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included in the students' textbook gave them any information about recent concepts such as reflective teaching, keeping diaries and journals, doing classroom-centered research etc. It would be a good idea if students became familiar with the principles of reflective teaching so that they could learn how to self monitor their teaching and get feedback from it. Knowing about reflecting teaching would also inform them about ways of conducting action research. About the importance which reflective teaching has gained in recent years in Asian countries, let me quote the following words from H. C. Liou (2001), a teacher trainer in Taiwan:

In Taiwan, we have paid too much attention to English proficiency and pedagogy, and ignore completely the role of teacher development and the social context. It is hoped that in this new wave of teacher education for primary school English teachers and certainly high school teachers as well, we add *reflective practice* and *action research* [my italics] to better prepare both pre-service and in-service teachers in the new workplace (p. 206).

In the end, I hope my dear colleagues at the ILI take care of the above point in revising their materials for the next programs. I do wish all of them ever increasing success.

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highly successful one. After all, we should not forget it was the first time this program was put to practice.

Another point which I should mention here before I go to the final section of this paper is that as this study was concerned with the theoretical part of the methodology course, nothing was mentioned about the practical part, i.e. the teaching demonstration of the students.

Concluding Remarks

In this section I would like to mention a few concluding remarks about the positive points of the program plus some suggestions for the improvement of it. The strong points of the program could be listed as follows:

- 1 . The small number of students attending the course allowed them to have an active, useful class.
- 2 . All the courses, especially the methodology course, were taught by well-qualified, knowledgeable teachers.
3. The reading materials were well selected texts.
4. Combining theory and practice is another noticeable feature of the course.
- 5 . And finally paying attention to the student teachers' language knowledge and high gains of language proficiency is another important characteristic of this teacher education program. As mentioned earlier, in this program students receive some 180 hours of instruction in different language skills.

Apart from the strong points mentioned above, there is something which the whole program lacks in. None of the articles that was

them. After that I read and repeat requests separately to have their attention to them and I may omit polite words like please, would, etc. from them in order to show the difference of meaning to them. ...

Mohsen PourMohammadi in reply to question 5 says,

Again I use a dialogue or a text which includes this tense [present perfect]. It should be boldfaced in order to attract students' attention. After that I explain it in order to make it clear using examples and then asking students to give their own examples in order to see whether they understand or not. At last I use pattern drills and substitutions.

Reading the last line, I was shocked. Why should a student teacher after receiving so much instruction still think that substitution drills are a good resource for teaching grammar?

It is time now to pause for a while and review our research question once more: to what extent is the content of this teacher education program consistent with current beliefs in the literature? By examining the articles that the students were exposed to in this program, one can claim that they were well selected ones. Many of them were taken from well known books such as Richards and Rodgers (1986), Chastain (1988), Richards (1990) Brown (1994), etc. The teacher's practice and behavior, as I argued before, was impeccable. The students' responses to my questions on the whole were fair enough. So it is not wrong if we say that the course was a

interesting topic with which the students are familiar, then I will ask questions (especially “wh” ones) to refer to general and principal questions. I will also pay attention to asking simple questions at first. I will try to avoid the questions that I know they have short answers.

Another good reply given to this question comes from Afsane Aram:

... in higher levels which they [students] are able to talk and communicate the teacher should ask for and against questions. She must first raise a topic and give them some clue sentences, then ask them questions and make them talk and support their own ideas.

The answers given to the fourth and fifth questions were not that much satisfactory; “satisfactory” in the sense that they were not that much in line with related literature concerned with task designing. In reply to these questions, students had mostly drawn on their personal opinions. Here are some typical answers to these questions. In reply to question 4, Babak Ekhtiary says:

I would choose a dialogue at their level which has at least 2 polite requests in it, and then I read it aloud myself for 1 time. Then I ask two of the students to read it to class and then give them some time to read it for themselves and if there would be any grammatical points or new vocabulary, I explain

With respect to the second question, i.e. the characteristics of an effective teacher there were some good theoretically based replies. However, the majority of the trainees were of the belief that a teacher (a) should love his job, (b) be patient and sympathetic, and (c) be a good manager. Afsane Aram quoting Richards says:

... a good teacher should have: 1. Class management
... 2. Structuring ... 3. Tasks deciding [I think she means designing] ... 4. Grouping ...

Such a reply shows that these trainees were not that much alienated from recent writings in TEFL.

Banafsheh Farahmandi outlines the characteristics of an effective teacher as someone who has good personal qualities, interpersonal skills, pedagogical skills, and technical skills.

Generally speaking, in reply to the second question students had drawn on both the materials they had studied and their own intuitions. With respect to the third question, there was somehow a mismatch between what I had expected them to answer, and what they really answered. I had hoped they would talk about different question types mentioned in the literature, i.e. display questions, referential questions, divergent questions, etc. However none of them had used any of these terms in their writings. In spite of this, the majority of them believed that the background knowledge of the students plays an important role in motivating them about what they want to say. Mahshid Abedi in reply to this question says:

In order to generate talking in class, I choose an

and suggest all of the teachers to use this method. The method a teacher uses depends on different factors. 1. The aim of the class ... 2. The age of the students ... 3. The atmosphere of the class ... So to me the best method is the one which is chosen carefully and is suitable for our class.

Amir Reza Mehdiani, another trainee teacher in this respect says:

In my opinion the term “best” conveys an abstract, unachievable meaning. The reason is that we always encounter an unknown future. In everything we do, we try to reach some goals, and language teaching is not an exception either. First of all we should know what the purpose of teaching a language to a group of people is and what they want to learn a language for. By answering these questions, we can determine the purpose of a language teaching class. Then with regard to it we can adopt the procedures that serve our purpose as well as possible.

Typical answers like this reveal that these young trainees were well aware of the fact that there is really no best method because everything depends on contextual factors (Prabhu 1990). Some of the trainees, however, had favored an eclectic approach, but even in preferring an eclectic approach, they had admitted that choosing the right methodology is context dependent.

The second question was raised to see how well they are familiar with the idea of effective teaching and effective teacher, i.e. concepts like grouping, structuring, management, etc. (Richards 1990b).

The third question was raised to see how well they are familiar with various question types in conversation classes, especially the difference between referential questions and display questions (Brock 1986).

Finally, the last two questions were raised to find out about the ability of the students in lesson planning, task designing, etc. (Nunan 1989b).

Results

Due to the qualitative nature of this research, the results will be mainly reported in the form of statements which were made by the students in reply to the above questions plus the investigator's comments. The answers were of varying length; some of them were very long and elaborate; others very short and to the point. Reviewing the answers revealed some shocking results. Almost all of the students had given satisfactory responses to the first three questions, but I can dare say none of them had provided theoretically based answers to the last two questions. Most of the things they had written about these two questions were based on their own hunches and personal experience. Below I will quote some of the answers given to the questions they were asked to reply.

Shaghayegh Vahabi, a young trainee teacher, in response to the first question writes:

I think we can not choose a method as the best one

1. In your opinion, what is the best method of language teaching?
2. What are the characteristics of an effective teacher?
3. In order to generate talk in class, what sort of questioning techniques and what sort of questions do you employ?
4. Imagine you are going to teach a language function, say “how to make a polite request” to a group of adult learners. Please, discuss in depth how you would plan a lesson to teach this function.
5. Imagine you are going to teach a tense, say present perfect tense to a group of adult learners. Please, discuss in depth how you would plan a lesson to teach this language form.

There is a theoretical basis behind each of the above questions. However, it should be mentioned that, obviously enough, these questions are not and can not be an exhaustive list of important issues that a teacher should necessarily know. Achieving such a comprehensive knowledge would require a reliable as well as a valid questionnaire. Due to the qualitative nature of my study, I collected my data in written discourse.

But what about the theoretical justification of these questions? The first question was raised in order to see how well these trainees are aware of the current thinking that in language teaching we are now in a post-method condition (Richards 1990, Prabhu 1990, Kumaravadivelu 1994). In other words, I wanted to see, in their philosophy of language teaching how much a teacher should be “method independent”.

different questions dealing with different areas of language teaching. It should be mentioned that these questions had been made prior to my visits to these classes. In other words, in designing these questions I had no knowledge of what topics students would cover in their methodology class. I had intended to have them answer these questions at the end of the first term, when they were expected to finish their textbook. However, since four chapters of this book were postponed to be covered in the second term, I also waited for a few more weeks and then collected my written data.

As mentioned earlier, in the second term students attended the methodology course four hours each week. The reason why they did so, as Dr. Borzabadi told me, was clear. In the second half of this term students were expected to have teaching demonstrations, so they naturally would need more time. In this second term the following materials were covered:

- Chapters 7 through 10 of their previous textbook.
- Chapters 16 through 19 of H. Douglas Brown's recent book *Teaching by Principles*, 2nd edition.

These four chapters inform students on the methodology for teaching the four language skills.

At the end of the eighth session of the second term, I had the teacher of the course distribute the following five questions among the students. I did so because I wanted them to think it was an assignment from their teacher, so they would answer them as seriously as they could. The questions are as follows:

a methodology class is similar to what Hess and Ghawi (1997) report in their EAP methodology course.

- From time to time, the teacher had the students relate the materials they had studied to their previous experiences about language learning. This process of drawing on the previous experience of trainee teachers is highly recommended by Freeman and Johnson (1998) and Golombek (1998).

- The teacher often asked the students to freely talk about their beliefs about language learning and teaching. Any time there was a wrong belief, the teacher would patiently try to convince the students that they held wrong beliefs. For instance, in one session there was a discussion on why too much repetition is a useless activity. Many students believed it was a valuable activity; however, the teacher at last persuaded them that it was not. This is very much similar to what Peacock (2001) strongly advises. That is, the false beliefs of trainee teachers is a great barrier to their subsequent professional practice, so they should be eradicated as soon as possible.

The above points represent the gist of my observations from the methodology class. Many of the techniques that the teacher used were in line with current beliefs and practices in modern teacher training programs according to the literature of the field.

So far I have partially provided an answer to the research question of this study. To complete my answer, and to examine the theoretical knowledge of the participants of the course, I tested them on five

Chapter 8: Drill Types in Language Teaching Textbooks

Chapter 9: Effective Classroom Activities

Chapter 10: An Introduction to Language Testing

Due to the high intensity of information in each of these chapters, in the first term only the first six chapters were covered. Chapters seven through ten were assigned for the second term.

Now, in this part of the paper, I wish to talk about the result of my observations in this methodology course. The following points epitomize what regularly happened in each class.

- The classes started and finished on time.
- The participants of the course, 7 girls and 6 boys, were all young people with an average age of 22.
- Students would sit in comfortable chairs in a semicircle.
- In the beginning of each class, one of the students was called on to come to the board and begin to present a brief summary of the assigned material. It should be mentioned here that students' accuracy of speech was highly emphasized in this part. At the end of each presentation, the teacher reminded the student of his/her mispronunciations, or grammatical errors.
- After this presentation, the teacher asked the class some thought-provoking questions about the content of the article, and in this way discussion would start in the class. In these discussions, the teacher mostly had the role of an organizer. He did his best not to talk very much. Instead, he encouraged the students to express their opinions in a stress-free atmosphere. This way of conducting

these classes for 4 hours a week. This methodology course was both designed and taught by a well-qualified teacher and a faculty member of College of Foreign Languages at Tehran University, Dr. Davood Borzabadi Farahani. Holding a Ph.D. in TEFL, he was very well informed about the topics he was teaching. So to begin with, students were enjoying a highly educated teacher. The material that was taught in this course was a collection of articles by well-known authorities in the field of foreign/second language teaching. These articles were bound in the form of a well-designed textbook called *Basic Issues in Language Teaching*. This book consists of ten chapters, each of which including two or three articles. As I was informed by the course instructor at the beginning of the program, they were determined to cover one chapter in each session, so that the whole book would be finished in one term. Then in the second term, they would focus on practical teaching. At the end of the term, however, it was found that this had been an ambitious goal. So part of this book was postponed to be taught in the second term.

The topics which are covered in this textbook are as follows:

Chapter 1: The Nature of Language Teaching Methods

Chapter 2: An Overview of Language Teaching Methods

Chapter 3: Evaluation of Language Teaching Methods

Chapter 4: Characteristics of a Good Language Teacher

Chapter 5: Classroom Management

Chapter 6: Learner Variables

Chapter 7: Lesson Planning

teacher education lies in the very important fact that it encourages teachers to do classroom research and solve their problems. I will come back to the issue of reflective teaching and classroom research later when I am discussing the merits and demerits of the ILI teacher education program.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were the previously mentioned 13 student teachers who had signed up for this teacher education course. Besides these 13 students, there was also the teacher of the methodology course, Dr. Davood Borzabadi Farahani, who provided me with an invaluable source of information to do this research.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred over a period of two months. The sources of the data were my non-participant observations of the methodology class, regular contact and interviews with Dr. Borzabadi, and the answers which the student teachers gave to the questions which were distributed among them. All the answers were given in written form.

The Methodology Course

In this part of the paper, I would like to talk about the methodology course of the ILI teacher education program. Previously, it was mentioned that in the first term students attend this course for 2 hours a week, but in the second term it becomes double, i.e. they attend

sense of autonomy, with its own knowledge base, paradigms, and research agenda” (p. 3).

Similarly, Freeman and Johnson (1998) criticize this model of teacher training by arguing that “teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills; they are individuals who enter teacher education programs with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms” (p. 401). In Freeman and Johnson’s opinion, even novice teachers are clever people who have a lot of previous experience about language learning, so it is the purpose of any teacher education program to draw on this rich, dormant pool of beliefs and experiences.

Breen *et al* (1989:117) criticize this model of teacher preparation by referring to it as transmission model, i.e. a model by which theoretical knowledge is transferred to the learners in a passive way. It is this passivity of trainees which is very much criticized by Breen *et al*.

Having mentioned some of the criticisms of the applied science model of teacher education, I think it is time to talk about some of the advantages of the third model, i.e. the reflective model. According to Nunan (1989a) this approach to teacher education is a highly praised one because it encourages teachers to develop skills in observing, analysing and critiquing their own classrooms and their own practices. “With appropriate support, they can use the skills and knowledge acquired as a springboard for conducting their own classroom-oriented research” (p. 99). So as we see the value of this reflective model of

methodology, applied to classroom practice. Many university- and college-based teacher-training courses are based, explicitly or implicitly, on this idea of teacher learning.

3. The reflective model

The trainee teaches or observes lessons, or recalls past experience; then reflects, alone or in discussion with others, in order to work out theories about teaching; then tries these out again in practice. Such a cycle aims for continuous improvement and the development of personal theories of action. This model is used by teacher development groups and in some recently designed training courses.

In recent years, it is the third model which has gained a lot of popularity. The first model is now out of the place because it does not have any theoretical base. It regards teaching as a craft which could be learned through patient practice. This model, at best, provides us with well trained teachers, and, of course, it was previously argued that we should move beyond the level of training.

The second model, i.e. the applied science model also is not very much popular nowadays. Richards (1990a), for example, argues that “the theoretical basis of the field [language teaching] has moved away from the study of phonetics and grammatical theory – once considered a necessary (and sometimes sufficient) basis to launch a student into a career as a language teacher ... Language teaching has achieved a

Earlier I mentioned that the 1960's and the 1970's were decades when generative transformational linguistics was flourishing, and due to the influence of applied linguistics, it was thought that successful language teachers were those who had studied linguistics, i.e. those who knew a lot about language description (Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens 1964:167). Based on this view, it was assumed that the content of teacher training programs should be filled with information of different linguistic domains: phonology, morphology, syntax, etc. Now before I mention how and why this view was challenged, let me mention something about three major models of teacher training. Ur (1996:5) quoting Wallace (1993) describes these three models as follows:

1. The craft model

The trainee learns from the example of a 'master teacher', whom he/she observes and imitates. Professional action is seen as a craft, rather like shoemaking or carpentry, to be learned most effectively through an apprenticeship system and accumulated experience. This is a traditional method, still used as a substitute for postgraduate teaching courses in some countries.

2. The applied science model

The trainee studies theoretical courses in applied linguistics and other allied subjects, which are then, through the construction of an appropriate

understanding of the nature of job one is doing. That is, an educated person is well aware of *why* he is doing certain things. To understand *why* leads him into theory. In other words, an educated person needs to know the theoretical rationale behind his practice. To illustrate the difference between training and education in a clearer way, let me quote an example* about the difference between a midwife and an obstetrician. A midwife is the typical example of a trained person, while an obstetrician represents an educated figure. The former knows the basic techniques of giving birth to a child without having any theoretical or scientific understanding of what she does. The latter essentially does the same thing, i.e. giving birth to a child; however, there is a world of difference between an obstetrician's practice and that of her trained counterpart. An obstetrician, due to her vast theoretical knowledge, can overcome unexpected problems if they come her way, while a midwife probably cannot.

The same thing is true about teaching in general, and language teaching in particular. An educated teacher, because of his deeper theoretical basis of his practice is in a better position to solve his problems. It is for this reason that Widdowson (1997:121) calls teacher education a *problem oriented* activity.

Now that the difference between these two often interchangeably used terms has become clear, I will proceed with the rest of the discussion concerned with the history of teacher training.

* This example was offered by Dr. J. B. Sadeghian in a class lecture at Allameh Tabatabaee University in 1996.

field are Finocchiaro (1964), Mackey (1965) and Rivers (1964). All these books have something in common: they all have a strong basis of linguistics. This is understandable because in the 1950's and 1960's linguistics had a very strong impact on language teaching. The emergence of applied linguistics, often associated with the science of language teaching (Corder, 1973), was also another factor which gave rise to the development of books and programs which viewed linguistics as an indispensable component of any teacher training course which claimed to have a scientific base. In fact, as Brumfit (1997:164) rightly observes "the increased impact of linguistics [in the 1970's] as a discipline deriving from the influence of transformational generative grammar, together with the attempts of its critics to promote alternative, socially sensitive models of language" had a great influence on the contents of teacher training programs.

Before I go on with the discussion of the history of teacher-training models, I think it would be a good idea to discriminate between two frequently used terms in this respect, i.e. teacher training and teacher education. It is perhaps H. G. Widdowson, the celebrated English scholar, who should be given credit for the distinction between these two terms in the literature of language teaching (Widdowson 1984a, 1984b, 1990, 1997). Widdowson (1984a), for instance, argues that training is "a process whereby a person (or any other animal for that matter) is provided with certain techniques in order to achieve certain objectives" (p. 29). In other words, when we train somebody we tell him *how* to do something. Education, however, involves a deeper

candidates were given a test of English language proficiency (TOEFL). Only those who scored 550 and above were permitted to attend these classes. In the first selection test, there were more than 20 students who had got this minimum of 550; however, only 13 of them signed up for the program. So the first term started with 13 students.

Undoubtedly, it seems that this long program is much better than the short training program which used to be the dominant mode of teacher training at this institute. The designers of this new teacher development program are all of the conviction that this course, due to its strong theoretical foundation, has the characteristics of a teacher *education* program. As I mentioned earlier, the present study is concerned with a qualitative analysis of the theoretical part, i.e. the methodology module of the program. Thus the purpose of this study is to find an answer to the following research question:

To what extent is the content of this teacher education program consistent with current trends of teacher education according to the related literature?

As with any sort of research, before discussing the method of research, it would be a good idea to see what the literature of ELT says about teacher training and teacher education.

Review of Literature

The literature of second and foreign language teaching is abundant with lots of books and articles about teacher training. Many of these books appeared in the early years of the second half of the 20th century. Some of these books now considered to be classics of the

LEVEL 1

Components	Sessions per week	Hours per week
Listening and Speaking	2	4
Reading and Vocabulary	2	4
Grammar	1	2
Methodology	1	2

LEVEL 2

Components	Sessions per week	Hours per week
Listening and Speaking	2	4
Reading and Vocabulary	1	2
Grammar	1	2
Methodology	2	4

As can be seen from the above tables, in each term all language skills are emphasized. This shows that the overall language proficiency of the student teachers is taken a lot into consideration. However, as the purpose of this study is to look into the methodology course of the program, I will not talk about the general language courses. Instead, I will do my best to provide a thorough, qualitative description of the methodology classes. However, before dealing with this issue, there are a couple of points which I would like to mention. The first is concerned with the hours of instruction. In this program each session of instruction really consists of 2 hours of instruction without any break in between. The second point is concerned with how the first group of trainee teachers were admitted into these classes. The

teachers” here should be understood as teachers who are equipped with more theoretical knowledge of what they are practicing. After the formation of this committee, it was decided that the new teacher training program should start from the beginning of fall, 1380. In the next section, I will talk about the contents of this course in detail.

Description of the New Program

This new teacher training program consists of two terms. Each term lasts for 11 weeks. The eleventh week, however, is devoted to the final examinations. In each term students attend the classes three days a week, each day for four hours. This means that each term, they receive 120 hours of instruction. Each term consists of different modules. Students attend both general English courses and a methodology course. The following tables represent the components of each level.

and thus can not teach English in any other way. The roots of this problem, i.e. lack of creativity and flexibility among ILI teachers, as many people have argued, originate in the short intensive T.T.C. programs which are designed for the novice teachers. Having taught at this institute for some eight years, I am quite familiar with what goes on in these short training classes. These classes usually last for some four or five days. In the first two days, trainee teachers get acquainted with the method of teaching vocabulary, grammar, dialogs, and reading comprehension texts at the ILI. In the next two or three days, they are asked to have a teaching demonstration based on the materials which they receive. To be evaluated as an eligible teacher, the participants of the course should do their best to stick to the methodology that they have been told to follow. This way of training teachers indeed leaves no place for showing creativity. Teachers in this way are viewed as machines which are programmed to transfer some previously selected packages of knowledge to the students. The teachers in this short training programs would receive no theoretical information on *why* they should teach like this. They are just provided with some knowledge on *how* they should teach certain items. This view of training teachers has been dominant at this institute for some two decades. Recently, and according to some new managerial decisions, it was decided that this way of training teachers should undergo a serious change. As a result, a committee of some highly educated and well experienced teachers of this institute was formed in order to find newer ways of developing better teachers. "Better

An Evaluation of the First Teacher Education Program at the Iran Language Institute

Sasan Baleghizadeh

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to report on a qualitative study of the first teacher education program at the Iran Language Institute. The whole program is divided into two terms, each term consisting of 120 hours of instruction. The program covers both language courses as well as a methodology course. The purpose of this study is to look into the nature of the theoretical basis of the methodology course. The data for this study was gathered through observation of the methodology course, interview with the course instructor and written answers to some questions given by the participants of the study. After commenting on certain strong points of the whole program, the writer suggests that informing the participants of the concept of reflective teaching would make a great improvement in methodology course of this program.

Introduction

As a celebrated language teaching center, the Iran Language Institute (ILI) has often been proud of its well qualified teachers. The teachers who teach at this institute are usually screened through a challenging language proficiency test, followed by a demanding interview. After that they are required to have a short teaching demonstration, which is usually evaluated by a panel of experienced teachers. The teachers who start teaching after passing these exams are not left alone. Each term their classes are observed by senior teachers who then provide them with guidance and assistance in necessary areas. Despite this systematic way of selecting teachers, the Iran Language Institute has often been criticized on the grounds that its teachers, due to the mechanical procedure of teaching there, do not have much creativity,