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Exploring the Use of Narratives to Understand Pre-service Teachers' Practicum Experiences from a Sociocultural Perspective

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Abstract: This paper reports on an exploratory study designed to investigate what aspects of practicum pre-service teachers narrate as meaningful experiences and how these narratives help them promote teacher awareness and professional development. The study is conducted with 21 fourth-year pre-service teachers attending the practicum at the time of the study. The data consist of 84 narratives written in 2015-16 academic year and oral interviews with pre-service teachers conducted in seminar courses. A two-person review panel analysed the data through inductive data analysis from a sociocultural perspective. The analysis points to the nature of narratives, the practicum school context these narratives emerge, and the link between narratives and their contributions to pre-service teachers' awareness and professional learning. The article concludes by considering implications for developing the content of practicum and pre-service teachers' reflective practices.

Keywords: narratives, pre-service teachers, reflection on action, practicum, sociocultural theory

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Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, reflective teaching, action research, and the teacher researcher movements have helped us recognise the importance of reflection on and inquiry into the experiences of teachers by reshaping the professional development from a sociocultural perspective (Crandall, 2000; Johnson, 2009; Mann, 2005). This trend has given way to various school-based, practitioner-driven, collaborative and inquiry-based approaches in professional development. Upon the emphasis on these approaches, recent studies seek to create a meditational space for teachers to engage in on-going, in-depth, systematic, and reflective investigations of their teaching practices and contexts (Farrell, 2015; Johnson, 2009). Unless sufficient and effective decision-making skills based on reflective and critical thinking are offered to pre-service teachers (PSTs), the knowledge and skills they gained at pre-service level may be removed (Bailey, 2006; Griffin, 2003). Hence, collecting journals of teachers to construct a shared understanding of their experiences in their local contexts has been considered to be one of the opportunities that guide teachers to interpret and reinterpret situations, identify and name problems, resolve contradictions they experience in the

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workplace, and reflect on these experiences. Such a system contributes to the exploration of teachers' experiences for both professional development and instructional decision-making (Little, 2003).

This study is based on Shön's (1983, 1987) term "reflection-on-action" that requires the teacher to recall their teaching by exploring reasons and behaviours for their actions in the class, and on Dewey's (1933) notion of reflecting on teachers' specific experiences (Farrell, 2015). The aim is to explore what aspects of practicum PSTs narrate as meaningful experiences and how these narratives help them promote teacher awareness and professional development. Narratives provide a more profound level of reflection on the knowledge, ideas, perspectives, understandings, and experiences that lead actions. They also provide teacher-generated data in which teachers reflect on their problem-solving, decision-making, and thinking skills they employ during the teaching process. Such kind of a reflection type is called "narrative reflection" (Johnson & Golombek, 2004). This paper outlines narrative reflections of 21 fourth-year PSTs on their practicum experiences throughout 2015-2016 academic year.

Narrative Reflection and Sociocultural Perspective

Teacher reflection in different forms has been considered central to teacher learning processes (Bartlett, 1996; Burns & Richards, 2009; Burton, 2009). Among these forms, writing has been considered to involve *reflection-in-action* or *on-action*. Narratives, for example, have the potential to serve as an effective reflective tool because they enable the formation of useful and expandable database to understand teachers' viewpoints (Golombek & Johnson, 2004). Teacher narratives uncover stories of teachers' professional development within their professional worlds (Golombek & Johnson, 2004). According to Doyle (1997), "narratives situate and relate facts to each other, and the essence of "truth" lies in how the phenomena are connected and interpreted rather than being static" (p.95). Teachers can both reflect on particular meaningful events and share their emotions about teaching through narrations. Farrell (2013) acknowledges that for narrative reflection to be useful to teachers, it should capture meaningful and specific experiences for teachers.

From a sociocultural perspective, narratives have contributed to the importance of reflection on teachers' experiences in the classroom and for their professional development (Bartlett, 1996; Franson & Holliday, 2009; Johnson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). They help PSTs analyse how, when, and why new understandings emerge, and understandings that can lead to transformed conceptualisations of self and transformed modes of engagement in the activities of teaching. In addition, narratives bring teachers' emotions to the surface as teachers recognise contradictions in their teaching. Chronologically structured, teacher narratives centre round teachers' interpretations of a series of events. They help us associate what is known with what is not known, and interpret the events by trying to bring meaning to the experiences (Johnson, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). These experiences are structured in specific social and institutional settings. Teachers interpret and reinterpret situations, identify, categorise, and resolve contradictions, and contribute to future education (Little, 2007). Hence, narratives are considered to be powerful tools for systematic change in classroom practice. While narratives are based on inquiry-based approaches to professional development, they contribute to our understanding of "teacher-as-person" perspective. Such a perspective helps us gain more self-knowledge and awareness of inner worlds and past experiences (Farrell, 2015). Through narratives, teachers' past experiences, philosophy and values can be uncovered, carefully examined, and critically reflected on. In this way, teachers can better make sense of everyday experiences and feelings because they involve the insider

knowledge, personal experiences and ideas that lead their work (Farrell, 2015; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Johnson, 2009).

The practicum provides PSTs with the opportunity of making a transition from their academic programme to the realities of teaching in a school (Freeman, 2009; Gebhard, 2009). It involves supervised teaching, systematic observation, gaining familiarity with the real setting, and experiencing teaching practices with real learners. Richards and Crookes (1988) emphasize that practicum aims to help PSTs gain practical classroom teaching experiences, apply theory and principles in real settings, make lessons from their observations, and improve lesson planning, materials development, and adaptation skills. PSTs are also offered opportunities to develop awareness of real classroom conditions and student perspectives, question and reflect on their own teaching and learning philosophies, and interpret their teaching differently by learning how to make decisions through systematic observation and exploration of others' and own teaching practices (Crookes, 2003; Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999; Richards & Crookes, 1988).

There are considerable studies in the literature that focus on the practicum experiences of PSTs through writings. Castaneda-Pena, Rodriguez-Uribe, Chala-Bejarano (2016) collected narrations of 184 PSTs at the end of the practicum to analyse their practicum experiences socially, linguistically, cognitively, and emotionally, and to find out what theories of teaching PSTs have built from their practicum experiences. Results imply that the relation between PSTs and mentors in schools serves as a tool to gain independence in their role as methodologists. The feedback PSTs receive from the mentors shapes their theories of teaching. Another study is conducted to explore how critical reflective practice in a pre-service teacher education (PSTE) programme in England is supported through a required course task for PSTs and an associated professional learning conversation with a designated school teacher-mentor (Harrison & Lee, 2011). Narrations of 180 PSTs, a questionnaire of 59 mentor teachers, and semi-structured interviews with mentors and PSTs are analysed according to the thematic analyses in relation to types of narratives, emotional responses, supervising teachers' responses and level of reflective practices. Their findings show that classroom management, pupil behaviour, and teaching and learning in the classroom are the mostly remembered and narrated themes by PSTs. Heightened emotions between PSTs and mentors have direct relationship with the professional learning process, in that, these emotions may help uncover reflective practice and develop deeper critical reflection on practice. Also, the opportunities that narratives created serve as professional turning points for insights. Such opportunities along with interviews are found to increase awareness of the reasons for teachers' experiences. Similarly, Golombek and Johnson (2004) analysed narratives written by three teachers of English as a foreign/second language in three different instructional settings. They concurred that the activity of engaging in narrative inquiry created a meditational space where teachers were able to draw upon various resources that in turn, allowed them to reconceptualise and re-internalise their new understandings of themselves and their instructional practices. This mediation is realised through the experiential and expert knowledge that PSTs use as a tool to restructure themselves in an active way.

It has been discussed, however, that little is known about how PSTs conceptualize their initial teaching experiences, and what impact these experiences have on their professional development as teachers (Gebhard, 2009; Johnson, 2009). Such knowledge has been considered necessary to build grounded theories about how to teach second language teachers to teach (Freeman, 2009). Hence, this study aims to get a deeper insight into PSTs' practicum experiences and how these experiences contribute to their professional development and awareness. Specifically, the following questions guided the research: (1)

What aspects of practicum are narrated as meaningful experiences by PSTs? (2) What theories of teaching did PSTs build from the reflections on narratives in the practicum?

Methodology

In line with the aim of this study and research questions, eighty-four narratives, written by PSTs during the fourteen-week practicum experience, were collected and analysed by a two-person review panel. The panel analysed the accounts for: (a) PSTs' reflective practices on teaching skills and theoretical knowledge; (b) the content of practicum; (c) PSTE programmes. Through inductive data analysis (Mackey & Gass, 2005), findings emerged from frequent, dominant, and significant themes and were determined by multiple analysis and interpretation of the data parallel to research questions.

Participants

The participants of this study are 21 (3 males and 18 females) fourth-year PSTs from the English Language Teaching programme of a well-known state university in Ankara, Turkey. With an age range of 22-24, PSTs whose native languages were Turkish were attending the practicum in a secondary state school during the time of the study. These teachers met for a two-hour seminar course once a week, led by the supervisor, to share their experiences and reflections on practicum. In these courses, PSTs were interviewed orally to clarify details in their narratives. The aim of the seminar classes was to help PSTs transfer the theoretical knowledge they gained in the PSTE programme into the real classroom context through practice oriented lesson plans and materials. The practicum experience in conjunction with the seminar class provided them with authentic opportunities to build bridges between the two worlds through the meditational dialogues among themselves, and between the supervisor and themselves. Their names were kept confidential and they were given pseudo names due to ethical concerns.

Research Context

In the ELT programme, PSTs were provided with theory- and practice-based courses like language acquisition, translation studies, English literature and language teaching, linguistics, teaching language skills, specific teaching methods, teaching English to young learners, materials design, and language testing to prepare them to teach at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. In the fourth-year, they are provided with school experience and practicum courses in a state school close to the university.

Data for this study were collected during the fall and spring semesters of 2015-2016 academic year for the duration of the practicum. Each group of four PSTs was placed at two different levels (5th and 6th grades) in a large secondary state school in Ankara. For the fall term, these participants mainly observed and reported on the practicum context like the physical facilities of the school and classrooms, the profile of mentors, learners' backgrounds, levels, attitudes towards learning English, performances in the classes, the course books and other course materials, and the secondary school curriculum for English lessons. They submitted these reports to supervisors weekly. For the spring term, they were assigned to teach 45-minute English lessons individually. Although they taught weekly, supervisors observed them during practicum teaching twice a term. While the individuals were teaching,

the rest of the group members were observing and taking notes of peers' performances. They attended the same practicum school in two terms to understand the practicum context better.

Data Collection

This is an exploratory and qualitative study. Data for the study came from two sources: (a) narratives of PSTs during the practicum; (b) oral interviews conducted twice a term in seminar courses. They narrated twice on their practicum experiences during a year. Totally, eighty-four narratives were gathered from twenty-one PSTs. They were given two open-ended questions for the narratives. These are: (1) what are the meaningful events that you experienced throughout the practicum? (2) how do these events shape your professional development and understanding? First, PSTs narrated three events that were important and meaningful to them throughout the year. Second, they reflected on how these events shaped their professional development and understanding. Also, all participants were interviewed twice a term. In these interviews, the narrating process, challenges they experienced during the practicum teaching, and suggestions about the practicum content were discussed as a way to detail and deepen their narratives more. This helped researchers analyse the data and understand PSTs better.

Data Analysis

Researchers employed qualitative approach and followed inductive data analysis (Mackey & Gass, 2005). A review panel of two supervisors, with extensive involvement in the PSTE programme, analysed the whole data separately. Then, they came together for the reliability of the analysis, and compared and contrasted their findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) acknowledge that inter-rater reliability can be calculated through the formula:

Reliability = number of agreements/total number of agreements + disagreements

Accordingly, reliability figure is found to be 90% for the first entry: the meaningful events during the practicum, and 85% for the second: the reflection of how these events shaped their professional development and understanding. Interviews also helped researchers deepen their understanding of the narratives and were used for triangulation so as to confirm categories that emerged from the narratives.

Findings

The findings of the study revealed that PSTs focused mainly on problems arising from the PSTE programmes and teaching practices in the practicum. They also mentioned the awareness they developed upon their reflective practices related to teaching skills and theoretical knowledge. The awareness they developed with the help of their observation and narration guided them to question the basics of the national curriculum, mentors' position as a young learner teacher in the classroom, and compare the background of pre-service programmes with that of real atmosphere practices. The findings are presented under three interrelated headings: (1) the content of PSTE programmes; (2) teaching practices in the practicum; (3) PSTs' reflective practices in terms of teaching skills and theoretical knowledge.

The Content of PSTE Programmes

The first research question aimed to explore the meaningful events PSTs experienced and narrated during the practicum. The data indicated that PSTs were concerned about the advantages and disadvantages of PSTE programmes in preparing PSTs competently for their future teaching. The purpose was to make PSTs more aware of the insights they gained from the methodology courses at pre-service level and encourage them to transform these insights into the real classroom atmosphere. PSTs realised the nature of real atmosphere and provided a rationale for the events they observed. These observations also revealed their heightened emotions at the time of the practicum. For example, in 25 out of 45 narratives it was uncovered that PSTs felt frustration due to the gap they felt between the real atmosphere in the secondary school and microteaching sessions in the programme. The frustration they felt resulted from different reasons (Tab. 1). Pelin (participant 8), for instance, observed that secondary school learners were used to hearing instructions and teacher talk in the native language (L1) in English lessons. Whenever the mentor gave an instruction or talked about an issue, she immediately translated her words into the target language (L2). This prevented learners from comprehending L2 in the classroom. When Pelin, in line with her ideal considerations and her belief in the necessity of using simple and clear L2 in an EFL context, started her teaching performance in the classroom, learners neither listened to her nor understood her instructions. Thus, their interests were lost immediately, which resulted in noise and loss of their attention. As a result, her morale was down and classroom management problems rose. Ergin (participant 17) also narrated that emphasising the importance of learning a new language, culture, and about a country was essential not only to pass their exams but also for their future career in the global world. Accordingly, learners studied the lesson solely to pass the mechanical exams organised by school administration and kept their scores high. Therefore, learners did not try to internalise the rules, sample structures, or elicit the new information. Although Ergin tried to use various techniques like elicitation, educational games, or songs, learners saw them only as fun. This helped him understand that parental involvement and teacher role in educating the child were crucial. So, the importance of learning new foreign languages and the benefits of L2 into learners' future careers should be emphasised. In one of the interviews, Ergin said that:

In the practicum class I observed, cultural differences and background of learners were not considered. The level of each learner in the classroom was underestimated. Due to the changing times and needs, it was obvious that learners' language learning ways also changed. So, one technique did not meet their needs.

- Overuse of L1
- Focus on mechanical activities
- Large classes
- Physical conditions of classrooms
- Traditional and/or age inappropriate teaching techniques and materials
- Clash of expectations of classes in the 21st century

Table 1: Differences between Simulated Context and Real Atmosphere as Narrated by Psts

More than half of the participants (25 out of 45 narratives) mentioned the frequency of classroom management problems. For example, Selen (participant 3) said that:

In microteaching presentations, we used to teach themes to our peers in the classroom. Although they pretended to be primary or secondary learners, they understood and carried out the instructions we gave immediately. We used to speak in L2, applied games, songs, and digital activities, and performed presentations satisfactorily. We did not experience or have the chance to observe

the problematic situations in real teaching contexts before. Thus, we felt frustration and disappointment.

The necessity of teaching large classes and dealing with classroom management was a heavily felt need by PSTs. They explained that pre-service education should offer the opportunity of observing problematic classrooms and analysing what would work and not work in specific cases. Another reason for the frustration resulted from the conflict arisen between the national curriculum and the pre-service education (Tab. 1). In the national curriculum and syllabus for primary and secondary English lessons, detailed explanations were given in terms of target structural and vocabulary items, basic language skills, and assessment types. The course books used in primary and secondary state schools were also prepared based on those guidelines. When these course books were analysed, it was seen that the content of themes, the type of activities in practising structural and vocabulary items, and the assessment ways did not match with the school of thought at pre-service level. PSTs were prepared for the ideal contexts but did not have the chance of observing learners' levels in real atmosphere. Cemre (participant 12), for example, narrated that:

In the pre-service programme, we were taught how to prepare lesson plans for the specific age groups, design materials, and develop testing materials. However, we were not introduced with the idea that real atmosphere could be different from what we expected. We were not introduced with the course books, national examination system, or physical conditions of real classrooms in either rural or urban areas. In the practicum, I had to learn the content and requirements of the national exam for secondary schools and analyse the teaching process accordingly. The content of national exams did not cluster with the philosophy we learnt at pre-service level. Hence, I was shocked at the lecturing style and testing method applied to secondary grades.

In conclusion, the data indicated that PSTs felt frustration and disappointment due to the gap between ideal considerations at pre-service level and the real classroom atmosphere. This led them to experience disequilibrium at first sight, and then to question the differences between two contexts. They narrated the meaningful events that had an effect on their professional development and understanding of the teaching practices in real context. As a result, they noticed the advantages and disadvantages of the content of PSTE programmes to prepare them to be competent teachers.

Teaching Practices in the Practicum

In the narratives, problems were not only related to PSTE programmes but also teaching practices in the practicum. Hence, the first research question was analysed from two angles: the content of PSTE programmes and teaching practices in the practicum. Also, lessons PSTs learnt from the practicum experiences were narrated through conflicts and resolutions. There was considerably more discussion about a more effective and useful practicum course.

1. Instruction-based problems
1.a Overuse of L1
1.a.1 low level of proficiency in spoken production
1.a.2 simplifying the L2
1.a.3 raising learners' awareness towards the use of L2
1.a.4 developing comprehension skills
1.b Large classes and classroom management problems
1.b.1 no space for classroom interaction
1.b.2 attention span
1.b.3 providing equal active participation
1.b.4 classroom rules
1.b.5 taking learners' attention
1.b.6 the choice of age appropriate teaching techniques and activities
2. Material-based problems
2.a the choice, use and adaptation of materials
2.b raising learners' attention
2.c developing learners' comprehension skills
3. Syllabus-based problems
3.a too much load in the syllabus
3.b course books

Table 2: Problems Related to Teaching Practices in the Practicum

The problems related to teaching practices in the practicum were categorised into three sub-themes: a) instruction-based problems, b) material-based problems, and c) syllabus-based problems. To start with the first category -instruction-based problems-, most of the narratives were on the overuse of L1 in the classroom (Tab. 2). Sevil (participant 20), for example, narrated that:

> *L2 is not preferred for two reasons: the difficulty in simplifying teacher talk in L2 and time constraints. From the beginning of the term, teachers should have made learners get used to classroom routine language and encourage the use of L2 via body language, visuals, and gestures.*

It was stated that overuse of L1 caused many problems in the classroom. Depending on these problems, PSTs experienced various conflicts. First, learners could not practice speaking skills because the focus of the lesson was usually on the receptive skills rather than the productive skills. Therefore, they could not fulfil the communicative activities. Second, the mentor did not endeavour to simplify her talk while giving instructions. She directly used L1 with learners during the lesson. She did not encourage learners to interact with each other in L2 so as not to cause noise and lose control. This, unfortunately, affected the way of interaction in the classroom negatively. Third, PSTs perceived that it was crucial for mentors to be role models for young learners and help them develop their pronunciation through correct modelling to avoid fossilization. Despite its importance, avoiding the use of L2 prevented learners from taking teachers as role model and correcting their pronunciation. Fourth, learners got used to hearing L1 so they did not make any efforts to understand L2 instructions or the activities in the course book. They knew that the mentor would translate them into L1 before the activities. As resolutions to these conflicts they experienced, PSTs perceived body language, pictograms, or visuals were significant to imply the meaning. Also, they emphasized the need for consistent use of simplified L2 talk in all the communication with the classroom. This would help learners get used to comprehending L2 input and understand that the use of L2 was necessary and crucial for their future careers.

Another category in which PSTs experienced instruction-based problems is large classes and classroom management issues (Tab. 2). This category is divided into six sub-themes. First, it was noted that mentors usually tended to follow the course book strictly and did not give enough space for interaction or collaboration. In so doing, taking learners' attention became problematic during the lesson, which caused noise and lack of interest in the lesson. Second, the attention span of the age group was not considered. As a result, learners sometimes found the activity inappropriate for their levels and got bored soon. Therefore, they lost interest towards the lesson. PSTs also narrated that kinaesthetic or craft activities were not preferred due to classroom management concern. Third, learners were reported not to participate in the lesson equally. For example, some of the learners could not get any turn to speak or participate in the activities. PSTs were aware of the fact that teachers should be fair and provide equal participation. Fourth, classroom rules should be established at the beginning of the academic year and mentors should follow those rules themselves by becoming a model for learners. The following quote captures an important insight:

> I see that a competent teacher should understand the underlying problems behind learners' behaviours, analyse the cause and result of their misbehaviour to solve the problem. Time management and homework control are the most time consuming things in the lesson. Learners start dealing with irrelevant things or breaking classroom rules after homework correction. So, time and classroom management should be considered in the classroom.

Material-based problems resulting from the choice, use and adaptation of materials into age appropriate levels were narrated in the second category. Participants recognised the importance of the use of materials in young learners' classrooms from three angles (Tab. 2). First, it was observed that materials helped teachers raise learners' attention during the lesson and increase participation. Second, materials were reported to contribute to learners' comprehension skills by simplifying the teacher talk, helping learners visualise, and functioning as facilitator in fulfilling the activities better. Third, learners loved various teaching materials like puppets, stick figures, and crafts, so they did not lose their attention or try to break the rules, which eliminated chaos or management problems in the classroom. Elif narrated in her journal that:

> Mentors strictly follow the MoNE course books in the lesson without any supportive material. Learners get bored as it does not provide meaningful learning in the classroom. In the microteaching presentation about "adjectives of appearance", I brought various pieces of materials that helped learners guess the meaning of adjectives. I used "guessing game" in groups. They both loved it and elicited the target vocabulary items easily.

Syllabus-based problems composed the third category of problems related to teaching practices in the practicum (Tab. 2). This category was composed of two main themes. Firstly, it was reported that there was too much load in the syllabus for primary and secondary school learners. Teachers were in a rush to finish the syllabus throughout the term; therefore, they did not pay enough attention whether learners learnt meaningfully or not. Secondly, course books were not found to be satisfactory enough for age appropriate teaching and learning processes. It was thought that course books needed to contribute to learners' thinking and learning skills in the 21st century. Participants emphasised the necessity of more collaboration, cooperation and interaction opportunities among learners in the learning process. Course books were thought to provide enough space for these opportunities. Selen narrated that:

> The course book is insufficient for secondary grades because the choice of themes and the way of introducing new target items should be smoother and of their interests. For example, in "adventure sports" unit there are various unknown vocabulary items for learners. They have neither experienced any of these sports nor heard about them before in L1. As a trainee, I used the smart board and videos to explain the meaning of each

> *unknown vocabulary instead of course book activities. Learners and I also used*
> *pantomime technique and pretended doing the sports. They enjoyed the activity.*

In a nutshell, participants narrated the problems they experienced in practicum under three main categories: instruction-based, material-based, and syllabus-based ones (Tab. 2). Furthermore, they narrated and discussed in detail why these issues became problems in the classroom. While they were narrating the events, they thought about the reasons and possible solutions by activating their thinking and problem solving skills. They forwarded their own solutions towards the narrated problems by reflecting on their experiences. As a result of this, a new category "lessons learnt from the practicum experience" came out subsequently. This category was about PSTs' reflections and lessons they learnt upon the systematic observation, active involvement in the real atmosphere, and regular meetings with the mentors at the end of the lessons. PSTs compared and contrasted differences between simulated and real teaching context. The abovementioned challenges and problems helped them understand causes and results of their practices in real context.

Lessons Learnt from the Practicum Experience: Conflicts and Resolutions

PSTs reflected on the reasons and results of the problems they experienced in real atmosphere upon detailed and systematic observation of learners and mentors. Consequently, lessons emerging from the observation are sequenced in conflicts and resolutions below.

Conflict 1: Taking learners' attention is difficult in real context due to large classes, load of mechanical activities, and the choice of age-inappropriate teaching materials for young learners.

Resolution 1: Communicative games should be emphasized more in the course book (Selen, Cemre, Aysenur).

Conflict 2: Learners feel under pressure in the lesson due to the reprimand and error correction types preferred by mentors.

Resolution 2: Relaxing and enjoyable learning atmosphere should be provided to reduce the affective filter in young learners' classrooms. Then, warm-up and pre-activities should be practised with learners before the lesson to engage them emotionally and cognitively in the lesson. Body language and visuals are important to simplify and clarify the teacher talk (Pelin, Busra, Cemre).

Conflict 3: Classrooms are larger than we expected. This makes management issues difficult to handle.

Resolution 3: Scaffolding and group work are effective techniques that work well in case of discipline problems in large classes. Learners work effectively in groups with the help of each participant's contribution to the task. Large classes can also be managed through the integration of art and craft activities. Such group works require each group member to participate actively and contribute to the task completion. Therefore, learners are all focused and enthusiastic about task completion (Elif, Sevil, Selen).

Conflict 4: Some learners learn a foreign language solely to pass national exams. The use of puppets, craft activities, or kinaesthetic activities may not work well with these learners. They are unwilling to do activities and tasks.

Resolution 4: Parental involvement and cooperation may be necessary to increase learners' awareness on the importance and necessity of learning a foreign language. Encouraging learners is significant during the lesson.

Conflict 5: Learners do not know aims of activities beforehand; hence, they sometimes question why they are doing the relevant activity. They may even question the benefit of activities or tasks.

Resolution 5: Giving linguistic and emotional aims is essential in clarifying the learning outcomes of activities, tasks, and lessons. Also, each activity should be based on linguistic, cognitive, and emotional aims for the age group. Activities should provide mutual interaction among learners. Physical conditions of classrooms need to be arranged in a way to let learners interact, keep eye contact, and collaborate during the lesson (Ergin, Sevil, Elif, Cemre).

PSTs' Reflective Practices in terms of Teaching Skills and Theoretical Knowledge

The second research question dealt with theories of teaching PSTs built from the reflections on their narratives in the practicum. The aim was to understand how they reflected on the theoretical information they learnt at pre-service level in real atmosphere. They compared and contrasted the theoretical knowledge they gained in pre-service with practices and situations in real atmosphere. They expressed their concerns about the gap they felt between pre-service and real teaching context. While they were narrating the specific details, they used the literature for guidance in understanding classroom practices in practicum and connected them to broader issues of teaching and schooling. Hence, it was pointed out that narratives helped them grow in self-awareness. PSTs' reflections revealed that initial reactions in the practicum context were tempered, that their empathy increased, that they had a greater understanding of the situation while narrating on it, and that they negotiated what worked and did not work in the real context. They questioned where the true problem might lie and what things could be done to overcome it. Specifically, PSTs' reflections on the practicum experience were characterised by (a) error correction, (b) classroom management, and (c) meaningful learning.

Focus on Error Correction

PSTs' reflections indicated that there were essential steps in giving feedback and correcting errors in young learners' classes. Although they were taught about the types and sample uses of error correction techniques in pre-service methodology courses, they were not given the opportunity to transfer them into the real context. They also expressed the need to learn more about the types of feedback and error correction techniques according to language skills such as in writing, listening, speaking, and reading. Ergin narrated in his journal that:

> *In one of the writing lessons I observed the mentor was checking the written assignments one by one. When she recognised spelling mistakes, she shouted them out in the class with frustration and stressed the error by writing it on the board. Actually, the mentor aimed to take others' attention to the error; however, she caused the boy to be embarrassed and feel afraid in the class.*
> *Some other narratives are:*
> *I learnt that peer correction technique was effective in the process of peer learning and scaffolding each other. However, in the lesson I observed it did not work with learners. The mentor aimed to correct the spoken errors of learners in a role-play activity. She formed pairs and asked each pair to make a dialogue based on the information they were given. Next, she invited some volunteers to the stage to perform the role-play. During the activity, pairs were making speaking mistakes. The mentor intervened them and asked partners to correct each other. Instead of scaffolding and helping each other, the activity turned into a competition because others in the class interrupted them frequently and kidded them about their mistakes. This made pairs who were on the stage embarrassed (Cemre).*

> *Mentors need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of immediate and delayed feedback well. Such feedback types do not always work well with young learners (Sevgi).*

The main idea in nearly all narratives was found that positive attitude of mentors towards learners was the primary concern while correcting errors. It was forwarded that corrections needed to be made via visuals, by raising their awareness to the correct versions, or by providing peripheral learning atmosphere in which learners would always see and internalize the correct rules in the classroom.

Focus on Classroom Management

Types and reasons of classroom management problems were narrated previously in the first and second categories. However, this section dealt with the reflections of PSTs on the classroom management issue upon their experiences, microteaching performances in real context, and systematic observation. As a result of the overall experience and impact of narrating, PSTs came up with their own solutions and suggestions towards the management problems. It was narrated that despite the various management techniques in the literature, it was thought to be teachers' and learners' willingness and motivation towards the lesson, which made those techniques work well in the classroom. Therefore, they discussed that the importance and necessity of learning a foreign language and its contribution to their future careers in the 21st century were essential. In other words, raising learners' awareness towards learning a foreign language was found to be crucial to establish a safe classroom atmosphere. In so doing, learners no longer considered the lesson as a compulsory element of the curriculum and feel the need to learn more.

Focus on Meaningful Learning

Preparing the classroom atmosphere for meaningful learning was one of the commonly discussed issues in the narratives. Meaningful learning was observed to be necessary as a result of the experiences in real context. This category gave way to experience-based suggestions for PSTs.

Instead of writing grammar rules on the board explicitly, it was narrated that eliciting the target items from learners, asking questions that fostered their thinking skills, and explaining the sample sentences in L2 motivated learners more. Also, relating the target topic to learners' lives to make the learning more meaningful was essential. A specific example to demonstrate the importance of providing meaningful learning atmosphere for learners is Pelin's case. Pelin observed and taught 37 sixth graders with diverse cultural backgrounds. She narrated how she made the classroom atmosphere suitable for learners' interests below:

> *In my classroom there were 37 learners with diverse backgrounds (from different regions of Turkey). They had different tastes for food, music types, and clothes. The target theme I aimed to teach was breakfast on that day. First, we watched a video "Peanut butter and jelly" with lyrics. Then, I asked them what type of food they ate for breakfast. Although they gave common answers, some mentioned different breakfast types. I changed the lyrics of the song suitable for bread with tomato sauce that was very well known in Turkish culture. I performed the song by becoming a model for them. They enjoyed it. I asked them to change the lyrics and compose a very simple song according to their cultural breakfast ingredients.*

In conclusion, narrating has not only developed PSTs' problem solving skills but also reflection skills on their teaching practices in real atmosphere. Through narratives PSTs were able to evaluate their practice and take multiple perspectives in learning teaching.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore what aspects of practicum were narrated as meaningful experiences by PSTs, and how these narratives helped them promote teacher awareness and professional development. Overall, the data indicated an increase in the reflective ability of PSTs. Similar to Griffin (2003), Farrell (2013), and Harrison and Lee (2011), narratives helped them take multiple perspectives upon problems in the practicum context and promoted an increase in their awareness of the variables that impacted teaching and learning. Specifically, as Atay (2007), Golombek and Johnson (2004), and Legutke and Ditfurth (2009) found out, PSTs' narratives focused on differences between real teaching and microteaching contexts by experiencing conflicts and resolutions, the question to what extent theoretical information they gained at pre-service level worked or did not work in real context by re-internalising and re-contextualising understandings, and the content of syllabus for primary and secondary school English lessons in Turkey. While they were narrating the meaningful events, they discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the practicum content in terms of preparing prospective teachers to teach in different school contexts. Finally, narratives pointed out an increase in PSTs' awareness to some extent by helping them activate their problem solving, thinking and reflecting skills during the cycle of experiencing, thinking, narrating, and reflecting.

Narratives, as a reflection and data collection tool, helped researchers discover PSTs' ways of thinking, taking multiple perspectives on the practicum and teaching, and values in the learning teaching process (Griffin, 2003; Stuart, 2012). Nearly half of the PSTs discussed how initially they blamed another person or the situation for the dilemmas in their narratives and then understood the need to evaluate an issue from multiple perspectives. They searched literature to support their teaching practices in the practicum. They not only evaluated themselves but the mentors, learners, teaching materials, the syllabus for primary and secondary English lessons, and PSTE programmes. In other words, reflections in their narratives addressed these issues.

In addition, findings indicated what new understandings had emerged from narratives and how these understandings contributed to PSTs' professional learning. In line with Atay's study (2007), real teaching atmosphere raised their awareness in instructing, managing classrooms, and engaging learners in the lesson. As noted previously in other studies (Ekşi & Aşık, 2015), contextualising and relating the target theme to learners' lives were narrated to be important in providing a meaningful learning context for learners. It was observed that the use of L2 as medium of communication encouraged learners to endeavour to understand or infer the meaning from teacher talk and develop listening comprehension. Giving the objectives of the lesson and aims of each activity beforehand enabled learners to understand why they were learning and practising the L2. Similar to other studies (Atay, 2007; Ekşi & Aşık, 2015; Tavil & Güngör, 2016), it was revealed that understanding the background of learners, their environment, learning needs, and characteristics was basic to managing classrooms successfully. Based on these results, it could be claimed that narrative reflection process in this study contributed to PSTs' understanding and evaluating instructional activities.

Similar to Bailey's suggestions (2006) for PSTE programmes, PSTs suggested that supervisors should bring videos of diverse classrooms, and share narratives of novice teachers in various school contexts. These materials may be utilised in collaborative problem solving tasks in the practicum course. Further study can be conducted to develop sample activities by using these materials for the practicum course. As Franson and Hooliday (2009) also discussed, comments from narratives reflected the two most necessary courses "teaching large classes" and "teaching diverse classrooms" to be integrated into the curriculum of PSTE

programmes in the 21st century. Longitudinal studies that investigate the effectiveness of these courses, if integrated, in PSTs' novice years of teaching are needed. Further, PSTs valued the need to maintain the interaction with supervisors not only in undergraduate years but also in their novice teacher years to support and scaffold them in the first few years of teaching (Castaneda-Pera, et all, 2016).

From Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (Johnson, 2009), data coming from narratives and interviews are based on the specific instructional and social activities in which PSTs engage in real teaching atmosphere with secondary school learners in Ankara, the capital of Turkey. As Golombek and Johnson (2004) acknowledge, narratives are socially and culturally bound and cannot be separated from sociocultural contexts they emerged. Accordingly, PSTs' narratives and interviews represent socially mediated view of experience in the local context and put forward suggestions for PSTE programmes. These narratives raised PSTs' awareness of sociocultural contexts within which they taught and learnt to teach (Stuart, 2012). In this study, the analysis uncovers the fact that Turkey, with immigrants and refugees primarily from middle-east countries like Syria, Iran, Iraq and citizens from various ethnic groups, is a growing and developing country located as a bridge between Asia and Europe. It consists of seven culturally diverse regions. Prospective teachers will start teaching in any of these regions to not only Turkish learners but also those immigrants. This may be a crucial factor not to be missed in the 21st century because learners' needs, physical conditions of classrooms, and target learners and parents are changing. To this end, observing sociocultural differences in rural and demographically representative schools to understand learners better in the learning process may be necessary (Tavil & Güngör, 2016). This result confirms the suggestions of Tavil and Güngör (2016) that PSTE programmes should be adapted by considering sociocultural dimensions and changes nationwide. A follow-up study on this process, if integrated into the PSTE programmes, could be done to understand how and to what extent these adaptations work.

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