An Analysis of Language Teacher Education Programs: A Comparative Study of Turkey and Other European Countries

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to analyze and discuss the similarities and the differences between English language teacher educationial programs at universities in Turkey, and to identify the undergraduate students' ideas about their current curriculum. In addition to this, the study aims to compare the education of English language teacher education in some countries in which English language proficiency scores are at the highest level in EF EPI (EF English Language Proficiency Index), and to suggest some important points to improve the language teacher educationial programs in Turkey.

In the study, a document analysis and a semi-directed interviews with the 30 students in English language education departments in Turkey are implemented to provide valid and reliable results. The interview questions are based on students' thoughts and ideas describing the sufficiency of their programs, and their goals and objectives. In the study, also, the course curricula of 15 English language teacher education programs are examined and compared. In this research, qualitative and quantitative methods are used. The study includes an international comparison of English language teacher education. With the comparison of the programs, some weak points of English language education programs in Turkey are determined. Besides, in the study, with the analysis of the English teacher education in 5 countries, the ways in which how they reached these targets are defined. At the end of the study, some suggestions are submitted to design and develop English language teacher education programs to produce more successful future teachers and English language education.

Keywords: language teaching, curriculum, program design, program evaluation, syllabus

1. Introduction

Today, English is used as the global language among people all over the world who have a different first language. As English becomes more common, it has began to be widely taught and learnt. Hence, many people are interested in English, and English language teaching (ELT) has become so popular and important. Various researches studied qualities of effective language teachers. It should be emphasized that students success depends on the success of their teachers; the success of teachers depends on qualified language teacher education programs.

As English has a key role in a global world, many countries are aware of the importance of English language teachers' education. Like many countries, in Turkey, the main goal of the English language teacher education programs is to train and guide future teachers to have successful language learners. However, although the large amounts of time, effort and money are spent in language learning and teaching, the results are not so positive. Little is known about teacher's language awareness, their language learning experiences and their understanding of language learning in the mainstream classroom (Cajkler & Hall, 2011). Also, research on teacher education for linguistic diversity is also scarce (Lucas and Grindberg, 2008; Bunch, 2013). In one of the recent researches, Abdullah and Daloglu (2010) aim to draw attention to the importance of program evaluation for teacher education programs and to reveal the pre-service English teacher education program components. The study reveals that while teachers believe that the program does not suffice to improve student teachers' linguistic competence, student teachers also think that the pedagogic side of the program needs to be improved. What is the reason for it? What should a qualified language teacher education program involve? The question of how to design and implement language teacher education programs to solve these problems still remains unsolved.

Therefore to answer these questions, program evaluations should be implemented permanently and the needs and

expectations should be determined frequently. Thus, the current study includes a comparative English language teacher education program evaluation in 15 randomly chosen Turkish universities through examining programs' content. Besides, language teacher education in some countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands and Denmark) which have very high English proficiency levels in EF EPI (English Proficiency Index) are analyzed and common features are designated. Also, in the study students' needs and expectations are determined.

1.1 Language Teacher Education

Like other branches of teachers, language teachers should adapt new methods and techniques in teaching. Those language teachers who accept and use the new trends, improve their existing knowledge in their fields. Richards and Farrrell (2005) state that teacher education and development takes time. A language teacher should understand how the process of language development occurs, should care about the different kinds of learners and should create a very different classroom atmosphere.

Language teachers get their first professional development in their teacher education schools as pre-service education. In literature, there are some studies and researches that have been carried out on the evaluation of English language teacher teaching programs. Mahmood Abdallah (2011) in his study focuses on ELT teacher training. The study deals with teaching English via internet, which has been playing a vital role in this age. In another study, Zhengdong (2013), investigates the challenges of non-native pre-service ESL teachers in a Bachelor of Education program from Hong Kong. Results of the study show that teaching students have a lack of sense of control in classs. Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015) in their study, describe a framework for the education of ESOL teachers that is inspired by principles grounded in research on English as a lingua franca and world English. In another study, Savas (2013) suggests teacher educators who would like to increase interaction, collaboration, and autonomy in their pre-service teacher training programs may choose to adopt thematic blogs as instructional tools.

In this study, the English language teacher education programs of some Turkish universities are compared, the perceptions of student teachers are explored, and English language teacher education in some European countries is analyzed.

1.2 Language Teacher Education in Turkey

In Turkey, there are a number of language teacher education departments in the universities and colleges. The Gazi Teacher Training School was founded in 1926 to provide language teacher education. After 1965, the number of foreign language teaching departments increased (Altundis, 2006). The 1997 curriculum has been redesigned with a number of innovations in the language policy in Turkey. Language education departments in Turkey provide a 4-year curriculum. The courses in the program generally include pedagogic and field lessons. There are seminar and practice courses, as well.

In 1998 and 2006, Turkey, like EU countries has witnessed two program-reforms in teacher education. Thus, English language teacher education programs of these years have also been studied using different techniques and methods. Within this frame work, this study, is set to discover whether the language teacher education programs achieve the targets and expectations or not. With the help of comparative and summative evaluation, the study aims to answer the following questions.

1). To what extent are English language teacher education programs similiar and different in universities in Turkey?

2). To what degree do the current programs of English language teacher education meet the needs and expectations of the English language teacher students?

3). How is the English language teacher education in five countries which are the most succesful in EF EPI?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

In this evaluation study, by using a mixed method design both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. The data were gathered through a survey of documents and literarture and semi-directed interviews. The contents of the English language teacher education programs of universities in Turkey were analysed by correlational comparative survey methods. Correlational comparative survey, and semi-directed interview and document analysis were applied. To reach reliable and valid results, semi-directed interview questions were developed by the researcher and two experts in the field were consulted and administered to the teaching students. Firstly, semi-directed interview questions were piloted to determine the mistakes and the missing data. Later, the poor items and questions were revised. The answers of the interviews were grouped to reveal students' common

opinions about their programs. The piloting and validity of the interview questions, inter-rater reliability of the interviews were determined. All the answers were analyzed by organizing the items obtained from the answers. Also, thematic analysis was implemented for the analysis of interviews. After collecting the data, the collected data were examined via frequency and percentage distribution. Descriptive approach was selected to put forward the comparisons of programs by defining similarities and differences found by collecting and analyzing documents. In order to provide objectivity, various state and private universities (15) had been chosen randomly from different regions and courses, and the practices in their programs were compared. In addition to this, in the study, English language teacher education of five countries were examined through document analysis and literature survey. The special features of English language teacher education sytems of these countries were defined. Data was coded line-by-line and then a qualitative analysis of the data was produced by constantly comparing data with data.

2.2 Research Sample

The research examined 15 randomly chosen English teacher education programs in Turkey during 2013-2014 academic year. 30 teaching students in English language teacher education departments participated in the study. The English language teacher education of five countries which received the top five scores on the EF EPI were surveyed and different features of them were analyzed. These limitations were the impossibility of accessing whole parts of these groups. Hence, some sample groups were chosen in this study.

2.3 Research Instrument and Procedure

To identify the needs and expectations of the students, the opinions of language teacher candidates were analyzed in this qualitative and longitudinal study. The students completed semi-structured interviews about their programs. The interviews ranged in duration from five to ten minutes. In the interviews, the participants were asked open-ended questions developed by the researcher. The questions presented in written format and distributed to the students. Teaching students were asked to respond to the following questions:

2.4 Interview Research Questions

1). What do you think about the sufficiency of your language teacher education?

2). Are there inadequate areas in your education?

3). Do you have an opportunity to be a student teacher in schools?

4). Is your proficiency in your field adequate as a future English language teacher?

5). Are the contents of the courses sufficient?

6). Can you easily find the sources related with your branch?

7). Do you have extra-curricular activities?

8). Do you have any opportunities to study abroad?

9). Are the technological investments in your schools sufficient for your requirements?

10). What are your suggestions?

2.5 Data Analysis

The courses in English language teacher education programs of 15 universities in Turkey are listed below in Table 1. The universities are coded U1, U2, ….U15. In the table, "+" symbolizes the courses taking place in the language teacher education programs of universities.

Table 1. The universities and English language teacher education courses in the curricula

Universities	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12	U13	U14	U15	Total
Communication Competence	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	**13**
Composition	+	+														**2**
Modern English Structure	+	+														**2**
American	+	+														**2**

Course	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Total
Literature																
Second Language Teaching Approaches	+	+														**2**
Material Development	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+			+		**11**
Language Transfer	+	+														**2**
Material Evaluation and Development	+			+		+	+	+							+	**6**
Seminar	+	+			+						+					**4**
Contextual Grammar	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	**15**
Advanced Reading-Writing		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	**14**
Listening and Pronunciation		+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	**13**
Vocabulary				+		+						+		+		**4**
English Literature	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	**14**
Applied Linguistics	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	**15**
ESL Approaches				+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	**12**
Writing Skills		+									+					**2**
Language Conscious		+														**1**
Research Methods	+	+	+	+							+				+	**6**
Academic Reading and Writing		+									+					**2**
Sociolinguistics and Teaching English		+														**1**
Young Learners		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	**14**
English Teaching with Literature	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	**14**
Special Teaching Methods			+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	**12**
Technology and Language Teaching		+														**1**
Measurement and Evaluation	+		+	+		+					+		+			**6**

in English

Course														Total
Eng-Turkish Translation	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+		+	+	**11**
Expression Skills	+	+	+			+	+				+	+	+	**8**
Language Acquisition	+		+			+		+			+			**5**
Teaching Language Skills	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+	**12**
Turkish-Eng. Translation	+	+	+											**3**
Drama		+				+					+	+		**4**
Short Story		+												**1**
Novel Analysis		+												**1**
Introduction to Literature		+												**1**
Constrastive Grammar					+						+			**2**
Fluency in Speaking					+									**1**
Writing	+													**1**
School Experience														**15**

When Table 1 is examined, it can be recognized that the courses *"Applied Linguistics(15), Contextual Grammar (15), Advanced Reading-Writing (14), English Literature (14), Young Learners (14), and English Teaching with Literature (14)"* are provided by almost all universities. It is further seen that *"Communication Competence (13), Listening and Pronunciation (13), ESL Approaches (12), Special Teaching Methods (12), Teaching Language Skills (12), English-Turkish Translation (11),* and *Material Development (11)"* are common to most universities. In contrast, *"Expression Skills (8), Material Evaluation and Development (6), Measurement and Evaluation (6), Research Methods (6), Language Acquisition (5) Vocabulary Knowledge (4),* and *Drama (4)"* are not common to all the universities. The other courses in the table are very rare.

In CEFRL (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), some criteria are determined for producing successful teacher in language teacher education to be a successful teacher. In this framework, it is emphasized that the language teacher should have proficiency and knowledge in four language skills, linguistics, grammar, literature, foreign language teaching, and proficiency in language and practice".Thus, in the current study the courses in 15 sample English language teacher education programs can be classified under 6 headings. These groups are " *Four skills, Linguistics and Grammar, Literature, Foreign Language Teaching, Proficiency in English* and *Practice".* These groups and the courses are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The group of the courses

Courses	G 1 Four Skills	G 2 Linguistics and Grammar	G 3 Literature	G 4 Foreign Language Teaching	G 5 Proficiency in English	G 6 Practice
Communication Competence	+					
Composition	+					

Modern English Structure		+				
American Literature			+			
SLT Approaches				+		
Material Development				+		
Language Transfer		+				
Material Evaluation and Development				+		
Seminar						+
Contextual Grammar		+				
Advanced Reading-Writing	+					
Listening and Pronunciation	+					
Vocabulary					+	
English Literature			+			
Applied Linguistics		+				
ESL Approaches				+		
Writting Skills	+					
Language Conscious		+				
Research Methods						
Academic Reading and Writing	+					
Sociolinguistics and Teaching English		+				
Young Learners				+		
English Teaching with Literature						
Special Teaching Methods				+		
Technology and Language Teaching				+		
Measurement and Evaluation in English				+		
Eng-Turkish Translation					+	
Expression Skills						
Language Acquisition				+		
Teaching Language Skills				+		

Turkish-Eng. Translation					+	
Drama			+			
Short Story			+			
Novel Analysis			+			
Introduction to Literature			+			
Constrastive Grammar		+				
Fluency in Speaking	+					
Writing	+					
School Experience						+
Total	**8**	**7**	**6**	**10**	**3**	**2**

The courses in *Group 1* aim at improving the students' four skills in English. To develop students' receptive and productive skills, they employ listening, reading, writing and speaking skills and strategies. In *Group 2*, there are linguistics and grammar courses. These courses are aimed at improving the students' understanding of the relationship between language structures and components, and at enabling them to compare the features of their native language with English. The courses in *Group 3*, are associated with literature. These courses provide students with understanding of literature in English. *Group 4* contains foreign language teaching courses. These courses enable students to be adequate teachers in their fields. *Group 5* is comprised of *Proficiency in English* courses. These include vocabulary and translation courses. The last group involves vocational practice courses. It includes seminars and school experiences.

When *Table 2* is examined, it is recognized that the total number of *Foreign Language Teaching* courses comes first. Next, *Four Language Skills* courses take place and these are followed by (in decreasing order) *Linguistics and Grammar* courses, *Literature* courses, and lastly, *Proficiency in English* and *Practice* courses.

In addition to surveying the course contents of the programs, this study analyzed the responses of 30 English language teacher students who participated in an interview. In the interview, they were asked ten questions related to their education. According to the interview questions, their answers can be summarized as follows:

Table 3. Interview questions and answers

	Questions	YES	NO	NOT ENOUGH
1	sufficiency of your language teacher education	15	10	5
2	inadequate areas in your departments	23	7	-
3	opportunity to be a student teacher in the schools	26	-	4
4	sufficient proficiency in your field as an English language teacher	5	7	17
5	sufficient contents of the lessons	2	18	-
6	adequate sources	16	14	-
7	extra-curricular activities	20	10	-
8	opportunities for education abroad	30	-	-
9	technological instruments	7	23	-
10	suggestions	7	23	-

The data was gathered from a 10-item interview asking students about their experiences, perceptions and beliefs about their education. When Table 3 is analyzed, it is shown that 15 out of 30 students think that their language teacher education is adequate, but 10 out of 30 think that it is not enough. They mention that they have very

detailed theoretical courses but no practice at all. Also, the majority of the students explain that although they have "speaking problems in English", their programs do not include enough speaking lessons. In Table 3, it is seen that the majority of the students (23) accept that there are some inadequate areas in their departments. The lack of teaching practices and implementation comes first. Secondly, they complain about the contents of the lessons. The majority of the students think that they do not have enough proficiency in their field as English language teachers. Generally, the courses are theoretical, and the contents of the lessons are not rich. Twenty-three out of thirty students say that their departments do not have enough technological instruments.

Case processing summary of interview questions is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Case processing summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	30	100,0
	Excluded	0	,0
	Total	30	100,0

Table 4 shows that 30 students anwered all questions in the interviews.

Below, reliability statistics of interviews are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,867	,853	9

In Table 5, it is seen that Cronbach's Alpha is 0,867. As Cronbach's Alpha is > 0,7, the interview is reliable.

The mean scores and standard deviation for each question are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Item statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
adequacy of your language teacher education	1,83	,913	30
inadequate areas in your departments	1,47	,860	30
opportunity to be a student teacher in the schools	1,13	,346	30
sufficient proficiency in your field as an English language techer	2,13	,629	30
sufficient contents of the lessons	2,20	,997	30
adequate sources	1,93	1,015	30
extra-curricular activities	1,67	,959	30
technological instruments	2,53	,860	30
suggestions	2,53	,860	30

Table 6 contains basic statistics for each question. If the corrected item-total correlation is analyzed, it is seen that the correlation between the interview questions and interreliabilty is meaningful. The correlation between all questions > 0,4 (except the question "sufficient proficiency in your field as an English language techer"). If the item "sufficient proficiency in your field as an English language techer" is deleted, Cronbach's Alpha would be 0,899. However, with all questions our Cronbach's Alpha is 0,867. As there is not a meaningful difference between two Cronbach Alpha numbers, all items are used in the research.

In the study, language teacher education is analyzed in five countries in which English proficiency is at the highest in the EF EPI. The EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) is a report which attempts to rank countries by

the average level of English skills amongst adults. According to the 2014 report, five countries of 63 are at the top as high proficiency level in English Proficiency Index (EF EPI-2014). These countries and their EFI scores are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. English Proficiency Index (EF EPI-2014)

	Countries	EF EPI Scores in 2014
1	Denmark	69,30
2	Netherlands	68,98
3	Sweden	67,80
4	Finland	64,39
5	Norway	64,32

The success of these five countries in English proficiency scores depends on many reasons. One, may be the most important of them which the teacher's success. Hence, in this study the English language education of these countries is searched and analysed by document analysis and literature review. In the light of data, the following features of English language teacher education in these countries are determined.

1). Teachers' pedegogical studies are within education, and contain teaching practice.

2). Investment in new technology has been rather extensive.

3). The factors such as working conditions, salaries, and teaching loads affect teachers' success.

4). The countries have very selective intake into teacher education.

5). The teacher education system is decentralized.

6). In the classes, high level of communicative English competence is shown.

7). The teacher education programs incorporate both subject didactic literature and subject knowledge literature in the same courses.

8). During the classroom teaching, the student teachers are supervised.

9). There is a clear division of labor between the teaching of theory and the teaching of practice.

10). Educational development is built on the changing needs of individuals and society.

(Reimer & Dorf, 2014; Molstad, 2008, Fruhauf, 1996, Zwarts,1996, Euroguidance Sweden, 2006; Lasagabaster, Sierra, 2009; Rasmussen & Bayer, 2014; Van Essen, A. J., 1996)

3. Results

The students' interviews revealed tangible results concerning the effective and ineffective components of the existing programs in the language teacher education of their universities. The trainee teachers feel that the lessons are generally theoretical but not practical. They acknowledge that production, practice and speaking activities should occur in lessons. When these findings are compared with the contents of the university programs, it can be said that there is an analogy between the thoughts of the students and the courses, but not enough practices. Thus, through language teacher students' beliefs and the contents of the programs in English teacher education departments, we can see that there are some points to be reviewed and improved.

In addition to this, in this study English language teacher education in five countries is scrutinized. This search aims to find some special features of these teacher education systems in these countries. It is revealed that the language teacher education systems comprise significant factors to have qualified language teachers and programs. According to the findings, many opportunities to obtain better learning are offered to the student teachers. In language teacher education, there is clear division of labor between the teaching of theory and teaching practice. Pedagogical studies, and educational subjects are given together. Teacher education is based on not only theory, but also research. The investment in new technologies takes an important place in language teacher education.

All education programs should be evaluated and their weak points should be determined. In this study, it is revealed that there are some points to be reviewed and developed in English language teacher programs in Turkey.

4. Discussion

As Arnon and Reichel (2007) state, teacher effectiveness can be categorized in many ways due to the multitude of the studies conducted in the field. Globalization, a changing world, different educational opportunities and technology influence the teachers to be ideal. Yet, it is known that as part of the teaching and learning process, teacher education programs are at the center of increasing the effectiveness of teachers.

5. Recommendations

In the current study, the aim is to discover whether the programs in English language teacher education in Turkey achieve the intended outcomes or not? The above findings of this study lead to some suggestions to improve the English language education programs in general. In the light of data collected, suggestions are grouped in two parts-students' suggestions, and author's suggestions.

Students' suggestions:

They need

a.   more speaking lessons

b.   more practices and more classroom activities

c.   more opportunities to study abroad

d.   seminar lessons all through the school period

e.   more technological instruments in their departments

f.   easier access to sources

g.   more detailed content in the courses

h.   less theory and more practice

Author's suggestions:

1) Language teacher education institutions need to develop strategies to increase the motivation of the students.

2) Language teachers should be equipped with updated knowledge in their fields.

3) The curriculum should be realistic, theoretical and practical.

4) Many opportunites should be given to the staff and students to develop their professional areas.

5) In order to improve the proficiency of students in the four skills, different alternatives should be presented.

6) Real-life experiences and practices should be reflected into the classroom.

7) School experiences, sessions and seminars should be increased and spread throughout the semesters.

8) There should be a connection between field courses and language proficiency courses.

9) Teacher education should provide the students with throrough knowledge based on research.

10) Foreign language departments must have investment in new technology.

11) Macro and micro level planning of language policies should be a part of the state policy.

12) The programs and curriculum should be reorganized, reviewed and developed according to needs of the students and new objectives.

In the light of data collected, the similarities and differences have emerged, and the needs, lacks and expectations have been revealed in the programs and language teacher education in Turkey. As part of the teaching and learning process, evaluation is turning into a center of increasing demand in developing the quality of education (Richards, 2001). Hence, in this study the English language education programs in Turkey were evaluated. For further studies, it can be suggested that the contents of the programs can be redesigned according to the findings of this study.

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