



Pre- and in-Service Foreign Language Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Teaching

Hizmet Öncesi ve Hizmet İçi Yabancı Dil Öğretmenlerinin Etkili Öğretim Hakkındaki Düşünceleri

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Öz

Yabancı Dil Öğretimi ve öğrenimi son yıllarda geleneksel yaklaşımdan daha çok iletişime dayalı ve öğrenci merkezli yaklaşıma yönelmektedir. Ancak, bu değişimin hizmet öncesi ve hizmetiçi öğretmenlerin zihninde nasıl yer aldığı hala araştırılması gereken bir alandır. Öğretmenlerin kişisel teorilerine olan ilgi bu inançların dil öğrenimi ve öğretimi sürecindeki olası sonuçları sayesinde artmıştır. Bu nedenlerden dolayı, bu çalışmanın temel amacı, hizmet öncesi ve hizmetiçi yabancı dil öğretmenlerinin etkili öğretimle ilgili düşüncelerini araştırmaktır. 28 son sınıf hizmet öncesi öğretmen ve dokuz ana dili İngilizce olan 68 hizmetiçi öğretmen araştırmaya katılarak ankete yanıt vermiştir (Brown, 2006). Daha derinlemesine very toplamak amacıyla rastgele seçilmiş 5 hizmet öncesi, 5 hizmet içi (2 ana dili İngilizce olan, 3 Türk) öğretmenlerden yansıtıcı kompozisyon yazmaları istenmiştir. Sonuçlar, pedagojik uygulamalarla birlikte tartışılmıştır.

Abstract

The field of foreign language teaching and learning has been experiencing a shift of paradigm; from traditional to more communicative and student-centered pedagogy. However, how these changes are represented in the minds of both pre and in-service teachers is still an area requiring examination. The interest in teachers' personal theories has sparked owing particularly to the possible outcomes of these beliefs on the process of language learning and teaching. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to identify and compare the ideals of both pre- and in-service foreign language teachers' perceptions regarding effective teaching. 25 pre-service teachers in their senior year and 68 in-service language teachers, 9 of whom were native speakers, responded to a questionnaire (Brown, 2006). To gather in-depth data, randomly selected five pre-service and five in-service teachers (two native, three non-native) were requested to write a reflective essay. The findings are discussed along with pedagogical implications.

Anahtar Kelimeler

etkili dil öğretimi
hizmet öncesi öğretmen
hizmetiçi öğretmen

Keywords

effective language teaching
pre-service teachers
in-service teachers
nativity

1. Introduction

The attempt to identify the perceptions of language teachers regarding effective teaching has attracted educational researchers for a long period. A number of studies attempted to explore the perceptions of different stakeholders, and several studies aimed at investigating the possibility of matches or mismatches in perceptions among various groups, including teachers, colleagues, administrators, and students.

Cooper and McIntyre (1998) emphasize the importance of understanding what teachers do in the classroom if the aim is to improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning. They argue that the practices employed by teachers to achieve their goals, the methods they apply and also the problems encountered during the process provide fruitful departure points for gaining insights into effective classroom learning and teaching.

Keeping in mind that the nature of good teaching is essentially a matter of opinion rather than certainty (Roberts, 1998), this article reports a study exploring the perceptions of pre-, native and non-native in-service language teachers regarding what constitutes effective teaching.

2. Literature Review

Developments in FLT resulted in changes about the characteristics of effective language teaching. The move from grammar-based methods towards more communicative approaches has led to alterations in instruction. As indicated by Bell (2005), these trends include communicative language teaching (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Nunan, 1989; Savignon, 1998), computer-assisted language learning (Bush & Terry, 1997; Dunkel, 1991; Lafford & Lafford, 1997; Pennington, 1996), teaching the culture of the target language (Lange, 1999), content-based instruction (Genessee, 1998; Leaver & Stryker, 1989), languages for specific purposes (Douglas, 1999; MacKay and Palmer, 1981), and authentic language proficiency testing (Liskin-Gasparro, 1996).

As a result of this shift in language teaching approaches, perceptions of pre-service and in-service language teachers regarding effective language teaching have also been expected to change. Therefore, this issue has been of concern in many contexts both outside Turkey (Anker, 1992; Bell, 2005; Brosh, 1996; Brown, 2009; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher & James, 2002; Wennerstrom & Heiser, 1992; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie & Minor, 2001) and in Turkish context (Çubukçu, 2010; Korur & Eryılmaz, 2012; Tok, 2010).

Studies investigating language teachers' perceptions of effective teaching (Anker, 1992; Bell, 2005; Brosh, 1996; Brown, 2009) found that the teachers claimed that they preferred a communicative classroom setting with group and peer work activities. Another common finding is on the importance of teachers' qualification to explain and clarify the misunderstood points and correcting errors when necessary.

Moreover, the studies shedding light on the effective language teaching perceptions of pre-service teachers (Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher & James, 2002; Wennerstrom & Heiser, 1992; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie & Minor, 2001) revealed that teachers attached importance to features such as being student-centered, professional, effective classroom and behavior managers, competent instructors, ethical, enthusiastic about teaching with adequate content knowledge.

Findings of Çubukçu (2010), Korur and Eryılmaz (2012), Tok (2010) indicated that in-service teachers perceived good command of pedagogical and content knowledge, use of communicative approaches over grammar-based approaches as effective. The results also forefronted the significance of engaging students in using target language in language classroom. On the other hand, the findings showed hesitancy about explicit error correction and grammar instruction.

As is clear in the above discussion, the studies mainly focused on perceptions of effective teaching behavior without considering the similarities and distinctions between in-service and prospective EFL teachers. Moreover, the comparison of native and non-native language teachers' perceptions has been overlooked in the field.

Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. Are there any differences between native, non-native and pre-service language teachers regarding effective teaching?
 - 1a. Are there any differences between the perceptions of pre- and in-service EFL teachers regarding of effective teacher behavior?
 - 1b. Are there any differences between the perceptions of native and non-native language teachers regarding effective language teaching behavior?

3. Method

Design

For the purposes of this study, convergent parallel design was adopted (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). This design is suggested to be employed when the researcher uses simultaneous timing to implement the quantitative and qualitative instruments during the same phase of the research process, without prioritizing either methods. The results are, then, combined to obtain an overall interpretation.

Participants

In this study, convenient sampling was employed (Creswell, 2007; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The sample consisted of 25 pre-service and 68 in-service EFL teachers. Pre-service teachers were senior students at a foundation university located in Istanbul, Turkey. Nine of the in-service teachers were native speakers of English. The in-service teachers were all teaching EFL in different cities and different schools in Turkey. Since the aim was not investigating the relationship between participants' responses to their demographic information (e.g., gender, age, type of school, year of experience), further personal data were not gathered.

4. Data Collection and Analysis

Data for the study came from a Likert-type scale adopted from Brown (2009) and randomly selected participants' written reflections.

Effective Language Teaching Questionnaire

Prior to data collection, each participant was informed about the aim of the research and asked to hand in a consent form. The questionnaire included 24 items on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) demonstrating behavior of effective language teachers. Every single item in the questionnaire tapped one significant attribute of effective language teaching (e.g., teaching culture, error correction, grammar teaching, assessment). The alpha analysis revealed a reliability coefficient of .80 indicating that the questionnaire could be a reliable data collection instrument (Field, 2004). In order to decide whether parametric or non-parametric testing would be appropriate for the analysis, normality of the data was checked. The Shapiro-Wilk test was applied as the numerical means of assessing normality. Significance value of the Shapiro-Wilk Test was checked for each item. Results showed values less than .05 showing that the data for each item is not normal. Therefore, Kruskal-Wallis was run as a non-parametric test and then it was followed by Mann-Whitney U test for the post-hoc testing purposes to see which group agrees or disagrees with the statements more.

Reflectivity Task

In order to strengthen the data gleaned via the questionnaire, randomly selected participants were requested to write a reflective paper by following the guideline provided by the researchers with the purpose of activating mental representations of participants regarding effective language teaching behavior. The qualitative data functions as the supportive evidence to be able to elaborate on the findings of the quantitative data. In doing so, the lack of integration as a common problem in mixed method designs was secured (Bryman, 2007).

5. Results

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the differences between pre- and in-service as well as native and non-native EFL teachers' perceptions with regard to issues in effective language teaching.

Research Question 1

First research question attempted to investigate the differences between native, non-native and pre-service language teachers regarding effective teaching. A statistically significant difference only in item 20 i.e. teaching grammar by giving examples of grammatical structures before explaining the grammar rules, among the three different teacher groups ($\chi^2(2) = 6,535, p = 0.038$), with a mean rank of 51,82 for non-native, 33,39 for native and 40,52 for pre-service teachers. This result showed that non-native in-service teachers agree with the statement greater than native teachers and pre-service teachers.

Research Question 1a.

The first sub research question sought to determine whether there are any differences between the perceptions of pre- and in-service EFL teachers regarding effective teacher behavior. For the analysis, Mann-Whitney U test was performed. The following table illustrates that these two groups of teachers differ in their perceptions regarding teaching culture (item 3), error correction (item 5) and use of simplified language (item 22).

Table 1. Mann-Whitney U Test Results

Item	3. devote as much time to the teaching of culture as to the teaching of language.	5. not correct students immediately after they make a mistake in speaking.	22. not simplify or alter how when they speak
Mann-Whitney U	617,500	626,000	623,000
Wilcoxon W	942,500	951,000	2969,000
Z	-2,087	-2,010	-2,035
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,037	,044	,042

In order to understand which group agrees with the statements more, mean ranks statistics were also given in the following table. Results showed that pre-service teachers agree with speaking the language without simplifying greater than the in-service teachers. Moreover, in-service teachers support the idea of not correcting errors immediately, and integrating culture of target language more than the pre-service teachers.

Table 2. Mean Ranks of In-service and Pre-service Teachers

Mean Rank	In-Service	Pre-Service
Item 3	50.42	37.70
Item 5	50.29	38.04
Item 22	43.56	56.08

These results were also supported with the excerpts taken from the reflective essays of the participants as can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Excerpts Supporting Questionnaire Results

	Excerpts from Pre-service Teachers' Reflections	Excerpts from In-service Teachers' Reflections
Culture	Culture of the target language should be a part of language teaching. However, it is not the most important component of effective language teaching.	Culture has to be integrated. Otherwise, learners fail to think in the target language and this prevents them from meaningful language production.
Error Correction	Immediate error correction in speaking is necessary especially with young learners to prevent any fossilization.	Immediate error correction is necessary when we teach a subject for the first time. But I do not believe in the efficiency of error correction during oral use of language. It only discourages the student.
Use of Target Language	The more input means more output. That's why, teachers should use English. They should also be careful with their accuracy and fluency because their being good role models is an important factor.	Use of Turkish sometimes provides economy in time and effort. It is wrong to ignore it totally. But this does not mean using solely Turkish as the medium of instruction.

Research Question 1b

Mann-Whitney U test was also run to analyze the differences between native and non-native in-service teachers' perceptions of effective teacher behavior. Table 4 indicates that these two groups differ in their perceptions regarding error correction and grammar teaching through examples.

Table 4. Mann-Whitney U Test Results

	8. only correct students indirectly when they produce oral errors instead of directly	20. teach grammar by giving examples of grammatical structures before explaining the grammar rules
Mann-Whitney U	201,000	249,500
Wilcoxon W	256,000	304,500
Z	-2,761	-2,215
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,006	,027

Mean ranks of the responses given by these two groups (see table 5) show that non-native teachers favor the ideas about; indirect error correction of oral mistakes and teaching grammar by giving examples of grammatical structures before explaining the grammar rules greater than the native-teachers.

Table 5. Mean Ranks of Native and Non-native Teachers

Mean Rank	Native	Non-Native
Item 8	21.22	36.53
Item 20	22.56	36.32

These results were also complemented with the data gathered through the reflective writings of the participants. Table 6 displays some excerpts in line with the above stated questionnaire results.

Table 6. Excerpts Supporting Questionnaire Results

	Excerpts from Native Teachers' Reflections	Excerpts from Non-native Teachers' Reflections
Error Correction	I think all grammar mistakes should be corrected explicitly except when speaking for fluency.	If we want autonomous learners who can learn inductively, immediate and direct error correction hinder this process.
Teaching Grammar	At lower levels it should be taught as a separate course. In later levels, it should be integrated when students need.	From the very beginning of language education, grammar should not be the main purpose. It should be an integrated component.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was two-fold. First, the comparison of pre- and in-service EFL teachers' perceptions of effective teaching was investigated. Second, the differences between the ideals of native and non-native in-service EFL teachers were delved into. For these purposes, a convergent parallel design was employed.

The analysis revealed that pre-service teachers valued speaking foreign language in their teaching without simplifying more than the in-service teachers. This might be due to not having experienced the challenges of the real teaching environment yet. Not being aware of the problems in schools in Turkey might be another explanation for this finding. Pre-service teachers might also be thinking that they will be able to implement the ideal theories they have been instructed in initial teacher education programs. As was explained in Borg (2003), teacher cognition as the source of perceptions and beliefs, might be effected by schooling, professional education and classroom practice. Therefore, the difference in perceptions of pre and in-service teachers is expected. In line with this explanation, the distinction in perceptions might also be explained as that in-service teachers are more aware of the difficulties and challenges in the education system because of schooling and classroom practice they experience.

On the other hand, non-native teachers favor the ideas regarding indirect error correction of oral mistakes, more than the native-teachers. This result was found to be parallel with Anker (1992), Bell (2005), Brosh (1996), Brown (2009) wherein non-native language teachers beliefs were explored. This lack of agreement may show the distinctive experiences teachers have had regarding when and how to correct errors in their own teaching practices (Bell, 2005).

Additionally, non-native teachers agreed with the idea of not teaching grammar through explicit instruction to a greater extent than the native teachers. This result is parallel with the findings of some national studies investigated the beliefs of non-native language teachers (Çubukçu, 2010; Korur and Eryılmaz, 2012; Tok, 2010). However, the disagreement between native and non-native perceptions concerning grammar teaching can be explained by referring to being educated in different contexts and initial teacher education programs as well as differing teaching contexts.

Pedagogical Implications

This study contributes to the field of language teacher education with pedagogical implications and applications. First, it is clear that pre-service teachers, native and non-native in-service teachers, who can be accepted as one of the significant triads in language education, perceive effective language teaching in distinctive ways. This finding implies the significance of the role of social-constructivism for effective language education.

Secondly, exploring language students' ideals of effective language teaching at the outset of an academic semester would help teachers (native and non-native) modify their teaching techniques and develop activities that they would use (Horwitz, 1988).

Additionally, since it is a well-known fact that effective teaching cannot be separated from setting, while judging the ideals of stakeholders in language teaching contexts, the expectations and instructional objectives of the institution, the type of students enrolled, instructors' teaching styles as well as students' learning styles should be investigated (Braskamp, 1980).

It is also recommended that awareness of teachers' classroom practices and beliefs underlying them help designing and/or reorganizing curricula for professional development of teachers. Thus, examining teachers' teachers' personal theories is of value for language program development (Cooper and McIntyre, 1998).

Pre-service, native, and non-native in-service teachers who can be accepted as one of the significant *triads* in language education seem to perceive effective language teaching differently. This may imply the value of *dialogue* among these groups and surfacing the *tacit ideals* of each group through *reflective activities* for more efficient language education. This application may both lead to improved teaching and strengthen the collaboration through idea sharing of the members of this triad within practicum period when all members present in the context.

Examining the ideals at the onset of the initial teacher education and academic years would help teachers modify their teaching techniques and develop more stimulating activities that they would use (Horwitz, 1988; Roberts, 1998). Thus, these implicit beliefs should be surfaced and examined during their teacher education. Due to lacking typical knowledge (expectations from students, types of challenges to set and anticipating problems) (Calderhead, 1987), pre-service teachers need extended amount of practice teaching in different contexts (Roberts, 1998).

Finally, owing to the fact that pre-service teachers' personal theories tended to diverge after teaching experience as indicated in the present study, the longer and more intensive practicum they have, the better they may elaborate on their personal theories.

Limitations of this Study

Some limitations of this study should be noted. First, because of the limited number of native-language teachers working in the setting of the study, a balance in the number of native and non-native teachers could not be maintained. Therefore, it is not easy to generalize the results regarding the difference between native and non-native teachers' perceptions. Other limitation of the study is related to the data collection method. Since the questionnaire items may not explain why the participants agreed or disagreed with a particular item, participants would have been interviewed right after the questionnaire analysis to express their opinions about items.

Further Research

The perceptions of teachers might change according to the type of school and level of the students they are working with. Therefore, this study should be extended to focus on the comparison of different groups of teachers' ideals regarding effective teaching behavior should be investigated. Furthermore, teachers' should be observed in their teaching contexts and their claims through questionnaire statements should be complemented. It would be useful to find out the extent teacher perceptions of effective teaching behavior are reflected in their actual instruction. In addition, a follow-up research to compare different groups of foreign language teachers teaching different languages, with varying years of experience, degree of education, would help investigate the differences in perceptions depending on these independent variables. Finally, having an important role in shaping teachers' effective teaching perceptions, teacher educators' ideals with regard to the same issue should also be explored.

7. References

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