

## Prospective English Teachers' Teaching Practices in Primary Education

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**ABSTRACT** The aim of this paper is to determine the opinions of prospective English teachers related to their teaching practices and observations in primary education about English language teaching. In this study, a qualitative research method was used. The study group consisted of 30 prospective teachers attending the "English Teaching Certificate Program" and taking a "Teaching Practice" course at a state university in Ankara. To collect data, semi-structured interviews were used in focus group discussions made up of 6-7 students. These semi-structured interviews included two dimensions: one to understand the observations and experiences of prospective teachers, and one to determine the opinions of prospective teachers about teaching English in primary education. The data obtained via the interviews were analyzed through descriptive analysis. As a result, prospective teachers generally stated positive views on teaching practices and made some suggestions regarding the improvement of the quality of teaching.

### INTRODUCTION

Becoming a teacher is a process in which theory and practice intermingle with each other and in which development is required in terms of several aspects. The general aim of teaching practices is to help prospective teachers use the content, culture, general knowledge, and the information, skills, attitudes, values, and habits they gained during training, effectively, efficiently, and safely in their teaching environment and to contribute to their individual and professional development (Hacioglu and Alkan 1995). Problems experienced in integrating theory and practice are increasing the importance given to Teaching Practice courses day by day. Parallel to this, the responsibility given to the practice teacher is increasing. In the Teaching Practice course, prospective teachers are expected to

develop their teaching skills, understand the curriculum in their fields, use and evaluate course-books and other tools, develop extra materials, measure and assess student achievement, and finally share their studies with the practice teacher, practice course instructor, and their peers, and improve themselves (Saricoban 2008).

The Teaching Practice course is designed to make prospective teachers use and develop the knowledge and skills acquired in the school environment. It is an important period in which they have their first experiences that will benefit them all through their professional lives (YOK 1998). It is essential for prospective teachers to make practices together with teachers and students at schools while preparing for full-time teaching positions. In other words, it is important to have prospective teachers acquire teaching experience through "School Experience" and "Teaching Practice" courses (Unluonen and Boylu 2007; Cited by Secer et al. 2010). Teaching Practice gives prospective teachers the chance to participate in school life extensively for one semester (Cicek and Ince 2005). During the Teaching Practice course, the prospective teacher tries to prepare for the role of the teacher he is going to become (Gurses et al. 2005).

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Beliefs can shape the learning process and the outcomes of teaching, which makes them a valuable research focus to investigate (Cephe and Yalcin 2015). Teaching is a profession that requires constant revision in order to keep up with changing societal circumstances. In an age where information is the most significant form of capital, people have easy access to information of all kinds in all fields, and teachers and schools are not the only sources of information (Nayir and Cinkir 2015).

It is seen that in the studies related to teaching practice in Turkey, the ideas of prospective teachers, practice teachers, and school administrators (Simsek et al. 2013) and, in a few studies, instructors (Arslantas and Yildiz 2013) are reflected. Studies have been conducted with Mathematics (Eraslan 2008; Koroglu et al. 2000), Science (Basturk 2009), Primary School (Yapici and Yapici 2004), Preschool (Duman 2013), and German (Cetintas and Genc 2005) prospective teachers. Some studies involve a "School Experience" course. For example, in their studies restricted to the "School Experience I" course, Genc et al. (2001) have evaluated specific activities taking place in the Faculty-School Collaboration Guidebook in terms of their appropriateness for German Language Education prospective teachers, and presented their recommendations.

When foreign literature is examined, it is seen that the importance of teaching practice regarding teachers' behaviours and attitudes toward the profession and their effects are reflected. Hubbal et al. (2005) examined an eight-week certificate programme related to teaching and learning in higher education and determined to what extent theoretical knowledge educators practised reflective activities. McCluskey (2009) conducted a study covering the preparation of prospective teachers whose mother tongue is not English for a learning environment in which English is the language of teaching in multicultural Australia. In their study about prospective Science teachers maintaining their attitudes towards teaching after graduation, Richards et al. (2011) emphasized that prospective teachers should be supported during both their education and professional lives. Hudson (2012), on the other hand, stated that, in their first years at work, teachers need more support to get to know the learning environment and culture at a school, and experienced teachers are important role models. Izadinia (2012) gave voice to similar ideas about

prospective teachers and teacher trainers and their roles in teaching English. Salleh and Tan (2013) studied the effects and results of teacher mentoring activities in Shanghai regarding novice teachers and experienced teachers. Cameron and Campbell (2013) conducted a study related to the observations and discussions of prospective and experienced teachers on learning designs, teaching methods, and activities during prospective teachers' visits to schools. Duarte (2013) examined the terms of "good teaching" and "good teacher" in higher education, and concluded that novice teachers used constructivist principles in their teaching practices and expressed its positive effects on teaching activities.

Furthermore, Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) is a rapidly growing field around the world, and English education is increasingly found at the primary levels. However, starting earlier does not necessarily produce better English speakers (Shin 2007). Therefore, the subject of how English teachers can best teach English at such an early age and which teaching principles and methods should be used gain importance. From the beginnings of the 2000s, curricula restructuring and educational reform have been put into practice in terms of teaching English as a second language to young learners (Bayyurt 2006, 2010, 2012; Bayyurt and Alptekin 2000; Enever 2011; Garton et al. 2011; Haznedar 2012; Kirkgoz 2007, 2008; Lopriore 2002; Nikolov and Curtain 2000; Cited by Bayyurt 2014). However, research in Turkey on young learners' learning of English as a foreign language (hereafter EFL) is scarce, especially when the nature of classroom tasks and procedures used in Turkish primary schools are considered (Arikan 2015). Some basic reasons for the increase of importance in teaching a foreign language to young learners are children's natural inclination to learn a foreign language, the need to create intercultural awareness, international foreign language teaching policies, and the educational advantages of learning a foreign language at an early age (Sad 2011). In addition, Cameron (2003) suggests that teachers who are to teach English to young learners should have some characteristics, like knowing the way children think and learn and what their interests are, and be fully equipped to teach a foreign language. Thus, while teaching English to young learners should be dealt with carefully, how the teachers should practice teaching effectively must also be taken into consideration.

Therefore, if proper training for teachers is successful, pre-service teacher training curricula should be dealt with and conducted scientifically. For this reason, it is considered necessary to determine prospective teachers' perceptions and experiences during their teaching practices as part of the pre-service teacher training and to reflect their impressions and evaluations related to their observations at schools.

### **Aim of the Study**

The aim of this paper is to determine prospective English teachers' perceptions about English language education at primary schools and their experiences and impressions related to teaching practice. In this paper, the positive and negative sides of prospective teachers' experiences are presented. The perceptions of prospective teachers related to school environment and administration, and these teachers' observations in the classroom are given in the study, as it can be useful to display the quality of English language education at primary and secondary schools through the eyes of prospective teachers. Therefore, the study's sub-problems are:

What are the prospective English teachers' experiences and observations related to:

1. teaching practice?
2. the quality of teaching in primary school English lessons?

### **METHODOLOGY**

In the study, in order to present the detailed descriptions and patterns, a qualitative research technique has been used. Qualitative research is research in which data collection methods like observation, interviews, and document analysis are used and events are put forth in their natural environment in a realistic and integrated way (Merriam 1998; Yildirim and Simsek 2013).

#### **Study Group**

The study group involved 30 prospective teachers studying at a state university in Ankara, attending the English Language Teaching Certificate Programme and taking a "Teaching Practice" course. In qualitative studies, participants are determined by purposeful sampling (Creswell 2005). Among the study's sampling methods, the criterion sampling method was

used. Purposeful sampling increases the appropriateness of the information taken from a small sample group. In other words, the participants selected for the study are the people to give information about the phenomenon the researcher wants to discover. In criterion sampling, the units fulfilling the criteria (objects, events etc.) determined for the sampling are included in the sample (Buyukozturk et al. 2012). In this sense, two basic criteria have been taken into consideration while selecting the participants: prospective teachers' ability to graduate by taking all the theoretical and practical courses related to initial teacher training, and taking part in the study voluntarily. Participants study in the departments of English Linguistics, English Language and Literature, American Culture and Literature, and Translation and Interpreting. The average age of the participants was 21, and 23 of the participants were female and 7 were male. The prospective teachers observed 30 hours of English lessons (4<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> grades) at a state primary and secondary school in Ankara, and had taught English for 2 hours. The main anxiety about the teaching practice course process is that the prospective teacher completes this process by depending on the feedback of only the instructor and one practice teacher, and by observing just one age group (Richardson-Koehler 1988; cited by Duman 2013). For this reason, prospective teachers have had the chance to observe all the teachers working at school. The practice teachers (n=3) have 10 or more years of teaching experience.

#### **Data Collection Tool**

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from the prospective teachers in groups of 6-7 and these focus group discussions took approximately 30 minutes. In the semi-structured interviews, prospective teachers were asked questions in two dimensions. Some were related to their observations and experiences during teaching practice, and some were about their ideas regarding teaching English at a primary school level. Having been prepared, the interview questions were presented to three curriculum specialists, two practice teachers, and two instructors giving the teaching practice course to check the questions' clarity and appropriateness for the study. In light of the experts' ideas, necessary changes were made and a pilot study was conducted with five prospective teachers.

The interviews in which the researcher prepared the questions in advance but questions can be reorganised, providing flexibility, discussion, and control for the interviewer, and providing comparable information, are called semi-structured interviews. In a semi-structured interview, the researcher can prepare the questions to be asked to the interviewee beforehand, but if he feels the need he can ask new questions and therefore can combine fixed alternative answering and instensifying (Fraenkel and Wallen 1993; Ekiz 2009; Mil 2007; Buyukozturk et al. 2012).

### Data Analysis

In order to find answers to the research questions, the findings obtained were analysed via descriptive analysis. In descriptive analysis, the data are described systematically and clearly according to the themes determined. These descriptions are then explained and interpreted, and the cause and effect relationships among them are examined and the results are presented (Yildirim and Simsek 2013). For this purpose, with the interview questions the frame of data analysis has been formed, the data obtained via the themes have been chosen as sub-themes, those have been defined and gathered in a meaningful and logical way. To determine the reliability of the themes, the interviews were computerised and the printout and themes were given to an expert for evaluation. For the reliability calculation, conformation percent was calculated to be:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{Agreement}}{\text{Agreement} + \text{Disagreement}}$$

At the end of this process, reliability was found to be .92. How frequently each theme is repeated was calculated and frequency tables were prepared. These were also supported by direct quotations from the opinions of the participants. The findings supported by the opinions of the participants were explained and the findings were associated with one another. Finally, the findings were integrated with literature and presented parallel to the themes.

To increase the internal validity in the study (Buyukozturk et al. 2012), the findings obtained through the data collected were checked by two experts to see whether they were categorised correctly and the inconsistent data were left out of the content of the study. To support the findings, quotations from the students' answers were given. To increase the external validity, which is the generalizability of the results, the ways that the study was conducted, the data was collect-

ed, and the data was analysed were all presented in detail. So as to increase the internal reliability, the interviews made by the prospective teachers were recorded with a recorder. In addition, to increase the external reliability of the data collection tool, the data obtained and the findings were presented to an expert and the necessary organisation was made.

## RESULTS

### Findings Related to Teaching Practice

#### *Experiences and Observations Related to the Practice School*

In the light of the findings, it can be said that the prospective teachers expressed their positive opinions (n=16, 53.3%) about the practice school and the practice teacher in general. In addition to this, prospective teachers stated that their professional expectations were satisfied (n=5, 16.6%) and that this process strengthened their self-sufficiency (n=1, 3.3%). On the other hand, some prospective teachers emphasized that they wanted to have more hours of lessons to teach English (n=4, 13.3%). The situations in which prospective teachers expressed their negative opinions about the practice course and the quality of teaching were the crowdedness of the classrooms (n=2, 6.6%), the physical condition of the school (n=2, 6.6%), and the lack of technological equipment (n=1, 3.3%). It is seen that the prospective teachers have positive opinions about teaching practices, and they have taken pleasure in this process; however, they expect to take on a more active role in teaching. Here are some examples from the answers given by prospective teachers to this question:

*"I wish I could teach in more lessons. I think some of the observation hours can be added to practice"* (P.T.1).

*"I thought English Language teaching at schools of Ministry of National Education was inadequate but I saw that I was wrong. I think English Language teaching is good enough"* (P.T.13).

#### *Experiences and Observations Related to the Practice Teacher*

Most of the prospective teachers thought the practice teachers were good role models in terms of profession (n=24, 80%), and providing the guidance and feedback that they needed

(n=21, 70%). In addition, some prospective teachers expressed their positive opinions about the teachers who helped them to take active role in teaching (n=7, 23.3%). However, a few prospective teachers expressed their negative opinions about practice teachers regarding guidance (n=2, 6.6%), being prepared for the lesson (n=2, 6.6%), and classroom management (n=2, 6.6%). Thus, it can be said that the practice teachers who guided the prospective teachers are leading, helpful, and qualified. Therefore, it can be inferred from these findings that the main reasons for their positive impressions and experiences are the efficacy of the practice and proficiency of the practice teachers. The answers of some prospective teachers to this question of the study are as follows:

*“My practice teacher was a good model to me because she guided and encouraged me well enough. She was a good role model to me because she had all the characteristics a teacher needs to have. More important than everything, she liked her job and she was hardworking. She was knowledgeable about every topic, tolerant, patient and helpful”* (P.T.6).

*“The practice teacher forced us sometimes. For example, she asked us to teach the students without any preparation. She did this to make us get experience and actively take part in the profession, but we were anxious most of the time as we were not prepared”* (P.T.16).

*“I did not expect such good performance and knowledge from a teacher who only taught primary school students; however, the teacher I observed had improved herself, was totally away from old useless teaching methods, and had a student-centered teaching style. I learned a lot of things from her during that observation period. She helped us all the time, asked whether we had any questions and answered them all. She treated us as if we were real teachers”* (P.T.29).

### ***Educational Attainments Gained by Teaching Practice***

Prospective teachers acquired considerable awareness about the difficulties and responsibilities of the profession in general (n=18, 60%). Besides, prospective teachers emphasized that they enjoyed their jobs more after doing their practice (n=13, 43.3%). The other subjects that the prospective teachers responded to positive-

ly were enjoying working with primary school students (n=5, 16.6%), and learning about the setting where they will work in the future (n=3, 10%). Only one prospective teacher said she realized the difficulties of the profession and she does not think that she is able to cope with these, therefore she thinks negatively about her future job. When these answers are considered, it can be said that teaching practice is of vital importance in terms of developing awareness about the difficulties and problems that teachers may face, and providing a chance for prospective teachers to communicate with students. These all help the prospective teachers to enjoy their profession more. Some prospective teachers have expressed their opinions as:

*“Teaching is always seen as an easy and ideal job. But at the end of my initial training I realised that it is not so, and it has very significant responsibilities. I also realised the big difference between my own teachers at school and practice teachers I observed during teaching practice”* (P.T.1).

*“Teaching practice helped me acquire teaching experience and knowledge. Its most important contribution is perhaps that it showed me my mistakes and made me like the teaching profession more”* (P.T.12).

*“During practice I understood how much I like children and how happy I will be while teaching children in the future. For this reason, my thoughts about the job, which were blurred and complicated before, became clear and changed in the positive way after this process”* (P.T.17).

### **Findings Related To English Language Teaching At Primary School**

#### ***Students’ Affective Characteristics***

Prospective teachers think students are interested in learning English and they have a positive attitude toward the lessons (n=17, 56.6%). Only two prospective teachers stated that students have negative attitudes toward the lessons because of the problems in classroom management and the attitude of the teacher (n=2, 6.6%). On the other hand, some prospective teachers (n=7, 23.3%) emphasized there exists a difference between the attitudes of different age groups (4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades and 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades). The prospective teachers having the opportunity to

spend time together with the students and observe them gives the students a positive attitude toward the lesson. The main reasons for this situation can be defined as the approach of the practice teacher, her efficacy in communication, and teaching activities. Some answers given to this question are:

*"The attitudes of students depended on their class. For example, the lessons in Class 7/A were always enjoyable. However, the number of indifferent students were more in Class 7/C. In this class, the teacher seemed to teach only the middle row. I believe that this situation is related to students' individual interests as well as the class size"* (P.T.6).

*"Students come to English classes more excited than to any other lessons. Their motivation is so good that they raise their hands to answer all the questions"* (P.T.18).

#### **Using L1 During the Lessons**

More than half of the participants stated their positive views on practice teachers' speaking English during the lessons and its positive effects on learning (n=16, 53.3%). On the other hand, some think that the use of L1 is more than necessary, and this affects the attitudes of students in a negative way (n=8, 26.6%). Furthermore, some have said the use of English depends upon different age groups and grades similar to the previous question (n=3, 10%). The prospective teachers emphasized the lessons of the teachers who used the target language, except for some necessary situations, and encouraged students to peak English more effectively. The opinions of some prospective teachers are:

*"In none of the lessons I observed did the teacher use L1 except for some necessary explanations. The teacher directly teaches every topic in English and she speaks English while giving instructions. This is one of the most important reasons why students learn language so fast and efficiently, I think. This makes them become more familiar with the sounds in English. This also helps them practise speaking more in the classroom"* (P.T.18). *"In some of the lessons I observed English was almost not used. The lessons were taught in L1. I am for speaking English in English lessons because in time the students may start understanding what the teacher says and in this way they can use the language in an effective way."* (P.T.21)

#### **The Use of Educational Materials and Communication in the Classroom**

Most of the teachers expressed positive opinions about the coursebooks' appropriateness for students' levels (n=25, 83.3%) and practice teachers' support of the coursebook with various materials and a good learning environment (n=17, 56.6%). In addition, some prospective teachers stated that this learning-teaching environment improved the communication between the teacher and the students (n=12, 40%). The prospective teachers who expressed negative opinions on this topic touched upon the use of the coursebook as the only material (n=8, 26.6%), the coursebook's being boring (n=1, 3.3%), inadequate use of materials (n=2, 6.6%), and problems in teacher-student communication (n=2, 6.6%). As can be seen, most of the prospective teachers think that the levels and the contents of the coursebooks are appropriate for students. Moreover, they find the materials used and prepared by the practice teachers interesting. However, some prospective teachers stated that, although the coursebooks are appropriate for students, they should be supported by visual, audio, and audio-visual materials. Some examples of prospective teachers' answers to this question are:

*"The relationship of the teacher with the students was based on respect and this totally reflected into the lesson. When there was an indiscipline she warned the students orally but not in an offensive way"* (P.T.3).

*"There were sometimes problems in the relationship with the students. For example, I remember the practice teacher once asked a student to state his opinion insistently, although he did not know the answer. When the student gave the wrong answer, she got very angry and said: 'you are unbelievable! Did I teach it this way!' I do not think that student will ever want to answer any questions after such a response"* (P.T.8).

*"There were projectors in the classrooms; however, I did not see the teachers use them once. But a number of activities can be done by using them. Lessons can be taught in this way or students can watch cartoons... In this way, lessons can be more enjoyable, the number of students interested in the lesson and their level of achievement can increase"* (P.T. 11).

*"There has been a great change in the coursebooks. In the past there were coursebooks for*

*teaching and practising grammar. Now the coursebooks cover exercises for listening, comprehension, and speaking skills. The coursebooks are prepared for induction through which students can learn grammatical rules themselves from reading passages and sample sentences rather than referring to old learning methods” (P.T.15).*

### **Teaching English**

More than half of the prospective teachers think the practice teachers teach effectively (n=17, 56.6%). Some prospective teachers stated positive opinions about the effective time management of the practice teachers (n=6, 20%). Nonetheless, some prospective teachers expressed they found the practice teachers’ field information (especially vocabulary and pronunciation) inadequate (n=4, 13.3%). In general, prospective teachers had the opportunity to observe the implementation of various teaching methods and techniques and increased their professional attainments. Some of their opinions are:

*“The teacher I have observed is very experienced. With the help of this experience she can easily organise the students. Thus, she has no problems forming a good classroom environment necessary for effective teaching” (P.T. 9).*

*“The teacher uses time management in the most effective way as a characteristic of an experienced teacher. While doing an activity, she did not have any difficulties and it was obvious that she planned that in advance” (P.T. 25).*

### **Suggestions for Increasing the Quality of Teaching in English Lessons**

Most of the teachers made suggestions about the practice teachers’ forming an effective teaching environment and using teaching principles and methods (n=18, 60%), the school administration’s being sensitive to problems (n=19, 63.3%), the attitudes of parents (n=16, 53.3%), and active learning (n=10, 33.3%). In addition to these, giving importance to communication (n=8, 26.6%), the increase of the course hours (n=5, 16.6%), using the target language intensively (n=5, 16.6%), and starting to teach English in the first grade at primary school (n=3, 10%) are the other topics suggested by the prospective teachers. The prospective teachers expressed their opinions on several topics in light of the knowl-

edge they gained during the certificate programme through their observations and experiences. Here are some examples of their opinions:

*“The teacher should motivate the students before the lessons, have a smiling face, be understanding, come to the class prepared, give importance to teaching, use the materials effectively, and use discovery and presentation methods” (P.T.8).*

*“School administrators must make the institution an organised place away from the negative conditions of the environment” (P.T.12).*

*“The most important duty of the parents is to give support to their children. They should be constructive when they fail. In addition, they must make the students feel they are always there and this can increase student achievement” (P.T.18).*

*“Firstly, the use of English in the lessons should be provided and the amount of L1 use should be decreased” (P.T.19).*

## **DISCUSSION**

This study aimed to determine prospective teachers’ experiences and observations related to the quality of teaching in primary school English lessons. The experiences of the prospective teachers change according to the practice teachers’ adequacy and professional skills, and also their attitudes toward the prospective teachers. It was found that the prospective teachers have positive opinions and experiences related to the practice school and the practice teachers. The prospective teachers think positively about the practice teachers’ guiding and supporting them. Mansell (2013) also focused on the importance of observing teaching practice and giving feedback in terms of personal experience.

In relation to this finding, it can be said that the expectations of the prospective teachers were satisfied both during observation and practice, and the practice teachers were good role models for the students. It is also seen that the practice teachers guided the students on how to practice their profession in the future. Parallel to this finding, Bilgin et al. (2008), in their study about prospective teachers studying in different departments, concluded that practice teachers encouraged and helped prospective teachers well enough. On the other hand, the limited criticisms made about the teachers’ field information and practices may lead to the need for in-

service training and guidance for teachers. Mewborn (2001) emphasized the importance of teacher training and dealt with the problems that occur in his study about math teachers in the United States. In terms of the criticisms made about the practice time, Aytacılı (2012) similarly stated that prospective teachers think the number of hours they practise teaching is fewer. Demir (2012) stated that the school experience course was effective, but problems with the instructor, practice teacher, and the process itself need to be resolved.

The prospective teachers stated that their awareness about the responsibilities of their profession has increased, and teaching covers more tasks and responsibilities than they previously thought. In this sense, they reported now respecting their profession more, and their point of view towards the teaching profession changed positively. Another topic about which the prospective teachers expressed their thoughts is getting to know the school environment. Some teachers have said they learned about the environment they will work and how the school works.

In some studies related to the courses of School Experience I and II in literature, there are some findings showing that practice teachers do not know much about the activities (Yildiz 2006), the prospective teachers cannot get enough guidance (Kocaturk 2006; Unlu Saratlı 2007), and therefore teachers were not effective in practising activities.

The prospective teachers indicated that they observed that the students have a positive attitude towards English lessons. In terms of the effectiveness of the learning and teaching processes, the students' engagement plays a very important role (Nayir 2015). According to the findings, students' actual levels of interest and participation in the lesson were above the expected level. Firat (2009) found that children (age 11-12 years) had a positive attitude towards learning English. Similarly, Sad (2011) stated 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students had positive attitudes toward learning English and wanted to know about different cultures. Gest and Rodkin (2011), in their study conducted at the primary school level, found that teaching practices had positive effects on children's attitudes and friendships. Koyonu (2012), in a study on the relationship between children's attitudes toward English lessons and their levels of achievement, stated that the students' attitudes differed according to their

grades. Fourth grade students had more positive attitudes, but this had very little effect on achievement, and the most powerful relationship between the two variables was seen in the eighth grade.

In the light of the findings obtained, it is seen that prospective teachers have found the coursebooks appropriate to the level of students. Therefore it can be said the coursebooks renewed by the Ministry of National Education can meet the students' needs and interests. On the other hand, Demirbulak (2013) indicated that the teachers interviewed found the coursebooks boring, and they had problems doing activities and conveying the necessary messages.

In terms of the practice teachers' speaking only English in the classroom and directing students this way, most of the prospective teachers participated in the study expressed their positive opinions. They emphasized they would also like to do the same in their own classrooms in the future because this helps the students improve their speaking skills significantly. Similarly, Schweers (1999), in his study about using L2 while teaching a foreign language, concluded L1 should only be used in necessary situations and 99 percent of students want the teacher to speak English in the classroom. In addition, a few prospective teachers criticised the overuse of L1 in the classroom. They considered the insistence of students to use L1 and the practice teachers' using L1 when necessary acceptable; however, they evaluated the use of L1 while teaching English negatively. In their study conducted with prospective German teachers, Cetintas and Genc (2005) found an abundant use of L1 in the classroom, and they thought negatively about this situation.

According to the prospective teachers, practice teachers generally make use of educational materials. Moreover, the tendency to use the coursebook as the main source still continues. In language teaching, audio and visual materials make the lesson more attractive to the students, lessen the use of too many words, and provide a natural classroom atmosphere (Demirel 2010). Tok (2010) touched upon the problems that prospective teachers experienced while using materials and concluded that this might have happened because of the inadequate guidance of practice teachers. Korkmaz and Yavuz (2011), emphasized that it was the common idea of the participants that creating a positive teaching environment in

the classroom was necessary. In addition to this, it was important to motivate the students and know their needs.

### CONCLUSION

When the findings of the study are evaluated together, it is seen that the prospective teachers think positively about the teaching environments provided by the practice teachers, despite some shortcomings. They have also made suggestions related to their experiences and observations in order to increase the quality of teaching in English lessons. The practice teachers' being experienced in teaching young learners can be one of the reasons in this situation. More than half of the prospective teachers have found the practice teachers' field information adequate and their attitudes positive.

With the help of the initial teacher training, prospective teachers understood the responsibilities and necessities of their profession. They developed positive attitudes toward their profession as well. In this sense, it can be said that the certificate programme has positive results in meeting the cognitive and affective needs of prospective teachers.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of the study, it is thought that the prospective teachers' practice period should be increased as much as possible. Of course the determining factors in this situation are the circumstances that can help their professional development. The findings obtained in the study are restricted to the practice school in which the prospective teachers had their observations, and the findings demonstrate expected results. However, practice teachers, school administrators, parents, and faculty instructors are not included in the study. Therefore, it could be significant for further studies to refer to the opinions of practice teachers, school administrators, parents, and faculty instructors in order to contribute to the unity of the subject. In this way, a more detailed and deeper portrayal of the situation can be provided.

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