



The use of EPOSTL to determine the self-efficacy of prospective EFL teachers: Raising awareness in English language teacher education

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Abstract

The current practices in the field of foreign language teacher education have a heavy inclination to make use of traditional means especially throughout the assessment process of student teachers at foreign language departments. Observing the world in terms of teacher education makes it urgent to include more reflective and objective tools in teaching practices courses. Since the success and the level of affective factors play a huge importance in teacher education as well as cognitive factors while preparing the student teachers to their real life experiences, taking into consideration of their self-efficacy and an attempt to increase the level of self-efficacy comes on the scene of teacher education. Thus, this study aims to determine the self-efficacy levels of 4th grade prospective ELT program teachers studying at Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education. For this purpose, the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) was adapted into 5 point likert-type scale and filled by 38 prospective teachers in the fall semester of 2014. The collected data was analyzed via SPSS 17.00 package program for social sciences. In the light of the findings, it is proposed that the EPOSTL should be integrated into teacher education programmes which will make this process more reflective and convenient for the prospective teachers by using it also as a scale for raising their self-efficacy level.

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Keywords: EFL Teacher Education; Self-efficacy; EPOSTL

1. Introduction

Teacher education is one of the most prominent subjects of educational system. It is naturally known that it has a great significance on the quality of education. In this sense, teacher education programs and the curricula of the education faculties need strategically to be regulated and developed. This necessity started such a new movement in 1997 that the programs of education faculties in Turkey were reconstructed (Yelken, 2009). With the reconstruction process, the main objective of the secondary level English education turned into a way of promoting the basic communication skills of learners through the integration four skills in order to engage learners into a powerful communication in the target language (MONE, 2001). On account of this, the 1997 curriculum can be accepted as a milestone in English language teaching in Turkey in that the concept of the constructivism and

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communicative approach was placed into the English Language Teaching curriculum for the first time (Kirkgoz, 2005). Furthermore, the number of methodology courses was increased and the teaching practicum component was extended to cover both primary and secondary schools. Thus, the teacher trainers had more chance to observe the actual teaching practices, thereby gaining more practical and hand-on experiences (Hismanoğlu, 2013).

In 2006, the Council of Higher Education (CHE) reconstructed the curricula of the education faculties to meet the demands of social, educational and political domains; and local, national and international requirements (Coşkun, 2008; OECD, 2005). In this way, the components of new ELTE curriculum covers field knowledge (linguistic competence), teacher education (pedagogic competence), general knowledge and teaching practice (Altunya, 2006). This change was summarized by Seferoğlu (2006) as more stress was placed on teaching methodology and practice components.

This new curriculum is based on Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) which provides a common basis for language programs and a comprehensive way to describe language teaching and learning processes (Council of Europe, 2001). Within the framework of the CEFR, the trainees are expected to be independent learners and the teachers are expected to widen the scopes of both personal and professional enhancement. The reconstruction of the curriculum has been planned within the framework of European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) and shaped by taking the prerequisites of teacher training programs and faculties of education into account (CHE, 2008). Although several research studies (e.g. Coşkun & Daloğlu, 2010; Ogeyik, 2009; Erozan, 2005; Salli-Copur, 2008; Seferoğlu, 2006) have analyzed the new programs from several perspectives since 2007, and have concentrated on the relatedness of the new English Language Teacher Education (ELTE) curriculum and the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) concept, very few studies focus on the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Language which goes beyond the CEFR and its relation with the self-efficacy level of EFL prospective teachers. Hence, the aim of the present study is to investigate whether the EPOSTL reflects the self-efficacy level of EFL prospective teachers and place as an awareness raising position in teacher education.

1.1. EFL Prospective Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is an important motivational construct that shapes teacher effectiveness in the classroom. Teachers with a high level of self-efficacy have been shown to be more effective in their teaching and likely to try harder to help all students to reach their potential. In contrast, teachers with a low level of self-efficacy have been found to be less likely to try harder to reach the learning needs of all their students. It is for this reason that the investigation of the level of self-efficacy in prospective EFL teacher education is important. Since the level of self-efficacy will concern not only the prospective EFL teachers teaching practices but also their teacher identity as well.

Self-efficacy beliefs operate as a key factor in a generative system of human competence (Bandura, 1997). Teacher self-efficacy relates to the beliefs teachers hold about their own capability and competency in undertaking certain teaching tasks. Bandura (1997, p.3) defines self-efficacy as “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainments”. Self-efficacy therefore influences thought patterns and emotions that enable classroom actions. In the context of education, teacher self efficacy is considered a powerful influence on teachers’ overall effectiveness with students. Tschannen- Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) suggest that supporting the development of teachers’ self-efficacy is essential for producing effective, committed and enthusiastic teachers.

From a more global point of view, self-efficacy has been conceptualized as a more general sense by some researchers (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) which refers to “a global confidence in one’s coping ability across a wide range of demanding or novel situations” (cited in Luszczynska et al., 2005, p. 81). Through several studies (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 1995; Schwarzer, 1993) high general self efficacy (GSE), providing a stable and broad sense of personal competence in order to handle various stressful situations encountered in life, has been proved to have positive relations with higher achievement, more social integration and healthier life (Bandura, 1997; Schwarzer, 1992). People who have a high sense of SE rely on much more in their capabilities to experience various types of environmental situations. That’s why they can perceive the tasks and problems as challenges not threats or uncontrollable events and face stressful events.

Teachers’ judgmental perspectives, behaviors, actions are connected with the cognitive factors like their beliefs, perceptions, assumptions and motivation (Cerit, 2010; Yüksel Tunç, 2010). That’s why; the “self-efficacy” concept has been a focus concern in educational context recently. Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) is defined (Bandura, 1977) as “a judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated”. Having consistent relationship with characteristics of teachers and the behavior or learning of students, TSE is an exceptional concept (Henson, 2001). TSE lies behind critical instructional behaviors such as involving use of time, behaviors in classroom, innovative teaching practices, and reaction to the learners who are difficult to learn and questioning techniques (Atay, 2007). Potential of shaping many factors in the classroom atmosphere has taken sense of SE concept to the centre of English language teaching (ELT) domain which is related to individual beliefs and interaction.

1.2. European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL)

In teacher education there is an urgent need to change the common attitude of teaching practices nature especially for prospective teachers before starting their in-service teaching process. No matter how much time consuming and difficult to try alternative instrument, practitioners should take a step to utilize or develop new and alternative tools in language teacher education. For this purpose, the EPOSTL was developed for the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML) by a team of teacher educators from five different countries (Armenia, Austria, Norway, Poland, and UK) . It is a product of a project ' A framework for Teacher Education' carried out by the ECML between 2004 and 2006 (Krisjane et al., 2009; Newby, 2012), the team of which is to harmonize teacher education across Europe.

The EPOSTL encourages the students undergoing their initial teacher education to reflect the didactic knowledge and the skills needed to teach languages, evaluate their own didactic competences and enables them to monitor their progress and to record their experiences of teaching during teacher education at the faculties. The EPOSTL available at <http://www.ecml.at/epostl> consists of three main sections. The present study deals with only the self-assessment section including seven sections of EPOST with 195 'can-do' descriptors relating to didactic competences of language teacher education. Since these 'can-do' descriptors reflect the competency of language teachers, they can also be accepted as items having relations with prospective language teachers self-efficacy beliefs. Therefore the present study, it is sought to find answer to the research questions defined below:

- 1- Can EPOSTL be used to determine prospective EFL teachers self-efficacy level?
- 2- Is the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages a reliable instrument?
- 3- What are the self-efficacy levels of prospective EFL teachers?

4- What are the self-efficacy levels for each section of EPOSTL?

2. Method

You should provide sufficient detail to allow the work to be replicated. Methods already published should be indicated by a reference. Only relevant modifications should be described here.

2.1. Sample / Participants

Thirty eight students from the English Language Teaching Department of Hacettepe University participated in this study in the Fall Semester of 2014-2015 Academic Year. The selection of the participants was done in random regardless of their gender and race. The students ranged in age from 20 to 23, and 31 of the 38 students were female and 7 of them were male. The high number of female participants is accepted as normal due to the female students' natural inclination to English Language Teaching Department. All of the participants were studying at the 4th grade as senior level students and they all got the course of İDÖ475 'School Experience' that semester.

2.2. Instrument(s)

To investigate whether the EPOSTL reflects the self-efficacy level of EFL prospective teachers, the researcher adapted the EPOSTL developed for the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe (ECML) by a team of teacher educators to the context of the present study. The adapted version of the EPOSTL was made up of 195 descriptors. The 195 descriptors were grouped into seven general categories which have the following headings: 1. Context, 2. Methodology, 3. Resources, 4. Lesson Planning, 5. Conducting a Lesson, 6. Independent Learning, 7. Assessment of Learning. Each general category has sub-sections such as 'Context' includes the sub-headings of Curriculum, Aims and Needs, The Role of the Language Teacher, Institutional Resources and Constraints. 195 descriptors are divided into all abovementioned sub-headings and in the adapted version of EPOSTL turned into a 5 point likert-type scale ranging from '1=not developed', '2=less developed', '3=developed', '4=very developed', '5=fully developed'.

2.3. Data collection procedures

The EPOSTL was administered to 50 prospective EFL teachers at the English Language Teaching Department of Hacettepe University. However, the return rate from prospective EFL teachers was 38. Prior to administering the EPOSTL to the prospective EFL teachers, all the sections and items were clarified by the researcher so that the respondents could easily choose the right option which express their competency level of teaching English. Only one copy of European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages was given to each respondent. In the process of filling the EPOSTL, prospective EFL teachers were asked about their personal information concerning their age, gender, having preparatory class, familiarity of EPOSTL and after that their competency levels of agreement concerning their self-efficacy of teaching English. The gathered data was coded and analyzed via SPSS 17.00 package program for social sciences. Since time limitation and budget deficiency made it difficult for researcher to administer the EPOSTL to a larger sample, the researcher made use of convenience sampling method in the present research study as the number of the participant is above 30 which is accepted as a limit number for parametric studies. Apart from the number of the participants, the number of the items in EPOSTL (195 descriptors) makes the data collection process more valid as well.

3. Results

This section aims to present the findings of this research as scientific results. Starting with the first and second research questions whether EPOSTL can be used to determine prospective EFL teachers self-efficacy level and the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages is a reliable instrument are handled. For this purpose, the EPOSTL containing 195 descriptors turned into a 5 point likert-type format and applied to 38 prospective teachers. According to the statistics, the Cronbach alpha reliability level is presented in the table 3.3.

Table 1. Coefficiencies of Data Collection Instruments Reliability

Data Collection Instrument	Cronbach alfa (α)
EPOSTL	,98

When it is paid attention to the Cronbach alpha level of the scale as it is calculated as .98, it proves that the EPOSTL can be effectively used in this adopted 5 point likert-type format since the reliability level of this instrument is highly acceptable. Here, the researchers should keep in their mind this rule with caution:

Cronbach's alpha	Internal consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent (High-Stakes testing)
$0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.9$	Good (Low-Stakes testing)
$0.6 \leq \alpha < 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.5 \leq \alpha < 0.6$	Poor
$\alpha < 0.5$	Unacceptable

As for the third research question of this research, what the self-efficacy levels of prospective EFL teachers are, is handled in this part. In table 2 EPOSTL competency levels for each prospective teacher are shown. These competency levels can overlap with the self-efficacy levels of each prospective teacher as well since this research accepts the competency statements as reflecting prospective teachers' self-efficacy levels.

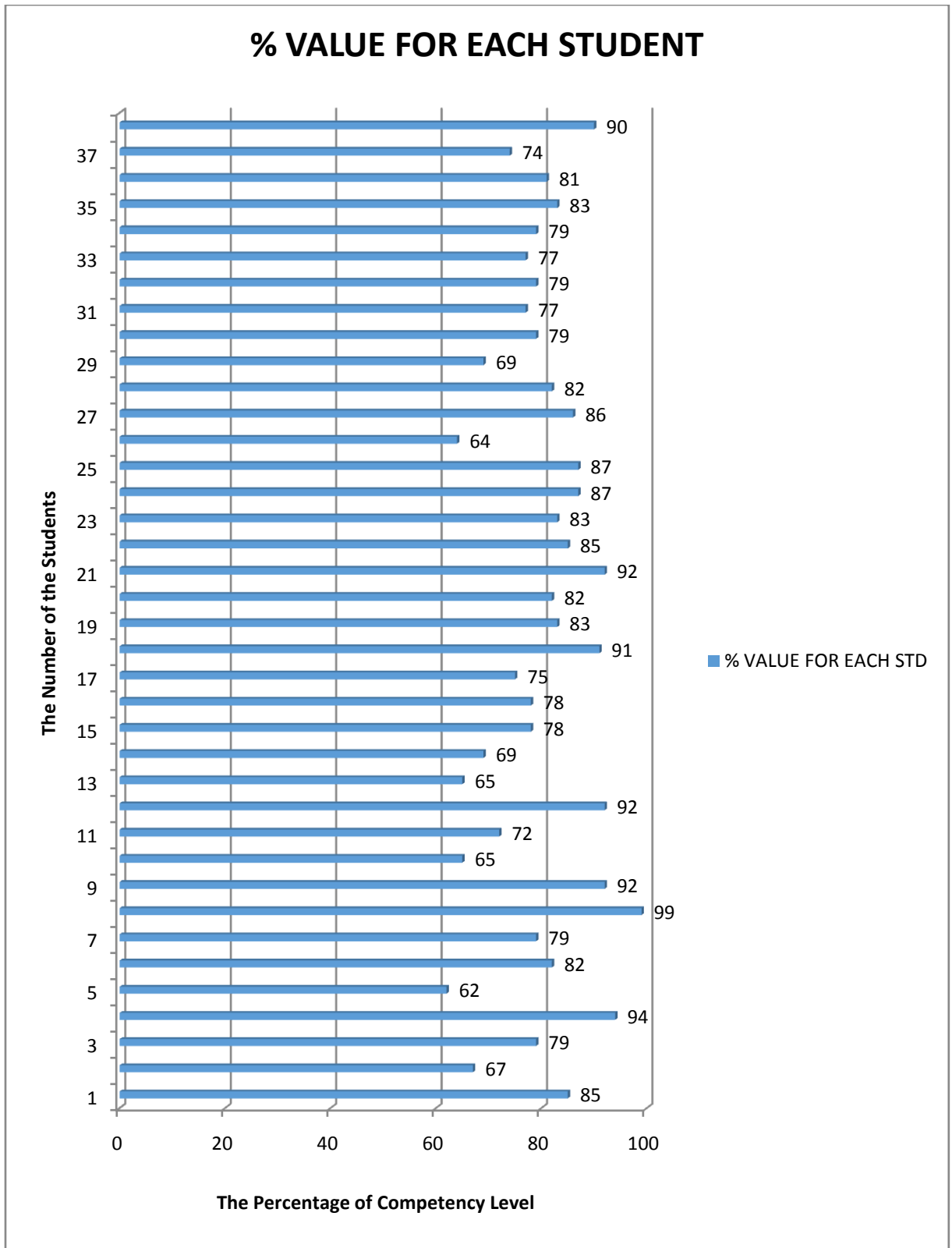
Table 2. EPOSTL Competency Level for Each Prospective Teacher

MAX. SCORE	EACH STD SCORE	% VALUE FOR EACH PROSPECTIVE TEACHER
975	826	84,71794872
975	657	67,38461538
975	768	78,76923077
975	918	94,15384615
975	607	62,25641026
975	796	81,64102564

975	769	78,87179487
975	965	98,97435897
975	899	92,20512821
975	634	65,02564103
975	706	72,41025641
975	898	92,1025641
975	633	64,92307692
975	676	69,33333333
975	756	77,53846154
975	760	77,94871795
975	733	75,17948718
975	891	91,38461538
975	806	82,66666667
975	799	81,94871795
975	896	91,8974359
975	831	85,23076923
975	814	83,48717949
975	850	87,17948718
975	849	87,07692308
975	621	63,69230769
975	837	85,84615385
975	797	81,74358974
975	677	69,43589744
975	774	79,38461538
975	748	76,71794872
975	773	79,28205128
975	755	77,43589744
975	769	78,87179487
975	812	83,28205128
975	792	81,23076923
975	719	73,74358974
975	881	90,35897436
TOTAL	29692	3045,333333
MEAN	781,3684211	80,14035088

According to the findings given in table 2., the prospective teachers' EPOSTL results out of 195 descriptors are presented generally. Based on these findings, it is reached that each prospective teacher's EPOSTL grades differ from each other and the EPOSTL may also reflect the self-efficacy levels of prospective teachers as results of this research.

Figure 1. presents the EPOSTL general competency percentages for each prospective teachers and figure 2. shows the specific competency percentages of each prospective teacher for the sub-sections of 7 sections labeled in EPOSTL.



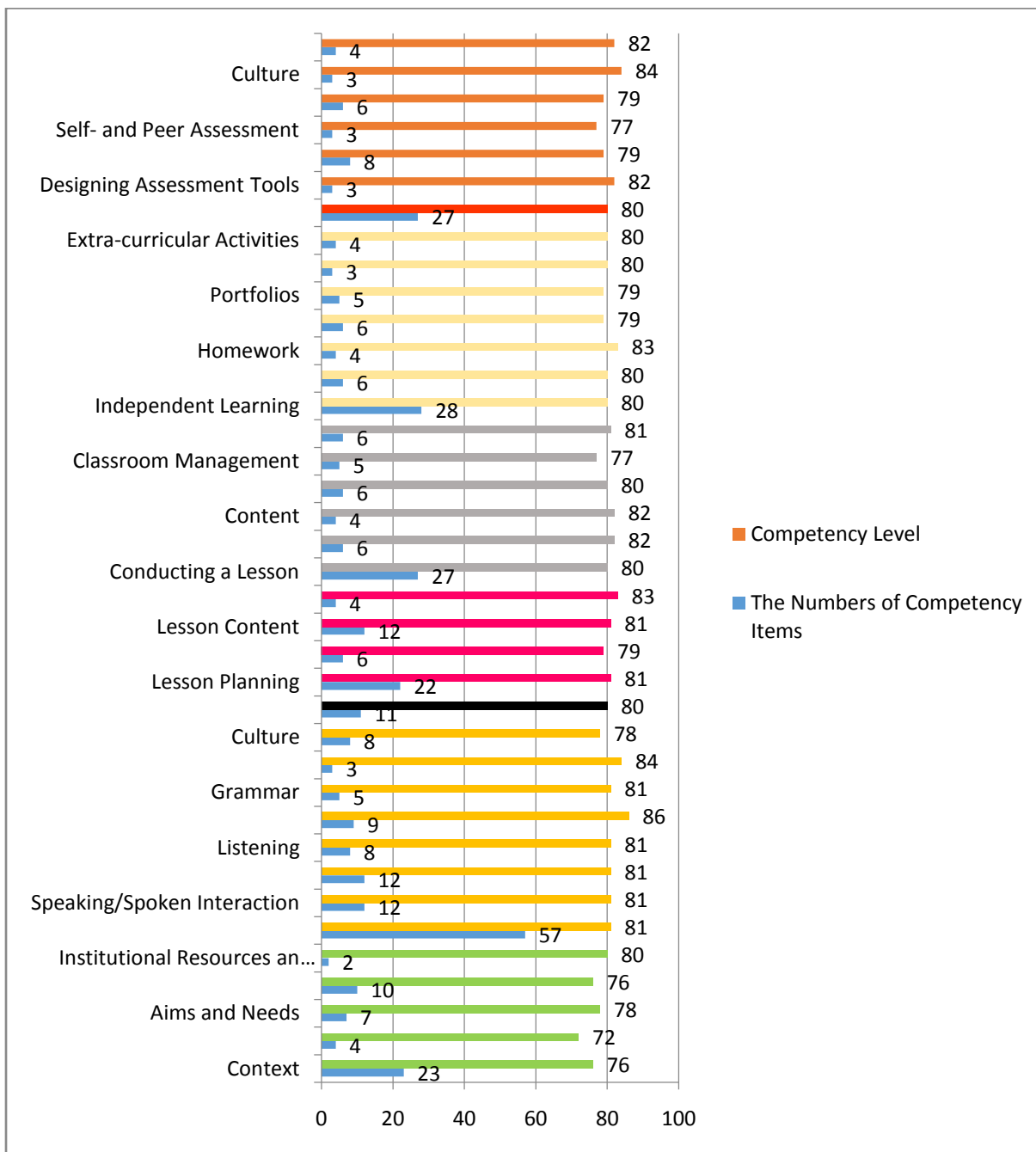


Figure 2. The Specific Competency Percentages of EPOSTL Sub-Sections

Dealing with the fourth and last question of what the self-efficacy levels for each section of EPOSTL are, figure 5.3. shows the percentages of each 7 section of EPOSTL. According to the findings, the competency levels of each section reflects the general self-efficacy level of these participants and it deserves to pay attention that prospective teachers need more professional support in these fields labeled in EPOSTL focusing mainly on context of teaching.

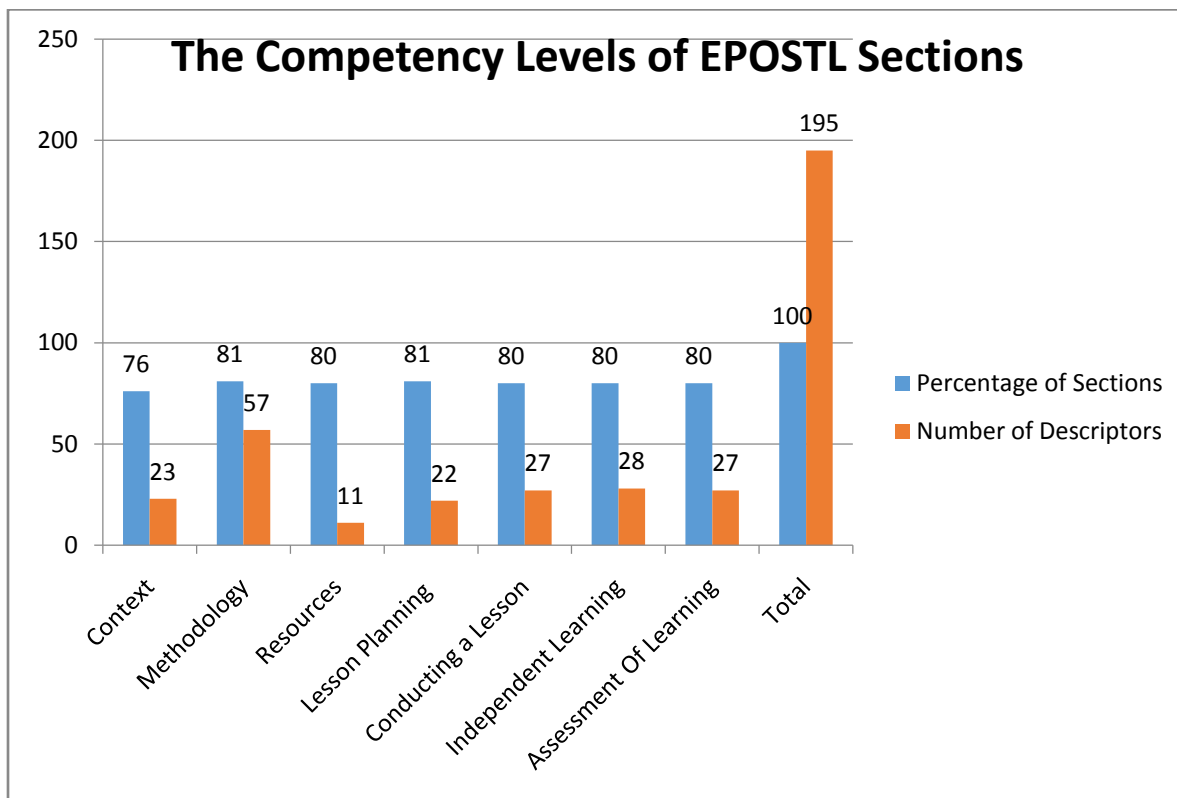


Figure 3. The Percentages of Each 7 Section

Aiming to support the above mentioned statistics, Table 5.3. intends to share the findings of one sample T-test results. Here, it is scientifically seen that 7 sections of EPOSTL differ meaningfully from each other as the significance level of each section proves the successful distribution of the means $p < .01$.

Table 3. One-Sample T-Test Results

	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Sig
Context	38	76,3387	9,99291	,000
Methodology	38	81,4681	10,43866	,000
Resources	38	79,8565	12,07068	,000
Lessonplanning	38	80,8852	10,18587	,000
Conductingalesson	38	80,3119	10,95537	,000
Independentlearning	38	79,7556	12,43768	,000
Assessmentoflearning	38	80,3119	10,78484	,000

4. Conclusions

The present study investigated prospective EFL teachers' self-efficacy levels with respect to the EPOSTL descriptors reflecting the competency levels of language teachers. The results of the study revealed that the majority of prospective EFL teachers have knowledge about the EPOSTL or took course/got education concerning the EPOSTL or related subjects. The results of this study also unearthed that the EPOSTL can be used to express prospective EFL teachers' self- efficacy level

through concerning the competency levels of teaching. Moreover, EPOSTL is a reflective instrument which gives not only deep information about the prospective ELF teachers but also the program and the courses they got during their teacher education in English Language Teaching Departments. In this sense, EPOSTL should be taken into account in English language teacher education program and as obligatory or elective it should be incorporated into English language teacher education curriculum.

Regarding general teacher education characteristics gained during the prescribed programs, this study also showed that with these participants although the competency levels occurring the self-efficacy levels of prospective EFL teachers seem satisfactory, the percentages between the participants may differ at large values which mean that the prescribed models, programs or curriculum have not the same effect on prospective EFL teachers. Furthermore, the sections and sub-sections of EPOSTL should be taken on account very specifically during EFL teacher education as the context part takes place as the section in which the prospective EFL teachers feel themselves less competent and less efficient as well.

As a result, this study reveals and supports the idea that EPOSTL provides a common basis for the specification and discussion of competences in teacher education curricula. Thus, it serves as a benchmarking tool suited to compare and observe the contents of teacher education programmes nationwide, which will also bring unity in pre-service teacher education. This small scale study of 38 prospective ELF teachers could be repeated with more participants including a control group to generalize the findings. This point could be the topic of another study and shed light on further studies.

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İngiliz dili öğretmen eğitiminde farkındalığın artırılması: İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten öğretmen adaylarının öz-yeterliklerinin belirlenmesinde EPOSTL kullanımı

Öz

Özellikle yabancı dil öğretimi bölümlerindeki öğretmen adaylarının değerlendirilmesi sürecinde mevcut uygulamalar yabancı dil öğretmeni yetiştirme alanında geleneksel yöntemlere doğru yoğun bir eğilim olduğunu göstermektedir. Öğretmen eğitiminde dünyadaki gelişmeler, öğretmenlik uygulaması derslerinde daha yansıtıcı ve objektif araçların içerilmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir. Öğretmen yetiştirmede öğretmen adaylarının gerçek hayat tecrübelerine hazırlanmasında bilişsel faktörler kadar duyuşsal faktörlerin düzeyleri de önemli bir rol oynadığından öz-yeterliliğin dikkate alınması ve öz-yeterlilik düzeyinin artırılması çabası öğretmen eğitimi sahnesinde yerini almaktadır. Bundan dolayı, bu çalışma Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi alanında öğrenim gören 4. sınıf öğretmen adaylarının öz-yeterlilik düzeylerinin belirlenmesini amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla Dil Öğretmen Adaylarına Yönelik Avrupa Portfolyosu 5'li likert-tipi ölçeğe dönüştürülmüş ve 2014 yılı güz akademik yılında öğrenim gören 38 öğretmen adayı tarafından doldurulmuştur. Elde edilen veriler sosyal bilimler için kullanılan SPSS 17.00 sürümü kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular ışığında, Dil Öğretmen Adaylarına Yönelik Avrupa Portfolyosu'nun öğretmen adayları için öğretmen yetiştirme sürecinde daha yansıtıcı ve uygun olması ve bu ölçeğin öğretmen adaylarının öz-yeterlilik düzeyini arttırması açısından öğretmen yetiştirme programlarına entegre edilmesi gerektiği önerilmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten öğretmen eğitimi; öz-yeterlilik, dil öğretmen adaylarına yönelik Avrupa portfolyosu (DÖAYAP)

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