign language”.

Regarding less positively perceived dimensions of the TTF course, almost all of the participants claimed that the course is not giving them enough chance for teaching practice of TFL. One of the student teachers mentioned “Although our teachers are giving us some theoretical knowledge, we have no chance to put them into practice. This is also not giving us a chance to get feedback from
Table 6. Departments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The graduates of</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Language Teaching Department</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Language and Literature Department</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Language and Literature Teaching Department</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages Department (if established)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of TFL</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

our teachers on our practice in the classroom”. Another student teacher, similarly, stated: “…we also do not have any chance to see our teacher in practice. It would be very good to see our teacher teaching Turkish to foreigners in a real teaching atmosphere”. The results revealed that this idea was shared by many (n:8) student teachers that were interviewed. Some (n:5) of the student teachers shared the idea of their friend who mentioned: “It would be great to see our teachers to see to what extent they themselves are able to put into practice what they taught us in the class...”. Some (n:4) student teachers agreed with their friend who mentioned: “In our TTF lesson, I was expecting to learn how to teach Turkish to foreigners but it was not like that. We mostly listened to teacher about how it should be and could be done in TFL. It was waste of time and useless for me to listen to theory of approaches”. Similarly, many students (n:8) agreed with the student teacher who mentioned: “Our teachers did not present how to teach Turkish language skills to foreigners such as speaking, listening, reading and writing, but they talked long enough on the importance of teaching them”. Another student teacher added: “Unfortunately we were not taught how to teach these skills at all”. One student teacher said: “I know a lot about grammar of Turkish language, but I don’t think that I can teach it to foreigners”. Regarding gaining skills on teaching competency in TFL, one student teacher said: “I do not feel myself competent enough in teaching language skills to a foreign learner. For example, I have no idea about how to teach listening skill to foreigners”.

Almost all of the student teachers expressed their views about the necessity of actual teaching opportunities of TFL. Similarly, almost all of them claimed the lack of micro-teachings in the classroom during the course and in a real classroom where foreigners are learning TFL. Similarly, almost all of the student teachers highlighted the necessity of:

1. School experience; such as in TÖMER (Turkish Language Teaching Center) where they will have a chance to teach Turkish to foreigners in a more natural teaching atmosphere with foreign students.
2. School experience process carried out parallel to the actual theoretical TTF course.
3. Micro teachings in TTF classes which will give them a chance to observe their friends and teachers and get peer and teacher feedback.

All the student teachers who are in favor of more practice-oriented hours in the course criticized their teachers talking very long about the ‘the importance of this and that in TFL’. It can be said that it is so obvious that student teachers are very much in need of practice rather than pure theory teaching in TTFL environments.

Almost all of the students teachers stood for the idea mentioned by their friend: “It is not possible for us to learn how to teach Turkish to foreigners with only two hours a week. It is only one semester in four years. When I have started having some idea about foreign language teaching methods, the semester was already over”. Another student teacher suggested: “There should be more hours of this course. It should be in two parts: theory and practice”, “It should be in the first four semesters of our studies”.

Overall, the focus group interview revealed that student teachers found the followings as positive dimensions and strengths of the TTF course: the theoretical component of the TTF course (even it is too much focused on), and existence of such a lesson/course in their study program. The perceived weak and negative dimensions of the TTF course by the student teachers can be summarized as follows: Lack of school experience and micro-teachings dimensions of the course, presentation of too much theory by teachers in the TTF classes, insufficient class hours of the TTF course, teacher-centered approach in the TTF course.

Suggestions offered by the participating student teachers that can be considered in improving the TTF course are as follows:

1. Addition of more practice opportunities dimension to the course such as school experience for example in TÖMER, in a similar way as it is done for the courses of TTNL in state/private schools,
2. Addition of more practice opportunities dimension to the course content such as micro-teachings in the
3. Less theory teaching, but teaching theory through presentations and micro teaching activities during the TTF classes,
4. Inclusion of more teaching hours for the course of TTF in the study program,
5. Increasing the number of semesters and course hours allocated to TTF,
6. Encouragement of more involvement of student teachers in micro-teachings and opportunity of getting feedback from the classmates and the teachers in TTF classes,
7. Application of more student-centered teaching methods in the TTF classes. Özbay (2003) notes that teaching methods implemented in many countries that are not taking into account new developments and research results, only transfer information to students in the form of molds. Many nations began questioning their education systems at the beginning of this century right after the new teaching methods started to demand from learners to take a more active role in the learning environments rather than to be a passive (listener).

As the results from the questionnaire and interview revealed, the pedagogic dimension of the TTF course is criticized by the student teachers. As perceived by student teachers, it does not allow sufficient practice opportunities for them in TTFL. Findings of this particular study regarding the practice and/or methodology dimension(s) of the course corroborate with the results of the evaluation studies of language programs conducted by Erozan (2005), Seferoğlu (2006), and Çoskun and Daloğlu (2010). Varış (1978) notes that education is an applied science. Therefore, one should seek the solution to the educational problems not only in theory, but right in the source of the problem: in the whole school or educational environments/system. In this sense, teachers should follow a more learner centered approach in the instruction of such courses in order to balance the linguistic and pedagogical dimensions of the courses. The results of the study also corroborate with the results of the evaluation studies of TFL courses conducted by Şahin et al. (2013) and Şahin (2013) in terms of student teachers' high interest in the field of TFL. Besides, both studies revealed that student teachers believe that TTF is the only chance for them to get familiar with the issues of teaching TFL.

Student teachers demand, very intensively, more practice opportunities in TTF classes. They suggest the inclusion of micro-teaching activities in the TTF course content. Inclusion of school experience dimension to the course content has also attracted a lot of attention by the student teachers. They consider this dimension very valuable as they think it will/may provide them with a lot of teaching experience with foreign students in TFL environments such as in TÖMER at the universities.

Student teachers underline the importance of allocating more hours to the TTF course, as they think the current two hours will not develop their professional skills in TTFL. They also suggest that the course should have practice-based and theory-based dimensions, and it should be offered not only for one semester, but four semesters in the first two years of their studies. Getting feedback from classmates and the teachers after micro-teachings also attracted a lot of attention by the student teachers.

According to the findings, student teachers believe that without enough teaching opportunities of TFL in actual teaching environments, linguistic competence will be useless in their future TFL career. Thus, almost all of the student teachers believe that number and teaching hours of TTF courses should be increased in order to improve their professional competence both in theory and practice dimensions. They suggest that this course should be offered in the first two years of their study period at the teacher training departments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some suggestions, in the light of the findings, were offered considering the course dimensions such as objectives, content, teaching and learning environments, linguistic and pedagogic aspects, evaluation tools and methods of the TTF course. Additionally, suggestions were also offered regarding the dimensions of the TFF course that may/should be maintained and/or developed.

1. The general and specific goals of the TTF course should be set and/or should be made clear for student teachers at the beginning of the course. ‘Clearly defined learning goals/outcomes contribute to a structure that surrounds a course and can aid in selecting appropriate graded and ungraded assessments, selecting relevant content for the course, and enhancing the assessment or grading practices’ (Center for Teaching and Learning, 2014).
2. The content topics of the TTF course should be restructured and enriched to improve the quality in TTFL.
3. The number of class hours and semesters allocated to the TTF courses should be increased.
4. More elective TFL courses should be constituted at the language teacher training departments.
5. The TFL courses should be offered in the first four semesters of the language teacher training departments.
6. The TTF course should be redesigned and restructured so that it meets the practice-based needs of the student teachers. It is assumed that courses and curricula that are tailored the specific TFL needs of the learners may yield more effective outcomes in TFL processes.
7. The elective TFL courses, that may be offered, should have a balance in theory and practice dimensions. The
results of both questionnaire and interview revealed that student teachers are in need of more practice opportunities rather than pure theory teaching in TFL environments. Sarac (2005) states that the most important determinant of the quality and competency level of the student success is the quality of Turkish language teachers. Kavcar (2002), on the other hand, notes that even though the teaching environments such as schools, and teaching equipment and curricula play a vital role in the teaching process, teachers who will implement the curricula, knowledge and skills are more important than all. Therefore, student teachers in the field of TFL should be trained professionally both in linguistic and pedagogic competences.

8. The TTF courses should have a school experience dimension that will give student teachers a chance for ‘experiential and hands on teaching-learning’ process in TFL.

9. The TTF courses should have a micro-teaching dimension thorough which student teachers will have a chance for practice as an initial step to school experience. ‘Microteaching is a teacher training technique for learning teaching skills. It employs real teaching situation for developing skills and helps to get deeper knowledge regarding the art of teaching.... With the proven success among the novices and seniors, microteaching helps to promote real-time teaching experiences. The core skills of microteaching such as presentation and reinforcement skills help the novice teachers to learn the art of teaching at ease and to the maximum extent’ (Remesh, 2013).

10. Following micro-teaching experience in the TTF courses, student teachers should be given opportunities to reflect their experiences and get peer and teacher feedback in an interactive teaching-learning environment. One of the important dimensions of the learning process is social communication/interaction. In order to support cognitive development in the learning environments, a social interaction environment should be created (Orlich et al., 2001; Yurdakul, 2007).

11. The teachers of the TTF courses should follow a more learner-centered approach in class. Using learner-centered approaches in teaching environments increases motivation for learning, and creates greater satisfaction with learning environments that lead to greater achievement in the learning process (Slavin, 1990; Johnson, 1991).

12. Contemporary evaluation techniques, which do not purely and traditionally assess the learning outcomes but also promote language learning processes, should be included in the TTF course content. McTighe and O'Connor (2005) note that ‘Classroom assessment and grading practices have the potential not only to measure and report learning but also to promote it’.

13. Similarly, the dimensions related to communicative teaching materials should/may be added to TTF course content. The course should focus more on how to teach student teachers to use and prepare communicative teaching materials in teaching TFL processes.

14. Teachers of TTF can/may be evaluated, at the end of each semester/completion of the course, in terms of student satisfaction. ‘The basic purpose of evaluating teachers is to improve instruction by promoting better performance. At the same time, evaluation encourages teachers to maintain their professional growth’ (Duncan, 2004). It is assumed that evaluation of TFL teachers and courses regularly will lead to the TTF curricula be better designed in TTF processes.

15. In the TTF course, more time should be allocated to teaching methods and techniques of language skills in TFL environments. Especially, it should be focused more on the skills such as listening and speaking that are even neglected in TTFL environments. Results of a study conducted by Melanlioğlu (2014) revealed that the foreigners learning TFL find the listening skill the most difficult domain to learn. According to Özbay (2010), listening is one of the main channels of obtaining the knowledge. It has such a key role in the process of learning.

16. Even though the student teachers are not fully satisfied with the TTF course outcomes, they highly appreciate the existence of such a course as they see it the only chance to get familiar with the TFL field. Therefore, the course should be maintained but developed in terms of clarification of goals, content, teaching and evaluation methods.

17. It was seen that the student teachers are highly enthusiastic in the field of TTF. Developing the course dimensions, with the aim of better meeting their professional needs, will/may encourage student teachers more to get into the field of TTFL.

Overall, it can be said that more TTF courses in teacher training programs at Turkish language teaching departments in Turkey should be included in the curricula in terms of variety and number of hours. These TTF courses should definitely include a practice-based dimension in their contents, such as a dimension of micro-teaching, in order to equip novice teachers with teaching skills and professional competence.

Before concluding, it can be said that more frequent and regular evaluation of TTF courses need to be done with the aim of designing more effective TTF curricula that better fit the needs of future teachers of TFL. Once, TFL teachers are more knowledgeable and competent in the art of teaching, it will eventually lead to the TFL be accepted faster as a discipline, but not only a course to be evaluated.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research study is based on student teachers’ subjective perceptions about the course of TTF. The results of this particular study may not be generalized to
other TTF course contexts as they are limited to 326 student teachers’ judgments. In order to gather more detailed data, other stakeholders of the TFL, such as teachers, graduates and administrators can be included in the data collection process. Besides, more participants from different universities in and out of Turkey, where the TTF courses are being carried out, can provide more in-depth information about the TTF courses.

Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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