

Exploring Teacher Educators' and Teacher Trainers' Perceptions on Methodology Courses

Seyyed Ali Ostovar Namaghi, Saeed Saffarzadeh*

Shahrood University of Technology, Iran

E-mail: saffarzadehsaeed@yahoo.com

Received for publication: 29 May 2017.

Accepted for publication: 11 August 2017.

Abstract

Methodology courses are one of useful sources through which teacher trainers can enrich their knowledge in terms of language teaching. The purpose of this study is exploring teacher educators' and teacher trainers' perceptions on the effectiveness of methodology courses and also uncovering their suggestions towards such courses to make them more effective. Initial participants were selected through purposive sampling followed by theoretical sampling based on the principles of grounded theory. Data were gathered through interviews along with memo writings and three main categories were found. The first main category was weak points of the methodology courses. The second category was 'the suggestions to make this course effective' with three sub-categories such as 'do it by practice', 'localizing some methods', and 'avoiding bias towards this course'. The third category contributes to 'how this course is helpful for the teacher trainers' with four sub-categories such as 'leading to unconscious use of methods', 'building student teachers' background', 'providing purposeful methods', and 'acting as a pre-requisite for effective practice'.

Keywords: methodology courses, teacher educators, teacher trainers, grounded theory

Introduction

Introduce the Problem

Along with the growth of English language learners and users worldwide (Graddol, 2003), There has been increasing interest in research that explores the knowledge base of second language teacher education and how foreign language teachers are prepared to teach (Crandall, 2000; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Kleinsasser, 2013; Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Wallace, 1991; Wright, 2010)

It is through the methodology course that pedagogical content knowledge related to being a foreign language teacher is transmitted or constructed (Grossman, 1990; Grosse, 1993). To be able in deciding on the most effective teaching style based on a specific language learning course's requirements, teachers need to be knowledgeable in terms of principles of different teaching styles. Methodology courses are one of sources through which teacher trainers can enrich their knowledge in terms of language teaching. Yet, we can see some EFL/ESL teachers' weakness in teaching appropriately in spite of providing them with rich methodology courses in universities. One reason of this fact might be attributed to a specific issue that teacher educators and course coordinators are not aware of the fact that to what extent teaching methodologies can be helpful for teacher trainers in their future experience of teaching. In addition, voices of language teachers who are real practitioners of methods about the role of methodology courses in their teaching experience have remained unheard.

Statement of the Problem

Therefore, in spite of the fact that methodology courses are presented in slightly large scale in universities, teacher educators are not aware of appropriate ways of employing it so that teacher

trainers can make use of them in their future experience of teaching. In addition, the areas of language teaching in which the principles of methodology courses may play role have been remained uncovered.

Purpose of the Study

To help the methodology courses' coordinators to make such courses more effectively so that knowledgeable teacher trainers are educated from universities, this study is conducted to explore appropriate ways of conducting these courses by asking teacher educators to share their experience of teaching methodologies to teacher trainers. In addition, language teachers' perceptions on areas in which the methodology courses may play role are going to be explored.

Review of the Related Literature

Theoretical Perspectives

Regarding the importance of the methodology courses, Molebash (2004) considers the methodology courses, among the courses offered to pre-service teachers, as one of the few opportunities for teacher candidates to view new knowledge through different aspects of their developed prior knowledge about teaching and learning. Therefore, he suggests that a basic objective of a teacher preparation program should be to provide pre-service teachers with appropriate teaching experience. By enabling students to teach and analyze their teaching behavior, peer-teaching can be an invaluable learning experience for prospective teachers, and it might lead to a consequent improvement in their teaching pedagogy. Hashweh (1987) also believes that pre-service program faculty development is necessary to assist instructors of subject matter content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to be able to demonstrate and reflect upon uses of the knowledge in their own teaching. University faculty needs to understand the nature of language teaching methodology in order to facilitate its development in teacher education students. According to Shulman (1986), the methodology course is an effective device to provide student teachers with pedagogical knowledge and subject matter knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge is a type of knowledge that is unique to teachers, and in fact concern what teaching is about. It concerns the manner in which teachers relate their pedagogical knowledge (what they know about teaching) to their subject matter knowledge (what they know about what they teach), in the school context, for the teaching of specific students. It is the integration or the synthesis of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their subject matter knowledge that comprises pedagogical content knowledge.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), methods can solve many problems of beginning teachers because many of the basic decisions on the course of teaching have already been made for them. The acceptance of methods depends on their ease or difficulty of introducing them practically since the authors believe that practicality is the key issue. Overall, there is a broad range of methods and approaches which affect teachers' pedagogical values and beliefs, their understanding of the nature of second language learning, their classroom practices and use of teaching materials.

Bell (2003) states that teachers should be exposed to all methods and they themselves would construct their own methods or decide which principles they would adopt more in their teaching practices. According to him, we cannot underestimate the importance of guiding principles of these methods and their influence on our teaching practices.

Empirical Findings

Dogancay-Aktuna (2005) investigated the effectiveness of the methodology courses in teacher education programs. The author found that the methodology courses led to a good starting point for learning to consider students' sociocultural backgrounds in designing and implementing lessons. As trainees analyzed the assumptions behind various approaches to language

teaching, their attention were drawn to the fact that methods, activities, and techniques emerged from and expressed underlying theories about the nature of language and language learning as experienced in a particular context, and therefore the methods were not considered to be universal by the trainees. So, this awareness of cross cultural variation in norms of teaching and learning formed the first step in developing an appropriate methodology in their own teaching experiences.

Correspondingly, MacDonald, Richard, and White (2001) observed that the control group who did not take an SLA course did not show any significant changes in their attitudes towards language learning. But, the students who did take the course showed significant changes in their attitudes towards certain issues in language learning. Thus, it seemed that, despite the fact that the students expressed their aversion towards the theoretical approach of the course, the course had some measurable effect on their beliefs and knowledge. Actually, the students were either unaware of, or undervalued, the changes that were taking place which was evident through their comments, both orally and on their course evaluation forms.

Kumaravedivelu (2006) found that practicing teachers could design their own micro strategies or classroom activities by using the macro strategies as guidelines. In other words, macro strategies were made operational in the classroom through micro strategies. The author also found that teachers were able to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant theory of practice by exploring and extending macro strategies based on the challenges of changing the contexts of teaching, by designing appropriate micro strategies to maximize learning potential in the classroom, and by monitoring their teaching acts.

Moreover, Crandall (1994) investigated that language teacher educators called for more extensive and intensive practical experiences to be integrated throughout the teacher education program, provided prospective teachers with greater opportunities to link theory with practice and to receive support and learn from experienced teachers, and offered experienced teachers an opportunity to learn from their new counterparts. Stoyneff (1999) found that within general teacher education, prospective teachers spent more time in real teaching situations than is often the case in language teacher preparation programs, especially those housed outside of education departments. Partnerships between university-based teacher education departments and schools offered prospective and experienced teachers opportunities for engaging in collaborative research and teaching, while also benefited the language learners in the classroom (Johnson, 1996a).

Likewise, Crandall (1996) explored that teacher-education programs provided practical experiences that encouraged prospective teachers to continue their professional development after leaving the program. These experiences prepared them for a variety of professional activities: writing for publication, developing proposals for conference presentations or grant funding, or working on public speaking and professional presentations.

In addition to the previous studies, Cullen (1991) did a research on the activities in teacher education programs and found that videos provided significant input to the overall development of future teachers; moreover, he also showed that student-teachers who learned to use technology during their pre-service studies were far more likely to incorporate technology in their future classes than those who did not have experience with its use. This implied that teacher educators covered both theory and practice by using videos to meet a double folded objective: as a means for constructing knowledge and developing reflective skills; and as a tool for forming critical video consumers and producers (Goldsby & Fazal, 2000).

The Correspondence to Research Design

The usefulness and effectiveness of the methodology courses have been the main concern of many scholars so that it led them to find the effect of the methodology courses on future beliefs and practices of the teacher trainers. To narrow down the aspects of the methodology courses in the

teacher education programs, some other scholars tried to find the techniques and approaches attributed to the “how” of teaching the methodology courses (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005; MacDonald, Richard, & White, 2001; Kumaravedivelu, 2006; Crandall, 1994; Stoyhoff, 1999; Johnson, 1996a; Crandall, 1996; Cullen, 1991; Goldsby & Fazal, 2000).

Besides the mentioned findings by several scholars, the aim of this study is to discover the current teachers’ beliefs and attitudes towards the methodology courses they had acquired during their university education. In a particular sense, the aim is at finding the effectiveness of the methodology courses in Iranian EFL/ESL teachers’ performance in their classrooms. In addition, the way through which they benefit from their acquired knowledge in the methodology courses during their university education is intended to be explored. Since, different countries and societies have different context of foreign language teaching and learning based on their own facilities, the approaches and suggestions to teach the methodology courses in definitely different from the ones found by the above scholars in different countries and context. So, the finding of this study is going to be significant in itself as it is supposed to be fulfilled in Iranian EFL/ESL classrooms.

Research Questions

To this end, this study is directed by the following questions:

1. What are teacher educators’ and teacher trainers’ perceptions on the effectiveness of methodology courses in universities”
2. What are their suggestions towards such courses to make them more effective?

Methodology

The selected research method was Grounded Theory which was firstly presented by Glaser and Strauss in 1960s. By getting familiar with the rationale and philosophy behind the grounded theory, the researcher identified this type of research method as reasonable one to do this study. The principles of grounded theory were used by the researcher in terms of sampling procedure, data collection, and data analysis.

Glaser (1965) originated the basic process of Grounded theory method described as the constant comparative method where the analyst begins analysis with the first data collected and constantly compares indicators, concepts and categories as the theory emerges. The aim of the technique of constant comparative analysis is to force the analyst to be close to the data in order not to come up with subjective understanding of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

According to Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010), the goal of this methodology “is to inductively build a theory about a practice or phenomenon using interviews and observation as the primary data collection tools” (p. 463). Punch (2001) refers to grounded theory as a research strategy aimed at generating theory from data, while Mansourian (2006) describes it as “inductive, contextual and processual” (p. 397).

Sampling Procedure and Participants

Grounded theory studies are characterized by theoretical sampling, but this requires some data to be collected and analyzed. According to Patton (2002), sampling must thus begin purposively, as in any qualitative study. Purposive sampling (also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling) is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study. Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Clark, 2007).

According to Chenitz and Swanson (1986), theoretical sampling emerged with the foundation of grounded theory, which was first developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. Theoretical sampling is associated with grounded theory approach based on analytic induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

According to Sandelowski (1995), although theoretical sampling is often misconstrued as purposive sampling, the uses of theoretical sampling vary to a large extent. Also, the selection criteria of participants for theoretical sampling changes according to the needs and changes that occur in the theoretical study at the given time. Theoretical sampling is considered to be purpose driven and it explicitly carries out its function on the basis of an emerging theory (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). The main focus of theoretical research is to use its development through a constant comparative analysis of data that is gained through theoretical sampling for a better understanding of the theory produced (Coyne, 1997).

Therefore, the participants of the current study were selected through purposive sampling followed by theoretical sampling. The participants were Iranian teacher educators who had rich experience of teaching methodology courses in universities of Khorasan province in Iran. Around twenty teacher educators were interviewed until the topic of discussion was saturated.

Data Collection

In qualitative studies, data most commonly consist of narratives of some sort, usually transcribed interviews or transcriptions of observational data, but also can include other kinds of documents (e.g. field notes, clinical case notes, historical documents, organizational reports, autobiographies, service logs). According to Patton (2002), interviewing is one of the most common methods of collecting information from individuals. As these authors mentioned, there are various types of interviews that are used to collect data. These include structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews that are more or less like questionnaires since they consist of closed ended items.

As another method of data collection, theoretical memoing is the core stage of grounded theory methodology (Glaser, 1992). Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about substantive codes and their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during coding, collecting and analyzing data, and during memoing (Glaser, 1992). Without memoing, the theory is superficial and the concepts generated are not very original. Memoing works as an accumulation of written ideas into a bank of ideas about concepts and how they relate to each other. This bank contains rich parts of what will later be the written theory. Memoing is total creative freedom without rules of writing, grammar or style (Glaser, 1998). According to Charmaz (2006), memos are important tools to both refine and keep track of ideas that develop when researchers compare incidents to incidents and then concepts to concepts in the evolving theory. In memos, they develop ideas about naming concepts and relating them to each other and try the relationships between concepts in two-by-two tables, in diagrams or figures or whatever makes the ideas flow, and generates comparative power.

Data Analysis

Once the data are collected, grounded theory analysis involves several basic steps (Charmaz, 2000). The first step is coding text and theorizing. In grounded theory research, the search for the theory starts with the very first line of the very first interview that one codes. It involves taking a small chunk of the text where line by line is being coded. Useful concepts are being identified where key phrases are being marked. The concepts are named. Another chunk of text is then taken and the above-mentioned steps are being repeated. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), this process is called open coding and Charmaz (2000) called it initial coding. Basically, this process is breaking data into conceptual components. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define coding as “the analytic processes through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory” (p. 3).

Bernard and Ryan (2010) proposed several stages in data analysis process which was modification of Corbin and Strauss's (1990) model. According to these authors, Open coding or substantive coding is conceptualizing on the first level of abstraction. Written data from field notes or transcripts are conceptualized line by line. In the beginning of a study everything is coded in order to find out about the problem and how it is being resolved. The coding is often done in the margin of the field notes. Corbin and Strauss (1990) also proposed axial coding and defined it as "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (p.96). Kelle (2005) proposed a "coding paradigm" that involved conditions, context, action/ interactional strategies and consequences.

Research Design

The initial stage of this study was getting an in-depth understanding of philosophies and rationale behind this type of research method. Regarding sampling procedure, the researcher selected initial participants through purposive sampling. In this step, some participants who were representative of the intended issue were identified to be interviewed. Initial codes were emerged through analyzing the interviews taken from these first participants. Next, theoretical sampling was followed by the researcher through which the researcher had to look for the theories and extracted codes to expand them.

Based on the principles of grounded theory in data collection, the researcher asked questions that were likely to yield as much information about the study phenomenon as possible and also addressed the aims and objectives of the research. In a qualitative interview, the researcher used open-ended questions and started with questions that participants could answer easily and then the researcher proceeded to more difficult or sensitive topics. Then, the researcher made use of theoretical memos to expand and verify the already collected data through interview.

The final step was analyzing data which was totally done based on the presented principles in grounded theory. This step was divided into two main steps; open coding and selective coding. Through the first step of data analysis, the researcher took a small chunk of the text where line by line was being coded. The second step of data analysis was selective coding through which a core "story" was generated, which was a brief narrative of the most important aspects of the data, subsuming all of the other categories and articulating their relationships to the core story. Axial coding was also used as a set of procedures whereby data were put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories.

Results

The data of this study were gathered and analyzed based on the presented rules in the grounded theory research method through which some teachers of the methodology course in the universities were interviewed to share their ideas and suggestions about this course. Three main categories were found through catching the teachers' perceptions on the methodology course that have exhibited different characteristics of this course. The first main category which was mostly mentioned by most of the participants is the disadvantage of the methodology course that is theoretically-bound. Only one disadvantage was mentioned by the participants. The second category is the suggestions to make this course effective. This category involves some sub-categories such as do it by practice, localizing some methods, and avoiding bias towards this course. The third category contributes to how this course is helpful for the teacher trainers. This category encompasses four sub-categories such as leading to unconscious use of methods, building student teachers' background, providing purposeful methods, and acting as a pre-requisite for effective practice.

Disadvantage of Methodology Courses

Theoretically-Bound

Some of the participants did not believe in the effectiveness of the methodology course since it is highly theoretical and does not engage the teacher trainers in practical experiments. It has been considered as weak point of the methodology course that prevents the students to benefit from it in their future experiments of teaching. The participants believe that the students should be good practitioners of the presented methods in the methodology course rather than just gain rich knowledge about the rules and theories behind the methods.

The weak point of methodology courses is that it is merely theoretical. Some of the participants considered the theories and histories of the methods as the most useless part of this course. They preferred to replace the time of working on the theories by showing the teacher trainers the right ways of applying each method in practice. In addition, they argued that the methodology course in universities does not result in the students' (future teachers') learning since it is totally theoretically-based and has no use for the students in future. As a participant stated:

The great weak point of the methodology course is that it is highly theoretical. The theories are never applicable for the teacher trainers. Even if the students pass this course with high score, it does not have any use for them in practice. It is better to replace teaching the theories with practicing the methods. Teaching the practical aspects of the methods is more important since knowing the histories of the theories in many years ago does not have any application and function in teaching language. So, it is better to show the students how the methods are employed in a real EFL/ESL context instead of teaching them who has created a specific method. Furthermore, the allocated time to this course is too short that we do not have any extra time to involve the students in practicing the methods.

Suggestions to Make these Courses Effective

Do it By Practice

One of the mostly recommended ways of presenting the methodology course is teaching it both theoretically and empirically. That means that the teachers make the students to perform each taught method empirically. They believe that knowing only the rules and knowledge behind the methods is not workable unless it is accompanied by practice. The students should get familiar with the application of each method in semi real contexts. If it does not happen in the methodology courses in universities, then the graduated teacher trainers are knowledgeably competent but weak in applying their knowledge in EFL/ESL classrooms. Therefore, their knowledge does not help them to be successful in their field unless they know how to make use of their knowledge in practice.

The students are mostly involved in learning the theories of language teaching methods through different practices such as making use of realia, related videos, performing demo, and apprenticeship. The last approach is making the students to go to an EFL/ESL classroom to observe the applied methods in that classroom and then the teacher trainers are made to apply the taught and observed methods in a real EFL/ESL classroom. As one of the advocators of this approach said:

We have apprenticeship approach in teaching the methodology course. The students learn the theories in the classroom, watch the related videos to the methods in which the correct way of applying the methods in EFL/ESL classrooms are shown, and then they have to go to any EFL/ESL classroom in schools or language institute to see the way that theories are changed to practice in real context. It worth mentioning that the students should first present their demo for their classmates and the classmates discuss the weak and strong points of their friends' presentation and after that they are allowed to observe a real EFL/ESL classroom to explore the teachers' methods of language teaching. It is one way of making the methodology course effective for the teacher trainers. After observing any EFL/ESL class, the teacher trainers have to teach a real EFL/ESL

class by making use of the taught theories, the practiced methods in their classrooms by demo, the presented movies, and the observed class.

Making teacher trainers to observe EFL/ESL classes and pay attention to the methods applied in these classes by the teachers are considered as effective complementary to the methodology course in order to make it effective for the students. In addition, the syllabus of this course is better to be moved from theory to practice so that the students learn how to change the theories to practice. The students have stress when they are asked to apply a specific taught method for their classrooms since they have only taught some theories and they have not observed the ways of applying the methods in practice.

Real situation helps the teacher trainers to evaluate their abilities of becoming language teachers based on what they have learnt in the methodology course. In a real situation, the students should firstly observe the applied methods in EFL/ESL classes and then combine their already knowledge of theories about the methods with what they have acquired during observation. The next step is treating their classmates as EFL/ESL students and teach them a determined lesson by making use of their gained experiences through both the observation and the taught theories. The students should get familiar with different aspects of the EFL/ESL classes and be put in different conditions to see if they are capable of controlling a class in an appropriate way.

Localizing Some Methods

In contrast to some of teachers in methodology courses who believed that all of the presented methods in the course book should be taught completely to the teacher trainers since each method has a specific characteristic and principle which is applicable for specific purposes, some other teachers tried to localize some of the methods and ignored teaching them completely since they thought that some of the methods are not applicable in the context of their country due to lack of some facilities. However, they should think of the future when their current students are language teachers in an almost developed context and have not any problem with lack of facilities. Therefore, localizing some of the methods by some of the teachers endanger the students' future experience of teaching. One of the advocates of the localization of methods said:

Some of the methods should be localized because of specific conditions. For example, I pass over the teaching of silent way and desuggestopedia methods since they cannot be applied in the classrooms due to lack of the required facilities. The students also recognize that some of the methods are useless in the context of their country. So, they prefer not spending their time on acquiring some useless methods.

Localization of some methods in the methodology course was also advocated by other teachers who believed that teaching all of the methods is wasting the students' (future teachers') time. They preferred spending more time on practicing all aspects of those methods which are applicable in our country. However, it was argued that all of the language teaching methods are not needed to be localized. Any method has its own specific aspects which are applicable for our context. Having localized all of the methods are not suggested by some of the participants and they claimed that all of the methods should be taught for the students of the methodology course but devote different times to each method based on the extent to which they are applicable in our context.

Avoiding Bias towards these Courses

Setting a fix rule towards teaching the methodology course is not reasonable. Teachers should not force the teacher trainers just to learn some fix rules and do not leave any room for them to think and reflect upon this course independently. Teachers of the methodology course should avoid their bias towards it and only emphasize on teaching the methods theoretically; instead, they should go beyond the specific design of the methodology book, containing only some theories about

the methods, and apply some practical methods to make the students understood so that they can make use of the acquired methods in their future experiments of teaching.

Having bias towards teaching the theories in the methodology course is just wasting the students' (future teachers') times. The students need to go beyond the theories and be engaged in practical experiences. The teachers of the methodology course should put aside their bias towards teaching the theories since the students just memorize some rules and theories about language teaching methods which are no applicable in any period of their life. Actually, what the students need is watching the ways that methods are operated in real context and then experience them by their own.

Assigning a fix prescription for language teachers is considered as having bias towards the theories and methods presented through the methodology course. If the teachers of the methodology course have bias towards teaching the methods and make the students to teach the methods in a prescribed manner, the teacher trainers will not become autonomous teachers at all. Actually, the teacher trainers should learn that they have to take the individual differences among EFL/ESL students in to account at first and then decide on the most appropriate methods to be applied for them. Since, the context of language learning is varied from class to class and students to students, the teachers of the methodology course should avoid their bias towards the principles of the methods and also avoid prescribing the methods in a fix manner without considering the individual differences between EFL/ESL students.

How These Courses are Helpful for Teacher trainers

Leading to Unconscious Use of Methods

All of the presented methods in the methodology course books are employed in the EFL/ESL classrooms unconsciously more or less. The teachers may make use of combination of some methods to fulfill the classes' needs. Although, each teacher has his/her own method of teaching a foreign language, he/she is unconsciously employing the acquired methodology rules during the university education. That is, he/she does not think of the exact rules of the methods he/she is employing in the classrooms; instead, having encountered with different subjects, he/she changes his/her methods unconsciously to fulfill the intended objectives of that subject. In this term, one of the participants expressed as follows:

I teach the methodology and testing courses. Although, I do not teach any language and actually my job is teaching the knowledge of language, I unconsciously make use of the acquired methods to make the students understood. For example, I try to make the students to interact with each other through discussing different parts of the language knowledge which is one of the rules of communicative approach. Or, I engage them in inductive and deductive questions which are the rules I have acquired in my university education. Actually, we are not separate from those theories and we should be aware that without those theories, we cannot have a flow teaching process. So, the methodology course is a guidance tool for whoever wants to be language teacher in future.

Regarding the unconscious use of language teaching methods, another participant was found to have made use of the taught language teaching methods during the methodology course so that he currently applies them unconsciously in his teaching process. By unconsciously, I mean that although the participants had the whole knowledge of language teaching methods which they acquired during their university education, they cannot employ them directly and completely in their classrooms because they are in charge of teaching the knowledge of language not teaching a language to any ESL/ESL students. So, they unconsciously make use of the taught methods in only some specific occasions.

Building Teacher Trainers' Background

Having pre-knowledge of a specific issue in its specific area is essential before entering field. That is also the case in the field of language teaching. Most of the language teachers benefit from their background knowledge they have been provided with it through studying the methodology books in the university. Without having any background in terms of the language knowledge, they might be unable to conduct their classes effectively. However, the knowledge behind each language teaching method is not enough because the teacher trainers need to get familiar with the empirical use of the methods through observing. Regarding the importance of providing background knowledge by the methodology course, one of the participants said:

In the field of language teaching like any other fields, teachers need to know the history, rules, and knowledge behind the teaching course. The methodology course in the university helps the teacher trainers to have enough background knowledge in order to enter the teaching field. Before employing each method empirically and observe its effectiveness in language learning, they should get aware of the principles behind it at first. I consider the presented knowledge behind the language teaching methods in the methodology course as necessary as possible since it activates the future teachers' background to employ the methods.

Increasing the students' (future teachers') awareness about the language teaching methods is one of the considerable advantages of the methodology course in universities. Through this course, the students get familiar with the philosophies behind the methods which in turn they can use the methods in an innovative way since they have known the methods' principles as well.

Providing Purposeful Methods

Having set a purpose for language learning necessitates the application of methods having the related purpose. Since, the methodology course presents variety of language teaching methods with different applications, it is beneficial for the current students (future language teachers) to evaluate each method based on the future students' needs of language learning. The methodology course in universities is a tool to provide teacher trainers with lots of rules and principles in terms of each method so that the students can easily apply them in future based on the classes needs. So, the provided language teaching methods in the methodology course (each for a specific purpose) are valuable guide for the students to conduct their teaching process in future effectively.

Thinking about the last and most effective method of language teaching is stupidly wrong because most of the participants appreciated each method for its specific purpose. According to the different contexts, facilities, and language learners' needs, the teachers' methods of teaching are differed. In addition, the provided philosophy and information about each method in the methodology books should be taken into consideration because without having knowledge about the characteristics and purposes of the methods, the teacher trainers will not be able to recognize what kind of methods are appropriate and applicable for specific types of contexts. As one of the participants exclaimed:

We cannot say that the philosophies, histories, and theories of the methods are useless. The presented information about the methods in the methodology books makes the teacher trainers to think about the adjustment of each method with specific context. In addition, we should not think of the last explored method. We should consider the purposes behind each method and apply it in its related context. Sometimes, depending on the classes' requirements and purposes of language learning, the teachers may apply Direct-method and sometimes Audio-Lingual method. Therefore, the methodology course is helpful for the teacher trainers in such a way that they get familiar with the philosophies and purposes of each method.

Act as a Pre-requisite for Effective Practice

The methodology course should be presented in such a way that the teacher trainers can make a link between the theories behind the presented methods and practicing them in real context. Most of the students think the only thing that they need is practicing the methods in the methodology course and consider the presented theories behind the methods as useless subject. The fact is that they are not aware of the connection between the theories and practice. Actually, they do not know that they will not be able to apply the methods in their future experience of teaching without having any knowledge about the methods. In other words, the presented theories behind the methods in the methodology course book are pre-requisite for effective practice of those methods. Therefore, it is essential for the students to have rich theoretical sight in order to be a good teacher in future.

Moving from theory to practice is another approach followed by the participants which is the proof of theory as a pre-requisite for effective practice. It has been recommended that teaching the theories of the methods presented through the methodology course should be followed by the practice of those methods. The students are introduced with the theories of the language teaching methods and then are asked to perform the methods practically. To this end, the methodology course is recommended to be divided into two parts; theoretical and practical parts respectively.

Having the eclecticism ability by the teacher trainers is the result of studying the theories during the methodology course. The students are aware of the specific required conditions for each method that helps them to be good practitioners of the methods. They can determine which method is appropriate for which situation and also which methods can be combined with each other to results in effective learning.

Discussion and Conclusion

As the first category found through analyzing data (theoretically-bound), some of the participants did not believe in the effectiveness of the methodology course since it is highly theoretical and does not engage teacher trainers in practical experiments. This finding was in line with Bruner's (1986) explanation that universities have traditionally focused on scientific knowledge which is abstract, decontextualized, and impersonal, but teachers also need access to narrative ways of knowing which relate theory to specific practices in concrete, contextualized, and personal ways.

One of the sub-category of 'the suggestions to make this course effective' was presented in different ways. This sub-category has been labeled as 'do it by practice' through which one of the mostly recommended ways of presenting the methodology course is teaching it both theoretically and empirically. Such argument is in consistence with Kumaravadivelu (1999), Van Manen (1991), Chambers (1990), as they state that new developments in the field of teacher education are shifting from a theoretical to a more school-based approach, focusing on practical experience as the starting point for teacher education, and orienting towards a more constructivist approach.

Practical experiences such as observations, internships, apprenticeships, student teaching, or other teaching practice have long been a part of most language teacher education programs. In addition, the findings of some other scholars are in consistence with the participants' suggestions. For example, Kleinfield (1992), Davis (1980), and Cullen (1991) found that video modelling is a means of getting student-teachers' to focus their attention on target skills or behavior. Video-coaching has been used to refer to the use of taped activities of the student-teachers' themselves which then leads into group discussion. These activities provided contextualized portraits of the many factors which influenced teacher decision making and behavior in the classroom.

Another finding concerns ‘providing purposeful methods’ that is a sub-category of ‘how this course is helpful for the teacher trainers’. It is found that teacher trainers appreciated the effectiveness of the methodology course since it provides the students with different language teaching methods, each for different purpose, while lacking practical exercises. To prove such finding, Widdowson (1979) states that “the first aim assigned to the methodology component is generally that of relating practice to principle, developing an awareness of the rationale of particular procedures and of when they are useful, relating one procedure to another and short-term objectives to long-term goals, and understanding the organization of language courses in terms of ends and means” (p.68).

The language teaching students should get familiar with the philosophy and basic rules of language teaching process. Their back ground knowledge in future when they become language teachers should be rich with conceptual information about the theories and principles of language teaching in order to be able to change the theories to practice. This finding is in consistence with Richards and Rodgers’ (2001) arguments that since teachers and teachers in training need to be able to use approaches and methods flexibly and creatively based on their own judgments and experience, training in the techniques and procedures of a specific method is important as it provides them with the confidence, techniques and strategies they will need in a classroom environment.

Kumaravedivelu’s (2006) findings also prove the expressions of the current study’s participants that practicing teachers could design their own micro strategies or classroom activities by using the macro strategies as guidelines. In other words, macro strategies were made operational in the classroom through micro strategies. The author also found that teachers were able to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant theory of practice by exploring and extending macro strategies based on the challenges of changing the contexts of teaching, by designing appropriate micro strategies to maximize learning potential in the classroom, and by monitoring their teaching acts.

Through this course, the students get familiar with the philosophies behind the methods which in turn they can use the methods in an innovative way since they have known the methods’ principles as well. Such finding can be proved by Case, Lanier, and Miskel (1986) who have based the legitimization of the teaching profession on the assumption that when more research-driven knowledge is provided to teachers, their teaching performance will improve. Teacher education programs generally operates under the assumption that teachers need discrete amounts of knowledge, usually in the form of general theories and methods that are assumed to be applicable to any teaching context.

As another sub-category of ‘how this course is helpful for the teacher trainers’ it is found that the methodology course should be presented in such a way that teacher trainers can make a link between the theories behind the presented methods and practicing them in real context. Most of the students think the only thing that they need is practicing the methods in the methodology course and consider the presented theories behind the methods as useless subject. The fact is that they are not aware of the connection between the theories and practice. Such conclusion which is taken from the ‘acting as a pre-requisite for effective practice’ sub-category is in a same direction with Sandholtz (2002) who has acknowledged that transmission-based approaches in teaching the methodology has the form of formal lectures, where theory and practice are separated, reduce learners to passive recipients of knowledge and do not promote teacher development through passive participation in the learning process.

Another finding is taken from ‘leading to unconscious use of methods’ sub-category of ‘how this course is helpful for the teacher trainers’ main category. The participants argued that all of the presented methods in the methodology course books are employed in the EFL/ESL classrooms

unconsciously more or less. The teachers may make use of combination of some methods to fulfill the classes' needs. Although, each teacher has his/her own method of teaching a foreign language, he/she is unconsciously employing the acquired methodology rules during the university education. Such finding can be proved by Freeman and Richards (1996) who found it difficult to understand that the changes in teacher behavior were a result either of their experience of the classroom, the theoretical input they received during their initial or some combination of these.

The importance of the methodology course taught in universities is not ignored by any teacher educator. The explored perceptions on the effectiveness of the methodology course for teacher trainers are helpful for both teacher educators and teacher trainers to take it more serious. By valuing such courses in universities, the teacher trainers' skills in language teaching are developed and therefore it results in educating more knowledgeable language learners. In addition, the explored suggestions contributing to the way of conducting the methodology courses help teacher educators to make such courses more effective and helpful so that teacher trainers can employ the presented principles in their own experience of teaching. Therefore, success of education system can be assigned to the appropriate way of presenting the methodology courses in universities in such a way that skilled teacher trainers are educated from universities and consequently knowledgeable language learners will be educated from schools and language institutes.

The findings of this study are useful for teacher educators at the initial stage since they can increase the importance of the methodology course by getting aware of its advantages and also the techniques through which this course can be conducted more effectively. At the second stage, teacher trainers can make use of the findings of this study in such a way that they appreciate the methodology course because of its advantages and effects on their own teaching styles in future.

Suggestions for Further Studies

The findings of this study revealed the areas in which the methodology course can be useful for teacher trainers. In addition, several suggestions were presented through this study to make this course more effective. Such suggestions have been mentioned to be taken into account by teacher educators. It also worth mentioning that conducting the methodology course is better to be by lateral. In other words, teacher trainers also play important role in conducting this course as well as teacher educators. So, suggestions to be considered and applied by teacher trainers are also need to be explored. In addition, the already explored suggestions that have to be considered by teacher educators are needed to be tested in order to find the extent to which they can be applicable in university context.

References

- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Sorensen, C., & Razavieh, A. (2010). *Introduction to research in education*. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning.
- Bell, D. (2003). Method and postmethod: Are they really so incompatible? *TESOL Quarterly*, 37, 325–336. 10.2307/3588507
- Bernard, H. R., & Ryan, G. W. (2010). *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches*. California, CA: Sage Publication.
- Breckenridge, J., & Jones, D. (2009). Demystifying theoretical sampling in grounded theory research. *Grounded Theory Review*, 8(2).
- Bruner, J. 1986. *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Case, C. W., Lanier, J. E., & Miskel, C. G. (1986). The Holmes Group report: Impetus for gaining professional status for teachers. *Journal of teacher Education*, 37(4), 36-43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002248718603700408>

- Chambers, J. H. (1990). The many different types of theory which underpin the study of education. *The Journal of Educational Foundations*, 4(4), 79.
- Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 509–535). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory*. London: Sage.
- Chenitz, W. C., & Swanson, J. M. (1986). Qualitative research using grounded theory. *From practice to grounded theory: Qualitative research in nursing*, 3-15.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons and evaluative criteria. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 19(6), 418-427. <https://doi.org/10.1515/zfsoz-1990-0602>
- Coyne, I. T. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling; merging or clear boundaries?. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 26(3), 623-630. 10.1046/j.1365-2648.1997.t01-25-00999.x
- Crandall, J. (2000). Language teacher education. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 20, 34-55. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190500200032>
- Crandall, J. A. (1994). Strategic integration: Preparing language and content teachers for linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. In J. E. Alatis (ed.), *Strategic interaction and language acquisition: Theory, practice, and research* (pp. 255-274). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Crandall, J. A. (1996). Teacher professionalism in TESOL. *MEXTESOL Journal*, 19, 11–26.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cullen, R. (1991). Video in teacher training: the use of local materials. *ELT Journal*, 45(1), 33-42.
- Davis, R. L. (1980). *RSA Cert. TEFL courses: teacher-training techniques and problem areas*. Broadstairs: Hilderstone English Language Centre.
- Dogancay-Aktuna, S. (2005). Intercultural communication in English language teacher education. *ELT journal*, 59(2), 99-107. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eltj/cci023>
- Freeman, D., & Johnson, K. E. (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), 397-417. 10.2307/3588114
- Freeman, D., & Richards, J. C. (1996). *Teacher learning in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Glaser, B. (1965). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis. *Social Problems*, 12(4), 445, 436.
- Glaser, B. (1992). *Basics of grounded theory analysis*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B. G. (1998). *Doing grounded theory: Issues and discussions*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). Grounded theory: The discovery of grounded theory. *Sociology The Journal Of The British Sociological Association*, 12, 27-49.
- Goldsby, D. S., & Fazal, M. B. (2000). Technology's answer to portfolios for teachers. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 36(3), 121-123. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2000.10532035>
- Graddol, D. (2003). The decline of the native speaker. In G. Anderman, & M. Rogers (Eds.), *Translation today: Trends and perspectives* (pp. 152-167). Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Grosse, C. U. (1993). The foreign language methods course. *The Modern Language Journal*, 77(3), 303-312. 10.1111/j.1540-4781.1993.tb01976.x
- Grossman, P. L. (1990). *The making of a teacher: Teacher knowledge & teacher education*. Columbia, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Hashweh, M. Z. (1987). Effects of subject-matter knowledge in the teaching of biology and physics. *Teaching and teacher education*, 3(2), 109-120. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051X\(87\)90012-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051X(87)90012-6)
- Johnson, K. E. (1996a). The role of theory in L2 teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30, 765-771. 10.2307/3587933
- Kelle, U. (2005). Sociological explanations between micro and macro and the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 95-117. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20762014>
- Kleinfeld, J. (1992). Learning to think like a teacher: The study of cases. In J. H. Shulman (ed.) *Case methods in teacher education* (pp. 31-49). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Kleinsasser, R. C. (2013). Language teachers: Research and studies in language(s) education, teaching, and learning in Teaching and Teacher Education, 1985-2012. *Teacher and Teacher Education*, 29, 86-96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.08.011>
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1999). Theorising practice, practising theory: The role of critical classroom observation. *Theory in language teacher education*, 33-45.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2006). TESOL methods: Changing tracks, challenging trends. *TESOL Quarterly*, 40(1), 59-81. 10.2307/40264511
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (2012). *Language teacher education for a global society*. NYC, NY: Routledge.
- MacDonald, M., Badger, R., & White, G. (2001). Changing values: what use are theories of language learning and teaching?. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(8), 949-963. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(01\)00042-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00042-7)
- Mansourian, Y. (2006). Adoption of grounded theory in LIS research. *New Library World*, 107(9/10), 386-402. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03074800610702589>
- Molebash, P. (2004). Preservice teacher perceptions of a technology-enriched methods course. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 3(4), 412-432.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Punch, K. F. (2001). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. London: Sage Publications.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2001). *Approach and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis*. Cambridge, London: Cambridge University.
- Sandelowski, M. (1995). Sample size in qualitative research. *Research in nursing & health*, 18(2), 179-183. 10.1002/nur.4770180211
- Sandholtz, J. H. (2002). Inservice training or professional development: Contrasting opportunities in a school/university partnership. *Teaching and teacher education*, 18(7), 815-830. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X\(02\)00045-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(02)00045-8)
- Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational researcher*, 15(2), 4-14. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X015002004>
- Stoynoff, S. (1999). The TESOL practicum: An integrated model in the US. *TESOL quarterly*, 33(1), 145-151. 10.2307/3588200
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. Suny Press.
- Wallace, M. J. (1991). *Training foreign language teachers: A reflective approach*. Cambridge University Press.

- Widdowson, H. G. (1979). *Notes on educational/vocational aspects in EFL diploma courses*. British Council.
- Wright, T. (2010). Second language teacher education: Review of recent research on practice. *Language Teaching*, 43(3), 259-296. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444810000030>