Web-Based Foreign Language Education Courses Are Missing!

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Abstract

English language teaching as a foreign language continues over a century and it seems that English as a lingua franca will be taught in the future too. The growing technological demands of 21st century are another important aspect of this era. These two important concepts of our century make the combination of internet communication technologies (ICT) and English as a foreign language (EFL) inevitable in today's modern settings. When foreign language learners use technological innovations for educational purposes, they reach knowledge easily, in other words instantly; they develop both their linguistic and communicative skills through internet and assess the information through range of channels provided by technology. A question arises in this point; how foreign language teachers will be prepared to these students and learning settings? Foreign language teacher trainees can develop their technological skills and can teach language in a combined way with the help of a web-based language teaching course. However, the research shows that a web-based course for pre-service teachers is missing in most of ELT departments in Turkey. In this respect, the current study is important to gather ideas of future teacher trainers in other words MA and PhD candidates about the issue. We have compiled their ideas about whether English language teaching departments need web-based language courses in pre-service teacher training program. The aim of the study is to gather MA and PhD candidates' ideas about a possible web-based course. To collect the data of this research a five item interview is prepared by the researchers and thirty MA and PhD candidates of ELT departments answered the interview questions. The results of the study show that participants think a web-based course is necessary for pre-service teachers to enhance prospective teachers' technology skills and language teaching strategies.

1. Introduction

Technological growth and development continues enormously day by day and the growth in web is a significant issue in CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). Many research studies in education field support the integration of instructional technology (7), (8). Thus, web provides huge global database for authentic materials for language teaching and learning (1) . Thus, teaching the effective ways to use web in language pedagogy content is an important issue for English Language Teaching departments. As information rich societies, Turkey universities are turning towards ICT to retrieve information in various field (2), (3), (4),(5), (6). Web-based course for language education aims to make students able to use web effectively for language learning. Web-based courses for ELT departments should aim to teach pre-service language teachers use Web effectively to teach English. As web-based instruction provides the ubiquitous learning that learners can learn anytime and anywhere through web sources, pre-service teachers should take web-based courses in ELT department.

For these reasons, the current paper described a study that examined whether Turkish ELT departments have web-based courses in ELT programmes and MA and PhD. student's point of view about the effectiveness of web-based courses.

2. Methodology

The current research is qualitative in nature. A five-question interview is developed by researcher and administered to 27 MA and PhD students at ELT department, Gazi University. They were selected using random sampling and their age varies between 22 and 40. Participants include 12 male and 15 female students and they have their bachelor degree from various universities including Gazi University. Content Analysis is used to analyze data. The present study is limited to the data which were collected from Gazi university's MA and PHD students. Other universities' MA and PHD students would be included.

3. Findings of the Study

The responses that the participants provided to the interview questions are analyzed by content analysis. The first question was related with whether participants had taken any web-based language

teaching/learning courses when they were at their pre-service level. The entire participant answered this question as 'no' with 100% percentage. Besides, the participants completed their bachelor degree in 12 various universities in Turkey. As the table has shown below none of them has a web-based language teaching/learning course in Bachelor level. The following response has been provided by a participant reflects the case clearly.

Q1: Did you get any Web-based language teaching/learning course when you were at your pre-service level?

S: ' No, I didn't. I just got computer I/ II but it wasn't related language teaching and learning'.

Turkey Universities	Bachelor Programme ELT Web-based language teaching/learning course		Turkey Universities	Bachelor Programme ELT Web-based language teaching/learning course	
	Yes	No		Yes	No
Ankara University		+	Pamukkale University		+
Gazi University		+	Yüzüncü yıl University		+
Akdeniz University		+	Atatürk University		+
Hacettepe university		+	Dokuz Eylül University		+
Selçuk University		+	Dumlupınar University		+
METU		+	19 Mayıs University		+

Table 1. *Web-based language teaching/learning course in Turkish Universities.*

Considering the comment and table 1., ELT departments does not have web-based language teaching and learning courses in pre-service level. The point is ELT programmes include Computer Course to teach basic computer skills. However, these courses are not related with language pedagogy specifically.

The second question is asking whether participants' current university namely Gazi University has a web based language teaching and learning course for MA and PHD levels. All of the participants answered this question as 'yes' with 100 % percentage. Gazi University provides web-based course for language pedagogy to teach English effectively. Question two and some of the comments as follows;

Q2: Does your current university's ELT department have a web-based language teaching/learning course for MA and PHD programmes? What do you think about the courses?

A1: ' Yes, I got Web-based course for language teaching in PHD. I think the course was really beneficial to see authentic ways of language teaching'.

A2: 'Yes, there is a web-based course in MA programme. I discovered new websites'

As answers of question two shows, participants think that web-based courses are useful to learn new ways of language teaching and learning.

The third question of the written interview asks the information about web-based course content in Turkish universities. 27 participants stated that content is not sufficient enough to make language teacher candidate capable of using web in language education. They added such comments;

Q4: Do you think pre-service foreign language teaching programs in Turkey are sufficient enough to make teacher trainees capable of teaching language in computer assisted settings?

A1; 'There are not so many professors capable of integrating technology into the classroom.'

A2; 'It is necessary to raise the awareness of teaching staff first. What teacher trainees do during pre-service program is just showing PPTs and some videos.'

A3; 'Student teachers must be provided with practical demo technology courses. Since computers are not only used for reflecting presentations in educational contexts, one cannot claim that computers and technology is efficiently utilized in ELT Departments.'

A4; 'Computer assisted language teaching requires well equipped settings such as good internet connection, updated computers, software etc. I believe ELT departments cannot provide those equipments effectively & adequately.'

Participants state that lecturers are not sufficient enough to teach a web-based course for language teaching and ELT departments are not well-equipped for lesson technically. So, both lecturers and classroom environment should be up to date for an efficient web-based course.

The question four aims to elicit information from participants about a possible web-based course which they can design. Out of 27 participants, 5 participants have no idea about a possible web-based course. The question and some of the answers as follows;

Q4: If you were to design a web-based language teaching course for ELT programs, what type of course would you design?

A1; 'a kind of course both raising awareness towards ICT and training towards integrating technology into the classroom'

A2; 'My course would include ICT, educational web 2.0 tools and developing new web 2.0 tools for language teaching and web 2.0 activity design.'

A3; 'I would design a web 2.0 tool through which student teachers could reflect upon and share their teaching experiences online.'

A4; 'Actually I did. I tried to prepare a course syllabus based on CALL. And in that course I emphasized the integration of some software in each language skill, digital task-based activities and project-based learning.'

As the answers of question 4 show participants are aware of ICT, web 2.0 tools, software for language teaching and technologies' integration into language pedagogy. However, English language teaching departments does not include we-based courses for language teaching in bachelor level.

The question five of the interview aims to collect participants' suggestion to combine ICT and foreign language education in ELT programmes. One of the participants has no idea about this combination and one said just no. Other participants think yes the combination is possible. The question five and some of the answers as follows;

Q5; Do you think ELT courses can be taught with the help of technology? What do you suggest to combine ICT and foreign language education in ELT programs?

A1; 'Yes, there are many online web sites that can be used as supplementary to class activities.'

A2; 'Technology has been implemented foreign language teaching since the last decade. Therefore, educational technology should definitely be integrated in the courses of ELT Departments. As for ICT and language teaching/learning software, both theoretical and practical knowledge should be given and students should apply their knowledge to develop web-based technological activities for language teaching.'

A3; 'Certainly. In-service trainings for teachers and teacher candidates can be organized and e-materials for English courses can be developed and introduced in ELT courses.'

A4; 'Yes, courses can be taught. First of all, ELT Departments need computer labs and teacher trainers need in-service training about technology integration.'

4. Conclusion

To sum up, most of the English language teaching departments does not include web-based courses for foreign language education in Turkey and participants' of the study have not taken any web-based course during their bachelor education for language teaching. However, participants have web-based-courses for language education in their MA and PHD programmes.

As the responses to the interview questions reflect, participants are aware of the importance above mentioned courses for language education. Participants think that both language teaching programmes and lecturers of these programmes should be trained in terms of ICT and Web use for language pedagogy.

Since, the participants of the current study are the candidates for future's lecturer in Turkey, their point of view about ICT's integration into programmes are certainly significant. In the light of current study English language teaching programmes can be improved in terms of ICT and web-based instructions.

As a conclusion English language teaching programmes should be developed in terms of technology use both for content and lecturers' knowledge about ICT and its integration into language pedagogy.

According to Gee and Levine professional development in the use and educational technology has a key role in all professional development (9). As other professional fields of education, English language pedagogy takes advantage of technology use.

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