

Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes towards Communicative Language Teaching in EFL Context

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ABSTRACT The purpose of this quantitative research is to investigate pre-service teachers' attitudes towards communicative language teaching in English as a foreign language (EFL) setting. Pre-service teachers observe the classroom practices of communicative language teaching (CLT) principles that they are based on their experiences during teacher training. To collect data, a questionnaire was administered to 151 pre-service teachers from the Department of English Language Teaching. The results revealed that although in some cases pre-service teachers held views that ran counter to communicative language teaching principles, their attitudes in the courses were on the whole positive towards their implementation in actual language classrooms. The paper concludes that the results can yield valuable insights into the training of prospective English teachers regarding communicative language teaching principles. The survey recommends that practical courses during initial teacher training be provided to promote pre-service teachers' language teaching skills in communicative ways.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, linguists like Hymes have asserted that one cannot account for the nature of language by merely depending on the concepts of 'performance' and 'competence' developed by Chomsky, and a third concept under the heading of 'communicative competence' also needs to be covered (Demirel 1999: 50). The theory of communicative competence advanced by Hymes (1972) was defined as the ability to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately. As a result of this theoretical stance, it has been well established that a set of rules of use and interaction as well as rules of grammar are of primary importance to the issue of communication in foreign language. In methodological term, this trend has emerged as communicative approach or communicative language teaching and it has been ideally adopted in foreign language teaching in the Turkish educational system as this is the case in most of the countries worldwide.

Despite the heavy emphasis placed upon communicative approach in Turkish context at theoretical level, it is not without the problems arising from the act of communicating at practical level. As Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011: 115) point out, students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but aren't capable of transferring them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside of the class-

room setting. In a language project conducted by Özen et al. (2014), and in collaboration with British Council, a large scale needs analysis was administered to Turkish learners of English as well as their English teachers in order to inform the language learning in the state-run Turkish high schools. The findings of this survey revealed that the language instruction of language skills and the assessment of these skills largely constitute the grammar-based activities without adequate concern with the way in which language is commonly seen as a device of communication. As Hymes (1972) noted, this supports the view which says that being able to communicate profoundly requires communicative competence other than linguistic competence.

Given the implications for methodology, the new communicative approach to language teaching prompted a rethinking of classroom teaching methodology (Richards 2006). This in turn gave rise to the development of various approaches that highlighted the communicative properties of language (Brown 2001: 42). Brown maintains that these classrooms are characterized by authenticity, fluency and meaningful tasks. In line with this, Richards (2006) argues that learners acquire a language through the process of communicating in those classrooms, and the act of communicating meaningful to the learner provides a better opportunity for learning than through a grammar-based approach.

As an important distinctive feature of CLT a great deal of emphasis is placed on meaning-oriented instruction, a notion that emerged in response to language teaching methods that emphasized the mastery of language forms (Hedge 2000). Reflecting on the defining features of CLT, Richards and Rodgers (1986) conclude that language is a system for the expression of meaning.

Given the rationale for the paper, understanding pre-service teachers' attitudes is of particular importance in developing the language learning process based on CLT principles. In this respect, many scholars have emphasized that teachers' attitudes should be examined closely when considering the effectiveness of a language teaching approach (Breen and Candlin 1980). Clear understanding of learners' attitudes and perceptions of CLT is important to help learners attain their goals (Savignon and Wang 2003; Savignon 2007). These attitudes are central to students' success within CLT in which the teachers generally assume the role of facilitator in the language teaching process. Moreover, Sherwani and Kiliç (2017) stressed that CLT principles were designed for a Western cultural context. This in turn makes it necessary to investigate the effectiveness of CLT principles in the Turkish culture.

In broad terms, findings from empirical research (Karavas-Doukas 1996; Yilmaz 2007; Chung and Huang 2009; Inceçay and Inceçay 2009; Aubrey 2010; Amin 2016; Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2017; Kpoblahoun 2017) on CLT conducted in different EFL contexts have revealed the importance of identifying both teachers' and learners' beliefs pertinent to the implementation of CLT in their classroom settings. In a case study carried out in the Turkish context, Inceçay and Inceçay (2009) investigated the perceptions of 30 Turkish university students in order to understand the effectiveness of communicative and non-communicative activities in their EFL courses in a private preparatory school in Istanbul, Turkey. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no studies like this have specifically dealt with the pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions of CLT as well as its implementation in the Turkish context. The present paper addresses the issues surrounding CLT on the grounds of pre-service teachers' dispositions towards the use of communicative approach in the course of teacher training on foreign lan-

guage teaching. In doing so, the results of the paper may contribute to a broader understanding of CLT within the Turkish context and also serve to provide valuable guidance in developing pre-service EFL teachers' CLT skills.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to examine Turkish pre-service teachers' attitudes towards the practice of CLT principles in Turkish EFL classrooms. Besides this, another major purpose of this paper is to draw implications from the empirical results that would help to frame the pre-service EFL teachers' communicative needs as part of developing the present communicative syllabus in the EFL teacher training program.

Research Question

To achieve the purposes stated above, the following research question was addressed in the paper.

- ♦ What are Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards implementing the principles of CLT?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A method of quantitative data collection was utilized for the main paper. Initially, descriptive analyses were conducted on the basis of the responses from 151 pre-service teachers with regard to their attitudes towards CLT. De Vaus (2002: 18) defines descriptive research as a method which "deals with questions of what things are like, not why they are that way." A questionnaire survey as the main instrument adapted from Karavas-Doukas (1996) was employed in order to evaluate the degree of attitudes held by the participants.

The communicative approach attitude questionnaire comprises 24 statements. Practically, these fell into five thematic groups: that is, group/pair work (4 statements), quality and quantity of error correction (4 statements), the role and contribution of learners in the learning process (7 statements), the role of the teacher in the classroom (4 statements), and place/importance of

grammar (5 statements). The 24 questionnaire items were measured by five-point Likert type scale, from 1 showing “strongly disagree” to 5 showing “strongly agree”. Prior to the implementation phase of the paper and as an ethical research procedure, the researcher obtained formal administrative consent from the Faculty of Education at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. A statement indicative of this approval was attached to all the questionnaires in order to assert the objective of the paper. Then, the questionnaire was administered in May 2016.

Participants

One hundred and fifty-one (151) university students (92 females, 59 males) from a state-run Turkish university participated in the paper. The participants for this paper were all pre-service EFL teachers majoring in English language teaching in Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Faculty of Education, Turkey. All of the participants were prospective English teachers attending English classes in the 2015-2016 academic year at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. Prior to the survey, the researcher ensured that the subjects had taken the English methodology course and that they had a great deal of practical acquaintance with the communicative approach required to respond to the survey items accurately. The participants of the study were selected through convenience sampling because they met certain practical criteria, such as availability at a certain time, and easy accessibility (Dörnyei and Csizer 2012).

Data Analysis

In the phase of analyzing data, the answers elicited from the respondents were digitalized and put into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The CLT principles were classified into five subscales: group/pair work, quality and quantity of error correction, the role and contribution of learners in the learning process, the role of the teacher in the classroom, and place/importance of grammar. Then, descriptive statistics were obtained in order to determine pre-service teachers' dispositions towards communicative language teaching. In line with this, the frequency (f), percentage (%), mean score (M) and standard deviation (SD) for each item involved in the questionnaire as well as the over-

all scores for the CLT principles were calculated running SPSS 18.0 Software for Windows. In this paper, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient for the questionnaire was .89.

RESULTS

The main research question probed Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' attitudes towards the CLT principles represented by five subscales. Thus, descriptive statistics were calculated to describe the percentages, means and standard deviations for each item as well as the overall scores indicative of the general attitudes of participants.

Broadly, the scores for the items revealed that most participants held positive attitudes towards all the five principles of CLT. The scores obtained ranged from 2.23 (minimum) to 4.41 (maximum), with a mean of 3.48. More specifically, they displayed moderate attitudes toward “the role and contribution of learners in the learning process,” with the highest mean ($M=3.98$), including the most favorable items of CLT subscales. Likewise, they held moderate attitudes towards “the role of the teacher in the classroom,” with higher means ($M=3.80$). The engagement in “group/pair work” was noted as a positive attitude with a mean of 3.52. Furthermore, their attitudes towards the “place/importance of grammar” and “quality and quantity of error correction” were favorable, though with lower means of 3.22 and 2.88 respectively.

The questionnaire comprises five subscales as noted in the methodology section. In addition to getting a holistic understanding of the pre-service teachers' overall attitudes towards the principles of CLT, the section that followed is devoted to presenting the item-based frequencies involved in each subscale in the questionnaire.

The following findings were obtained with regards to the first subscale (group/pair work). In line with the research findings pertinent to this subscale (Table 1), the study sought to find out to what extent pre-service teachers perceived the group activities as fitting into their classroom routines. The results revealed that the majority of pre-service teachers (88%) supported the view that group work activities are essential in promoting genuine interaction among students (Item 1). The mean score for this item was $M=4.26$; $SD=0.69$. The findings also indicated that 124 pre-service teachers ($M=4.25$; $SD=0.82$)

Table 1: Group/Pair work

Questionnaire items	Strongly agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Group work activities are essential in promoting genuine interaction	60	39.7	73	48.3	16	0.6	2	1.3	0	0
2. Group work allows students to explore problems for themselves among student and thus have some measure of control over their own learning	71	47	53	35.1	22	14.6	5	3.3	0	0
3. Group work activities take too long and waste valuable teaching time	10	6.6	15	9.5	19	12.6	63	41.7	44	29.1
4. Students do their best when taught as a whole class	21	13.9	54	35.8	39	25.8	29	19.2	8	5.3

appeared to highly value group activities because they in turn led them to develop a sense of autonomy in acquiring the range of language learning skills. The overwhelming majority of the participants (82.1%) agreed that group work allows students to explore problems and thus have some measure of control over their own learning (Item 2). In response to the next question that was in effect designed to underestimate the group activities, 107 pre-service teachers disagreed with the view ($M=2.23$; $SD=1.16$) that group activities take too long and waste valuable teaching time (Item 3). With regard to the last question, nearly half of the participants (almost 49.7%) believed that students do their best when taught as a whole class by the teacher (Item 4). Contrary to this, 37 of them (24.5%) seemed to favor either group or pair work activities as opposed to whole class work. Interestingly, the rest (25.8%) had no idea as to the pedagogical value of whole class work for communicative purposes.

For the second subscale which applies to the quality and quantity of error correction (Table 2), the findings serve to highlight pre-service teachers' attitudes towards treating language errors as part of the principles evident in communicative language teaching. Clearly, there is consensus among the participants (62.2%) on the view that grammatical correctness is not the most important criterion by which language performance should be judged (Item 5). The mean score for this item is consistently low ($M=2.56$; $SD=1.05$). For most of the prospective teachers (56.3%), the responsibility for correcting students' language errors does not fall upon the teachers (Item 6). The mean score of this item is $M=2.60$; $SD=1.21$. Thirty-two (32) participants (21.2%) remained uncertain regarding whether the teacher assumes the responsibility in this respect. A large number of pre-service teachers (65.6%) are convinced that errors are by nature normal parts of the language acquisition process (Item 7). The mean score for this aspect of error correction is considerably high ($M=3.62$; $SD=1.15$). 71 (47.2%) opposed the idea that group work activities have little use since it is very difficult to monitor the students' performance while 40 (26.5%) remained uncertain about this view (Item 8).

The third subscale concerns the identification of teacher roles by pre-service teachers (Table 3). 102 pre-service teachers (67.6%) made it

Table 2: Error correction

<i>Questionnaire items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Uncertain</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Strongly disagree</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
5. Grammatical correctness is the most important criterion	7	4.6	29	19.2	21	13.9	79	52.31	5	9.9
6. The teacher should correct all the grammatical errors	17	11.3	17	11.3	32	21.2	60	39.7	25	16.6
7. Since errors are normal part of learning, much correction is wasteful of time	35	23.2	64	42.4	19	12.6	26	17.2	7	4.16
8. Group work activities have little use since it is very difficult to monitor the students' performance	12	7.9	28	18.5	40	26.5	51	33.8	20	13.4

Table 3: Role of the teacher

<i>Questionnaire items</i>	<i>Strongly agree</i>		<i>Agree</i>		<i>Uncertain</i>		<i>Disagree</i>		<i>Strongly disagree</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
9. The teachers' feedback must be focused on the appropriateness and not the linguistic form	41	27.2	61	40.4	26	17.2	21	13.9	2	1.3
10. Teacher as 'authority' and 'instructor' is no longer adequate to describe the teachers' role	33	21.9	59	39.1	28	18.5	26	17.2	5	3.3
11. The teacher as transmitter of knowledge is one of his/her many different roles	48	31.8	76	50.3	15	9.9	9	6	3	2.0
12. The role of the teacher is to impart knowledge through explanation and example	31	20.5	86	57.0	14	9.3	17	11.3	3	2.0

clear that the teachers' primary role is not restricted to the teaching of only the linguistic form (Item 9). The mean score for this statement is $M=3.78$; $SD=1.03$. To this end, 92 out of 151 prospective teachers (61%) pointed to the need to redefine the prescribed roles of teachers as 'authority' and 'instructor (Item 10). It was observed that a large proportion of pre-service teachers (82.1%) agreed on the main role of the teacher as transmitter of knowledge in the classroom setting (Item 11). This item had the highest mean score ($M=4.03$; $SD=.91$) among the whole items in the questionnaire. When pre-service teachers were asked to clarify this current role ascribed to teachers, as the next question reveals (Item 12), an overwhelming majority of them (77.5%) acknowledged that the role of the teacher is to impart knowledge through explanation and example. The mean score for this item was found to be considerably high ($M=3.82$; $SD=.95$).

The fourth subscale (the role and contribution of learners in the learning process) reveals the findings (Table 4) which relate to the central role that learners play in the process of CLT. Drawing on this aspect of CLT, with the items 13 and notably 14 corresponding to the highest mean score ($M=4.41$; $SD=.77$) involving this subscale of the questionnaire, teacher trainees were asked to evaluate whether CLT truly prompts learner responsibility for learning. 85 participants (56.2%) thought that learners should not be trained to take responsibility in performing the CLT tasks in the classroom (Item 13). Almost ninety percent of teacher trainees agreed on the view that the learner-centered approach to language learning encourages responsibility and allows each student to develop his/her full potential (Item 14).

In addition to emphasizing learner responsibility as part of CLT, the focus is on the individual needs and interests of students in the field of language teaching. Half of the respondents (51%) reported that it is difficult to organize teaching process in large classrooms (Item 15). A greater proportion of the participants (70.2%) claimed that acquiring language is most effective when it serves as a vehicle to something else (Item 16). In response to the questions 17 and 18, student teachers were asked to assess the degree of importance with regard to the needs and interests of students. The mean score for this dimension of learner roles was $M=4.32$; $SD=.97$ (Item 17). It was observed that the

overwhelming majority of the participants (88.7%) agreed that tasks and activities should be performed after they are negotiated by both teachers and learners. 125 (82.8%) respondents supported the notion that a textbook alone is not sufficient to cater for all the needs and interests of students (Item 18). Almost half of the participants (46.4%) reported that learners are not in a position to make decisions on the content of the lesson (Item 19).

The last thematic group addressed the role of grammar skill (Table 5) in accordance with the guiding principles of the communicative approach. The item 20 in the questionnaire aims at identifying the confines of grammar on a communicative basis. The results displayed that 83 student teachers out of 151 (55%) strongly supported the view that grammar should be taught only as a means to an end and not as an end in itself. Interestingly, the remaining 48 viewed this question as 'uncertain', indicating that linguistic competence is somewhat one part of communicative competence. Despite this scant attention to grammar in CLT by student teachers, the common view that they appear to strongly take is made quite evident in the item 21 with the highest mean ($M=4.29$; $SD=1.33$) among the others, stressing that grammatical competence in language learning does not guarantee learners to acquire communication skills. Fifty-five (55) of the participants (36.4%) argued that CLT as an approach to language teaching produces inaccurate learners whereas 47 (31.1%) remained uncertain about this effect of CLT on the participants' grammatical competence (Item 22). The Item 23 asked student teachers to judge whether students are capable of communicating with a native speaker by mastering the rules of grammar. This item had the lowest mean score ($M=2.36$; $SD=1.33$) which was indicative of strong disagreement on the part of student teachers. Of 151 student teachers, 98 (43.6%) disagreed with the view that mastering the rules of grammar results in successful communication with a native speaker while, by contrast, the rest favored the commitment to grammar rules in order to succeed in communicating with a native speaker. Finally, 62 of the pre-service teachers (41.1%) viewed the instruction of grammar as vital for learners to communicate effectively while 54 (35.8%) of them did not support this (Item 24).

Table 4: Role of the learners

Questionnaire items	Strongly agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly disagree		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
13. Training learners to take responsibility is futile	28	18.5	57	3	7.7	30	18.9	25	16.6	11	7.3
14. The learner-centered approach to language teaching encourages responsibility	84	55.6	51	33.8	12	7.9	3	2.0	1	0.7	
15. It is impossible in a large class of students to organize teaching	33	21.9	44	29.1	31	20.5	36	23.8	7	4.6	
16. For most students language is acquired most effectively when used as a vehicle	44	29.1	62	41.1	42	27.8	3	2.0	0	0	
17. Tasks and activities should be negotiated	74	49.0		60	39.7	12	7.9	5	3.30	0	0
18. A textbook alone is not able to cater for all the needs and interests of students	88	58.3	37	24.5	16	10.6	7	4.6	3	2.0	
19. The learner is in no position to suggest what the content of the lesson should be	14	9.3	56	37.1	33	21.9	38	25.2	10	6.6	

Table 5: Place of grammar

Questionnaire items	Strongly agree		Agree		Uncertain		Disagree		Strongly disagree		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
20. Grammar should be taught only as a means to an end	19	12.6	64	42.4	48	31.8	18	11.9	2	1.3	
21. Knowledge of the rules of a language does not guarantee ability to use the language	74	49	54	35.8	16	10.6	7	4.6	0	0	
22. The communicative approach to language teaching produces inaccurate learners	15	9.9	4	0	26.5	47	31.1	35	23.2	14	9.3
23. By mastering the rules of grammar, students are capable of communicating with a native speaker	16	10.6	1	9	12.6	18	11.9	49	11	49	32.5
24. Instruction of grammar is essential if students are to learn to communicate effectively	16	10.6	4	6	30.5	35	23.2	40	26.5	14	9.3

DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the questionnaire suggest that the pre-service teachers hold favorable attitudes towards the principles of communicative approach in general. Notably, this finding is compatible with those of the previous works conducted in Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Taiwan, North Cyprus, Togo and Tunisia, which drew similar conclusion that subjects hold positive attitudes towards CLT (Amin 2016; Sherwani and Kiliç 2017; Khatib and Tootkaboni 2017; Ibrahim and Ibrahim 2017; Kpoblahoun 2017; Ounis and Ounis 2017). As such, this present study builds on the current studies on CLT which have demonstrated the value of implementing CLT in an EFL environment.

Group work activities as one of the main principles of the communicative approach emerged as fitting into their classroom routines. Common to most of the classroom tasks in CLT is that they are designed to be carried out in pairs or small groups (Richards 2006). Through engaging in activities in this way, as Richards (2006) argues, learners will be able to produce a greater amount of language than they would use in teacher-fronted activities. The results revealed that the majority of pre-service teachers supported the view that group work activities are essential in promoting genuine interaction among students. At the same time, the results correspond with those of Rajabi and Godazhdar (2016) and Sherwani and Kiliç (2017), in which participants were similarly reported to hold more favorable attitudes toward pair/group work than the other techniques specific to CLT. The findings indicated that pre-service teachers appeared to highly value group activities because they in turn led them to develop a sense of autonomy in acquiring the range of language learning skills. In this respect, Holec (1981) describes autonomy as the ability to take charge of one's learning. From this, it can be implied that learners possessing this ability are capable of monitoring their language potentials and identifying common problems hindering their progress in language acquisition.

A closer look into pre-service teachers' perceptions in the study is suggestive of both teacher and learner roles ascribed in the process of implementing CLT in Turkish context. They believed that the prescribed roles of teachers as 'authority' and 'instructor' remain inadequate

to cover, what Richards and Rodgers (1986) regard as particular roles being determined by the view of CLT. Describing one of these teacher roles, Breen and Candlin (1987) argues that the first role assumed for teachers in Communicative Language Teaching is to facilitate the communication process between all participants in the classroom, and between these participants and the various activities and texts. However, pre-service teachers agreed on the main role of the teacher as transmitter of knowledge in the classroom setting. It seems that pre-service teachers are frustrated by this passive role attributed to Turkish EFL teachers. The other defining role of the teacher within the framework of CLT principles relates to the authority of the teacher in the classroom setting. As was revealed in the prior section, most of the pre-service teachers appeared to have rejected the idea of authority in EFL classroom. Rather, it is felt that they tend to assume the role of "contributor" and "facilitator," both of which inform the principles of CLT. The studies conducted by Mangubhai et al. (1998) and Kpoblahoun (2017) drew similar conclusions in that teachers are no longer regarded as playing the role of "controller" inside the classroom, but rather that of "contributor" or "facilitator" in the process of language learning and teaching.

Besides, a point of interest in the process of CLT is in the central role of learners. In this regard, the findings of the study indicated that most of the pre-service teachers strongly felt that the attention to the interests and needs of students reflects one of the central principles of CLT. The analysis of the attitudes towards CLT shows pre-service teachers' desire for the learner-centered approach to teaching English in Turkish EFL environment. Drawing on this aspect of CLT, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) argue that teacher's role is less dominant than in a teacher-centered method and students are seen as more responsible for their own learning. Thus, the concern with the learner-centered approach to language learning encourages responsibility and allows students to develop their full potential by catering for their individual needs and interests in the field of language teaching. This suggests that learner responsibility and needs emerge as the vital properties of CLT in the course of teacher training as well as in the future teaching profession of student teachers.

Given the results in the paper, pre-service teachers expressed strong agreement for such items as “Grammatical correctness is the most important criterion” and “Errors are normal part of learning” and “Knowledge of the rules of a language does not guarantee ability to use the language”. Considering the CLT principles in order of importance, the quality and quantity of error correction had a minimum score among the others, which is consistent with the findings of other studies (Hawkey 2006; Kpoblahoun 2017). The results from these studies pointed to some concerns about the CLT principle associated with correcting linguistic errors in EFL educational context. A possible explanation of this inclination within these contexts might be that more attention is focused on correcting learners’ grammatical errors regardless of their communicative competence which in essence pinpoints the ultimate purpose of language learning. As the results suggest, errors are by nature normal parts of the language acquisition process (Richards and Rodgers 1986; Grassi and Barker 2010). A common principle in CLT indicates that errors are tolerated and seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson 2011). While it is crucial that learners have an accurate command of grammatical forms, making corrections on the errors caused by their incorrect uses is by no means an ultimate goal of language teaching. It might be that pre-service teachers tend to think of it as the constraints of communicative ability.

In reality, the ongoing discussions relating to the link between grammar teaching and CLT remain inconclusive, and it is still unclear to what extent students are required to acquire grammar skills so as to become communicatively competent. Looking at the general picture from the pre-service teachers’ standpoint, the results in general seem to back up the concerns about the role of grammar in CLT. The findings of the present paper are consistent with those of Chang (2011) and Kpoblahoun (2017), both of which indicated that CLT is not simply aimed at teaching grammar rules in the development of communicative competence. Nonetheless, the data obtained from the survey signal a discrepancy between accuracy and fluency. As reported in the previous section, a considerable number of pre-service teachers disagreed with the view that mastering the rules of grammar results in successful

communication with a native speaker while the rest expressed positive attitudes toward grammar-based instruction in order to succeed in communicating with a native speaker. Even though the two instructional practices are to be viewed as complementary (Asassfeh et al. 2012), an analysis of Turkish EFL learners’ attitudes toward communicative approach in general shows a preference for developing their fluency, rather than accuracy (Yilmaz 2007). To be sure, however, considering student teachers’ reflections on this issue, it is reasonable to suggest that form-based instructional practices on the surface are likely to play a supportive role in enhancing the communicative competence of students.

Finally, the results of the paper suggest a discrepancy between pre-service teachers’ beliefs and classroom practices regarding the implementation of CLT in Turkish context. As Savignon and Wang (2003) point out, classroom practices are not necessarily a reflection of learners’ beliefs about language teaching and learning. That is, the instructional practice performed in Turkish secondary schools is commonly described as grammar-based in nature. By contrast, an analysis of pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards CLT shows their preference for a meaning-based approach. Thus, in addition to teachers’ attitudes, both the educational system and context informing learners’ actual needs and expectations should necessarily be considered as the key factors influencing the implementation of CLT.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the questionnaire conducted to determine pre-service teachers’ attitudes towards CLT display that to a large extent, they adopt the defining characteristics of CLT and in turn tend to utilize them as prospective English teachers. The perceived attitudes expressed by the pre-service teachers were either found to be relevant to the principles of CLT involving group and pair work tasks, the contribution of learners in the learning process, and the role of the teacher in the classroom, or relatively compatible regarding the role of error correction and grammar. Based on the pre-service teachers’ experiences of the practices of these principles in their classroom, the findings commonly show that teaching for communicative competence emerges as

the underlying principle of English language teaching pedagogy in the Turkish EFL.

Remarkably, it can be concluded that pre-service teachers ideally assume the role of teacher who facilitates language acquisition rather than simply imparting knowledge. Importantly, the student teachers appeared to be cautious about the role of grammar instruction in the implementation of CLT throughout language teaching. Overall, grammar was viewed as a tool likely to help enhance effective communicative abilities among students.

The results from the survey provide valuable insights into the training of prospective English teachers in a Turkish setting in view of the common principles surrounding CLT. On a more basic level, the findings of the present paper can yield valuable practical and theoretical considerations for stakeholders, curriculum designers as well as the prospective EFL teachers to use CLT in Turkish secondary and high school contexts. The diversity of pre-service teachers' perceptions of the CLT principles underscores the need to provide them with methodological practices on CLT in the light of their emerging needs where they can be afforded opportunities to obtain communicative teaching skills in a practical way.

In addition to the pre-service teachers' attitudes, the Turkish educational system acts as a key factor which necessarily informs pedagogical concerns in respect of the implementation of CLT. As a result of ongoing revisions of English education policy by the Turkish Ministry of Education, the implementation of new curricula reflective of communication-based language teaching promises to be a language reform. However, the process is yet to be completed because of the constraints caused by the use of traditional grammar-translation approach. Given the findings of this paper, what is needed could be shifting the educators' and practitioners' efforts from learning grammar to improving speaking skills thereby making the communicative competence the ultimate goal of language learning and teaching in Turkey.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The present paper is not without limitations. To this end, this paper recommends directions for further studies. The participants in this paper were drawn from populations of the pre-ser-

vice ELT teachers in Turkey. Although the questionnaire response rate of the paper was high, the pre-service teachers' attitudes expressed for the principles of CLT cannot be said to represent the perceptions of EFL pre-service teachers throughout Turkey. Therefore, further studies should also be conducted in different EFL environments in Turkey to be able to generalize the findings of the paper to other educational contexts. The population of the investigation can also involve ELT teachers with a view to making a comparison between the two parties on the basis of their perceptions of CLT. The source of data in this survey comes from student questionnaires. As a follow-up to the present questionnaire, in-depth analysis through an interview protocol with students and teachers could reinforce the findings from the paper. As such, reports of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards their CLT experiences cannot be claimed to provide clear insights into the practices of CLT in the actual EFL classroom. Future studies are recommended to conduct classroom research with which to investigate how the principles of CLT actually work in a real EFL classroom.

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