

In the Name of God

The Beneficent, The Merciful



Shahrood University of Technology

English Language Department

M.A. Thesis in Language Teaching

Exploring Teacher Educators' Perceptions of the Methods Course

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January, 2018

Dedication

A special thanks to my family. It is not easy for a man to become a great father and a great human being but you are both; dear mother, you are the most charming, faithful, forgiving and caring person I've ever met. No one will ever know the strength of my love for you, both. After all, you're the only one who knows what my heart sounds like from the inside.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and thanks to my major professor Dr. Seyyed Ali Ostovar-Namaghi, you are a wonderful, boss, professor, leader and friend. When I thought I couldn't do it, you told me that I could. For that, I can never repay you. You are everything one could look for in a good mentor. You groomed us to be sound professionals and made working with you an interesting and memorable experience. I will always be grateful to you for your support and kindness. Thanks for guiding me towards the thesis I made use of all your nice comments. I am also very grateful to the supportive participants of this study for sharing their learning experiences with me. Finally, I wish to thank my kind and supportive family.

تعهد نامه

اینجانب سعید صفارزاده خمکی دانشجوی دوره‌ی کارشناسی ارشد رشته‌ی آموزش زبان انگلیسی دانشکده‌ی مهندسی صنایع و مدیریت دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود نویسنده‌ی پایان نامه‌ی

Exploring Teacher Educators' Perceptions of the Methods Course

- تحت راهنمایی جناب آقای دکتر سید علی استوار نامقی متعهد می‌شوم.
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تاریخ ۱۳۹۶/۱۱/۱۲

امضای دانشجو

مالکیت نتایج و حق نشر

- کلیه‌ی حقوق معنوی این اثر و محصولات آن (مقالات مستخرج، کتاب، برنامه‌های رایانه‌ای، نرم افزارها و تجهیزات ساخته شده) متعلق به دانشگاه صنعتی شاهرود می‌باشد. این مطلب باید به نحو مقتضی در تولیدات علمی مربوطه ذکر شود.
- استفاده از اطلاعات و نتایج موجود در پایان نامه بدون

Abstract

Methods course is one of useful sources through which teacher learners can enrich their language teaching knowledge. The importance of methods course has been ignored by scholars while it really needs to be explored to help the educational system of our country. This study aims at exploring teacher educators' perceptions of the effectiveness of methods course and also uncovering their suggestions for improvement. Initial participants were selected through purposive sampling followed by theoretical sampling based on the principles of grounded theory. Data were gathered through interviews along with memo writings and three main categories were found; pitfalls of the methods course, strengths of the methods course (building student learners' background, providing purposeful methods, acting as a pre-requisite for effective practice), and suggestions for improvement (do it by practice, leaving room for teacher initiatives, taking contextual constraints into account). Taking the findings of this study into account results in improvement in educational system through which both teacher educators and teacher learners make benefit out of it.

Key Words: methods course, teacher educators, teacher learners, grounded theory

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Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1. Overview

By growing English language learners and users around the world, many researchers have been done to explore the knowledge base of foreign language teachers and also the how of preparing foreign language teachers is investigated.

According to Crandall (2000) and Freeman and Johnson (1998), methods courses can be a specific tool of knowledge base for teacher trainers. Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. As Kumaravadivelu (2012) and Wright (2010) state, the main goal of the methods course in teacher education is educating qualified foreign language teachers. . The methods course in teacher education refers to the policies, procedures and provision designed to equip teachers with the knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and skills they require to perform their tasks effectively in the classroom, school community (Wallace, 1991). Teaching methodology involves the use of a wide body of knowledge about the subject being taught, and another set of knowledge about the most effective ways to teach that subject to different kinds of learner; it, therefore, requires teachers to undertake a complex set of tasks every minute (Kleinsasser, 2013). Methodology does not define specific methods, even though much attention is given to the nature and kinds of processes to be followed in a particular procedure or to attain an objective (Kleinsasser, 2013). The importance of these courses cannot be overstated. It is through the methods course that pedagogical content knowledge related to being a foreign language teacher is transmitted or constructed (Grossman, 1990; Grosse, 1993).

Teacher learners may not be aware of the extent to which methods courses can be helpful for them in their future experience of teaching. Actually, any EFL teachers' teaching style is not anything separated from what they have acquired in methods courses during university education. To facilitate the process of knowledge transmission, teachers

should apply appropriate teaching methods that best suit specific objectives and outcomes. In order for teacher learners to be successful in their teaching experience, teacher educators are responsible in conducting the methods courses effectively so that skilled teacher learners are educated from universities.

Methods courses' coordinators are responsible for ensuring effective management of a course and delivery of a coherent and relevant curriculum that aligns teaching, learning and assessment approaches within a strong pedagogical framework. The Course coordinators are also responsible for ensuring that delivery and management of the course follows faculty and university education policies. Therefore, the course coordinators are responsible for success of education system and they have to get aware of the rationale and principles behind methods courses. One of the reliable sources through which the course coordinators can perceive the effectiveness of such courses better is language teachers' opinions towards this course. In other words, since language teachers are practitioners of methods, getting an in-depth understanding of their perceptions towards the extent to which they make use of methods courses in their teaching styles is helpful for both course coordinators and teacher learners.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Identifying the knowledge base of English language teachers is essential so that the strengths and weakness of it can be clarified for methods course coordinators. Unfortunately, the importance of such issue has been ignored by experts in this field. Without clarifying the characteristics of the methods course, teacher educators would not be successful in educating capable teachers. Importantly, to choose the most effective teaching style based on a specific learning course, language teachers should be knowledgeable in terms of principles of different teaching styles. Methods course is one way of enriching teacher learners' knowledge that its different aspects are not explored yet. To benefit from this course, the rationale behind its principles should be clarified for teacher learners so that they can choose the most appropriate methods according to the context they will be engaged in.

Since some teacher learners are not familiar with the rationale behind principles of methods courses and their applications in real context, they cannot have any improvement in their occupation. Such lack of knowledge for teachers in terms of methods' principles can be attributed to inefficient presentation of methods course by the educational system and ignoring its importance. Therefore, different perceptions of the effectiveness of methods courses are needed to be gathered by researchers so that its different characteristics are clarified for both teacher educators and teacher learners.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

To have successful educational system through which knowledgeable language teachers can be educated, this study aims at clarifying the rationale behind the principles of the methods course. To this end, different teacher educators' perceptions of the methods course are going to be explored by asking them to share their experience of teaching methods to teacher learners. Therefore, investigating the pros and cons of the methods course and also ways of improving it, is the main purpose of this study. This study is going to be directed by the following question:

What are teacher educators' perceptions of the methods course in universities and what are their suggestions to make it more effective?

1.4. Limitations of the Study

Language teaching methods courses are employed in every university all over the world. Countries implement such courses in different ways based on their own specific methods and requirements. In addition, language teachers in different countries make use of methods courses in different degrees and have different perceptions of the application and effectiveness of methods courses since their contexts of teaching are totally different due to each country's specific educational policy. The researcher was unable to get accessed to both language teachers and teacher educators in different countries and contexts who have different experiences in terms of methods courses and consequently may have different opinions in this regard. Therefore, many different opinions and suggestions in

terms of the methods course might be missed while the more opinions and suggestions may increase the chance of success in conducting the methods course.

1.5. Delimitations of the Study

To delimit the mentioned limitation, the researcher decided to narrow down the scope of his research and also the study's objectives by only focusing on methods courses employed in Iran education system. To this end, only teacher educators and teacher trainers who have been involved in Iran education system were selected to be interviewed to share their experiences and opinions towards such courses. However, the context of employing methods courses is not identical in universities over Iran and the selected participants may experience different contexts of teaching and learning the methodologies. Therefore, it should be noticed that the presented suggestions and opinions by the participants are only a brief description of the methods course that is mostly related to the context in which they were connected to methods courses. Therefore, many opinions and suggestions are still remained uncovered that will be helpful for teacher educators.

1.6. Ethical Issues

In this study, the researcher provided a long list of possible recruitment strategies and interview questions, as suggested by Charmaz (2006). Through interview, the researcher constantly reminded participants that the current study design is intended to evolve modifications and improvements in educational system. . Each modification was approved without difficulty. As in any ethical study, he ensured that participation was voluntary, that participants could withdraw at any time, and that confidentiality was protected. All responses were anonymized before analysis, and he took particular care not to reveal potentially identifying details of places, practices or practitioners.

Chapter Two:
Review of Related Literature

2.1. Overview

This chapter is broken down into two parts. The first part is going to introduce the teacher education programs at the initial stage. Then, it moves towards discussing different arguments about the role, usefulness, and effectiveness of the methods courses in teacher education programs. The suggested approaches towards teaching the methods course is also presented in the first part that is theoretical perspectives.

Having finished the discussions about different aspects of the methods courses, the second part starts with bringing the ways through which the methods courses affects the teachers' performance and real practice in EFL contexts. Then, several activities and strategies towards teaching the methods courses have been brought through empirical findings.

2.2. Theoretical Perspectives

2.2.1. Teacher Education

As an introduction to teacher education programs, Deniz and Sahin (2006) tried to describe Turkey as a country that has also kept up with the development of teacher training courses. They observed that the government has implemented several educational reforms to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching. Consequently, education faculties were reorganized and restructured to provide the necessary numbers of qualified teachers. Through this restructuring program, Higher Education Council (HEC) attempted to remedy insufficient teaching practice and the incongruity between theory and practice. As a part of this restructuring movement in Turkey, in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice the competence-based model of teacher education was considered as the main part. Thus the importance of practice was highlighted. The renewed TEFL curriculum was put into practice in the 1998–1999 academic years throughout the country with some minor modifications in different universities.

The rationale behind pre-service TEFL programs have been presented by Goker (2006), Grossman et al. (2007), Kerlinger (1977), and Richards and Nunan (1990). According to Grossman et al. (2007), pre-service TEFL programs were re-modified in 2006-2007 academic year. One major orientation was to place more emphasis on teaching methodology and teaching practice while preparing teacher candidates with the knowledge base necessary for teaching a foreign language. This new program dictates that preparation for the teaching profession requires the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the three domains as subject matter training, pedagogy, and general culture. The teaching practice in 2006-2007 teacher education program involved two sessions of school experience during the first and second semesters of the fourth year, however, actual teaching practice is delayed until their final semester. This new curriculum aims at equipping teacher candidates with a variety of techniques and strategies for enabling them to acculturate into their profession (Goker, 2006).

Richards and Nunan (1990) also distinguish between teacher education and teacher training. They define teacher education as "characterized by approaches that involve teachers in developing theories of teaching, understanding the nature of teacher decision making, and strategies for critical self-awareness and self-evaluation" and teacher training as "characterized by approaches that view teacher preparation as familiarizing student teachers with techniques and skills to apply in the classroom"(p.187).

Kerlinger (1977) states that the teacher education curriculum is conventionally classified into research and theory courses on the one hand, and practical teaching courses on the other hand. In his idea, the theory tends to be devalued in the current language teacher education climate that is practical pedagogy where there is a "desire for immediate application of research to general education" (p.180). In a same line, Kagan (1992) believes that student teachers come to their teacher education courses with their pre-set beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning. Several authors also argue that there is a general rule according to which the teachers are conditioned by their previous schooling experiences and tend to teach the way they were taught.

2.2.2. The Methods course in Teacher Education

Strevens (1974) distinguishes an 'information' and a 'theory' component in addition to skills training in his mapping out of the territory of TT/EFL. The former comprises information about education, information about syllabus and materials in the target situation, and information about English language. Under 'theory' which is applicable in all TT/EFL courses, the author means "generalization", "principle" or "abstraction" and providing the "why" of language teaching, connected to the "what" of the information component and the "how" of the skills (p.25).

Regarding the importance of the methods courses, Molebash (2004) considers the methods course, among the courses offered to pre-service teachers, as one of the few opportunities for teacher candidates to view new knowledge through different aspects of their developed prior knowledge about teaching and learning. Therefore, he suggests that a basic objective of a teacher preparation program should be to provide pre-service teachers with appropriate teaching experience. By enabling students to teach and analyze their teaching behavior, peer-teaching can be an invaluable learning experience for prospective teachers, and it might lead to a consequent improvement in their teaching pedagogy. Hashweh (1987) also believes that pre-service program faculty development is necessary to assist instructors of subject matter content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to be able to demonstrate and reflect upon uses of the knowledge in their own teaching. University faculty needs to understand the nature of language teaching methodology in order to facilitate its development in teacher education students.

According to Shulman (1986), the methods course is an effective device to provide student teachers with pedagogical knowledge and subject matter knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge is a type of knowledge that is unique to teachers, and in fact concern what teaching is about. It concerns the manner in which teachers relate their pedagogical knowledge (what they know about teaching) to their subject matter knowledge (what they know about what they teach), in the school context, for the teaching of specific students. It is the integration or the synthesis of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and their subject matter knowledge that comprises pedagogical content knowledge.

Additionally, Widdowson (1979) states that “the first aim assigned to the methodology component is generally that of relating practice to principle, developing an awareness of the rationale of particular procedures and of when they are useful, relating one procedure to another and short-term objectives to long-term goals, and understanding the organization of language courses in terms of ends and means” (p.68). In other words, the methodology component involves talking about EFL apart from the actual doing of it and making explicit the principles underlying a given practice of EFL.

The core of traditional language teacher education has long been the methods course, a course which presents the theoretical rationale and practical implications of language teaching approaches, methods, procedures, and techniques (Celce-Murcia, 1991). Methods courses often discuss the rationale for, and instructional practices reflected in “innovative” methods (e.g., Silent Way, Community Language Learning, Natural Approach, Content-based Language Instruction) as well as “traditional” ones (Grammar-Translation, Audio-Lingual, Communicative), and they often combine this discussion with specific attention to techniques for teaching the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Sometimes specific courses in oral or written skills are provided, and also courses in assessment and evaluation.

Likewise, Richards and Rodgers (2001) consider the adaptation of a new approach or method as a solution to the problem of second language teaching. They see a method as a specific instructional design or system based on particular theory of language and language learning. It contains detailed specifications of content, roles of teachers and learners, and teaching procedures and techniques. The concept of method has been regarded as prescriptive of the teachers’ role as they have to follow the method and apply it precisely according to the rules. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), methods can solve many problems of beginning teachers because many of the basic decisions on the course of teaching have already been made for them. The acceptance of methods depends on their ease or difficulty of introducing them practically since the authors believe that practicality is the key issue. Overall, there is a broad range of methods and approaches which affect

teachers' pedagogical values and beliefs, their understanding of the nature of second language learning, their classroom practices and use of teaching materials.

In addition, Krashen (1983) argues that "When we provide theory, we give them (teachers) the underlying rationale for methodology in general. This permits adaptation for different situations, evaluations of new techniques and evaluations of theory. Without theory, there is no way to distinguish effective teaching procedures from ritual and no way to determine which aspects of methods are helpful and which are not helpful" (p.261). Clark (1987) also states that at the intended level, the methodological approach to language teaching leads to curriculum promotion as it makes the curriculum to be oriented towards particular goals. Specific language teaching methods give a specific value to the education system that incorporates sociopolitical and philosophical thoughts.

Similarly, O'Hanlon (1993) has addressed the theory/ practice dichotomy by positing a distinction between professional theories and personal theories. According to him, professional theories are those that are generated by experts and are generally transmitted from centers of higher learning. Personal theories, on the other hand, are those that teachers develop by interpreting and applying professional theories in practical situations while they are on the job. In reality the expert-generated professional theories are often valued whereas the teacher-generated personal theories are often ignored. A border line has been set between theorists' theory and teachers' theory as well as the borders between theory and practice.

Generally, it has been argued that teachers' personal beliefs and principles concerning their role in the classroom, the nature of effective teaching and learning, the difficulties learners face and how they can be addressed, successful learning activities and the structure of an effective lesson are shaped during teachers' personal development process of teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). So, beliefs and theories concerning these aspects can pave the way for the development of core principles guiding the teachers' plans and decisions (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

2.2.3. Approaches to Present the Methods Course

The goals, values and beliefs teachers hold with regard to the content and process of teaching, beliefs about social context of language, the instructional decisions and practices that teachers employ in teaching, their learning and learners have great impact on teachers' adopted systems (Graves, 2000; Richards & Lockhart, 1996). It is therefore suggested that what teachers do is a reflection of what they know and believe and teacher knowledge and teacher thinking provide the underlying framework which guides the teacher's classroom actions.

As Kumaradivelu (1992) suggests "we cannot prepare teachers to tackle so many unpredictable needs, wants and situations; we can only help them develop a capacity to generate varied and situation specific ideas within a general framework that makes sense in terms of current pedagogical and theoretical knowledge" (p. 41).

In addition, as Brown (1994) and Nunan (1991) state, while few language teacher educators believed that the role of the traditional methods course was to make teacher trainers into methods teachers (methods actors), the counter view argued that prospective teachers should pick and choose from among the techniques described in an eclectic approach. Based on the Nunan and Lamb's (1996) statement, several recent core texts for methods courses concern the role of context and the need to engage prospective and experienced teachers in analyzing their own theories of teaching and learning as they practice, discuss, and reflect upon instructional techniques.

In a parallel manner, Head and Taylor (1997) consider traditional language teacher education programs as a way of categorizing learners based on the variations in language teaching situations and some other variations such as different ages (teaching young children or adults), different levels of proficiency (teaching beginners or advanced learners), different purposes for learning (academic, professional, or general), and different contexts (second or foreign language; intensive or occasional). But these kinds of categorization of the methodology based on different language teaching situations do not provide sufficient preparation for the heterogeneity of learners or contexts that teachers actually encounter. So, the authors believe that a number of activities which make the

teachers' underlying beliefs more explicit and encourage the development of alternative perspectives are needed to be applied in teacher education programs.

Ramani (1987) also argues that the methodology in teacher training courses should aim at effecting changes in teachers' beliefs and should focus on teacher development. According to his argument, this can be achieved through teacher reflectiveness, promotion of critical awareness, active participation in the learning process and shared responsibility in learning (Kennedy, 1993). In addition, Schon (1983) and Ur (1992) believe that professional development results from reflection in action and the binding of theories to action. Such development is best promoted through learner-centered approaches and inductive training methodology.

Moreover, as Bruner (1986) explains, universities have traditionally focused on scientific knowledge which is abstract, decontextualized, and impersonal, but teachers also need access to narrative ways of knowing which relate theory to specific practices in concrete, contextualized, and personal ways. In traditional language teacher education, the recognition of the role that the teacher plays in generating knowledge through teaching experience and reflection was missed and the importance of “what”, “why”, and “how” of relating theories to practice was highly ignored. So, the teachers' reflection and research were also disregarded which had to be considered in order to answer the “what”, “why”, and “how” of relating theories to practice.

In addition, as Davis (1980) says, the methodology component should enable the future teacher to “select his methods, techniques and materials in an informed manner” to be adaptable and innovative (p. 23). The methodology component involves introducing the trainee to EFL approaches which can be handled through both presenting impractical theories and permissive activities. Overall, the methodology component raises the trainee's attitudes and value systems in ways favorable to the EFL approach adopted in the training program.

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

the importance of guiding principles of these methods and their influence on our teaching practices.

Furthermore, Sandholtz (2002) has acknowledged that transmission-based approaches in teaching the methodology has the form of formal lectures, where theory and practice are separated, reduce learners to passive recipients of knowledge and do not promote teacher development through passive participation in the learning process. However, in the idea of Fishman et al. (2003), training courses need to value trainees' knowledge and experience, incorporate these in the act of learning and enhance the possibility of change by exploring context-specific constraints. They also claim that teacher training courses with such an overall orientation will assist teachers in being efficient decision-makers and managers of change. Such courses will assist them in critically evaluating change in their own context and in anticipating problems with interested parties. They will further enable them to do a cost-benefit analysis and decide on the implementation of specific procedure. By the cost-benefit, the authors means the benefits the change is expected to bring and the costs of implementing the change.

In addition, since teachers and teachers in training need to be able to use approaches and methods flexibly and creatively based on their own judgments and experience, training in the techniques and procedures of a specific method is important as it provides them with the confidence, techniques and strategies they will need in a classroom environment (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The authors also assume that as the teacher gains experience and knowledge, he/she will begin to develop an individual approach or method that will reflect the teacher's individual beliefs, values, principles and experiences. They further emphasized that it does not mean that the teachers will dismiss or totally abandon the approach they adopted at the beginning but it will lead to a modification of their adopted approach in order to adjust it to the realities of their particular contexts.

According to Richards (1990), the main reason of calling for teacher preparation programs to create opportunities for prospective teachers to access this knowledge and test theories and principles with actual practice is the growing respect for the situated knowledge of the teacher, the recognition of the teacher as central in the teaching and

learning process, and the crucial roles of the teacher as program and materials developer, needs analyst, decision-maker, problem-solver, and researcher of his or her own classroom. To this end, practical experiences such as observations, internships, apprenticeships, student teaching, or other teaching practice have long been a part of most language teacher education programs.

In a similar direction, Case, Lanier, and Miskel (1986) have based the legitimization of the teaching profession on the assumption that when more research-driven knowledge is provided to teachers, their teaching performance will improve. Teacher education programs generally operate under the assumption that teachers need discrete amounts of knowledge, usually in the form of general theories and methods that are assumed to be applicable to any teaching context. In their view, learning to teach is learning about teaching in one context (the teacher education program), observing and practicing teaching in another context (the practicum), and, eventually, developing effective teaching behaviors in a third context (usually in the first years of teaching). Thus, it was argued that teacher learning moves from on-the-job initiation towards the practices of teaching.

Furthermore, Parrott (1988) suggest that trainees should be exposed to as wide a range of training modalities and procedures as possible, including seminars, workshops, and discussions. This will maximize the effectiveness of their training, and have a profound influence on their eventual classroom practices. Trainees whose methodological knowledge is mainly communicated to them via a lecture mode of presentation are likely to adopt a transmission style of teaching with their own pupils later on, which will not be suited to the task of developing the children's communication skills. By contrast, the experience of diverse activities and procedures in the teacher education classroom will provide an excellent basis for trainees to determine the types of activities and groupings that can be usefully utilized in the ELT classroom.

Murdoch (1994) also believes that a holistic or macro approach is needed to develop not only the teacher's grasp of the theoretical principles underlying particular teaching practices, but also those behaviors and more general attitudes to teaching which are needed to create a positive learning environment. The author considers the ability to deal with the

diverse learning styles of children, as a quality which cannot be directly taught in training, but have to be nurtured through providing opportunities for observation, discussion, and reflection.

Concerning the knowledge system of language education, Johnson (1992) introduces conceptual knowledge as abstract wisdom and perceptual knowledge as practical wisdom. She argues for the focus in teacher education to be on perceptual knowledge because the variations of the classroom is often against the application of a general rule. Woods (1996) also makes a distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge that is more conventionally framed in the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge is knowledge about teaching that is knowledge of subject areas and the 'theory' of education. On the other hand, procedural knowledge is knowledge of how to teach that is knowledge of instructional routines to be used in the classroom.

Likewise, Kincheloe (1993) suggests that teachers should construct their personal theories by testing, interpreting, and judging the usefulness of professional theories proposed by experts. He claims that the professional theories should leave only a narrow space for teachers to function fruitfully as reflective individuals. Indeed, this suggestion leaves very little room for self-conceptualization and self- construction of pedagogic knowledge, because teachers are treated merely as executors of professional theories.

Additionally, Goker (2006) suggests that a way for pre-service teachers to acquire pedagogical knowledge and skills is through examination of their teaching practices and reflecting upon it. According to Kpanja (2001), using a process of micro peer teaching has been considered as an effective technique for transferring theory into practice for pre-service teachers in teacher education programs. Originally, micro-peer teaching was conceptualized and developed to provide teachers an opportunity to assess and improve their teaching skills (Kavanoz & Yuksel, 2010). In the idea of Kavanoz and Yuksel (2010), micro-peer teaching means having students to teach a micro level lesson to their peers in methods courses in order to acquire experience in lesson planning, materials development, presentation and through reflection to gain awareness about their teaching behaviors.

As well, Wallace (1991) proposes a reflective teacher training approach that aims at providing input on two main levels: received knowledge and experiential knowledge, which might be developed by the observation of practice. Wallace (1991) points out that it is essential for teacher training to have a phase during which the students become aware of their experiences as learners and reflect upon their styles and strategies. Furthermore, he argues that various modes of teaching and learning should be integrated in teacher training courses, to raise the trainees' understanding of learning and to provide a rich learning environment which the trainees might use later on in their own teaching. Two important aims of the reflective approach to teacher training are "to empower teachers to manage their own professional development [and] to enable teachers to be more effective partners in innovation" (p.166).

Likewise, Elliott (1991) believes that pedagogy of practicality does not pertain merely to the everyday practice of classroom teaching. It pertains to a much larger issue that has a direct impact on the practice of classroom teaching, namely, the relationship between theory and practice. He has long recognized the harmful effect of the theory/practice dichotomy. He also affirms that theory and practice mutually inform, and together constitute, a dialectical praxis, an affirmation that has recently influenced L2 teaching and teacher education as well.

Correspondingly, Kumaravadivelu (1999) visualizes that a pedagogy of practicality attempts to overcome some of the deficiencies existed in the theory-versus-practice, the dichotomies of the proposed theories by theorists and by teachers by encouraging and enabling teachers themselves to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize. If pedagogic knowledge which is context-based has to emerge from teachers and their practice of everyday teaching, then they need to be assisted in becoming autonomous individuals. This objective cannot be achieved simply by asking teachers to put into practice theories conceived and constructed by others. It can be achieved only by helping teachers develop the knowledge and skill, attitude, and autonomy necessary to construct their own context-sensitive pedagogic knowledge that will make their practice of everyday teaching a worthwhile endeavor.

In a similar approach, Van Manen (1991) expresses that a pedagogy of practicality aims at generating theory of practice by teachers themselves. This claim is implied in a rather simple and straightforward proposition that no theory of practice can be useful and usable unless it is generated through practice. A logical behind this assertion is that if teachers are given adequate tools for exploration, then they can produce such a practical theory in a best situated way. According to Chambers (1990), in the context of deriving a theory of practice, pedagogical knowledge reinforce the reflective capabilities of teachers that enable them to understand and identify problems, analyze and assess information, consider and evaluate alternatives, and then choose the best available alternative, which is then subjected to further critical appraisal. In this sense, a theory of practice is "an ongoing, living, working theory" (p. 13) involving continual reflection and action.

As a suggestion in this regard, Freeman and Cornwell (1993) believe that the collections of "what works" or "new ways" of teaching or educating teachers provide teachers with practical options, but analysis and evaluation of teaching and learning strategies that teachers use in a variety of contexts help bring coherence to the process. Focusing on teachers, their beliefs about teaching, learning, or classroom interaction cause top-down and product-oriented conceptions of language teaching in general, and cause bottom-up, process-oriented descriptions of specific language teaching events in particular.

Generally, Kumaravadivelu (2001) proposes three principles as a product of post method condition, one of which is practicality that concerns enabling and encouraging teachers to theorize from their practice and to practice what they theorize. Ten macro strategies have been derived by the author from theoretical, practical, and experiential knowledge base as the result of the construction of a context-sensitive post method pedagogy. They are (a) maximize learning opportunities, (b) facilitate negotiated interaction, (c) minimize perceptual mismatches, (d) activate intuitive heuristics, (e) foster language awareness, (f) contextualize linguistic input, (g) integrate language skills, (h) promote learner autonomy, (i) ensure social relevance, (j) raise cultural consciousness.

2.3. Empirical Findings

2.3.1. The Methods Course

As long as the practicality and usefulness of the methods courses has been concerned by many scholars, different researchers have been done in this field to prove its effective role. For instance, Dogancay-Aktuna (2005), Freeman and Richards (1996), Hundleby and Breet (1988), MacDonald, Richard, and White (2001), Sandholtz (2002), Widdowson (1987), and Woods (1996) are among the scholars who have investigated the role of the methods courses in teacher education programs, each with their own specific ways and findings. Dogancay-Aktuna (2005) found that the methods courses led to a good starting point for learning to consider students' sociocultural backgrounds in designing and implementing lessons. As trainees analyzed the assumptions behind various approaches to language teaching, their attention was drawn to the fact that methods, activities, and techniques emerged from and expressed underlying theories about the nature of language and language learning as experienced in a particular context, and therefore the methods were not considered to be universal by the trainees. So, this awareness of cross-cultural variation in norms of teaching and learning formed the first step in developing an appropriate methodology in their own teaching experiences.

Similarly, Freeman and Richards (1996) went on to investigate whether there was any change in the beliefs, assumptions and knowledge of student teachers undergoing undergraduate and postgraduate programs in TESOL in a UK university. In other words they aimed at exploring the relationship between theoretical knowledge and teacher behavior in the classroom. They found it difficult to understand that the changes in teacher behavior were a result either of their experience of the classroom, the theoretical input they received during their initial or some combination of these. Also the way teachers behaved in classrooms was possibly affected by the presence of observers or other methods of observation. Overall, they argued that the theoretical knowledge provided on a teacher education program in TESOL caused some changes in the beliefs, assumptions and knowledge of the student teachers on it.

Likewise, Widdowson (1987) attempted to explore the teacher trainers' attitudes towards the methods course. In fact he found that courses were usually praised by participant trainees who completed them with a sense of fulfillment in their ongoing interest for developments in the profession, feelings of renewal and willingness to promote changes in their classroom. Such positive attitudes might stem from the "social and professional intensity of the event" (p.27) as trainees had the opportunity to find themselves in a different setting, away from their everyday routine, with colleagues facing the same problems. In addition, Sandholtz (2002) found that contact with colleagues in this setting provided a supportive network, which gave them the opportunity to discuss problems, share ideas, viewpoints, and experiences. According to his findings, positive attitudes were reinforced by the adoption of the role of the student, which gave teacher trainees the opportunity to view knowledge from a different perspective.

According to the Woods's (1996) research on the effect of SLA theory on student teachers' actions in EFL/ESL classrooms, it was found that that SLA theory actually played a part in the development of the everyday classroom routines of prospective teachers. Therefore, Woods (1996) conceptualized that changes in teachers' belief systems led to changes in their perceptual/procedural systems, which in turn produces outcomes in terms of classroom practice. Woods (1996) also examined the role of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in teacher education. He concluded that while content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge remained important underpinnings of language teacher education, also they were needed as opportunities for prospective teachers to become aware of their own beliefs about effective teaching and learning. Through both the content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, the teachers achieved to opportunities to acquire the ways of thinking (general strategies, personal orientation, and habits of mind) that characterized being a member of the language teaching community. Case studies and teacher narratives, teaching videos, and teacher journals were the employed ways acted as windows into that thinking (Kennedy, 1983).

Correspondingly, MacDonald, Richard, and White (2001) tried to find out whether within the context of the other courses on their B.A. and M.Sc. programs, their course on

SLA research and theory as one area of conceptual/declarative knowledge did have an impact on some of the beliefs, assumptions and knowledge of their student teachers. They observed that the control group who did not take an SLA course did not show any significant changes in their attitudes towards language learning. But, the students who did take the course showed significant changes in their attitudes towards certain issues in language learning. Thus, it seemed that, despite the fact that the students expressed their aversion towards the theoretical approach of the course, the course had some measurable effect on their beliefs and knowledge. Actually, the students were either unaware of, or undervalued, the changes that were taking place which was evident through their comments, both orally and on their course evaluation forms.

Furthermore, Hundleby and Breet (1988) examined two in-service teacher-training courses at the University of Nanjing in the People's Republic of China to explore the extent to which the methodology note books were used by them. The students on these courses were experienced Chinese teachers of English from universities and colleges throughout the country. The employed device was the 'Methodology Notebook'. This was a file compiled by each student during the courses. The notebooks developed into personal and highly individual collections of items related to teaching English as a foreign language. This article illustrated one practical solution to the problem of teacher-training courses in which the emphasis was on language improvement rather than the teaching of methodology. For the trainer, the notebooks provided a unique opportunity to observe that the trainees' awareness was changed based on the wide-ranging possibilities in EFL teaching. It also seemed likely that the notebooks were a useful reminder when meeting resistance to new techniques in trainees' own teaching. As well as this, of course, the notebooks provided an infinitely useful set of resources.

2.3.2. Applied Strategies in the Methods Course

The introduction of the pedagogical knowledge, practical knowledge, and the applicable activities in this regard have been done by Crandall (1994), Crandall (1996), Cullen (1991), Davis (1980), Johnson (1990), Kleinfield (1992), Kumaravadivelu (2001),

Kumaravedivelu (2006), Murdoch (1994), Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis (2008), Richards and Crookes (1988), and Stoyhoff (1999).

Nicolaidis and Mattheoudakis (2008) aimed at presenting the results of a follow-up investigation regarding the effectiveness of short Teacher Training Courses (TTCs) held at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. In other words, they tried to examine the extent to which the knowledge and skills they had acquired were implemented in their classroom. The results indicated that the trainees benefited from the knowledge and ideas acquired in subjects focusing on major language components, such as teaching vocabulary, teaching grammar and teaching pronunciation which was the reflection their need for innovative techniques in basic aspects of their teaching. The findings also indicated that the courses promoted innovative ideas for the production and use of materials beyond what is usually provided by popular textbooks. These were implemented by providing an interactive environment and providing opportunities for application of the knowledge acquired in TTCs through microteaching, classroom observation and teaching, reflection and peer feedback. It was also concluded that innovations and research in teaching methodology were applied and evaluated in the classroom where there was active interaction and cooperation between academics, policy-makers, advisors, mentors, teachers and principals, as well as students. Interaction and cooperation provided opportunities for feedback at different levels, input from the different agents and ultimately resulted in advances in theory as well as practice.

In a slightly different manner, Kumaravadivelu (2001) reviewed several study in the field of practical pedagogy in language teacher education to find different arguments in this regard. The author found that pedagogy of practicality aims at rejecting the artificial dichotomy between theorists who have produced the knowledge of language and teachers who have been the consumers of knowledge. So, it seeks to break such a relationship by enabling and encouraging teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they theorize.

In addition, Kumaravedivelu (2006) found that practicing teachers could design their own micro strategies or classroom activities by using the macro strategies as

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

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

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

Additionally, Johnson (1990) tested several classroom activities adjusted to the level of the trainees in teacher education to see their effects on their development. The activities were related to pedagogic topics provide excellent opportunities for communication practice including the preparation of materials and presentation of them before peers in the training group, practicing language associated with asking students different types of questions and responding to their answers and questions, taking part in

trainee panel discussion and question and answer sessions on teaching particular skills, keeping a diary of training and teaching practice experiences. Such practices usefully consolidated the work carried out in sessions devoted exclusively to language development. The result revealed the conventional distinction in teacher education between linguistic and pedagogic studies, and the practices helped the trainees to develop both their pedagogic and language competencies.

Similarly, Murdoch (1994) did a survey on Sri Lankan teacher trainees' views on language development provision in their institutional training curriculum. The findings showed the activities required the highest levels of creativity, interaction, and production from the trainees as the most highly-ranked activities. In addition, activities which allowed trainees to assume an active and involved role in the teacher education classroom were clearly perceived as beneficial for expanding communicative competence. Teaching skills and techniques were developed by methods that maximized opportunities for students to develop and practice their language skills. Eighty-five per cent of respondents indicated that learning classroom language had a beneficial effect on their teaching performance, and it was clear that familiarity with classroom language and routines maximized the effectiveness of trainees' own language training.

In a similar direction, Kleinfield (1992) engaged some student teachers into some practices including analyses of teacher logs, diaries, or journals; audio or video recordings of teaching; interviews; and teacher narratives or case studies of teacher practice to explore their effects on the teachers' experience of teaching. The author observed that such activities acted as ways of tapping into teachers' knowledge and helping teachers to make explicit their own beliefs about teaching have been proposed. Teaching case studies and stories provided a means of bridging theory and practice and demonstrating the complexity of teaching as a profession. These activities provided contextualized portraits of the many factors which influenced teacher decision making and behavior in the classroom.

In a parallel, Davis (1980) tested some teaching-and-learning vehicles for the knowledge element in the methods course include reading, films or video, lectures, Socratic lectures, workshops and seminars, and various forms of discovery procedure. He observed

that more than one mode were used in the same session, and different topics were reverted to different modes systematically for a different type of treatment which was the evident of adopting cyclical course design in the methods course.

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

As a counterpart to the previous findings, Nunan and Lamb (1996) did a study to find how ideas introduced in a short teacher training course were implemented by participating teachers a year after the course was run. They conducted interviews and classroom observations and reported that many of the practical ideas presented in the course were not put in practice as anticipated by the trainers. They observed that presented practical ideas during the training courses were confused, adapted, or rejected as the result of the teachers' own beliefs concerning teaching and learning. Indeed the results indicated that very limited changes had been implemented as a result of the course. Therefore, they argued that for long-term change to be implemented, the teacher training courses should place emphasis on teacher's beliefs. To this end, he proposed the use of awareness-raising activities and the active participation of the trainees in such courses aiming to formulate a framework for change in their own teaching context.

2.4. Summary of the Empirical Findings

Different aspects of the methods courses in teacher education programs have been discovered by several studies. The methods courses have been regarded as useful tool of providing student teachers with rich theories and pedagogical knowledge. The usefulness and effectiveness of the methods courses have been the main concern of many scholars so

that it caused them to find the effect of the methods courses on future beliefs and practices of the student teachers (Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Hundleby & Breet, 1988; MacDonald, Richard, & White, 2001; Widdowson, 1987, Woods, 1996; Sandholtz, 2002; Kennedy, 1983). The authors could, to a large extent, prove that the methods course have had a relative positive effect on student teachers' manner of implementation of the methods in their own teaching experiences.

To narrow down the aspects of the methods courses in the teacher education programs, some other scholars tried to find the techniques and approaches attributed to the "how" of teaching the methods courses (Crandall, 1994; Crandall, 1996; Cullen, 1991; Davis, 1979; Johnson, 1990; Johnson, 1996a; Kleinfield, 1992; Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Kumaravedivelu, 2006; Murdoch, 1994; Nicolaidis & Mattheoudakis, 2008; Richards & Crookes, 1988; Stoyhoff, 1999). They investigated several practical activities to be employed by teacher educators of the methods courses such as workshop, role play teaching, observing other EFL/ESL classrooms, watching related videos, and so on. These authors got to a same conclusion that is directing the methods courses through the found strategies and approaches would lead to high development of the teacher learners' skill of teaching.

2.5. Statement of the Gap

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

Chapter Three:

Methodology

3.1. Overview

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

3.2. Grounded Theory Research Method

Among the different qualitative approaches that may be relied upon in family theorizing, grounded theory methods (GTM) developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss are the most popular. Glaser and Strauss co-founded grounded theory in the 1960s, and this was followed by the first publication they co-authored titled *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Soon after this publication the two scholars then differed on the usage of grounded theory and ceased to publish together on this methodology (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987). The difference between the two concerns the verification. Strauss and Corbin (1990) who are for verification argue that grounded theory analysis is more verification than what Glaser and Strauss had suggested in their original work together. Their perspective on verification is that researchers should continuously examine the data, and should be an on-going process throughout the study. However, Glaser (1992) argues grounded theory is not verification and that it is only after the development of theory that researchers can verify.

Grounded theory is a general methodology, a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The GT approach is so named because its ultimate aim is to produce innovative theory that is “grounded” in data collected from participants on the basis of the complexities of their lived experiences in a social context. Theory is derived inductively through an iterative, concurrent process of data collection, coding, conceptualizing, and theorizing, wherein new data are constantly compared to emerging concepts until no new themes, categories, or relationships are being discovered, at which point the properties of, and relationships among, constructs are specified in the

form of a substantive theory about the social behavior under investigation (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Rennie (1998) maintains that a significant strength of this approach is that it enables researchers to use data to develop theory rather than to test it.

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

According to Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010), the goal of this methodology “is to inductively build a theory about a practice or phenomenon using interviews and observation as the primary data collection tools” (p. 463). Punch (2001) refers to grounded theory as a research strategy aimed at generating theory from data, while Mansourian (2006) describes it as “inductive, contextual and processual” (p. 397). Wiersma and Jurs (2005) emphasise that “if a theory develops based on the data, we have “grounded theory,” that is, a theory grounded in the data rather than based on some a priori constructed ideas, notions, or system” (p. 14). Generally speaking, grounded theory is an approach for looking systematically at (mostly) qualitative data (like transcripts of interviews or protocols of observations) aiming at the generation of theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). There are some elements of grounded theory in which Glaser and Strauss still agree. These include theoretical sensitivity, theoretical sampling, the coding process, constant comparative analysis, and theoretical memoing which are considered fundamental grounded theory elements that contribute to objectivity (Rennie, 1998). The first element is theoretical sensitive coding, that is, generating theoretical strong concepts from the data to explain the phenomenon researched. The second element is theoretical sampling, that is, deciding whom to interview or what to observe next according to the state of theory generation, and that implies starting data analysis with the first interview, and writing down memos and

hypotheses early. And the final one is the need to compare between phenomena and contexts to make the theory strong.

According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), theoretical sensitivity is about “having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t” (p. 41). Unlike Glaser, Corbin and Strauss (1990) argue that theoretical sensitivity is derived from a number of sources. One such source is the reading of literature for researchers to be familiar with publications that would provide them with a rich background of information that would sensitize them to what is happening with the phenomenon of study. Other important sources of sensitivity rejected by Glaser but recognized by Strauss and Corbin (1990) are the professional and personal experience of researchers.

According to experts in this field, important concepts of grounded theory method are categories, codes and coding. The research principle behind grounded theory method is neither inductive nor deductive, but a combination of both. This leads to a research practice where data sampling, data analysis and theory development are not seen as distinct and disjoint, but as different steps to be repeated until one can describe and explain the phenomenon that is to be researched. This stopping point is reached when new data does not change the emerging theory anymore (Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

3.3. Sampling Procedure

3.3.1. Purposive Sampling

Grounded theory studies are characterized by theoretical sampling, but this requires some data to be collected and analyzed. According to Patton (2002), sampling must thus begin purposively, as in any qualitative study. Purposive sampling (also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling) is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study. Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited

resources. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Clark, 2007). According to Oppong (2013), purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when “elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, which will result in saving time and money” (p. 206). Therefore, in purposive sampling personal judgment needs to be used to choose cases that help answer research questions or achieve research objectives.

Six categories of purposive sampling were proposed by Oppong (2013). The first was typical case that explains cases that are average and normal. Second is *extreme or deviant case* that concerns deriving samples from cases that are perceived as unusual or rare such as exploring the reasons for corporate failure by interviewing executives that have been fired by shareholders. Then there is critical case sampling focuses on specific cases that are dramatic or very important. The next category is heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling relies on researcher’s judgment to select participants with diverse characteristics. This is done to ensure the presence of maximum variability within the primary data. The fifth one is homogeneous sampling that “focuses on one particular subgroup in which all the sample members are similar, such as a particular occupation or level in an organization’s hierarchy” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). The last category concerns theoretical sampling that is a special case of purposive sampling and is based on an inductive method of Grounded Theory.

3.3.2. Theoretical Sampling

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

According to Sandelowski (1995), although theoretical sampling is often misconstrued as purposive sampling, the uses of theoretical sampling vary to a large extent. Also, the selection criteria of participants for theoretical sampling changes according to the

needs and changes that occur in the theoretical study at the given time. Theoretical sampling is considered to be purpose driven and it explicitly carries out its function on the basis of an emerging theory (Breckenridge & Jones, 2009). The main focus of theoretical research is to use its development through a constant comparative analysis of data that is gained through theoretical sampling for a better understanding of the theory produced (Coyne, 1997).

According to Coyne (1997), the main advantage of theoretical sampling is that it strengthens the rigor of the study if the study attempts to generate the theory in the research area. The application of theoretical sampling provides a structure to data collection as well as data analysis. It is based on the need to collect more data to examine categories and their relationships and assures that representativeness exists in the category. Theoretical sampling has inductive as well as deductive characteristics (Coyne, 1997). Flexibility occurs in this style of sampling when the researchers want to increase the sample size due to new factors that arise during the research. Flexibility also occurs when the researcher's wishes to use a small sample during the initial stages of the research but increase the sample size to test developing generalizations. Finally flexibility is also allowed when the researcher finds unexpected generalization and wants to look into deviant cases (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008).

Certain disadvantages may be associated with this sampling method. It is a highly systematic method due to which application of theoretical sampling requires more resources like time and money as compared to other sampling methods (Oppong, 2013).

Silverman and Marvasti (2008) mentioned three features to be considered while discussing theoretical sampling. The first feature is choosing cases in terms of the theory. In this feature, the basis is constructed on an ideal universe or a wider universe where there is a larger comprehension or social explanation according to which the researcher is able to construct his theory. The second feature is choosing deviant cases. One of the leading philosophies in theoretical sampling is the fact that the researcher doesn't choose cases that are supportive to his/her argument. The third feature is changing the size of your sample

during the course of the research. This feature deals with concerns or application during the process of the research.

The concept of saturation was first defined in the context of grounded theory as theoretical saturation. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), in qualitative research the word saturation is extensively used almost interchangeably with data saturation, thematic saturation, theoretical saturation and conceptual saturation. Saturation can be simply defined as data satisfaction. It is when the researcher reaches a point where no new information is obtained from further data. *According to* Teeter and Sandberg (2016), saturation point determines the sample size in qualitative research as it indicates that adequate data has been collected for a detailed analysis. However, there is no fixed size or a standard test that determines the required data for reaching saturation. For example, in many phenomenographic studies, theoretical saturation is often reached after 15 to 30 participants, whereas other methods may require far fewer, or greater, numbers.

3.4. Data Collection

3.4.1. Interviewing

In qualitative studies, data most commonly consist of narratives of some sort, usually transcribed interviews or transcriptions of observational data, but also can include other kinds of documents (e.g. field notes, clinical case notes, historical documents, organizational reports, autobiographies, service logs). According to Creswell (1998) and Patton (2002), interviewing is one of the most common methods of collecting information from individuals. As these authors mentioned, there are various types of interviews that are used to collect data. These include structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are more or less like questionnaires since they consist of closed ended items. In this kind of interview, the respondents must choose from a limited number of answers that have been written in advance. Semi-structured interviews are flexible kind of interviews in which the interviewer asks important questions in the same way each time but is free to alter the sequence of the questions and to probe for more information. Some items are structured while others are open. The respondents are free to answer the questions in any way they choose. Unstructured interviews are wholly open ended instrument in which

interviewers have a list of topics they want respondents to talk about but are free to phrase the questions as they wish. The respondents are free to answer in any way they choose (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002).

According to Creswell (2009), the interview form should fit your research goals. Depending on your subject of research, you may want to find out about subjective concepts or unconscious motives; or you may be interested in biographical self-description or simply in information from an expert. Interviews differ in the degree of structure; you may go into an interview knowing already a lot about the subject matter or you go into it as a stranger; the interview may take place as part of an everyday activity as in an ethnographic setting or in a more artificial context. The focus may be on listening to a long narrative or on working towards mutual understanding and everything in between.

As Britten (1999) stated, when designing an interview schedule it is imperative to ask questions that are likely to yield as much information about the study phenomenon as possible and also be able to address the aims and objectives of the research. In a qualitative interview, good questions should be open-ended (i.e. require more than a yes/no answer), neutral, sensitive and understandable (Britten, 1999). It is usually best to start with questions that participants can answer easily and then proceed to more difficult or sensitive topics (Britten, 1999). This can help put respondents at ease, build up confidence and rapport and often generates rich data that subsequently develops the interview further.

According to Creswell and Clark (2007), in order to have the interview data captured more effectively, recording of the interviews is considered an appropriate choice but sometimes a matter of controversy among the researcher and the respondent. It is often also helpful to make 'field notes' during and immediately after each interview about observations, thoughts and ideas about the interview, as this can help in data analysis process (May, 1991). However, Creswell and Clark (2007) argued that hand written notes during the interview are relatively unreliable, and the researcher might miss some key points. The recording of the interview makes it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview content and the verbal prompts and thus enables the transcriptionist to generate "verbatim transcript" of the interview.

Before an interview takes place, respondents should be informed about the study details and given assurance about ethical principles, such as anonymity and confidentiality (Britten, 1999). This gives respondents some idea of what to expect from the interview, increases the likelihood of honesty and is also a fundamental aspect of the informed consent process.

Wherever possible, interviews should be conducted in areas free from distractions and at times and locations that are most suitable for participants. For many this may be at their own home in the evenings. Whilst researchers may have less control over the home environment, familiarity may help the respondent to relax and result in a more productive interview (Kvale, 1996).

3.4.2. Theoretical Memoing

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

Memoing is an element that Glaser (1978) considers a continuous process which begins with the first coding of data through to sorting and writing papers to the end of the study. Memos can be of any length, ranging from just a sentence, a paragraph, or through to a few pages. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990) researchers have to develop their own style of memoing, which may include the use of software, colour coded cards, and putting

type-written pages into folders or notebooks. Of most importance is for researchers to ensure that their memos are orderly, systematic, and can be easily retrievable for purposes of sorting or cross-referencing. Corbin and Strauss (1990) emphasize the importance of dating each memo and referencing the source from which it was taken.

3.5. Data Analysis

Once the data are collected, grounded theory analysis involves several basic steps (Charmaz, 2000). The first step is coding text and theorizing. In grounded theory research, the search for the theory starts with the very first line of the very first interview that one codes. It involves taking a small chunk of the text where line by line is being coded. Useful concepts are being identified where key phrases are being marked. The concepts are named. Another chunk of text is then taken and the above-mentioned steps are being repeated. According to Strauss and Corbin (1967), this process is called open coding and Charmaz (2000) called it initial coding. Basically, this process is breaking data into conceptual components. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define coding as “the analytic processes through which data are fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form theory” (p. 3). The literature on grounded theory shows that the data have to be analyzed and coded to generate *categories* (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Categories can be described as “a type of concept, usually used for a higher level of abstraction” (Glaser, 1992, p. 38), or as “concepts, derived from data that stand for phenomena” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 114). Bryman (2008) defines a category as “a concept that has been elaborated so that it is regarded as representing real-world phenomena” (p. 544). The other significant level of Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) method is axial coding, which they define as “the process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed ‘axial’ because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (p. 123). The aim of axial coding is to put “the fractured data back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between a category and its subcategories” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). Corbin and Strauss (2008) refer to axial coding as “crosscutting or relating concepts to each other” (p. 195). The aim is to develop what would ultimately be one of several main categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Two kinds of coding processes namely, substantive coding and theoretical coding are described (Glaser, 1992). According to Glaser (1992) substantive coding is in two levels, open coding and selective coding. In the process of open coding, the aim of the researcher is to generate an emergent set of categories and their properties which should fit, work and are relevant to be integrated into a theory. The researchers have to code for as many categories that might fit; and should ensure that they code different incidences into as many categories as possible. In the process, new categories emerge and new incidences fit existing categories. Glaser (1978) emphasizes the need for the researcher to analyze the data line-by-line to be able to identify emerging substantive codes within the data. Further, the researcher should verify and saturate categories, and in the process avoid the risk of missing an important category. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) open coding is “the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data” (p. 62). The second stage of Glaser’s (1978) substantive coding is selective coding. This stage requires the researcher to selectively code for a core variable. Glaser uses the word *variable* while Strauss uses *category* to mean the same thing. This is the stage of coding, where the researcher is required to delimit “coding to only variables that relate to the core variable in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 61). Glaser (1978) suggests that the core variable becomes a guide to further data collection and theoretical sampling. This level requires the researcher to know when to cease coding to be able to selectively code for a core category (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The authors define the core category as representative of the central problem or issue confronting the participants under study. Once the core category has been discovered, selective coding commences. This leads to further investigation of issues and ideas that are mainly centered round the core category. Strauss (1987) explains that “selective coding pertains to coding systematically and concertedly for the core category” (p. 33).

Bernard and Ryan (2010) proposed several stages in data analysis process which was modification of Corbin and Strauss’s (1990) model. According to these authors, Open coding or substantive coding is conceptualizing on the first level of abstraction. Written data from field notes or transcripts are conceptualized line by line. In the beginning of a

study everything is coded in order to find out about the problem and how it is being resolved. The coding is often done in the margin of the field notes. Corbin and Strauss (1990) also proposed axial coding and defined it as "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (p.96). Kelle (2005) proposed a "coding paradigm" that involved conditions, context, action/ interactional strategies and consequences.

The second stage mentioned by Bernard and Ryan (2010) is selective coding that is done after having found the core variable or what is thought to be the core, the tentative core. The core explains the behavior of the participants in resolving their main concern. Selective coding could be done by going over old field notes or memos which are already coded once at an earlier stage or by coding newly gathered data.

The third and final basic step is integrating, refining and writing up theories: Once coding categories emerge, the next step is to link them together in theoretical models around a central category that hold everything together. The constant comparative method comes into play, along with negative case analysis which looks for cases that do not confirm the model. Basically one generates a model about how whatever one is studying works right from the first interview and see if the model holds up as one analyze more interviews. Researchers have to compare incidents applicable to each category, and they do that by coding each incident in the data into as many categories of analysis as possible. The basic rule for the constant comparative method is that in the process of coding an incident for a category, it should be compared with previous incidents in the same group as well as different groups that may have been coded in the same category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is essential that researchers have to ensure that constant comparison is ongoing, as it is the process by which they sort the emerging themes on account of their similarities and differences (Goulding, 1999).

3.6. Design of the Study

Having identified the characteristics and principles of the Grounded Theory research design helped the researcher to consider it as the most useful research method that fits to the objectives of this study. The initial stage of this study was getting an in-depth

understanding of philosophies and rationale behind this type of research method. Having followed the path of Glaser and Strauss (1967), the researcher obeyed the principles of grounded theory in terms of sampling procedure, data collection, and data analysis. As Glaser (1965) originated the basic process of Grounded theory method described as the constant comparative method, the researcher acted as an analyst beginning analysis with the first data collected and constantly compares indicators, concepts and categories as the theory emerges. The aim of the technique of constant comparative analysis is to force the analyst to be close to the data in order not to come up with subjective understanding of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Therefore, the researcher made use of the principles of grounded theory from the perspectives of Glaser and Strauss (1967) to build his own theory in terms of the perceptions on the effect of the methods course in universities on teacher learners' experience of teaching.

3.6.1. Sampling Procedure and Participants

Regarding sampling procedure, the researcher selected initial participants through purposive sampling. According to Patton (2002), sampling must thus begin purposively, as in any qualitative study. In this step, some participants who were representative of the intended issue were identified to be interviewed. Initial codes were emerged through analyzing the interviews taken from these first participants.

Next, theoretical sampling was followed by the researcher through which the researcher had to look for the theories and extracted codes to expand them. Theoretical sampling is associated with grounded theory approach based on analytic induction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This theoretical universe allowed for better-formulated samples which were more meaningful and sensible than others. So in this type of sampling, the researcher selected samples that had a particular process, examples, categories and even types that are relevant to the ideal or wider universe.

Teacher Participants	Age	Gender	Ranking	Job Experience
T.P. 1	55	Male	Associate Professor	25
T.P. 2	38	Female	Assistant Professor	6
T.P. 3	45	Male	Assistant Professor	12
T.P. 4	50	Male	Associate Professor	16
T.P. 5	46	Male	Associate Professor	15
T.P. 6	55	Male	Associate Professor	22
T.P. 7	37	Male	Assistant Professor	3
T.P. 8	50	Female	Assistant Professor	15
T.P. 9	52	Male	Associate Professor	22
T.P. 10	42	Male	Associate Professor	10
T.P. 11	45	Male	Associate Professor	15

Table 1. Participants' Demographics

3.6.2. Data Collection

Based on the principles of grounded theory in data collection, the researcher applied two methods to collect the intended data. The first method was interviewing the participants. The researcher asked questions that were likely to yield as much information about the study phenomenon as possible and also addressed the aims and objectives of the research. In a qualitative interview, the researcher used open-ended questions and started with questions that participants could answer easily and then the researcher proceeded to more difficult or sensitive topics.

Then, the researcher made use of theoretical memos to expand and verify the already collected data through interview. Theoretical memoing is the core stage of grounded theory methodology (Glaser, 1992). Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about substantive codes and their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during coding, collecting and analyzing data, and during memoing (Glaser, 1992). Memoing was when the running notes of each of the concepts that were being identified were kept. It was the intermediate step between the coding and the first draft of the completed analysis. Memos were field notes about the concepts in which the researcher lays out his observations and insights. Memoing started with the first concept that has been identified and continued right through the process of breaking the text and of building theories.

3.6.3. Data Analysis

The final step was analyzing data which was totally done based on the presented principles in grounded theory. The main focus of theoretical research is to use its development through a constant comparative analysis of data that is gained through theoretical sampling for a better understanding of the theory produced.

Two kinds of coding processes namely, substantive coding and theoretical coding are described (Glaser, 1992). According to Glaser (1992) substantive coding is in two levels, open coding and selective coding that was totally followed by the researcher. Through the first step of data analysis, the researcher took a small chunk of the text where line by line was being coded. Useful concepts were being identified where key phrases

were being marked. The concepts were named. In other words, the researcher broken down the transcribed data into units of meaning (concepts), and then labeled them with words close to those of the participant, and interrogated them for alternative interpretations, conditions surrounding the meaning, and gaps left unfilled. This step also involved the constant comparative method and it went on throughout the grounding theory process, right up through the development of complete theories. The basic rule for the constant comparative method is that in the process of coding an incident for a category, it should be compared with previous incidents in the same group as well as different groups that may have been coded in the same category (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The second step of data analysis was selective coding through which a core “story” was generated, which was a brief narrative of the most important aspects of the data, subsuming all of the other categories and articulating their relationships to the core story. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), selective coding could be done by going over old field notes or memos which are already coded once at an earlier stage or by coding newly gathered data.

3.6.4. Establishing Credibility of the Findings

The main focus of theoretical research is to use its development through a constant comparative analysis of data that is gained through theoretical sampling for a better understanding of the theory produced. In addition, the researcher maintained his conceptual level when he wrote about concepts and how these concepts related to each other. Axial coding was also used as a set of procedures whereby data were put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories. The study ended with creating the ultimate theory in accordance to the core codes which concerned closely the perceptions on the effect of the methods courses taught in universities on teacher trainers’ experience of teaching.

Chapter Four:

Results

4.1. Overview

The data of this study were gathered and analyzed based on the presented rules in the grounded theory research method through which some teachers of the methods course in the universities were interviewed to share their ideas and suggestions about this course. Three main categories were found through catching the teacher educators' perceptions of the methods course that exhibited different characteristics of this course. The first category is the pitfalls of the methods course subcategorized as 'theory-based', 'lack of time', 'lack of practicality', and 'teaching outdated methods course books' among which the 'theory-based' was highlighted by most of the participants. The second category concerns the strengths of the methods course involving three subcategories such as 'building teacher learners' background', 'providing purposeful methods', and 'act as a pre-requisite for effective practice'. Suggestions for improvement have been identified as the third category including three subcategories such as 'do it by practice', 'leaving room for teacher initiatives', and 'taking contextual constraints into account'.

The methods course is important in universities since it helps the teacher learners to get familiar with psychological and philosophical thought behind each method. It is essential for the university students to recognize the purpose of each method. There is a disagreement among the teachers of the methods course in terms of teaching the most appropriate and applicable book in their classrooms. Some of them are in favor of teaching complex books since they are written by the most famous experts in the field while some others prefer to teach the simplified books in order to make the students understood in an easy way. Therefore, there is not a common methods course book which is both deep in meaning and comprehensible for all types of the teacher learners especially those who have not any knowledge about the philosophies and theories behind language teaching methods. The other characteristics of the methods course have been presented in the following part through separated categories.

4.2. Pitfalls of the Methods Course

4.2.1. Theory-Based

Some of the participants did not believe in the effectiveness of the methods course since it is highly theory-based and does not engage teacher learners in practical experiments. It has been considered as a weak point of the methods course that prevents the students from benefiting from it in their future practice. The participants believe that students should be good practitioners of the presented methods in the methods course rather than just gain rich knowledge about the rules and theories behind the methods. In this regard, T.P. 3 said:

Unfortunately, the methods course books are totally theory-based and very weak in activating the practical sense of the teacher learners. There are practical books in this field such as Jeremy Harmer, but the problem is that they are not used in the methods course in universities because of some educational policies. By employing the theory-based course books, the students merely get familiar with methods and their principles. Actually, they do not know how it should be applied in a real context in order to meet students' needs.

Lack of knowledge about the practical essence of each language teaching method is the result of focusing exclusively on theories. The teacher learners are encouraged to gather information about the philosophies and theories about the methods because they are mainly tested in terms of these theories or actually the contents of the methods course books. In most cases, the theories by themselves are not applicable for the teacher learners unless they are presented to the students in practical ways. As T.P. 9 said:

The methods course seems to be more theory-based. The teacher learners have to study some fixed theories about language teaching without having any knowledge about the ways through which they can make use of these theories in

practice. Actually, they study these theories aimlessly and do not know how theories may help them in their future experience of teaching.

To increase the language teaching quality, the students of language teaching field should be prevented from wasting their time on learning some marginal theories. Learning only theories is considered to be only time-consuming process which never results in the teacher learners' improvement in their field of study. The useless theories in terms of translation and linguistics are suggested to be eliminated for the students who are going to be language teachers since these theories make the methods course totally theoretical which is not much applicable for the teacher learners. As one of the participants said:

The methods course has some pitfalls. The first is that the purpose of this course should be increasing the teaching quality of the teacher learners, while it mostly focuses on theories which only wastes the students' time and prevents them to have practical practices. The teacher learners need to be introduced with the psychology of teaching, performance of teaching, skills of teaching, and tricks of teaching. (T.P. 8)

The language teaching students in some universities have to pass some repetitive theory-based methodology books which none of them is applicable in their future. All of these books are abstract which are totally theory-based without explaining each method in detail and make it concrete for the students. The concreteness of the theories is highly avoided in the methods course books. The methodology books present and evaluate the methods briefly and in a list manner. The important point is that it is hardly ever can be seen that these presented theories are applicable in real context of language teaching and the language teaching students cannot act as a successful language teachers by relying only on these theories. In addition, the students of the methods course constantly complain that they do not understand anything since their teachers emphasize only on the abstract part of this course which concerns teaching the theories.

4.2.2. Lack of Time

Lack of time and opportunity for practical experience of the teacher trainers makes the methods course useless for them. The methodology books are mostly theory-based and leave no room for the students to be engaged in practical experience. So, the responsibility of involving the students in practical experiences is on the teachers' shoulders which in most cases is ignored by the teachers due to lack of time and therefore this course is conducted theoretically rather than practically. As one of the participants stated:

Considering the importance of teaching the theories about the methods, it should be also considered that teaching practically is necessary for the teacher trainers. Unfortunately, it is not what happened in the methods course in most of our universities. Actually, it is not the teachers' fault. It is actually because of lack of time for teaching this course. Teachers have to put their effort on reinforcing the students' knowledge in terms of the presented theories in the methods course books. Ultimately, the students have rich knowledge about the theories but are not able to change the theories to practice in their practical experience. (T.P. 3)

Students need to practice useful methods in class. Therefore, useless parts should be omitted to have more time to work on. Some of the participants considered the theories and histories of the methods as the most useless part of this course. They preferred to replace the time of working on the theories by showing the teacher trainers the right ways of applying each method in practice. In addition, they argued that the methods course in universities does not result in teacher learners' learning since it is totally theory-based and has no use for the students in future. As another participant stated:

The theories are never applicable for the teacher learners. Even if the students pass this course with high score, it does not have any use for them in practice. It is better to remove

some useless and old methods so students have more time to practice the methods in class. (T.P. 6)

4.2.3. Lack of Practicality

The participants believe that knowing only the rules and knowledge behind the methods is not workable unless it is accompanied by practice. The students should get familiar with the application of each method in semi real contexts. If it does not happen in the methods courses in universities, then the graduated teacher learners are knowledgeable competent but weak in applying their knowledge in EFL/ESL classrooms. Therefore, their knowledge does not help them to be successful in their field unless they know how to make use of their knowledge in practice. As one of the participants said:

We should present the methods course in a way that students see how it is applied in practice. They should evaluate their abilities in employing each method in their classes in future. For example, when I teach a language teaching method, for instance suggestopedia, after presenting all of its principles, then I make students to teach a lesson through this method. Following such procedure makes the methods course as a really useful course for the students in their future when they are language teachers. (T.P. 1)

Regarding the importance of practice in the methods course, some of the participants believe that just memorizing a set of theories and fix rules of language teaching methodology is not an appropriate way of making use of this course in future. They highly recommended that the students need to get familiar with the practical use of the methods rather than memorizing the theories. As one of the participants ignored teaching theories behind the language teaching methods as follows:

If the language teaching methods are taught to the students practically, I think it is more effective. For example, the teachers show the students how to teach speaking skill or

grammar rules in practice. In my opinion, this way of teaching the language teaching methods is more effective rather than making the students to memorize a set of compound sentences and theories about each method. Some teachers of the methods course ask the students to memorize a set of rules and theories and present them for their classmates as a lecture. However, they can devote the class time on making them to practice a method in the class by teaching a specific lesson in the classroom. (T.P. 7)

4.2.4. Teaching Outdated Methodology Books

One other pitfall of such courses is using old versions of methodology books which can cause some problems in training teacher learners. For instance, the outdated books were written in long distant years when the facilities and policies of education were totally different from current educational setting. In addition, nowadays the application of traditional teaching policies in terms of methods course is not appropriate for the teacher learners as they are equipped with lots of modern facilities. In this regard, one of the participants expresses:

Unfortunately, many teacher trainers make use of the outdated methodology books which were written by experts so many years ago. It is obvious that these books were written in that years based on the facilities and educational setting at that time. But, teacher learners who are now educating in modern societies with lots of facilities need to be taught in newer manner to develop their knowledge. So many years ago, the teacher learners had to rely only on the presented methodology books by their teacher; however, the current teacher learners can easily develop their knowledge by making use of workshop, internet, projectors, and so on. (T.P. 2)

These days the EFL learners' need and purpose of learning a foreign language determine the teaching method. So, it is important for teacher learners to be educated and trained in such a way that they can meet their EFL learners' need in future. Such issue necessitates considering the educational setting in which the teacher learners are going to be engaged. Therefore, the differences between traditional methods courses and modern ones should be highlighted and considered by teacher trainers in order to educate knowledgeable teacher learners based on their societies' facilities and educational requirement. To support this, one of the participants says:

Teacher trainers have to update their knowledge in this regard so that their educated teacher learners can meet the requirements of new educational setting. For example, in past the teacher trainers relied only on lecturing approach in conducting the methods course But, now with all of these modern facilities such as internet, workshop, and so on, teacher trainers can broaden their teaching fashion that consequently will result in development of teacher learners' knowledge.(T.P. 11)

4.3. Strengths of the Methods Course

This part which has been found as the second category concern the ways through which the methods course helps the teacher learners in their future experience of teaching language. Actually, the following sub-categories show how teacher learners make use of their acquired knowledge during the methods course in the university.

4.3.1. Building Teacher learners' Background

Having pre-knowledge of a specific issue in its specific area is essential before entering field. That is also the case in the field of language teaching. Most of the language teachers benefit from their background knowledge they have been provided with it through studying the methodology books in universities. Without having any background in terms

of the language knowledge, they might be unable to conduct their classes effectively. However, the knowledge behind each language teaching method is not enough because the teacher trainers need to get familiar with the empirical use of the methods through observing. Regarding the importance of providing background knowledge by the methods course, one of the participants said:

In the field of language teaching like any other fields, teachers need to know the history, rules, and knowledge behind the teaching course. The methods course in universities helps the teacher trainers to have enough background knowledge in order to enter the teaching field. I consider the presented knowledge behind the language teaching methods in the methods course as necessary as possible since it activates the future teachers' background to employ the methods. (T.P. 9)

Increasing the teacher learners' awareness about the language teaching methods is one of the considerable advantages of the methods course in universities. Through this course, the students get familiar with the philosophies behind the methods which in turn they can use the methods in an innovative way since they have known the methods' principles as well. As one of the participants said:

The key point is that without having enough background knowledge about the principles of methods, the teachers would not be able to recognize which aspect of a method is useful for a specific context. Actually, the main reason that a language teacher is successful in his/her job is because of the methods course that provided them with rich knowledge about the language teaching methods that is like building blocks for the teacher learners. (T.P. 10)

Due to some shortcomings such as lack of enough time the teachers of the methods course emphasize only on teaching the theories behind the language teaching methods as

they believe these theories build the students' background knowledge. They have considered building the students' background knowledge as an important part of their future experience as language teachers. So, although the methods course books are weak in engaging the students in practical experiences, they are rich in building background for the teacher learners in terms of theories and philosophies of language teaching methods. As the following participant said:

In my opinion, the students can make use of their background knowledge to apply the methods or even create their own methods of teaching. Without having any background knowledge about the theories, they cannot create their own methods in EFL/ESL classes or decide about the most appropriate methods based on the classes' requirements. (T.P. 2)

Through teaching the theories in the methods course, the teacher learners gain information about different scholars' views on language learning such as Chomsky. Without having any knowledge about the aspects and characteristics of the language learning process and the students' mind process during language learning, the EFL/ESL teachers may not be able to teach language effectively. So, the methods course is useful as it provides the teacher learners with valuable information that prevents them to operate EFL/ESL classes without having background about language learning and the factors contributing to it. As one of the participants said:

The Chomsky's ideas about language learning process and the role of mind on it are what the teacher learners learn through teaching the theories in the methods course. For example, they should know how to involve the language learners' mind in the process of language learning. Teachers should consider that their students have already some inactive rules of language learning in their mind and the teachers' responsibility is awaking these rules in the

language learners' mind and elaborate on them so that it results in their language learning. (T.P. 4)

Language teachers are recognized as practitioners that try to practice the existed theories in their minds. In order to be good language practitioners, they need to have rich knowledge about the theories of language teaching methods. The language teachers can determine what types of methods and principles of teaching are appropriate for what types of language learners by making use of their background knowledge that they gained during the methods course in the university. As one of the participants said:

A language teacher is a practitioner who moves from theory to practice. He constantly tries to practice the theories he acquired during the methods course in the university. The applied methods by the language teachers are based on what already exist in their mind. When a language teacher is going to start teaching an EFL/ESL classroom, he firstly evaluates the specific condition and context of the class and then decides on adopting the most appropriate method for it. This would not be done effectively if the language teacher does not have enough background knowledge about the principles of language teaching. (T.P. 5)

Methods courses are applicable for the teacher learners if it is taught and conducted in a way through which the students learn how to be autonomous in their teaching process in future. This course provides the students with lots of valuable information and knowledge about different language teaching methods. Through these courses, the students should evaluate their ability to employ the methods in reality. Without doing this evaluation, the students will not be good practitioners of this valuable course book. In addition, the education system behind this course should train the students to foster their creativity in applying the methods in their future teaching process in order to be successful in the field. Therefore, assigning this course in universities is of high importance if it is fulfilled in such a way through which the students' practical ability in a creative way is

fostered. Therefore, it is essential for the students to move from dependence to independence through examining different ways of learning this course. Notice the following participant's statement in this regard:

The effectiveness of the methods course depends on the way of presenting it. If the teachers of the methods course just try to present the methods in a cliché way, it does never lead to the students' creativity and autonomy. Generally, the students need to think creatively, reflect, and be independence in acquiring the presented methods in this course in order to feel that they are capable of conducting an EFL/ESL classroom according to the principles of the methods course. (T.P. 7)

The presented theories in methodology books can be used creatively by the teacher trainers to have their own methods of teaching. Through getting familiar with the theories of the language methods and watching the practical ways of employing them, the students can learn how to adjust a method to their students' needs in future. In this regard, another participant said:

I mostly make use of the methods of teaching the methods course which meet the teacher learners' needs. Due to the individual differences among the EFL/ESL students, the teachers need to be creative so that they can make use of different methods to meet the classes' requirements. So, without having knowledge about different characteristics of different methods, the teacher learners cannot specify what types of methods are useful for specific types of language learners. (T.P.10)

Therefore, the methods course is helpful as it provides the teacher learners with lots of knowledge about the principles of language teaching. The students' background knowledge in terms of language teaching is built through this course that is very helpful for them in future when they have to adjust their intended applied methods based on the EFL/ESL context. The language teaching students should get familiar with the philosophy and basic rules of language teaching process. Their back ground knowledge in future when they become language teachers should be rich with conceptual information about the theories and principles of language teaching in order to be able to change the theories to practice.

4.3.2. Providing Purposeful Methods

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

A good language teacher is a person who is knowledgeable enough in terms of each method's rules and principles at first and then be able to adjust the applied method with the classes' needs of language learning. Sometimes teachers apply GTM based on the required conditions and situations. On the other hand, some teachers may apply audio-lingual method according to the learners' needs. (T.P. 1)

Regarding the provided purposeful methods by the methods course books, some of the participants appreciated this course because of providing them with different methods which each of them is appropriate for a specific context. They did not ignore any presented

methods because they believed that they can conduct different classes with different purposes by applying different methods helping them to fulfill the class requirements. For example one of the teachers said:

I mostly make use of combination of methods. For example, in some classes I make use of GTM although most of the language teaching practitioners consider it as an invalid method. But, I think it is applicable and valid for some type of students who live in low level part of the society and their parents constantly ask them to translate some specific sentences into English. If we do not employ this method in such kind of classrooms, then the students are disappointed because they think they don't know anything about English.
(T.P. 3)

Most of the teachers of the methods course have never ignored teaching a specific method and never tried to cherry pick the methods to teach them to the teacher learners since they have believed in the usefulness of each method in a specific context. As another participant said:

I try to criticize the language teaching methods and specify their strong and weak points. I never recommend the teacher trainers to ignore teaching any of the methods because I think it is possible for any language teacher to elicit a specific and appropriate technique out of any method based on the classrooms' requirements. For example, in GTM we have a useful technique of cognate which is highly applicable in teaching vocabulary. So, any method that you think it has been outdated, it will be helpful for you somewhere in future.
(T.P. 8)

Most of the participants' expressions have shown that they make use of all of the methods in their teaching experience. That means, the methods course they had passed

before during the university education has been beneficial for their current experience of teaching. They have taken specific techniques out of specific methods for specific purpose. As one of the participants expressed:

In teaching writing, I apply the methods that lead to the students' cooperative learning such as task-based method through which they are given a descriptive task for instance. Therefore, it is one of the great advantages of the methods course that introduces teacher learners with different methods for different purposes. (T.P. 11)

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

We cannot say that the philosophies, histories, and theories of the methods are useless. The presented information about the methods in the methodology books makes the teacher learners to think about the adjustment of each method with specific context. We should consider the purposes behind each method and apply it in its related context. Therefore, the methods course is helpful for the teacher learners in such a way that they get familiar with the philosophies and purposes of each method. (T.P. 5)

4.3.3. Act as a Pre-requisite for Effective Practice

Presenting theories along with practice is another way of helping the teacher learners to make use of the methods course in future. Relying only on some theories does not lead to any success in this field. It should be combined with appropriate practice. Theory and practice are interrelated with each other. Without any of them, the other one does not become effective. So, the presented theories in the methods course book are really helpful and necessary for the teacher learners because they show them the appropriate ways of employing the methods. As one of the participants described his experience as follows:

I devote the time of class into two parts. The first part is spent on teaching the theories behind the methods and the second part is practicing the methods. For example, I want to teach them audio-lingual method. I teach them all of the theories and rules behind this method. Then, I move towards performing this method by practicing for the students. If they were just encountered with the teacher's performance, they might not be good practitioners since they just learned to imitate the teacher. (T.P. 10)

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

I teach all of the methods both theoretically and practically. The students should spend about an hour on learning the theories and rules of each method. Then, I provide some opportunities for them to practice the method practically. If

theories time is increased, the students get bored very soon. They want to move towards practice in order to show their ability in that field. So, the theories are necessary for them in order to have improvement in their practice of the methods. (T.P. 4)

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

There are some types of language teaching in the language institutes which are the evident signs of the effect of the methods course on teachers' language teaching methods. That is, they make use of their acquired knowledge by the methods course in the university to conduct EFL/ESL classes effectively. They mostly take a practical part of each method and combine it with other practical parts of other methods by evaluating the specific context in which they are teaching language. (T.P. 6)

4.4. Suggestions for Improvement

The third category is going to present three main ways of teaching the methods. The teachers of the methods course think that the teacher educators will make use of their acquired knowledge through this course in more effective way if this course is taught and operated by the following suggested ways.

4.4.1. Do it by Practice

One of the mostly recommended ways of presenting the methods course is teaching it both theoretically and empirically. That means teachers make the students to perform

each taught method empirically. In addition, they argued that the rules and procedures of each method stick in the students' mind for longer time if they see the practical ways of applying the method. Furthermore, they appreciated the effectiveness of the methods course since it provides the students with different language teaching methods, each for different purpose, while lacking practical exercises. One of the participants argued:

The devoted time for teaching the methods course should be increased since it is not merely a theoretical lesson but it is rather practical course. We should change the domain of this course from theoretical to empirical. So, the theories that are supposed to be memorized by the students for their final exam, are evident in their practice of methods more or less. In this manner, the rules of methods are fixed in their mind. (T.P. 1)

As learning the methods by practice is advocated by most of the participants, different ways and approaches towards this method has been introduced. In contrast to the above experiments through which the teacher acted as a model for the students, one of the participants has described her new method as follows:

I bring videos of each language teaching method in class and after teaching the theories of each method I play the related video for the teacher learners. In this manner, they get familiar with the practical ways of applying the methods in EFL/ESL classes. After getting familiar with the practical process of each method, the students are asked to teach a selected lesson based on the taught method. (T.P. 9)

Similar to the previous participant, one of the participants also made use of method-related videos in his classroom. Some of the participants thought that practicing through realia results in the students' improvement in the field of language teaching. One of the participants' experience in this regard is as follows:

By using method-related videos, the methods course becomes interesting for the students. For example, Larsen Freeman has provided the videos of her methodology book through which the students can see the processes involved in applying each method. Or, other similar videos are available in YouTube. After that, the students are asked to have demo to actualize the taught method according to what they have watched in the presented videos. (T.P. 2)

One of the most innovative ways of teaching the methods in order to be effective for the teachers is teaching each method through that method. The following expression is complete description of such practice:

Suppose you want to teach Audio-Lingual method. You can employ the principles of this method to teach that part effectively. In this manner, the students get familiar with the principles of each method and its practical manner of it simultaneously. It is worth mentioning that it is not applicable always. You can never teach all of the theories and principles of a specific method by only employing that method. (T.P. 3)

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

We have apprenticeship approach in teaching the methods course. The students learn the theories in the classroom, watch the related videos to the methods in which the correct way of applying the methods in EFL/ESL classrooms are

shown, and then they have to go to any EFL/ESL classroom in schools or language institute to see the way that theories are changed to practice in real context. It is worth mentioning that the students should first present their demo for their classmates and the classmates discuss the weak point and strength of their friends' presentation and after that they are allowed to observe a real EFL/ESL classroom to explore the teachers' methods of language teaching. (T.P. 8)

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

The best complementary to this course is making the students to go to real EFL/ESL classes to observe the methods which are applied there by the teachers. The main reason of doing so is that most of the students are stressful when they are asked to perform one of the taught methods for other classmates and they are really weak in practice because of making them to memorize some theories without knowing how they operates in real life. (T.P. 11)

Real situation helps the teacher learners to evaluate their abilities of becoming language teachers based on what they have learnt in the methods course. In a real situation, the students should observe the applied methods in EFL/ESL classes and then combine their already knowledge of theories about the methods with what they have acquired during observation. The next step is treating their classmates as EFL/ESL students and teaches

them a determined lesson by making use of their gained experiences through both the observation and the taught theories. The students should get familiar with different aspects of the EFL/ESL classes and be put in different conditions to see if they are capable of controlling a class in an appropriate way. As one of the participants said:

I play role as an EFL student. I put the students in different real situations such as bombarding them with lots of questions or annoying them to evaluate their resistance against the encountered difficulties and their ability in controlling the class. In addition, the students have to search in the internet for the related videos to language teaching methods. Getting familiar with different experiences of different practitioners of the methods makes the students to elicit the most effective and applicable methods out of each practitioner's method of teaching. (T.P. 10)

In some cases, two separated methodology books are suggested that the first one concerns the theoretical needs of the teacher learners and the second one meets the practical needs of them. Besides this suggestion, the teachers of the methods course prefer to break the course into two parts by themselves. During the first part they introduce the theories of language teaching to the students and the second part is spent on engaging the students in practical tasks. As one of the participants said:

I recommend using two separated methodology books or the methodology books containing two separate parts such as theoretical and practical. Through the first type the students get familiar with the principles of the methods and the second part helps them to get familiar with the practical ways of the presented principles in the first part. When a method is presented theoretically, it should be immediately presented practically in order to be more concrete and tangible for the teacher educator. (T.P. 8)

To decrease the abstractness of the methods course, it has been highly suggested to assign some practical practices for the teacher trainers such as observing real EFL/ESL classes, presenting demo, or even teaching real EFL/ESL students. All of these practices should be done in a form of workshop course. The concreteness of the language teaching methods is considered more important than its abstractness. As one of the participants stated:

The language teaching students should be getting familiar with the practical tricks and practical guides of the language teaching methods through assigning workshop course for them so that the methods become concrete for them. Making the teacher learners to present demo, go to real EFL/ESL environment and observe the applied methods, and teach some real EFL/ESL students are the practices which are asked by the teacher educators to be done by the teacher learners. (T.P. 6)

Practical practices are also known as effective way of increasing teacher learners' motivation and self-confidence. The students are motivated to present their demos since they enjoy this kind of cooperation with their classmates and also each method has a specific aspect that is enjoyable for different kinds of students. Regarding their self-confidence, as they are engaged in practices such as teaching their classmates or other real EFL/ESL students more and more, they consider themselves as a person in the rank of real language teachers and they also take the gesture of teachers that results in their self-confidence increase and the disappearing of their shyness towards teaching in real context. Furthermore, by engaging the teacher learners in practical practices, they become curious to find out the different aspects and applications of each method and also find out which aspects of methods are suitable for what types of students. Generally, all of the teacher learners are attracted towards the practical aspects of the methods rather than the theoretical and conceptual aspects of them. They also confess that they learn better through practical practices rather than theoretical teaching.

4.4.2. Leaving Room for Teacher Initiatives

Setting a fix rule towards teaching the methods course is not reasonable. Teachers should not force the teacher learners just to learn some fixed rules and do not leave any room for them to think and reflect upon this course independently. Teacher educators should avoid their bias towards it and only emphasize on teaching the methods theoretically; instead, they should go beyond the specific design of the methodology books, containing only some theories about the methods, and apply some practical methods to make the students understand so that they can make use of the acquired methods in their future experiments of teaching. As one of the participants said:

I believe that the education system behind the methods course should be changed from top-down to bottom-up. Through the bottom-up approach, the teacher learners consider the experiments of their teachers or other experts in the field of language teaching to elicit some useful and practical methods out of them. The educators of the methods course should provide more rooms for the teacher learners, who want to be language teachers, to be independent in their learning and avoid dictating them a set of fixed rules. (T.P. 5)

Having bias towards teaching the theories in the methods course is just wasting the teacher learners' times. The students need to go beyond the theories and be engaged in practical experiences. Teacher educators should put aside their bias towards teaching the theories since the students just memorize some rules and theories about language teaching methods which are not applicable in any period of their life. Actually, what the students need is watching the ways that methods are operated in real context and then experience them by their own. In this regard, another participant said:

In my opinion, this course should be conducted in a way that involves the students in practical experiences rather than making them to memorize some rules and theories. The teachers should avoid teaching the histories about the methods since they have no application for the students in their future experience as language teachers. It would be more effective if we are allowed to change the syllabus of this course, increase the time of it, and allocate some hours to engage the students in practical experience. Then, they would be surely successful at the time of being employed. (T.P. 3)

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

It is not possible to prescribe a fix method of teaching for all of the language teachers and order them to operate the classes as it is determined by the authorities. Actually, it is not anymore the time of having bias towards the exact principles and methods presented through the methods course for the language teaching students. Through the methods course, the teacher trainers should learn that they have to avoid bias towards the presented methods because

they will be possibly made to change some principles of some methods in their teaching based on the context they are going to operate. (T.P. 1)

Therefore, having bias towards teaching the methods course prevents our society to have knowledgeable and autonomous language teachers.

4.4.3. Taking Contextual Constraints into Account

In contrast to some of educators in methods courses who believed that all of the presented methods in the course book should be taught completely to the teacher learners since each method has a specific characteristic and principle which is applicable for specific purposes, some other teachers tried to localize some of the methods and ignored teaching them completely since they thought that some of the methods are not applicable in the context of their country due to lack of some facilities. One of the advocators of the localization of methods said:

Some of the methods should be localized because of specific conditions. For example, I pass over the teaching of silent way and desuggestopedia methods since they cannot be applied in the classrooms due to lack of the required facilities. The students also recognize that some of the methods are useless in the context of their country. So, they prefer not spending their time on acquiring some useless methods. (T.P. 6)

Regarding the localization of some methods, another participant considered some of the methods as useless ones in the context of a specific country. She recommended presenting the methodology course books containing the methods appropriate for specific contexts. As she said:

I think it is more effective if the writers of the methods course books try to design different volumes of this book which each volume contains some specific methods that are appropriate

for specific context. For example, in the context of our country, teaching Desuggestopedia method is somehow wasting time because we do not have the required facilities for it. In addition, some of the methods are helpful for EFL students and some of them for ESL students. (T.P. 7)

Localization of some methods in the methods course was also followed by other teacher educators who believed that teaching all of the methods is wasting the teacher learners' time. They preferred spending more time on practicing all aspects of those methods which are applicable in their country. One of the participants also argued that teaching useless methods may result in the teacher learners' demotivation. As he expressed:

If some studies are done in our country to find out what types of methods are mostly applicable in the context of our country is really helpful. The methods are better to be localized. Most of the theories about specific methods are suitable and applicable in specific contexts such as America and Canada in which the classes are low populated. In addition, when the teacher educators evaluate the presented methods based on the context in which they live and they are supposed to teach EFL/ESL students in future, they find them useless. (T.P. 2)

However, it was argued that all of the language teaching methods are not needed to be localized. Any method has its own specific aspects which are applicable for our context. Having localized all of the methods are not suggested by some of the participants and they claimed that all of the methods should be taught for the students of the methods course but devote different times to each method based on the extent to which they are applicable in our context. As one of the advocators of such arguments said:

The reason is that they are not applicable in specific contexts especially in our country because of the shortage of their required facilities. For example, desuggestopedia is one of

those methods which is not compatible with our contexts. It does not mean that the teachers of the methods course should completely ignore teaching this method. They can teach some important aspects of this method which are somehow applicable in our context such as its referral learning aspect through which lots of pictures containing vocabularies are stick on the wall. (T.P. 10)

Therefore, the localization of some teaching methods can be considered as another pitfall of the methods course that is actually the fault of teacher trainers; however, it can be considered as a result of lack of time in conducting this course.

Chapter Five:
Discussions and Conclusion

5.1. Overview

The objective of the current study was to get an in-depth understanding of EFL teachers' perceptions on the extent to which the methods course taught in universities can be helpful for future experience of teacher trainers. The participants were selected through the principles of sampling procedure in grounded theory research method. The data were also collected and analyzed by making use of grounded theory approach. Having analyzed the data provided the researcher with three main categories; pitfalls of the methods course, strengths of the methods course, and suggestions for improvement. . Each category encompasses several sub-categories that are going to be discussed through this chapter. One of the explored category (strengths of the methods course) show that applying the methods courses is of high importance for teacher learners.

5.2. Discussions

As mentioned earlier, the researcher found three main categories with their specific sub-categories. The first category is 'pitfalls of the methods course' with its four subcategories such as 'theory-based', 'lack of time', 'lack of practicality', and 'teaching outdated methodology course books'. The second main category is 'strengths of the methods course' and its subcategories are 'building teacher learners' background', 'providing purposeful methods', and 'act as a pre-requisite for effective practice'. The last category is 'suggestions for improvement' including three subcategories such as 'do it by practice', 'leaving room for teacher initiatives', and 'taking contextual constraints into account'.

As the first category found through analyzing data (pitfalls of the methods course) some of the participants did not believe in the effectiveness of the methods course since it is highly theory-based and does not engage teacher trainers in practical experiments. It has been considered as weak point of the methods course that prevents teacher learners to benefit from it in their future experiments of teaching. The participants believed that teacher learners should be good practitioners of the presented methods in the methods course rather than just gaining rich knowledge about the rules and theories behind the methods. The methods course is not merely theoretical. Teacher educators consider it as an

empirical course. In addition, they argued that the rules and procedures of each method stick in the teacher learners' mind for longer time if they see the practical ways of applying the method. This finding was in line with Bruner's (1986) explanation that universities have traditionally focused on scientific knowledge which is abstract, decontextualized, and impersonal, but teachers also need access to narrative ways of knowing which relate theory to specific practices in concrete, contextualized, and personal ways. According to this author, in traditional language teacher education, the recognition of the role that the teacher plays in generating knowledge through teaching experience and reflection was missed and the importance of "what", "why", and "how" of relating theories to practice was highly ignored. Therefore, it can be concluded from the participants' and Bruner's expressions that lack of opportunities for practical experience for teacher learners makes the methods course useless for them. The methodology books are mostly theoretical-based and leave no room for the students to be engaged in practical experience. So, the responsibility of involving the students in practical experiences is on the teachers' shoulders which in most cases is ignored by the teachers and this course is conducted theoretically rather than practically.

One of the sub-categories of 'suggestions for improvement' was presented in different ways. This sub-category has been labeled as 'do it by practice' through which one of the mostly recommended ways of presenting the methods course is teaching it both theoretically and empirically. That means that the teachers make the students to perform each taught method empirically. They believe that knowing only the rules and knowledge behind the methods is not workable unless it is accompanied by practice. The students should get familiar with the application of each method in semi real contexts. If it does not happen in the methods courses in universities, then the graduated students (future teachers) are knowledgeably competent but weak in applying their knowledge in EFL/ESL classrooms. Therefore, their knowledge does not help them to be successful in their field unless they know how to make use of their knowledge in practice. This great advocated sub-category is proved by different scholars' arguments. For example, Goker (2006) suggests that a way for pre-service teachers to acquire pedagogical knowledge and skills is through examination of their teaching practices and reflecting upon it. According to Kpanja (2001), using a process of micro peer teaching has been considered as an effective

technique for transferring theory into practice for pre-service teachers in teacher education programs. Originally, micro-peer teaching was conceptualized and developed to provide teachers an opportunity to assess and improve their teaching skills (Kavanoz & Yuksel, 2010). In the idea of Kavanoz and Yuksel (2010), micro-peer teaching means having students to teach a micro level lesson to their peers in methods courses in order to acquire experience in lesson planning, materials development, presentation and through reflection to gain awareness about their teaching behaviors. Molebash (2004) considers the methods courses, among the courses offered to pre-service teachers, as one of the few opportunities for teacher candidates to view new knowledge through different aspects of their developed prior knowledge about teaching and learning. Therefore, he suggests that a basic objective of a teacher preparation program should be to provide pre-service teachers with appropriate teaching experience. By enabling students to teach and analyze their teaching behavior, peer-teaching can be an invaluable learning experience for prospective teachers, and it might lead to a consequent improvement in their teaching pedagogy.

Another way of presenting the mentioned sub-category (do it by practice) is making teacher trainers to observe EFL/ESL classes and pay attention to the methods applied in these classes by the teachers are considered as effective complementary to the methods course in order to make it effective for the students. In addition, the syllabus of this course is better to be moved from theory to practice so that the students learn how to change the theories to practice. The students have stress when they are asked to apply a specific taught method for their classrooms since they have only taught some theories and they have not observed the ways of applying the methods in practice. Such argument is in consistence with Kumaravadivelu (1999), Van Manen (1991), Chambers (1990), as they state that new developments in the field of teacher education are shifting from a theoretical to a more school-based approach, focusing on practical experience as the starting point for teacher education, and orienting towards a more constructivist approach. These new developments should stimulate teacher educators to evaluate and redefine their professional skills. Therefore, attention to the professional development of teacher educators who already work in the field is crucial. Likewise, Elliott (1991) believes that pedagogy of practicality does not pertain merely to the everyday practice of classroom teaching. It pertains to a much

larger issue that has a direct impact on the practice of classroom teaching, namely, the relationship between theory and practice. He has long recognized the harmful effect of the theory/ practice dichotomy. He also affirms that theory and practice mutually inform, and together constitute, a dialectical praxis, an affirmation that has recently influenced L2 teaching and teacher education as well.

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

As another suggested method of fulfilling the subcategory labeled as ‘Do it by practice’, the participants argued that they bring videos of each language teaching method in class and after teaching the theories of each method I play the related video for the teacher learners. In this manner, they get familiar with the practical ways of applying the methods in EFL/ESL classes. By using method-related videos, the methods course becomes interesting for the students. One of the most innovative ways of teaching the methods course in order to be effective for teacher learners is teaching each method through that method. Students are mostly involved in learning the theories of language teaching methods through different practices such as making use of realia, related videos, performing demo, and apprenticeship. The last approach is making the students to go to an EFL/ESL classroom to observe the applied methods in that classroom and then teacher trainers are made to apply the taught and observed methods in a real EFL/ESL classroom. This finding is proved by different scholars’ arguments such as Richards (1990) and Parrott (1988) who believed that the main reason of calling for teacher preparation programs to create opportunities for prospective teachers to access this knowledge and test theories and

principles with actual practice is the growing respect for the situated knowledge of the teacher, the recognition of the teacher as central in the teaching and learning process, and the crucial roles of the teacher as program and materials developer, needs analyst, decision-maker, problem-solver, and researcher of his or her own classroom. To this end, practical experiences such as observations, internships, apprenticeships, student teaching, or other teaching practice have long been a part of most language teacher education programs. In addition, the findings of some other scholars are in consistence with the participants' suggestions. For example, Kleinfield (1992), Davis (1980), and Cullen (1991) found that video modeling is a means of getting student-teachers' to focus their attention on target skills or behavior. Video-coaching has been used to refer to the use of taped activities of the student-teachers' themselves which then leads into group discussion. These activities provided contextualized portraits of the many factors which influenced teacher decision making and behavior in the classroom. This implied that teacher educators covered both theory and practice by using videos to meet a double folded objective: as a means for constructing knowledge and developing reflective skills; and as a tool for forming critical video consumers and producers.

Another finding concerns 'providing purposeful methods' that is a sub-category of 'strengths of the methods course' It is found that teacher trainers appreciated the effectiveness of the methods course since it provides the teacher learners with different language teaching methods, each for different purpose, while lacking practical exercises. Having set a purpose for language learning necessitates the application of methods having the related purpose. Since, the methods course presents variety of language teaching methods with different applications; it is beneficial for the current teacher learners to evaluate each method based on the future students' needs of language learning. The methods course in universities is a tool to provide teacher trainers with lots of rules and principles in terms of each method so that the students can easily apply them in future based on the classes needs. So, the provided language teaching methods in the methods course (each for a specific purpose) are valuable guide for the students to conduct their teaching process in future effectively. Regarding the provided purposeful methods by the methodology course books, some of the participants appreciated this course because of

providing them with different methods which each of them is appropriate for a specific context. They did not ignore any presented methods because they believed that they can conduct different classes with different purposes by applying different methods helping them to fulfill the class requirements. To prove such finding, Widdowson (1979) states that “the first aim assigned to the methodology component is generally that of relating practice to principle, developing an awareness of the rationale of particular procedures and of when they are useful, relating one procedure to another and short-term objectives to long-term goals, and understanding the organization of language courses in terms of ends and means” (p.68). In other words, the methodology component involves talking about EFL apart from the actual doing of it and making explicit the principles underlying a given practice of EFL. In addition, Krashen (1983) argues that "When we provide theory, we give them (teachers) the underlying rationale for methodology in general. This permits adaptation for different situations, evaluations of new techniques and evaluations of theory. Without theory, there is no way to distinguish effective teaching procedures from ritual, no way to determine which aspect of a method is helpful and which are not helpful" (p.261). Clark (1987) also states that at the intended level, the methodological approach to language teaching leads to curriculum promotion as it makes the curriculum to be oriented towards particular goals. Specific language teaching methods give a specific value to the education system that incorporates sociopolitical and philosophical thoughts.

Regarding the ‘providing purposeful methods’ subcategory, the researcher found that having the eclecticism ability by teacher learners is the result of studying the theories during the methods course. The students are aware of the specific required conditions for each method that helps them to be good practitioners of the methods. They can determine which method is appropriate for which situation and also which methods can be combined with each other to results in effective learning. Therefore, the methods course is helpful as it provides the teacher learners with lots of knowledge about the principles of language teaching. The students’ background knowledge in terms of language teaching is built through this course that is very helpful for them in future when they have to adjust their intended applied methods based on the EFL/ESL context. The language teaching students should get familiar with the philosophy and basic rules of language teaching process. Their

back ground knowledge in future when they become language teachers should be rich with conceptual information about the theories and principles of language teaching in order to be able to change the theories to practice. This finding is in consistence with Richards and Rodgers' (2001) arguments that since teachers and teachers in training need to be able to use approaches and methods flexibly and creatively based on their own judgments and experience, training in the techniques and procedures of a specific method is important as it provides them with the confidence, techniques and strategies they will need in a classroom environment. The authors also assume that as the teacher gains experience and knowledge, he/she will begin to develop an individual approach or method that will reflect the teacher's individual beliefs, values, principles and experiences. They further emphasized that it does not mean that teachers will dismiss or totally abandon the approach they adopted at the beginning but it will lead to a modification of their adopted approach in order to adjust it to the realities of their particular contexts. Kumaravedivelu's (2006) findings also prove the expressions of the current study's participants that practicing teachers could design their own micro strategies or classroom activities by using the macro strategies as guidelines. In other words, macro strategies were made operational in the classroom through micro strategies. The author also found that teachers were able to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant theory of practice by exploring and extending macro strategies based on the challenges of changing the contexts of teaching, by designing appropriate micro strategies to maximize learning potential in the classroom, and by monitoring their teaching acts.

Another sub-category of 'strengths of the methods course' is 'building teacher learners' background'. The researcher found that having pre-knowledge of a specific issue in its specific area is essential before entering field. That is also the case in the field of language teaching. Most of the language teachers benefit from their background knowledge they have been provided with it through studying the methodology books in the university. Without having any background in terms of the language knowledge, they might be unable to conduct their classes effectively. However, the knowledge behind each language teaching method is not enough because the teacher learners need to get familiar with the empirical use of the methods through observing. Through teaching the theories in the

methods course, teacher trainers gain information about different scholars' views on language learning such as Chomsky. Without having any knowledge about the aspects and characteristics of the language learning process and the students' mind process during language learning, the EFL/ESL teachers may not be able to teach language effectively. So, the methods course is useful as it provides the teacher learners with valuable information that prevents them to operate EFL/ESL classes without having background about language learning and the factors contributing to it. As Kumaradivelu (1992) suggests "we cannot prepare teachers to tackle so many unpredictable needs, wants and situations; we can only help them develop a capacity to generate varied and situation specific ideas within a general framework that makes sense in terms of current pedagogical and theoretical knowledge" (p. 41). Ramani (1987) also argues that the methodology in teacher training courses should aim at effecting changes in teachers' beliefs and should focus on teacher development. This can be achieved through teacher reflectiveness, promotion of critical awareness, active participation in the learning process and shared responsibility in learning (Kennedy, 1993). Correspondingly, Bell (2003) states that teachers should be exposed to all methods and they themselves would construct their own methods or decide which principles they would adopt more in their teaching practices. According to him, we cannot underestimate the importance of guiding principles of these methods and their influence on our teaching practices.

Concerning the 'building teacher learners' background' sub-category, it is found that increasing teacher trainers' awareness about the language teaching methods is one of the considerable advantages of the methods course in universities. Through this course, the students get familiar with the philosophies behind the methods which in turn they can use the methods in an innovative way since they have known the methods' principles as well. Due to some shortcomings such as lack of enough time the teachers of the methods course emphasize only on teaching the theories behind the language teaching methods as they believe these theories build the students' background knowledge. They have considered building the students' background knowledge as an important part of their future experience as language teachers. So, although the methodology course books are weak in engaging the students in practical experiences, they are rich in building background for

teacher trainers in terms of theories and philosophies of language teaching methods. Language teachers are recognized as practitioners that try to practice the existed theories in their minds. In order to be a good language practitioner, they need to have rich knowledge about the theories of language teaching methods. The language teachers can determine what types of methods and principles of teaching are appropriate for what types of language learners by making use of their background knowledge that they gained during the methods course in the university. Such finding can be proved by Case, Lanier, and Miskel (1986) who have based the legitimization of the teaching profession on the assumption that when more research-driven knowledge is provided to teachers, their teaching performance will improve. Teacher education programs generally operate under the assumption that teachers need discrete amounts of knowledge, usually in the form of general theories and methods that are assumed to be applicable to any teaching context. In their view, learning to teach is learning about teaching in one context (the teacher education program), observing and practicing teaching in another context (the practicum), and, eventually, developing effective teaching behaviors in a third context (usually in the first years of teaching). Thus, it was argued that teacher learning moves from on-the-job initiation towards the practices of teaching.

Moreover, regarding the previous discussed sub-category, it is found that in the field of language teaching like any other fields, teachers need to know the history, rules, and knowledge behind the teaching course. The methods course in the university helps teacher trainers to have enough background knowledge in order to enter the teaching field. Before employing each method empirically and observe its effectiveness in language learning, they should get aware of the principles behind it at first. The participants considered the presented knowledge behind the language teaching methods in the methods course as necessary as possible since it activates the future teachers' background to employ the methods. Most of the language teachers refer to their already acquired knowledge about the principles of language teaching methods. It does not mean that they use the old version of the methods. I mean that they use the methods in an innovative way. Since, they have enough background knowledge about the language teaching methods, they can easily elicit a useful technique out of each method based on the classes' needs. The key point is that

without having enough background knowledge about the principles of methods, the teachers would not be able to recognize which aspect of a method is useful for a specific context. Actually, the main reason that a language teacher is successful in his/her job is because of the methods course that provided them with rich knowledge about the language teaching methods that is like building blocks for the teacher learners . So, the students' awareness about the theories of the methods are increased so that they can update the methods based on their own situations of teaching by considering the methods' principles. All of these arguments are in a same direction with Johnson (1992) who introduces conceptual knowledge as abstract wisdom and perceptual knowledge as practical wisdom. She argues for the focus in teacher education to be on perceptual knowledge because the variations of the classroom is often against the application of a general rule. Woods (1996) also makes a distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge that is more conventionally framed in the distinction between declarative and procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge is knowledge about teaching that is knowledge of subject areas and the 'theory' of education. On the other hand, procedural knowledge is knowledge of how to teach that is knowledge of instructional routines to be used in the classroom. Woods (1996) also examined the role of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in teacher education. He concluded that while content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge remained important underpinnings of language teacher education, also they were needed as opportunities for prospective teachers to become aware of their own beliefs about effective teaching and learning. Through both the content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, the teachers achieved to opportunities to acquire the ways of thinking (general strategies, personal orientation, and habits of mind) that characterized being a member of the language teaching community.

As another sub-category of 'strengths of the methods course' it is found that the methods course should be presented in such a way that teacher learners can make a link between the theories behind the presented methods and practicing them in real context. Most of the students think the only thing that they need is practicing the methods in the methods course and consider the presented theories behind the methods as useless subject. The fact is that they are not aware of the connection between the theories and practice.

Actually, they do not know that they will not be able to apply the methods in their future experience of teaching without having any knowledge about the methods. In other words, the presented theories behind the methods in the methodology course book are pre-requisite for effective practice of those methods. Therefore, it is essential for the students to have rich theoretical sight in order to be a good teacher in future. Such conclusion which is taken from the ‘acting as a pre-requisite for effective practice’ sub-category is in a same direction with Sandholtz (2002) who has acknowledged that transmission-based approaches in teaching the methodology has the form of formal lectures, where theory and practice are separated, reduce learners to passive recipients of knowledge and do not promote teacher development through passive participation in the learning process. In addition, in the idea of Fishman et al. (2003), training courses need to value trainees’ knowledge and experience, incorporate these in the act of learning and enhance the possibility of change by exploring context-specific constraints. They also claim that teacher training courses with such an overall orientation will assist teachers in being efficient decision-makers and managers of change. Such courses will assist them in critically evaluating change in their own context and in anticipating problems with interested parties. They will further enable them to do a cost-benefit analysis and decide on the implementation of specific procedure. By the cost-benefit, the author means the benefits the change is expected to bring and the costs of implementing the change.

Additionally, regarding the findings in the sub-category ‘acting as a pre-requisite for effective practice’, accompanying the theories with practice is another way of helping teacher trainers to make use of the methods course in future. Relying only on some theories does not lead to any success in this field. It should be combined with appropriate practice. Theory and practice are interrelated with each other. Without any of them, the other one does not become effective. So, the presented theories in the methodology course book are really helpful and necessary for the teacher learners because they show them the appropriate ways of employing the methods. Moving from theory to practice is another approach followed by the participants which is the proof of theory as a pre-requisite for effective practice. It has been recommended that teaching the theories of the methods presented through the methods course should be followed by the practice of those methods.

The students are introduced with the theories of the language teaching methods and then are asked to perform the methods practically. To this end, the methods course is recommended to be divided into two parts; theoretical and practical parts respectively. Crandall's (1994) investigation proves this finding as the language teacher educators called for more extensive and intensive practical experiences to be integrated throughout the teacher education program, provided prospective teachers with greater opportunities to link theory with practice and to receive support and learn from experienced teachers, and offered experienced teachers an opportunity to learn from their new counterparts. Stoyhoff (1999) found that within general teacher education, prospective teachers spent more time in real teaching situations than is often the case in language teacher preparation programs, especially those housed outside of education departments. Partnerships between university-based teacher education departments and schools offered prospective and experienced teachers opportunities for engaging in collaborative research and teaching, while also benefited the language learners in the classroom (Johnson, 1996a).

'Taking contextual constraints into account' has been explored as another sub-category of 'suggestions for improvement'. In contrast to some of teachers in the methods course who believed that all of the presented methods in the course book should be taught completely to the teacher learners since each method has a specific characteristic and principle which is applicable for specific purposes, some other teachers tried to localize some of the methods and ignored teaching them completely since they thought that some of the methods are not applicable in the context of their country due to lack of some facilities. However, they should think of the future when their current students are language teachers in an almost developed context and have not any problem with lack of facilities. Therefore, localizing some of the methods by some of the teachers endanger the students' future experience of teaching.

Another sub-category of the mentioned main category is 'leaving room for teacher initiatives'. It was found that setting a fix rule towards teaching the methods course is not reasonable. Teachers should not force the teacher learners just to learn some fix rules and do not leave any room for them to think and reflect upon this course independently.

Teachers of the methods course should avoid their bias towards it and only emphasize on teaching the methods theoretically; instead, they should go beyond the specific design of the methodology book, containing only some theories about the methods, and apply some practical methods to make the students understood so that they can make use of the acquired methods in their future experiments of teaching.

5.3. Implications for Practice

The participants of this study discussed around the pros and cons of the methods course and they were mostly in favor of employing this course for teacher learners. Actually, they suggested employing the methods course in universities according to their presented suggestions for improvement through which the appropriate ways of teaching this course are introduced by experienced teacher educators. Considering the pros and strengths of the methods course is helpful for both teacher educators and teacher learners in such a way that they take this course more seriously and try to improve it. Furthermore, the introduced suggestions by the participants can be considered and applied by teacher educators in order to be successful in training skillful teacher learners. In addition, the teacher educators can notice the cons of the methods course so that they can ignore them in their own teaching experience.

Therefore, by taking such findings into account by both teacher educators and teacher learners (especially teacher educators), many teacher learners would be educated from universities. Consequently, these teacher learners will be successful in their profession as language teachers in future in such a way that they will decide more effectively in applying appropriate teaching styles based on their teaching context. So, knowledgeable EFL learners will be educated from language schools. Generally, the educational system will be improved by considering the findings of this study as the awareness of teacher educators about the importance of the methods course would finally result in educating knowledgeable EFL learners. Therefore, the educational system of the country will be improved as the success of EFL teachers and learners are increased and guaranteed by the methods course.

5.4. Suggestions for Further Studies

As mentioned earlier, different characteristics and aspects of the methods course are explored as its pros and cons, and some suggestions for improvement of this course. The presented suggestions were all taken from the teacher educators' expressions, while it would be also helpful to catch ideas of teacher learners and EFL teachers regarding the appropriate ways of conducting the methods course. The reason is that EFL teachers can better decide what aspects of the methods course and in what ways can be applied in order to train EFL learners more effectively. In addition, the explored suggestions towards conducting the methods course are needed to be tested by different teacher educators to see to what extent they will be applicable in universities and result in educating successful teacher learners and EFL teachers.

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چکیده

درس روش تدریس یکی از منابع قوی در زمینه آموزش زبان انگلیسی می باشد که فراگیران زبان انگلیسی می توانند از طریق آن بر معلومات خود بیافزایند. اهمیت این درس در کشور نادیده انگاشته شده در حالی که می تواند بسیار کارگشا باشد. در این تحقیق نظرات مربی معلمان زبان انگلیسی را گرفته ایم تا نقاط قوت و ضعف این درس را بیشتر بشناسیم و همچنین پیشنهادات آنها برای بهتر ساختن این درس گرفته شد. شرکت کننده ها در این تحقیق از طریق نمونه گیری هدفمند بر اساس نظریه بنیادی انتخاب شده اند. داده ها از طریق مصاحبه و نت برداری از شرکت کننده ها انجام شد. سه دسته بندی اصلی شامل نقاط ضعف، نقاط قوت (قوی سازی پیش زمینه دانش آموزان، فراهم سازی روش های تدریس هدفمند، پیش نیاز موثر برای تدریس) و پیشنهاد برای بهتر سازی درس که شامل: عملی تدریس کردن روش ها، فضا دادن برای ابتکار عمل معلم ها در نظر گرفتن محدودیتها متنی میشود. یافته های این مطالعه منجر به پیشرفت سیستم تحصیلی میشود که به ارتقاء کیفیت تدریس اساتید دبیری و دانشجویان کمک خواهد کرد.

کلیدواژه ها: درس روش تدریس، مربی معلم، یادگیرنده معلم، نظریه بنیادی



گروه زبان انگلیسی

پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد آموزش زبان انگلیسی

بررسی نظرات مربی معلم ها بر درس روش تدریس

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